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Defeating Naturalism: Defending and Reformulating Plantinga's EAAN

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Defeating Naturalism: Defending and Reformulating Plantinga's EAAN

Abstract

Abstract: During the past two decades, Alvin Plantinga has formulated an argument against naturalism that focuses on naturalism's acceptance of contemporary evolutionary theory. Plantinga argues that given naturalism and evolution, our cognitive faculties have been developed to produce beliefs that meet the Darwinian requirement of survival and reproduction. Plantinga argues that accepting this will lead a naturalist to have a defeater for all of their beliefs, including their belief in naturalism. In this paper, I survey and respond to two types of objections that have been given as a response to Plantinga's argument. The first objection that I interact with is an objection given by Michael Bergmann. Bergmann argues that a naturalist can continue to hold on to both their naturalism and their belief that their faculties are reliable, even if the probability of their faculties being reliable is low. The second objection that I interact with is an objection that can be seen in the work of Jerry Fodor and Stephen Law. This objection argues that beliefs that enable survival and reproduction will likely be truth conducive and thus, the chance of having reliable faculties is high. I respond to this argument by first reiterating Plantinga's traditional response to this objection. After I clarify and defend this traditional response, I then reformulate Plantinga's argument to specifically address metaphysical beliefs. Not only does this give the non-naturalist two different responses to this objection, but I take it that the reformulation could be seen as even more persuasive than the traditional formulation.

Keywords

Plantinga, EAAN, Law, Metaphysics, Evolution

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INTRODUCTION

After developing his theory of warrant in *Warrant and Proper Function*, Alvin Plantinga argues that if one takes both the tenets of naturalism and evolution, one has a defeater for all of their beliefs, including their belief in naturalism. In 2002, James Beilby edited a volume entitled *Naturalism Defeated?: Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism*. In this volume Plantinga briefly reiterates his evolutionary argument against naturalism and then allows several high caliber epistemologists, metaphysicians, and philosophers of science to respond to the argument. The volume ends with Plantinga addressing each critique as he argues that his argument is "bloodied but unbowed."¹ Through the work of Plantinga and my own contributions, in this paper I will first attempt to defend Plantinga's evolutionary argument against a unique objection from Michael Bergmann and then an objection that is shared by William Ramsey, Jerry Fodor, and Stephen Law. Stephen Law's specific formulation of the latter objection will lead me to reformulate Alvin Plantinga's argument by only addressing metaphysical beliefs (and more specifically, beliefs in naturalism and theism). Though before I begin this endeavor, I will first need to reiterate and identify what Plantinga has in mind by naturalism.

NATURALISM

There are many variations of what one can mean by naturalism. There is a naturalism that one might invoke in an epistemological context when discussing what types of things one can know.² To this type of naturalism, W.V. Quine states, "It is within science itself, and not in some prior philosophy, that reality is to be identified and described."³ Similarly, Devitt notes, "There is only one way of knowing: the empirical way that is the basis of science (whatever that may be)."⁴ There is also a methodological understanding of naturalism that is in regard to certain methodological assumptions to what guides or constrains the process of inquiry.⁵ In order to help make this clearer, Michael Rea quotes Leiter, "Naturalism in philosophy is always first a methodological view to the effect that philosophical theorizing should be continuous with empirical inquiry in the sciences."⁶

¹ Alvin Plantinga, "Reply to Beilby's Cohorts," in *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism*, edited by James Beilby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 205.

² I was initially made aware of the following definitions in Michael Rea's work, *World Without Design: The Ontological Consequences of Naturalism*.

³ W.V. Quine. *Theories of Things* (Harvard University Press, 1981), 21.

⁴ Michael Devitt. *Coming to Our Senses: A Naturalistic Program for Semantic Localism* (Cambridge Press 1996), 2.

⁵ Michael Rea. *World Without Design: The Ontological Consequences of Naturalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 64.

⁶ Ibid.

These epistemological and methodological definitions would be distinct from a metaphysical view of naturalism which according to Armstrong is “a spatio-temporal account of the general nature of reality.”⁷ Similarly, Stace argues “...naturalism [is] the belief that the world is a single system of things or events every one of which is bound to every other in a network of relations and laws, and...outside this ‘natural order’ there is nothing.”⁸ The last two definitions appear to be more in line with what Plantinga is arguing against.

Given that all of reality (that in which exists inside the natural order) is governed by the laws of nature, there wouldn't seem to be any room for something like an immaterial soul. Naturalism would seemingly force one into one of the three following options: one can deny human consciousness, reduce it to the physical, or allow for the possibility of supervenience. Plantinga's argument is an argument that can be successful regardless of which one of these options a naturalist takes. Having now established what I mean by naturalism I will now precede to Plantinga's formulation of the argument.

PLANTINGA'S EVOLUTIONARY ARGUMENT AGAINST NATURALISM (EAAN)

Let P stand for probability of, let R stand for the proposition that our cognitive faculties are reliable, and let N and E stand for naturalism and evolution.⁹

- (1) $P(R/N\&E)$ is low
- (2) Anyone who accepts N&E and sees that $P(R/N\&E)$ is low has a defeater for R
- (3) Anyone who has a defeater for R has a defeater for any other belief she thinks she has, including [belief in] N&E itself
- (4) If one who accepts N&E thereby acquires a defeater for N&E, N&E is self-defeating and cannot rationally be accepted.¹⁰

I will first address the less controversial (2), and then I will address the all-important (1). Regarding (2), one might wonder why one could not just have the reliability of one's cognitive faculties as a basic belief. Perhaps it would appear given N&E that the chances of our faculties producing mostly true beliefs would be low, but given the strong intuition that our faculties are reliable to some degree, one

⁷ David Armstrong, Postscript: “Naturalism, Materialism, and First Philosophy Reconsidered,” in *Contemporary Materialism: A Reader*, edited by Paul Moser and J. D. Trout (London: Routledge, 1995), 48.

⁸ Walter T. Stace. *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* Vol. 23, 1949-1950, 22.

⁹ In regard to ‘R’, the definition that I have in mind also includes the beliefs that are produced from them in both basic and based ways.

¹⁰ Alvin Plantinga. *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2011), 344-345.

could be warranted in affirming R in a basic way. Michael Bergmann argues for this as he states the following:

But the commonsense naturalist can respond as follows: "Even if a naturalist believed that $P(R/N\&E)$ is low or inscrutable, this needn't give her a defeater for R. For she could have nonpropositional evidence for R that is sufficiently strong to make belief in R rational, reasonable, and warranted—even for someone whose total relevant propositional evidence, k, was such that $P(R/k)$ is low or inscrutable."¹¹

How would Plantinga respond to such an argument? In order to respond to this objection, it would be helpful to first note that though one could acquire a belief in a basic way (as Bergmann of course knows), it doesn't follow that it would be immune to defeaters. There are a plethora of examples of how one could get a defeater for a basic belief. These sorts of beliefs would include beliefs like, 'In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue,' 'Obama won the majority of delegates in the 2008 election,' and the names of peoples, places, and things. Focusing on the last of these examples, let us take the belief that is formed when discovering a person's name by testimony. Perhaps a fellow student introduces his first name as being Luke and, without any argument, I just find myself believing that his name is Luke. It would seem that, if I am without a defeater and his name really is Luke, then I would have knowledge and be warranted in believing that his first name was Luke. However, if I found a list of the students in the class and I discovered that his first name was not Luke but in fact Jerry, I would no longer be rational in believing that his first name is Luke.

Take another example – perhaps an example of a basic belief that was derived from perception: I look out of my backyard where there happens to be a large pond and I see what I believe to be a beautiful swan. I see the swan moving as swans normally move; visually, from my distance, it looks how swans normally look. However, upon closer investigation, I discover that the swan was in fact a well-designed replica of a swan. If this were so, I would then have a defeater for the basic belief that was formed by my perception.

This is what I think Plantinga is trying to get across; namely, if one has a basic belief that one's cognitive faculties are reliable, but then reflects on the truths of N&E and comes to the conclusion that there is an undercutting defeater for all of their beliefs, one would then be irrational if one continued to hold that these cognitive faculties were reliable.¹² Now, one would indeed, have to be convinced that the chances of R is low, that is low enough that it significantly decreases one's warrant for believing in R. But given this is the case; one would have a defeater for their basic belief in R, and thus would be irrational in continuing to hold onto their belief in R and N&E. It thus seems to me that what Bergmann has shown is that

¹¹ Michael Bergmann, "Common Sense Naturalism," in *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism*, edited by James Beilby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 68.

¹² By undercutting defeater, I have in mind a defeater that doesn't directly demonstrate that something is false; rather, the defeater demonstrates that one is in such an epistemic situation, where one lacks warrant for believing that p.

this argument might be person variable. Some individuals might be affected by this argument in such a way that their warrant is significantly decreased, even given non-propositional evidence. Others however (Bergmann?), might not be moved much by this argument given that one holds to non-propositional evidence with extreme firmness. Given this is the case; it would appear that besides (1), the rest of the argument seems to follow without much controversy. The plausibility of the argument rests on (1) being plausible. If, indeed, (1) can be demonstrated to be more plausible than its negation, it would appear that Plantinga's initial argument is a good one.

A REFORMATIONAL VIEW ON PAUL

In arguing for (1) being plausible, I will now defend Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism and then further it by applying it to strictly metaphysical beliefs.¹³ In Plantinga's past works, he has made the following points: in an orthodox Darwinian framework, man's cognitive faculties produce beliefs that are not aimed directly at truth; rather, they are aimed at producing survival and reproductive behavior. The beliefs produced by a non-theistic Darwinian framework are beliefs produced to give the correct inputs that lead to the correct survival outputs. As Patricia Churchland puts it:

Boiled down to essentials, a nervous system enables the organism to succeed in the four F's: feeding, fleeing, fighting and reproducing. The principal chore of nervous systems is to get the body parts where they should be in order that the organism may survive... Improvements in sensorimotor control confer an evolutionary advantage: A fancier style of representing is advantageous so long as it is geared to the organism's way of life and enhances the organism's chances of survival. Truth, whatever that is, definitely takes the hindmost.¹⁴

In *Warrant and Proper Function*, Plantinga gives an example of how advantageous beliefs produced by natural selection can be causally linked with survival and reproduction but also be beliefs that are not aimed at truth. The scenario goes as follows:

Perhaps Paul very much *likes* the idea of being eaten, but when he sees a tiger, always runs off looking for a better prospect, because he thinks it unlikely the tiger he sees will eat him. This will get his body parts in the right place so far as survival is concerned, without involving much by way of true belief. ... Or perhaps he thinks the tiger is a large, friendly, cuddly pussycat and wants to pet it; but he

¹³ Though for the most part I will be defending Plantinga's traditional version of the argument, I will not argue that given N&E, R is low, rather I will argue that given N&E, R is inscrutable.

¹⁴ Patricia Churchland, Epistemology in the Age of Neuroscience. *Journal of Philosophy*: Vol. 84. 1987, 548-49.

also believes that the best way to pet it is to run away from it. ... Clearly there are any number of belief-cum-desire systems that equally fit a given bit of behavior.¹⁵

The sophomore biology major might see this example and object, saying that, in order for Paul to have a fighting chance at getting away from the tiger, he would have to get his adrenaline pumping through his body. Wanting to pet a 'nice ole pussycat' or perhaps being manically depressed and wanting to get eaten by a bigger one, would simply not do the trick.¹⁶ Thus, Plantinga's example fails to show how Paul might have a belief that would both aid him in surviving as well as be a belief that didn't correspond with the external reality.

The most common claims against Plantinga's argument, and possibly the most striking attempted defeaters heaved at Plantinga's seemingly arrogant claim, are those given by Jerry Fodor, Evan Fales, and Stephen Law. Their objections all center on the fact that natural selection would in fact choose mostly true beliefs, as true beliefs would be what are needed to give the greatest chance of survival. Though Stephen Law's main point is somewhat different than Fodor and Fales,¹⁷ and though Law has in mind the idea that certain neural structures just are certain beliefs, Law insists that ultimately, given certain neural structures combined with certain desires, a subject's faculties will likely produce a true belief that is necessary for survival and reproduction. Law formulates this objection into a scenario— let's call it the wandering nomad objection.¹⁸ Law asserts the following:

Consider a human residing in an arid environment. Suppose the only accessible water lies five miles to the south of him. Our human is desperately thirsty. My suggestion is that we can know a priori, just by reflecting on the matter, that if something is a belief that, solely in combination with a strong desire for water, typically results in such a human walking five miles to the south, then it is quite likely to be the belief that there's water five miles to the south (or the belief that there's reachable water thataway [pointing south] or whatever). It's highly unlikely to be the belief that there isn't any water five miles to the south (or isn't any reachable water thataway), or the belief that there's water five miles to the north (or thisaway [pointing north]), or the belief that there's a mountain of dung

¹⁵ Alvin Plantinga. *Warrant and Proper Function* (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1993), 225-226.

¹⁶ Is there any reason to believe that natural selection couldn't have made it so where depression pumps adrenaline and not wanting to become dinner triggers laughter? I am not sure why natural selection couldn't have gerrymandered differently, our emotions and desires, in regard to what biological reactions they trigger.

¹⁷ Stephen Law has in mind demonstrating how given that beliefs just are neural structures, that combined with the right desires, natural selection would likely produce true beliefs. This is because the neural structures that are selected are selected in virtue of what behavior will likely produce. This leads him to argue that beliefs that enable survival and reproduction are likely true beliefs. The response that I will give can grant his assumption that neural structures just are beliefs and that those beliefs are selected because of their relation to the necessary behavior that needs to be displayed.

¹⁸ Though Law has published recently on this topic, I have decided to use a slightly older copy of his work as it fits better with my purposes.

five miles to the south, or that inflation is high, or that Paris is the capital of Bolivia.¹⁹

Is Plantinga's attempted defeater then deflected? In *Naturalism Defeated: Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism*, Plantinga takes aim at the objection that a belief that enables survival likely correlates to true belief. Plantinga appears to raise a defeater deflector of his own by asserting that the answer is in gerrymandering the right properties. In what seems to be rarely responded to, Plantinga gives several examples of this. To Fales, Plantinga writes:

Consider the cognitive agents who think everything is created by God and whose predicates express only properties entailing being created by God. Then, by the naturalist's lights, their beliefs will be mainly false. Still, their beliefs can obviously be adaptive, that is, lead to appropriate action; all that's required is that they ascribe the right properties to the right objects. Thus, for example, if they ascribe the property of being a tiger creature to tigers, and the property of being a dangerous creature to tiger creatures, they will presumably act in appropriate ways.²⁰

Plantinga's point here is simple. For the naturalist, God doesn't exist, however, if all of a subject's beliefs are formed in such a way as to reflect the subject's affirmation that God created 'such and such,' it would follow that all such beliefs would be false. In demonstrating this more clearly, Plantinga gives the example of a tribe who predicates the property of witch to everything²¹ – meaning that what really is a fierce and dangerous tiger is given the properties of dangerous, fierce, and witch. Let F be the property of fierce and let D be the property of dangerous. Say Paul is now in a tribe that perceives and believes all sorts of things have the property of witch. Paul falsely sees a witch that has the properties F and D. Paul now perceives imminent danger, which helps meet the conditions to get his adrenaline pumping so that he can flee. As long as the right properties are in place (F&D), there seems to be no reason why the remaining content has to be true.

Perhaps one might reject this clarification, as though Paul may have one false belief, namely that something is a witch, he would still seem to have multiple true beliefs, namely something is F or something is D. In regard to predicating the property of witch to an *appletree* that is blooming, Jerry Fodor responds to Plantinga's approach as he states:

Still, much of what a creature believes in virtue of which it believes that *that appletree witch is blooming* (and in virtue of which the thought that *that*

¹⁹ Stephen Law. "Latest Version of EAAN Paper," Accessed March 3rd, 2014.
<http://stephenlaw.blogspot.com/2010/11/latest-version-eaan-paper-for-comments.html>

²⁰ Alvin Plantinga, "Reply to Beilby's Cohorts," in *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism*, edited by James Beilby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 265.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 253.

apple tree witch is blooming leads to behavioral successes) are perfectly straightforwardly true. For example: *that's an appletree; that's blooming; that's there; something is blooming; something is blooming there*, and so on indefinitely. The point is trivial enough: If a creature believes *that appletree witch is blooming*, then it presumably believes that *that's an appletree* and that *that's a witch* and that *that's blooming*. And two of these are true beliefs that the creature shares with us and that enter into explanation of its behavioral successes vis-à-vis blooming appletrees in much of the same way that the corresponding beliefs of ours enter into the explanation of our behavior success vis-à-vis blooming appletrees.²²

What Fodor objects to is that even if one's belief about a tiger includes it being created by God or one's belief about an appletree includes it being a witch, one would still have all sorts of true beliefs as these belief would entail that one also believes that something is fierce and dangerous (in case of the tiger) or that something is juicy and life sustaining (in case of the witch).

Plantinga responds to Fodor by stating the following:

These creatures form beliefs only of the form 'that P-witch has Q' for properties P and Q. (We may add, if we like, that they form general beliefs of the form *all (some) P-witches are Q*, together with propositions appropriately constructible out of these general and singular beliefs.) So the creature in question doesn't believe *that's an appletree* (though he may believe *that witch is an appletree*) or *that's blooming* (though he may believe *that witch is blooming*). Why couldn't there be creatures like that? Not, surely (as Fodor himself notes, because any such creatures would have to believe all the logical consequences (for all the obvious logical consequences) of what he believes; we ourselves do not do that.²³

Plantinga's argument comes down to the possibility that humans could have been constituted in such a way, where humans form beliefs in a phenomenologically simple way. It seems biologically possible that we could have evolved in such a way that we form beliefs without believing in any of the logical consequences that those beliefs would entail. Thus, to believe *that witchtree is blooming*, does not require one to believe that *that's a tree* or *that's blooming*. If this is possible, then it seems that one could form all sorts of different false beliefs that lead to survival and reproduction. If there are different beliefs that could be formed that would equally meet the Darwinian requirement, it would seem that one would have to remain

²² Jerry Fodor, "Is Science Biologically Possible?," in *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism*, edited by James Beilby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 34.

²³ Alvin Plantinga, "Reply to Beilby's Cohorts," in *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism.*, edited by James Beilby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 254.

inscrutable on the probability of R. This is so as one would lack a way to determine if their faculties produced beliefs that both meet the Darwinian requirement and reflect the external reality or if their beliefs just meet the Darwinian requirement. I will address this more in my own version of the argument. Now, having established the way in which Plantinga has responded to Fales and Fodor, I will apply his response to Law's scenario.

Instead of a man who needs to know the correct location of the water, let us change the content to needing a magical potion. Perhaps the nomad believes there was a demi-god who was jealous of humankind. Along with this, he believes that the demi-god cursed man and the creatures below man out of that jealousy. The curse now makes men's mouths shrivel up as the life is sucked slowly out of them. However, perhaps he also believes there is a good demi-god who countered this jealousy by giving man a special potion to sustain the life of man. The location of this magical potion is under the earth (where the demi-gods live of course) and can be seen in an abounding out flow from the earth. The nomad has several false beliefs (which for Law just are neural structures) in this revised scenario, but he is still being led by those false beliefs (for Law this would be different neural structures) to meet the Darwinian requirement.

One may think that this nice story helps explain how one could have many false beliefs (or perhaps for Law, different neural structures), but it does not explain why the nomad forms what seem to be necessarily true beliefs as to the location of the magical potion or the need to have the potion for survival. Thus, like Fodor, Law could tell Plantinga that the nomad still has several true beliefs (for Law he would have the 'right' neural structures). The proponent of this argument could respond in two different ways. First, the advocate of the EAAN could argue that if all of the beliefs that the nomad formed are formed in such a way that they are affirmed without reflection of any logical consequence (see discussion with Fales), then the nomad would still have all or mostly all false beliefs. The nomad would believe *that magical potion is over there*, or *I need that magical potion to survive*. He wouldn't need to believe in addition to those beliefs, that there was *something over there* or that *I need something to survive*.

Secondly, she might argue that the proponent of the EAAN can concede that Law has demonstrated that there might be some true propositions that must be believed (perhaps certain neural structures are needed) in order to survive and reproduce, but besides those beliefs that must be believed all other sorts of important beliefs could be false. Perhaps she would focus on how metaphysical beliefs don't secure such a tight connection to truth on N&E, and thus she would focus her attention on naturalism's problem with metaphysical beliefs.

It remains to be seen whether Plantinga's responses will be seen as cogent amongst the skeptics; I, however, would like to propose a new way of looking at Paul, the friendly homo sapien. Before looking at Paul again, I would like to take time to go through a brief overview of some evolutionary explanations for certain metaphysical beliefs. After surveying a few of these metaphysical views and their

relation to neo-Darwinian evolution, I will demonstrate how one might go about arguing for what I have suggested as the second response the proponent of the EAAN can give.

NATURALISM AND ITS CURRENT ENDEAVOR IN METAPHYSICS

I will now briefly discuss the different metaphysical beliefs that humans currently have that could have been a result of natural selection. By metaphysical belief(s), I mean a particular kind of proposition that is affirmed by a subject, that is often outside the spectrum of the empirical sciences and that is ultimately about what is real. On this subject, Paul Churchland asks and answers his own question, stating,

Is our basic conception of human cognition and agency yet another myth, moderately useful in the past perhaps, yet false at its edge or core? Will a proper theory of brain function present a significantly different or incompatible portrait of human nature...I am inclined toward positive answers to all these questions.²⁴ One wonders if they should trust their basic human experience at all, as Daniel Dennett best puts it when he states, "The human mind is something of a bag of tricks, cobbled together over the eons by the foresightless process of evolution by natural selection."²⁵

Attempts have been made to explain why the vast majority of the world's population has religious belief. Several naturalists such as E.O. Wilson and Michael Ruse have argued that natural selection could have produced belief in God for survival.²⁶ Kai Nielsen has continued this line of thinking by allowing for the possibility that personal dignity has a religious genesis.²⁷ Daniel Dennett seems to follow this line of thinking as he has stated the notion of rights as being, "Nonsense on stilts."²⁸

Of course, if human dignity did indeed have an evolutionary explanation, it would seem probable that ethics would as well. Mark Linville argues that if naturalistic Darwinian evolution were true, there would be Darwinian counterfactuals. That is, moral values and obligations could have been different, had the circumstances of evolution been different.²⁹ Linville reflects on the world that Darwin had envisioned by quoting:

²⁴ Paul Churchland. *The Engine of Reason, the Seat of the Soul: A Philosophical Journey into the Brain* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 19.

²⁵ Daniel Dennett. *Breaking the Spell: Religion As a Natural Phenomenon* (N.Y.: Viking, 2006), 107.

²⁶ Alvin Plantinga, "Reply to Beilby's Cohorts," in *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism.*, edited by James Beilby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 260.

²⁷ Kai Nielsen. *Ethics Without God* (London: Pemberton, 1973), 123-125.

²⁸ Daniel Dennett. *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 507.

²⁹ Mark Linville, "The Moral Argument," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, edited by William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 409.

Had the circumstances of human evolution been more like those of hive bees or Galapagos boobies or wolves, then the directives of conscience may have led us to judge and behave in ways that are quite foreign to our actual moral sense. Our wolfish philosophers defend justice as inequality, and their erudite reasonings take their cue from the fund of judgments bequeathed to them by their genes. Bees and boobies graced with intellect would judge that siblicide and infanticide are morally required under certain conditions.³⁰

In the same manner, Michael Ruse has stated, “Now you know that morality is an illusion put in place by your genes to make you a social cooperator.”³¹

Like moral values and obligations, free will is another aspect that is often given a natural selection explanation. In reference to free will, Patricia Churchland has stated, “It’s like the illusion with morality. We know that moral laws are not specified by the gods. We know that they are, first of all, neurobiologically based or evolutionarily based, and, secondly, culturally based, but it’s very useful for people to have the illusion that these are really true.”³² One of the leading philosophers of mind, John Searle, admits that, “Our conception of physical reality simply does not allow for [libertarian] radical freedom.”³³ Searle is not as certain with regard to why evolution would have given man the illusion of alternative possibilities, for he goes on to state, “For that reason, I believe, neither this discussion nor any other will ever convince us that our behavior is unfree.”³⁴

In continuing the tour of metaphysical proposals that have arrived in the form of biological adaption, Dennett suggests that the problem of how meaning could be determinate in a determined and Darwinian-fashioned universe, could be solved by denying any determinate meaning (a presupposition of reason) altogether. He states:

Something has to give. Either you must abandon meaning rationalism – the idea that you are, unlike the fledgling cuckoo, not only having access, but in having privileged access to your meanings--or you must abandon the naturalism that insists that you are, after all, just a product of natural selection, whose intentionality is thus derivative and hence potentially indeterminate.³⁵

³⁰ Ibid., 409.

³¹Michael Ruse. “*God is Dead. Long Live Morality*,” (accessed November 7, 2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2010/mar/15/morality-evolution-philosophy>

³² Patricia and Paul Churchland, “Patricia and Paul Churchland,” in *Conversations on Consciousness: What the Best Minds Think About the Brain, Free Will, and What It Means to Be Human*, edited by Susan Blackmore (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 62.

³³ John Searle. *Minds, Brains, and Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 98.

³⁴ Ibid., 98.

³⁵Daniel Dennett. *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 313.

Lastly, I would like to point out that according to Plantinga, Michael Rea argues that materialism implies there are no real objects but that things are really propertied goo.³⁶ It seems that regardless of Rea's answer of why this is, it is possible that there are really no such things as objects (at least how we currently understand physical objections), but that perhaps our system developed in a special way where we perceive physical objects so that we could better organize our surroundings.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL

With a few examples of how the truth of certain metaphysical beliefs *could* be related to natural selection, I would like to take a new look at Paul. However, this time, instead of focusing on the causal relationship with the tiger, I would like to propose looking at Paul and his perspective of this sticky situation in which he has found himself. Paul again encounters the tiger; now, what false beliefs could be produced in the event that would lead to a Darwinian result?

Paul lives in a world in which there are no objects – perhaps in reality following Michael Rea's line of thinking that there is only proportioned goo.³⁷ It is here, however, that our minds have evolved in such a way as to perceive objects in order for survival.³⁸ Paul finds himself eye-to-eye with a tiger and distressed about what he should do. He has a belief that his free will (though he is a determined being) has brought him here and his belief in free will brings some comfort as he goes up against the tiger. After thinking for a while, Paul decides it would be best if he were to scream for help just in case any nearby hunters are listening. Of course, his thoughts are indeterminate, just as a cuckoo bird's thoughts would be, but luckily for Paul, he does not know that. Paul then makes a good conscious and logical reflection about his situation and the moral obligation he feels to run up against the tiger so that his large family, (which he has built up for religious reasons) may get away. Paul attacks the tiger in order that his offspring may live and reproduce.

These beliefs would successfully deliver the correct Darwinian output, and yet these beliefs could have all been false. Thus, here is an example of how our cognitive faculties could be producing false metaphysical beliefs, but that even these false metaphysical beliefs could in fact be aiding survival. Natural selection could

³⁶ Alvin Plantinga, "Reply to Beilby's Cohorts," in *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism.*, edited by James Beilby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 261.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Perhaps even the metaphysical belief in other minds is really an illusion that natural selection has provided. Something like a Freudian theory could be true, in that in order to survive this cold and dark world, our mind has projected other minds to aid in our comforting.

have just as easily chosen different metaphysical views, as opposed to those we have now. Notice, I have not argued that natural selection did make it the case that we would believe in things like free will and moral obligations for the evolutionary reasons that were given. Nor have I claimed that the evolutionary explanations for the metaphysical beliefs that have been discussed above are orthodox views in the naturalist community. Rather, I am arguing that given N&E, these evolutionary explanations are just as likely as any other sort of explanation. This is because these beliefs (whether they are true or false) are such beliefs that would lead to the correct Darwinian result.

NATURAL SELECTION, THEISM, AND NATURALISM

Having established how different metaphysical views could aid in fulfilling the Darwinian requirement and yet not be true beliefs, I would like to specifically bring attention to the metaphysical beliefs in theism and naturalism. As mentioned above, there are certain evolutionary psychologists who affirm that our cognitive faculties produce belief in God as a means to achieve better survival. Perhaps believing in something like God is comforting, or perhaps a group believing in something higher than them, helps a group's unity and community. Now, if people came to believe that God existed in such a way and this belief aided in the Darwinian requirement, this belief would seem to be a candidate for what our cognitive systems *could* have produced.

This does not seem like the only candidate however, as perhaps naturalism could be a belief that natural selection *could* have given us as well. Under different circumstances, maybe humans who were inclined to have religious beliefs and form religious rituals in light of them, would have fought more against those in their own group for wanting to form different religious rituals. This might have brought division and if it would have continued, it would have continually decreased the population of a group. If a mutation began in some individuals (or perhaps some individuals never were naturally inclined to accept theistic belief) that led to them naturally believing in naturalism, it would have allowed the predisposed naturalist to have a better chance to meet the Darwinian requirement than the predisposed theist who were in continual schism.

Thus, if both believing in theism and believing in naturalism are genuine possibilities that natural selection could have selected, it would appear that there would be no way to know which belief is true. Both of these beliefs could have aided in meeting the Darwinian requirement and both would recognize certain evidences as supporting their views. When the Darwinian requirement could be met by two different conflicting views, I fail to see how one could know *if their cognitive faculties are aimed at* producing true metaphysical beliefs or if one's metaphysical

beliefs have been produced and kept merely for the purposes of meeting the Darwinian requirement.³⁹

XX Pills and Undercutting Defeaters

Perhaps one may now be tempted to run to science and reason (S&R) and argue that the empirical sciences can come to the rescue. Maybe, left without S&R, we would just have to work from unreliable intuitions that have been hardwired to believe a certain way. But with S&R, one can verify in an objective way, how the world really is. We can then have tangible reasons for believing that free will is bunk or that there really are such things as objects.

I think this sort of thinking however, misses the point entirely. On this view, humans would likely have beliefs about their justification which would stem from a particular framework that would be the result of natural selection. This framework would be made up of impulses, intuitions, background beliefs, and moral values, which would all be subjected to particular Darwinian factors that could have easily not have actualized under different circumstances. This framework would then be used to interpret and analyze all of the evidence for the rationality of theism.

I think a clear example of this can be seen from the problem of evil. Thomas Crisp has argued that given unguided evolution, the chances of human beings having accurate high level metaphysical beliefs such as beliefs about justifying reasons for why God would permit evil, would be low.⁴⁰ In addition to this, given that the moral Darwinian counterfactuals could have been different; would one really be in a position to judge objectively what is evil? As mentioned earlier, we could have evolved under different circumstances where all sorts of other actions could have been perceived as evil. Thus, even if one wanted to use reason (perhaps using the argument from evil) to see if one's faculties were truth aimed in regard to their belief about theism, it would be impossible to use such means in a way that would bring about objective probability.

This case would then seem similar to the man who takes the XX pill. This is the scenario where a man takes the XX pill, (which has a high chance of making one's cognitive faculties no longer reliable) and becomes convinced that he took the XX pill. Even if the man looked around and it appeared to him that nothing had changed, it wouldn't appear that he would have warrant for his belief that R. This is so; even if it was the case that he did empirical experiments or used reason to try to prove that his cognitive faculties were in fact reliable. I think this is analogous to a subject who, when seeing there is reason to believe his cognitive faculties could have

³⁹ In addition to these possibilities, perhaps given the right external factors, we could have been biologically constituted in such a way that we would naturally believe in god or gods, but then slowly lose that belief for belief in naturalism. Similarly, the opposite of this seems true as well. The point is, on N&E, there is no way of telling if a belief came about from faculties aimed at truth or if the belief is just accepted as the result of the fulfillment of the Darwinian requirement.

⁴⁰ Thomas Crisp, "An Evolutionary Argument from Evil," in *Evidence and Religious Belief*, edited by Kelly James Clark and Raymond Van Arragon (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2011).

equally produced other conflicting beliefs, still tries to prove that those faculties are truth conducive. This is because his framework, in which he reasons from, is affected by Darwinian factors that could have easily been different. There could have been all sorts of different sets of impulses, intuitions, background beliefs, and moral values. He would lack reason to believe that his particular framework is a framework aimed at truth and is unaffected by the Darwinian dilemma. Thus, in both cases, there would be undercutting defeaters.

THE EVOLUTIONARY ARGUMENT AGAINST METAPHYSICAL BELIEFS

It is in virtue of this that I now propose a new argument within the family of Plantinga's argument. Let N be naturalism and let E stand for evolution.

- (1) Given N&E, one's metaphysical beliefs are produced from cognitive faculties that are not directly aimed towards producing true beliefs but are produced from faculties aimed at meeting the Darwinian requirement of survival and reproduction.
- (2) Given (1), all of our metaphysical beliefs are either the direct result of being produced to meet the Darwinian requirement or they are evolutionary by-products (spandrels) of beliefs that do.
- (3) Given (1) and (2), it seems possible that under different circumstances, our evolutionary makeup could have made it to where we would have believed different metaphysical beliefs.
- (4) (3) would include all metaphysical beliefs besides those metaphysical beliefs that would be required to be believed in order to meet the Darwinian requirement.
- (5) Given (3) and (4), if one's cognitive system could have produced different metaphysical beliefs, and if upon reflection one lacked a reason for giving preference to certain metaphysical beliefs over others, one would lack a way of knowing which metaphysical beliefs were true.
- (6) If one lacked a way of knowing which metaphysical beliefs were true, then one would have a defeater for those metaphysical beliefs.
- (7) Naturalism is a metaphysical belief that given (5) and (6), one would lack a way of knowing if it were true.
- (8) Therefore, given N&E, one has a defeater for the belief in naturalism.

It appears that (1) and (2) would be espoused by anyone who adheres to N&E; thus I suspect that these premises would not be controversial. However, the main thrust of the argument would be with regard to (3) and (7). If the above examples are suffice to demonstrate its plausibility, at least in showing that (3) and (7) are more plausible than their negation, then I think the argument is a good one and can contribute to the literature that pertains to the evolutionary argument against naturalism.

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