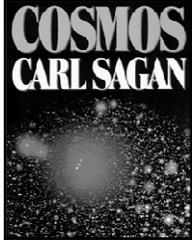


Worldview Apologetics

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Week 3: Naturalism

Naturalism: The Basic Idea

The natural universe is all there is.



“The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be.”
Carl Sagan

Why Naturalism?

- Scientism
 - All knowledge comes through science
- Empiricism
 - All knowledge comes through sense experience
- Cultural shifts: Theism → Deism → Atheism
- Naturalism is most consistent form of atheism

Naturalism: Theology

- Only the natural universe exists
 - Everything can be explained scientifically
 - Everything reduces to physics and chemistry
- There are no supernatural beings
 - So there is no God (as the Bible describes)
 - So there are no angels, demons, souls, etc.
- The natural universe came from nothing
- The natural universe will fizzle out in the end

Naturalism: Anthropology

- We are basically smart apes who wear clothes
- We are purely physical beings (no souls)
- We are the products of undirected evolution
 - We're just another form of animal life
 - We're only here because the universe got lucky
 - There is no objective meaning to human life
- We are by nature neither good nor bad
- There is no life after (physical) death

Naturalism: Knowledge

- Scientific knowledge is the best knowledge
 - All knowledge must be based on sense experience
- Science can tell us whatever we need to know
 - Everything can be explained scientifically
- Scientific authority is the highest authority
 - Scientists are the modern priests and prophets
- There is no supernatural revelation
- Religious claims are superstitious myths

Naturalism: Ethics

- There is no objective good/evil or right/wrong
- There is no objective moral goal or purpose
- Two options for understanding morality:
 - it's *illusory* – an evolved survival mechanism
 - it's *subjective* – based on individual pleasure/pain
- We should be good because...
 - It will promote our survival
 - It will give us personal pleasure
- There is no ultimate accountability

Naturalism: Salvation

- There is no real problem (objectively speaking)
- Our most serious problem is...
 - Not enough pleasure and too much pain
 - The threat of extinction (humans? planet?)
- Science is the solution to the problem
 - Science can make our lives more pleasurable
 - Science can help us save ourselves and the planet
 - Science mustn't be held back by religion/tradition

Evaluating Naturalism

Theoretical Tools:

- Tool #1: Consistency
- Tool #2: Explanation
- Tool #3: Experience
- Tool #4: Coherence

Practical Tools:

- Tool #5: Conscience
- Tool #6: 'Livability'
- Tool #7: Fulfillment
- Tool #8: Hope



Tool #2: Explanation

- Why does the natural universe exist at all?
 - After all, it didn't have to exist!
- Christian worldview:
 - God has the power to bring things into existence
 - God freely chose to create the universe
- Naturalist worldview:
 - No explanation is possible in principle!
 - Nothing beyond the universe that could explain it

Tool #4: Coherence

- What assumptions does science depend on?
 - The uniformity of nature in time and space
- Christian worldview:
 - God is orderly and reliable
 - God created and sustains the natural universe
- Naturalist worldview:
 - The universe has no orderly mind behind it
 - No way of knowing whether nature is uniform

Tool #5: Conscience

- Why do we feel guilty when we do wrong?
 - We take for granted our moral responsibility
- Christian worldview:
 - God is the source of absolute moral standards
 - God holds us responsible for our free choices
- Naturalist worldview:
 - Humans are just "meat machines"
 - No ultimate moral standards or accountability

Tool #7: Fulfillment

- Do our lives and actions have any value?
 - Is it possible for us to make meaningful choices?
 - Is it possible for us to make this a better world?

"There is only one really serious philosophical question, and that is suicide. Deciding whether or not life is worth living is to answer the fundamental question in philosophy. All other questions follow from that."

Albert Camus

Tool #7: Fulfillment

"In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference."

Richard Dawkins

Tool #7: Fulfillment

