

Beliefs behind Beliefs

Examining Three Common Worldviews from a Christian Perspective

I reside in Houston, Texas and for a while I lived in an area of the city called Memorial. Memorial is a neighborhood with many large, million dollar houses that are home to some of the city's top executives. The neighborhood is connected to downtown Houston where a good number of Memorial's residents work, but in all my years of living in Memorial, I must say that I saw very few of the residents ever take the bus. Why is that? People suggest that it is because the area's residents value independence, efficiency of time, or the status that comes with driving a luxury car. These reasons may well be true, but I doubt that each morning when Memorial residents take their own vehicle instead of the bus that any of those reasons ever cross their mind. It's not that those reasons are not in play; it's just that if they are there, they are so buried in the mind that they never come to the surface as considerations. In fact, I would suggest that Memorial residents rarely if ever wrestle over the decision to take the bus or a private car, because it has already been made by a host of underlying assumptions or perspectives, most of which are so deeply rooted that they are unconscious to those who hold them.

While we may not all share the same underlying assumptions and perspectives as people in Memorial whatever they may be, few would disagree with the idea that each of us holds a set of deep-rooted beliefs that shape the way we view the world and make decisions. These beliefs are often referred to as a person's *worldview*, and they impact the decisions we make regarding the transportation we take, the jobs we pursue, and the candidates we elect. More importantly they provide answers to the larger questions of life—questions like:

- When it comes to the natural and supernatural, what is real and how do we know it is real?
- What are humanity's greatest problems and how should they be solved?
- When it comes to human behavior, is there such a thing as right and wrong, and, if so, how can we determine what is right and wrong?

Although no two people hold precisely the same worldview, most people living in the West have a

worldview that falls into one of three camps: naturalism, postmodernism, or theism.¹ Understanding how people with these respective worldviews answer questions like those posed above is important if we are to adequately understand why people think and behave the way they do. To that end, this article has two aims. First, it is my aim to explain naturalism, postmodernism, and theism so that a reader might have a basic grasp of each. Secondly, I will present contributions and shortcomings of each worldview and in doing so help the thoughtful Christian understand how to respond to those who hold a worldview different than their own.

Naturalism

The Natural and the Supernatural

If someone were to ask you what is real and what is not, you might answer in this way, "The tree in my front yard is real, but the three-headed goblin I saw in the movie last night is not." Naturalists would concur with your answer because naturalism is the belief that what is real is what is found in nature. Nature includes all of the elements you would find on the periodic table of elements in science class and everything those elements combine to make, from water to air and from living creatures to far away planets. It also includes the laws that govern these elements, such as gravity or the Second Law of Thermodynamics. At first glance, naturalism may seem to be a worldview that most would hold. It seems very reasonable to believe that nature and the laws that govern nature are real. But what is important to understand is that for the naturalist, *nature is all there is*. There is nothing else that can be said to be real. There is no supernatural world. There is no God.

Considering that naturalism states that nature is all there is to reality, it should come as no surprise that the naturalist's means of knowing what is real is generally limited to science. It is science that seeks to find out what natural elements make up the galaxy, the earth we live on, and all the living things that find themselves on the earth (or anywhere else for that

¹ There are certainly other worldviews, such as animism or polytheism, but as postmodernism, naturalism, and theism are the most widely held worldviews in the West, they are addressed here.

matter). It is science that hopes to discover the laws that govern everything from planetary motion to biological development. Accordingly, science is the only reliable tool that can tell us anything about what is real. Wilfred Sellars, an American philosopher and naturalist, echoed this sentiment when he wrote, "In the dimension of describing and explaining the world, science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not."²

Humanity's Greatest Problems

Disease, natural disaster, overpopulation, food shortages, and tainted water would probably top the list of the greatest problems facing humanity for the naturalist. For those who see humans as nothing more than complex combinations of matter, it makes sense that the greatest problems of humanity are centered on what keeps human matter from functioning well. It also makes sense that science, which seeks to understand nature, would be the preeminent tool used to identify and alleviate these problems.

In saying this, it should be noted that the obvious natural enemies of humanity like disease and hunger are not the only problems in which naturalists are interested. Those who cause problems like bullying others or stealing from a neighbor need to be addressed as well. Rather than turning to spiritual reasons or calling for people to live up to ancient moral codes to fix these disruptive behaviors, the naturalist looks to science to figure out how to make humans respond better. For example, soon after the 1999 Columbine tragedy in which two high school students killed twelve of their fellow students and one teacher, *Newsweek* magazine ran a cover article titled, "Why the Young Kill?" that examined biological and sociological factors as the cause of teen violence. In other words, from the perspective of the article's authors, science is the means of understanding how our bodies work and of preventing tragedies like Columbine.³

Right & Wrong

When it comes to how we should live, naturalists do not appeal to any religious code or God-ordained ethic. As they do not believe in the supernatural, people are not beholden to any moral behavior based on a holy book or some purported supernatural

source. For the naturalist, there are simply no transcendent morals that tell us what is right and wrong.

Naturalism argues that the moral codes we have today are just part of our evolutionary development. People who did not kill each other (because their DNA was bent less towards killing) were more likely to survive than those with the killer instinct, says the naturalist.⁴ Furthermore, because morals are just an evolutionary development for the naturalist, they are subject to change and may change even in our day.

Naturalism: A Thoughtful Christian's Response

Christians are often quick to address the shortcomings of worldviews that are different from their own, but I believe it is valuable to first consider positive contributions a worldview might offer. Naturalism has such contributions and a thoughtful Christian ought to recognize them.

First, naturalism has a high view of reason and science in the attainment of knowledge, both of which are not things the Christian should fear or ignore. The Bible's very existence assumes the importance of reason by its admonition that people read it and follow its instructions. Likewise, there are several biblical passages where thorough investigation of truth is positively presented,⁵ meaning that the investigative characteristics of modern science are certainly not discouraged.

Secondly, naturalism takes seriously many problems that face humanity such as disease or natural disaster. This too is a positive contribution of naturalism and is not out of line with Scripture's concern for the sick or those impacted by famine and other natural disasters. The Christian can agree with the naturalist when it comes to the use of reason and science in confronting the physical hardships that are experienced in a fallen world.

Despite these positive elements, however, naturalism has several critical shortcomings. The most obvious shortcoming is that God is left entirely out of the picture. But beyond this glaring deficiency from the Christian's perspective, there are some good philosophical reasons for rejecting naturalism.

First, there is a problem with the claim that knowledge can only be achieved through science. This is simply not a claim that any method of science can substantiate. If naturalism states that science is

² Wilfred Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality* (The Humanities Press: New York, 1963), 173.

³ Sharon Begley, Adam Rogers, Pat Wingert and Thomas Hayden, "Why the Young Kill." *Newsweek* 133, no. 18 (May 3, 1999): 32-35.

⁴ See Wright, Robert, *The Moral Animal: Why We Are the Way We Are: The New Science of Evolutionary Psychology* (Vintage, 1995) for a look at how naturalists explain morality as an evolutionary adaptation.

⁵ Luke 1:1-4; 20:26-27; 1 Thes 5:21; 2 Pet 1:16-18

the source of all knowledge, then one might ask how the naturalist arrived at such certainty when the proposition “science is the only reliable source of knowledge” is one that cannot be substantiated using scientific experimentation. Furthermore, it makes little sense to discount any possible knowledge of the supernatural based on a tool—the scientific method—that is specifically designed to investigate the natural. That would be like a beachcomber declaring the absence of oil under the sand because his *metal* detector did not reveal the existence of oil!

Third, although one applauds the use of reason and science, there is something suspect about the reason upon which naturalists rely. Naturalists believe that all of life evolved from the basic elements without divine intervention. This would mean that the brain we have today and the thoughts and reason that flow from it are in a passing evolutionary state. Indeed for naturalists, reason is something that can be expected to change as humans evolve and is therefore not a static and reliable means for processing what is real. If this is the case, one might wonder how we can have any confidence in the rationale that is being generated from an ever evolving brain, including the rationale that is used to support naturalism itself.

Fourth, naturalism requires that certain rational conclusions be considered as nothing more than illusions. For example, according to naturalism humans do not have free choice and do not love (unless love is defined only as a chemical reaction in the brain); such “states” are simply the result of pre-determined biological matter responding to the environment. From my perspective, this does not match up with what people rationally observe. When I look at my process of deliberation and decision-making, there is no sense that I am being coerced to the point that I cannot freely act. The burden of proof lies on the naturalist to prove that this sense (and that of nearly of humanity) is mistaken. Or consider further that naturalists believe that our highly ordered universe and the intricacies of biology happened by chance and that its look of design is but an illusion. Is such a conclusion a rational deduction based on observation? If a person sees a beautifully contoured BMW parked outside his house, is it not unreasonable to conclude that the appearance of its design is merely an illusion? The naturalist must argue it is not unreasonable and I would disagree with them.

Postmodernism⁶

The Natural and the Supernatural

When it comes to the natural and supernatural and how we know what is real, postmodernism addresses these issues in a fundamentally different way than naturalism. Naturalism is quite sure about what is real and about the means of understanding what is real. Postmodernism, on the other hand, says that we cannot know what is real. We cannot know if nature is all there is. We cannot know if science provides us any real answers. We cannot know if a religion is right.

Postmodernism comes to this position because of the purported effect culture is said to have on individuals. We are brought up in different cultures that tell us that certain things are true and certain things are not, and as a result we are hopelessly biased in our pursuit of truth. People in the West often think of science as being an objective source of knowledge, but a postmodern person would say that Western naturalistic means of discovering what is real are no more legitimate than any other means. Thus, when women in a tribal culture are taught lessons on hygiene and are given evidence that diseases can be prevented through simple acts like the washing of hands, the postmodernist declares that these same women are still justified in believing that disease is prevented by the appeasing of local spirits. In the end, it is said that each culture (and even each individual) has its own truth that is no more or less valid than any other.

Humanity's Greatest Problems

As we have seen, postmodernists believe that we are trapped in our perspective of the world by the cultural influences around us and as a result objectivity about universal truth is impossible. It follows then that they would also believe that the world is adversely affected when people make claims of objectivity and try to forward a truth as being universal. Take, for example, the efforts of the Nazis to support their case that the Arian race was superior to all others. In making this claim, Nazis appealed to what they considered objective reasons for their

⁶One of the first questions asked about the postmodern worldview is: why is it called postmodernism? The answer to this question comes through an understanding of modernism. Modernism forwards, among other things, the idea that we can attain certainty about knowledge and use that knowledge to create a better world. Because postmodernists reject the certainty espoused by modernity, they consider themselves *post-modern*.

conclusions. Asserting objectivity and developing a universal truth is where the Nazis went wrong, believes the postmodern person.

Postmodernists believe that all claims of universal truth are little more than power moves by the leaders of a cultural group. Using again the example of the Nazis, it is not difficult to see that the claim of Arian supremacy was a power move not only against the Jewish people, but also a power tool on the part of the Nazi leaders to rally Germans to the Nazi cause. Postmodernism would say that those who argue that Christianity or Islam, capitalism or communism, or marriage or free love is the objectively right path are not only wrong in making their case, but are only doing so as a means of exercising control over others.

From the perspective of postmodernism, perhaps the greatest problem of humanity is intolerance toward other cultures and beliefs. If we would all quit trying to convince others that we are right about truth, peaceful coexistence would ensue and the world would be a better place to live in. Perhaps you have heard people trumpeting the importance of tolerance at your workplace or school. Such a call for tolerance is at the center of postmodernism's solution to the main struggles that are said to plague humanity.

Right & Wrong

By now you should understand clearly that postmodernists believe there is no universal truth, at least none that can be known. So when it comes to how a person should live or what is right and wrong, the postmodern person is unable to point to any transcendent ideal which people should follow. Instead the postmodern person says that each culture constructs its own theory of what is right and wrong, and while right and wrong can be identified within a cultural context, it can never be extended beyond it.

Although postmodernists are quite strong in their declaration that there are no universal rights and wrongs, they nonetheless seem to say that there are three very wrong things that someone can do. It is wrong to claim that one is objectively neutral. It is wrong to declare universal truth. And it is wrong to be intolerant of what other people believe.

Postmodernism: A Thoughtful Christian's Response

The main concern for Christians when it comes to postmodernism is its declaration that absolute knowledge or truth is something that we cannot attain. Such a belief means that Christianity is simply a "truth" for those who have been influenced by

Christian culture and nothing more. These conclusions of postmodernism are at odds with Scripture's claim that we can know what is true. Take, for example, the words written by the Apostle Paul to his younger co-worker Timothy:

...I urge that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanks be offered on behalf of all people...Such prayer for all is good and welcomed before God our Savior, since *he wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim 2:1-4, italics added).

According to this passage, God is presented as one who wants all people to come to the knowledge of the truth. From Paul's perspective, the message of Christ is not only knowledge for the Christian subset; it is for all people. This is certainly not consistent with postmodern thinking and should give Christians reason to be suspicious regarding postmodernism.

Before we explore further reasons why postmodernism should be challenged, it is helpful to recognize that postmodernism addresses some important issues. First, postmodernism acknowledges that people can be biased by their cultural upbringing. While Christians may not agree that culture completely blinds us from truth, we should admit that our cultural biases can skew our perception unduly. This said, Christians should be careful that the truth they declare is not merely a cultural expression of faith, but is based on what the Bible says is true for people of all cultures.

Secondly, postmodernism recognizes that people use "truth" to gain and maintain power over others. There are plenty of examples of this occurring, including: Marxist communism, the caste system of Hinduism, or the call for segregation in the southern United States. The Bible itself illustrates Pharisees using "truth" in an effort to maintain their power (Matt 23:2-4; 26:62-68; Mark 7:1-13). Since the Christian should agree that declarations of "truth" can be misused for personal gain, it is important that any truth they forward is not for the sake of personal power, but for the sake of consistency with the work and word of God.

Thirdly, postmodernism's celebration of multiple truths means that postmodernists are generally very good at esteeming the world's many cultures, sometimes even more so than Christians. While the Christian may not agree with the idea that there are many truths, he can take a lesson from the postmodern playbook and learn to appreciate people

from many different backgrounds. Not everything in every culture is worthy of praise, but God did make the nations (Gen 11) and Christians, like postmodernists, can appreciate the mosaic of humanity.

Now back to postmodernism's shortcomings. The greatest philosophical weakness of the postmodern worldview is its logical inconsistency. Postmodernism says that we cannot know universal truth. In making this claim, however, postmodernists are declaring universal truth. This kind of position is self-defeating. At the very best, the logically consistent postmodernists can only declare "I don't know what is true. I don't even know if postmodernism is true." Of course, such a position does not give one much reason to trust in postmodernism in the first place.

Considering that postmodernism is logically self-defeating, it is not surprising that postmodernists have a difficult time living by its tenets in their day to day lives. In other words, while postmodernists like to make all "truth" relative, they often behave as if at least some things are really true. For example, suppose your postmodern friend loves pets. Tell her that your friends like to complete experiments on animals (such as holding puppies under water to see how long they take to drown) and in no time at all she will be sure to tell you that you are wrong in what you are doing. You might respond by saying, "But I have a different truth about the treatment of animals and my truth is as valid as yours." More than likely your postmodern friend will not let you off the hook, because even though she says that there are no universal truths, she has a difficult time acting as if that is true.

Another critique of postmodernism is that it has great difficulty in supporting reform within a culture. Postmodernism says that we cannot appeal to universal truths like justice or compassion or human dignity to encourage reformation, so how is it that one brings about change within a culture? Consider Martin Luther King, Jr. and his efforts to reform the discriminatory practices of the United States. Clearly, his message was in the minority in the South. If the South was allowed to have its own truth, then lawmakers who represented the majority would have been right in jailing King and attacking his supporters. King, however, believed that there was a universal truth regarding human dignity to which he could call people, and because he did many were ultimately drawn to that truth.

A final critique of postmodernism is that its mantra of tolerance is not quite as tolerant as it sounds. As mentioned earlier, postmodernists want

everyone to peacefully co-exist. It is hard to understand, however, how postmodernism promotes peace when it tells those who believe in universal truth (whether they be Muslims or Christians or even naturalists) that they are wrong. Imagine a postmodernist heading to the Middle East and telling a group of Shiite Muslims that what they believe is just a product of culture and that Islam does not represent anything that is transcendently true. Such a stance would contribute little to peaceful co-existence.

Theism

Naturalism and postmodernism are certainly prevalent in Western culture and most likely as you read through the descriptions above people went through your mind that embrace one of those two worldviews. Theism, however, has the deepest roots in the West and is still very much alive. It is the worldview that is held by practicing Christians, Jews and Muslims. As with naturalism and postmodernism, we shall define theism and then discuss some criticisms and strengths.

The Natural and the Supernatural

Naturalism says that reality is made up of matter only and postmodernism says that "reality" is determined by culture and is relative. Theism, on the other hand, says that reality is made up of both the material and the immaterial. Further, it argues that the two interact with one another and truth about both can be known. More specifically, theists believe that apart from humans there is a supreme supernatural being ("God") who interacts with humanity in history. They also believe that humans are made of both biological material and an immaterial soul.

In regards to knowledge, theists believe that an understanding of reality can be acquired through reason (like naturalists) and can be transmitted through culture (like postmodernists), but theists also believe that knowledge can come from divine revelation. This revelation may be attained through a variety of means including dreams and visitations, but perhaps most importantly it is received through written revelation. For the Jew this written revelation is the Old Testament; for the Christian, this written revelation is the complete Bible; and for the Muslim, this written revelation is the Qur'an. Because the theist recognizes there are limits to human reasoning and that cultural biases do exist, greatest weight for the theist is always given to divine revelation. In the

end theists believe that any accurate assessment of reality comes about because of God. It comes about through the reason he has granted, the cultures which have been shaped by his ways, or the divine revelation which he made directly accessible.

Humanity's Greatest Problems

Theists recognize, as do naturalists, that there are great natural challenges for humanity. There are diseases, environmental factors, and physical quality of life issues that are problems for peoples of all races, gender, and socio-economic status. Theists also recognize, as do postmodernists, that there are challenges associated with humanity's culturally-impacted perspective as well as with those who are intolerant of others who hold different beliefs. But theists do not see these concerns as the greatest problems for humanity. The fundamental human problem for the theist is how people respond to God, his design for the world, and his pattern for a flourishing life.

Theists hold that God is the Supreme Being in the cosmos and is worthy of worship and obedience. They also hold that God has created the world and has the best understanding of how people should live. When humans choose not to recognize God as the rightful ruler and do not live in the way that he has revealed we should live, people do not get along well with another, fall prey to addictions, and take pathways that are destructive to both themselves and others. For example, a theist would say that when a husband regularly beats his wife he does not ultimately do so because his DNA makes him do so or because of cultural influences, but rather because he has not responded rightly to God's ways.

Another problem for humanity from a theistic perspective is the influence of evil supernatural powers in the world. While some theists only believe in good supernatural forces, many still hold to the traditional position that there are also evil supernatural beings (as attested to in both the Old and New Testaments as well as in the Qur'an). These evil beings, while not holding complete sway over humanity, can influence people away from God and cause considerable hardship.

Finally, when considering the problems facing humanity, many theists believe that a person's rejection of God and his ways, as encouraged by supernatural evil powers, not only creates problems in the present but also impacts the individual's eternal destiny. Notice the following words by Jesus in the book of Matthew as well as those recorded by Mohammed in the Qur'an:

This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt 13:49-50)

If they who are bent on evildoing could but see -- as see they will when they are made to suffer -- that all might belong to God alone, and that God is severe in punishment! (Sura 2:165b)

From both sources we see that theists believe that an eternal judgment of the wicked is coming. What is the solution to this terrible plight? For many theists, salvation is achieved through a sincere pursuit of good works in accordance with God's revealed way. For these theists, if a woman's good acts outweigh her bad and she is sincere in her effort to live right before God, she will escape damnation at death. For the Christian theist, however, salvation cannot be achieved through self-effort. Humanity has more than proven that it is incapable of living up to God's standard. What humanity needs, says the Christian theist, is the undeserved forgiveness of God made possible through Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty by his death for our rebellious ways. With this in mind, the Christian theist contends that if we respond to Jesus by acknowledging that his sacrifice on our behalf and his authority over our lives is the only hope, then we are granted the privilege of living with God forever.

Right & Wrong

For both naturalism and postmodernism there are no universal or time-enduring morals. People may choose to enforce or encourage certain types of behavior because they help us physically or because they help people within our culture operate in some cohesive manner, but for these two worldviews there are no universal moral truths. As you might imagine, this is not the stance of theists. Instead they declare that there is a God who has the right to declare what is right and wrong and it is our responsibility to live out what is right in his eyes.

Most theists will point to certain actions as being against the will of God, such as murder or adultery. But beyond specific dos or don'ts, Christian theists point to the character of God in Scripture as being prescriptive for human behavior. For example, on a number of occasions in the Bible, God describes himself as "the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,

maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet, he does not leave the guilty unpunished..." (cf. Exo 34:6-7). As those under God's rule, it follows then that the Christian theist believes we are to mirror such characteristics.

Theism: A Thoughtful Christian's Response

In the previous two sections, I have provided a critique of the contributions and shortcomings of naturalism and postmodernism from a Christian perspective. In this section, I will respond to common criticisms leveled against theism as well as provide positive reasons for preferring theism (and particularly Christian theism) over the other two worldviews.

A response to the criticisms of theism. It is not uncommon for people to argue that theism ignores modern science and posits God as the creator when the universe can be explained to exist by natural forces. Two responses can be given to this assertion. First, theism does not ignore modern science. It embraces the vast majority of its findings, many of which have been made through the centuries by Christian scientists. Secondly, what theism rejects about science is the idea that it is the only source of truth and the idea that the universe could have only come from naturalistic processes. Both of these latter positions are not rooted in science, but in a naturalistic worldview and are to be rejected by Christians.

One of the most common questions for theists concerns the presence of evil in the world. Non-theists wonder how a good and omnipotent God can allow the kinds of evil that we see in the world. This question is not easy for Christians to answer, but I find the most tenable response to be that the character of God's goodness means he does not force his creation to be good. I may be a good father to my children and even might have the physical dominance to force my children to be good. But in forcing such goodness, I would at that point no longer be acting out of goodness myself. The same can be said to be true for God. God is good and is willing to shower his goodness upon us, but he is not willing as the good father of his creation to force humans to be good. This, of course, then opens the possibility for evil in our world.

A third common complaint of theism is that theists cannot prove whose revelation of God is the one to believe as truth. In other words, non-theists ask: if theism is true, how can one substantiate whether the Old Testament (Jews), the whole Bible (Christians), or the Qur'an (Muslims) is God's

revelation? A Christian may answer this in a number of ways. First, the Christian recognizes that God is able to personally substantiate which of the purported revelations is true. He certainly did that by the events surrounding the introduction of the Old Testament Law and by the miraculous works that accompanied the words of Christ. Second, the Christian theist may respond by saying that the revelation from God that can be trusted is the one that is corroborated by history. Since there is substantial extra-biblical evidence for the veracity of the historical events in both the Old and New Testament⁷ (something that is sorely missing in other religious holy books) there is good reason to consider that the Bible is indeed the revelation of God. Third, the Christian theist believes that obedience to the teaching of Scripture brings about confirmation that it is true. Jesus said so much in answering whether his teaching was from God: "...My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (John 7:16-17).

Positive reasons for preferring theism. Beyond the defense of charges against theism, the theist is able to offer up several positive strengths of this worldview. One of the great strengths of theism relative to naturalism and postmodernism is that reason itself is not self-defeating in the theistic worldview. Reason cannot be trusted in either of the other two worldviews because it is either a passing evolutionary state or a temporal cultural construction. Theism, on the other hand, posits reason as a God-given gift, which makes it rational for one to believe in its conclusions.

A second strength is that theism fits nicely with the design that we see in the world. Whereas naturalism has to explain away "apparent design," theism easily explains the appearance of design by the existence of an intelligent designer. By pointing to an intelligent designer, theists are not only relying on divine revelation ("The Bible tells me so"), they are also presenting a rational verdict on the vast appearance of design found in the cosmos from DNA coding to the constants that govern the universe.⁸

⁷ To find out more about such extra-biblical evidence for the historicity of Scripture, see *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel and *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell.

⁸ For more on how the appearance of design points to an intelligent creator, see *The Case for a Creator* by Lee Strobel and *Intelligent Design: Uncensored* by William A. Dembski and Jonathan Witt.

Third, unlike postmodernism, theism allows for individuals and cultures to be reformed without the use of power or environmental manipulation. As mentioned earlier, postmodernism provides no basis for social reformation and naturalism gives no grounds for the dignity of human life. Theism, however, allows people to draw on transcendent God-given values like justice and mercy to anchor protests against those who would seek to belittle and harm any segment of humanity.

Fourth, theism provides a basis for morality, love, and beauty as most people think of such things. If morals, love, and beauty are just chemical reactions in our brain (as the naturalist proposes) or simply cultural concoctions (as the postmodernist argues), then when we say we love a child, that a painting is beautiful, or that a rapist is bad, we are only saying that we are having a chemical reaction or cultural response that we cannot control towards the object in question. That is hardly the reality by which people intuitively live.

Finally, theism provides an attainable and straightforward solution to the problem of evil and destruction in the world that is available to people in every culture regardless of their access to scientific information. This is especially true of Christian theism, where people in every age and location can

turn to God and receive his mercy and grace as well as find the power and direction to live a more virtuous life. In addition, the Christian theist can have hope in the midst of pain and suffering knowing that a balance of justice will be attained in the life to come.

Conclusion

This brief explanation and critique of naturalism, postmodernism, and theism is sufficient to recognize that each is a fundamentally different way of viewing the world. It is not difficult to see that these different worldviews can and do substantially impact the way people both think and behave. While there are positive aspects to naturalism and postmodernism, as rational worldviews, I believe they are less supportable and satisfying than a theistic worldview. Many Christians believe that people must simply take Christianity by faith, but this faith need not be devoid of reason. There are good reasons to reject naturalism and postmodernism and there are good reasons to embrace theism.

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