

Jeff Lowder's Closing Statement

Well, I've really enjoyed this debate!

1. *The Simplicity of Naturalism*

First, simplicity. He tries to make Christian theism appear as modest as naturalism by listing six statements *entailed by* naturalism, but that isn't how modesty works because we can define an *infinite* number of entailments for *any* hypothesis. Rather, naturalism is narrower in scope than Christian theism. Furthermore, since the evidence in both of his first two arguments is uncertain, it follows that the conclusion, "God exists necessarily," is *also* uncertain. So we have to consider intrinsic probability.

2. *The Accuracy of Naturalism*

Second, accuracy.

Naturalistic Theism and Naturalistic Evidence

Regarding naturalistic theism, which is a term I thought I'd invented, he's given no good reason *on theism* to think natural laws are necessary. But *if* they are metaphysically necessary, then the fundamental constants are probably *also* necessary, since that view is more coherent than the idea that the laws are necessary but the constants are not.¹ And the necessity of both the laws and the constants is antecedently much more likely on naturalism than on theism.²

Because he's given no reason to think natural laws are necessary, the facts of cosmic hostility, naturalistic explanations, evolution, mind-brain dependence, types and distribution of moral agents, limitations on freedom, pain and pleasure, and flourishing and languishing are all more likely on naturalism.

Physical Matter and the Intelligibility of the Universe

Furthermore, he's given no reason to think that God's goodness *requires* that God create physical matter or that "the entire natural history of the universe" implies the supernatural, so physical matter and the success of naturalistic explanations favor naturalism.

¹ Consider two rival hypotheses, H1 and H2, about the laws of nature and the physical constants. H1 is the view that the laws of nature are metaphysically necessary, but the constants are contingent. H2 is the view that *both* the laws of nature *and* the constants are metaphysically necessary. H2 attributes more uniformity to the world than H1. Uniformity is necessarily more intrinsically probable than variety. Therefore, H2 is intrinsically more probable than H1. In symbols, if $\Pr(|X|)$ stands for the intrinsic probability of X, then $\Pr(|H2|) > \Pr(|H1|)$.

² In symbols, $\Pr(H2 | N) > \Pr(H1 | T)$. Note also that $\Pr(\sim H1 \ \& \ \sim H2 | T) > \Pr(\sim H1 \ \& \ \sim H2 | N)$.

Origin of the Universe

He still hasn't clearly answered *when* God created. First, his defense of "metaphysical time" violates the inductive Rule of Total Evidence by ignoring the background knowledge that *things which begin to exist come from pre-existing material*. Second, there is no such as thing as 'causally prior' but not 'temporally prior.' "Timeless without creation" just is "timeless *before* time," which is incoherent. Third, there is no correct argument from authority which shows the BGV theorem proves an *absolute* beginning or that the universe cannot be explained by its own nature and by what else exists and doesn't exist.

Discoverability of the Universe and Applicability of Mathematics

He doesn't describe a universe where set theory isn't applicable to physical reality. And if the same fine-tuning explains both the universe's discoverability and life-permitting conditions, then it would seem that we can't have one without the other and so he's again double-counting evidence.

Evolution

As for evolution, what I said is that God didn't have to create the exact set of animals we have. God could have created different creatures.

Pain and Pleasure

Regarding pain and pleasure, since humans and closely related animals share very similar mental states, those animals very likely feel pain just as intensely as we do. And animal suffering is very difficult to reconcile with Mr. Vandergriff's naturalistic, evolutionary Christian theism, which entails that animal suffering existed long before humans did and so long before original sin.

Triumph and Tragedy

Regarding triumph and tragedy, the point here is that (a) not everyone experiences either triumph or tragedy; (b) out of those who do, tragedy is much more common than triumph; and (c) horrific tragedies are much more common than glorious triumphs. Attempts to deny this smack of a first-world perspective disconnected from global events.

Yes, people are hard-wired to be resilient and find meaning in tragic events, but (d) this mechanism is not surprising on evolutionary naturalism; (e) it's far from perfect; and (f) God can do better.

Mind-Brain Dependence

He still hasn't given a reason to think God would need to create a maximally powerful being in order to create embodied moral agents.

Embodied Moral Agency

Regarding moral agency, he's undermined his own argument with his denial of (a) the contingency of natural laws and (b) libertarian free will, effectively *downgrading* the evidence about moral agency to evidence about cosmic fine-tuning. In order to defend fine-tuning, he has to *deny* one of the rules of mathematical probability known as countable additivity.³ But, as Timothy McGrew has shown, this destroys the possibility of showing that fine-tuning is more probable on theism than on naturalism.⁴

Moral Perception and Flourishing

Regarding moral perception and flourishing, Darwin's thought experiment asks us to imagine humans being raised under the same conditions as hive bees. But even then, we'd still be humans with human natures, not bees with bee natures. On the ethical theory I've presented, what's *good for* bees doesn't necessarily have anything to do with what's *good for* humans. Our biological natures are totally different and that's a crucial difference on Aristotelian ethical naturalism.

Ethical Disagreement

As for ethical disagreement, even if God can't *eliminate* disagreement, He could have *decreased* disagreement.

Nonresistant Nonbelief

He doubts nonresistant nonbelievers, but as John Schellenberg writes, "it would take something like willful blindness to fail to affirm that not *all* nonbelief is the product of willful blindness."⁵

He denies that a relationship *with* God requires the belief *that* God exists, but that's a contradiction in terms. The belief *that* God exists is necessary for belief *in* God.

Christian Theism

Regarding the Resurrection, what we heard in the last speech was *a priori* speculation about what God *would* do with a corpse, but this ignores the empirical evidence about what God *does* do with corpses. On the assumption that God exists, all of our relevant observations, about dead bodies and statistical mechanics in general, show that God virtually always wills that the dead stay dead. And we still don't have evidence that Jesus' body was incorruptible.

³ For a critique of this move in the context of fine-tuning arguments, see Neil A. Manson, "The Fine-Tuning Argument," *Philosophy Compass* 4/1 (2009) 271-286, 10.1111/j.1747-9991.2008.00188.x.

⁴ Timothy McGrew, "Pondering Fine Tuning," <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~mcgrew/PonderingFineTuning.pdf>.

⁵ John Schellenberg, "What Divine Hiddenness Reveals, or How Weak Theistic Evidence is Strong Atheistic Proof" *God or Blind Nature? Philosophers Debate the Evidence* (2008), http://infidels.org/library/modern/john_schellenberg/hidden.html.