

THE NATURALISTIC FACE OF HUMANISM

Robert L. Waggoner¹

Naturalism is the belief that nature is all that exists. This belief has religious connotations. Naturalism requires that nature be the means by which the origin and processes of all things are explained. It means that naturalism is the key to all knowledge. It means that nature is the lord of man.

Naturalism Is Religious

Naturalism requires that certain divine characteristics be attributed to nature. First, if nature is all there is, and power operates within nature, (such as in weather conditions, in the force of a mighty river; in the growth of living plants and animals, etc.), then nature, rather than a supernatural being, must be considered all powerful. Second, if nature is all there is, and intelligence is operative within nature, (through design, order, wisdom, beauty, etc.), then nature, rather than a supernatural being, must be considered all wise. Third, if nature is all there is, then nature, because it exists, must be considered self-existing. This implies that nature is eternal - another attribute of deity.

Origins of Naturalism

Although naturalism arose in the eighteenth century, it received no universal following because it had no explanation of the mechanics by which nature originated or is sustained. However, when Charles Darwin published in 1859 his *Origin of Species*, he gave some plausible mechanisms for the theory of organic evolution, and with that, provided, for many who were wanting it, an excuse for their denial of the supernatural. Naturalism then gained credibility, and became a major foundation stone for modern humanism.²

Significance of Naturalism

The theory of organic evolution is primarily biological. However, if the process of evolution is true in biology, then the same evolutionary process may also be assumed to be operative in the origins and continuation of all things. A supernatural God is therefore no longer needed to explain origins or continuing events of nature. Humanism generally denies the existence of a supernatural being.³

If the theory of evolution is true, then it must of necessity effect every area of human knowledge. If there is no supernatural, then human knowledge cannot be acquired through divine

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²*Humanist Manifesto I*, First, Eleventh; *Humanist Manifesto II*, First.

³*Humanist Manifesto I*, Sixth; *Humanist Manifesto II*, Preface, First; *A Secular Humanist Declaration*, 6.

revelation, (that is, the Bible). Naturalism requires that knowledge be acquired only from nature, and only through the natural processes. This is also affirmed by humanism.⁴

Humanism also states that since human knowledge is limited by naturalism to whatever can be ascertained through nature, then whenever man seeks to know about himself, he can only learn from nature whatever nature chooses to reveal by its own processes.⁵

Relationship Between Man and Nature

These beliefs of humanism suggest that nature is the eternal regulatory force and intelligence which humanity must accept. By this reasoning, man must submit to nature, and live harmoniously with it. However, man refuses to accept his natural environment as his Lord. Man must change it, and regulate it. Man wants to be Lord over Nature. This desire is expressed in the Preface to the second Humanist Manifesto.

The next century can be and should be the humanistic century. Dramatic scientific, technological, and ever-accelerating social and political changes crowd our awareness. We have virtually conquered the planet, explored the moon, overcome the natural limits of travel and communication; we stand at the dawn of a new age, ready to move farther into space and perhaps inhabit other planets. Using technology wisely, we can control our environment, conquer poverty, markedly reduce disease, extend our life-span, significantly modify our behavior, alter the course of human evolution and cultural development, unlock vast new powers, and provide humankind with unparalleled opportunity for achieving an abundant and meaningful life. . . . Humanity, to survive, requires bold and daring measures. We need to extend the uses of the scientific method, not to renounce them. . . . Confronted by many possible futures, we must decide which to pursue.

The concluding sentences of the first *Humanist Manifesto* declared that “Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible . . .” This idea that man should rule over nature is not new. In his commentary on the Old Testament book of Judges, James B. Jordan compares the modern religion of secular humanism to the worship of Baal, the ancient Canaanite fertility god.

So what was Baalism? In essence it was the ascription of power to Nature: The universe has within itself the force of life. The world as we know it is the result of the union of the ultimate male and female principles of the universe, which may be called Baal and Ashteroth (or Astartes). (A similar goddess is Asherah, mistranslated as groves in the King James Version. The difference between the two goddesses is technical, and both were expressions of the same religious principle.) Canaanite philosophers believed, of course, that these ultimate forces were impersonal, and that their union was not sexual; but the common people preferred to think of the matter mythically. The sun god copulated with the origin mud of the world, and the animals and man resulted. How does

⁴*A Secular Humanist Declaration*, 8; Corliss Lamont “Naturalistic Humanism,” *The Humanist Alternative: Some Definitions of Humanism*, ed. by Paul Kurtz, (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Press, 1973), 130.

⁵*Humanist Manifesto I*, Second, Third, Fourth; *Humanist Manifesto II*, Second.

such a myth differ from a more sophisticated expression of the same principle, such as can be found in any 20th century high school science textbook? Once, we are told, there was a vast primordial sea. Then one day, sparked by sunlight, an organic molecule appeared, which evolved to become our present world. A male principle, sunlight, inseminates a female principle, the primordial sea, and life is born.

The Baal-Asteroth religion understandably was intimately concerned with fertility. The Creator God of the Bible had promised fertility to Israel if they were faithful to Him (Dt. 7:13-14), but what He demanded was moral loyalty, including especially sexual chastity (monogamy). The religion of Baal, however, advocated exactly the opposite method of getting fertility. Chaotic sexual orgies would stimulate Nature (human, animal, and crop fertility). The true religion of Israel said that fertility was obtained by submitting to the Creator, while Baalism said that fertility was obtained by stimulating Nature. Thus, in true religion, man is the servant/slave of God, in submission to Him; while in Baalism, man is the lord of his god (Nature) who needs to be stimulated by him.

Nature religion is a religion of stimulation. Man has to stimulate Nature in order to get results. Like the Baal priests of the ancient world, he may engage in sexual orgies, or cut himself with knives (1 Kings 18:28), in order to arouse the sleeping god. This is also the philosophy of the modern world. Stimulating nature is not seen (as in Christian faith) simply as a form of technological dominion. It is also seen as a way of salvation, so that modern medical scientists believe they will solve the problem of disease by learning how to control nature, and modern philosophers believe that controlling nature will permit man to control evolution and advance humanity, while modern revolutionaries from Marx to Marcuse believe that simply stimulating society through the imposition of social chaos will automatically lead to a better world.⁶

Nowhere in our modern world is the use of scientific technology more desired than it is regarding AIDS. Our American society is demanding much more extensive scientific research to give us salvation from AIDS. All that is really needed, however, is for society to follow the biblical prohibitions against homosexuality (cf. Leviticus 18:22; 22:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:8-11; 2 Peter 2:6-10; Jude 7). Refusal to follow the biblical requirement is a practical denial of the existence of God by a society which otherwise generally voices belief in God!

Until such time as scientific researchers may develop the technology to halt death by homosexuality, our humanist controlled society is being educated to continue its fornicating lifestyle by the use of condoms and other contraceptive devices. Humanism as naturalism is alive and thriving in modern America!

Impact Of Naturalism Upon Christianity

The impact of naturalism upon Christianity in America is enormous. Naturalism contributes immensely to the destruction of Christian homes and also to society as a whole.

⁶James B. Jordan, *Judges: Gods War Against Humanism*, (Tyler, TX: Geneva Ministries, 1985), 35-36.

Naturalism dominates the nations compulsory educational establishment from top to bottom. When Christian parents send their children to public schools, their children learn the philosophy of naturalism. They are taught that nature is all there is, that there is no God, that the Bible consists of myths, legends and superstitions, that man evolved by chance to become what he now is, that man has no soul, that there is no such thing as sin, and therefore no need for salvation from the eternal consequences of sin. Since naturalism teaches that there is no God, then it concludes that human beings will not stand in judgment before God, that there will be no life after death, and therefore that there is no heaven and no hell.

While Christian parents insist that their children live by Christian values, their children may be under pressure from school teachers and fellow students to live by the values of naturalism. Children may therefore be torn between two diverse value systems. They may become confused regarding what is right and what is wrong. This often creates family tensions between parents and children, and far too frequently, results in children rebelling against their Christian parents.

Flaws Within Naturalism

Naturalism Cannot Explain Morality

To overcome family deterioration caused by naturalism, we must teach that naturalism is fatally flawed with unsolvable problems. In the first place, if nature acts as it has been designed and programmed by nature to act, then all actions of living things can only be classified as natural actions. Whatever nature does must automatically be considered right. When snakes stick out their tongues, when bears catch and eat fish, when birds fly south for the winter, they are all acting naturally and rightly. Wild and domesticated animals act naturally by instinct or as they have been trained. All actions of such animals do not fall into a moral category.

The physical conduct of human beings, however, while performed within natural boundaries, is generally realized to come within a moral category. If nature is all there is, and if man is only natural, then it might be considered natural for a man to tell lies, to be adulterous, to murder, or even to be cannibalistic, and such would then be considered right. If such conduct were the basic nature of humanity, then it would not be natural to be truthful, chaste, faithful or righteous. The fact that humanity is capable of opposite types of conduct within the moral category, one righteous and one wicked, indicates that humanity is not confined to natural activity. Therefore, nature is not all there is.

All men, whether humanists or Christians, insist that humanity must abide by certain moral imperatives. The differences between humanists and Christians are about which moral imperatives are applicable. Christians, believing that people are responsible to God, accept moral imperatives from God. However, humanists, believing that mankind is only natural, incorrectly departs from naturalism to insist that people must act according to moral imperatives, not of nature's design, but of man's own choosing!

For humanists, moral values are relative, situational, and autonomous. Humanists insist that there are no absolute moral values. However, that insistence is itself an absolute. What they are really saying is that there must be no arbitrary absolutes not of their own choosing.

Humanists seem to think that absolutely nobody but humanists should be allowed to impose absolutes upon others!

Naturalism Is Not Scientifically Proven

A second flaw of naturalism is that, in spite of its claim to be scientific, naturalism cannot be supported either by the scientific method or by commonly recognized principles of science. Scientific methodology requires both observation and repetition, neither of which is applicable to the origin of the universe since scientists were not there to witness it, nor does the universe repeat its origination. Moreover, scientific principles of causality, analogy, comprehensiveness and consistency all fail to support naturalism's theory of evolution. The principle of causality requires that every effect have a cause. The theory of evolution, however, has no explainable cause to commend it. The principle of analogy (or uniformity) requires that the present be explained in terms of the past. Nothing in the present explains the evolutionary assumption that life comes from non-life. The principles of comprehensiveness and consistency also indicates that evolution by chance of living creatures, even over extremely long periods of time, is impossible.⁷

Other known scientific principles also argue that nature could not have originated through the process of evolution. The second law of thermodynamics, a well proven law of science, demonstrates that all things in nature tend to deteriorate and decay whereas the evolutionary theory would have us believe, without scientific viability, that living things within nature evolve in an upward progression of complexity.

Naturalism Is Subjective

Finally, naturalism unrealistically presumes that its so-called scientific foundations are unbiased and objective. However, studies in the philosophy of science have clearly demonstrated that all natural sciences have preconceived philosophical foundations. Natural scientists approach their experimentation with theories derived from their own personal training and previous experiences. Among men there is no such thing as absolute objectivity.

Scientific pronouncements about the validity of evolution are founded, not upon any knowledge derived from the scientific method, but from personal presuppositions of the scientists. Belief in evolution is just that. It is a faith. In the final analysis, naturalism, like humanism, is a religion!

Conclusion

Although modern man wants to believe in naturalism, there are too many objections to its validity. If naturalism were true, then man would not want to be lord over nature, nor would it be flawed with unreasonable and unscientific difficulties. Since humanism is built upon the foundation of naturalism and since naturalism can be demonstrated to be false, then it follows that humanism is also false.

⁷For further discussion, read Norman L. Geisler, *Is Man The Measure? An Evaluation*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 30-150.