

DIALOGUE BETWEEN AN AGNOSTIC AND A CHRISTIAN

AGN—"So you think you can show Christianity to be true beyond a reasonable doubt?"

CHR—"Yes, that's what I hope to do."

AGN—"Don't you think that is a bit naive and outdated?"

CHR—"How so?"

AGN—"Well, leaving to one side the great implausibility of Christianity itself, you seem uncritically to assume that there is such a thing as objective truth. You obviously are unaware that philosophy has destroyed any such notion and that we are living in a Post-modern era which places no confidence in the assurances and dogmas of Modernism.

CHR—"What do you mean? Are you saying there is no such thing as truth?"

AGN—"Yes, precisely. Linguistic philosophy and pragmatism has shown that every assertion and claim to knowledge is loaded with one's presuppositions and perspectives which control all that one says or affirms. The idea of objective truth should be dropped from the human vocabulary. Knowledge is neither true nor false; it is simple power. It enables us to cope. The whole idea of truth or knowledge as that which corresponds to reality should be rejected. Knowledge is useful, not true or false."

CHR—"Then it is foolish for me to try to show Christianity or any other knowledge claim to be true?" Are you saying that objective truth about anything, not just about Christianity, is impossible to attain?"

AGN—"Exactly; truth is what your peers will let you get away with."

CHR—"But aren't you contradicting yourself? For obviously you are asserting at least one thing that is objectively true; --namely, that truth and knowledge are impossible to attain. You mean that assertion to be taken as objectively true. To deny objective truth, then, is to affirm it. Isn't this a self-contradiction?"

AGN—"Perhaps. But logical consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds."

CHR—"But to embrace logical contradictions in one's thinking leads to intellectual meaninglessness, doesn't it? It can't be meaningful to affirm and deny the same thing at the same time and in the same respect, can it? No one would know what you meant. Communication would be impossible.

AGN—"Maybe"

CHR—“And further, if one thing is objectively true, namely that truth cannot be known, then perhaps there are other objectively true beliefs also. In addition, isn't it arrogant to think that one can know the limits of what can be known before ever investigating the evidence. Wouldn't you have to be omniscient in order to make such a claim?”

AGN—“Well perhaps, but you need to know that my view is the considered judgment of most philosophers and academicians today, in spite of what you say to the contrary.”

CHR—“There you go again. If you mean by this, that the claims of modern philosophers and academicians are objectively true, then you are contradicting yourself that objective truth is impossible to attain. For you are affirming that they have attained it! Objective truth cannot be denied without affirming it.

AGN—“I am simply saying that I don't know whether truth is knowable or not.”

CHR—“Ahh! Now you are shifting your ground. You are no longer saying objective truth impossible to know—now you are simply saying that you don't happen to know whether objective truth can be known. This is quite a different thing. I would say to you, fine, let's launch an investigation and find out. The practical demands of life require that we cannot suspend judgment. Some issues are of such great consequence that we must not suspend judgment. One of these issues is Christianity. Is it true or false?”

Michael Denton, Evolution: A Theory in Crisis

- P. 327—"The intuitive feeling that pure chance could never have achieved the degree of complexity and ingenuity so ubiquitous in nature has been a continuing source of scepticism ever since the publication of the *Origin of the Species*; and throughout the past century there has always existed a significant minority of first-rate biologists who have never been able to bring themselves to accept the validity of Darwinian claims...
- P. 328—"Perhaps in no other area of modern biology is the challenge posed by the extreme complexity and ingenuity of biological adaptations more apparent than in the fascinating new molecular world of the cell. .. To grasp the reality of life as it has been revealed by molecular biology, we must magnify a cell a thousand million times until it is twenty kilometers in diameter and resembles a giant airship large enough to cover a great city like London or New York. What we would then see would be an object of unparalleled complexity and adaptive design. On the surface of the cell we would see millions of openings, like the port holes of a vast space ship, opening and closing to allow a continual stream of materials to flow in and out. If we were to enter one of these openings we would find ourselves in a world of supreme technology and bewildering complexity.
- P. 342—"Is it really credible that random processes could have constructed a reality, the smallest element of which—a functional protein or gene—is complex beyond our own creative capacities, a reality which is the very antithesis of chance, which excels in every sense anything produced by the intelligence of man?"

NATURALISM

1. Can't explain the universe—neither its existence nor the form it is in; though everything in the universe has a cause, there is no cause of the universe itself—makes the universe an irrational fact. To appeal to chance is simply the absence of explanation.
2. Can't explain the appearance of mind in the universe—how can mindless materialistic mechanism give rise to mind, purpose and intelligence for no reason at all. To appeal to evolution is again an appeal to chance.
3. Can't explain "knowing"—if natural laws (as naturalism contends) really causally determined me to hold the opinions I hold, then I can never know that naturalism is true (nor anything else, for that matter). I would believe what I believe simply because natural laws have forced me to believe so. Therefore, my beliefs would have a non-rational cause—they would be determined by biochemical processes in brain tissue and bloodstream.
4. Can't explain thought's applicability to reality—any attempt to discuss, argue or investigate freely the merits of an issue is impossible; on naturalist grounds, reasons cannot change my mind—only natural law (physical-causal determinism) can do that. Also, there's no reason to believe that natural law would condition us to believe only true beliefs. My beliefs, therefore come from a non-rational cause.
5. Can't explain moral "ought"—if all human decisions are determined by physical causation and not free, then moral appeals are meaningless. It cannot be meaningful to insist that I "ought" to have done what I did not do. I do what I do (according to naturalism) because natural laws have determined me to act so. Outrages and injuries cannot be met with an appeal to "ought" if a naturalist is to be consistent.
6. Can't explain "freedom"—man is a machine with no responsibility for actions. There can be no testimony of conscience speaking contrary to conditioning just as there can be no free reflective thought. Moral values merely exist—there is no "ought" attaching to them for men create them by natural laws.
7. Makes human life meaningless and absurd—one's life is merely an accidental by-product of nature (matter plus time plus chance). There is no reason for my existence; no ultimate meaning value or purpose.
8. Can't be lived consistently—human beings cannot live without meaning to their lives; naturalists supply this by pretending that life has meaning—but with no reasonable basis in fact. Inconsistently a naturalist may affirm love, brotherhood, honesty, justice, etc., but he has no basis for doing so.
9. Can't provide an adequate account of evidences of the supernatural—a naturalist must explain away all reports and evidences of supernatural events, miracles, providential occurrences, etc., a difficult and unlikely thing to do in many cases.