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IN WHAT SENSE IS THEISTIC EVOLUTION MORE RATIONAL THAN NATURALISTIC EVOLUTION?

Abstract. Drawing on the contributions of logical positivism and the socio-historical perspective in the philosophy of science, I advocate the thesis of the empirical equivalence between metaphysical theistic and naturalistic interpretations of the evolutionary process. This process, defined by the variability of life forms on Earth, primarily occurs through natural selection and genetic mutations. Highlighting the shared aspects of the anti-naturalist arguments put forward by Clive S. Lewis and Alvin Plantinga, I propose that these arguments support the view that a theistic interpretation of evolution is more rational than a naturalistic one. This is because naturalistic evolutionism encounters the problem of its own credibility, as it calls into question the reliability of our cognitive faculties. In contrast, theistic interpretations of evolution are more compatible with the reliability of our cognitive faculties.

Keywords: logical positivism; evolution; theism; naturalism; rationality; C.S. Lewis; A. Plantinga

1. INTRODUCTION

A 1996 study by American scientists found that 95% of biologists who are members of the National Academy of Sciences are non-believers (Larson, Witham, 1997). This finding aligns with the perspectives presented in the works of authors like Richard Dawkins and other so-called new "atheists," who advocate a naturalistic worldview, particularly regarding biological evolution. As we will see, Charles Darwin (1809-1892) himself seemed to lean towards a non-theistic

interpretation of his theory. However, theistic interpretations of biological evolution emerged immediately after the publication of *On the Origin of Species* and continue to exist in various forms today. But how can one choose between these two perspectives? Is empirical data the central issue, or does the debate represent an unresolved conflict between two metanarratives? I will argue that what we are dealing with here is a different organization of the same data, similar to the curve-fitting paradox and the concept known in Gestalt psychology as a "Gestalt switch." If this is the case, the choice between the two viewpoints must be based on considerations beyond empirical data.

Any rational account of reality is evaluated according to two main criteria: consistency with empirical data (facts) and adherence to logical principles. Are the ideas of naturalistic evolution and theistic evolution both logically sound? This paper focuses on whether naturalistic evolution adequately explains our cognitive abilities and the reliability of rational reasoning. As we will explore, the theses put forth by Clive S. Lewis (1898-1963) in his argument from reason and Alvin Plantinga in his evolutionary argument against naturalism suggest that naturalistic evolution undermines the reliability of human reason. In contrast, they argue that this problem does not arise with the theistic understanding of evolution. If Lewis and Plantinga are right, then logical and philosophical considerations suggest that theistic evolution is a more rational concept than naturalistic evolution.

The argumentation that follows consists of five main points: 1. The same set of facts can be accounted for by many mutually incompatible theories; 2. Metaphysical statements are empirically neutral, and the scope of scientific theories is quite limited; 3. The empirical data indicating the variability of life on Earth can be interpreted from both a naturalistic and a theistic metaphysical perspective; 4. If Lewis and Plantinga are right, then our cognitive faculties cannot be considered reliable if one adopts the naturalistic view of evolution. There is no similar problem with the conjunction of theism and

evolution; 5. If points 1-4 are true, then logical and philosophical considerations suggest that theistic evolution is a more rational concept than naturalistic evolution.

2. FACTS AND MUTUALLY INCOMPATIBLE THEORIES

An insight from 20th-century philosophy of science, especially regarding the critique of empirical confirmation as a criterion for distinguishing between meaningful and meaningless statements, is that a single set of empirical data can be explained by multiple theories, which may themselves be mutually incompatible. This insight is exemplified by the so-called curve-fitting paradox. This paradox involves quantitative theories, which are those whose predictions can be represented numerically. William Stanley Jevons (1835-1882) provided a detailed analysis of this issue in the 19th century (Jevons, 1877). The problem he explored concerns identifying a curve that corresponds to a function connecting the numerical data gathered through empirical research. As Jevons noted: "Having numerical results we are always at liberty to invent any kind of mathematical formula we like… The number of possible functions is infinite, and even the number of comparatively simple functions is so large that the probability of falling upon the correct one by mere chance is very slight. Even when we obtain the law it is by a deductive process, not by showing that the numbers give the law, but that the law gives the numbers" (Jevons, 1877, 488). In fact, in 1805 French scientist Adrien-Marie Legendre (1752-1833) introduced the method of least squares, which was known and analyzed by Jevons and had by his time become a standard tool in astronomy and geodesy (see: Kim, 1996, 156). Nevertheless, the belief that this method reveals the true laws of nature is based on strong metaphysical assumptions about the nature of reality. Logic, on the other hand, allows different functions to be accepted as the laws of nature or as theories explaining the obtained results. This means that facts alone are insufficient

to decide between alternative theories. Jevons was aware of this when he wrote, to reiterate, "Even when we obtain the law it is by a deductive process, not by showing that the numbers give the law, but that the law gives the numbers." For qualitative theories, the same problem was expressed as the grue-bleen paradox, introduced by Nelson Goodman (1906-1998) (see Goodman, 1954; cf. Jodkowski, 1990, 237; Wright, 1965. For the most recent discussion see Sprenger, 2024).

In Gestalt psychology, a situation known as the "Gestalt switch" is well-known (for current analyses regarding the relevance of Gestalt psychology to the philosophy of science, see Michalska, 2015; Fève, 2022). In this situation, the same patterns that appear on the retina are interpreted as different images. The most famous example of a "Gestalt switch" is the rabbit-duck illusion. Historians of science also point to the occurrence of this phenomenon in the history of astronomy. According to one interpretation of the Copernican revolution, the acceptance of heliocentrism in the time of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) was not linked solely to observational astronomical data. According to this view, Copernicus did not provide any new facts that mandated the acceptance of heliocentrism; he lacked more accurate observational instruments than his predecessors and, therefore, did not present astronomical facts that decisively proved the Earth's motion. As historian of science Rupert Hall (1920-2009) stated, Copernicus's position "rested in no way upon his discoveries in practical astronomy, which were negligible, or on the precision of his measurements, which was not remarkable. It sprang from a demonstrable truth, that celestial observations could be equally well accounted for if the earth and planets were assumed to move about a fixed sun, allied to various wholly nondemonstrable considerations – value-judgements – seeming to show that the astronomical system constructed upon this assumption was simpler than the older system and preferable to it" (Hall, 1962, 36). According to historian and philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996), "No fundamental astronomical discovery, no new sort of astronomical observation, persuaded

Copernicus of ancient astronomy's inadequacy or of the necessity for change. Until half a century after Copernicus' death no potentially revolutionary changes occurred in the data available to astronomers" (Kuhn, 2000, 32). The role of observation in the development of his heliocentric theory was essentially limited to Copernicus fitting his model to the phenomena observed in the sky. What Copernicus did was to rearrange old facts in a new way, similarly to what occurs in a "Gestalt switch."

But how do scientists deal with the theoretical pluralism of explanations permitted by logic? In the case of scientific theories, scientists must rely on factors other than empirical ones when choosing among competing theories. These factors are usually methodological and philosophical, such as the principle of simplicity, which can be adopted for methodological reasons (e.g., due to simpler calculations) or ontological reasons (e.g., due to the belief that the world is fundamentally simple). Ludwik Fleck (1896-1961) (see especially: Fleck, 1935), and later Thomas Kuhn (1970), Paul Feyerabend (1924--1994) (see especially: Feyerabend, 1975, and later editions), and other representatives of the social and historical tradition in the philosophy of science indicated that scientists' decisions are influenced by socio-cultural factors.

3. THE LIMITED SCOPE OF SCIENTIFIC THEORIES AND THE EMPIRICAL NEUTRALITY OF METAPHYSICAL STATEMENTS

An important achievement of logical positivism, particularly by the Vienna Circle, was the emphasis on the empirical neutrality of metaphysical statements. As Rudolf Carnap (1891-1970) expressed it: "If any philosophical thesis answering any of … [the metaphysical] questions positively or negatively is added to the system of scientific hypotheses, this system will not in the least become more effective; we shall not be able to make any further prediction as to future experiences" (Carnap, 1996, 21). According to logical positivists, no

observational statements can be derived from metaphysical claims; in this sense, metaphysical statements are unverifiable and are also considered to lack cognitive value. Empirical data are not suited for determining the falsity or truth of metaphysical propositions. However, a mistake of logical positivism was the assumption that, because empirical data do not permit a decision between metaphysical statements, such statements are meaningless, and that there is no cognitively valuable way to determine which metaphysical statements should be accepted and which should be rejected.

According to logical positivists, there is room in science only for meaningful statements, that is, those that can be reduced to claims about empirical data. Today, particularly in the context of discussions regarding the relationship between science and religion, it is generally suggested that the scope of what scientific theories or disciplines can competently establish about the world through empirical research is quite limited. None of these theories provides insights into everything that exists, nor do they address questions about why anything exists or whether there is anything beyond the scope of their research, among other inquiries. Similarly, no scientific discipline formulates moral judgments. Thus, no scientific discipline answers philosophical or theological questions (see e.g. Ratzsch, 2000, chap. 6; Lewis, 1977, 7, 61-62; Moreland, 2018, especially chap. 7).

On the one hand, what scientific disciplines reveal through empirical research can be organized and explained in various ways using scientific theories. On the other hand, these scientific theories can also be interpreted in different ways from a philosophical or theological perspective (see e.g. Bylica, 2015; see also Clayton, 2002, 186; 1998, 142). While empirical data alone do not enable us to decide between competing scientific theories that aim to explain them, even less do they serve as a basis for making decisions between metaphysical positions. Scientific theories are related to metaphysical theories in a manner analogous to how facts – as understood as the results of observations conducted in a specific place and time – relate

to the theories that explain or interpret those facts. Just as facts (the direct results of observations) can be interpreted or explained by various scientific theories, scientific theories can likewise be interpreted in different ways by metaphysical theories. If the facts, understood as empirical data collected at a certain time and place, are insufficient for resolving disputes between scientific theories, then they are even less adequate for resolving disputes between metaphysical theories. An example of such a situation is the debate between naturalistic and theistic interpretations of the theory of evolution.

4. INTERPRETING EMPIRICAL DATA ON THE VARIABILITY OF LIFE ON EARTH FROM BOTH NATURALISTIC AND THEISTIC METAPHYSICAL PERSPECTIVES

The empirical data indicating the variability of life on Earth can be interpreted from both naturalistic and theistic metaphysical perspectives. On the one hand, paraphrasing the previously cited words of Carnap: if statements regarding the directed versus undirected and purposeless nature of evolution were incorporated into the scientific theory of evolution, "this system will not in the least become more effective; we shall not be able to make any further predictions" (Carnap, 1996, 21). On the other hand, the same data can be organized and explained through different metaphysical theories, owing to the curve-fitting paradox and the "Gestalt switch." In this sense, the data remain metaphysically neutral. If this is the case, both the naturalist and the theist can accept the fact of evolution on Earth. However, they will interpret this fact differently, based on their distinct philosophical assumptions. For the naturalist, evolution is a blind, mindless, undirected process – accidental and entirely autonomous. On this view, humanity is a product of processes that did not intentionally take human beings into account. Conversely, for the theist, evolution is, in some manner (regardless of the specifics) directed and ultimately accounted for by God, understood

as a knowing and purposefully acting being. Humanity is created in the image and likeness of God, which presumably includes our God-intended capacity to seek and know the truth.

The choice between these two perspectives is not determined by empirical data supporting the theory of evolution, which includes, for example, detailed observational data from paleontology or information derived from molecular biology. The problem of selecting between the theistic and naturalistic interpretations of the theory of evolution has arisen since the time of Charles Darwin. For instance, Asa Gray, an American botanist and a friend of Darwin, recognized as a believer the philosophical neutrality of the scientific aspects of Darwin's theory: "Since natural science deals only with secondary or natural causes, the scientific terms of a theory of derivation of species – no less than of a theory of dynamics – must needs be the same to the theist as to the atheist. The difference appears only when the inquiry is carried up to the question of primary cause, a question which belongs to philosophy" (Gray, 1861, 36). According to Gray, Darwin's theory does not alter anything regarding the question of the final causes, utility, and special design in nature, understood as a philosophical issue: "After full and serious consideration, we are constrained to say, that, in our opinion, the adoption of a derivative hypothesis, and of Darwin's particular hypothesis, if we understand it, would leave the doctrines of final causes, utility, and special design just where they were before" (Gray, 1861, 36). Gray advocated for a theistic interpretation of Darwin's theory: "Organic Nature abounds with unmistakable and irresistible indications of design, and, being a connected and consistent system, this evidence carries the implication of design throughout the whole. On the other hand, chance carries no probabilities with it, can never be developed into a consistent system; but when applied to the explanation of orderly or beneficial results, heaps up improbabilities at every step beyond all computation. To us, a fortuitous Cosmos is simply inconceivable. The alternative is a designed Cosmos" (Gray, 1861, 41). In one of his

letters, he wrote: "I am determined to baptize [*The Origin of Species*], *nolens volens*, which will be its salvation" (Gray, 1893, 479-480).

Darwin had a different approach. As he explicitly stated, "However much we may wish it, we can hardly follow Professor Asa Gray in his belief 'that variation has been led along certain beneficial lines,' like a stream 'along definite and useful lines of irrigation' " (Darwin, 1868, 433). In other words, "There seems to be no more design in the variability of organic beings and in the action of natural selection, than in the course which the wind blows" (Darwin, 1958, 87). This naturalistic interpretation had many supporters and promoters, ultimately becoming the dominant view and being virtually equated with the position of science itself. However, if the above remarks are correct, then both interpretations of evolution are empirically equivalent. If this is the case, then the choice between them must rely on factors other than just empirical data.

5. THE NATURALISTIC AND THEISTIC PERSPECTIVES ON EVOLUTION AND THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN COGNITIVE FACULTIES

While these two metaphysical perspectives can be equally compatible with the empirical data supporting the fact of evolution, there is concern regarding their internal coherence. This issue has been primarily highlighted by two authors. The first is Lewis, who formulated the so-called *argument from reason* against naturalism, and the second is Alvin Plantinga, who articulated a position known as *the evolutionary argument against naturalism* (for other formulations of such arguments, see: Reppert, 2003a; Bassham, 2015, 6; Oppy, 2022). At a fundamental level, we are dealing with a singular argument, which can be broadly referred to as *the evolutionary argument from reason against naturalism* (see Bylica, 2024).

The central thesis of this argument posits that the naturalistic account of the evolution of life on Earth, including the evolution of humans, undermines the reliability of our cognitive faculties. Lewis

referred to this combination of evolution and naturalism as the "myth of evolution" (Lewis, 2017, 124), distinguishing it from the scientific theory of evolution, which is grounded in empirical data. Lewis deemed the myth of evolution to be false, but not simply because it is a myth; he also viewed Christianity as a true myth. According to Lewis, the falsity of the myth of evolution stems from its internal logical difficulties: "[T]he Myth asks me to believe that reason is simply the unforeseen and unintended by-product of a mindless process at one stage of its endless and aimless becoming. The content of the Myth thus knocks from under me the only ground on which I could possibly believe the Myth to be true. If my own mind is a product of the irrational – if what seem my clearest reasonings are only the way in which a creature conditioned as I am is bound to feel – how shall I trust my mind when it tells me about Evolution?" (Lewis, 2017, 124).

If the mind is a product of the irrational, its reliability can be easily called into question. In another context, Lewis explains that for the credibility of our cognitive acts it is essential that they result from the application of logical principles rather than from causal processes. According to Lewis, in a naturalistic view of reality everything should be explicable as a part of a causal order, leaving no room for reason to draw conclusions based on logical relationships. When one considers the distinction between an explanation that refers to causal relationships and one that speaks of logical relationships and cognitive acts, Lewis argues that a belief is credible if it arises from premises rather than being the result of some causal factor. If, as naturalism asserts, this is indeed the case, then nature cannot be known in a rational or reliable manner, as it would be impossible to even formulate a credible or sound concept of nature. Such a concept would only accidentally relate to something real. If nature were all that exists, it would elude our understanding; that is, there could be no logically meaningful propositions expressing the idea of nature. Understanding nature requires a reason that is not a product of nature itself: "Any

thing which professes to explain our reasoning fully without introducing an act of knowing thus solely determined by what is known, is really a theory that there is no reasoning" (Lewis, 1977, 22). According to Lewis, naturalism "offers what professes to be a full account of our mental behaviour; but this account, on inspection, leaves no room for the acts of knowing or insight on which the whole value of our thinking, as a means to truth, depends" (Lewis, 1977, 22).

Plantinga articulates this difficulty of naturalistic evolution as follows: "…the conjunction of naturalism with the belief that we human beings evolved in conformity with current evolutionary doctrine… is in a certain interesting way self-defeating or self-referentially incoherent… [N]aturalism and evolution – 'N&E'… furnishes a defeater for any belief produced by our cognitive faculties, including, in the case of one who accepts it, N&E itself: hence its self-defeating character" (Plantinga, 2002, 2; see also 1993, chap. 12; 2011, chap. 10.).

According to Plantinga, our cognitive faculties, such as memory, perception, and reason, cannot be regarded as reliable if one adopts the view that they are the product of a completely undirected, random process where having true beliefs is irrelevant. According to Reppert, the naturalistic perspective on our cognitive faculties undermines the cognitive value of all human beliefs, and particularly of beliefs about the "nonapparent character of the world" (Reppert, 2003b, 84-85), which encompasses aspects of reality that significantly extend beyond what is sensibly perceptible and necessary for survival. Such beliefs, included in various scientific concepts, such as the idea of the atomic structure of matter, encompass assertions related to both naturalism and theism, as well as all metaphysical claims (see also Bylica, 2024).

Plantinga points out that Darwin himself fell into the difficulty we are highlighting due to his acceptance of a naturalistic view of evolution. Darwin undermined the reliability of our cognitive faculties while tracing their evolutionary origins: "But then with me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind, which

has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?" (Darwin, 1887, 315-316; quoted in: Plantinga, 2002, 3.)

In his *Autobiography*, Darwin explicitly stated that the origin of the human mind from lower animals undermines the value of the belief in the truth of theism. To show this, let us quote a longer passage: "Another source of conviction in the existence of God connected with the reason and not with the feelings, impresses me as having much more weight. This follows from the extreme difficulty or rather impossibility of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capacity of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of blind chance or necessity. When thus reflecting I feel compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I deserve to be called a Theist. … This conclusion was strong in my mind about the time, as far as I can remember, when I wrote the *Origin of Species*; and it is since that time that it has very gradually with many fluctuations become weaker. But then arises the doubt – can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as that possessed by the lowest animal, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions? May not these be the result of the connection between cause and effect which strikes us as a necessary one, but probably depends merely on inherited experience? Nor must we overlook the probability of the constant inculcation in a belief in God on the minds of children producing so strong and perhaps an inherited effect on their brains not yet fully developed, that it would be as difficult for them to throw off their belief in God, as for a monkey to throw off its instinctive fear and hatred of a snake" (Darwin, 1958, 92-93).

Darwin, up until a certain point in his life, held a belief in God. He viewed the world as something that could not be explained merely "as the result of blind chance or necessity." However, over time this

conviction diminished and eventually faded entirely. When reflecting on it later from the standpoint of naturalistic evolutionism, he ultimately regarded it as untenable.

It is important to note that, in explaining the origin of the belief in the existence of God, Darwin referred not only to the imperfections of our minds as products of lower animals but also to causal mechanisms he regarded as responsible for the emergence of theistic beliefs. This second component of his argument corresponds precisely to the naturalistic approach to cognitive acts as presented by Lewis. In the passage quoted above, Darwin appeared to overlook the problem that a naturalistic understanding of our cognitive faculties undermines not only theism but also his theory of evolution along with its naturalistic interpretation.

In any case, Darwin adopted a naturalistic interpretation of the theory of evolution, even though empirical data did not necessitate it and such an interpretation undermined the reliability of our beliefs. Darwin's biographers suggest that his strict adherence to a naturalistic, more specifically atheistic vision of reality may have been influenced by his personal experiences, such as the illness and death of his beloved daughter. According to Michael White and John Gribbin: "The most painful experience of Darwin's life was an event which would for ever seal his feelings about God, man and the scheme of life began to unfold in June 1850, when his favourite daughter Annie fell ill." And later: "In losing his beautiful daughter… he had also lost any remaining vestige of religious faith he may have had. From this moment on, Darwin was a total, uncompromising atheist: his only god was rationality, his only saviour, logic and science." And further: "There was no meaning to existence other than a culmination of biological events. Life was selfish and cruel, headless and heartless. Beyond biology there was nothing" (White, Gribbin, 2009, 154, 156). Aside from various psycho-social and cultural factors, in the context of the empirical neutrality of metaphysical theories, the painful experience of loss that Darwin endured may provide

part of the explanation for his choice of a naturalistic interpretation of reality, including the process of evolution.

As Plantinga asserts, the issue of a coherent explanation of the reliability of our cognitive faculties does not arise in the case of theism: "I see no similar problems with the conjunction of *theism* and the idea that human beings have evolved in the way contemporary evolutionary science suggests" (Plantinga, 2002, 1-2). And further: "[A]ccording to traditional Christian (and Jewish and Muslim) thought, we human beings have been created in the image of God. This means, among other things, that God created us with the capacity for achieving *knowledge* …" (Plantinga, 2002, 2).

Similarly, Lewis wrote that the coherent idea of anchoring human reason in the rationality of a transcendent God allows for the acceptance of the possibility of genuine human cognitive acts as something distinct from causal processes: "[A theist] is not committed to the view that reason is a comparatively recent development moulded by a process of selection which can select only the biologically useful. For him, reason – the reason of God – is older than Nature, and from it the orderliness of Nature, which alone enables us to know her, is derived. For him, the human mind in the act of knowing is illuminated by the Divine reason. It is set free, in the measure required, from the huge nexus of non-rational causation; free from this to be determined by the truth known. And the preliminary processes within Nature which led up to this liberation, if there were any, were designed to do so" (Lewis, 1977, 26-27).

Although Lewis and Plantinga suggest that the problem of self-undermining does not arise when the idea of evolution is combined with theism, this does not imply that the truth of theism follows from the evolutionary argument from reason against naturalism. Theism is compatible with beliefs about the value of our cognitive faculties and the existence of rational reasoning, but it is not a necessary condition for the truth of those beliefs (see also: Bylica, 2024). Naturalism, however, as Plantinga states, is self-defeating. It is precisely

in this sense that the idea of theistic evolution is more rational than the idea of naturalistic evolution. The concept of theistic evolution lacks the internal logical difficulties that the concept of naturalistic evolution faces.

6. CONCLUSION

We have intentionally refrained from presenting a detailed discussion of the evolutionary argument from reason against naturalism, which has been widely debated. Nevertheless, it is essential to underscore the significant implications that arise from integrating this argument with contemporary philosophical insights concerning the interplay between empirical data, theories, and metaphysical claims. Theistic evolution stands out not only for its internal consistency regarding the reliability of our cognitive faculties but also for providing a firm foundation for the cognitive value of scientific inquiry. In contrast, naturalism fosters skepticism about the cognitive value of all forms of knowledge, including scientific understanding, as well as the validity of naturalism itself. Consequently, when considering the empirical and scientific equivalence of both theistic and naturalistic evolution, logical and philosophical considerations highlight the superiority of the theistic viewpoint. In this context, theistic evolution is ultimately a more rational concept than its naturalistic counterpart.

However, while the elucidation of human cognitive faculties may be less contentious within a theistic framework than in a naturalistic one, a thorough examination of the discourse surrounding the theistic and naturalistic interpretations of reality requires a consideration of additional facets of both human and non-human experience. It is vital to evaluate how these facets correspond to the aforementioned alternative perspectives. Logically, it is conceivable that certain empirical facts align more closely with one interpretation, whereas others might be more effectively addressed by the alternative framework. In terms of human reality, alongside issues related to cognitive

capacities and rational thought, pertinent considerations may encompass the status of moral judgments, more broadly construed value judgments, as well as the widespread occurrence of religious experiences. In the realm of non-human reality, discussions might include the overarching mathematical order observed in nature or inquiries related to anthropic principles. A crucial point of intersection between human and non-human realities lies in the existence of non-moral evil, particularly the phenomenon of suffering – encompassing both mortality and anguish – witnessed in both animal and human contexts, and intimately linked to the processes governing biological variability on Earth. Although theistic evolutionism may present a seemingly more coherent framework with respect to the rationality of human cognition and the dependability of our cognitive faculties, the acknowledgment of animal suffering, as a part of the broader discourse on the suffering of the innocent and the generalized issue of "unde malum," may find a more accommodating space within a naturalistic evolutionary perspective. It is critical to recognize that this relationship is not definitive; within the context of Christian theism, various approaches have been proposed to address the problem of suffering, and the effectiveness of these approaches will significantly impact the evaluation of the coherence and rationality of theistic evolutionism.

If the considerations presented here are valid, then empirical data alone are insufficient to resolve the dispute between theistic and naturalistic evolutionism. Simultaneously, the theistic perspective proves to be free from the logical coherence issues that arise in relation to the origin of human cognitive faculties within naturalistic evolutionary views. If we can distinguish between the scientific theory of evolution, which comprises a set of assertions confined to purely naturalistic inquiries, and its metaphysical interpretations – whether naturalistic or theistic – then the theistic interpretation of evolution does not conflict with what science, as such, is capable of competently asserting. For proponents of Christian theism, the implications

of the arguments presented in this paper for the creation-evolution debate manifest in shifting the focus from empirical research (currently occupied by various forms of interventionist creationism) to the realm of philosophy.

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