The Worldview of Jurassic Park – A Biblical Christian Assessment

Dr. Bohlin examines the message of Jurassic Park, bringing out some of the underlying messages on science, evolution, new age thinking, and cloning. The movie may be entertaining, but a Christian scientist points out some of the misconceptions people are taking away from the movie. Remember, this is just a piece of fiction—not a scientific treatise.

The Intent Behind *Jurassic Park*

Driving home after seeing the movie *Jurassic Park* in the first week of its release, I kept seeing tyrannosaurs and velociraptors coming out from behind buildings, through intersections, and down the street, headed straight at me. I would imagine: What would I do? Where would I turn? I certainly wouldn't shine any lights out of my car or scream. Dead give-aways to a hungry, angry dinosaur. Then I would force myself to realize that it was just a movie. It was not reality. My relief would take hold only briefly until the next intersection or big building.

In case you can't tell, I scare easily at movies. *Jurassic Park* terrified me. It all looked so real. Steven Spielberg turned out the biggest money-making film in history. Much of the reason for that was the realistic portrayal of the dinosaurs. But there was more to *Jurassic Park* than great special effects. It was based on the riveting novel by Michael Crichton and while many left the movie dazzled by the dinosaurs, others were leaving with questions and new views of science and nature.

The movie *Jurassic Park* was terrific entertainment, but it was

entertainment with a purpose. The purpose was many-fold and the message was interspersed throughout the movie, and more so throughout the book. My purpose in this essay is to give you some insight into the battle that was waged for your mind throughout the course of this movie.

Jurassic Park was intended to warn the general public concerning the inherent dangers of biotechnology first of all, but also science in general. Consider this comment from the author Michael Crichton:

Biotechnology and genetic engineering are very powerful. The film suggests that [science's] control of nature is elusive. And just as war is too important to leave to the generals, science is too important to leave to scientists. Everyone needs to be attentive.{1}

Overall, I would agree with Crichton. All too often, scientists purposefully refrain from asking ethical questions concerning their work in the interest of the pursuit of science.

But now consider director Steven Spielberg, quoted in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal:* "There's a big moral question in this story. DNA cloning may be viable, but is it acceptable?"{2} And again in the *New York Times*, Spielberg said, "Science is intrusive. I wouldn't ban molecular biology altogether, because it's useful in finding cures for AIDS, cancer and other diseases. But it's also dangerous and that's the theme of *Jurassic Park*."{3} So Spielberg openly states that the real theme of *Jurassic Park* is that science is intrusive.

In case you are skeptical of a movie's ability to communicate this message to young people today, listen to this comment from an eleven-year-old after seeing the movie. She said, "Jurassic Park's message is important! We shouldn't fool around with nature."{4} The media, movies and music in

particular, are powerful voices to our young people today. We cannot underestimate the power of the media, especially in the form of a blockbuster like *Jurassic Park*, to change the way we perceive the world around us.

Many issues of today were addressed in the movie. Biotechnology, science, evolution, feminism, and new age philosophy all found a spokesman in *Jurassic Park*.

The Dangers of Science, Biotechnology, and Computers

The movie *Jurassic Park* directly attacked the scientific establishment. Throughout the movie, Ian Malcolm voiced the concerns about the direction and nature of science. You may remember the scene around the lunch table just after the group has watched the three velociraptors devour an entire cow in only a few minutes. Ian Malcolm brashly takes center stage with comments like this: "The scientific power….didn't require any discipline to attain it….So you don't take any responsibility for it."{5} The key word here is responsibility. Malcolm intimates that Jurassic Park scientists have behaved irrationally and irresponsibly.

Later in the same scene, Malcolm adds, "Genetic power is the most awesome force the planet's ever seen, but, you wield it like a kid that's found his dad's gun." Genetic engineering rises above nuclear and chemical or computer technology because of its ability to restructure the very molecular heart of living creatures. Even to create new organisms. Use of such power requires wisdom and patience. Malcolm punctuates his criticism in the same scene when he says, "Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn't stop to think if they should."

Malcolm's criticisms should hit a raw nerve in the scientific community. As Christians we ask similar questions and raise similar concerns when scientists want to harvest fetal tissue

for research purposes or experiment with human embryos. If Malcolm had limited his remarks to *Jurassic Park* only, I would have no complaint. But Malcolm extends the problem to science as a whole when he comments that scientific discovery is the rape of the natural world. Many youngsters will form the opinion that all scientists are to be distrusted. A meaningful point has been lost because it was wielded with the surgical precision of a baseball bat.

Surprisingly, computers take a more subtle slap in the face—surprising because computers were essential in creating many of the dinosaur action scenes that simply could not be done with robotic models. You may remember early in the movie, the paleontological camp of Drs. Grant and Satler where Grant openly shows his distrust of computers. The scene appears a little comical as the field- tested veteran expresses his hate for computers and senses that computers will take the fun out of his quaint profession.

Not so comical is the portrayal of Dennis Nedry, the computer genius behind *Jurassic Park*. You get left with the impression that computers are not for normal people and the only ones who profit by them or understand them are people who are not to be trusted. Nedry was clearly presented as a dangerous person because of his combination of computer wizardry and his resentment of those who don't understand him or computers. Yet at the end of the movie, a young girl's computer hacking ability saves the day by bringing the system back on line.

The point to be made is that technology is not the villain. Fire is used for both good and evil purposes, but no one is calling for fire to be banned. It is the worldview of the culture that determines how computers, biotechnology, or any other technology is to be used. The problem with *Jurassic Park* was the arrogance of human will and lack of humility before God, not technology.

The Avalanche of Evolutionary Assumptions

There were many obvious naturalistic or evolutionary assumptions built into the story which, while not totally unexpected, were too frequently exaggerated and overplayed.

For instance, by the end of the book and the film you felt bludgeoned by the connection between birds and dinosaurs. Some of these connections made some sense. An example would be the similarities between the eating behavior of birds of prey and the tyrannosaur. It is likely that both held their prey down with their claws or talons and tore pieces of flesh off with their jaws or beaks. A non-evolutionary interpretation is simply that similarity in structure indicates a similarity in function. An ancestral relationship is not necessary.

But many of the links had no basis in reality and were badly reasoned speculations. The owl-like hoots of the poison-spitting dilophosaur jumped out as an example of pure fantasy. There is no way to guess or estimate the vocalization behavior from a fossilized skeleton.

Another example came in the scene when Dr. Alan Grant and the two kids, Tim and Lex, meet a herd of gallimimus, a dinosaur similar in appearance to an oversized ostrich. Grant remarks that the herd turns in unison like a flock of birds avoiding a predator. Well, sure, flocks of birds do behave this way, but so do herds of grazing mammals and schools of fish. So observing this behavior in dinosaurs no more links them to birds than the webbed feet and flattened bill of the Australian platypus links it to ducks! Even in an evolutionary scheme, most of the behaviors unique to birds would have evolved after the time of the dinosaurs.

A contradiction to the hypothesis that birds evolved from dinosaurs is the portrayal of the velociraptors hunting in packs. Mammals behave this way, as do some fishes such as the sharks, but I am not aware of any birds or reptiles that do.

The concealment of this contradiction exposes the sensational intent of the story. It is used primarily to enhance the story, but many will assume that it is a realistic evolutionary connection.

Finally, a complex and fascinating piece of dialogue in the movie mixed together an attack on creationism, an exaltation of humanism and atheism, and a touch of feminist male bashing. I suspect that it was included in order to add a little humor and to keep aspects of political correctness in our collective consciousness. Shortly after the tour of the park begins and before they have seen any dinosaurs, Ian Malcolm reflects on the irony of what *Jurassic Park* has accomplished. He muses, "God creates dinosaurs. God destroys dinosaurs. God creates man. Man destroys God. Man creates dinosaurs." To which Ellie Satler replies, "Dinosaurs eat man. Woman inherits the earth!" Malcolm clearly mocks God by indicating that not only does man declare God irrelevant, but also proceeds to duplicate God's creative capability by creating dinosaurs all over again. We are as smart and as powerful as we once thought God to be. God is no longer needed.

While the movie was not openly hostile to religious views, Crichton clearly intended to marginalize theistic views of origins with humor, sarcasm, and an overload of evolutionary interpretations.

Jurassic Park and the New Age

Ian Malcolm, in the scene in the biology lab as the group inspects a newly hatching velociraptor, pontificates that "evolution" has taught us that life will not be limited or extinguished. "If there is one thing the history of evolution has taught us, it's that life will not be contained. Life breaks free. It expands to new territories, it crashes through barriers, painfully, maybe even dangerously, but, uh, well, there it is!….I'm simply saying that, uh, life finds a way."

Evolution is given an intelligence all its own! Life finds a way. There is an almost personal quality given to living things, particularly to the process of evolution. Most evolutionary scientists would not put it this way. To them evolution proceeds blindly, without purpose, without direction. This intelligence or purposefulness in nature actually reflects a pantheistic or new age perspective on the biological world.

The pantheist believes that all is one and therefore all is god. God is impersonal rather than personal and god's intelligence permeates all of nature. Therefore the universe is intelligent and purposeful. Consequently a reverence for nature develops instead of reverence for God. In the lunch room scene Malcolm says, "The lack of humility before nature being displayed here, staggers me." Malcolm speaks of Nature with a capital "N." While we should respect and cherish all of nature as being God's creation, humility seems inappropriate. Later in the same scene, Malcom again ascribes a personal quality to nature when he says, "What's so great about discovery? It's a violent penetrative act that scars what it explores. What you call discovery, I call the rape of the natural world." Apparently, any scientific discovery intrudes upon the private domain of nature. Not only is this new age in its tone, but it also criticizes Western culture's attempts to understand the natural world through science.

There were other unusual new age perspectives displayed by other characters. Paleobotanist Ellie Satler displayed an uncharacteristically unscientific and feminine, or was it New Age, perspective when she chastened John Hammond for thinking that there was a rational solution to the breakdowns in the park. You may remember the scene in the dining hall, where philanthropist John Hammond and Dr. Satler are eating ice cream while tyrannosaurs and velociraptors are loose in the park with Dr. Grant, Ian Malcolm, and Hammond's grandchildren. At one point, Satler says, "You can't think your way out of

this one, John. You have to feel it." Somehow, the solution to the problem is to be found in gaining perspective through your emotions, perhaps getting in touch with the "force" that permeates everything around us as in *Star Wars*.

Finally, in this same scene, John Hammond, provides a rather humanistic perspective on scientific discovery. He is responding to Ellie Satler's criticisms that a purely safe and enjoyable *Jurassic Park*, is not possible. Believing that man can accomplish anything he sets his mind to, Hammond blurts out, "Creation is a sheer act of will!" If men and women were gods in the pantheistic sense, perhaps this would be true of humans. But if you think about it, this statement is truer than first appears, for the true Creator of the universe simply spoke and it came into being. The beginning of each day's activity in Genesis 1 begins with the phrase, "And God said."

Creation is an act of will, but it is the Divine Will of the Supreme Sovereign of the universe. And we know this because the Bible tells us so!

They Clone Dinosaurs Don't They?

The movie *Jurassic Park* raised the possibility of cloning dinosaurs. Prior to the release of the movie, magazines and newspapers were filled with speculations concerning the real possibility of cloning dinosaurs. The specter of cloning dinosaurs was left too much in the realm of the eminently possible. Much of this confidence stemmed from statements from Michael Crichton, the author of the book, and producer Steven Spielberg.

Scientists are very reluctant to use the word "never." But this issue is as safe as they come. Dinosaurs will never be cloned. The positive votes come mainly from Crichton, Spielberg, and the public. Reflecting back on his early research for the book, Michael Crichton said, "I began to

think it really could happen."{6} The official *Jurassic Park* Souvenir magazine fueled the speculation when it said, "The story of *Jurassic Park* is not far-fetched. It is based on actual, ongoing genetic and paleontologic research. In the words of Steven Spielberg: This is not science fiction; it's science eventuality."{7} No doubt spurred on by such grandiose statements, 58% of 1000 people polled for *USA Today* said they believe that scientists will be able to recreate animals through genetic engineering.{8}

Now contrast this optimism with the more sobering statements from scientists. The *Dallas Morning News* said, "You're not likely to see Tyrannosaurus Rex in the Dallas Zoo anytime soon. Scientists say that reconstituting any creature from its DNA simply won't work."{9} And *Newsweek* summarized the huge obstacles when it said, "Researchers have not found an amber-trapped insect containing dinosaur blood. They have no guarantee that the cells in the blood, and the DNA in the cells, will be preserved intact. They don't know how to splice the DNA into a meaningful blueprint, or fill the gaps with DNA from living creatures. And they don't have an embryo cell to use as a vehicle for cloning."{10} These are major obstacles. Let's look at them one at a time.

First, insects in amber. DNA has been extracted from insects encased in amber from deposits as old as 120 million years.{11} Amber does preserve biological tissues very well. But only very small fragments of a few individual genes were obtained. The cloning of gene fragments is a far cry from cloning an entire genome. Without the entire intact genome, organized into the proper sequence and divided into chromosomes, it is virtually impossible to reconstruct an organism from gene fragments.

Second, filling in the gaps. The genetic engineers of *Jurassic Park* used frog DNA to shore up the missing stretches of the cloned dinosaur DNA. But this is primarily a plot device to allow for the possibility of amphibian environmentally-

induced sex change. An evolutionary scientist would have used reptilian or bird DNA which would be expected to have a higher degree of compatibility. It is also very far-fetched that an integrated set of genes to perform gender switching which does occur in some amphibians, could actually be inserted accidentally and be functional.

Third, a viable dinosaur egg. The idea of placing the dinosaur genetic material into crocodile or ostrich eggs is preposterous. You would need a real dinosaur egg of the same species as the DNA. Unfortunately, there are no such eggs left. And we can't recreate one without a model to copy. So don't get your hopes up. There will never be a real *Jurassic Park*!

Notes

1. Sharon Begley, "Here come the DNAsaurs," *Newsweek*, 14 June 1993, 61.

2. Patrick Cox, "*Jurassic Park*, A Luddite Monster," The *Wall Street Journal*, 9 July 1993.

3. Steven Spielberg, quoted by Patrick Cox, *WSJ*, 9 July 1993.

4. Cox, *WSJ*, 9 July 1993.

5. From this point on all dialogue is from the movie *Jurassic Park*, Kathleen Kennedy and Gerald R. Molen, Producers, copyright 1993, Universal City Studios, Inc., and Amblin Entertainment.

6. Michael Crichton, quoted in "Crichton's Creation," *The Jurassic Park Official Souvenir Magazine*, (Brooklyn, N.Y.: The Topps Company, Inc., 1993), 4.

7. "Welcome to Jurassic Park," *The Jurassic Park Official Souvenir Magazine*, (Brooklyn, N.Y.: The Topps Company, Inc., 1993), 2.

8. American Opinion Research poll of 1,000 adults from May 7-24, 1993 cited in *USA Today,* Friday, June 11, 1993, 2A.

9. Graphic inset, "How Real is *Jurassic Park*?," The *Dallas Morning News*, Monday, 14 June 1993, 10D.

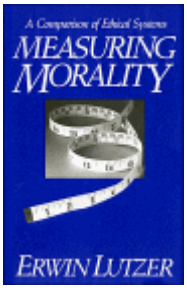
10. Begley, "Here Come the DNAsaurs," 60-61.

11. Raul J. Cano, Hendrik N. Poinar, Norman J. Pieniazek, Aftim Acra, and George O. Poinar, Jr. "Amplification and sequencing of DNA from a 120 135-million-year-old weevil," *Nature* 363 (10 June 1993): 536-38.

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Measuring Morality

What makes an action right or wrong? The answer to this question, when asked of various ethical systems, helps sort through the maze of beliefs that muddy the ethical waters. Lou Whitworth provides a condensation of Erwin Lutzer's book Measuring Morality: A Comparison of Ethical Systems.



In evaluating ethical systems we can be lost in a maze of systems, details, and terminology. Such arguments lead nowhere, shed little light on the subject, and polarize people into opposing camps. A helpful way to sort through this subject is to ask a basic question which will make clear the assumptions underlying disparate views. That question could be stated this way: "What makes an action right or wrong in this system?"

Cultural Relativism

When the question is asked "What makes an action right or

wrong?" one category of answer will be: "Culture," that is, culture determines what is right or wrong whatever a cultural group approves of is right; whatever the group disapproves of is wrong.

This is the ethical position known as cultural relativism. There are several key ingredients that make up this view.

1. Culture and Custom – In cultural relativism, moral standards are the result of group history and common experience which over time become enculturated ways of belief and action, i.e., customs, mores, and folkways.

2. Change – Since group experiences change with the passage of time, then naturally customs will change as a reflection of these new experiences.

3. Relativity – What is right (or normal) in one culture may be wrong (or abnormal) in another, since different forms of morality evolved in different places as a result of different experiences cultural adaptation. Thus, there are no fixed principles or absolutes.

4. Conscience – Cultural relativism holds that our consciences are the result of the childhood training and pressures from our group or tribe. What our consciences tell us is what our culture has trained them to tell us.

An Evaluation of Cultural Relativism

In trying to evaluate cultural relativism some things must be clear. First, it is quite obvious that there are many things we can all learn from other cultures. No culture has a monopoly on wisdom, virtue, or rationality. Second, just because we may do things a certain way doesn't mean that our way is the best or the most moral way to do those things.

Having said this, however, there are some problems cultural relativism faces. First, it is not enough to say that morals

originated in the world and that they are constantly evolving. Cultural relativism needs to answer how value originated out of non-value; that is, how did the first value arise?

Second, cultural relativism seems to hold as a cardinal value that values change. But, if the value that values change is itself unchanging, then this theory claims as an unchanging value that all values change and progress. Thus, the position contradicts itself.

Third, if there are no absolute values that exist transculturally or externally to the group, how are different cultures to get along when values collide? How are they to handle such conflicts?

Fourth, where does the group, tribe, or culture get its authority? Why can't individuals assume that authority?

Fifth, most of our heroes and heroines have been those who courageously went against culture and justified their actions by appealing to a higher standard. According to cultural relativism such people are always morally wrong.

Finally, cultural relativism assumes human physical evolution as well as social evolution.

Situational Ethics

When the question "What makes an action right or wrong?" is asked another answer one hears is that "love" is the determining principle. This is the basis of situational ethics, a system made popular by Joseph Fletcher.

Three Types of Ethical Systems

Fletcher believes there are three approaches to making moral decisions. The first he calls legalism which he defines as "rules and regulations." He rejects this system as being more concerned with law than with people.

Fletcher states that the second approach to morality is antinomianism, meaning “against law.” Antinomians reject all rules, laws, and principles regarding morality and see no basis for determining whether acts are moral or immoral. Fletcher rejects antinomianism because it refuses to take seriously the demands of love.

The third option, Fletcher’s personal choice, is situationism. It is often called situation ethics or the new morality. It argues for a middle road between legalism and antinomianism.

The Three Premises of Situationism

The first premise of situationism is that love is the sole arbiter of morality in any situation. This means that under certain conditions doing the loving thing may require us to break the rules or commandments of morality because they are only contingent, whereas love is the unchanging absolute.

Second, situationism holds that love should be defined in utilitarian terms. This means that to be truly loving an action should be judged by whether or not it contributes to the greatest good for the greatest number.

Third, situationism is forced to accept the view that the end justifies the means. The problem here is that the end in mind is often one chosen arbitrarily by the person who acts. This posture, of course, opens to the door for all sorts of brutality and abuse.

Criticisms of Situationism

The ethical system known as situationism is subject to several serious criticisms. The first is that love, as defined by Fletcher, is of no help whatsoever in making moral decisions because everyone may have a different opinion of what is loving or unloving in a given situation. The truth is, love without ethical content is meaningless, and without rules (or principles, or commandments), love is incapable of giving any

guidance on making moral decisions. In fact, it isn't love that guides many of the decisions in Fletcher's system at all, but preconceived personal preferences.

A second criticism of situationism is that in a moral system based on the consequences of our actions, we have to be able to predict those consequences ahead of time if we want to know whether or not we are acting morally.

We may start out with the best of intentions, but if our prediction of the desired consequences does not come true, we have committed an immoral act in spite of our good intentions. And now we begin to see the enormity of the situationist's dilemma: (1) calculating the myriad possible outcomes of each and every ethical possibility before making the needed decisions, and then (2) choosing the very best course of action. Such calculations are impossible and thus render the moral life impossible.

Naturalism and Behaviorism

When the question, "What makes an action right or wrong?" is posed to the naturalist, the answer comes back "Whatever is, is right." To see how we came to this point, we must review how naturalism and behaviorism arose in reaction to dualism.

Dualism's Difficulties

the philosophy of dualism holds that there are two principal substances in the universe: matter and mind (or soul or spirit). These two substances correspond to the material and immaterial aspects of human life and reality. The belief goes back all the way to Plato and is compatible with the Christian worldview.

When Descartes came along, he ascribed to the concept that matter and mind (or spirit) are different, but he eventually came to assert that matter and mind (spirit) are so diverse that they have no common properties and cannot influence each

other. This led to what is known as the mind-brain problem: namely, if mind and body (matter) cannot interact, how do we explain the fact that the mind appears to affect the body and the body appears to affect the mind?

Naturalism Catches On

While philosophers and scientists pondered this dilemma, the growing implications of Newton's discovery of the law of gravity served to further complicate things. Since observation and mathematical calculations revealed that all bodies (including human bodies) are subject to the same seemingly unbreakable laws, the existence of the mind (or spirit) became increasingly difficult to maintain. Consequently, some philosophers thought it much simpler to believe in only one substance in the universe.

Thus dualism (meaning two substances: matter and mind) lost popular appeal and naturalism or materialism (meaning one substance: matter) gained the ascendancy. If there is only one substance in the universe, then all particles of matter are interrelated in a causal sequence and the universe, human beings included, must be a giant computer controlled by blind physical forces. Thus, according to naturalism, humans are mere cogs in the machine. We cannot act upon the world, rather the world acts upon us. In such a world the mind is just the by-product of the brain as the babbling is the by- product of the brook. Freedom, therefore, is an illusion, and strictly speaking there is no morality at all.

Behaviorism

Behaviorism grew out of naturalism and is an extension of it. One form of behaviorism is called sociobiology, a theory that morality is rooted in our genes. That is, all forms of life exist solely to serve the purposes of the DNA code. According to sociobiology, the ultimate rationale for one's existence and behavior is the preservation or advancement of the person's genes.

The more well-known form of behaviorism comes from B. F. Skinner. He stated that we are what we are largely because of our environmental training or conditioning.

Evaluating Behaviorism

When we remember that both forms behaviorism are built on naturalism, the implications are the same: man is a machine; all our actions are the product of forces beyond our control, and we possess no special dignity in the universe. Thus, strictly speaking, behaviorism does not propose a theory of morality, but it results in antimorality.

Emotive Ethics

In modern ethical thought an unusual answer has been given to the question, “What makes an action right or wrong?” The answer? “Nothing is literally right or wrong: these terms are simply the expression of emotion and as such are neither true nor false.” This is answer of emotive ethics.

This theory of morality originated with David Hume and his belief that knowledge is limited to sense impressions. Beyond sense impressions, our knowledge is unfounded. What difference does such a theory make? It renders intelligent talk about God, the soul, or morality impossible, because real knowledge is limited to phenomena observable by our physical senses. Discussion of phenomena not observable by our physical senses is considered to belong to the realm of metaphysics, a realm that cannot be touched, felt, seen, heard, nor smelled.

What can we know if our knowledge is limited to our sense experience? Hume claimed that all we can know are matters of fact. We can only make factually verifiable statements such as, “That crow is black” or “The book is on the table.” On the other hand, we cannot, in this system, make a statement like, “Stealing is wrong.” We cannot even say, “Murder is wrong.” Why? Because wrong is not a factual observation and cannot be

verified empirically. In fact, it is a meaningless statement, and merely an expression of personal preference. We are really just saying “I don’t like stealing,” and “I dislike murder.” It is on the order of saying, “I like tomatoes.” Someone else can say, “I dislike tomatoes,” without factual contradiction because it’s just the statement of two different personal preferences.

In summary, emotive ethics holds that it is impossible to have a rational discussion about morals. This is because ethical statements cannot be analyzed since they do not meet the criteria of scientific statements; that is, they are not observation statements. Thus, in emotivism, all actions are morally neutral.

An Evaluation of Emotivism

Upon reflection, emotivism is less devastating than it first appears. For starters, emotivists can never say that another ethical system is wrong; they can only volunteer that they don’t like or prefer other systems. Likewise, they can’t say that we ought to accept their views. Emotivism, therefore, by its own principles, allows us to reject this theory.

Second, unless emotivists provide some rational criterion for making moral choices, they must allow moral anarchy. Their only objection to terrorist morality would be, “I don’t like it.” The emotivist, then, is left with no reason to judge or oppose a dictator or terrorist.

Third, the thesis of emotivism that rational discussion of morality is impossible is false. Their assumption that the only meaningful utterances are statements of factual observation is one of emotivism’s basic philosophical flaws, and it cannot be factually verified! It does not fit into the “crow is black” model proposed by emotivists themselves. Morality is open to rational discussion. Emotivism’s arbitrary limitations on language cannot be maintained.

Traditional Absolutes

Earlier we considered four systems of ethics cultural relativism, situationism, behaviorism, and emotivism that in one way or another all self-destruct, ultimately destroyed by their own arbitrarily chosen principles.

Now we must reexamine traditional ethics: the Judeo-Christian ethic based on revelation, i.e., the Bible.

1. God's moral revelation is based on His nature.

God is separate from everything that exists, is free of all imperfections and limitations, and is His own standard. No moral rule exists outside of Him. Holiness, goodness, and truthfulness indeed all biblical morality are rooted in the nature of God.

2. Man is a unique moral being.

The biblical picture of mankind differs strikingly from the humanistic versions of mankind. We alone were created in the image of God and possess at least four qualities that distinguish us from the animals: personality, ability to reason, moral nature, and spiritual nature.

3. God's moral principles have historical continuity.

If God's moral revelation is rooted in His nature, it is clear that those moral principles will transcend time. Although specific commands may change from one era to another, the principles remain constant.

4. God's moral revelation has intrinsic value.

God's standards, like the laws of nature, have built-in consequences. Just as we have to deal with the laws of nature, we will eventually have to deal with the consequences of violating God's standards unless we put our faith in Christ who took on the consequences of our disobedience by His death

on the cross.

5. Law and love are harmonized in the Scriptures.

In the biblical revelation, love and law are not mutually exclusive, but are harmonized. Love fulfills the law. If we love God, we will want to keep His commandments.

6. Obedience to God's Law is not legalism.

The Bible speaks strongly against legalism since biblical morality is much more than external obedience to a moral code. No one can live up to God's standards without the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, because we are judged by our attitudes and motivations not just external performance.

7. God's moral revelation was given for our benefit.

Though in the short run it may sometimes appear that biblical moral standards are too restrictive, we can be sure that such injunctions are for our benefit because of His love for us. After all, in the long run God knows best since because of His omniscience, He can calculate all the consequences.

8. Exceptions to God's revelation must have biblical sanction.

Biblical morality is not based on calculating the consequences since only God can do that perfectly. Our responsibility is to obey; God's responsibility is to take care of the consequences.

9. "Ought" does not always imply "can."

According to the Bible, we do not, and cannot, live up to what we know to be right. Yet God is not mocking us because He has left us a way out. He made provision for our weaknesses and failures because Christ's death on the cross in our behalf satisfied His moral requirements.

What makes an act right or wrong then? The answer is: the

revealed will of God found in the Bible.

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The Holocaust: Ideas and Their Consequences

Former Probe staffer Ray Cotton examines two conflicting worldviews in Nazi Germany, the Christian church and atheistic naturalism.

"Schindler's List," Steven Spielberg's award-winning film based on a novel by Thomas Keneally, brings us a story of great moral courage in the midst of a culture of fear and hate. Set in World War II Europe, during the horrors of the Jewish Holocaust, the movie chronicles the fanatical determination of the Nazi regime to eliminate the Jews from the face of the earth. Along the way, the movie teaches a lesson about the power of a single individual to do good, in spite of the circumstances and in the face of unbelievable difficulties.

The movie allows us to observe the moral growth that took place in the life of Oskar Schindler as he matured from a greedy war profiteer to a rescuer of Jewish people. Mr. Schindler went from amassing a personal fortune to draining that fortune and risking his life in the process. He saved 1,300 Jews from the Nazi death camps. But he could only save a small percentage of the persecuted Jewish people, and the movie re-emphasizes the horror of this tragedy.

Six million Jews (and five million non-Jews) went to their deaths under the hands of the Nazi exterminators. This means

that half of all the Jews in Europe and a third of all the Jewish people on earth perished in the Holocaust. This historical lesson of man's inhumanity to man must never be forgotten and today, thanks to Holocaust museums in cities around the world and movies like "Schindler's List," the message is being kept alive.

1994 marked the 50th anniversary of the D-day invasion of Europe; it also marked the liberation of the first death camp, Majdanek, where 360,000 people, most of them Jews, were exterminated. The liberations continued as the Allied forces advanced during the next six months.

Auschwitz, the most infamous death camp, was liberated on January 27, 1945.{1} The stories of that came forth from those who liberated the camps were at first dismissed as too horrible to be true. But as each succeeding camp was liberated, it became impossible to deny the reality of it all. To this day the world continues to ask, how could such things happen in modern times? Even more frightening is the realization that the same forces which gave rise to the Holocaust are operating in our world today.{2}

Adolf Hitler, on the last day of his life, April 29, 1945, in the Berlin bunker, dictated these final words to the German people: Above all I charge the leaders of the nation and those under them to scrupulous observance of the laws of race and to merciless opposition to the universal poisoner of all peoples, international Jewry.{3}

What was the overpowering idea that brought forth the paradigm that allowed Hitler and the Nazi party to come into power? Was it the anti-Semitism of the church or was it the ever growing idea of atheistic naturalism?

It has been asserted that the early church said the Jews may not live among them as Jews, that the secular society followed by saying the Jews could not live among them, and the Nazis

ultimately said the Jews may not live. Is this a valid view of the progression of ideas that led to the Holocaust and, if so, how did this progression develop and what, if any, leaps of logic or inconsistencies took place during the process?

Accounting for the Holocaust

Accounting for the Holocaust, deciphering and explaining the social and moral conditions that led up to it, has prompted all sorts of theories. It is more than an academic question for if the same conditions occur again will we be able to forestall another Holocaust? Also, how could one of the world's most advanced nations become the seat of such cruelty and depravity? What ideas were in place in the German culture that led to this tragedy? How did these ideas gain enough of a following among the European people to produce such a hideous atrocity? These are important questions. They deserve serious answers, and we will now attempt to shed some light on the issues.

The Church and Anti-Semitism

First, we need to look at the record of the early Christian church. The early church was zealous in its efforts to convert both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews were a major stumbling block because of their resistance to conversion, their unwillingness to accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah. The first anti-Jewish policy started in the fourth century A.D. in Rome under Constantine. Comparing the anti-Jewish measures of the early Catholic Church canonical law with the anti-Jewish measures of the Nazi regime in the 1930s and early forties reveals a striking similarity. As soon as Christianity became the state religion of Rome, in the fourth century A.D., Jewish equality of citizenship was ended. Over the centuries this eventually led to expulsion of the Jews and the establishment of ghettos in Rome in the 1800s in which the Jews were incarcerated.{4}

The Roman Catholic church deviated greatly from the teachings

of Jesus Christ as demonstrated in the parable of the good Samaritan and other lessons from the life and ministry of Christ found in the gospels of the New Testament. Christ's teaching was the ethic of love and the only individuals He dealt with severely were those Jewish Pharisees and Scribes who were hypocrites. The attacks of the Apostle Paul were directed at the Judaizers (Phil. 3:2) who were trying to oppose the spread of Christianity among the Gentiles. The Judaizers often described the gentiles as dogs, so Paul called the Judaizers dogs. Paul was not attacking all Jews, but only those actively opposing the teachings of Christ.

But all the blame does not fall upon the Catholic church. Martin Luther and some other reformers in Germany were guilty of communicating an ever increasing anti-Jewish perspective.{5} Clearly, Jews were perceived as enemies of Christendom by many church leaders, but it is a huge leap from considering someone an enemy of your cause to seeing them as a non-person whom you are free to dispose of at will.

In today's culture, you may consider yourself to be anti-Nazi or anti-skinheads. This means you avidly oppose all that they stand for, but it does not mean you would actively pursue their physical demise, except in just retribution for their personal actions. In fact, if you saw one of them in physical danger, you would probably take action to protect them, possibly at your own personal risk. The Catholic church and many fathers of the reformation may be guilty of anti-Semitism, but that does not provide the foundation necessary to set the stage for the events to follow. The far greater question is how one arrives at the Nazi position of annihilation or "the final solution" to the "Jewish Problem"? That is, how did the German people come to the point of seeing the Jews as non-persons whom they could dispose of at will? What ideas came in to corrupt the thinking of a people steeped in church culture?

The Real Culprit: Atheistic Naturalism

At this point we must bring in a completely different world view, that of atheistic naturalism. Atheism is the doctrine that denies or disbelieves the existence of God or divine beings. Naturalism, which goes hand in hand with atheism, is the belief that all truth is derived from a study of natural processes. All action is based on natural instincts and desires. Only the natural elements of the world are taken into account, the supernatural or spiritual is excluded.

Machiavelli's Evil Influence

To set the stage for a naturalistic worldview, one could go all the way back to Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), a great voice in the revival of the ancient view of political naturalism or power ethics, long suppressed in the Western world by the impact of the early Christian church. Machiavelli's most influential work, *The Prince*, was significant because it helped to mold modern minds and, in turn, modern history. His theme was plain: the ruler "who wants to keep his post must learn how not to be good, and use that knowledge, or refrain from using it, as necessity requires."{6} In other words, do what you need to do to preserve your position and don't concern yourself with what is the ethical thing to do.

The Downward Spiral Continues

The ethical stance that whatever strengthens the state is right had a great influence on the thinking of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). Hobbes, although heavily influenced by the ideas of Machiavelli, was also influenced by the revived Epicurean ideas of pleasure. Epicurean philosophy is centered around the goal of maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. Thomas Hobbes developed the idea of good being what we like and evil what we dislike, as well as the idea that self-preservation is

achieved through the sovereign state. In Hobbes we can trace the merging of Machiavelli's power ethics philosophy with the Epicurean philosophy of pleasure.

The teaching of Hobbes influenced others such as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Karl Marx (1819-1883), and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). From this group came the power politics of men like Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini. In fact, Hitler personally presented a copy of Nietzsche's works to Benito Mussolini, and Mussolini submitted a thesis on Machiavelli for his doctor's degree.

From Neitzsche to Auschwitz (and the Gulag)

There is a need to take a much closer look at the ideas espoused by Nietzsche, since he became the primary influencer of two divergent worldviews or paradigms, both antagonistic toward the Jews and both responsible for the murder of countless millions of innocent people. One line leads to the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini, while the other leads to the communism of Lenin and Stalin. Nietzsche had a profound impact upon Hitler and subsequent politicians of power.

Although atheism has never lacked a spokesman, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche shines forth as the one who changed the flow of history with his eloquent presentations leading to the "death of God."

"There will be wars," Nietzsche had written, "such as have never been waged on earth. I foresee something terrible. Chaos everywhere. Nothing left which is of any value, nothing which commands: 'Thou shalt!'" Nietzsche and others prefigured and predicted the moral nihilism of the twentieth century, the revolt against reason and the limitless pursuit of the irrational. Nazi Germany materialized the progression toward this chaos.{7} "Nietzsche despised religion in general, and Christianity in particular. So profound and operative was

Nietzsche's philosophy upon Hitler, that it provided the conceptual framework for his demogogical onslaught to obliterate the weak and inferior of this world."{8} Hitler's hatred of Christians was second only to his hatred of Jews and Gypsies.

Nietzsche was quick to attack the ethics of love as taught by Christ in the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. He believed that if mankind sought to show responsibility toward the poor and weak, then the losers would be in control. He predicted that the twentieth century would become the bloodiest century in history and that universal madness would break out. Hitler and Stalin brought forth the reality of his predictions.

In Nietzschean terms, the cause—atheism, and the result—violence and hedonism, are as logically connected as the chronological connection between Hitler's announcement of his intent in *Mein Kampf*, and the hell ushered in by the Third Reich.{9} Hitler took Nietzsche's logic and drove the atheistic worldview to its legitimate conclusion.

Even though there was anti-Semitism both in the Catholic church and expressed by reformation leaders, it was atheistic naturalism that provided the real power behind the Holocaust. In seeking to blame both the church and atheistic naturalism for providing the ideas that led to the Holocaust, how does one reconcile the huge antithesis between the two totally opposing worldviews?

One cannot, except to say that the weakness, or failure of the church to maintain biblical standards allowed for the inroads of anti-Semitism. The biblical position is totally at odds with the actions of the Holocaust. As we address the church, we can say the Holocaust may not have happened if the church had maintained obedience to biblical teaching, for love is the ultimate norm of the Christian ethic (Matt. 22:37-40).

But to the atheistic naturalists, we must say, you have faithfully followed out both the ideology and logical conclusions of your position.

The mass murder of the Jews was the consummation of his (Hitler's) fundamental beliefs and ideological position.{10}

There is a world of difference in the lessons to be learned from the two positions. The naturalist's hope is in man and looks at the world accordingly. The Christian's hope is in God and sees man as sinful. History bears witness to both the sinfulness and failure of man, i.e., history validates the Christian position and destroys the naturalist's position. The naturalist's only hope is in education. What hope does education give us for preventing another Holocaust? We will examine the hope of education and the true nature of man.

Is Education Really Our Best Hope?

The philosophy of atheistic naturalism can logically lead to the excesses of the Nazi and Communist regimes. Since this is true, howare we to prevent such horrors from happening again?

Many today believe the answer lies in education. Education does an excellent job of teaching us how to best do what we already believe in, but it does a dismal job of helping us see what it is that we should believe. It is at this very point that we realize the need for transcendent truth.

Man's Greatest Need

Man's greatest need is for a redemptive truth beyond himself. The murder of millions has been perpetuated by some of the most educated, cultured people in the world. While up to 12,000 people a day were being obliterated at the Auschwitz camps, the builders of those state of the art camps were enthralled by the music of Wagner. They had the best of education and of culture. The Bible tells us that the nature

of man is flawed and that without help from beyond ourselves we are doomed to eternal death. Even Bernard Shaw recognized this problem as sin when he wrote:

The first prison I ever saw had inscribed over it “Cease to do evil, learn to do well”: but as the inscription was on the outside, the prisoners could not read it. It should have been addressed to the self-righteous free spectator in the street, and should have read, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”{11}

We all stand naked and guilty before God. Romans 3:10 says that “There is none righteous, no not one.” If the Holocaust did nothing else, it did strip away all illusions about the refined nature of man. Only when we are prepared to come humbly before God and confess our sin and ask for forgiveness and deliverance can we have a hope for the future. Speaking to the Jewish people, God said in 2 Chronicles 7:14, “If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” This is a promise that all those who belong to the kingdom of God can apply and claim.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we are drawn to say that the Nazi’s “final solution” was the untimely child of the union of Christian anti- Semitism and German nationalism,{12} but Christian anti-Semitism is an oxymoron and is the product of an disobedient church, be it Catholic or Protestant. Jesus Christ, the One we adore was a Jew, the Apostles from whom we have the New Testament Scriptures were Jews, and all the teaching of the New Testament is built upon the foundation of Jewish Old Testament Scriptures. In contrast, the anti-Semitism of Nazi Germany was the logical conclusion to the ideology that German nationalism was built upon, that of atheistic naturalism.

Therefore, the anti-Semitism of the church became the convenient, albeit invalid, excuse while the real reason for the Holocaust was the atheistic anti-Semitism of German nationalism based on a naturalistic worldview.

Notes

1. John Conroy, “Beyond One Man’s Heroism,” *Dallas Morning News*, Sunday, 10 July 1994, Section G, page 1.

2. Pauline B. Yearwood, “Reminders from a `Schindler Jew,'” *Dallas Morning News*, Sunday, 10 July 1994, Section G, page 1.

3. Adolf Hitler, “My Political Testament,” NCA, 6, Doc. 3569-PS, pp. 258-63.

4. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), pp. 5-6.

5. Peter J. Haas, *Morality After Auschwitz* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p. 20.

6. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1977), p. 44.

7. Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry* 1933-1945 (New York: Schoken Books, 1973), p. xiii.

8. Ravi Zacharias, *A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1990), p. 17.

9. Ibid., p. 26.

10. Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), p. 3.

11. Bernard Shaw, Preface to “Imprisonment” in *English Local Government* quoted in *Making Moral Decisions*, ed. D. M. MacKinnon (London: SPCK, 1969), p. 67.

12. Dawidowicz, p. 23.

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Worldviews

A worldview is like a pair of glasses through which we view the world. Everyone has one. Jerry Solomon examines the basic worldviews and some of the beliefs and questions that they involve.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

A friend of mine recently told me of a conversation he had with a good friend we will call Joe. Joe is a doctor. He is not a Christian. This is how the conversation went: “Joe, you’re an excellent doctor. You care deeply about your patients. Why do you care so much for people since you believe we have evolved by chance? What gives us value?” Joe was stunned by the question and couldn’t answer it. His “worldview” had taken a blow.

The concept of a worldview has received increasing attention for the past several years. Many books have been written on the subject of worldviews from both Christian and non-Christian perspectives. Frequently speakers will refer to the term. On occasion even reviews of movies and music will include the phrase. All this attention prompts us to ask, “What does the term mean?” and “What difference does it make?” It is our intent to answer these questions. And it is our hope that all of us will give serious attention to our own worldview, as well as the worldviews of those around us.

What is a Worldview?

What is a *worldview*? A variety of definitions have been

offered by numerous authors. For example, James Sire asserts that "A worldview is a set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously) about the basic makeup of our world."{1} Phillips and Brown state that "A worldview is, first of all, *an explanation and interpretation of the world* and second, *an application of this view to life*. In simpler terms, our worldview is a view *of the world* and a view *for the world*."{2} Walsh and Middleton provide what we think is the most succinct and understandable explanation: "A world view provides a model *of the world* which guides its adherents *in the world*."{3} With the realization that many subtleties can be added, this will be our working definition.

The Need for a Worldview

Worldviews act somewhat like eye glasses or contact lenses. That is, a worldview should provide the correct "prescription" for making sense of the world just as wearing the correct prescription for your eyes brings things into focus. And, in either example, an incorrect prescription can be dangerous, even life-threatening. People who are struggling with worldview questions are often despairing and even suicidal. Thus it's important for us to give attention to the formulation of the proper worldview. Arthur Holmes states that the need for a worldview is fourfold: "the need to unify thought and life; the need to define the good life and find hope and meaning in life; the need to guide thought; the need to guide action."{4} Yet another prominent need for the proper worldview is to help us deal with an increasingly diverse culture. We are faced with a smorgasbord of worldviews, all of which make claims concerning truth. We are challenged to sort through this mixture of worldviews with wisdom. These needs are experienced by all people, either consciously or unconsciously. All of us have a worldview with which we strive to meet such needs. The proper worldview helps us by orienting us to the intellectual and philosophical terrain about us.

Worldviews are so much a part of our lives that we see and hear them daily, whether we recognize them or not. For example, movies, television, music, magazines, newspapers, government, education, science, art, and all other aspects of culture are affected by worldviews. If we ignore their importance, we do so to our detriment.

Testing Worldviews

A worldview should pass certain tests. First, it should be rational. It should not ask us to believe contradictory things. Second, it should be supported by evidence. It should be consistent with what we observe. Third, it should give a satisfying comprehensive explanation of reality. It should be able to explain why things are the way they are. Fourth, it should provide a satisfactory basis for living. It should not leave us feeling compelled to borrow elements of another worldview in order to live in this world.

Components Found in All Worldviews

In addition to putting worldviews to these tests, we should also see that worldviews have common components. These components are self-evident. It is important to keep these in mind as you establish your own worldview, and as you share with others. There are four of them.

First, **something exists**. This may sound obvious, but it really is an important foundational element of worldview building since some will try to deny it. But a denial is self-defeating because all people experience cause and effect. The universe is rational; it is predictable.

Second, **all people have absolutes**. Again, many will try to deny this, but to deny it is to assert it. All of us seek an infinite reference point. For some it is God; for others it is the state, or love, or power, and for some this reference point is themselves or man.

Third, **two contradictory statements cannot both be right**. This is a primary law of logic that is continually denied. Ideally speaking, only one worldview can correctly mirror reality. This cannot be overemphasized in light of the prominent belief that tolerance is the ultimate virtue. To say that someone is wrong is labeled intolerant or narrow-minded. A good illustration of this is when we hear people declare that all religions are the same. It would mean that Hindus, for example, agree with Christians concerning God, Jesus, salvation, heaven, hell, and a host of other doctrines. This is nonsense.

Fourth,**all people exercise faith**. All of us presuppose certain things to be true without absolute proof. These are inferences or assumptions upon which a belief is based. This becomes important, for example, when we interact with those who allege that only the scientist is completely neutral. Some common assumptions are: a personal God exists; man evolved from inorganic material; man is essentially good; reality is material.

As we dialogue with people who have opposing worldviews, an understanding of these common components can help us listen more patiently, and they can guide us to make our case more wisely.

Six Worldview Questions

Have you ever been frustrated with finding ways to stir the thinking of a non-Christian friend? We are confident the following questions will be of help. And we are also confident they will stir your thinking about the subject of worldviews.

We will answer these questions with various non-Christian responses. Christian responses will be discussed later in this article.

First, **Why is there something rather than nothing?** Some may

actually say something came from nothing. Others may state that something is here because of impersonal spirit or energy. And many believe matter is eternal.

Second, **How do you explain human nature?** Frequently people will say we are born as blank slates, neither good nor evil. Another popular response is that we are born good, but society causes us to behave otherwise.

Third, **What happens to a person at death?** Many will say that a person's death is just the disorganization of matter. Increasingly people in our culture are saying that death brings reincarnation or realization of oneness.

Fourth, **How do you determine what is right and wrong?** Often we hear it said that ethics are relative or situational. Others assert that we have no free choice since we are entirely determined. Some simply derive "oughts" from what "is." And of course history has shown us the tragic results of a "might makes right" answer.

Fifth, **How do you know that you know?** Some say that the mind is the center of our source of knowledge. Things are only known deductively. Others claim that knowledge is only found in the senses. We know only what is perceived.

Sixth, **What is the meaning of history?** One answer is that history is determined as part of a mechanistic universe. Another answer is that history is a linear stream of events linked by cause and effect but without purpose. Yet another answer is that history is meaningless because life is absurd.{5}

The alert Christian will quickly recognize that the preceding answers are contrary to his beliefs. There are definite, sometimes startling differences. Worldviews are in collision. Thus we should know at least something about the worldviews that are central to the conflict. And we should certainly be able to articulate a Christian worldview.

Examples of Worldviews

In his excellent book, *The Universe Next Door*, James Sire catalogs the most influential worldviews of the past and present. These are Christian Theism, Deism, Naturalism, Nihilism, Existentialism, Eastern Pantheism, and New Age or New Consciousness.{6}

Deism, a prominent worldview during the eighteenth century, has almost entirely left the scene. The Deist believes in God, but that God created and then abandoned the universe.

Nihilism, a more recent worldview, is alive among many young people and some intellectuals. Nihilists see no value to reality; life is absurd.

Existentialism is prominent and can be seen frequently, even among unwitting Christians. The Existentialist, like the Nihilist, sees life as absurd, but sees man as totally free to *make himself* in the face of this absurdity.

Christian Theism, Naturalism, and New Age Pantheism are the most influential worldviews presently in the United States. Now we will survey each of them.

Christian Theism

Let's return to the six questions we asked earlier and briefly see how the Christian Theist might answer them.

Question: **Why is there something rather than nothing?** Answer: There is an infinite-personal God who has created the universe out of nothing.

Question: **How do you explain human nature?** Answer: Man was originally created good in God's image, but chose to sin and thus infected all of humanity with what is called a "sin nature." So man has been endowed with value by his creator, but his negative behavior is in league with his nature.

Question: **What happens to a person at death?** Answer: Death is either the gate to life with God or to eternal separation from Him. The destination is dependent upon the response we give to God's provision for our sinfulness.

Question: **How do you determine what is right and wrong?** Answer: The guidelines for conduct are revealed by God.

Question: **How do you know that you know?** Answer: Reason and experience can be legitimate teachers, but a transcendent source is necessary. We know some things only because we are told by God through the Bible.

Question: **What is the meaning of history?** Answer: History is a linear and meaningful sequence of events leading to the fulfillment of God's purposes for man.

Christian Theism had a long history in Western culture. This does not mean that all individuals who have lived in Western culture have been Christians. It simply means that this worldview was dominant; it was the most influential. And this was true even among non-Christians. This is no longer valid. Western culture has experienced a transition to what is called Naturalism.

Naturalism

Even though Naturalism in various forms is ancient, we will use the term to refer to a worldview that has had considerable influence in a relatively short time within Western culture. The seeds were planted in the seventeenth century and began to flower in the eighteenth. Most of us have been exposed to Naturalism through Marxism and what is called Secular Humanism.

What are the basic tenets of this worldview? First, God is irrelevant. This tenet helps us better understand the term Naturalism; it is in direct contrast to Christian Theism, which is based on *supernaturalism*. Second, progress and

evolutionary change are inevitable. Third, man is autonomous, self-centered, and will save himself. Fourth, education is the guide to life; intelligence and freedom guarantee full human potential. Fifth, science is the ultimate provider both for knowledge and morals. These tenets have permeated our lives. They are apparent, for example, in the media, government, and education. We should be alert constantly to their influence.

After World War II "Postmodernism" began to replace the confidence of Naturalism. With it came the conclusion that truth, in any real sense, doesn't exist. This may be the next major worldview, or anti-worldview, that will infect the culture. It is presently the rage on many of our college campuses. In the meantime, though, the past few decades have brought us another ancient worldview dressed in Western clothing.

New Age Pantheism

Various forms of Pantheism have been prominent in Eastern cultures for thousands of years. But it began to have an effect on our culture in the 1950s. There had been various attempts to introduce its teachings before then, but those attempts did not arouse the interest that was stirred in that decade. It is now most readily observed in what is called the New Age Movement.

What are the basic tenets of this worldview? First, all is one. There are no ultimate distinctions between humans, animals, or the rest of creation. Second, since all is one, all is god. All of life has a spark of divinity. Third, if all is one and all is god, then each of us is god. Fourth, humans must discover their own divinity by experiencing a change in consciousness. We suffer from a collective form of metaphysical amnesia. Fifth, humans travel through indefinite cycles of birth, death, and reincarnation in order to work off what is called "bad karma." Sixth, New Age disciples think in terms of gray, not black and white. Thus they believe that two

conflicting statements can both be true.

On the popular level these tenets are presently asserted through various media, such as books, magazines, television, and movies. Perhaps the most visible teacher is Shirley MacLaine. But these beliefs are also found increasingly among intellectuals in fields such as medicine, psychology, sociology, and education.

Conclusion

We have very briefly scanned the subject of worldviews. Let's return to a definition we affirmed in the beginning of this article: "A worldview provides a model *of the world* which guides its adherents *in the world*." If your model of the world includes an infinite-personal God, as in Christian Theism, that belief should provide guidance for your life. If your model rejects God, as in Naturalism, again such a belief serves as a guide. Or if your model asserts that you are god, as in New Age Pantheism, yet again your life is being guided by such a conception. These examples should remind us that we are living in a culture that puts us in touch constantly with such ideas, and many more. They cannot all be true.

Thus some of us may be confronted with the need to think more deeply than we ever have before. Some of us may need to purge those things from our lives that are contrary to the worldview of Christian Theism. Some of us may need to better understand that our thoughts are to be unified with daily life. Some of us may need to better understand that the good life and hope and meaning are found only through God's answers. Some of us may need to let God's ideas guide our thoughts more completely. And some of us may need to let God's guidelines guide our actions more fully.

Paul's admonition to the believers in ancient Colossae couldn't be more contemporary or helpful in light of our discussion. He wrote:

> *See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ (Col. 2:8).*

Notes

1. James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1988), 17.
2. W. Gary Phillips and William E. Brown, *Making Sense of Your World* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 29.
3. Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1984), 32.
4. Arthur F. Holmes, *Contours of a Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 5.
5. Sire, 18.
6. Ibid.

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Animal Liberation: Do the Beasts Really Benefit?

Are You a Speciesist?

"When it comes to feelings, a rat is a pig is a dog is a boy."(1) That is the moral bottom line for Ingrid Newkirk, founder and director of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (or PETA). I intend to discuss in these pages the contentious issue of animal rights; yet for Ms. Newkirk the

issue is settled: a boy has no more (and no less) rights than a rat.

Almost every week there is a story in the media about a research project stopped by an animal rights group, a protest against women wearing furs, a laboratory bombed by a militant animal rights activist, or a media figure protesting the conditions of animals on factory farms. What are all these protests about, and how should a Bible-believing Christian approach these issues? That is our subject in this pamphlet.

In 1975 Australian Peter Singer wrote a book whose title was to become the banner of a new movement: *Animal Liberation*. This book laid the foundation for most of the discussion since 1975, but it also set the tone of that discussion as specifically anti-Christian. Singer is quite clear about his distaste for Christianity: "It can no longer be maintained by anyone but a religious fanatic that man is the special darling of the universe, or that animals were created to provide us with food, or that we have divine authority over them, and divine permission to kill them."(2)

By using the echoes of specific passages from the Bible and claiming that only a "religious fanatic" could still believe them, Singer is making clear not only that his view is not based on anything resembling a biblical worldview, but that, in fact, the Bible is the root of much of the problem.

It was Peter Singer's book that also made popular the rather ponderous term "speciesism." He writes of this as, "a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species."(3) Singer says speciesism is just as bad as sexism or racism.

So what does "speciesism" really mean? If you think it's acceptable to test a medicine on laboratory animals before giving that medicine to a sick child or a cancer patient

fighting for life, then you, too, are a speciesist. If you believe it is all right to eat meat or fish or shrimp, you are clearly a speciesist, just as guilty as someone who thinks that slavery is an acceptable way to treat another human being, according to Singer and others in the animal rights movement.

Why should Christians even bother to think about issues like animal rights when people are not even treated as well as animals in places like Bosnia or Iraq or many inner cities? Christians need to be actively involved in speaking out and acting clearly on this issue because the very definitions of humanity, of human dignity, and human responsibility are being rapidly reconstructed and any hint of man as created in the image of God or of a God who creates and gives value is seen as "speciesist" and dangerous.

Are We the Creation's Keeper?

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them…. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. That's how God describes His coming kingdom in Isaiah 11.

Clearly God is concerned for all the animals He has created, and they will share a future, a non-violent future, with us. But what of today? How does God intend us to treat animals now?

The animal liberation movement opposes favoring humans over other animals. "Speciesism," they say, is treating humans as if they were more valuable than other animals. What does the Bible say?

God, in Genesis, tells us we have a responsibility as stewards

to care for His creation. We are God's representatives on earth, but we are not Lords of the earth. In Proverbs Solomon says that "a righteous man cares for the needs of his animal" (Prov. 12:10). It is a mark of righteousness that we give animals the care they need. But at the same time we must understand that both we and the rest of creation have value because a sovereign God created us and gave us value because He cares about us. Our value comes from God and not ourselves.

Our concern for animals does not mean we should give up the Bible's insistence that we are unique in all of God's creation because we bear His image, or that we should immediately eliminate all use of animals for any purpose and live resolutely vegetarian lives. What place, then, should animals have? In Matthew 12:11-12 Jesus berates the Pharisees' willingness to help an animal on the Sabbath but not a human.

> *If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.*

Jesus' point is clear: we should have compassion on animals in trouble, but have even more compassion for human beings, because they are "much more valuable" than sheep! But Christians sometimes show little compassion for either.

As Christians we have often not lived up to our responsibilities to animals as creations of God. Frequently we have acted as if all animals are here **only** for our use, to do with whatever we wanted. We have taken God's statement in Genesis 1:28, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth," as giving us the right of despots, not the responsibilities of stewards. As Christians we have not set an example for the world of valuing the rest of creation because

it belongs to God, and we have often abused the creation with no sense of damaging a creation that is not our own.

Next, we will look at what happens when people who deny God try to find an adequate basis on which to build value for themselves or animals, and how far into dangerous territory this can lead them.

From Animal Rights to Abortion: A Small Step from Man to Animal

"Six million Jews died in concentration camps, but six billion broiler chickens will die this year in slaughterhouses."(4) This is how Ms. Newkirk of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals sums up her outrage at the killing of animals. What happens when well- meaning people try to give animals value without God? Ms. Newkirk may think she has improved our view of chickens by comparing them to Jews who were killed in concentration camps. But actually she only trivializes one of the most brutish examples of evil in our century. In her view numbers are everything; if more chickens than people were killed, then poultry farming is worse than Nazi Germany.

What is the foundation of Ms. Newkirk's sense of value? She speaks of Peter Singer's book, *Animal Liberation*, as "the Bible of the animal-rights movement." Singer develops a purely utilitarian view of the greatest good for the greatest number of beings that can experience pain. For Singer there can be no God over creation. He almost sarcastically says: "The Bible tells us that God made man in His own image. We may regard this as man making God in his own image."(5) So Singer turns to evolution to consider how we are related to other creatures.

Singer believes the evolutionary history of humans and other animals, particularly mammals, makes our central nervous system and theirs very similar. His conclusion? That many animals must feel pain like we do. Since we have no basis, in

his view, to see humans as any different from other animals, if it is bad to do something to another pain-feeling human being, then it is wrong to do it to any other pain-feeling animal. The logic is simple, but it leads to just the kinds of confusion that cannot separate Jews dying in gas ovens from chickens dying in processing plants.

Where does a view like this ultimately lead? Singer willingly points the way in its application to new-born children. Writing for physicians in the journal *Pediatrics*, he shows how his ethic applies to humans,

> *Once the religious mumbo jumbo surrounding the term "human" has been stripped away…we will not regard as sacrosanct the life of each and every member of our species, no matter how limited its capacity for intelligent or even conscious life may be.(6)*

With chilling clarity, Singer says that once we come to his position of valuing a life only if it meets certain requirements, it is much easier to take the life, not only of the unborn, but of those who have a "low quality of life." He argues for the right to take the lives of new-born children who do not have certain capacities for "intelligent or even conscious life." Singer concludes:

> *If we can put aside the obsolete and erroneous notion of the sanctity of all human life,…it will be possible to approach these difficult decisions of life and death with the ethical sensitivity that each case demands, rather than with a blindness to individual differences.(7)*

In other words, if a baby does not measure up to Singer's standards, it is not kept alive. The values of animal rights, applied to people, lead coldly to abortion and euthanasia.

While there are many areas where Christians might disagree

with the animal rights movement, one might well ask, Have we Christians lived up to the responsibilities God gave us towards animals?

Are Farm Animals Just Machines?

After the Flood, God tells Noah: “Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.” God also makes a covenant, not only with Noah, but “with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth” (Gen. 9:3, 10).

So, while there is no question that God has given us permission to eat meat, we must also remember that we are moving towards a kingdom in which, as we saw in Isaiah 11, all of creation will live at peace with one another. So what should we be doing now, as we await perfection?

We have already looked at problems with the animal rights position. On the other hand, there are some uses of animals that should cause Christians significant concern.

One of the great changes in Western economies has been the change from the small family farm to the huge “agribusiness.” With this change has come not only increased production and lower food prices, but the treatment of animals as machines and land as a commodity. One area where animal rights activists have done commendable work is in showing the appalling conditions under which most farm animals now live.

Chickens live in battery cages that, on average, allow them only 36 to 48 square inches. This means that two chickens live in less space than a page of paper. Generally four or five chickens share a cage, so that they must almost physically live on top of each other. Does this sound like what Solomon means when he said that “a righteous man cares for the needs

of his animal”?

As one other example, pigs too are treated as machines to produce food. The United States Department of Agriculture tells farmers: “If the sow is considered a pig manufacturing unit, then improved management…will result in more pigs weaned per sow per year.” This is surely not man acting as a good steward of created beings that belong to God. The decline of any belief in God has been accompanied by a decline in any attempt to treat animals on farms as anything other than “manufacturing units” to be treated in whatever way will cause them to produce the most.

If we truly believe what the Psalmist says, that “The earth is the LORD’s and all it contains” (Ps. 24:1), then we must not accept how those who do not believe this have acted. While we are directly given permission in Scripture to eat meat, it might well make a great difference in how animals are treated if Christians choose not to buy from those meat producers who do not tend to their animals as if they really did belong to God.

In the same way that if we believe in the sanctity of human life we must stand against abortion, so too, if we believe that “the earth is the LORD’s” then we must consider whether we can support those who do not treat animals as animals but only as “manufacturing units.”

I want to conclude this discussion with some suggestions about how we can both uphold the uniqueness of humans and stand against the mistreatment of God’s creation.

Recovering the Creation as Compassionate Stewards

I have pointed out the disturbing consequences of abandoning the biblical view that humans are created in the image of God. As theologian and social critic Richard John Neuhaus

perceptively puts it: “The campaign against `speciesism’ is a campaign against the singularity of human dignity and, therefore, of human responsibility…. The hope for a more humane world, including the more humane treatment of animals, is premised upon what [animal rights activists] deny.”(8)

If we are merely animals, we have no reason to be less species- ist than other animals. Dogs show no concern for the welfare of cats. If we are moral in a way that other animals cannot be, then we are both different from other animals and responsible to God for that difference. Because we have a spiritual aspect that no other animal shares, what the Bible calls the “image of God,” we also have a responsibility to care for what God has entrusted to us. How should we live out that responsibility?

First, we must live in obedience to Jesus Christ. It was Jesus who reminded us that God clothes even the grass as an example of His care for all His creation. We need to demonstrate in our actions and in how we teach our children that we, too, consider all of God’s creation as something that shows His glory.

Secondly, we must consider what our own role is as God’s stewards. Just as not all are called to give their lives in vocational missionary service, so, too, not all are called to be full-time activists for better treatment of God’s creation. But we are all called to be missionaries, and we are all called to be stewards and not spoilers of the natural world.

Medical research and experiments on animals provide an excellent place for Christians to be proactive. Animals must be humanely treated, but at the same time we have much to learn about the treatment of cancer, diseases of the nervous system, and the management of serious injuries from animal experiments. If a cure for AIDS or any one of a number of genetic diseases is to be found, it should first be tested on animals. However, just as on farms, we have a duty as stewards

to see that animals are treated with the respect due them as part of God's creation. Like Jesus, who regarded helping the sheep out of the well as more important than keeping the Sabbath, so too we must speak out strongly for the humane treatment of animals whenever they are used by humans.

We have been given the right and the responsibility to rule over the earth by its Owner, God. Once Christians led in this area, starting the whole movement for the humane treatment of animals. Now we have little to say to our culture about real stewardship. We must read our Bibles carefully and prayerfully consider how God would have us help recover His creation. Animals may not have rights, but we as Christians clearly have responsibilities to them.

As Christians we must stand for man as created in the image of God and His creation as a reflection of His glory. Let us say with the Psalmist: "How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures" (Ps. 104:24).

Notes

1. Ingrid Newkirk cited in Charles Oliver, "Liberation Zoology," *Reason* (June 1990), p. 22.
2. Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Avon Books, 1975), p. 215.
3. Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, new revised ed. (New York: Avon Books, 1990) p. 6.
4. "Liberation Zoology," p. 26.
5. *Animal Liberation*, new rev. ed., p. 187.
6. Peter Singer, "Sanctity of Life or Quality of Life," *Pediatrics* (July 1983), pp. 128-29. (Cited in Francis Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*.)
7. Ibid.
8. Richard John Neuhaus, "Animal Lib," *Christianity Today*, 18 June 1990, p. 20.

See Also *Probe Answers Our E-Mail:*

- What's Up with Animal Rights?

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