

Consciousness, Theism and Naturalism

There has recently been a surge in publications espousing arguments from consciousness for the existence of God.¹ In particular, J. P. Moreland has produced a series of articles in which he promotes the virtues of the following argument²:

1. Mental events are genuine nonphysical mental entities that exist.
2. Specific mental and physical event types are regularly correlated.
3. There is an explanation for these correlations.
4. Personal explanation is different from natural scientific explanation.
5. The explanation for these correlations is either a personal or natural scientific explanation.
6. The explanation is not a natural scientific one.
7. Therefore, the explanation is a personal one.
8. If the explanation is personal, then it is theistic.
9. Therefore, the explanation is theistic.

In this chapter, I propose to focus on Moreland's defence of arguments from consciousness.³ In particular, I shall argue against his claim that considerations about consciousness favour theism over naturalism.

Moreland's argument that considerations about consciousness favour theism over naturalism depends crucially upon his account of naturalism, his account of theoretical virtues, and his method of assessing the relative merits of theism and naturalism. So I begin with some discussion of his treatment of each of these topics.

1. Naturalism

On Moreland's account, 'naturalism'—i.e., the view that 'the spatiotemporal universe of entities postulated by our best current (or ideal) theories in the physical sciences, particularly physics, is all there is' (284)—has three major constituents.

First, there is naturalistic epistemology: 'the naturalist epistemic attitude'. According to Moreland, naturalistic epistemology is scientistic: naturalists suppose either that 'non-scientific fields are ... vastly inferior to science in their epistemic standing and do not merit full credence' or else that 'unqualified cognitive value resides in science and in nothing else' (284). More exactly, according to Moreland, naturalistic epistemology is committed to the claim that 'there is no such thing as first philosophy ... [but rather only] continuity between philosophy and natural science'

¹ One indicator of just how recent this surge in publications has been: there is no entry on arguments from consciousness in Quinn and Taliaferro (1997), but there is an entry on this topic in Taliaferro, Draper and Quinn (2010). There are sympathetic treatments of arguments from consciousness in: Swinburne (1979), Adams (1992), Taliaferro (1994) (2000), Hasker (1999), Foster (2001), Moreland (2003) (2007) (2008) (2010), Nagasawa (2008) and Goetz (2010), among others.

² The argument given here is taken directly from Moreland (2010: 296). Closely related arguments are presented in Moreland (2003: 206) and Moreland (2007: 374). In these related arguments, the second and third premises are replaced by a single premise which claims that there is an explanation of the existence of mental events.

³ I discuss Swinburne's argument from consciousness at some length in Oppy (2006). Discussion of further arguments from consciousness will need to wait for some other occasion.

and to the claim that ‘scientific theories ... employ combinatorial modes of explanation’ (284)

Second, there is the naturalistic creation account: ‘the naturalist Grand Story’. According to Moreland, the naturalist Grand Story says:

All of reality—space, time and matter—came from the Big Bang and various heavenly bodies developed as the universe expanded. On at least the Earth, some sort of pre-biotic soup scenario explains how living things came into being from non-living chemicals. And the processes of evolution, understood in either neo-Darwinian or punctuated equilibrium terms, gave rise to all of the life forms we see including human beings. (285)

Moreland goes on to note what he takes to be ‘three key features’ of the naturalist Grand Story. These are: (a) that ‘at its core are two theories that result from combinatorial modes of explanation: the atomic theory of matter and evolutionary theory’; (b) that it ‘expresses a scientific philosophical monism according to which everything that exists or happens in the world is susceptible to explanations by natural scientific methods’; and (c) that it is ‘constituted by event causality and eschews both irreducible teleology and agent causation in which the first relatum of the causal relation is in the category of substance and not event’. (285)

Third, there is general naturalistic ontology: ‘the naturalist ontology’. According to Moreland, the naturalist ontology only includes entities that ‘bear a relevant similarity to those thought to characterise a completed form of physics’ (284). More exactly, according to Moreland, naturalistic ontology involves commitments to: (a) causal closure of the basic microphysical level; (b) ontological dependence of entities and their activities at supervenient levels on entities and their activities at the basic microphysical level; and (c) necessary spatial extension of both concrete particulars and property-instances possessed by those concrete particulars.

Finally, according to Moreland, there is an ordering amongst these three components of naturalism: ‘the epistemic attitude justifies the aetiology, which together justify the ontological commitment’ (284). On Moreland’s view, the existence of this ordering justifies the further claim that naturalists ought to accept ‘the naturalist Grand Story’ and ‘the naturalist ontology’, and allows him to ‘identify a substantial burden of proof for alternative naturalist ontologies that bloat naturalist metaphysical commitments beyond what is justifiable within the constraints that follow from the other two aspects of a naturalist worldview’ (283).

My conception of naturalism is very different from Moreland’s. I take it that the core of naturalism is the claim that natural reality exhausts causal reality: there is no supernatural causation. That’s it. In itself, naturalism has no commitment to the details of Moreland ‘Grand Story’. Most naturalists these days suppose that it is an open question whether all of reality came from the Big Bang; at least some suppose that there are many hitherto unanswered questions about the emergence of life on Earth. Moreover, in itself, naturalism has no commitment to Moreland’s ‘naturalist epistemic attitude’. Many naturalists—myself included—suppose that naturalism is to be preferred to theism on grounds of theoretical virtue, i.e. on grounds that might properly be thought to belong to ‘first philosophy’; most naturalists take themselves to

be committed to fundamental theories that employ non-combinatorial modes of explanation (e.g. thermodynamics). Again, in itself, naturalism has no commitment to Moreland's 'naturalist ontology'. To make the most obvious point: there are some naturalists who espouse 'one-level' ontologies—e.g. Heil (2003); and, of course, there are many naturalists who deny that there *are* spatially extended tropes. Finally, in itself, naturalism is plainly not committed to the ordering that Moreland imposes on his components of naturalism. I think that very few naturalists would accept the suggestion that justified acceptance of a naturalistic 'grand story' depends upon the prior adoption of a scientific attitude: on the contrary, if a scientific attitude comes, then it does so as a justified *consequence* of the acceptance of a naturalistic 'grand story'. Moreover, no naturalists should accept the details of the scientism that Moreland would foist upon them: there is nothing second-rate about the knowledge that I obtained when I watched my son play football yesterday, and yet that knowledge does not depend upon my knowledge of science.

Here's how I see the wider dispute. Theism is committed to the claim that natural reality has a supernatural personal cause. Naturalism is committed to the claim that there are none but natural causes. Theistic and naturalistic theories are all elaborations of these basic claims. When we compare particular theistic and naturalistic theories, we need to be careful not to overstate the conclusions that can be drawn from our comparisons. Our guiding ideal is perhaps something like this: we take the best fully elaborated theistic and naturalistic theories, and compare them in the light of a complete account of theoretical virtues. But, in practice, we are confronted with a range of limitations: we do not have fully elaborated theories of either kind; and we do not have a complete account of theoretical virtues. So the best we can do is to proceed with caution: we should only compare theories that have been worked out to more or less the same degree of detail, and we should bear in mind a wide range of theoretical virtues when we carry out our theoretical comparisons.

2. Theoretical Virtues

Moreland draws attention to four topics in what he calls 'theory acceptance' (though I think it would be better called 'theory choice' or 'theory assessment').

The first issue is about what he calls 'basicity'. It involves 'deciding whether it is appropriate to take some phenomenon as basic such that only a description and not an explanation for it is required, or whether that phenomenon should be understood as something to be explained in terms of more basic phenomena' (294).

The second issue is about what he calls 'naturalness'. About this, he says: 'Some entity *e* is natural for a theory *T* just in case either *e* is a central, core entity of *T* or *e* bears a relevant similarity to central, core entities in *e*'s category within *T*.' He goes on to add: 'Given rivals *R* and *S*, the postulation of *e* in *R* is *ad hoc* and question-begging against advocates of *S* if *e* bears a relevant similarity to the appropriate entities in *S*, and in this sense is at home in *S*, but fails to bear this similarity to the appropriate entities in *R*' (295).

The third issue is about what he calls 'epistemic values'. After making a list of 'normative properties that confer some degree of justification on theories that possess them'—simplicity, descriptive accuracy, predictive success, fruitfulness in guiding

new research, capacity for solving internal and external conceptual problems, use of certain types of explanation, following of certain methodological rules—Moreland goes on to note that rival theorists can ‘rank the relative merits of epistemic values in different ways’ and can even ‘give the same epistemic virtue a different meaning or application’: ‘In arguing against B, it may be inappropriate for advocates of A to cite its superior comportment with an epistemic value when B’s proponents do not weigh that value as heavily as they do a different one they take to be more central to B. For example, given rivals A and B, if A is simpler than B but B is more descriptively accurate than A, then it may be inappropriate—indeed, question-begging—for advocates of A to cite A’s simplicity as grounds for judging it superior to B.’ (295)

The fourth issue is about what he calls ‘simplicity’. Here, Moreland distinguishes between what he calls an ‘epistemic principle of simplicity’—entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity—and what he calls an ‘ontological principle of simplicity’—our ontology/preferred theory about the world should be simple. After suggesting that some naturalistic philosophers conflate these two principles, he goes on to argue that naturalists *should* adopt them both. (291/2)

My take on all of this is rather different from Moreland’s. I agree with him that, when weighing the relative merits of competing theories, we should consider ‘simplicity’, ‘basicity’, ‘naturalness’, and ‘appropriateness of fit to data’. Other things being equal: (a) simpler theories are better than more complex theories; (b) theories with fewer ontological, ideological, and explanatory primitives are better than theories with more ontological, ideological, and explanatory primitives; (c) theories that involve fewer *ad hoc* assumptions are better than theories that involve more *ad hoc* assumptions; and (d) theories with ‘appropriate’ fit to data are better than theories that do not have ‘appropriate’ fit to data. I also agree with Moreland that it is not straightforward to weigh the relative merits of competing theories taking account of these (and other) theoretical desiderata: when two theories differ along all four of these dimensions (and more besides), there may be no clear answer to the question which of the two theories is better. However, where I certainly part company from Moreland is in *not* supposing that a theory might be more theoretically virtuous if it includes a judgment of the relative importance of the various theoretical virtues. If A and B differ in both simplicity and ‘appropriateness’ of fit with data, but all else is equal, then the better theory just is the one that effects the best trade-off between simplicity and ‘appropriateness’ of fit with data. If A is more *ad hoc* than B, and all else is equal, then A is better than B, even if B’s postulation of e is *ad hoc* and A’s postulation of e is not *ad hoc*. Moreover, considerations about ‘begging the question’ are utterly irrelevant to these kinds of judgments.⁴

Of course, I do not accept that naturalists should suppose that their ‘ontology/preferred theory of the world’ should be simple. Rather, what is true is that naturalists should suppose that their ‘ontology/preferred theory of the world’ effects the best trade-off amongst all of the theoretical virtues. In particular, in the present context, naturalists suppose that their ‘ontology/preferred theory of the world’ effects

⁴ It is a category mistake to say—as Moreland does—that one theory begs the question against another theory, or that proponents of one theory beg the question against proponents of another theory simply by espousing the theory that they in fact espouse. The proper targets for charges of ‘begging the question’ are arguments, and proponents thereof.

a better trade-off amongst all of the theoretical virtues than the trade-off amongst those virtues that is effected by theism.

3. Moreland's Method

How does Moreland argue for the superiority of theism over naturalism (when it comes to considerations about consciousness and other mental properties)? He begins with the thought that naturalism is committed to a sparse set of base 'ingredients'. Given this set of base 'ingredients', the only other things to which naturalism is legitimately committed are things that can be 'deduced' from the base 'ingredients', or 'structures' that are composed from the base 'ingredients'. Any other 'ingredients' would be 'contingent brute facts', and so 'highly suspicious' (290). In particular, then, 'naturalism' could have no legitimate truck with (a) *sui generis*, simple, epiphenomenal, intrinsically characterisable properties that are 'new' relative to base; (b) *sui generis*, simple, intrinsically characterisable, properties—with causal powers construed as passive liabilities—that are 'new' relative to base; (c) *sui generis*, simple, intrinsically characterisable, properties—with active causal powers—that are 'new' relative to base; or (d) unified entities—with active causal powers—that are 'new' relative to base. But, on Moreland's account, on any naturalist theory, mental properties—and, in particular, certain kinds of conscious mental properties—fall into categories (a)-(c) and minds fall into category (d).

As I noted in the previous section, I agree that, when we assess the relative merits of competing theories, one thing that we must consider is the comparative simplicity of the theories: their comparative ontological commitments, their comparative ideological commitments, and so forth. However, when we make this kind of assessment we have to make sure that there is no 'double counting' of commitments: if a theory is committed to things that are appropriately 'entailed by' or 'composed from' other things to which a theory is committed, then those things that are 'entailed by' or 'composed' from other things to which the theory is committed do not count as additional commitments. Properly speaking, then, *every* theory should be taken to have a commitment to a sparse set of base 'ingredients': any theory is committed to its base 'ingredients', and gets for free anything that can be 'deduced' from those base ingredients or that is 'composed from' those base ingredients.

Given this much, it may seem clear that there are various ways in which mental properties and entities could figure in naturalist theories. First, it could be that mental properties and entities are 'base ingredients': mental properties and mental entities count among the ontological and ideological commitments of naturalist theories. Second, it could be that mental properties and entities are 'deducible from' or 'composed of' 'base ingredients'—and, in that case, they do not figure among the ontological and ideological commitments of naturalist theories. (Perhaps it could also be that some mental properties and entities count among the ontological and ideological commitments of naturalist theories, and some do not, because some mental properties and entities are 'deducible from' or 'composed of' other mental properties and entities, or are 'deducible from' or 'composed of' a combination of other mental and non-mental properties and entities. For ease of exposition, I shall simply ignore this consideration in what follows.) Third, it could be that there are no mental properties and entities: in that case, mental properties and entities do not figure

in naturalist theories, but naturalist who take this line deny that their theories are any the worse for having this feature.

We might call the three views distinguished in the preceding paragraph ‘eliminative naturalism’, ‘reductive naturalism’ and ‘non-reductive naturalism’. ‘Non-reductive naturalism’ is distinguished from ‘eliminative naturalism’ and ‘reductive naturalism’ by way of its commitment to ‘irreducible’ mental properties and entities, i.e. to mental properties and entities that are not ‘deducible from’ or ‘composed of’ non-mental properties and entities. However, exactly what these distinguished views amount to depends upon two further questions that we have not yet addressed: first, what exactly we mean by ‘mental properties and entities’; and second, what exactly we mean if we claim that some properties and entities are ‘deducible from’ or ‘composed of’ other properties and entities.

In the present context, we can perhaps afford to be somewhat stipulative about what we mean by ‘mental properties and entities’. It is clear from Moreland’s presentation that he supposes that there are certain kinds of *sui generis*, simple, intrinsically characterisable properties—and certain kinds of entities that are, in particular, bearers of these *sui generis*, simple, intrinsically characterisable properties—that are paradigmatically ‘mental’, and that pose a particular threat to naturalism. In general philosophical usage, the term ‘mental’ can be applied to a wide range of entities and properties: beliefs, desires, intentions, emotions, itches, tickles, pains, sensations, perceptions, intuitions, thoughts, acts of will, decisions, and so on.⁵ However, it is not very controversial—and not much contested—that, in large part, these entities and properties are not properly thought of in terms of *sui generis*, simple, intrinsically characterisable properties’. If there are any *sui generis*, simple, intrinsically characterisable mental properties, then these will be what philosophers typically call ‘qualia’—phenomenal qualities associated with experiences, such as the tasting of Vegemite, or the feeling of gustatory pleasure, or the hearing of a Brahms’ lullaby, or the like. And many philosophers have supposed that, if there are qualia—i.e., if, for example, the tasting of Vegemite (typically) involves a particular, *sui generis*, simple, intrinsically characterisable property—then there is good reason to suppose that qualia should figure among the ‘base ingredients’ in an adequate total theory of the world.

Unfortunately, the question what we might mean, if we claim that some properties and entities are ‘deducible from’ or ‘composed of’ other properties and entities, is much less tractable than the question how we should understand the term ‘mental’ in the context of Moreland’s argument from consciousness. A natural first thought is that we need some distinctions that Moreland fails to draw. On the one hand, we can make sense of the idea that one property is ‘deducible from’ another. We can say what it is for one property to entail a second, or for a set of properties to entail a further property, and so forth. On the other hand, we can make sense of the idea that one entity is ‘composed of’ other entities. We can say—at least roughly—what it is for some entities to jointly comprise a further entity; and we can also make some comments about the ways in which the properties of a constituted entity may—or may not—be related to the properties of the entities from which it is constituted. However, despite Moreland’s fairly explicit claims to the contrary—I do not think that we can

⁵ We can further distinguish, at least, between mental events and mental states; between what is occurrent and what is standing; between propositional and non-propositional attitudes; and so forth.

make sense of the idea that a property might be ‘composed of’ such things as entities, relations and events. Here is the sort of thing that Moreland says:

Emergent supervenience is the view that the supervenient property is a simple, intrinsically characterisable, novel property different from and not composed of the parts, properties, relations, and events at the subvenient level. ... A structural property is one that is constituted by the parts, properties, relations and events at the subvenient level. (288)

I think that there must be some kind of category mistake here; at the very least, I can make no sense of the idea that a higher-level *property* might have as constituents lower-level *objects* and *events*. (Suppose you think that chemical properties belong to a higher level than physical properties: molecules have chemical properties, whereas neutrons and protons only have physical properties. Surely you cannot sensibly propose that chemical properties have neutrons and protons as constituents; rather, you may and should say that it is the bearers of chemical properties—e.g. molecules—that have neutrons and protons as constituents.)

4. Qualia

There are two famous arguments for the claim that qualia should figure among the ‘base ingredients’ in an adequate total theory of the world: Frank Jackson’s knowledge argument⁶, and David Chalmers’ zombie argument⁷. Both arguments have been endlessly discussed; I shall only make very brief comments upon them here.

Chalmers’ zombie argument relies crucially upon the assumption that there could be a world that is *exactly* like the world in which we live *except* that it does not contain any qualia. In that other possible world, people behave exactly as we do—right down to some among them claiming that they have qualia—but people in that world do not have access to the *sui generis*, simple, intrinsically characterisable phenomenal qualities that are associated with our experiences. I agree that, if it is possible that there is a world that is *exactly* like the world in which we live *except* that it does not contain any qualia, then qualia should figure among the ‘base ingredients’ in an adequate total theory of our world. However, I think that it is highly implausible to suppose that it is possible that there is a world that is *exactly* like the world in which we live *except* that it does not contain any qualia (if it is indeed true that our world contains qualia). On the contrary, I think that, on the best theory of real possibility, it is not really possible that there could be a world that is exactly like the world in which we live except that it does not contain any qualia (if it is indeed true that our world contains qualia).

Jackson’s knowledge argument relies upon the assumption that someone who knew all of the physical (and natural) truths about our world might nonetheless lack knowledge about what it is like to have certain kinds of experiences (e.g. what it is like to taste Vegemite): such a person might fail to have knowledge of the *sui generis*,

⁶ See Jackson (1982). Jackson has since changed his mind: he no longer supposes that his knowledge argument provides a good reason to suppose that qualia are ‘base ingredients’ of our world.

⁷ See Chalmers (1996). In this book, Chalmers defends a kind of panpsychism, in which ‘qualia’ are ubiquitous ‘base ingredients’ of our world. It is worth noting that Chalmers supposes that functionalism gives an adequate account of the rest of our mental lives: beliefs, desires, intentions, and so forth.

simple, intrinsically characterisable phenomenal qualities that are associated with our experiences. Here, I am tempted by a two-part response. On the one hand, it does not seem to me to be plausible to suppose that we can tell whether someone who knew *all* of the physical (and natural) truths might nonetheless lack knowledge about what it is like to have certain kinds of experiences. On the other hand, if someone who knows all of the physical (and natural) truths might nonetheless lack knowledge about what it is like to have certain kinds of experiences, then I take it that what it is plausible to suppose that they might lack is an ability rather than an item of knowledge. (Perhaps such a person would not have the ability to identify Vegemite by its taste until they had first tasted Vegemite. But this gap in their abilities would not point to any gap in their propositional knowledge.)

Even if I am right that the *arguments* from Chalmers and Jackson are unpersuasive, it remains open that qualia should nonetheless figure among the ‘base ingredients’ in an adequate total theory of the world. Since I do not have space here to consider other arguments that have been advanced in favour of qualia, I can do no more than record my views. Where Moreland is clearly sympathetic to the idea that qualia should figure among the ‘base ingredients’ in an adequate total theory of the world, I am highly sceptical of the suggestion that there are any qualia—i.e., I am highly sceptical of the claim that there are *sui generis*, simple, intrinsically characterisable phenomenal qualities associated with experiences. At least in broad outline, I am sympathetic to the kind of view about consciousness that is developed in Dennett (1991). However, I should add—*contra* Moreland—that I think that it is just a mistake to suppose that the kind of view that Dennett advocates somehow amounts to ‘feigning anaesthesia’ (340). Thus, for example, I do not deny that we have experiences; but I do insist that our having of experiences just is our undergoing certain kinds of natural processes (most prominently, *neural* processes).

5. My View

I regard physicalism—the view that the ‘base ingredients’ of the world are all physical—as a plausible metaphysical hypothesis. I take this hypothesis to have at least two parts. First, that there are no things—no objects—that ultimately have anything other than physical constituents. Second, that there are no properties whose possession by objects is not entailed by the world’s possession of the physical properties that it possesses. (I leave for some other occasion consideration of the question whether there are further parts to the hypothesis, concerning states, or events, or processes, or laws, or the like.)

I regard naturalism—the view that the ‘base ingredients’ of the world are all natural (as opposed to supernatural)—as a considerably *more* plausible metaphysical hypothesis than physicalism. I take the naturalistic hypothesis to have at least two parts. First, that there are no things—no objects—that ultimately have anything other than natural (as opposed to supernatural) constituents. Second, that there are no properties whose possession by objects is not entailed by the world’s possession of the natural (as opposed to supernatural) properties that it possesses. (I leave for some other occasion consideration of the question whether there are further parts to the hypothesis, concerning states, or events, or processes, or laws, or the like.)

As a rough first pass, I take it that supernatural things—or supernatural objects—would be either (i) things—or objects—that do not have spatiotemporal locations but that nonetheless are causally responsible for, and/or have causal effects on, things—or objects—that do have spatiotemporal locations; or else (ii) things—or objects—with spatiotemporal locations that bring about causal effects at spatiotemporally remote locations in the absence of spatiotemporally continuous causal processes connecting their actions to those effects, unless somehow making use of quantum entanglement or the like. Given this account of supernatural things—or supernatural objects—I take it that supernatural properties would be properties that can be possessed only by supernatural things—or supernatural objects—or, if there are things that have both natural and supernatural parts, by things—or objects—that have at least some supernatural parts.

I am inclined to think that Moreland holds that, according to the above account of the supernatural, human minds are supernatural things—or supernatural objects—i.e., he holds that human minds do not have spatiotemporal locations but that they do, nonetheless, have causal effects on things—or objects—that have spatiotemporal locations (in particular, human bodies). But, of course, Moreland has further commitments to the supernatural: for instance, he supposes that there is a supernatural person who created natural reality *ex nihilo*, who is responsible for sustaining the existence of natural reality, and who is directly causally responsible for events that occur in natural reality. When we come to ask about the bearing of consciousness and other mental properties on the choice between naturalism and theism, we need to bear these further considerations in mind.

Here's a choice set up. First, there is the naturalist picture that I prefer. Causal reality is exhausted by natural reality. Human beings are entirely natural creatures. The mental processes of human beings are nothing but natural processes (in particular, neural processes). Human beings act with compatibilist freedom—their actions are, for the most part, the products of their naturally acquired beliefs, desires, intentions, and so forth—but not with libertarian freedom—there is no such thing as 'agent causation'. Human beings have rich mental lives—they have desires, intentions, emotions, itches, tickles, pains, sensations, perceptions, intuitions, thoughts, acts of will, and so forth—but they do not have qualia, i.e. *sui generis*, simple, intrinsically characterisable phenomenal qualities associated with experiences. Of course, this is not to deny that people are conscious, or that they have consciousness: rather, it is just to deny one particular conception of what it is to be conscious and of what consciousness is.

Second, there is the naturalist picture that would be preferred by a naturalist who believes in both qualia and agent causation. Causal reality is exhausted by natural reality. Human beings are entirely natural creatures. The mental processes of human beings are nothing but natural processes (in particular, neural processes). Human beings have rich mental lives: they have desires, intentions, emotions, itches, tickles, pains, sensations, perceptions, intuitions, thoughts, acts of will, and so forth—and these things are often associated with qualia, i.e. *sui generis*, simple, intrinsically characterisable phenomenal qualities associated with experiences. Different versions of this picture tell different stories about the nature of the connection between qualia and human mental states; merely for the sake of definiteness, we shall suppose here

that it is a matter of metaphysical necessity. (Different versions of the story also tell different stories about freedom. We need not worry about this difference here.)

Third, there is the theistic picture that Moreland prefers. Causal reality outruns natural reality. In particular, supernatural reality contains God—a conscious supernatural agent—and it also contains conscious human minds. Human beings are partly natural, partly supernatural creatures. The mental processes of human beings are supernatural processes, but they are ‘correlated’ with natural processes (in particular, neural processes). Human beings act only with libertarian freedom: actions issue from *their supernatural part*. Human beings have rich mental lives involving qualia, i.e. *sui generis*, simple, intrinsically characterisable phenomenal qualities associated with experiences. The actions of human beings—and, indeed, everything else that involves natural reality—depends upon God’s causal involvement (as necessary causal sustainer).

When we consider the theoretical virtues of these views, it seems to me that the first is better than the second, and that the second is much better than the third. Here, I will simply indicate reasons for supposing that the first is better than the third.

It is clear—and Moreland effectively concedes as much—that the first view does much better when it comes to simplicity (and to considerations of ontological and ideological commitment). On the naturalist view, there is one kind of reality, one kind of causation, and one kind of explanation, whereas on the theistic view there are two kinds of reality, two kinds of causation, two kinds of explanation, two ‘parts’ of human beings, and so forth. Moreover, the theistic account requires interactions between the two kinds of reality, and between the two ‘parts’ of human beings. And the theistic account is committed to things—e.g. qualia and libertarian freedom—that are clearly philosophically problematic (whereas the naturalist view does not have *these* problematic commitments). All else being equal, then, there would be clear reason to prefer naturalism to theism.

If we are to prefer theism to naturalism, then, we must suppose that the enormous extra investment—the greater complexity, the addition of ontological and ideological commitments—yields advantages elsewhere. Where might those advantages be? Suppose, for example, that we think that there is a genuine difficulty in understanding *how* the undergoing of mental processes could be nothing more than the undergoing of natural (neural) processes. Do we have a better understanding of *how* mental processes could be nothing more than processes in a non-spatiotemporal supernatural realm that are somehow correlated with neural processes? While I am not prepared to concede that there are genuine difficulties involved in understanding how the undergoing of mental processes could be nothing more than the undergoing of natural (neural) processes, I do want to say that I cannot see any advance in understanding that is afforded by the theistic view—and I also want to add that I certainly cannot see an advance in understanding that repays the massive increase in ontology and ideology over the naturalistic view.

When we take all of the theoretical virtues into account—simplicity, descriptive accuracy, predictive success, fruitfulness in guiding new research, capacity for solving internal and external conceptual problems, use of certain types of explanation, following of certain methodological rules, and so forth—it seems to me that we

should end up preferring the first picture to the third. However, it may be that the assessment of the two pictures against some of these theoretical virtues ends up depending very heavily upon prior views about the relative plausibility of fuller elaborations of these two theoretical pictures. One of the standard theoretical virtues is fit with other established views; someone who supposed that theism was otherwise well-established might suppose that, even when it comes to consciousness, theism trumps naturalism on that account. But, of course, if that were the case, then a more sober assessment would be that, while, in itself, considerations about consciousness do favour naturalism over theism, those considerations about consciousness are outweighed by considerations elsewhere. Said differently: if we just restrict our attention to the pictures of theism and naturalism sketched above, and ignore questions about the ways in which these pictures might be more fully elaborated, then, on grounds of theoretical virtue, we should prefer the naturalistic picture to the theistic picture.⁸

6. Concluding Remarks

The conclusion of Moreland (2010) begins as follows:

Strong naturalism/physicalism has been in a period of Kuhnian paradigm crisis for a long time, and physicalist epicycles have multiplied like rabbits in the past two decades. Moreover, the various versions of physicalism are in a stagnating period of stalemate. Increasingly, naturalists are turning to emergentist views of consciousness. The truth is that naturalism has no plausible way to explain the appearance of emergent mental properties in the cosmos. (339)

You have to admire his effrontery. I know how more belligerent naturalist than I would respond: *Naturalism marks a new dawn after a long dark age of supernaturalism! If you really want epicycles, stagnation and stalemate, consider the history of theology!* Etc. Whatever justice there might be in this more belligerent response, I shall here rest content with the claim that, to the extent that we can give an assessment of the relative theoretical virtue of naturalistic and theistic accounts of consciousness and the mental lives of human beings, that assessment seems to favour naturalism over theism.

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⁸ Moreland (2010:n.1) says: 'Oppy ... rejects all-too-briefly cumulative case arguments ... and thus in my view does not give them sufficient consideration'. Two brief comments. First, the argument I have given in this paper does not depend upon my scepticism about cumulative case arguments. Second, I have since defended my scepticism about cumulative case arguments at much greater length. See, for example, Oppy (forthcoming),

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