
December 2015

An Incongruent Amalgamation: John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism on Naturalism

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Recommended Citation

Robinson, Jeffrey M.. 2015. "An Incongruent Amalgamation: John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism on Naturalism." *Eleutheria* 4, (2). <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/eleu/vol4/iss2/4>

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Abstract

John Stuart Mill's utilitarian principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, often surfaces in cultural debates in the contemporary West over the extent and foundations of moral duties. Given the drift from its historical Judeo-Christian moorings, naturalism now provides much of the epistemic grounding in Western culture in relation to moral duties. The amalgamation of Mill's utilitarianism and naturalism has resulted in a cultural and epistemic disconnect. Naturalism is hard-pressed to provide consistent epistemic support for Mill's utilitarian principle. This essay provides a number of suggestions as to why Mill's utilitarianism may be inconsistent on naturalism.

Keywords

Utilitarianism, Naturalism, Philosophy, Ethics, Apologetics, John Stuart Mill

Cover Page Footnote

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INTRODUCTION

Among various ethical theories, naturalism would seem to find close fit with utilitarianism, yet it fails to provide a substantive argument for the utilitarian principle via lack of moral explanatory power. In a sentence, utilitarianism self-destructs on naturalism. In order to argue for this proposal, I shall attempt to do the following. First, I shall provide a working definition for both utilitarianism and naturalism. In order to sharpen the focus, I will specifically address the version of utilitarianism espoused by John Stuart Mill. Second, I shall endeavor to demonstrate the incompatibility of utilitarianism and naturalism because of three naturalistic options that result in anemic explanatory power: 1) the vacuity of the utilitarian principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number on naturalism, 2) the lack of moral explanatory power of naturalism on raw naturalistic, evolutionary survivalism, and 3) the self-contradiction of Sam Harris' concept of "creaturely flourishing" on naturalism. Third, I shall explicate the inadequacy of naturalism to account for moral duties in three specific ways: 1) the moral vacuity of higher and lower pleasures, 2) the lack of moral explanatory power of the moral duties to contribute to human happiness, and 3) the lack of explanatory power of moral duties and free will. For the purposes of this paper, I shall adopt the definition that naturalism is a denial of the supernatural.

Before diving into the philosophical deep end, one suggestion to consider, even if only for a moment, is the grim consequences of mistakenly assuming naturalism.¹ Imagine the inexpressible tidal wave of grief that has overcome more than a miniscule sampling of former naturalists when they came to the shocking realization that their conclusions were wrong only to find comfort in a newfound relationship with God. C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Lew Wallace, Alister McGrath, and Francis Collins are just a few of the intellectual bulwarks that dot the landscape of those who have departed ways with naturalism. While the existence of God is not the primary focus of this paper, the reader would do well to keep in mind the supremacy that philosophical presuppositions play in ethical queries.²

¹ On this point, Blaise Pascal writes, "the immorality of the soul is something of such vital importance to us, affecting us so deeply, that one must have lost all feeling not to care about knowing the facts of the matter. All our actions and thoughts must follow such different paths, according to whether there is hope of eternal blessings or not, that the only possible way of acting with sense and judgment is to decide our course of action in light of this point, which ought to be our ultimate objective." Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, trans. Honor Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 143. In, David Baggett & Jerry Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 179.

² For a fascinating read on an evidential critique of naturalism and the afterlife, see, Gary Habermas & J.P. Moreland, *Immortality: The Other Side of Death* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995).

DEFINITION BEFORE DISCOURSE: UTILITARIANISM AND NATURALISM

Utilitarianism, as expressed by its erudite proponent, John Stuart Mill, is “The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure.”³ I have selected Mill because he is arguably one of the most polished proponents of utilitarianism. His clarification of Epicurus’ excesses and avoidance of Bentham’s unwieldy hedonic calculus makes for a highly respectable platform.

In a spirit of honest scholarship, Mill admits what many ethicists are slow to confess that no ethical theory is without tension. He wisely notes, “There exists no moral system under which there do not arise unequivocal cases of conflicting obligation.”⁴ Beginning with Epicurus’ hedonism, to Bentham’s hedonic calculus, followed by Mills’ explication of “customary morality,”⁵ utilitarianism has played a major part in the progress of Western philosophy.

INCOMPATIBILITY OF UTILITARIANISM AND NATURALISM

1) Odd Bedfellows: Cultural Equality on Naturalistic Utilitarianism

One of the greatest challenges for naturalistic utilitarianism is quantifying the moral foundations of equality. Western culture almost *a priori* alludes to the often referenced but rarely defined idea of equality in ethical debates. Such moral musings come to full bloom in the relentless cultural debate about the role of the government in society. Far beyond Adam Smith’s classical liberalism—limiting the government’s three-fold role to protecting society from invasion, providing a level economic playing field, and maintaining public works⁶—is the increasing belief that the government should take on a larger role in society. While progressives routinely adopt a Kantian textbook narrative in championing the showcase progressive values of abortion, rights of workers to unionize, or providing LGBT persons the legal right to marry whomever they wish, there is still a utilitarian undercurrent. The narrative on alleged inalienable rights is often immediately followed with a conjecturing, “Imagine what society would be like if these rights were infringed,” form of argumentation that begins Kantian and ends textbook utilitarian.

³ John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 55.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶ Adam Smith, *On the Wealth of Nations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869), 350. Smith notes the common governmental disregard for fiscal responsibility; “Kings are always the greatest spendthrifts in society.” *Ibid.*, 585.

On the other hand, conservatives routinely champion the individual rights of private property, private firearms ownership,⁷ rights of the unborn, and religious liberty by appealing to the model of limited government. For example, the first line of argumentation for the conservative position on private firearms ownership is laced with references to individual liberty. However, usually upon facing strong interrogation on how the expression of those alleged rights could result in societal harm, the conservative argument shifts to the uncomfortable prospect of a society where only criminals and the government have access to firearms.⁸ What begins Kantian, when pressed, ends with an appeal to utility. On the other hand, the progressive argument for the restriction of private firearms ownership appeals to equality by way of creating a safer society.

Although they both appeal to individual liberties, progressives more often place building a safer society ahead of certain individual liberties whereas conservatives also appeal to what would produce the ideal society. Behind both of these respective positions is the driving principle of equality in that both positions argue for societal principles that would produce the maximum pleasure for the maximum number. At their core, camouflaged utilitarian equality links popular conservatism and progressivism. Mill argues precisely this point where he argues that the vague standard referenced by ethicists throughout philosophical history “is the utilitarian one.”⁹ Mill goes so far as to suggest that the essentials of Kant’s universal maxim are actually utilitarian.¹⁰ It is precisely this point as it relates to naturalism that I seek to highlight.

⁷ Paul M. Barrett, “Gun Control and the Constitution: Should We Amend the Second Amendment?” *Bloomberg Business Week*, February 20, 2014. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-02-20/gun-control-and-the-constitution-should-we-amend-the-second-amendment>. Barrett exegetes Justice John Paul Stevens’ argument that the Second Amendment only applies to those serving in military roles and thus, private firearms ownership should be banned.

⁸ Despite claiming to argue from a standpoint of individual liberty, Wayne LaPierre, Executive Vice President of the National Rifle Association, dedicates an entire chapter to the utilitarian-leaning argument of what would happen if private firearms ownership were banned. See, chapter 11, “Arming Against Crime,” by Wayne LaPierre, *Guns, Crime, and Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1994).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 51-52. Mill attempts arguing this point by wedging an undercutter deep within deontological territory where he later writes, “When Kant (as before remarked) propounds as the fundamental principle of morals, ‘So act, that thy rule of conduct might be adopted as a law by all rational beings,’ he virtually acknowledges that the interest of all mankind collectively, or at least of mankind indiscriminately, must be in the mind of the agent when conscientiously deciding on the morality of the act. Otherwise he uses words without a meaning: for, that a rule even of utter selfishness could not *possibly* be adopted by all rational beings—that there is any insuperable obstacle in the nature of all things to its adoption—cannot be even plausibly maintained. To give any meaning to Kant’s principle, the sense put upon it must be, that we ought to shape our conduct by a rule which all rational beings might adopt *with benefit to their collective interest*” (97).

Yet a most intriguing query is how utilitarianism relates to the foundation of equality. For the conservative, what is the foundation for the inalienable rights of all persons? For the progressive, what is the moral warrant for the duty to produce a society grounded on equality? For the theist, the answer comes much easier than for the naturalist. In the words of Thomas Jefferson enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, inalienable rights come from the Creator. Therefore, individual rights and safeguards against governmental infringement on these rights find considerable warrant on theism. Human equality makes considerable sense on theism, especially Christian theism, because God has created all persons in His image signifying intrinsic value.¹¹ For naturalists, however, the situation becomes much more challenging. First, if God does not exist, then rights most likely come from culture or oneself rather than a transcendent authority. As I will argue, none of the naturalistic options provide a satisfactory source of intrinsic human rights upon which equality makes sense. Second, the entire premise of Mill's utilitarianism is inextricably intertwined with the concept of equality, an abstraction that is extremely difficult to establish on naturalism.

For instance, equality of the shared human experience, the clearest possible illustration of the distribution of the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest number of persons, assumes a necessary moral grounding that naturalists seem hard-pressed to answer. Chronological conditioning is a pivotal historical consideration in providing an adequate treatment of naturalism and utilitarianism. Alasdair MacIntyre chronicles a cultural contrast between the heroic age and contemporary Western culture as follows:

The self of the heroic age lack precisely that characteristic which we have already seen that some modern moral philosophers take to be an essential characteristic of human selfhood: the capacity to detach oneself from any particular standpoint or point of view from the outside. In heroic society, there is no "outside" except that of the stranger. A man who tried to withdraw himself from his given position in heroic society would be engaged in the enterprise of trying to make himself disappear.¹²

MacIntyre's observation reveals how the communal nature of most traditional cultures clashes with the sort of individualism prominent in contemporary Western culture. Either way, neither the value of community in ancient heroic culture nor the moral merit placed on individualism of the contemporary West¹³ finds necessary grounding for human equality on naturalistic

¹¹ Genesis 1:26-27.

¹² Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 126.

¹³ Although a popular-level article, the observation of Paul Piff, assistant professor of psychology and social behavior at the University of California, Irvine, and Dacher Keltner, professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, is illustrative on this point where they note the, "broad societal shift that has been widely observed over the past 50 years: People have become

utilitarianism. Yet, combined with an increasing secularism, naturalistic utilitarianism has already seeped into much of popular culture and very well could become the preferred social ethical option for the majority of contemporary Westerners.¹⁴ Fashioned into the mold of individualism supplemented by a steady diet of consumerism, the average Westerner is well versed with the promises and disappointments of personal and collective utilitarianism.¹⁵ As Brad S. Gregory laments, “The new and more deadly threat was that of cultural assimilation and prosperity: “[G]oods are multiplied, but the soul is impoverished; clothes have become expensive, but interior beauty is gone.”¹⁶

Interestingly, the idea of virtue in heroic societies has much to do with utility, which is precisely Mill's argument contra Kant.¹⁷ In order to correct a prevalent false impression of utilitarianism, Mill argues for a reassessment all the way back to its earliest hedonistic roots. As to the contra mantra, “Epicureanism is a philosophy for pigs,” Mill counsels, “Epicureans have always answered, that it is not they, but their accusers, who represent human nature in a degrading light; since the accusation supposes human beings to be capable of no pleasures except those of which swine are capable.”¹⁸ Rather, Mill argues, “The happiness which they meant was not a life of rapture; but moments of such, in an existence made up of few and transitory pains, many and various pleasures, with a decided predominance of the active over the passive, and having as the foundation of the whole, not to expect more from life than it is capable of bestowing.”¹⁹ For this reason, Mill establishes an ethical criterion wherein the moral scales of circumstantial happiness should promote pleasure and prevent pain. Since utilitarianism has a strongly practical element, the question of how to produce pleasure instead of pain becomes quickly

more individualistic, more self-focused, more materialistic and less connected to others.” Paul Piff and Dacher Keltner, “Why Do We Experience Awe?” *The New York Times*, May 22, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/24/opinion/sunday/why-do-we-experience-awe.html?_r=0.

¹⁴ The disappearance of the self could be a referent of absurdity in the contemporary West for two reasons. First, life is largely viewed through the lenses of personal gratification via a radically individualistic operating principle of the pursuit of happiness. Second, the rise of divorce and the subsequent fracturing of the family have contributed to a colossal fracturing of cultural identity as well as the most basic familial structures upon which persons find their most basic identity.

¹⁵ The rise and fall of utopian attempts, from the commune of Brook Farms to the Soviet behemoth, is richly documented but often poorly understood. Moreover, whenever utilitarianism has been wedded to atheistic governments, one should expect an exponential increase in atrocities if history is any guide.

¹⁶ Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 244. In, Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 432.

¹⁷ MacIntyre, 122. MacIntyre makes this clear in his intricate word study of *arête*.

¹⁸ Mill, 55.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

mired in the quagmire of difficult ethical options.²⁰ The Emmy award winning series, *Breaking Bad*, provides a textbook example of utilitarian reasoning in Walter White's agonizing decision on whether or not to kill a particular drug dealer.²¹ Moreover, the utilitarian principle is notoriously difficult to quantify given limited human epistemic access.²²

As will be explained further in this paper, Mill's conception of pleasure is not so paltry so as to only include physical well being. However, on naturalism, "higher pleasures" are still, by definition, physical. Whether swine or scholars, corporeal or cognitive, pleasure and pain are ultimately quantifiable *only* in material terms. Therefore, Mill's distinction between the pleasures of swine and persons fails on naturalism for two reasons. First, if God exists, then an argument can be made for a noncorporeal reality, often called the soul or spirit that would exemplify the possibility of noncorporeal higher pleasures. Since God's existence is rejected *a priori* on naturalism, the existence of the soul, and thus, noncorporeal reality, is also repudiated since it is not a physical reality. Second, on naturalism, even if one argues for a robust and extensive cognitive superiority of humans over animals, the issue is still one of molecular change, not moral responsibility. Michael Peterson writes, "Alternative conceptual systems, such as naturalism or pantheism, can explain neither our peculiar consciousness of value nor its senseless destruction."²³

²⁰ Interestingly, William James dedicates his work, *Pragmatism*, to Mill, "To the Memory of John Stuart Mill, from whom I first learned the pragmatic openness of mind and whom my fancy likes to picture as our leader were he alive today." See, William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995), foreword.

²¹ Jonah Goldberg astutely summarizes, "Walter agonizes over what to do with him. Still the man of reason, he sits down with a notepad and writes up a list of pros and cons. Among the items on the list: "Con: MURDER IS WRONG! Pro: He'll kill your entire family if you let him go." Walter ultimately kills Crazy 8, but under circumstances that he can justify as self-defense. Over time, though, Walter's definition of self-defense grows beyond any moral justification, and his reluctance to kill shrinks to almost nothing. Once you step outside the borders of morality and the law, self-interest becomes self-justifying. Indeed, this is how pragmatism unchained from moral principles simply becomes a Nietzschean will to power. In a very different context, the philosopher Bertrand Russell realized this long ago. When nations shed moral principles and put their stake solely in power and pragmatism, Russell wrote in 1909, "ironclads and Maxim guns must be the ultimate arbiters of metaphysical truth." Jonah Goldberg, "Breaking Bad Breaks Through," *National Review Online*, (New York City, NY), September 23, 2013. http://m.nationalreview.com/article/359223/breaking-bad-breaks-through-jonah-goldberg/page/0/2?utm_source=web&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=091213

²² One example comes from the pioneering work of Hungarian physicist Leo Szilard on the development of the atom bomb. Szilard's initial letter to Roosevelt in 1939 outlined the terrifying prospect of nuclear fission. As the bomb's development progressed Szilard's internal campaign against deployment of the new weapon on Japanese civilian targets increased. For a fascinating account of moral realism in the context of inexorable technological increase, see, Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin, *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 422.

²³ Michael Peterson, *Evil and the Christian God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 65.

Making sense of consciousness on naturalism presents no small number of challenges.²⁴ Either way, sowing Mill's utilitarian seeds on naturalistic soil results in an uncomfortable absence of moral interpretive power.

2) Naturalism and Naturalistic Evolutionary Survivalism

While evolution does not necessitate naturalism, it best fits the naturalistic paradigm for explanatory power of life's origins simply because it is the only game in town.²⁵ How can Mill's utilitarian *telos* of pleasure over pain survive in the *telos*-deprived landscape of naturalistic evolution's unguided process?²⁶ The best naturalistic evolution has to offer is a raw sort of base survivalism. This is often expressed as "natural selection," which is an unduly articulate title for a theory that is functionally the law of the jungle.²⁷ Survival and the propagation of the species becomes the mantra of naturalistic social Darwinism. Humanitarian aid, an almost universally accepted virtue in the West, becomes fundamentally counterproductive where the strong deplete themselves in order to sustain the weak in their time of need. Such humanitarianism is consistent with the Mill's utilitarian principle so long as there is an intrinsic equality and value attributed to human life. However, when God is removed from the equation, this benevolent anthropological link is severely hampered if not altogether severed. A glimpse into the merciless landscape of naturalistic evolution guts the impetus to strive for the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Utilitarianism's prescriptive emphasis finds itself at odds with a morally bereft *ergo* on the few, the lucky, the survivors.

In order to counteract this rather bleak picture, certain ontologically creative naturalists have attempted to craft an alternative *telos*. What I am arguing here is that many naturalists attempt to function on utilitarian ideals which are vacuous on naturalism. For example, the famous British atheist Bertrand Russell bleakly reflects, "There is darkness without, and when I die there will be darkness within. There is no splendour, no vastness anywhere; only triviality for a moment, and then nothing. Why live in such a world? Why even die?"²⁸ Yet Russell goes on to give an encomium to facing the ultimate absurdity of life with bravery grounded in "the

²⁴ On consciousness, Keith Ward writes, "At the level of human consciousness one has to introduce the concepts of information-theory to understand what is going on...The topic of consciousness is one of the greatest mysteries of human thought." *Religion & Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 140, 147.

²⁵ Alister McGrath and Francis Collins are notable examples of theistic evolutionists.

²⁶ Theistic evolutionists object to an overgeneralization of evolution as an unguided process simply because argue that God guides the process of evolution. Hence, I have chosen to specifically address the unguided and morally vacuous evolutionary naturalism rather than a general Darwinism because of the possible theistic evolution alternative.

²⁷ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species or the Preservation of the Favored Races in the Struggle for Life* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2001), 63.

²⁸ Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography* (New York: Routledge, 1975, 2010), 374.

firm foundation of unyielding despair.”²⁹ This is little short of a wholesale capitulation to nihilism, yet Russell still attempts to establish some sort of happiness-producing *modus operandi*. Russellian bravery looks like a strategy of philosophical self-medication and a thoroughly utilitarian one at that. Even if it serves as an existential solace in an otherwise absurd universe, the placebo effect is still utilitarian in nature because it serves to provide persons with the happiness of purpose in place of the pain of despair.

Not to be outdone, Richard Dawkins flatly states, “In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference.”³⁰ Yet, in his popularized documentary, *The Root of All Evil*, Dawkins argues that the sheer improbability of sentient life is sufficient to establish objective purpose. What is this purpose? Simply enjoying the brevity of life.³¹

My point here is that these examples carry a common element: arbitrariness. Whether mind or muscle, philosophical or physical, emotional or educational, these attempts to establish meaning are utilitarian. The Achilles heel of this naturalistic idealism is in the paucity of transcendent grounding. Once the philosophical verbiage and emotional catch phrases are removed, one is left with raw, naturalistic, evolutionary survivalism. On such a view, why advocate a moral duty to one’s own happiness or that of society?

L. Rush Bush raises a point vehemently contested by most contemporary Darwinists, where he writes, “The Nazi movement in Germany was one of the logical conclusions of these ideas. For some people racism was scientifically justified on evolutionary biological grounds.”³² Still yet, for some evolutionary naturalists, speciation, not to be confused with human happiness, is the zenith of existence.³³ In fact, there is a contingent of evolutionary naturalists who believe a massive

²⁹ Bertrand Russell, “A Free Man’s Worship,” in *Why I Am Not a Christian*, ed. P. Edwards (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), 107. In, William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 50.

³⁰ Richard Dawkins, *River out of Eden* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 133.

³¹ *The Root of All Evil*, directed by Richard Dawkins. (2006; London, United Kingdom: A Channel 4 documentary, 2006).

³² Bush, 31.

³³ Peter Singer argues, “Surely there will be some nonhuman animals whose lives, by any standards, are more valuable than the lives of some humans.” Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethic for Our Treatment of Animals*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), 19. Singer also states, “Human babies are not born self-aware, or capable of grasping that they exist over time. They are not persons; therefore, “the life of a newborn is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee.” Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 122-123.

Malthusian³⁴ decrease in human population is the remedy for humanity's woes.³⁵ Humans are understood as the nemesis of the planet and, if allowed to freely procreate, will spell out almost certain destruction.³⁶ Yet, on naturalism, where does one acquire the ethical materials to construct a moral argument against such postulates? Even esteemed scholar Sir David Attenborough has joined the ranks of the anti-human movement with his stark confession:

We are a plague on the Earth. It's coming home to roost over the next 50 years or so. It's not just climate change; it's sheer space, places to grow food for this enormous horde. Either we limit our population growth or the natural world will do it for us, and the natural world is doing it for us right now... We keep putting on programs about famine in Ethiopia; that's what's happening. Too many people there. They can't support themselves—and it's not an inhuman thing to say. It's the case.³⁷

On such a view, not only is humanitarian aid to be withheld, such assistance is a roadblock to evolutionary progress. How can one maintain Mill's universal utilitarian principle on such naturalism bereft of human equality and the most basic instincts of pity? One helpful aspect is to remember that logic does not exist in an ethical vacuum. Ethics inform logic. William Lane Craig's treatise on the

³⁴ This sort of anti-human thinking finds much of its philosophical roots in the work of British cleric, Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) who unashamedly advocated, "[Persons] should consider the general welfare of the human race, of the society in which they lived, and of their own families, and so not cumber the earth with useless and miserable people." Hence, the phrase, "useless eaters" stems from Malthus' fear that overpopulation would destroy the human race. Patricia James, *Population Malthus: His life and times* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1979), 61.

³⁵ Peter Huber, paraphrases, "Pentti Linkola, an amateur biologist, eco-fascist, and one of Finland's most celebrated authors...the West must end all aid to refugees and the Third World. Abortion should be mandatory for women who have already borne two children. We occupy a sinking ship with one hundred passengers, and a lifeboat for only ten. "Those who hate life try to pull more people on board and drown everybody. Those who love and respect life use axes to chop off the extra hands hanging on the gunwale." Such policies presuppose the false environmental and economic concept of a zero-sum game. Peter Huber, *Hard Green: Saving the Environment from the Environmentalists-A Conservative Manifesto* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 160.

³⁶ Malthus' thoughts are best popularized by Paul R. Ehrlich's 1968 bestseller: *The Population Bomb*. Ehrlich's ominous foreword reads, "The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s and 1980s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now." The fear of overpopulation, and its alleged contribution to pollution and ravaging of natural resources remain a driving thought within much of current environmentalism although Ehrlich's ominous prophecies have systematically been proven false. Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), xi.

³⁷ Sir David Attenborough, interview by Louise Gray, "Humans are Plague on Earth," *The Telegraph* (London, UK), Jan. 22, 2013. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/earthnews/9815862/Humans-are-plague-on-Earth-Attenborough.html>

absurdity of life without God empties the naturalist's reservoir of purpose.³⁸ Craig's contention is that ultimately life is absurd without God. Even if the naturalist attempts to retain some trace of existential teleology, the point still remains: worldview sets the logical plumb line, not the reverse. Attenborough's commentary, though seemingly heartless, is thoroughly consistent on naturalism. Wedding utilitarianism and naturalism produces a strained coalition.

On the other hand, theism, particularly Christian theism, advocates a radical sort of self-denial that flies in the face of evolutionary naturalism. Kierkegaard somberly pleads, "But even if it is very pleasant for flesh and blood to avoid opposition, I wonder if it is a comfort also in the hour of death. In the hour of death, surely the only comfort is that one has not avoided opposition but has suffered it."³⁹ Evolutionary naturalism has no such category even on Mill's utilitarianism.

Robert Merrihew Adams' critique of moral shock, a concept very onerous to establish on naturalism, provides far more explanatory power than a naturalistic formulation of herd mentality or any other such musings. Reverence for the *imago dei*, by way of not violating the sanctity of personhood, is the best method of minimizing pain and maximizing pleasure. History bears testimony to the fact that a culture's respect for the intrinsic value of human life has a direct correlation to the well being of persons in that respective culture. Adams writes, "I think the moral horror or abomination there (Nazis making lampshades out of human skin) is not to be found in the blurring of a socially recognized boundary but in what is done to images of God."⁴⁰ A respect for inalienable rights creates the potential for a free and virtuous society while simultaneously restraining vice. Naturalism erodes transcendent ethics and creates an ethical vacuum almost always filled with human tragedy on a grandiose scale. Ideas have implications and ethical theories never remain only on the reservation of academia.⁴¹ They take on a life of their own as they trickle down into popular culture and politics. Marx's dialectical materialism exacerbated already nightmarish human suffering from the borders of Eastern Europe to the frigid shores of North Korea. On the other hand, the ideals of Bonhoeffer's radical Christian ethics and Wilberforce's social compassion for both humans and animals, rooted in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, still attract the youthful zeal of young Christ-followers to give their finest years in the stench of fetid slums and Third World orphanages.

3) Naturalism and Creaturely Flourishing

³⁸ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 65-88.

³⁹ Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, eds. and trans. (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1995), 84.

⁴⁰ Robert Merrihew Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 126.

⁴¹ See, R.C. Sproul, *The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts that Shaped our World* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2009).

Sam Harris attempts a more suit and tie approach to morality on naturalism. It should be noted that Harris does not claim utilitarianism. However, as I will show, his proposal of creaturely flourishing constitutes the core of utilitarian ideals even if they go unnamed. Harris writes, "I will argue, however, that questions about values—about meaning, morality, and life's larger purpose—are really questions about the well-being of conscious creatures."⁴² Harris' thesis is a colossal yet unsuccessful attempt to amalgamate utilitarianism and naturalism. Unfortunately for Harris, the epic failure of his theory was broadcast to an embarrassing level in his debate with William Lane Craig. Craig's rebuttal notes the difficulty of Harris' position:

But Dr. Harris has to defend an even more radical claim than that: he claims that the property of being good is identical with the property of creaturely flourishing. And he's not offered any defense of this radical identity claim. In fact, I think we have a knock-down argument against it...On the next-to-last page of his book, Dr. Harris makes the telling admission that if people like rapists, liars, and thieves could be just as happy as good people, then his "moral landscape" would no longer be a moral landscape. Rather, it would just be a continuum of well-being whose peaks are occupied by good and bad people, or evil people, alike.⁴³

Such an admission reveals not only the sandy foundation of Harris' moral landscape but also an unintentional backdoor endorsement of psychopathy. Who can deny the possibility that the psychopath can actually flourish so long as the psychopath avoids punishment? It seems that outside of employing a transcendent flourishing, Harris' moral landscape seems just as relevant to psychopaths as to philanthropists. Craig goes on to reference philosopher of science Michael Ruse:

The position of the modern evolutionist...is that humans have an awareness of morality...because such an awareness is of biological worth. Morality is a biological adaptation no less than are hands and feet and teeth...Considered as a rationally justifiable set of claims about an objective something, ethics is illusory. I appreciate that when somebody says "Love thy neighbor as thyself," they think they are referring above and beyond themselves...Nevertheless...such reference is truly without foundation. Morality is just an aid to survival and reproduction...and any deeper

⁴² Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 1.

⁴³ Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 190. Sam Harris and William Lane Craig, "Is the Foundation of Morality Natural or Supernatural?" Debate, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, April 2011, <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/is-the-foundation-of-morality-natural-or-supernaturalthe-craig-harris#ixzz2WDNGm1tT>

meaning is illusory.⁴⁴

While Harris grasps for materials within the storehouse of naturalism to construct his moral landscape he comes up woefully short. Naturalism simply fails the stress test to support Harris' morally weighty moral landscape. Craig's stinging rebuttal on this point stands as a textbook example of a rare knock down argument in serious academic discourse.

INADEQUACY OF NATURALISM TO ACCOUNT FOR MORAL DUTIES

1) Moral Vacuity of Higher and Lower Pleasures

Mill traces a line of demarcation between various levels of pleasure. He writes:

If I am asked, what I mean by difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure, except it's being greater in amount, there is but one possible answer. Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure.⁴⁵

For Mill, the answer to the degradation of morals in society was mental cultivation, not much unlike Plato's educational maxim, although with a specific bent toward the cognitive. Adams writes, "The effect of Mill's use of it (the higher/lower pleasures distinction) is to stack the deck against the sensualist and in favor of intellectual, social, and moral pleasures."⁴⁶ Mill's point here provides a substantive

⁴⁴ Michael Ruse, "Evolutionary Theory and Christian Ethics," in *The Darwinian Paradigm* (London: Routledge, 1989), 262, 268-9. In, "Is the Foundation of Morality Natural or Supernatural?" Debate between William Lane Craig and Sam Harris, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, April 2011. <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/is-the-foundation-of-morality-natural-or-supernatural-the-craig-harris#ixzz2WDRC9fGo>. Craig then references Darwin's admission, "If we were to rewind the film of human evolution and start anew, people with a very different set of moral values might well have evolved. As Darwin himself wrote in *The Descent of Man*, "If men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters, and no one would think of interfering." For us to think that human beings are special and our morality is objectively true is to succumb to the temptation to species-ism, that is to say an unjustified bias in favor of one's own species." Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2nd edition (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1909), 100. In, "Is the Foundation of Morality Natural or Supernatural?" Debate between William Lane Craig and Sam Harris, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, April 2011. <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/is-the-foundation-of-morality-natural-or-supernatural-the-craig-harris#ixzz2WDSX1UHW>

⁴⁵ Mill, 56.

⁴⁶ Adams, 91.

rebuttal against those who seek to lump enlightened utilitarians together with licentious hedonists.

However, the question for this discussion is whether or not Mill's higher/lower pleasures demarcation persists on naturalism. The smoke and mirrors game appears to quickly collapse under a most basic investigation. Mental and physical pleasures are, at their core, still physical processes. Why could one not take Callicles' admonition in Plato's *Gorgias*, "a man who is going to lead a full life must allow his desires to become as mighty as may be and never repress them"?⁴⁷ This begs the question on whether our desires are inherently drawn toward the rational or to selfishness, even if it entails a certain level of irrationalism. Then again, do such moral terms have the license to enter naturalistic territory? Virtually all of the discussion on higher and lower order goods presupposes moral realism that is qualitatively non-physical by definition. Take, for example, Adams' designation of Mill's pleasure categories:

Here we must ask how those who have fallen have lost their capacity for the higher pleasures. Is this really a change that could have preceded the change in their preferences? I think not. The only way in which people can possibly be said to have lost their capacity for moral or social pleasures in such cases is by ceasing to care very much about other people and about morality. Mill's deck is stacked against the sensory pleasures precisely because we are all susceptible to them.⁴⁸

Even the language of virtue and vice carries heavy moralistic overtones. As has been stated, on naturalism, in the end, everything is simply matter no matter how one may sift it. Adams goes on to note that naturalistic utilitarianism fails to even account for the value of human relationships.⁴⁹ If anything, naturalism can, at the very best, contribute to what nurses survival. However, mere propagation of the human race, given the apparent human potential for greater planes of existence, is a depressingly low bar.⁵⁰

If there is no qualitative or moral distinction between higher and lower level pleasures, then morality evaporates from the courtroom and slips into a test tube of bleak physical formulas. MacIntyre notes Nietzsche's reaction to the death of God,

⁴⁷ John E. Hare, *God and Morality: A Philosophical History* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 275-276.

⁴⁸ Adams, 92.

⁴⁹ He writes, "In some areas of human life, however, and particularly where certain kinds of personal relationships are concerned, the economic model is grossly inadequate for an understanding of what is involved in being good to people." *Ibid.*, 142.

⁵⁰ For those who consider these claims too strong, see Alasdair MacIntyre's spirited, *Intractable Disputes*, edited by Lawrence S. Cunningham (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009).

the unspoken core of the rise of naturalism, “But Nietzsche then goes on to confront the problem that this act of destruction has created. The underlying structure of his argument is as follows: if there is nothing to morality today but expressions of will, my morality can only be what my will creates. There can be no place for such fictions as natural rights, utility, the greatest happiness of the greatest number.”⁵¹

Even Mill's own recognition of human frailty makes little sense on naturalism. Mill laments the “many who begin with youthful enthusiasm for everything noble, as they advance in years sink into indolence and selfishness.”⁵² What is noble? What makes nobility a virtue and indolence and selfishness a vice? Mill's theology is a non-issue per the point of this paper even though his warning of the downward pull of the lower nature is nonsensical on naturalism. In fact, Mill's warning of the attraction of the lower nature to lower-end pleasures makes the most sense on the Christian view of human nature.⁵³

If one appreciates a certain sort of academic acrobatics, one needs look no further than to observe a utilitarian naturalist try to make sense of Mill's words toward religion. Mill writes, “If it be a true belief that God desires, above all things, the happiness of his creatures, and that this was his purpose in their creation, utility is not only not a godless doctrine, *but more profoundly religious than any other.*”⁵⁴ For Mill, the category of pleasure is defined best not in terms of corporeal pain and punishment but rather may include religious devotion. Mill references Jesus of Nazareth as having “the complete spirit of the ethics of utility” and sees no reason why moral sanctions couldn't include “the hope of favour and the fear of displeasure from our fellow creatures or from the Ruler of the Universe.”⁵⁵ Mill shows signs of supporting the notion that utilitarianism carries no moral force in a naturalistic universe unlike Sartre who despairingly argues like a rank naturalist, “The idea of God is contradictory and we lose ourselves in vain. Man is a useless passion.”⁵⁶ One must be careful not to assume that these statements establish Mill's explicit belief in God, but they do reveal that his understanding of utilitarian ethics finds no animosity with theism.

⁵¹ MacIntyre, 114.

⁵² Mill, 58.

⁵³ Mill writes, “Capacity for the nobler feelings is in most natures a very tender plant, easily killed, not only by hostile influences, but by mere want of sustenance; and in the majority of young persons it speedily dies away if the occupations to which their position in life has devoted them, and the society into which it has thrown them, are not favourable to keeping that higher capacity in exercise.” *Ibid.*, 58. Mill goes on to note inferior pleasures, addiction, and the strong potential for overall human moral decline. His warning almost sounds like a refrain of the Apostle Paul's lament over inherent human depravity where Paul writes, “For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Romans 7:15, ESV).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 64, 74.

⁵⁶ Jean Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1957), 76. In, Hare, 118.

2) Moral Duty to Contribute to Human Happiness

Mill strongly believed in moral duties, most specifically, one's duty to promote the highest pleasures for the greatest number in society. Mill's writings reveal his comfortability with rooting such a notion in the ethics of Jesus and the character of God.⁵⁷ When the Creator is removed from the equation, the power of moral duties to affect the utilitarian end simply evaporates. To what realm does the naturalist seek to teleport in order to mine moral materials? Moralizing molecules seems to be an attempted philosophical alchemy of sorts. It is at this crossroad where the naturalist experiences a crisis of evidential explanatory power: what to do with information. William Dembski explains, "Communication theory's object of study is not particles but the information that passes between entities. Information in turn is just another name for *logos*. This is an information-rich universe. The problem with mechanistic science is that it has no resources for recognizing and understanding information."⁵⁸ Naturalism has no such category. Due to an unwarranted timidity, theists often opt out of holding the naturalists' feet to the fire, and naturalists receive a free pass on moralistic poaching. Once again the same issue resurfaces: where do naturalists get their idea of moral duties and human rights? A naturalist, sitting upon her moralistic high horse, pouring forth vitriol against the alleged inhumanity of God, is inherently contradictory because she is assuming what she is trying to disprove. As Pope Benedict XVI remarks regarding the naturalism espoused by the New Atheists, "When you have lost God, you have lost yourself; then you are nothing but a random product of evolution."⁵⁹ Whether on naturalistic evolutionary survivalism or Harris's rickety edifice of the moral landscape, the naturalistic house of utilitarian morality sits on sinking sand.

On the other hand, Baggett and Walls argue, "The force of the moral argument is that theism is no more outlandish or outrageous than many of our most cherished moral convictions."⁶⁰ Not to be sidetracked with what is often characterized as fundamentalist diatribe, it should not be dismissed *a priori* that one's moral choices affect one's intellectual receptivity to the plausibility of God's existence. James Spiegel writes, "The human mind does not neutrally observe the world, gathering facts purely and simply without any preferences or

⁵⁷ Mill, 64, 68-69.

⁵⁸ William Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science & Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 233.

⁵⁹ Brad S. Gregory, "Science Versus Religion? The Insights and Oversights of the 'New Atheists,'" *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 12, no. 4 (2009): 50, accessed July 1, 2013, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/logos/summary/v012/12.4.gregory.html>

⁶⁰ David Baggett and Jerry Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 28.

predilections.”⁶¹ These predispositions toward atheistic naturalism are, “not a loss of intelligence so much as a selective intellectual obtuseness or imperviousness to truths related to God, ethics, and human nature. *But the root of this obtuseness is moral in nature* (emphasis mine).”⁶² Factors such as an absent or abusive/weak father, according to Spiegel, have a high potential for creating a fertile ground for atheism.⁶³ While father issues may increase one's proclivity toward atheism, the most shocking data is the correlation between sexual promiscuity and atheism.⁶⁴

Not only is moral duty, whether Kantian or utilitarian, bankrupt on naturalism, but Saul Bellow expresses the permeating pointlessness of naturalism, “But what is the philosophy of this generation? Not God is dead, that was passed long ago. Perhaps it should be stated death as God. This generation thinks—and this is its thought of thoughts—that nothing fateful, vulnerable, fragile can be durable or have any true power. Death waits for these things as a cement floor

⁶¹ James Spiegel, *The Making of an Atheist: How Immorality Leads to Unbelief* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 13.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 56.

⁶³ Spiegel supports this claim with fascinating details of the lives of famous atheists that, according to Spiegel, were contributing factors to their atheism, “Atheists whose fathers died: David Hume—was two years old when his father died. Arthur Schopenhauer—was sixteen when his father died. Friedrich Nietzsche—was four years old when his father died. Bertrand Russell—was four years old when his father died. Jean-Paul Sartre—was fifteen months old when his father died. Albert Camus—was one year old when his father died. Atheists with abusive or weak fathers: Thomas Hobbes—was seven years old when his father deserted the family. Voltaire—had a bitter relationship with his father, whose surname (Arouet) he disowned. Baron d’Holbach—was estranged from his father and rejected his surname (Thiry). Ludwig Feuerbach—was scandalized by his father’s public rejection of his family (to live with another woman). Samuel Butler—was physically and emotionally brutalized by his father. Sigmund Freud—had contempt for his father as a “sexual pervert” and as a weak man. H.G. Wells—despised his father who neglected the family. Madalyn Murray O’Hair—intensely hated her father, probably due to child abuse. Albert Ellis—was neglected by his father, who eventually abandoned his family.” *Ibid.*, 65-66.

⁶⁴ Spiegel provides a few cliff notes of Paul Johnson’s sordid, *Intellectuals* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988). Spiegel cites, “Jean Jacques Rousseau—intensely vain and wildly irresponsible; sired five illegitimate children and abandoned them to orphanages, which in his social context meant almost certain early death. Percy Bysshe Shelley—a chronic swindler with a ferocious temper; also an adulterer who, with three different women, fathered seven children whom he basically ignored, including one he abandoned to an orphanage, where the baby died at eighteen months. Karl Marx—fiercely anti-Semitic; egocentric, slothful, and lecherous; exploitative of friends and unfaithful to his wife; sired an illegitimate son, whom he refused to acknowledge. Henrik Ibsen—a vain, spiteful, and heartless man, caring only for money; an exploiter of women and contemptuous of the needy, even among his own family. Leo Tolstoy—megalomaniacal and misogynistic; a chronic gambler and adulterer; a seducer of women and contemptuous of his wife. Ernest Hemingway—ironically named, given that he was a pathological liar; also a misogynistic womanizer and self-destructive alcoholic. Bertrand Russell—misogynistic and a serial adulterer; a chronic seducer of women, especially very young women, even in his old age. Jean-Paul Sartre—notorious for his sexual escapades with female students, often procured by his colleague and lover Simone de Beauvoir.” *Ibid.*, 71-72.

waits for a dropping light bulb.”⁶⁵ If naturalism is true, talk of moral duties along with higher or lower pleasures is little more than a depressing trek beneath the pale banners of Vanity Fair. Talk of purpose on naturalism amounts to little more than the *soma* of Huxley's Brave New World. Honest naturalists, such as Albert Camus, are willing to push aside the hollow trinkets of feigned moral duties and ask the tough questions, “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy.”⁶⁶ Moral duty presupposes purpose, something that an intellectually honest naturalist will find difficult providing.

3) Moral Duties and Free Will

Finally we come to the colossal question of the existence of free will—an assertion that is a pillar for virtually all post-Enlightenment moral philosophy. The autonomy of the self is of indescribable value in regard to free will. But one must raise the question as to where free will is located on a naturalistic value stratum. Does naturalism actually entail determinism? It seems that could be the case. Sam Harris' admission, in his groundbreaking work, *Free Will*, states, “The illusion of free will is itself an illusion” only later to admit, “Am I free to change my mind? Of course not,” strips off the verbose concoctions of naturalistic free will.⁶⁷ Taken together with Mill's utilitarian moral duties entering the fray, the result amounts to a philosophical standoff because such an emphasis smacks of purpose and presupposes free will.

Mill's utilitarianism is qualitatively humanistic, having all the trappings of an overarching design as evidenced by the inexorable drive for human happiness. The Hedonic principle is prescriptive but, on naturalism, from whence comes the prescriptor? Human experience seems to suggest an almost universal moral barometer to which C.S. Lewis appropriately applies the epithet “the odious inner radio,” contrasting false guilt with genuine contrition.⁶⁸ Without some vestige of genuine responsibility to choose the good, the bridge between one's actions and moral responsibility may become subject to the decay of acidic determinism. Bush aptly notes, “Ironically in their quest to free themselves from God they have destroyed all hope of true freedom.”⁶⁹ Naturalists such as Francis Crick and Daniel

⁶⁵ In, Sam Keen, “Death in a Posthuman Era,” in *New Theology No. 5*, eds. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 79. In, Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 1075.

⁶⁶ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays: An Absurd Reasoning* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 3.

⁶⁷ Sam Harris, *Free Will* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 64, 65.

⁶⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Essential C.S. Lewis*, ed. Lyle Dorsett (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 531. Accessed November 22, 2013, http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm_send/884

⁶⁹ Bush, 50.

Dennett agree that, in the paraphrase of Stewart Goetz, “any kind of freedom that we have must be a kind of freedom that is compatible with the truth of determinism.”⁷⁰ If Crick and Dennett are correct, then one’s genetic proclivity may come precariously close to genetic determinism.⁷¹ Heroism (a hollow term if there is no genuine ability to choose) and cowardice lose any sense of moral distinction. Dennett posits, “Causation is so hopelessly inscrutable as to be invisible. We see the dramatic effects leaving; we don’t see the causes entering; we are tempted by the hypothesis that there are no causes.”⁷² Yet this is little more of an argument from silence rather than a robust rebuttal.

Contrary to the dearth of naturalistic hypotheses, Baggett and Walls, building on George Mavrodes’ “Religion and the Queerness of Morality,” assert, “So if one is an atheist in a Russellian world, then he’s faced with a choice: Either affirm that morality and rationality sometimes dictate different things and then either infer that we should do the moral, irrational thing anyway, or do the rational thing and ignore the dictates of morality.”⁷³ If *telos* is a wishful myth and there is no true freedom, objective moral duties, or genuine choice, then the line between pain and pleasure rapidly vaporizes under the heat of a mechanistic universe.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have provided a number of reasons to support the idea that naturalism may find a close fit with Mill’s utilitarianism yet fails to provide a reasonable warrant for Mill’s utilitarian principle via lack of moral explanatory power. I have given a number of reasons to believe that utilitarianism self-destructs on naturalism. First, I provided a working definition for both utilitarianism and naturalism. Second, I demonstrated the incompatibility of Mill’s utilitarianism and naturalism due to three explanatorily weak naturalistic options: 1) cultural equality on naturalism, 2) naturalistic evolutionary survivalism, and 3) naturalism and creaturely flourishing. Third, I explicated the inadequacy of naturalism to account for moral duties in three particular ways: 1) the moral vacuity of higher and lower pleasures, 2) the lack of moral explanatory power of moral duty to contribute to human happiness, and 3) the lack of explanatory power of moral duty and free will. For these reasons, the case is robust against using utilitarianism within naturalism.

⁷⁰ Stewart Goetz, “The Argument From Evil,” *The Blackwell Companion of Natural Theology*, eds. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 451.

⁷¹ To sidestep the charge of genetic determinism, naturalists may attempt to argue for a compatibilistic sense of free will and charge certain theists with philosophical doubletalk. Reformed Christians who eschew genetic determinism but espouse supralapsarianism and Muslims who hold to a form of theistic fatalism are open to this counterargument.

⁷² Daniel Dennett, *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), 76-77. In, *ibid.*

⁷³ Baggett and Walls, 172.

As Robert Jastrow famously declared, “For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”⁷⁴ Let the theologian gently, and in profound epistemic humility, resist the urge to establish the mastery of her intellectual superiority. Rather, in sincere epistemic humility, let her extend the hand of reconciliation to the skeptic dangling from the cliff of existential despair.

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⁷⁴ Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1992), 107.

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