

So, would you ever leave your faith?

“So, would you ever leave your faith?” That’s what I was asked. It had come out that I didn’t think evolution was plausible, and that I thought God better explained the facts.

My friend asked me, “So, what if evolution were proven? Would you leave?”

“Leave what”, I asked. “Christianity, or belief in God?”

“Well, they both go together, don’t they?”

I told my friend that there were two things that were foundational to my worldview. I’ve considered the alternatives and I’m convinced that God exists, and that Jesus rose from the dead. I’ve already covered the reasons I’m convinced [Jesus actually existed](#), that [he believed himself to be God](#), and that [he rose again to vindicate that claim](#). The one under question tonight was God’s existence.

Rather than outlining the [moral argument](#), the [cosmological argument](#), or [other apologetic standards](#), I decided to take a big picture approach. I explained that the existence of a God seemed to fit best with reality. **There are many big questions in life, and God’s existence seems to address them all.** Something that happened to my car might help explain my angle.



Last summer I noticed that my car’s A/C wasn’t working. The car was difficult to steer too. Since these seemed unrelated, I wondered what on earth was going wrong. I turned down the radio and heard some horrible clunking noises. At this point, I noticed that my engine gauge read incredibly hot, so I pulled over to shut it down before anything worse happened. (Side note: I’m definitely not a car guy, so looking at the engine is something I do because I know you’re supposed to - not because I’ll be able to fix anything.)

When I opened the hood I saw oil sprayed everywhere and what remained of a

belt. Even though I was out of my depth at this point, I had an idea what all the big parts did. It seemed to me that there were a couple of options, broadly speaking. Either there was one thing that caused all this destruction, or I had just witnessed a remarkable automotive catastrophe. Either a bunch of individual components simultaneously self-destructed like some horrible mechanical symphony, or one thing started a chain of events. One initial problem seemed most plausible, but the symptoms were so unrelated that it seemed like a stretch.

After reflecting on the symptoms, a scenario began to emerge. I knew a lot of expensive things had been connected to the belt that was now in shambles. That could explain how the problem spread. Since there was an oily mess that seemed to emanate from the steering pump, that reminded me of my difficulty steering. What if that started it all? If that seized, it would probably cause the belt to slow down. If the belt slowed down, it would make sense that my A/C would suffer. Since belts don't do well with seized parts, it probably snapped pretty quickly. That would completely shut down A/C and steering and anything else connected to the belt. If the water pump stopped working, that would explain the skyrocketing engine temperature.

It looked like the steering pump was the single cause of everything else. Was that explanation certain? No, but it did seem most plausible. If not that, it seems I would have to track down what could explain a spontaneously dying A/C unit, difficult steering, an overheating engine, and several other symptoms. It seemed more plausible to me that there was one cause rather than many. Why look for a half-dozen explanations when you would do. And when diagnosing it, the mechanic should probably start by looking at simple causes rather than outrageously rare ones.

When I say I believe in God, I'm doing the same sort of thing. I believe in God because a number of questions about reality are answered solely by his existence.

- How did something come from nothing?
- Where did life come from?
- Where did consciousness come from?
- Where did morality come from?
- What about things like justice, love, and hope?

On the Christian worldview, all these questions and more can be answered in a single response: God. I'm aware that nonbelievers have answers to some of these questions, but they are not terribly persuasive to me. Besides that, they require me to accept a separate explanation for each one. I *could* accept undirected macro-evolution, inexplicable forces of nature that happen to work nicely together, a herd morality that developed on its own, and all the other naturalistic explanations. Or I could observe that an all-powerful being could easily create all those things, and he could design them to function properly together. **The naturalistic worldview requires I take on a number of new, and unusual beliefs. The theistic worldview only requires I accept one.** I realize many people think that belief in an eternal, supernatural being is a big step - and maybe it is. But I'd rather take on one foreign belief than ten. And even so, this says nothing of the questions I'd have to be content leaving unanswered as a naturalist. Where did matter, space, life, consciousness, and all the rest come from? For these, there are no naturalistic answers. Nature can't explain where nature came from. Things cannot cause themselves - we have to look to other things for explanations. To explain nature we have to look beyond nature. Something you might call "super-nature". And that sounds to me like God. An omnipotent being that exists prior to space, matter, and time could create them all. A big bang needs a big-banger. The source of all life could create more life. A conscious creator would explain our consciousness. A maximally great being could do maximally great things. One explanation. One cause. Taking on this one belief that God exists explains everything we see. I'll concede that alone doesn't mean it's true. But it does mean it is the simplest explanation, and to my thinking the most plausible.

So, to return to the question I was posed, the proving of evolution would not cause me to turn from Christianity. (I think proof of such a thing is a very tall order, though I accepted it for the sake of argument.) Evolution itself says nothing about Jesus' resurrection or God's existence. As I hope I've explained above, I am convinced that God exists. Until a better explanation can be given for reality, things like evolution seem minor and insignificant.

In the rest of life, we typically exhaust simple answers before turning to the extravagant. Why not in metaphysical questions as well? Smart people have examined the evidence and come to different conclusions. I realize that. But if *you* haven't pondered the issue, you would do well to consider it. **Given the shape of**

reality, what is the most plausible explanation - one cause or an infinite number of causes?

God of War: God of Hope

If you have been patient enough to read the previous series, you have read several key insights that help us understand God as he is revealed in the Old Testament:

- [God implemented justice on a particularly evil culture](#). In doing so, God was not forcing His law onto every other nation; He was



showing He was a God cared about the victims of evil.

- God [waited hundreds of years](#) before implementing His justice; [he carefully warned](#) the targeted cultures; and he drove out most of the people ahead of time.
- The language of destruction in the war texts [primarily contain language of displacement](#): God was destroying a horrific cultural system, even while the individuals within it were embraced by the Israelite community.
- [The people involved in the wars were the cultural gatekeepers](#) (priests and military), not the civilians.
- The rules of war reflected [the principle of *lex talionis*](#), the command that the punishment should not exceed the crime.
- This is [not a history of genocide](#), but of the salvation of an area of the world from specific cultures that were some of the most brutal on record

in human history.

So why does all of this matter to us today?

God is offended by evil, as we should be. Actions have consequences. For the sake of the world, at some point someone must step in and stop evil and promote good. When we read or see the atrocities of the Holocaust, do we not cheer that someone intervened to stop that? When we read about genocide in Rwanda, or Saddam's torture rooms, or Kony's enslavement of children, isn't there a part of us that rises up and says, "Won't someone do something?"

If we were to find out that God ordered the defeat of Nazi Germany, or ordered intervention into the genocide in Rwanda, or had a plan for how to intervene in nations that commit atrocious human rights violations against their own people, would we suddenly become critical of God and say, "I thought you were a God of love?" I think we would be glad to know that Justice is part of God's nature too, and that He was also offended by what was going on.

We read in the book of Micah that by approximately 700 B.C., Israel had thoroughly absorbed the worship and the lifestyle of the very Canaanites they dispossessed: they were deceitful, violent, greedy, unjust liars; they had become like both the cultures and the rulers they had previously deposed. Micah warned them that they needed to repent (Micah 6), but not, perhaps in the way they expected:

What can we bring the Lord? What kind of offerings can we bring Him? Shall I bring him an offering of young calves? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall we offer our firstborn children to pay for our sins?

No! *The Lord has told you what is good, and what He requires of you: Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God.*

Act justly **and** love mercy. Is it possible that a God of Wrath and the God of Grace have more similarities than differences? Can God not hold the attributes of love and justice simultaneously? For that matter, can they even exist apart from each other? [In an interview with Lee Strobel, Paul Copan quoted Miroslav Volf, a Croatian who lived through unspeakable violence during ethnic strife in the](#)

former Yugoslavia:

"I used to think that wrath was unworthy of God. Isn't God love? Shouldn't divine love be beyond wrath? God is love, and God loves every person and every creature. That's exactly why God is wrathful against some of them.

My last resistance to the idea of God's wrath was a casualty of the war in the former Yugoslavia, the region from which I come. According to some estimates, 200,000 people were killed and over 3,000,000 were displaced. My villages and cities were destroyed, my people shelled day in and day out, some of them brutalized beyond imagination, and I could not imagine God not being angry. Or think of Rwanda in the last decade of the past century, where 800,000 people were hacked to death in one hundred days! How did God react to the carnage?

By doting on the perpetrators in a grandfatherly fashion? By refusing to condemn the bloodbath but instead affirming the perpetrators' basic goodness? Wasn't God fiercely angry with them?

Though I used to complain about the indecency of the idea of God's wrath, I came to think that I would have to rebel against a God who wasn't wrathful at the sight of the world's evil. God isn't wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love."

This is one of the messages of the anger of God in the Old Testament: **God is not indifferent with respect to those who suffer human cruelty.** Is it possible to conceive of a being who embodies love but does not become outraged at injustice? And while not every injustice in this life is addressed immediately, God's plan offers at least a hope that justice will have its day, if not in this life then the life to come.

"Human anger at injustice will carry less weight and seriousness if divine anger at injustice in the service of life is not given its proper place. If our God is not angry, why should we be? That God would stoop to become involved in such human cruelties as violence is... not a matter for despair, but of hope. God does not simply give people up to experience violence. God chooses to become involved...so that evil will not have the last word." - Terence Fretheim

God of War

“The entire concept of a God of justice and mercy ordering the slaughter of thousands of people on many occasions I find abhorrent. This is an issue I have always had profound trouble with and one I suspended judgment on when I began to believe.. The responses to this problem I have seen so far (God did them a favor, they were like cancer, or God’s justice is beyond ours) seem to me to be lame or inappropriate.” – from a letter to Timothy Keller

Let’s be honest: The Old Testament God sometimes seems cranky and eager to smash something. That is a daunting image of God, especially when compared to the mild and humble picture of Jesus. If the New Testament God is Mr. Rogers, the Old Testament God is Randy Couture. However, neither of these caricatures is accurate. This post is the first part of a series on an often uncomfortable topic:

God of War.

Growing up Mennonite, we never talked about God and war. We read the story about David and Goliath with as much detachment and inner condemnation as we could. We wondered how much we should cheer for David’s mighty men, who were the elite forces of their day. We cheered when Sampson brought the temple down, but with some guilt. (Plus he had long hair, and that was a problem for us too.) So what do you think we did with all the God-ordained wars in the Old



Testament?

Nothing.

We loved Jesus when he said “love your enemy” and “turn the other cheek,” but God? God in the Old Testament was sometimes treated like the crazy uncle who

shows up at family reunions. Nobody really knows how to interact with him or explain him to others.

A number of years ago I decided I could not avoid that part of the Bible any longer. The Bible is supposed to reveal something about God's nature and his purpose for the world, and as such needs to be understood, not avoided. I can't say I was excited about the task, but I have found that a careful reading of the texts reveals a God very different from the image I had before.

From a Christian apologetics standpoint, this is important. I think many Christians remain as confused as I was. But this is an crucial topic to address because those outside the faith aren't letting this one slide - and rightly so. How could God be "good" if he commanded so much evil? This is the question we must be prepared to answer.

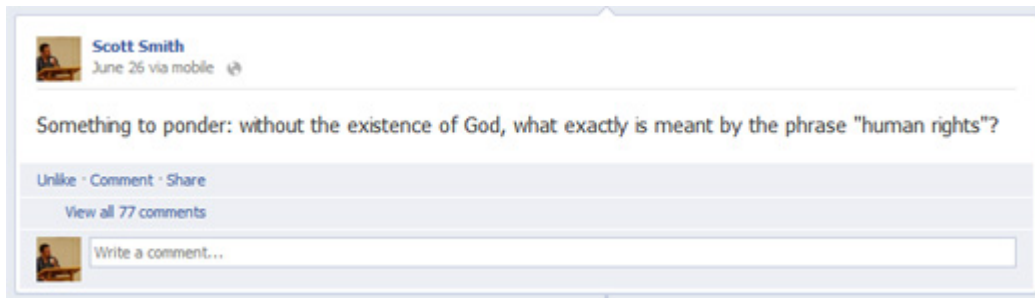
This series is not the definitive answer. This series is meant to be an entry level presentation, and as such I hope it can at least bring about a sincere re-thinking of God as He is often portrayed. This is also a separate topic from the difficulties of understanding Old Testament Law or some of the more gruesome Old Testament stories. (I will get to those eventually...)

Here's a question before [I move on to the actual war texts](#): Have you ever struggled to reconcile biblical portrayals of God's actions with the Biblical description of God's nature? And if so, has there been resolution to your conflict?

If there is no God, the Declaration of Independence is meaningless

Ok, maybe not meaningless, but it certainly starts out on a flawed premise.

It all started when I posted this to Facebook:



What followed was an interesting conversation, but one that failed to provide any reason to counter my contention. Here is a summary of my argument:
According to Stanford's Encyclopedia of Philosophy,

"Rights are entitlements (not) to perform certain actions, or (not) to be in certain states; or entitlements that others (not) perform certain actions or (not) be in certain states."

I would contend that **rights must be granted by persons**. By Stanford's definition, rights are abstract objects. They are intangible. The only way they may even be conceived of is in a mind, and minds are elements of persons. It is meaningless to speak of rights as existing prior to minds existing. It's like talking about forests that existed before trees.

Once a right is conceived of, or proposed, it must be evaluated on some basis. Just as prices must be expressed relative to the value of currency, and weight must be expressed relative to the force of gravity, rights must be evaluated with reference to some standard. **Without an objective referent, rights are merely expressions of what an individual or culture holds valuable.** History is replete with examples of cultures who have held different ideas of the value of humans than we hold today. Even today we see varying rights displayed in other cultures. Whether we examine the inherent value societies afford all human beings, or varying values based upon skin color, sex, pedigree, or other factors, it is clear that there is no agreed upon norm. Many cultures and organizations have attempted to create such a standard, but the fact that the standard must be created and ratified is further illustration that rights is fluid without proper grounding. I believe that the only standard by which the notion of rights may be seen as objective and transcendent is God - if He exists.

I would suggest that rights granted to one's own species are little more than a codification of preferences. If there is no transcendent being, I see no basis to call my conception of rights as any better than yours, or Lincoln's as superior to Mao's. They might seem less abhorrent. We might find them beneficial. We could suggest that they would better promote the flourishing of the human species. But we cannot make any objective comparisons. We can explain the differences, but we have no basis to make imperative statements such as "we ought to do XYZ". All we can do is appeal to emotions and cultural sensibilities. I'm not saying that is a bad thing - only that it is not necessarily a good thing. After all, who's to say that a culture 1,000 years from now will not look upon ours with equal disdain?

Legal human rights are those which are defined by governments in accord with their national and cultural values. Since they are defined, by definition they may be defined differently. These rights *ought* to be delineated as they define what a people group values. However, it can hardly be said that one set of such rights has any bearing with respect to any other people group. In fact, this would be bigotry, a violation of one people's "human rights" in favor of our own. On what basis could we do such a thing? Legal human rights exist, and they vary geographically, historically, and in other ways. But I don't believe that these are the types of rights we mean when we speak of "human rights" in sweeping terms. When we speak of human rights, we usually think of things like freedom from persecution, availability of drinking water, and equality. Clearly, on a legal basis, all of these can be defined away - and in many places they are. **In order for the notion of universal, inalienable human rights to bear any persuasive or imperative force, we must appeal to natural human rights, if such a thing can be said to exist.**

So - back to the title of this post. The founders of the USA and those crafting the Declaration of Independence believed in natural rights. From the Declaration,

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

My argument is that the only way this second sentence of the Declaration makes any sense is literally and as a whole. Obviously, they believed in a Creator (ie,

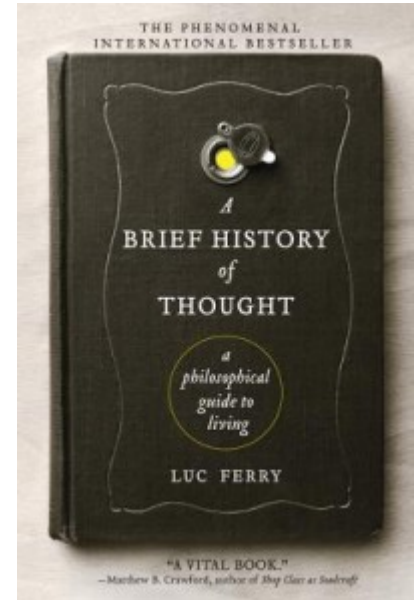
God). Not only did they say so, but they went straight to the notion of inalienable (unalienable is a less frequently used variant) rights. (Un/)Inalienable refers that which may not be taken away. It cannot be transferred or revoked. It could be ignored or not recognized (slavery, anyone?) but it could not be removed or repudiated. That can only be the case if these rights had their source from someone besides ourselves.

I have explained the source of legal rights, and have pointed out their shortcomings. The other type of rights is natural rights. Natural rights, if they exist, are those which are inherent and inalienable. They exist independently of us. They must either precede our species or arise concurrently with our species. Since rights are the products of minds, and natural rights precede human minds conceiving of them, they must find their origin in another mind. And since legal rights may be granted, they may also be taken away, and therefore are inalienable. So, either natural rights do not exist except as some romantic fiction in our minds, or they really do exist. **It seems to me, for human rights to bear any weight, they must be natural rights, and therefore must be real. The only way that could be the case is if there really is a God.**

So, there you have it. That's my thinking. What do you think - agree or disagree?

"A Brief History of Thought"

Luc Ferry's [Brief History of Thought](#) recently caught my eye as I wandered through a local bookstore. Not only did it promise an entire history of the human ability to think, it promised to do it briefly. How is that not a win/win? It's a bold endeavor, claiming to give perspective on the effectiveness and impact of 5 key philosophical eras in human history, beginning with the Greeks. The strength of the book is Mr. Ferry's ability to summarize complicated worldviews in a way that is accessible and interesting. The weakness is perhaps inseparable, as a philosophical overview for a mass audience is a tough venue to accurately capture philosophies that have transformed the world.



I will do my best to summarize both his claims and my reasons why I think that, while insightful, Mr. Ferry's conclusions fall short of being convincing, particularly when it comes to his view of Christianity.

Lest there be any confusion about what weight philosophy carries in certain circles, Mr. Ferry opens his book with boldness:

"The quest for salvation without God is at the heart of every great philosophical system...Philosophy also claims to save us - if not from death itself, then from the anxiety it causes, and to do so by the exercise of our own resources and our innate faculty of reason."

In spite of both aspiring to the same end - salvation - Mr. Ferry firmly believes that faith and reason are incompatible means in their efforts to achieve this goal.

Philosophy starts with the natural sciences - physics, mathematics, biology - then searches for causes and limits. Once philosophers reach the limits of science, they press on with logic and reason. The conclusions must be anchored in reality, not dependent on wishful thinking about what one hopes to be true or the untestable truths that the Other (God) offers. Religion, says Mr. Ferry, is "too good to be true," and offers comfort but not lucidity, serenity but not clarity.

From this starting point, Mr. Ferry begins a tour of five pivotal movements in the history of philosophy.

STOCISM



To the Stoics, the essence of the cosmos (*kosmos*) was harmony, rationality, truth and beauty, or the *logos* of existence. The *logos* was both imminent (it existed in the fabric of existence) and transcendent (it existed apart from humanity). They sought to find the universal *logos* behind the *kosmos*, so that their individual lives could

be as ordered as the universe. The Logos would direct their path.

After death, people became an oblivious fragment absorbed into the impersonal order of the *kosmos*, no longer self-aware but nonetheless existing as part of the order.

One need not fear death, as it could be overcome through a form of immortality found through having children and doing great deeds, which carried their legacy on forever.

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity moved in and absorbed the language of the Stoics. Christians agreed the universe was rational and harmonic, and to some degree did embrace philosophy in a way that was “*subordinate and modest, certainly, but nonetheless real.*” Christian and Stoic philosophy had in common the desire for immortality, though their explanations were very different.

The *Logos* was no longer an impersonal, pantheistic force; the *Logos* solidified in a man - Jesus Christ. He melded the immanent and the transcendent dichotomy of the Stoics. He also promised an afterlife in which there was not only existence, but one in which personal identity and awareness remained.

“It is no less than the transition from an anonymous and blind doctrine of salvation to one that promises not only that we shall be saved by one person, Christ, but that we shall be saved as individuals in our own right: for what we are, and as we are.”

Christianity elevated the individual far more than the Stoics did, because now

the actual person, not just their deeds, truly lived on for eternity. From this radical shift sprang a philosophy of human rights that still impacts the world.

Mr. Ferry allows for a weakened form of reason to coexist with faith, since the presence of a Christian command to “love God with all our mind” is certainly reflected in the Bible and Christian history. The Apostle Paul insisted there is a place for both faith and reason in his Epistles. He also notes the contribution of Thomas Aquinas, Justin Martyr and many others to the Christian philosophical endeavor.



He notes that, in the end, *“the truths revealed by faith take precedence of those deduced by reason.”* Believers are required to *“let go of our own thinking faculty, to forsake reason for trust, so as to make place for faith.”* Christian philosophers, of course, would claim that faith carries us onward when we reach the limits of what reason can do. This is hardly a subjugation of reason, but an honoring of its proper place.

Mr. Ferry struggles to make his starting presuppositions about faith hold up. He notes that religion should have a stranglehold over thinking, which then ought to be revealed in Christian ethics, but (oddly enough) that has not happened. Turns out the world owes its democratic inheritance, as well as the human rights that stem from the Christian claim that all people are of equal worth, to Christianity. The Christian concept of liberty rather than the cold, calculation fatalism of the Stoics became the foundation of morality. The French Revolution borrowed and then poorly executed Christianity’s egalitarian ideal (pun intended). Furthermore, Christians moved the ethical discussion beyond merely actions by claiming that thought and intent matter in addition to outward obedience. Those are some significant accomplishments for a movement full of unthinking, irrational people. Perhaps the Other is more capable than Mr. Ferry believes.

In the end, though he finds Christianity’s promise of salvation and the afterlife compelling, he rejects Christianity for two main reasons. First, he doesn’t believe the evidence supports its truth claims. Second, he believes the “wish fulfillment” of hope in the afterlife proves it can’t be true (more on this later).

Mr. Ferry does have a stellar close to the section:

“The personalizing of the Logos changes all factors in the equation. If the promises made to me by Christ are genuine; and if divine providence takes me in hand as an individual, however humble, then my immortality is finally overcome, and not merely the fears it arouses in me. Immortality is no longer the anonymous and cosmic event proposed by Stoicism, but the individual and conscious resurrection of soul together with their ‘glorious’ bodies. In this sense, it is ‘love in God’ which confers its ultimate meaning upon this revolution effected by Christianity in relation to Greek thought. It is this new definition of love, found at the heart of the new doctrine of salvation, which finally turns out to be ‘stronger than death.’”

HUMANISM

Modern physics apparently crushed the foundations upon which both Stoicism and Christianity rested. It revealed *“an infinite chaos devoid of sense; a field of forces and objects jostling for place without harmony.”* Now, mankind has found itself alone in a *kosmos* with no *logos* of any kind. Reality is now chaos; order cannot be found through study (the Stoics) or contemplation and revelation from God (Christians). *“Order, harmony, beauty and goodness are no longer the first principles...it was going to require man himself...to introduce some order into a universe which seemed no longer to offer any of its own.”*



Without order and harmony, everything was up for grabs. For the first time, people began to wonder what was separated humanity from the rest of the animal kingdom. And yet the Moderns still wanted to believe people had rights, though it was hard to figure out what those rights were, and why it should matter in a universe in which chaos reigned and animals had become brothers.

Rousseau decided to ground morality not on the *kosmos* or in religion, but in

mankind. What distinguishes us from the animals is that we have liberty; we can “*forge a personal history*” unlike my dog, which can barely forge his way through snow. Rousseau says we are so free we can choose to do radically good or evil things. But what is evil in universe of chaos, populated by animals and animals with personal history? The solution takes us back to first claim: since we are the ones to impose an arbitrary order to the universe, we “*invent ‘ideals’ to choose between good and evil.*” Among other criticisms of this position, Mr. Ferry notes that humanism offers no convincing explanation as to what evil is, and why it exists.

Mr. Ferry summarizes the humanist ideal this way:

“In modern life as in the ancient world, it was necessary to devise something – beyond morality – to take the place of a doctrine of salvation. The difficulty is that, in the absence of a cosmos or a God, it becomes especially difficult to think this through. How do we confront the fragility and finiteness of human existence, the mortality of all things in this world in the absence of any principle external to and higher than humanity? This is the problem which the modern doctrines of salvation have tried to solve – for better or worse – and, it has to be admitted, usually for the worse.”

POSTMODERNISM AND NEITZSCHE

Nietzsche dismissed both science and religion. He claimed that only by deconstructing all claims of truth can we learn anything about the world. Since neither science nor religion was willing to relinquish those claims, he viewed them both as equally wrong.

As Mr. Ferry summarizes, “*Religion and science...share in common a claim to accede to ideal truths, to intellectual realities, and to notions which do not partake of the corporeal world...we are ceaselessly deluded by them.*” Nietzsche loved the arts, because the arts don’t necessarily worry about ideal truths; they impose values and perspectives while bypassing argumentation.

Nietzsche hated the notion of the ideal, and ended up finding the greatest pleasure in the complete negation of the things in which people typically find meaning. At one point, when an earthquake hit the island of Java, he wrote to a friend: “Two hundred thousand wiped out at a stroke – how magnificent!”

Close to end, after writing eloquently about the Christian understanding of suffering, grief and Resurrection, Mr. Ferry notes:

“I find the Christian proposition infinitely more tempting [than Buddhism and Stoicism] - except for the fact that I do not believe in it. But were it to be true I would certainly be a taker.”

He also rejects humanism and postmodernism. Instead, he settles for secularized Christianity, which he offers as a humanist idealism: an transcendence of values and meaning that become immanent by residing with us. We are the *logos* and the *cosmos* . While he wants truth, beauty, love, and justice,

“There is no longer a heaven of metaphysical ideals, no God - or at least I am not obliged to think so in order to accept the idea that I am in the presence of values that are at once beyond me, yet nowhere to be found except within me.”

Unfortunately, the last section reads like a series of conclusions Mr. Ferry wants to be true rather than a logical, syllogistic argument than builds a case from facts, reason and logic (the tools which Mr. Ferry seeks to use). For example, Mr. Ferry dismisses Christianity because he believes the desire for heaven is “wish fulfillment,” and thus cannot be true. This is bad reasoning all by itself. More to the point, if Mr Ferry wishes to be consistent, he ought to acknowledge that his wish for a humanistic idealism containing a transcendence within immanence is also the greatest argument against its existence.



While he writes winsomely about the need for *teleos*, *kosmos*, and *logos*, his grounding in the vague notion of an immanent, transcendent self did not resonate with me logically or existentially.

In other words, I didn't see how his conclusion followed from his observations in the rest of the book, and I could not find a way to see how his explanation offered a better path to *kosmos* than the Moderns and Postmoderns. He showed how ideas had real world consequences

for all the other systems of thought; I had trouble seeing how his proposal would look in ordinary life, and how it could provide a more obligatory or compelling call to the good life.

Mr. Ferry notes distinguishing characteristics of Christianity that sets it apart from the other systems. He desires *teleos* and *kosmos*, so humanism and postmodernism are out. He desires an immanence and transcendence, so Stoicism and Christianity are in. He wants them to be personal, so Stoicism is out - leaving Christianity. He wants a system that leads to good in the world, and through his own writing shows how the Christian ideal transformed the world, while the other three had a real world impact that was not so good.

Upon reflection, it seems that Christianity offers almost everything for which Mr. Ferry is looking. There was a time when immanence merged with transcendence, when *logos* and *kosmos* merged, and gave *teleos* and hope for both this life and the next. In addition, we can test whether or not this is true by studying history, science, philosophy, and reason.

What it does not offer is a salvation grounded in the self. Mr. Ferry's *a priori* commitment to Philosophy as Savior (without God, using our own resources and reason) commits the fallacy of "poisoning the well" against Christianity. Frankly, it should poison it's own well too. Modernism and Postmodernism have not delivered what they promised in terms of an ability to "save" the self and society.

Christianity, on the other hand, by Mr. Ferry's own admission, has offered not only a compelling salvation of the self through the incarnation of immanent transcendence, but has transformed society in ways the other systems have not and can not.

Perhaps the greatest truths and most compelling hopes can be true, not just because we want them to be, but because they are.