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**Why Non-Christian Beliefs Are Not the Truth about Reality**

By Freddy Davis

There is some actual way reality is structured and it is not structured any other way. What does that mean?

- God either exists or he doesn't. It can't be both.
- If he does exist, he exists in some very particular form and not any other.
- If he doesn't exist, there is some very specific organizing principle for the universe.
- Human beings have a particular kind of existence and whatever that is it doesn't have any other form.
- There is only one actual ultimate expression of purpose or meaning that it is possible for human beings to attain. Whatever that is, all other possibilities are pure fantasy.

Because of the nature of a worldview, it is impossible to get at any of these matters using empirical science. Science can be one of the lines of evidence used to evaluate for truth, but it cannot positively prove anything related to the ultimate matters of our existence.

That being the case, we must use other lines of evidence to get at the answers to life's most essential questions. One of the most profound evidential arguments is based on human experience. As human beings, every person, without exception, experiences life in a particular manner. Different people evaluate those experiences based on varying worldview presuppositions, but the experiences themselves transcend the various beliefs. EVERYONE experiences life in a particular way. There are many experiences we could detail, but the following nine are some of the most profound.

**1. We experience life as personal, self-aware beings.**

As human beings, we are consciously aware of our own existence.

**2. We have a sense of transcendence.**

Most human beings acknowledge a sense that something exists beyond the material universe. This has been true across cultures and throughout time in every part of the world.

**3. We experience life in relationships.**

Humans have a need for relationship which goes beyond mere biological necessity. This need is seen in the desire we have for human interaction as well as in selfless acts towards others.

**4. We experience life based in spiritual qualities.**

There are human only characteristics which go beyond mechanistic biological function. These include such characteristics as creativity, self-consciousness, self-determination, analytical ability, etc.

**5. We experience life based on natural laws.**

It is apparent and undeniable that the operation of the material universe is based on natural laws. It is possible for human beings to work with the laws to create benefit for themselves, but is impossible to operate outside of them.

**6. We are capable of knowledge.**

Human beings have a unique ability to hold and self-consciously use knowledge.

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### **7. We have a sense of morality.**

All humans live life based on some system of morality. Different people may define morality differently and may even disregard what they believe to be right. But the sense is operative regardless.

### **8. We experience time as linear.**

Human beings experience time based on movement from past to present to future.

### **9. We experience the world as objective.**

Every human being lives life as if the world exists as an objective reality. Regardless of any philosophical attempt to define it in another way, they must live “as if” it is true.

### **How People Evaluate These Experiences**

In spite of the fact that everyone experiences life the same way, these experiences are evaluated differently based on the worldview presuppositions people hold. Let’s look at the four worldviews and see how their beliefs match up with human experience.

### **Naturalism**

Naturalism is the belief that there is no such thing as a supernatural reality. As such, human beings are understood to be purely physical animals which came into being by means of natural biological evolution. This belief has particular implications regarding their beliefs about the nature of the human person.

### Human Experience: Do naturalistic worldview beliefs match up with how human beings experience reality?

#### **1. We are personal, self-aware beings.**

No - Naturalistic beliefs rely completely on Darwinistic evolution to explain their belief about human self-awareness. The big problem is, its assumptions are based purely on faith. There is no scientific evidence

to show that naturalistic evolution can account for this characteristic. Naturalists must live life “as if” they are personal, self-aware beings while their doctrine tries to explain it away.

#### **2. We have a sense of transcendence.**

No - Naturalists may acknowledge this “sense” of transcendence, but assert that it is actually nothing more than a biologically evolved survival mechanism. There is, however, no science to back up this evolutionary claim. But since belief in anything supernatural is dismissed out of hand, there is no other possibility.

#### **3. We live life in relationships.**

No - In Naturalism, relationships are acknowledged to exist but are seen only as biological necessities (to continue the species) rather than as corresponding with any actual spiritual connection between individuals. There is no scientific basis for this doctrinal claim, but Naturalists have no choice but to live life “as if” personal relationships are actually self-conscious, self-determined realities.

#### **4. We have spiritual qualities.**

No - “Spiritual qualities” (elements of human experience which cannot be scientifically quantified) are acknowledged by Naturalists to exist. However, they are touted to be naturally evolved physiological elements. Again, there is no scientific proof that Naturalists are able to point to in defending this belief.

#### **5. We live life based on natural laws.**

Yes - In naturalistic belief, natural laws are considered to be able to explain all of reality. This assertion is considered to be absolute and is based on human observation of the universe in action. However, there is no scientific basis for positively affirming that the natural universe is all that exists.

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### 6. *We are capable of knowledge.*

No - Human knowledge is recognized to exist, but is seen purely as the physiological ability to store and retrieve information using a biological computer (the human brain). There is no scientific data to support this belief. It is based purely on the philosophical presupposition that the supernatural does not exist.

### 7. *We have a sense of morality.*

No - A sense of right and wrong is acknowledged to exist in humans but is regarded as nothing more than an evolutionary development meant to promote the survival of the species. It does not correspond with any kind of self-conscious, objective reality. There is no scientific basis for this assertion, but all Naturalists live life "as if" there is an objective morality at some level.

### 8. *We experience time as linear.*

Yes - Time is one of the essential elements of physical reality. As such, Naturalism wholeheartedly embraces humanity's experience of time to the point that it is one of the cornerstones of the worldview. This belief is based on the philosophical presupposition that the natural universe is all that exists.

### 9. *We experience world as objective.*

Yes - The physical universe is considered to be the ultimate form of reality.

## **Animism**

Animism is a worldview system which acknowledges many gods/spirits who are functionally interactive with the material universe. Interaction with various spirit beings is conceived of as a symbiotic set of relationships which cross between the physical and the spirit worlds. The work of humans is to offer prayers and offerings in order to meet the needs of the spirit beings in the spirit world. In turn, they will cause good to happen to the individuals in the material world. This works the other way, as well. If the

humans don't do the right things the spirit beings will cause bad things to happen.

## Human Experience: Do animistic worldview beliefs match up with how human beings experience reality?

### 1. *We are personal, self-aware beings.*

Yes - Animistic belief systems assume humans are personal, self-aware beings, but can point to no particular reason why this is true. The basis for making this assertion comes simply by observing how individual humans live life in the world.

### 2. *We have a sense of transcendence.*

Yes - A sense of transcendence is assumed to be true based strictly on human experience. It is expressed by adherent's respect and homage to the spirits and gods they recognize. There is, however, no basis for acknowledging any particular spiritual beings. Thus, the sense of transcendence provides us with no material justification for any particular belief.

### 3. *We live life in relationships.*

Yes - The fact of the existence of actual, self-conscious human relationships is assumed in animistic belief. There is, though, no justification for believing this. It is simply the default situation which is observed in human society.

### 4. *We have spiritual qualities.*

Partially - While spiritual qualities are naturally expressed in the mundane experiences of life, they are not acknowledged or expressed in ways which allow animistic cultures to move beyond primitive life circumstances. Whenever there is a problem or issue that needs to be solved, the solution is understood to be related to appeasing offended spirits rather than in using human spiritual qualities to find answers. As such, the spiritual qualities, which are innate in humanity, are minimized and not fully acknowledged.

**5. We live life based on natural laws.**

Partially - Animist's embrace of natural law is mitigated by the belief that spirits also engage the physical world and influence what happens. While Animists, in many respects, live "as if" the world operates by natural law, they also assign supernatural causation to matters which may actually be explainable by science. The determination is made strictly based on whether or not they are able to intellectually understand the cause. Thus, their understanding of reality is skewed by not being able to effectively distinguish between the natural and the supernatural.

**6. We are capable of knowledge.**

Partially - Animists assume that human beings are capable of knowledge as it relates to the routine elements of life. But things which lie beyond their limited knowledge is automatically attributed to supernatural causes. As such, Animists do not tend to seek natural answers for anything they do not already understand. This lack of ability to distinguish between the natural and the supernatural is problematic because it becomes difficult to distinguish between fantasy and reality.

**7. We have a sense of morality.**

Yes - Human morality is considered to be an integral part of the way the universe operates. Essentially, human actions which create problems in the spirit world are considered immoral and those which promote harmony in the spirit world are moral. The way humans discern the difference is to observe their own world. If bad things begin happening it can be assumed that some bad act has occurred and must be corrected. When things are going well, this indicates people are living out a proper morality.

**8. We experience time as linear.**

Yes - Animists assume a linear understanding of time, as this seems to be the natural default of human experience. That said, there is no justification for this assumption.

**9. We experience the world as objective.**

Partially - Animists embrace belief in an objective world because of their observation of the universe in action. At the same time, the spirit world is also acknowledged to be an objective reality which intrudes into the physical world in particular ways. There is, however, no means of affirming or justifying the way this interaction takes place other than by their philosophical presuppositions.

**Far Eastern Thought**

Far Eastern Thought (FET) originated, and is most prominent, in the Far East – thus the name. This worldview does not distinguish between the secular and the divine (pantheism) and teaches that all of reality is composed of, and reducible to, a single substance (monism). A more technical description would be pantheistic monism. It asserts that there is no personal god and that the essence of reality is composed of an impersonal life force which is constantly moving toward unity.

Human Experience: Do FET worldview beliefs match up with how human beings experience reality?

**1. We are personal, self-aware beings.**

No - Those who follow FET live life "as if" human beings are personal, self-aware creatures yet their doctrine asserts that the material universe is an illusion. They believe that ultimately every element of reality is impersonal – including what seems to be personal about humanity.

**2. We have a sense of transcendence.**

No - Far Eastern Thought believes in the existence of a transcendent reality but it defines that existence as strictly impersonal. Since reality is understood to be strictly impersonal, human beings must also ultimately be impersonal and an individual's self-awareness of this sense must be an illusion.

**3. We live life in relationships.**

No - Since relationships can only exist in a personal and material reality, and since FET asserts that material reality and personality do not reflect ultimate reality, the idea of personal human relationships is, in an ultimate sense, meaningless. Humans do, however, live "as if" relationships are important. There is no objective evidence to back up the FET point of view and even if there were it would be dismissed as illusory.

**4. We have spiritual qualities.**

No - The spiritual qualities we experience as human beings are personal qualities and FET believers express these in daily life as a part of their human existence. Doctrinally, though, they assert that ultimate reality is impersonal. Since the life force is impersonal in an absolute sense, and spiritual qualities are essentially personal, these must be understood to be an illusion.

**5. We live life based on natural laws.**

No - FET asserts that ultimate reality is the impersonal life force and that the natural universe is not a true

expression of that reality. Since the material universe is the only place natural laws have any meaning, the very concept is meaningless.

*6. We are capable of knowledge.*

No - Since knowledge is an expression of personality and ultimate reality is impersonal, we are once again faced with a human characteristic that does not mesh with FET doctrine. FET considers human knowledge to ultimately be illusory.

*7. We have a sense of morality.*

No - In FET doctrine, right and wrong do not exist in an ultimate sense. The cosmos is understood to be perpetually in a state of perfection with karma continually balancing everything out. Morality is an expression of personality and must be considered an illusion.

*8. We experience time as linear.*

No - FET believers live daily life "as if" the existence of past, present and future are a reality. However, FET doctrine asserts that reality exists in a state of eternity and operates cyclically. Since time is a function of material reality and is experienced in a linear fashion, it is understood to be an illusion.

*9. We experience the world as objective.*

No - Even though FET believers live in the world "as if" it is an objective reality, its doctrine asserts that the material universe is illusory.

## **Theism**

Theism is the belief that there is an actual, infinite and transcendent God who is responsible for creating and sustaining the material universe. God is generally understood to be a person, though of a higher order than humanity. For the most part, theistic groups depend on some kind of revelation to support their positions. This is understood to be possible because, as a person, God is able to communicate instructions to mankind. It is up to humans, then, to receive and follow this revelation in order to please God.

### Human Experience: Do theistic worldview beliefs match up with how human beings experience reality?

*1. We are personal, self-aware beings.*

Yes - In all theistic belief systems, God is revealed to be a person who created mankind with personal, self-aware characteristics. This matches with how humans experience the human condition.

*2. We have a sense of transcendence.*

Yes - Theistic belief systems understand God to be a transcendent person based on his revelation of himself to mankind. Human beings are seen to be creatures who were created with the ability to recognize God's existence. Human experience across time and cultures acknowledges this kind of understanding about God and is an affirmation that transcendent reality actually exists.

*3. We live life in relationships.*

Yes - The particulars of the way relationships are understood to operate vary based on the specific form of Theism being dealt with. But almost without exception, theistic belief systems affirm a God who operates in some kind of relationship with mankind. It also affirms that the human creature was created to live in relationships with other human beings and it sanctions various societal institutions to support these relationships.

*4. We have spiritual qualities.*

Yes - In theistic systems, God is revealed to be a spiritual being who made mankind as a creature who has the spiritual qualities that humans exhibit. This matches up with the way human beings experience their own personhood.

*5. We live life based on natural laws.*

Yes - Theistic beliefs affirm that material reality is based on a fixed set of natural laws, while also acknowledging that God can intervene in material reality without upsetting the operation of those laws. This matches up with the way human beings experience life on earth.

*6. We are capable of knowledge.*

Yes - Theism asserts that God created mankind with the ability to have knowledge. This matches up with the way human beings experience material life.

*7. We have a sense of morality.*

Yes - In theism, God is revealed to be a being with a particular character which defines the boundaries of morality. This morality is shared with mankind through revelation. The specifics of the revelation may vary based on the particulars of each theistic system, but it is not the differences between systems that is important at this point as much as the fact of its existence. As an extension of that, mankind is understood to have a sense of that morality as an innate part of his being. This also matches up with the way human beings experience life.

8. *We experience time as linear.*

Yes - In theistic belief systems, God is typically revealed to have established the material universe as a time based reality which moves from past to present to future. This is, certainly, how human beings experience time.

9. *We experience the world as objective.*

Yes - Theism asserts that God is an actual objective person who has created an objective material reality. Our human experience affirms the objectivity of the world we live in.

**What We Can Know**

By comparing the beliefs of the various worldview systems to the way human beings actually experience life in the world, it becomes obvious that the only worldview which matches up with our experience is Theism. The rest, at some point, must affirm beliefs which call into question the way humans experience life. Thus, we can legitimately come to the conclusion that the truth about reality falls somewhere within a theistic framework.

This does not mean, however, that all theistic belief systems represent the truth. In fact, the various theistic systems literally propose different gods who have different characteristics and purposes. Only one God is actual, and he exists as a being with particular characteristics and purposes. All other characterizations of God, then, are necessarily false. Testing for truth in Theism requires we look at each belief system.

It is not the purpose of this article to explore that matter. All we are trying to do here is narrow the scope of our search to move us in the right direction. Exploring further requires that we delve more into the arena of apologetics. We can say, though, that the Christian faith is the one belief system which represents truth. Every other one can be demonstrated false based on historical or logical problems.

The God of the Bible is an objectively real person and he has revealed himself to us. We can have total confidence that this is the truth.

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