

# Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

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Volume 30 | Issue 1

Article 7

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1-1-2013

## Taliaferro & Evans, THE IMAGE IN MIND: THEISM, NATURALISM, AND THE IMAGINATION

Nicholas Wolterstorff

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### Recommended Citation

Wolterstorff, Nicholas (2013) "Taliaferro & Evans, THE IMAGE IN MIND: THEISM, NATURALISM, AND THE IMAGINATION," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 30 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol30/iss1/7>

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were to respond that ultimate authorship requires that an agent have ultimate and direct control over what he or she does and the causally undetermined nature of agent-causing makes this control possible, then why could it not be the case that the causally undetermined nature of choosing makes this control possible, *without agent causation*? Again, agent causation seems explanatorily dispensible.

Though I have questions about the need for and existence of agent causation, I have no questions about the excellence of *Free Will: A Guide for the Perplexed*. It is a first-rate and thought-provoking treatment of the topic of freedom.

*The Image in Mind: Theism, Naturalism, and the Imagination*, by Charles Taliaferro and Jil Evans. Continuum, 2011. 213 pages. \$130 (hardcover).

NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF, Yale University.

The co-authors of this book, Taliaferro and Evans, are a professional philosopher and a widely exhibited painter, respectively. That leads one to expect something out of the ordinary. And so it is. One doesn't often find a philosopher and a painter collaborating except, now and then, in a very superficial way. The outcome of this collaboration is far from superficial. It includes black and white reproductions of six paintings by Evans.

The authors nicely state the project of their book in the opening paragraph.

This is a book about images and imagination and their role in the greatest philosophical debate in the modern era: the debate over the credibility of theism versus naturalism. What is the theistic image of the world and how does it differ from the naturalist image? What is beautiful or ugly, deep or superficial, extravagant or empty, illuminating or stultifying, about these images? How do these images impede or enlarge our moral and personal lives? Despite the enormity of the naturalism-theism debate, there has been insufficient attention to the aesthetic nature of the images and imagination in these two profound visions of reality. (1)

Upon first reading, one wonders what the last of these five sentences has to do with the four that precede it. What's the connection between a study of the role of images in the theism-naturalism debate and attention to the aesthetic nature of those images? Shortly the connection becomes clear: the authors argue that the aesthetic nature of the images contributes significantly to the role the images play in the debate. The authors take a broad view of the aesthetic dimension of things. It consists, on their view, of "the affective or emotive features of objects and events," that is, of those features to which we respond affectively, whether positively or negatively (38).

By "theism" the authors have in mind what they call *Platonic theism*. "Central to such an outlook is an affirmation of the intrinsic goodness of

the divine. It is in virtue of such divine goodness that theistic religions understand God to be worthy of praise, adoration, awe, love, and obedience" (52). A satisfactory definition of "naturalism" proves harder to come by. The authors distinguish between *strict* and *broad* naturalism. Strict naturalism holds that everything there is can be described in the terminology of natural science. Those who embrace such naturalism either hold that there are no such things as beliefs, intentions, consciousness, and the like, or they hold that these are identical to brain states of one sort and another. Those who embrace broad naturalism concede that there are these things and that they are not identical with anything physical, but insist that in the course of evolution they *emerged* from the physical.

Theism and naturalism, so understood, are commonly thought of as consisting of theses, or propositions; the debate between these two positions is then thought of as a debate concerning which of the theses in dispute are true and which are false, which are justifiedly held and which are not so held, and so forth. Without denying that there is indeed this sort of debate taking place over propositions, the authors argue that it is illuminating to see the debate as a debate over images; and that in this debate over images, affective responses to these images play a large role. The theist images and experiences the world "as an intended, purposive, valued reality"; the naturalist sees it as "not the result of [evolutionary] forces that could have foreseen its reality" (145). The authors quote Daniel Dennett as aligning himself with those "who love evolution," and as saying that "there is humility, and awe, and sheer delight in the glory of the evolutionary landscape" (158). The affective note here is obvious, as it is in well-known passages that the authors quote from Richard Dawkins in which Dawkins expresses his revulsion for Christianity.

The point eventually becomes obvious, and we are in debt to the authors for making it seem obvious: some people are drawn to the image of a good and awesomely creative God who brings about a world imbued with wisdom; others are drawn to the image of a mindless and purposeless evolutionary process that eventually brings forth beings like us. Many who are drawn to the former image are repulsed by the latter; many who are drawn to the latter image are repulsed by the former. The debate between theists and naturalists is anything but a cool and rational assessment of evidence pro and con various propositions.

In chapter 3 Taliaferro and Evans first insist that accepting the reality of consciousness is far more plausible than denying it, and then go on to argue that theism has a much more plausible way of accounting for the emergence of consciousness than does naturalism; God, who is himself conscious, brings about consciousness. Indeed, naturalism has no account whatsoever; those naturalists who accept the reality of consciousness hold that it emerged at a certain stage in the evolutionary process but have no explanation of why that happened. So too, of course, they have no explanation of why there is a cosmos at all. In chapter 4 the authors argue for a counterpart thesis concerning moral and aesthetic values: whereas theism

has a plausible way of accounting for such values, naturalism does not. In chapter 5 they observe that while naturalism would seem to have a more plausible account of natural evils than theism does, a close scrutiny of various accounts that theists have offered shows that this is not the case.

I find the arguments offered in these chapters competent, but neither new nor deep. In good measure the authors conduct their argument by the quotation of extended passages from other writers; that leads me to conclude that it never was their intent to offer new and deep arguments. Their intent was, instead, to call attention to the aesthetics of the debate.

But what does the aesthetic have to do with arguing that theism can offer an account of some things that naturalism cannot account for at all, that on other matters theism can offer a better account, and that on yet others it can offer an equally good account? The clue to the answer is to be found in the following passage: "In science as in art, one highly valued aesthetic feature is a cognitive, affective completeness or unity. That we value unity or wholeness is exemplified in the centuries of recorded human consciousness that acknowledges an awareness of incompleteness and lack of wholeness" and a longing for the wholeness that is missing (39). It's an aesthetic deficiency in naturalism that it cannot account for the existence of the cosmos, for the emergence of consciousness, and for moral and aesthetic values.

For decades now philosophers of science have puzzled over why it is that scientists prefer simple and elegant theories to complex and clumsy theories. After all, what we want out of our theories is that they be true. But simplicity and elegance are aesthetic qualities. Of course, if they were truth-indicators, that would be a reason for preferring them. But why would we think that they were? Or more precisely, if we were naturalists, what reason could there be for thinking that they were? If we were theists, we would have a good reason for thinking that they were truth-indicators.

Taliaferro and Evans have done us the service of pointing out that the appeal to simplicity and elegance in scientific theories is but a small part of the pervasive role of aesthetic categories in our conduct of the academic enterprise. The title of their book, *The Image in Mind*, would seem to indicate that their main aim is to call attention to the role of images in the academic enterprise and to the role of imagination as the producer of images. But eventually it becomes clear that the reason they want to call attention to the role of images is that they can then call attention to the role of aesthetic considerations in our acceptance and rejection of images. They don't mount a defense of this role of images; they just call attention to it. I wish they had mounted a defense. Or rather, I wish they had explored when this role is good and when it is bad; Dawkins's evident revulsion for theism is hardly an admirable feature of his work.

A final small point. A large proportion of the text consists of extended quotations from other authors; I cannot recall a text in which the proportion of quoted material was so large. I found myself of two minds about this. I realize that the evidence for the claim that images and aesthetic

considerations play a large role in the theism-naturalism debate will have to consist of a sizable number of passages quoted from participants in that debate. On the other hand, the extended argument, to the effect that theism has more explanatory power than naturalism, could well have been presented more in their own voice and less in the voice of others.

*Divine Evil? The Moral Character of the God of Abraham*, edited by Michael Bergmann, Michael J. Murray, and Michael C. Rea. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 337 pages. \$125.00 (hardcover).

PAUL COPAN, Palm Beach Atlantic University

In 2009, the University of Notre Dame hosted the “My Ways Are Not Your Ways” conference. On the table was the topic of the moral character of “the God of Abraham” as found in the Hebrew scriptures. The able philosophers and co-editors of this volume—Bergmann, Murray, and Rea—have put together an important collection of essays on a subject getting increasing attention, due in some measure to the criticisms of the New Atheistic foursome (Dawkins, Hitchens, Harris, Dennett). In this volume, protagonists and antagonists directly address issues all-too-frequently evaded by Bible readers—the nature of the God of the Hebrews, who apparently “commends bigotry, misogyny, and homophobia, condones slavery, and demands the adoption of unjust laws” (1).

Contributors friendly to the Hebrew God include Eleonore Stump, Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Peter van Inwagen, Mark Murphy, and John Hare. Those on the not-too-pleased-with-God side include Louise Antony, Edwin Curley, Evan Fales, Wes Morriston, and Paul Draper.

The book is divided into four parts: (I) Philosophical Perspectives: Problems Presented; (II) Philosophical Perspectives: Solutions Proposed; (III) Theological Perspectives; (IV) Concluding Remarks. What adds interest and depth to the book is the structure of each chapter (save the last), in which the presentation is followed by an opponent’s comments, to which the original presenter replies to round things out.

In the introduction, the editors analyze the various options on moral difficulties in the Hebrew scriptures with, for instance, the category of *herem* (“the ban/devotion to destruction”): (a) deny the texts are divinely inspired; (b) deny God’s goodness; (c) declare the biblical text a mystery on these matters; or (d) “(try to) revise one’s own moral values, intuitions, or whatever in light of the text” (12).

Now, the book is not as wide-ranging as many of us would have wanted it to be, and this is understandable given space limitations. Indeed, the God-critics such as Louise Antony, Edwin Curley, and Evan Fales in particular