Contemporary discussion on God’s existence in Philosophy of Science

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(Diplomski rad)

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the everlasting debate on God's existence in the field of philosophy. The thesis is largely based on the contributions of Alvin Plantinga and Elliott Sober, as they are some of the most influential figures who partook in the debate on God's existence in the 20th and the 21st centuries. The main theme of the thesis is an intricate connection between theism, naturalism, and science, with the contact point being Darwin's theory of evolution. While Plantinga argues that theism and science are compatible, Sober has a drastically different view, arguing that there is room for nothing else than naturalism and empiricism when working on scientific questions. The thesis provides a comparative analysis of Plantinga's and Sobers arguments, examining how they differ, but perhaps more importantly, how they overlap. By providing the comparative analysis, the thesis aims to contribute to the discussion on God's existence in the framework of the philosophy of science, as it provides a brief and concise overview of the main arguments in the discussion.

Key terms; philosophy of science, naturalism, methodological naturalism, evolution, theism

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Introduction

Should we believe in God, and if so, what is the purpose of our belief? What are its properties? What is the point of believing in God? If we can not answer these questions with a high degree of certainty, it seems irrational to believe in an entity when we know nothing about it (Berčić, 2012). For that reason, the question of God's existence, as well as God's properties, arose in the discipline of philosophy, as well as theology. However, when supporting the idea of theism, both philosophers and "common people" alike make assumptions, without being able to offer any sort of concrete proof of what they are supporting. On the other hand, scientific inquiry aims to answer questions with as few assumptions as possible, constantly seeking concrete evidence to support its claims.

For that reason, tensions between religion and science grew, resulting in two opposing views on how the scientific and theistic views can, or can not, co-exist within the same discussion. Within the realm of philosophy of science, a philosophical discipline this paper is going to revolve around, the discussion regarding science and theism transformed into a discussion on naturalism and theism, with the debate revolving around Darwin's process of evolution, as it is one of the most universally and commonly known scientific theories in modern science. This thesis will dive deep into this discussion through the lens of two philosophers, alongside supplementary authors who share their respective views, with the two key philosophers being Alvin Plantinga and Elliott Sober.

However, before exploring this discussion, the differences between the terms *naturalism*, *ontological naturalism*, and *methodological naturalism* should be highlighted. Firstly, naturalism is a broader term according to which all philosophical issues can be described within the constraints of empirical sciences, with no room for a priori thought (Jacobs, n.d.). Secondly, ontological naturalism deals with what constitutes our reality, with its starting point being a view where our reality offers no place for any supernatural entities. Ontological naturalists support a physicalist view on biological, mental, and other phenomena, stating that they are constituted of nothing more than physical entities (Papineau, 2023). Thirdly, the term methodological naturalism is more closely connected with the scientific method, as methodological naturalists claim that philosophy and science use near-identical methods to reach the same goal, exploring the world and the phenomena within it using the a posteriori evidence found within it (Papineau, 2023).

The first author to be discussed in the thesis is the aforementioned Alvin Plantinga, one of the leading Christian philosophers of our time, as he devoted a large portion of his work to the goal of proving that naturalistic and theistic views are not as opposite as it may seem at first, but rather complementary to each other. His 2011 work *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*, as well as the *Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism (EAAN)* will present the culmination of theistic thought and an attempt to prove that the combination of ontological and methodological naturalism is not enough to explain all the phenomena found in the world. What Plantinga ultimately concludes is not only that science and religion are compatible, but also that methodological naturalism and evolutionary theory are not (Plantinga, 2011). Although counter-intuitive at first, such an idea was very well developed by Plantinga who through good use of argumentation managed to strike a significant blow on the naturalist community within the realm of philosophy of science.

On the other side of the philosophical spectrum stands Elliot Sober, the second focal character of the thesis. He argues for the explanatory powers and empirical proof, which are both attributes closely connected to methodological naturalism. Sober offers a critique of the intelligent design argument, which is one of Plantinga's tools for proving God's existence, therefore offering a rebuttal towards theists. Sober also includes the notions of *parsimony*, also known as *Occam's razor*, as well as *irreducible complexity*, in order to bolster his claim that no supernatural being had anything to do with the evolutionary process, but rather that nature created itself while being governed by its own laws.

The main goal of this thesis is to provide a comprehensive analysis and comparison of both Plantinga's and Sober's work, alongside supplementing literature. In that way, the thesis will provide an overview of the discussion on God's existence in the philosophy of science, looking at it from two different perspectives, while also trying to reconcile them, despite their differences. By doing so, the thesis will not only offer an overview of the discussion on God's existence in the philosophy of science, but also elaborate on the limitations of natural sciences and empirical approach, which shape the scientific outlook we base our world upon.

1. Theoretical background

As we have previously seen, the discussion on God's existence in philosophy is one of the most popular discussions science has ever produced, as it is one of the most talked about philosophical theories outside philosophical circles. However, while the mainstream part of the discussion revolves around ethics and morality, this chapter will offer insight into the background of the discussion on God's existence in the philosophy of science specifically, alongside most prominent authors, as well as key terms that will be used in the rest of the thesis.

1.1. Historical context

The first philosopher who deserves to be mentioned in regard to the historical context of this discussion is David Hume, who presented an argument regarding God's existence, claiming that the universe was perhaps not created by an all-knowing creator. He instead claimed that all the nature's attributed people have been contributing to God could be assigned to nature instead. (Hume, 2012) Hume's sceptic approach hinted at conclusions naturalists agreed upon far after his death. The fact Hume laid strong foundations for those who will come after him is exactly why Hume deserves a considerable amount of credit regarding this topic, and it is the reason why he is mentioned as the first author of this historical context.

Following Hume, another key figure who, perhaps even accidentally, touched upon the discussion on God's existence in the field of philosophy of science is none other than Immanuel Kant. In one of his most prominent works, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant discussed how limited our knowledge is. He believed that our knowledge is based on our *phenomena*, the things we can observe, while the discussions on God's existence should be left within the realm of *noumena*, the unobservable. (Kant, 2009) By stating this, Kant aligned with many of his successors which will be discussed in the thesis, who claim that these two realms should be separated, with the observable realm being the only place we can seek scientific explanations.

Following Kant is Bertrand Russell, who challenged traditional arguments for God's existence. Russell went after some of the most prominent theistic arguments, such as the cosmological and the teleological argument, as he claimed they fail to provide any reliable proof (Russell, 2005). His work was a moment where the bridge between theistic and empirical approaches to God's existence was visible more than ever.

1.2. The current state of the discussion in philosophy of science

The modern landscape in the philosophy of science has been focused on the properties of scientific theories and explanations. Philosophers of science, as most other scientist, follow a paradigm upon which they build and develop their theories (Kuhn, 1962). However, in 1962, Thomas Kuhn presented the idea of *paradigm shift*s, where he explained that most scientific progress does not come from slow accumulation of knowledge over time, but rather through major shifts in scientific thought that completely turn the tables on how the discussion is developing. Kuhn claims that paradigms offer a framework within which scientists do their work, until the point they encounter an issue they can't tackle within their paradigm. That is when a shift occurs in scientific thought, as scientists often find an answer once they shift the paradigm and think outside the "paradigm box" (Kuhn, 1962). This will prove very interesting for the discussion, as the authors discussed in the thesis share very different worldviews, creating their separate narratives, i.e. paradigms. While the paradigm of methodological naturalism is the dominant paradigm in the realm of modern science, its explanations of God's existence (or lack thereof) don't sit well with philosophers such as Plantinga. This leaves room for Plantinga to offer his theistic explanation of God's existence, whose adoption would create a paradigm shift within the philosophical community, which was, according to Kuhn, occasionally necessary to make scientific progress.

However, as mentioned above, the more dominant scientific paradigm in contemporary science is the paradigm of methodological naturalism, which is supported by a large number of contemporary philosophers, one of who, is Godfrey-Smith. Godfrey-Smith emphasises the importance of testability and the role of empirical evidence when discussing scientific theories, therefore rejecting metaphysical explanations due to their lack of ability to be subjected to empirical testing(Godfrey-Smith, 2014). Just like Godfrey Smith, Michael Ruse provided an account of why empiric explanations took over the philosophical, as well as the entire scientific landscape in recent times. He focused on Darwin's evolutionary theory, like many authors that will be discussed, in order to show that there is no need for us to assume that there is an intelligent designer within the realm of modern, testable science (Ruse, 1999).

In line with these authors, Elliott Sober and his work will be one of the two focal points of this chapter, as he is a naturalist who devoted a portion of his work on explaining how naturalistic and evolutionary theory go hand in hand, with no room left for theism (Sober, 2024). However, while there are many who oppose theism and swear on naturalistic explanations, there are those who are on the other side of the debate.

One of them is Hick who decided to opt for a pluralist approach to the discussion. He was one of the first to reject the view that science and religion are two standpoints with zero shared views, He embraced the advancements of empirical science, and proposed the idea that it is complementary, rather than contrary, to theistic explanations (Hick, 1989).

And just like Hich, Alvin Plantinga, the second key character in this thesis, claims that science and religion are not two separate, but rather two closely connected entities. As it will be depicted in the upcoming chapters, Plantinga built upon his idea that science and religion are two very complementary things, and he expressed that thought through none other than Darwin's evolutionary theory, which depicts the essence of modern science (Plantinga, 2011). Another notable author who shares Plantinga's opinion on the limits of naturalistic approach to scientific inquiry is Thomas Nagel, as he also noted that naturalistic theories can not explain certain phenomena, such as reason, moral values, or consciousness (Nagel, 2012).

Overall, the discussion on scientific methods in itself is a pool of muddy water when it comes to the philosophy of science. When the ever-debatable element of God's existence is added to the equation, things get even more complicated. The following two chapters will take a look at the aforementioned Plantinga and Sober, alongside their respective work, in order to try and provide an overview of the discussion on God's existence in philosophy of science.

2. Alvin Plantinga's contribution

As previously mentioned, when debating the question of God's existence in the philosophy of science, one of the names that is infrequently left out is the one of Alvin Plantinga, due to his prominence when it comes to discussing the philosophy of religion, as well as its link to philosophy science. In a time where modern scientific discoveries seem to explain most of the phenomena happening in the world, thus making people inclined to look for answers outside of religion, Plantinga established himself as a prominent figure who resurrected theistic belief. Furthermore, Plantinga combines elements of philosophy, theology, and science, in order to bridge any possible gap between the aforementioned disciplines.

This chapter of the thesis will offer deeper insight into Plantinga's work, mainly focusing on his book *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*, alongside supplementing literature. The focal point of the chapter is Plantinga's *Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism* (EAAN), as it is Plantinga's argument that strongly opposes *methodological naturalism*, by aiming to show the theory of evolution and naturalism are self-refuting. Furthermore, the chapter will touch upon other concepts in Plantinga's work, such as the idea of reaching a possible concord between theistic and scientific belief.

2.1. Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism – An Introduction

Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism is a 2011 book written by Alvin Plantinga. In the work, Plantinga claims that most clashes between theism and science happen due to misunderstanding more than anything, believing in the idea that there is a strong connection between the two world views. However, when it comes to naturalism, Plantinga isn't keen on bridging a gap with theism. He refers to naturalism as a *"quasi-religion"*, stating that naturalism operates similarly to religion, as it tries to offer explanations about the world. Plantinga also describes a problem of methodological naturalism, which is the fact that it is in conflict with the principles of science itself, as Plantinga shows by using EAAN (Plantinga 2011), a concept that will be discussed later in the chapter. Even when suggesting that ontological naturalism is problematic, Plantinga is not necessarily a sceptic. He is instead trying to convince people to refuse ontological naturalism when trying to explain the metaphysical, while suggesting theism as a viable method of explanation that can take its place (Mashburn, 2010).

Plantinga starts the book by stating that he will be dealing with Christianity specifically, but highlights the fact that most of the points carried out will also count towards Islam and Judaism, thus expanding his view to theism as a whole, rather than just one select religion. Plantinga continues to list some of the modern authors who would try to refute his claim that there is no stark contrast between science and religion, and he defines them as *"new atheists"*, one of whom is Richard Dawkins, who he aims at in the second section of the first chapter (Plantinga, 2011).

He chose Dawkins specifically due to his work *The Blind Watchmaker*, a book titled in order to reference William Paley's 1802 work *Natural Theology*, where Paley presents one of the most popular theistic arguments. Paley notes the intricacies and complex structures of the world, such as the human eye, had to be crafted by an intelligent being in the same way that a watch is crafted by a watchmaker (Dawkins, 1986). Dawkins notes Paley's idea of a watchmaker was acceptable at the time of its creation, and that he wouldn't have been an atheist if he had lived before Darwin's theory of evolution. However, he also notes that Darwin's theory changed the way scientists examine the world and phenomena within it, as Darwin's theory provided concrete empirical evidence in order to support it, while Paley's hasn't. Based on Darwin's theory, Dawkins insists that natural selection has been the exclusive driving force of evolution, with no room for God's guidance in the process. Dawkins' watchmaker is "blind", for the world

is governed by forces and events that interact in an orderly fashion, without a plan or purpose, two properties the Paley's watchmaker would possess (Dawkins, 1986). By stating this, Dawkins claims that the world is not governed by a purposeful, always planning entity Christians call God, therefore alluding to the fact that theism is not able to coexist with the modern scientific worldview, as God does not exist at all.

As a Christian philosopher, Plantinga disagrees with Dawkins' view. Plantinga believes that Dawkins made a mistake by not differentiating the terms *randomness* and *guidance*. Plantinga chooses the example of genetic mutation, which Dawkins used to describe the evolutionary process. Dawkins sees genetic mutations as a series of events that took place throughout evolution, with seemingly no guidance. For Dawkins, genetic mutations happened simply based on the random needs of specific organisms at a specific point in time during the evolutionary process (Dawkins, 1986). Plantinga disagrees with that statement by saying such seemingly random processes still might be guided by a divine being, i.e. God, but in a manner that science can not detect, thus levelling the playing field regarding Dawkins' argument (Plantinga, 2011). By meeting Dawkins' view on methodological naturalism head-on, Plantinga builds a foundation for further analysis of methodological naturalism in the following chapters, showing that methodological naturalists fail to attribute evolutionary properties to a supernatural entity even when there is room to possibly do so.

2.2. Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism – Plantinga and others on Methodological Naturalism

When describing methodological naturalism, Plantinga starts off by differentiating it from the "regular", ontological naturalism in a similar fashion that was presented in the introduction of the thesis. While ontological naturalists claim that there is no God, among other supernatural entities, methodological naturalists claim that the supernatural realm is not a part of scientific discourse. It is important to note that methodological naturalism does not try to disprove God's existence intentionally, but it neglects it nonetheless, due to the fact a being such as a Christian God is a part of the supernatural realm (Plantinga 2011).

Furthermore, methodological naturalism has proved itself to be a dominant worldview in modern science, therefore pushing any idea of divine concepts such as *intelligent design* and *divine intervention*, both of which are concepts Plantinga himself mentions in his work, to the margins of scientific explanation (Kojonen 2016). When combining the properties of methodological naturalism described in this section of the thesis, we get the simplest definition of methodological naturalism and its relation to God's existence, which is the following; methodological naturalism is a worldview according to which all scientific theories and explanations must derive from the natural world. While methodological naturalism does not offer any direct insight into God's existence at this point, it seems like it leans towards the atheist's idea, since God is not something that derives from the natural world.

For that reason, methodological naturalism adopts a seemingly neutral stance concerning God's existence, not saying that God does not exist per se, rather saying that there is no room for the supernatural when talking within the constraints of scientific discourse. However, Plantinga argues such a claim. While he believes that some areas of science are religiously neutral, such as the distance between the Earth and the Sun, there are questions that have to be answered with some degree of religious bias. Plantinga continues to explain that there is not a clear-cut separation between questions which are, or are not religiously neutral, as he sees it as a continuum. The only guidance he offers regarding the distinction is that the questions which are not religiously neutral are the ones that deal with our pursuit to understand ourselves as human beings (Plantinga 1997).

Furthermore, other authors argue that methodological naturalism might fit better within the scientific framework if it was a rule that is an option a scientist can follow, instead of a necessary rule. This is due to the fact that, by limiting the constraints of science strictly to the

world surrounding us, a scientist could never uncover acts such as divine intervention, even in hypothetical situations where a divine intervention would be responsible for certain events (Kilian, 2024). Such opinion goes hand in hand with the historical overview of how modern science operates. Methodological naturalism, as well as the majority of modern science, relies on the concept of *causation* in order to provide an explanation for a certain phenomenon (Zargar et al., 2018). As Lewis notes in his 1986 work, we make conclusions about scientific fact based on the previous information that we simply build upon, therefore allowing no other information (such as divine information, for example) from the outside to be able to enter such narrow the streamline of thought (Lewis, 1986).

Lipton also addresses an issue regarding contemporary scientific explanations, stating that when we ask "why" did event A happen?", we are asking "why did event A happen, and not event B?". Lipton further explains the matter by stating a proper explanation should not only address event A that took place, but also address and refute event B, the contrasting situation, that did not happen. For him, the historical (causal) approach to scientific explanation, which as we saw with Lewis removes divine intervention as an explanatory option, is not enough to provide a sufficient explanation for all phenomena, rather for just some of them (Lipton, 2000).

When combining Lewis' and Liption's points, it seems like, when we remove the supernatural from the historical chain of causality, we are not excluding them completely, we are just rather these are casual factors not included in some explanations (Zargar et al., 2018). A perfect example of an explanation where there is no room for supernatural causation is the previously mentioned example regarding the distance between the Earth and the Sun. On the other hand, an explanation regarding human nature and our understanding of it would fall into the category of explanations where there is no causation similar to that in the former example, thus leaving room for the metaphysical aspect to take place. Even if modern science of the future enables scientists to understand the complexities of the human brain to a much larger extent than they do now, it seems unlikely that they will be able to explain phenomena such as subjective experiences (such as the way someone experiences emotions such as pain) , which seem to exceed the physical explanations science offers with the use of methodological naturalism.

2.3. Plantinga on Faith, Reason, and Naturalism

As we have seen in the previous section, many authors, including Plantinga, argue there is room for theism within the scientific discourse. Plantinga states his case by first addressing the problem of *reason* and *faith*, as those act as two concepts for rational opinion among Christians. Reason encapsulates abilities such as perception, memory, and a priori knowledge. These abilities are an essential part of our cognitive apparatus which every properly cognitively functioning being possesses. On the other hand, there is faith, something that God gave us as a way for him to prove his love for us, separating such a source of beliefs from reason, exceeding it in a sense, because it offers answers to questions about human, or any other non-empirical metric, as noted at the end of the previous section of the chapter. However, Plantinga notes that these terms are not mutually exclusive. They do not overlap, but the fact that they don't overlap does not mean that they contradict each other (Plantinga 2011).

This ties in nicely with Atran's work, where he states that the scientific view does not refute religious beliefs, but rather that scientific findings can not offer any insight regarding them. For him, religious beliefs do not fit within the scientific framework due to the fact they deal with the unobservable, something which is not empirically testable. He goes on to elaborate that religious beliefs are not meant to be verified or falsified based on empirical, but rather on a subjective, personal level (Atran, 2006). It seems like Atran's view on science and religious belief is similar to what Plantinga calls faith and reason, as he also leaves room for a theistic explanation of the empirically untestable, just as Plantinga does. Due to the constraints of the naturalistic, scientific explanations, Plantinga notes that there has to be room for the supernatural, i.e. for Christian beliefs to exist when providing explanations for phenomena (Plantinga, 2011).

2.4 Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism

At the very start of the tenth chapter, the one dealing with Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism, Plantinga once again states his thesis, according to which science in religion go hand in hand, with their conflict being nothing more than a frivolous misunderstanding, while offering the exact opposite view when comparing science and methodological naturalism. Plantinga believes that the concord between science and naturalism is superficial, while the gap between the two is a lot broader than it might seem at first. In order to bolster his thesis, Plantinga developed the Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism. As the name of the argument suggests, Plantinga attempts to persuade us to believe that methodological naturalism is in conflict with evolution (Plantinga, 2011).

Plantinga's argument centres around what he describes as *cognitive faculties*, the human ability to process belief and knowledge. Some of these are perception, sympathy, introspection, and memory, among others, Plantinga opts to deal with the aspect of *reliability* of these cognitive faculties. In order to do so, he first defines what it means for our cognitive faculties to be reliable, and uses memory as one of the basic faculties in order to depict reliability. Plantinga states that it is safe to assume that a person's memory is reliable if it produces truthful beliefs, at least two-thirds of them. He proceeds to assume that this principle can be used for all of our cognitive faculties, as long as they are not impaired by substances that cause delirium, such as alcohol (Stump & Padgett, 2012).

Here it is important to mention one specific fact, carried out by none other than Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*, where he notes that humans have been created in God's image, and therefore, gave us knowledge, since it is a property that God possessess (Aquinas & Cajetan, 2024). When describing this, it seems like Aquinas would also assume, if he could join the contemporary discourse, that our cognitive faculties are severably reliable, as they were given to us by an all-knowing God. However, according to Plantinga, modern naturalists who do not believe there is such creature as God, and who believe our cognitive faculties were crafted by the evolutionary process, can not think that our cognitive faculties have a high degree of reliability. Plantinga goes on to show that the chance for our cognitive faculties to turn out the way they did simply on the basis of naturalism and evolution is very low (Plantinga 2011).

Furthermore, Plantinga notes that if a person advocates both evolution, as well as methodological naturalism, they are creating a *defeater* for their assumption that they can rely on their cognitive faculties. According to Plantinga, a defeater is a piece of evidence regarding a theory which makes it irrational for an individual to keep supporting the aforementioned theory, and the interaction between evolution and naturalism creates a defeater in the following manner; Plantinga claims that a random process such as evolution did not exclusively favour cognitive faculties based on their ability to provide truthful information, but rather based on their ability to help an individual to survive. If this is the case, then all of our cognitive faculties are nothing more than a product of a random chain of events. This creates a defeater regarding the idea of methodological naturalism, because the truthful products of its empiric research are nothing more than a game of chance, making it irrational to blindly believe any piece of naturalistic evidence, including the naturalist theory itself (Plantinga, 2011).

Even Noam Chomsky noted that interactions between our science-forming cognitive apparatus and the world around us yield science. He stated that such interactions happen, and are a byproduct of the way our brain is wired, functioning solely on luck to produce a truthful scientific result (Chomsky, 1987). However, as we have previously seen, Plantinga is not the biggest fan of the "brain-science lottery", and from his theistic point of view, the truthful scientific results that our brain produces when interacting with the world is not a byproduct, but rather an expected outcome as designed by a supernatural being, i.e. God.

In order to combat Chomsky's view, Plantinga uses a basic example, our ability to see. Plantinga claims that our cognitive faculties are designed to know certain aspects of this world, not all of them, and we uncover truths about these aspects in specific conditions. In a world where our eyes receive stimulus from light at the correct wavelength, we are able to see and uncover truths about the world. A similar principle can be applied to our sense of hearing, and smelling, as well as other faculties regarding our perception. Plantinga notes that just because something originated from the evolutionary course, doesn't guarantee its reliability for the same reason as previously listed, the fact our senses can be tricked. Just because evolution favoured adaptive behaviour, it does not mean that it had an interest in truthful beliefs, but rather in safety and reproduction (Plantinga, 2011). By using this principle. It seems like Plantinga confirmed his assumption from the beginning of this section in the thesis, that the gap between the two is a lot broader than it might seem at first.

2.5. Bridging a gap between science and religion

As mentioned at the end of the previous section, by using the Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism, Plantinga confirmed the part of his main thesis, the portion revolving around proving the connection between science and methodological naturalism is fragile, to say the least. However, by proving one of his points. the question is still open about him being able to bridge the gap between the religious and scientific. In order to illustrate the connection between the scientific and theistic, Plantinga uses the Christian motif of the divine image (Plantinga, 2011).

It is interesting to note that, for a long period of human history, most of the leading scientists, such as Galileo Galilei, Nicholas Copernicus, and Sir Isaac Newton, strongly believed in God (van Inwagen, 1994). The emergence of atheist scientists, who claim that theism and the supernatural realm are a relatively new state of affairs. However, if we were to ask random pedestrians what is the aim of science, I would assume they would most likely tell us something along the lines of "understanding the truths about the world", "discovering new things", and "advancing human civilization". While this is all correct, it seems like these common definitions, which are accurate to a high degree, do not leave any room for theism and religion.

In this part, it is important to recall Thomas Aquinas' idea that we have been created in God's image (Aquinas & Cajetan, 2024). This notion is not only present in Christianity, but in other monotheistic religions, such as Judaism, and some forms of Islam. If we are created in God's image, then we must have knowledge of both the world we live in, and the our creator, that being God. While Aquinas' statement that having knowledge about the world is the pivotal idea of being created in God's image can seem a bit far-fetched, it does not mean that it should be abandoned completely. We can assume that an all-knowing God created us, as well as our cognitive faculties (whose goal is to provide us with truthful information), in a way that they successfully interact with the world surrounding us. Through this interaction, we can both uncover the secrets of the world, beliefs about ourselves as a species, as well as uncover certain theological truths (Plantinga, 2011). If we look at scientific methods through this lens, it seems like the theistic approach to science is broader than the naturalistic, as it enables us to uncover truths that we refer to as faith in section 3.3 of this chapter.

2.6. Conclusion on Alvin Plantinga, Naturalism, and Religious Belief

In this chapter, we looked at the work of Alvin Plantinga, one of the most prominent contemporary Christian philosophers, who in a time of naturalist renaissance took it upon himself to defend theism and religion within the frame of scientific discourse. We looked at several of his works, as well as a lot of supplementing literature, some of which advocated Plantinga's ideas, while the remainder served the purpose of offering a different point of view, focusing on the connection between naturalism and scientific inquiry. Looking at Plantinga's biggest work presented in the chapter, titled *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*, we saw that Plantinga successfully defended his thesis that science and theism aren't at odds with each other, but rather two compatible world-views. At the same time, he ruffled the feathers of those who discredit theism when talking about the seemingly unbreakable bond between naturalism and scientific research. Plantinga did so through his use of Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism, which is a direct critique of methodological naturalism, stating that an individual can't simultaneously support both naturalism and evolution. This enabled him to bring the entity of God into the scientific picture.

Plantinga goes on to call upon Thomas Aquinas and his idea that we are created in God's image. He does so in order to show that religious beliefs do not just go hand in hand with scientific discourse, but rather exceed it when it comes to questions regarding what Plantinga refers to as *faith*. While the discussion between naturalism, theism, and their relation to science keeps developing, there is no denying that the work of Alvin Plantinga will be much more than a stepping stone for others to build upon his theistic ideas and their connection to science.

The following chapter will provide an analysis of Elliot Sober's work regarding naturalism and theism, offering a drastically different view than Plantinga's. Looking at such strikingly different views on the matter will provide us with a great foundation to carry out a comparative analysis of the two authors, looking into their overlaps and disagreements, enabling us to make a broad conclusion of whose arguments carry a heavier weight in the scope of Philosophy of science and discussion on theism

3. Elliott Sober's contribution

I believe it was in one of my thesis advisor's courses where he mentioned Karl Popper's principle of falsification, which states that a good theory is not undeniable due to its arguments, but due to the inability of its dissenters to falsify it successfully. In this chapter, Plantinga's points from the third chapter of the thesis will be put to that test, for what better way to try and dispute one great author's opinion than to match it with an opposing view of an author of a similar pedigree. That second author is none other than Elliott Sober, one of the biggest philosophers of biology of our day and age. With his extensive work, Sober has helped shape a large sum of philosophical thought of today, dealing with all aspects of scientific theories, ranging from their creation and articulation, all the way to their understanding. While Plantinga tried disputing it, as we saw in the previous chapter, Sober is a great advocate of *methodological naturalism* and *parsimony*, therefore causing a conflict with Plantinga's advocation for supernaturalism in science.

This chapter will focus on Sober's most notable works, especially *Evidence and Evolution: The Logic Behind the Science*, alongside both Sober's, as well as other authors' supplementing literature. The chapter will review Sober's argumentation regarding evolution and science, consequently throwing shade on theistic explanations in biology and evolution. Sober's critique of theistic concepts such as *intelligent design*, sets up a perfect battlefield for chapter number 5, where Plantinga's and Sober's chapters will be comparatively analyzed.

3.1. Sober and others on the Theory of evolution

Sober begins his work *Evidence and Evolution: The Logic Behind Science* by defining the philosophy of science as he sees it, creating a frame within which he is going to operate in the rest of his work. He sees the philosophy of science as a normative discipline, whose aim is to separate the "good science" from the "bad science". Sober continues, noting that the book was aimed at philosophers of science, most of whom don't find intelligent design to be a well-put-together theory. Sober agrees with the aforementioned group of philosophers of science, however, he does not agree with the way answers were provided in order to dispute the theory of intelligent design (Sober 2008).

In order to mount an attack on the idea intelligent design, Sober opts to first define and describe what he means by evolution in his works, in order to have a definitive starting point. He notes that evolution in its essence means change, stating that evolution understood in that sense must provide an account for a change on a cosmic level. According to Sober, change on such a scale must provide an account for every single thing that happened in history, ranging from the creation of stars, to the building blocks of modern society. Since this is no easy task, Sober proceeds to explain that this won't be referring to such a form of evolution in his work, but rather the form Charles Darwin uses, revolving around how life evolves (Sober, 2000). There is no need to dwell any further on Darwin's idea of evolution regarding the principle of the tree of life and share of the same ancestors, simply based on the fact that Darwin's theory has been so widespread that it can even be considered common knowledge.

However, what is of interest to us is the idea of natural selection, especially taking into consideration what Plantinga had to say about the idea of its probability, as seen in the previous chapter. Sober believes that Darwin's idea of natural selection is reliable scientific evidence, due to the fact that it is closely connected to the idea of *fitness*. The core concept of the term fitness is that evolution favoured those who developed traits that would help them survive, with Sober's example of this being speed in zebras, which enabled the faster zebras to survive in the African wilderness (Sober 2000). However, why did the scientific community embrace this view, to such an extent that people who do not believe in evolution are seen as eccentrics in modern society? It is because many philosophers, methodological naturalists especially, agree on the fact that the empirical approach is the one to opt for when trying to approve or disprove a theory (Godfrey-Smith, 2003).

Such a view aligns perfectly with the theory of evolution, as it is pretty straightforward in explaining how we, just like the species before us, came to be. Sober claims that Darwin's theory of common ancestor has the upper hand on other evolutionary theories based on the fact that it is supported by a large body of empirical evidence, which prompted it to be the leading theory when it comes to how species evolved (Sober, 2008).

What is important to note here is that Plantinga and Sober share the view that Darwin's evolution is true by itself, it is the cause of this evolution where their views differ. With the idea of the automated evolutionary process creating the finest biological specimens that would go on to inhabit the Earth, Plantinga's question still looms about how sure we can be this happened with no strict guidance. The question is about what our assurance is that Sober and those who advocate the naturalist view are in the right. In the end, as Rosenberg notes, most naturalists agree on the fact that naturalism's purpose is the progress of science itself (Rosenberg, 1996). In order to try and find an answer to this question, I would like to trace the steps to the very beginning of this chapter, with Karl Popper's claim that the greatest quality of a theory is the inability of its opposition to disprove it. For that reason, the next section will offer critiques of intelligent design, as shown by Sober and his contemporaries, with the goal of removing theism as a plausible explanation for evolution, leaving room for nothing more than the naturalist view to take centre stage.

3.2. Supplementary authors on creationism and intelligent design

One feature of the theory of intelligent design is a feature no theory wants to possess, the fact that a major part of the scientific community does not agree with it, and is very vocal about it. A glaring example of this fact is Pennock's remark where he firmly believes that creationism has no room in the modern school system, especially in a science classroom (Penncock, 2001). As noted previously in the thesis, Plantinga and those who share his opinion are a minority within the scientific community, which discarded its Christian tradition and turned towards the naturalist, empirical view, which leaves no room for supernatural beings. This section of the chapter will now address some of the prominent authors who offered a piece of mind regarding intelligent design and its flaws, with Sober leading the way.

Before moving on to Sober's argument, we will have a look at other philosopher's work when it comes to criticizing the idea of intelligent design. A great example of this is depicted by Coyne, who finds a simple, yet very glaring flaw in the creationist idea. Coyne notes that the arm of natural selection is not the one of a master engineer, but rather, a tinkerer. What he means by this is that evolution as a whole has, in great part, been a trial-and-error process. He continues to note that a large portion of species living on Earth since its creation have gone extinct due to one reason or another, and he believes this poses a great issue for creationism and intelligent design. If our world was created by a supernatural being, such as an all-knowing God, doesn't it seem strange for him to make a mistake so many times before "getting it right"? He also notes that the pundits who advocate intelligent design tackle this issue very rarely, thus adding to his idea that this is a glaring problem for them (Coyne, 2009).

Furthermore, Ruse allows us to hear the voice of methodological naturalists who claim that, methodological naturalism has successfully yielded results in the past, ranging from small advancements in science, all the way to great paradigm shifts. While admitting that there are still plenty of questions methodological naturalists can't offer an answer for, Ruse claims that there is no need to change the current approach we have in science in order to substitute it for something that might not provide us with a product as successful (Ruse, 2013). However, when reading the passage, I couldn't get my mind off of the idea of pessimistic induction. Yes, science has made a great deal of progress using the tools provided by methodological naturalism, but science is also known for being notoriously fallible. The paradigms shift, which are great strides in science that cause the entire scientific community to change their outlook regarding a certain problem, are a product of the fallibility of the previous paradigm. In a sense, while we "know" that science is the best tool we have in order to grasp the concepts in the world that surrounds

us, we are actually “hoping“ that the scientists have come up with a theory that will not be disproved, or God forbid, cause a paradigm shift.

In one of his other works, Ruse notices that a vast majority of scientific inquiry is based on laws, with our world functioning in a way that revolves around those basic laws that create a cohesive unit. In addition, he says that Darwinism obliges the basic laws and principles of science, since we can trace back the steps of evolution and the genesis of species. However, he takes a jab at Christianity by stating that many of the deeds God does, especially miracles, like the rising of Lazarus, do not align with these laws, therefore reducing the credibility of providing theism space within the scientific discourse (Ruse, 2000).

3.3 Elliott Sober on the idea of creationism and intelligent design

While it may seem strange to place Elliott Sober as the last person to talk about the downsides of a theory, while claiming that he is the focal point of the chapter, this has been done with the goal of setting the stage for the comparative analysis of Plantinga's and Sober's view, with one part looking at the overlaps of their respective stances, and the other looking at their irreconcilable differences.

One of Elliott Sober's themes which is present in most of his book on evolution and intelligent design is the idea of how probability, which Sober brings into contrast with other natural sciences. He states that science such as physics can with certainty claim the outcome of the future event based on previous patterns, while probability can not, because it can only assume which of the possible future outcomes is most likely to happen. For Sober, probability is one of the main concepts the theory of evolution revolves around, due to the fact that there has been a finite total number of living organisms throughout the evolutionary process, with randomness playing a very significant role. It is because based on the set number of members of a population, scientists can calculate the probability of specific traits (such as cognitive faculties) to emerge within a population (Sober, 2008).

However, while Plantinga claims that such randomness is a negative of Darwin's evolutionary theory, therefore providing room for intelligent design and God, Sober begs to differ. Sober states that such randomness is exactly where the naturalistic view of evolution has the upper hand on intelligent design. The said upper hand of evolutionary theory occurs because the theory of intelligent design does not offer a probabilistic prediction, but rather just offers a hypothetical, theistic solution. Plantinga's approach does not seem “sufficiently scientific“, while the naturalistic approach does. This lack of testable parameters is a major flaw of the intelligent design theory according to Sober, as he claims that the empirically testable hypothesis carries much more weight in science, than the untestable one (Sober, 2008).

Sober's finishing remark regarding the concept of probability is that, although there are many evolutionary changes which are, even from the probability standpoint rather improbable, they were still able to occur via the “trial and error“ method throughout evolution. Based on such trial and error, Sober claims that even the seemingly impossible changes did manage to occur, due to the accumulation of minimal changes throughout history (Sober, 2008). Such view also ties in nicely with Coyne's view from the section 4.2, where he argues the same thing, while

elaborating that an intelligent designer would not make so many mistakes while creating our world (Coyne, 2009).

The second part of Sober's critique is very simple, in both metaphorical, as well as literal sense. When talking about evolution, Sober is a great advocate of *parsimony*, philosophically carried out in a way of *Occam's razor*. Occam's razor is a common principle in philosophy which states that the simplest answer to a question, or in our case, the one which produces the smallest number of (probable or improbable) assumptions, is going to be preferred when being compared to other answers (Sober, 1993). However, Sober highlights the fact that parsimony should not be the primary scientific option just for the sake of its simplicity as such, but rather due to the fact that simpler solutions, which also leave few doors open for assumptions, enable us to empirically test any thesis we are debating over. In Sober's analysis of the evolution and genetic mutation throughout history, parsimony is the correct choice to opt for due to the fact simpler explanations by nature make it easier for a scientist to make future predictions. In Darwin's case, parsimony is greatly utilized when looking at the tree of life, because by using it, the evolutionary theory favours the branches of the evolutionary tree which require the fewest evolutionary changes, thus making it more probable that the future prediction will turn out to be true. However, Sober adds that parsimony is not the greatest tool for answering all theories, with some complicated theories needing more data than parsimony allows, in order for them to be categorized as true (Sober, 2024).

However, regarding evolution, for which Sober states can use parsimony in a great manner, he also states that intelligent design is breaking its principle by adding an additional variable that makes things infinitely more complex, that of course being God. Sober claims that easily empirically testable and step-by-step traceable fitness-related mutations are for that reason much more reliable than the idea of intelligent design. Such a combination of simplicity and empirically testable parameters favours naturalism over theism when it comes to evolution, according to Sober (Sober, 2024).

The last point Sober touches upon that I want to mention the concept of *irreducible complexity*, a notion introduced by Behe (Sober, 2008). Behe noted that there are some systems, especially in the field of biology, which are composed of multiple parts that are independant, but have to be in a state of constant cooperation in order for the system to function. Behe notes that if we were to remove just one part of such system, that the entire system would collapse (Behe, 2006). Such a thesis has been placed on the theory of evolution, and Sober does not agree with it on any level, both empirical and theoretical. Sober states that, even if one part of

the evolutionary chain goes extinct, nature will find a similar one to take its place in order for the chain to remain cohesive. Sober calls this feature of the evolutionary process *function switching* and shows that there might have been a complex system which fulfilled a certain purpose in the evolutionary process. However, as time passed and systems changed, a certain organism's function could have changed, reduced, or expanded, with the ones changing and expanding covering the missing spots left by those who were not fit enough to survive (Sober, 2008). In order to support this, Sober offers examples of the human eye, a favourite among the supporters of intelligent design, which nature gradually improved, with each function taking the space of the previous one, with new ones simultaneously developing, until plenty of species evolving the camera-like eye we know today. The final blow Sober lands on Behe and his idea is his statement that the idea of irreducible complexity is mostly based on the insufficient understanding of science, as well as the evolutionary process (Sober, 2008). This idea of correct systems taking the place of faulty systems that came before them bolsters Sober's idea of probability and evolution. It is because such polyvalent properties of systems increase the chance of organisms developing with no additional guidance coming from a supernatural entity, i.e. God, since they can cover a wider range of evolutionary changes.

3.4. Conclusion on Elliott Sober and methodological naturalism

In this chapter, we went over the naturalist's views on evolution, especially the idea of intelligent design taking any part in the process, with Elliott Sober at the helm. Sober's view centres on naturalistic ideas of probability in the evolutionary process, which he identifies as a strength, unlike authors that have been discussed in the third chapter. He highlights the fact that evolution is a gradual process, placing emphasis on empirical testing as a way to define a theory as reliable, which is in stark contrast with the idea of intelligent design, due to its lack of ability to provide testable parameters.

Sober's idea of parsimony also bolsters the naturalistic view of the evolutionary process, as Sober, just like Coyne and Ruse, looks down on creationism due to its roots in the supernatural realm. Quite the contrary, Sober advocates simplicity when dealing with scientific theories, as they enable us to make valid conclusions based on testable data.

Finally, Sober's critique of Behe's idea shows that organisms gradually evolve, even though they might seem unfathomably complex at first, with specific systems taking the place of faulty systems which came before them. This takes the power away from the intelligent design's advocates in describing a human eye for example as something that only a supernatural being could create, proving that it is something nature could create itself, during a probable, but also very extensive process.

While Sober never explicitly states that he believes there is no God, it seems like such a statement can be implied based on this fourth chapter. It is because, when being presented with choice A (methodological naturalism as the plausible explanation with no room for intelligent design, i.e. God) and choice B (intelligent design, i.e. God that guides the evolutionary process), it seems that Sober selects option A every time. There is no scenario where he leaves room for theistic explanation, as he uses probability, parsimony, as well as irreducible complexity, to prove there is no room for God in creation, i.e. God's existence. Such a view brings his beliefs into direct conflict with Plantinga's, setting the stage for the fifth chapter of the thesis, the comparative analysis of Plantinga and Sober.

4. Comparative analysis – Elvin Plantinga and Elliot Sober

As we have seen in the previous two chapters, there is no denying Elvin Plantinga's and Elliott Sober's contributions when it comes to the philosophy of science. We have seen the two author's extensive discussions on the connection between science and religion, with the theory of evolution being the focal point of both of their views. Because their opinions on science and theism ultimately differ, it is more the reason to explore the undeniable overlaps between their respective views, as will be discussed in the two sections of this chapter.

4.1. Similarities between Plantinga and Sober

One of the most obvious similarities between Plantinga and Sober is the fact that they both support Darwin's theory of evolution. Regardless of their massively different worldviews, with Plantinga being a theist and Sober being a naturalist, they both hold the theory of evolution in high regard in the sense of its scientific credibility. While he does not accept the truthful nature of our cognitive faculties based on the product of the random, but rather a guided process, Plantinga approves the theory of evolution. He agrees with the fact that the theory played an important role in shaping the Earth we live on today, and he does not see the theory itself as something that directly opposes theism (Plantinga, 2011). Sober approves the theory of evolution by basing it on the principle of natural selection, applauding its empirical testability, a feature he holds in high regard when talking about natural sciences (Sober, 2008).

Another moment where Plantinga and Sober overlap is when dealing with empirical methods and science. As we have seen, Plantinga is an opponent of methodological naturalism, but he does not discredit the empirical methods fully, as he admits that these methods, no matter how limited, have been responsible for a large number of strides in science, none of which could have been achieved without empirical methods (Plantinga, 2011). Sober also talks about the role of empirical discoveries in science, but he has more faith in it than Plantinga does, as he notes that it is the best tool we have in order to at least try and understand the phenomena surrounding us. Additionally, Sober claims that scientific theories have to be tested in order to stand, for what they need an empirical method.

4.2. Differences between Plantinga and Sober

As we have seen in the last section, there are some points where Plantinga's and Sober's views align. However, the idea of this chapter is not to illustrate how similar, but rather how drastically different their views are. However, in my opinion, these two views might have much more in common than meets the eye at first, based on the exact idea that the authors overlap, while their views differing so significantly.

The greatest difference lies with Plantinga's idea of Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism, as Plantinga notes that the idea of combining methodological naturalism and evolution creates itself a defeater. His notion is, as we have previously seen, that our cognitive faculties are not as reliable as naturalists claim they are. He bases this on the fact that they were created through a system of chance and are therefore not reliable, even though they are the fittest features natural selection could have opted for. Such an argument aims to prove that the naturalist view of the theory of evolution is wrong on both philosophical and empirical level, as the theory would then attack the very cognitive tools that support it (Stump & Padgett, 2012). On the other hand, Sober believes that science should operate within the constraints of methodological naturalism and naturalistic explanations, with no room for supernaturalism left. He rejects the conflict between evolution and methodological naturalism, and describes the probabilistic nature of Darwin's theory as a perfect theory that can describe the diversity of living organisms and their common ancestor (Sober, 2008). Sober believes that it is exactly that numerical value something that uses naturalistic tools when providing evidence for evolution, as it can be, and was, tested. It seems like Sober gives more weight to the probabilistic chance, no matter how small it might be, therefore giving it the edge over the theory of intelligent design. For him, no matter how small the chance of something happening, those empirically testable, astronomical odds will always hold more weight than any theistic explanation, as it can't offer the same evidence as methodological naturalism can.

Another key difference lies in the role of the supernatural in scientific, which at this point does not need detailed explanation, but is still worth mentioning it as a difference between the two authors. Plantinga claims that theism can offer us insight in areas where methodological naturalism is unable to operate using its methods, claiming that theism therefore exceeds science (Plantinga, 2011). On the other hand, Sober as a member of the naturalist camp, notes that intelligent design can not exceed naturalistic science, again invoking the endless source of arguments for doing so, lack of evidence regarding the theistic theory.

Another point Sober mentioned when discussing why theism might not be the greatest option for explaining Darwin's theory, is the principle of parsimony, also known as *Occam's razor*. According to Occam's razor, the simplest answer, one with a need to rely on fewest assumptions, is most likely to be the most reliable. This is, of course, in conflict with Plantinga's theistic theory based on the fact that he introduces the infinitely complex entity of intelligent designer, whose being we can not even comprehend, thus needing an ample of assumptions to make the theistic theory one worth our while (Sober, 1993).

Sober also mounts an attack on the idea of irreducible complexity, while introducing the concept of function switching, as something to undermine Plantinga's, as well as other's philosopher's iterations of the intelligent design argument. He notes that complex human constructs, such as the human eye, were not necessarily "given" to organisms in an instant. Rather, Sober notes that it was an extensive, gradual, step-by-step process which allowed organisms to develop such systems (Sober, 2008). He notes this happened through function switching, a principle according to which when one piece of an organism became an "evolutionary byproduct", another took its place. The newer piece of such chain did so by expanding its previous ability, or by being replaced by another piece in its previous place. This complex chain of evolutionary shifts, according to Sober, is not a relic of intelligent design, but rather an undeniable statement on how powerful the driving mechanisms of evolution really are (Sober, 2008).

4.3. Comparative analysis – Alvin Plantinga and Elliot Sober, a conclusion

When adding all of the above-mentioned differences, the bottom line of Sober's and Plantinga's discussion is that they drastically differ in a philosophical sense. Plantinga is an advocate for metaphysical and theistic explanations, as he believes that theistic explanations are broader, and offer more coherent explanations than those naturalism can offer. For him, theism offers answers to all of the questions naturalism is able to answer, while adding a different layer with the questions naturalistic methods are unable to access.

On the other hand, Sober advocates methodological naturalism idea that data must be empirically tested in order to be feasible. While Plantinga claims that supernaturalism adds a new layer to finding answers in science, Sober could not agree less, because he deems that the addition of the supernatural to scientific questions undermines the very science itself (Sober, 2008).

In my opinion, both authors are correct and wrong at the same time. Plantinga's theory can not be tested, yes, but it at least tries to offer any type of answer regarding questions naturalism can not access. While most scientists agree that science is a gradual process, it seems like offering any theory on an untestable matter (such as God's existence) offers us at least some form of a starting point when dealing with questions modern science can't answer. On the other hand, it is a question if any starting point is a better thing than no starting point. If scientists were to universally accept the idea of intelligent design at first, while later achieving the conclusion that the theory of intelligent design was wrong the whole time, it seems like that starting point would set them back significantly.

Contrary, it is hard to "shake off" Sober's points, as they so perfectly align with practices in science which brought humanity to a point where it is now. If most things (if not all) we as humans discovered were built on the foundation of methodological naturalism and empirical testing, it seems like that would seem rational to continue following this route. However, regarding evolutionary theory, it does seem astronomically unlikely that we got this far by ourselves. For those reasons, the discussion boils down to picking not the perfect option, but rather picking your poison.

Because of that, I would like to offer my subjective view of the matter, within the constraints of the Catholic religion, since it is the religion I was raised in. If every person in the world would obey The Ten Commandments, I choose to believe that the world would be a more "net-positive" place than it is today. In other words, if we were to remove murder, theft, adultery, as well as all the other sins mentioned in the Ten Commandments, it seems almost certain to me that society would be more prosperous. Furthermore, by universally adopting the Ten Commandments, we would also approve the existence of God, since the Ten Commandments were given to us by none other than God itself. If we were to approve God's existence, we would open the door for God's involvement in designing the world, as well as offering us the means to discover it, therefore aligning with Plantinga's theistic point of view, rather than Sober's idea of methodological naturalism.

When it comes to said arguments, I can't help but feel like Plantinga's have a slight upper hand over Sober's. While empirical evidence that is the basis of the modern scientific method did enable us to uncover many truths about the world, Plantinga showed that there are questions which surpass it. By introducing the idea of defeaters when it comes to supporting methodological naturalism and evolution at once, it seems like Plantinga illustrated the way that the naturalistic method, which plants its roots in empirical evidence, deviates from its own principles when describing evolution. However, the downside of Plantinga's argument is the very obvious lack of empirical evidence, making it hard for an individual to opt for a paradigm shift while being offered little to no testable evidence.

On the other hand, when it came to naturalists' approach and their argumentation, at moments it almost seemed like they felt invincible when presenting their irrefutable theories. With ample empirical evidence which enables us to have deep understanding of certain matters, it seems like a person is more than welcome to base their knowledge on the testable scientific method. However, it seems like naturalists forgot about one of the principles of science it is not often talked about, which is the fact that science is not always right. As Kuhn noted, there have been many paradigm shifts throughout human history, and in order for paradigm A to replace paradigm B, paradigm B needs to be proven wrong within the scientific community. Based on this, without getting into the principle of pessimistic induction, nothing can guarantee to any naturalists that some of their theories are not wrong. For that reason, although it does not very intuitive, theology offers some sense of certainty. Because of these reasons, I see no downside to theism in both everyday and scientific sense, because in my subjective opinion, the benefits seem to heavily outweigh the negatives.

Conclusion

This thesis explored the heated debate between science and religion, through the scope of work of Alvin Plantinga and Elliott Sober. While such a discussion may seem abstract at first glance, the thesis showed that the discussion on God's existence within the framework of the philosophy of science is very closely connected to the way we understand the world we live in, and how we came to inhabit it. By analyzing the two contrasting views, the thesis offered a variety of explanations for naturalistic and theistic phenomena, allowing readers to opt for the explanation they find to be more plausible.

With the use of his Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism, Plantinga proved that combining naturalism and Darwin's theory leads us to conclude the two theories are self-defeating. If our cognitive faculties, which are the basis of our truthfulness, are based upon a random game of chance, it hardly seems they are as reliable as we naturalists would like them to be (Plantinga, 2011). He therefore leaves room for theistic explanations and intelligent design to fill the gaps left by naturalism, which did not sit well with many authors, one of them being Sober. Sober believes methodological naturalism left no room for discussion, both metaphorically and literally, as he argues that naturalistic methods offer us all the necessary evidence to make conclusions about the world we live in, with the theory of evolution being a part of that framework (Sober, 2008).

Despite their insurmountable differences, there are some key points Plantinga and Sober did manage to agree upon, as they both agree on the idea of probability that plays a role when it comes to evolutionary theory. Additionally, they both agree that Darwin's theory holds a great amount of scientific weight, stating that it is one of the cornerstones of the scientific landscape.

Although the thesis presented these drastically different views, depicting both how they meet each other head-on, while also highlighting their similarities, the question of God's existence in philosophy in general, as well as in the philosophy of science, remains. While writing this thesis, Plantinga's and Sober's, as well as supplementary author's articles, reminded me of a game of tug of war. There are two equally balanced sides with drastically different goals, with each pulling to their side while offering no room for the opposing side to make a move. This, alongside the fact the belief in God is one of the fundamental beliefs every person has or has not developed, leads to the conclusion that the question of God's existence is nothing more than a matter of subjective preference.

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