Naturalism and Postmodern Tribalism Worldview

Posted on May 12, 2020

Naturalism is a philosophical belief that explains reality through nature, matter, and natural laws rather than through spiritual or supernatural powers. According to naturalism, the universe operates according to physical laws that can be studied through observation, reason, and science. It does not depend on spirits, ghosts, divine intervention, or supernatural forces to explain the structure and behavior of the natural world. In this view, everything that exists is part of the natural order and can be understood within time, space, matter, and energy (Papineau, 2023).

Naturalism and the Nature of Reality

Naturalism is closely connected with ontology, which is the study of reality and existence. Ontology asks questions about what truly exists and what kind of things are real. A naturalistic worldview argues that the material world is the real world. Therefore, human beings, animals, planets, stars, physical forces, and biological processes are all part of reality because they exist within the natural universe. Naturalism also has a close relationship with materialism, which holds that matter is the basic substance of reality. From this perspective, human life, thought, behavior, and consciousness can be explained through physical, chemical, and biological processes.

Science and Rejection of the Supernatural

One of the central ideas of naturalism is that supernatural beings or forces are not necessary for explaining life or the universe. Naturalism suggests that ghosts, spirits, and similar entities are not real in a scientific or physical sense. Instead, such beliefs are often understood as cultural, psychological, or religious ideas created by human societies. In this way, naturalism becomes a worldview that relies heavily on science, evidence, and rational investigation. It assumes that nature itself is sufficient to explain existence.

Influence of Naturalism on Modern Thought

The naturalistic worldview has strongly influenced modern Western thought. It has shaped science, education, medicine, psychology, and many social sciences. For example, modern biology explains human life through evolution, genetics, and environmental adaptation. Psychology may explain human behavior through the brain, emotions, personality, and social conditions rather than spiritual causes. In this sense, naturalism encourages people to search for natural explanations for human

problems and experiences.

Postmodern Tribalism and Social Belonging

On the other hand, postmodern tribalism is a different concept because it focuses on the way human beings form social groups in modern society. The idea of postmodern tribalism became more visible in the modern period and continues to be relevant because society is changing very rapidly. Globalization, technology, migration, social media, and cultural exchange have transformed the way people connect with one another. Instead of belonging only to large national, religious, or traditional communities, people now often form smaller groups based on shared interests, lifestyles, values, identities, or emotions.

Modern Tribes and Multiple Identities

Postmodern tribalism suggests that human beings naturally seek belonging. Even in modern societies where individual freedom is highly valued, people still want to feel connected to others. These modern "tribes" may not be traditional tribes based on blood relations or geographic location. Instead, they may be groups formed around fashion, music, religion, politics, sports, online communities, professional identities, or shared cultural interests. For example, fans of a music group, members of an online gaming community, environmental activists, or supporters of a social movement can all function like modern tribes.

The society of today can therefore be seen as a network of many small tribes. People may belong to more than one tribe at the same time. A person can be part of a religious community, a student group, a professional network, and an online fan community. These groups give people a sense of identity and emotional support. Language, symbols, dress, habits, and shared values often unite these tribes. In many cases, social media strengthens tribal behavior because it allows people with similar beliefs and interests to gather quickly across different parts of the world.

The concept of postmodern tribalism also reveals that human beings have not completely moved away from group-based living. Although modern society often promotes individualism, people still search for community and emotional connection. This shows that human beings are social by nature. They do not live only as isolated individuals but also form relationships and communities that help them understand themselves and the world around them.

Prime Reality

The concept of prime reality deals with the question of what is ultimately real. Different worldviews answer this question in different ways. In religious worldviews, prime reality may be God, gods, or a spiritual force that created and governs the universe. In naturalism, however, prime reality is usually

understood as the material cosmos. This means that matter, energy, nature, and the physical universe are considered the foundation of reality. Human beings are not seen as accountable to a supernatural being but as part of the natural world.

In postmodern tribalism, prime reality is more complex because it focuses less on one universal truth and more on different communities and their meanings. Postmodern thought often questions the idea that there is only one fixed explanation of reality. Instead, it suggests that different groups create their own meanings, values, and identities. Therefore, reality is often understood through culture, language, and community experience (Aylesworth, 2015).

What is a Human Being?

The concept of the human being is also understood differently across worldviews. In naturalism, a human being is usually viewed as a highly developed biological organism. Humans are related to other animals through evolution and are shaped by genetics, environment, and social experience. From this perspective, a human being may be described as a complex physical and biological system with advanced mental abilities. Thoughts, emotions, and choices are connected to the brain and nervous system.

However, other worldviews may describe human beings differently. Some religious worldviews argue that human beings are created in the image of God and therefore have spiritual value and moral responsibility. Some philosophical views describe human beings as rational persons capable of self-awareness, moral judgment, and creativity. The idea that humans may be “like a machine” reflects the naturalistic view that human behavior can be explained through physical and biological processes, while the idea that humans are made in the image of God reflects a spiritual or religious worldview.

In postmodern tribalism, human beings are understood as social and identity-forming creatures. People define themselves not only through biology but also through the groups to which they belong. Their identity may be shaped by community, culture, language, belief, and shared experience. Therefore, a human being is not only an individual but also a member of different social tribes.

What Happens to a Person at Death?

Death is another major question in worldview studies. In naturalism, death is generally understood as the end of personal existence. Since naturalism views human beings as physical organisms, death means the stopping of bodily and brain functions. In this view, personality, consciousness, and individuality end when the body dies. There is no need to assume an afterlife, reincarnation, or spiritual continuation because naturalism explains life and death through biological processes.

However, other worldviews provide different answers. Some believe that death leads to a higher state of existence, heaven, judgment, or union with God. Others believe in reincarnation, where the soul or

consciousness is reborn in another form. Some traditions describe death as a shadowy existence beyond this world. These views show that the meaning of death depends strongly on the worldview through which it is interpreted.

In postmodern tribalism, death may also be understood through the beliefs and symbols of the community. Different tribes or communities may create different rituals, stories, and meanings around death. Some may see death as a spiritual passage, while others may see it as a natural ending. What matters in postmodern tribalism is that communities shape how individuals understand and respond to death.

In conclusion, naturalism and postmodern tribalism offer two different but important ways of understanding human life and society. Naturalism explains reality through nature, matter, and scientific laws, while postmodern tribalism explains human social life through identity, belonging, and community. Naturalism focuses on the physical universe, human biology, and the finality of death. Postmodern tribalism focuses on the way people form groups and create meaning in a changing world. Together, these concepts help explain how people understand reality, identity, society, and human existence.

References

Papineau, D. (2023). Naturalism. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/naturalism/

Aylesworth, G. (2015). Postmodernism. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/postmodernism/