

Theism versus Naturalism in Terms of the Explanation of History

Tarih'i Açıklama Açısından Naturalizme Karşı Teizm

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Abstract: It is human nature to seek the ultimate explanation for existence. However, not all people have the same perspective on this issue. This study deals with naturalism and theism, which are the two opposite poles of humankind's desire to reach the ultimate explanation. There are many contemporary philosophers who defend the superiority of the explanatory power of theism compared to alternative views. The views of these philosophers are in general a continuation of their predecessors. The extent to which these theistic defenses, which have only a few original aspects, are truly successful against non-theistic views requires philosophical analysis. Therefore, the philosophical analysis of the claim of being more successful will contribute to more qualified discussions in the philosophy of religion and thus to continue the current theism-naturalism discussions on a more rational basis.

Kenneth L. Pearce, who has been frequently mentioned recently in philosophy of religion and has been in discussions with the leading names of atheism, has produced many studies with the idea that he has made positive contributions to theism. Pearce defends

this idea with a contemporary version of the argument from contingency, a member of the family of cosmological arguments. In this version, the basis of Pearce's argument is the concept of "History". "History" is the total sequence of causes and effects, past, present and future. The question of how theism is more successful than naturalism in explaining "History" is a subject worth examining. Therefore, this study analyzes philosophically the internal consistency, truth value, validity and persuasive power of the claim that theism explains the universe better than naturalism. The analysis shows that Pearce couldn't defend theism strongly enough against naturalism with the argument from contingency as he claims.

Keywords: Philosophy of Religion, Theism, Naturalism, The Argument from Contingency (AC), History, Ultimate Explanation

Öz: Varlığa dair nihai açıklamayı aramak, insanın tabiatından kaynaklanır. Fakat tüm insanlar bu nihai açıklamayı aynı bakış açısıyla aramamaktadır. Bu çalışmada insanoğlunun nihai açıklamaya ulaşma isteğinin iki kutbu olan natüralizm ve teizm konu edilmektedir. Alternatif görüşlere kıyasla teizmin açıklayıcı gücünün üstünlüğünü savunan birçok çağdaş filozof vardır. Bu filozofların görüşleri genel itibarıyla kendilerinden öncekilerin devamı niteliğindedir. Sadece birkaç özgün yönü bulunan bu savunuların teizm karşıtı görüşlere nazaran ne denli başarılı oldukları felsefi analize muhtaçtır. Çünkü teizmi gerçekten başarılı şekilde savunan çağdaş teistler kadar, teizme negatif etkileri olan teistler de vardır. Dolayısıyla daha başarılı olma iddialarının felsefi niteliğinin analizi, din felsefesinde daha nitelikli tartışmalar ortaya konmasına ve böylece güncel teizm-natüralizm tartışmalarının daha rasyonel bir zeminde yürütülmesine katkı sağlayacaktır.

Din felsefesi alanında son dönemde adından sıkça söz ettiren ve ateizmin önde gelen isimleriyle tartışmalarda bulunan Kenneth L. Pearce, teizm adına pozitif katkılar sağladığı kanaatiyle birçok çalışma ortaya koymuştur. Pearce, kozmolojik argümanlar ailesinin bir üyesi olan olumsuzluk argümanının güncel bir versiyonunu kullanır. Bu versiyonda Pearce, argümanının temelini "Tarih" kavramını yerleştirir. Onun tanımıyla "Tarih" geçmiş, şimdi ve gelecek olaylar bütünüdür ve bu olayların neden-sonuç ilişkisinin tümüdür. Bu kavramın sınırlarına giren neden-sonuç ilişkisi içerisindeki zaman mefhumuna tâbi tüm varlıklar toplamını açıklama konusunda natüralizme kıyasla teizmin nasıl daha başarılı olduğu sorusu incelenmeye değer bir konudur. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada teizmin evreni natüralizmden daha iyi açıkladığı iddiasının iç tutarlılığı, doğruluk değeri, geçerliliği, rasyonelliği ve ikna edici gücü felsefi açıdan analiz edilmektedir. Yapılan analizler neticesinde, Pearce'nin olumsuzluk argümanına getirdiği güncel yorumu ile natüralizme karşı teizmi, kendisinin iddia ettiği gibi yeterince güçlü şekilde savunmadığı sonucuna ulaştırmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Din Felsefesi, Teizm, Natüralizm, Olumsuzluk Argümanı, Tarih, Nihai Açıklama

Geniřletilmiř Özet

Varlıęa dair nihai aıklamayı aramak insanın tabiatından kaynaklanır. Fakat nihai aıklama arayışında herkes aynı bakış açısına sahip olmadığı için elde edilen yanıtlar da farklılık göstermektedir. Bu alıřmada, insanoęlunun nihai aıklamaya ulaşma isteęinin iki zıt kutbu olan natüralizm ve teizm konu edilmektedir. Günümüzde birçok teist filozof, natüralizme kıyasla teizmin daha üstün bir aıklama gücüne sahip olduğunu savunmaktadır. Aslında bu karşılaştırma, düşünce tarihi boyunca süregelen tartışmalı bir konudur. Günümüz teist filozofların bu konudaki görüşleri çoğunlukla kendilerinden önceki tartışmaların devamı niteliğinde olup yalnızca birkaç açıdan özgünlük taşımaktadır. Felsefenin doğası gereęi bu teistik savunuların objektif analizine ihtiyaç vardır. Fakat dini inanca dair gerçek anlamda bir tarafsızlıktan söz etmenin zorluęu herkesin malumudur. Çünkü ister olumlayan ister reddeden bir tutumda olsun her insan bir dini inanca sahiptir ve bu yüzden objektif bir pozisyondan söz etmek mümkün gözükmemektedir. Bu noktada en sağlıklı çözüm yolu, söz konusu felsefi analizin hem teistik hem de teizm karşıtı bakış açısıyla yapılması gibi gözükmemektedir. Böylece bu savunuların sadece teizm karşıtı görüşlere nazaran ne denli başarılı oldukları değil, aynı zamanda teizme ne türden katkı sağladıkları da açık bir şekilde ortaya çıkacaktır. Nitekim teizmi gerçekten başarılı bir şekilde savunan çağdař teistler olduęu gibi teizme negatif etkileri olan teistlerden de söz etmek mümkündür. Bu konuda yapılacak her tespit, ortaya konacak yeni alıřmalara objektif ve farklı bakış açıları kazandıracaktır.

Bir iddianın karşıt görüşlere kıyasla daha güçlü olup olmaması, karşıt görüşlerle kıyaslanmadan önce o iddianın iç tutarlılıęa, rasyonellięe ve geçerlilięe sahip olup olmamasına baęlıdır. Eęer bir iddia bu nitelikleri taşıyorsa, zaten zayıf ve kendine referansla tutarsız olduęu için karşıt görüşlerle itiraz edilmesine gerek kalmayacaktır. Dięer bir ifadeyle, bir iddia bu niteliklere sahip olması koşuluyla karşıt görüşlerle kıyaslanabilir. Ancak bu şekilde bir iddianın alternatifine nazaran daha iyi aıklayıcı güce sahip olup olmadığı deęerlendirilebilir. Dolayısıyla bu alıřmada teistik bir savunuyu teizm karşıtı itirazlardan baęımsız olarak incelenmektedir. Bu alıřma özelindeki ifadesiyle, bu arařtırma teistik görüşlerin natüralist eleştirilere karşı aıklayıcı gücünün deęerlendirmesinden önce teistik aıklamaların kendine referansla tutarlı olup olmadıęının deęerlendirmesidir.

Din felsefesi alanında son dönemde adından sıkça söz ettiren Kenneth L. Pearce, bir teist olarak natüralizmin önce gelen isimleriyle tartışmalarda bulunmaktadır. Pearce, teizm adına pozitif katkılar sağladığı iddiasıyla birçok akademik alıřma ortaya koymuřtur. Varlıęı ve olguları aıklama konusunda teizmin natüralizmden daha başarılı olduęu iddiasını özgün bir yöntemle ortaya koyan Pearce'ın görüşleri bu alıřmanın merkezini oluřturmaktadır. Bu açıdan, Pearce'ın teistik savunusunun rasyonellięi, makuliyeti ve ikna edici gücü irdelenmektedir. Pearce'ın kendine özgü kavramlarını doğru bir şekilde analiz edebilmek için ve kapsamlı bir bakış açısıyla özgünlüęü koruma adına sadece Pearce'ın olumsuzluk argümanını konu ettięi alıřmalara değil, dięer alıřmalarına da yer verilmektedir. Ayrıca Pearce'a karşı ileri sürülen teizm karşıtı eleştiriler ve itirazlar da incelenmiř olmasına rağmen öncelięimiz Pearce'ın argümantasyonunun iç tutarlılıęı olduęu için burada karşıt görüşlere ayrıntılı şekilde yer verilmemiřtir.

Tanrı'nın varlığı lehine ileri sürülen a priori ve a posteriori birçok argüman vardır. Çeşitli tasnifleri olmakla birlikte genel itibarıyla bu argümanlar ontolojik, kozmolojik, teleolojik, ahlak ve dini tecrübe argümanı olarak sınıflandırılır. Bu sınıflandırmada kozmolojik ve teleolojik argüman aslında tek bir argüman formundan ziyade birer argüman ailesi niteliğindedir. Bu çalışmada merkeze alınan olumsuzluk argümanı da kozmolojik argüman ailesinin bir üyesidir. Bu çalışmada görüşlerini incelediğimiz Pearce, natüralizme karşı teizm savunusunu olumsuzluk argümanına getirdiği güncel bir yorumla ortaya koymaktadır. Tıpkı diğer çağdaş teist filozoflar gibi Pearce da klasik olumsuzluk argümanının temelleri üzerine inşa edilmiş ve çok az özgün yöne sahip bir olumsuzluk versiyonunu kullanır. Bu versiyonda Pearce, argümanının temeline 'Tarih' kavramını yerleştirir. Onun tanımıyla Tarih; geçmiş, şimdi ve gelecek olaylar bütünü ve bu olayların neden-sonuç ilişkisinin tümüdür. Pearce'ın bu kavramı temel alan argümanı ile teistik dünya görüşünün natüralist dünya görüşünden daha iyi açıklama gücüne sahip olduğu savunusu bu çalışmanın sınırlarını oluşturmaktadır. Bu sınırlar içinde Pearce'ın yönteminin iç tutarlılığı, argümanının doğruluk değeri, geçerliliği ve sonuçlarının ikna ediciliği felsefi açıdan analiz edilmektedir.

Yapılan analizler, Pearce'ın olumsuzluk argümana getirdiği güncel yorumun natüralizme karşı teizmi –kendisinin iddia ettiği gibi– yeterince güçlü bir şekilde savunamadığı sonucuna ulaştırmıştır. Bu kanaatin oluşmasındaki temel sebep Pearce'a yöneltilen teizm karşıtı eleştiriler değil, bilakis Pearce'ın görüşlerinin iç tutarlılık açısından birtakım eksiklikler ve problemler barındırmasıdır. Bu sonuçlara ilişkin birçok gerekçeye çalışmanın içeriğinde ayrıntılı bir şekilde yer verilmektedir.

Çalışmanın sonuçlarının iki önemli amacı vardır. Birincisi, nihai açıklamaya ulaşma konusunda farklı dünya görüşlerinin karşılaştırmasına ilgi duyan okuru ve akademik araştırmacıları ilgilendirmektedir. Bu açıdan çalışmamızda gerekçeleriyle birlikte ortaya konduğu üzere; 'Batı'da her önde gelen çağdaş düşünür ve her çalışma felsefi açıdan tatmin edici nitelikte değildir' ve 'teizm lehine olduğu iddia edilen her güncel argümanın teizme pozitif katkısı olduğu rasyonel bir şekilde savunulamaz'. Elbette teistik bir açıklamanın zayıflığı teizmin zayıflığını değil, açıklamayı ortaya koyan düşünürün argümantasyonunun zayıflığını göstermektedir. Fakat karşıt görüşler dikkate alınmadan bile iç tutarlılık açısından birtakım problemler içeren her iddia, hem savunduğu görüşü hem de felsefi duruşu olumsuz şekilde etkilemektedir. Dolayısıyla ikinci amacımız, önümüzdeki yıllarda teizm adına bu tür zayıf argümanların ön plana çıkmasını önlemeye çalışmaktır. Bu amacın her iki dünya görüşünü savunmak için daha güçlü argümanlar inşa edilmesine ve böylece felsefi açıdan daha sağlıklı tartışmalar yürütülmesine katkı sağlayacağı kanaatindeyiz.

Introduction

Throughout the history of thought, many arguments have been put forward for and against the existence of God, and these arguments¹ have been devel-

1 Plato, *Laws*, trans. Susan Sauvé Meyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Aristotle, "Physica", *The works of Aristotle*, ed. William David Ross, 12 Vol (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908).

oped and new ones have been added to philosophical discussions.² As time progresses, stronger objections and defenses have been put forward on this issue.³ This fact can be considered as a natural result of the cumulative progress of philosophy. However, it is striking that, especially in the last century, it is difficult to say that many of the defenses in favor of the existence of God are more valid, stronger or more convincing than the theistic explanations of the past.⁴ There may be many reasons for this fact, but we can express the main ones. From one perspective, this fact can be associated with the loss of importance of metaphysical explanations from the Enlightenment. From another perspective, non-theist views may have more successful explanations today compared to the past. One way to clarify this is to question contemporary thinkers who put forward views in favor of the existence of God in terms of method and content.

Many theist philosophers claim that theism is more plausible than alternative views in reaching the ultimate explanation of existence. They support this claim by updating and re-introducing one or more of the arguments for the existence of God.⁵ An example of this attitude is examined in this study through the claim that theism has more explanatory power compared to naturalism. In this example, the theist philosopher defends the existence of God by the argument from contingency (AC)⁶, which is a version of the family of cosmological arguments that reach from existence to God.

One of the leading theist philosophers today who follow this method is Kenneth L. Pearce. Pearce interprets theistic defenses before him in an original way and aims to show that theism is more plausible than naturalism. All of Pearce's

2 Anselm, *St. Anselm's Proslogion*, trans. Matthew J. Charlesworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965); Saint Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences: Philosophy of God*, ed. Rollen Edward Houser - Timothy B. Noone (New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2013); Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2000); Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947).

3 David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and Other Writings*, ed. Richard Popkin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929); Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, trans. R. Montgomery George (Illinois: The Open Court Publishing, 1979).

4 Compare leading examples: Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); Graham Oppy, *Arguing about Gods* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); William Lane Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument* (London: Macmillan Press, 1979); Nicholas Everitt, *The Non-Existence of God* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004).

5 Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); Robert Charles Koons, "A New Look at the Cosmological Argument", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34/2 (1997), 193-211; Richard M. Gale - Alexander R. Pruss, "A New Cosmological Argument", *Religious Studies* 35/4 (1999), 461-476; Timothy O'Connor, *Theism and Ultimate Explanation: The Necessary Shape of Contingency* (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

6 AC reaches a necessary being (God) based on the fact that the universe is not necessary but possible. This argument concludes that the existence of God is the ultimate explanation for questions like *Why is there something rather than nothing?*, *Why is the existence of the universe on this way and not another way?*, *Why did the universe exist at that time and not another time?*. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "On the Ultimate Origination of Things", trans. Roger Ariew - Daniel Garber, *Philosophical Essays* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1697), 149-155; Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Principles of Nature and Grace, Based Upon Reason", trans. Roger Ariew - Daniel Garber, *Philosophical Essays* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1714), 210.

views aren't discussed in detail in the study, because our aim isn't to support or object to Pearce's ideas. Our aim is not to challenge or refute Pearce's claims, but simply to assess whether his method is sound.

In philosophy, there are contemporary theists who successfully defend theism, as well as those who have negative effects on theism. Every research on the theism versus naturalism debates will bring different perspectives to the studies to be put forward today and tomorrow in the field of philosophy of religion. In fact, today, discussions on the existence of God attract more attention than in the past. The most basic reason is that this subject has not only philosophical and academic dimensions, but also individual and social dimensions. Therefore, I think that participating in current discussions on a philosophical subject that is becoming more controversial every day will make positive contributions to the literature.

Most current versions of arguments for the existence of God are based on classical Islamic theologians and philosophers and contain very few differences.⁷ Moreover, the fact that contemporary thinkers leave aside the philosophical notion and continue with the theological notion causes theistic defense to evolve into a defense of individual beliefs.⁸ As a result, the subjectivity in individual beliefs weakens the effect of classical arguments that strongly defend the existence of God. Therefore, I think that this study will contribute significantly to objectivity, comprehensiveness, consistency, in short, to maintaining the philosophical perspective. Thus, the study will contribute to the continuation of the philosophical attitude of the discussion and research that will be put forward in favor of the existence or non-existence of God.

Moreover, the search for the ultimate explanation of existence stems from human nature. Because "ALL men by nature desire to know"⁹ as Aristotle said. However, human beings have different perspectives in meeting this desire. These

7 For examples of this claim, cf: Koons, "A New Look at the Cosmological Argument", 193; William Lane Craig, *God, Time and Eternity* (Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001a), 261; William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time* (Illinois: Crossway Book, 2001b), 233; Craig, *The Kalâm Cosmological Argument*, 98-104; Gale - Pruss, "A New Cosmological Argument"; Alexander R. Pruss, "A Restricted Principle of Sufficient Reason and the Cosmological Argument", *Religious Studies* 40/2 (2004), 165-179; Joshua Rasmussen, "Cosmological Arguments from Contingency", *Philosophy Compass* 5/9 (2010), 806-819.

8 For examples of whether current theistic explanations are really rational defenses of theism and whether they include elements of individual beliefs, cf. Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*; William J. Wainwright, *Mysticism: A Study of Its Nature, Cognitive Value, and Moral Implications* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981); William P. Alston, *Perceiving God* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Richard M. Gale, *On the Nature and Existence of God* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Koons, "A New Look at the Cosmological Argument"; Gale - Pruss, "A New Cosmological Argument"; Pruss, "A Restricted Principle of Sufficient Reason and the Cosmological Argument"; O'Connor, *Theism and Ultimate Explanation: The Necessary Shape of Contingency*; Emanuel Rutten, *A Critical Assessment of Contemporary Cosmological Arguments: Towards a Renewed Case for Theism* (Amsterdam: Wöhrmann Print Service, 2012); Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time*; Joshua L. Rasmussen, "A New Argument for a Necessary Being", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 89/2 (2011), 351-356 Many more examples of such studies can be given, to which I have referenced some of the leading thinkers of theism.

9 Aristotle, "Metaphysica", *The works of Aristotle*, ed. William David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908), 8/ Introduction.

different perspectives can be expressed as worldview. According to some Philosophers, the comparison of these different worldviews is the definition of the philosophy of religion.¹⁰ In general, philosophers and those interested in philosophy tend to criticize opposing views and beliefs based on their own beliefs. In other words, this study evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of theistic explanations that provide a current defense of the existence of God, not by criticizing anti-theistic views.

For this purpose, the first section outlines the general claims of theism and naturalism, thus revealing the problematic of opposing views. The second section evaluates how theism is tried to gain an advantage with AC against naturalism. The conclusion section gives results on whether this method is plausible, reasonable, stronger than naturalism or not and also whether it has contradictions or tensions.

1. Naturalism vs Theism in terms of Explanatory Power

Naturalism and theism are perhaps a current version of one of the most fundamental distinctions in the history of thought. Although this distinction manifests itself in different versions in different periods, such as religion vs science, reason vs faith, religion vs philosophy, theism vs atheism, it is based on a single distinction. Just as the answer sought to the question what is truth? has been on the agenda throughout the history of thought, these distinctions have also been shaped accordingly. The fundamental distinction here is about the discussions on how to reach the truth in pursuit of the ultimate explanation. Every answer given to the question of whether the path to reaching true knowledge is based solely on experience or whether different methods are also possible has kept the distinction in question on the agenda in different colors but with similar structures. To reveal this tension between naturalism and theism, it is necessary to introduce these views in general terms. In this way, the ground is prepared for evaluations on the explanatory powers of these views.

1.1. Naturalism

Naturalism assumes that the whole of reality is nature. According to naturalism, nature contains everything that exists and is sufficient to explain all beings. In other words, everything that exists or happens constitutes a part of nature and everything can be explained in natural sciences. This fact is valid not only for nature but also for everything that happens in nature and therefore for human

¹⁰ Graham Oppy, *The Best Argument against God* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013a), 7; Graham Oppy, "Ultimate Naturalistic Causal Explanations", *The Puzzle of Existence: Why Is There Something Rather Than Nothing?*, ed. Tyrone Goldschmidt (London & New York: Routledge, 2013b), 51-52; Graham Oppy, *Atheism and Agnosticism*, ed. Yujin Nagasawa (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018a), 4-5, 16-17; Kenneth L. Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", *Is There a God? A Debate*, ed. Helen De Cruz (New York & London: Routledge, 2022a), 13.

existence. Humans don't have a supernatural dimension and are a natural being in all their dimensions. Naturalism opposes the view that there are some beings or events that are beyond scientific explanation. Because every natural object (all universe) exists because of natural causes.¹¹

There are many different definitions for naturalism, but we can look at Pearce's perspective for a worldview comparison. For the structure of naturalist thought, he says: "... that the natural sciences (physics, biology, etc.) provide the correct methods for knowing about the world, so that philosophers need to take their cues from scientists."¹² He underlines that naturalism is not just a rejection of (a particular version of) theism, but also a worldview that God does not exist. Since God is not among the beings studied in science, anyone who believes in God goes beyond the method of naturalism, that is, beyond science. In short, naturalism is the idea "that any metaphysics that goes beyond natural science ought to be rejected."¹³

1.2. Theism

Theism can be defined in its simplest form as belief in God or gods. It is commonly defined as the belief in the existence of God, who is transcendent, eternal, omniscient, omnipotence, omnibenevolence and a necessary personal agent, who creates and sustains everything that exists.¹⁴ Although the definitions of theism vary, they can basically be divided into two main groups in approach: Traditional Theism and Classical Theism. This can also be expressed as theological theism and philosophical theism. Pearce doesn't give a specific definition of theism and finds sufficient to refer to the distinction. Without going into the discussions on the differences between traditional versus classical theism, I should briefly introduce them.¹⁵

Traditional theism is the view of God defended by most theologians in the Abrahamic religions. This version is generally defended by theologians and includes some attributes (omniscient, omnipotence, omnibenevolence, etc.) to God. Classical theism is a tradition of metaphysical notion about God developed

11 Arthur C. Danto, "Naturalism", *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1967), 5/448-450; David Papineau, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta - Uri Nodelman, 2023, "Naturalism"; Paul Copan, "Naturalism is a Simpler Explanation than Theism?", *How Do You Know You're Not Wrong?* (Michigan: Baker Books, 2005), 47-56; Oppy, *The Best Argument against God*, 6; Oppy, "Ultimate Naturalistic Causal Explanations", 50; Oppy, *Atheism and Agnosticism*, 13; Graham Oppy, *Naturalism and Religion: A Contemporary Philosophical Investigation* (London & New York: Routledge, 2018b), 11; Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), 4.

12 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 16.

13 Kenneth L. Pearce, "Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency", *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Jonathan L. Kvanvig (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017b), 246.

14 Huw Parri Owen, "Theism", *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1967), 8/97-98; C. Stephen Evans - R. Zachary Manis, *Philosophy of Religion: Thinking about Faith* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 36-37.

15 Helen De Cruz (ed.), *Is there a God?: A Debate* (New York & London: Routledge, 2022), 334.

by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Philosophers. In addition to traditional one, in general, classical theism views God as a necessary being who possesses all the attributes of being essentially, atemporal, impassible, unchangeable and immutable. Pearce defends a special version of classical theism, which states that space-time and all its contents came into existence due to the free choice of a Necessary Being.¹⁶ Pearce defends this version with AC. Pearce's original aspect is his approach to naturalism and his concepts. Now, we can briefly introduce his original approach and concepts.

1.3. Original Foundations and Distinctive Features of Pearce's Argument

Even those who are familiar with the literature have the opinion that theistic explanations completely reject naturalism. However, Pearce doesn't hold this opinion, that is, he doesn't completely exclude naturalism. He argues that these two approaches have many common points, similarities and certain presuppositions, both in terms of starting point and method. This claim reveals the distinctive features of his theistic explanations and allows us to evaluate whether they are more plausible than naturalism or not. The question of to what extent these claims really make theism plausible compared to naturalism needs to be discussed with both theistic and non-theistic views. To answer this question, it is helpful to examine the basic foundations of Pearce's argument in terms of reaching the ultimate explanation from a theistic perspective.

Unlike many definitions, Pearce defines philosophy of religion as a worldview comparison and evaluates the comparison of theism and naturalism in this direction. For the naturalist, the only fundamental stuff that exists is physical stuff. But God isn't physical, so for the theist, in addition to fundamental stuff, there is God, which is an extra intricacy to non-theists.¹⁷ Therefore, Pearce expresses the claims put forward to eliminate this intricacy as a worldview comparison.

The basic element of Pearce's argument is the concept of History. This concept is "the total sequence of causes and effects, past, present and future".¹⁸ Pearce also defines History as a name we give to a series of definite, particular causes and effects that actually happen.¹⁹ He constructs his argument on the grounds that History must have an explanation, and that explanation is God.²⁰ The argu-

16 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 29.

17 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 64.

18 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 32.

19 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 37; In a different work, Pearce defines History as "narrative ground of created objects". cf. Pearce, "Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency", 250-253.

20 There is no similarity in method or meaning between the concept of History used by Pearce and the concept of history identified with Hegel in philosophy. Rather, it is quite similar to the concepts of Big Conjunctive Fact and Big Conjunctive Contingent Fact used in AC built on the basis of the Weak-Principle of Sufficient Reason by Gale & Pruss. Compare the details of the studies that are not included because they do not have a direct impact on the answers to the questions in this study: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. Johannes Hoffmeister (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Gale - Pruss, "A New Cosmological Argument".

ment runs along the following lines: “classical theism [...] states that space-time and all of its contents exist because of the free and rational choice of a necessary being.”²¹ In other words, all those things are grounded in History, and History is grounded in God’s choice.²² God is therefore not the cause of History, but its foundational ground.²³

From a broader perspective, as we have noted above, AC belongs to the family of cosmological arguments²⁴ for the existence of God. Compared to the other members²⁵, AC isn’t a demand for a cause of the origin of the universe, but rather a demand for an explanation of the total sequence of causes and effects in the universe. Pearce claims that in other cosmological arguments, God is the first cause of the causal sequence, but these arguments simply add another cause to the beginning of the sequence.²⁶ This would add another cause to the beginning of the causal sequence investigated by natural science. Moreover, even accepting that the causes are infinite doesn’t provide a solution for theism, and the result remains problematic.²⁷ So we can focus on the question of how theism can be more plausible than naturalism with Pearcean grounds and distinctive features.

2. The Explanatory Power of the Argument from Contingency

Based on the definitions in the first section, we can say that according to theism, the natural world was created by a transcendent God. According to naturalism, the natural world is everything that exists.²⁸ From this perspective, advocates of both views have put forward many proofs, arguments, evidence, opposing views, criticisms and objections. Among these, AC has been reassessed and renewed in recent years, mostly without making major changes in its main structure.²⁹ One of the leading proponents of this version, of which there are several examples today, is Pearce. He argues that naturalism necessarily leaves the totality of the causal order of existence or the universe unexplained, whereas theism provides a satisfying explanation for this totality with AC. This explanato-

21 Pearce, “Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense”, 29.

22 Pearce, “Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense”, 46.

23 Pearce, “Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency”, 245.

24 For examples of how the cosmological argument is not a single argument but a family of arguments, cf. William L. Rowe, *The Cosmological Argument* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975), 7; John Leslie Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and against the Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); Gale, *On the Nature and Existence of God*; James F. Harris, *Analytic Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Eugene Thomas Long (Virginia, U.S.A.: Springer-Science+Business Media, 2002), 122-123.

25 Plato, *Laws*; Aristotle, “*Physica*”; Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences*; Al-Ghāzali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. James F. Anderson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975); Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument*.

26 Pearce, “Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency”, 245.

27 Pearce, “Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense”, 40; Pearce does not provide any explanation of what problems would be encountered if the infinite causal series were accepted. He merely refers to: Alexander R. Pruss, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason: A Reassessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

28 Pearce, “Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense”, 91.

29 For renewed contemporary examples, see: Rutten, *A Critical Assessment of Contemporary Cosmological Arguments: Towards a Renewed Case for Theism*.

ry power also provides adequate reason for Pearce to prefer theistic worldviews to naturalistic ones.³⁰ The questions of what these grounds are and how they provide superiority are philosophically important.

2.1. Pearcean Argument from Contingency

Pearce bases his argument on three theses. First, if AC is to be successful, History must be explained in terms of God, and this explanation mustn't be a causal explanation. Second, Pearce puts forward the hypothesis that God is the foundational ground of History regarding the relationship of God to History and argues that this hypothesis is both intelligible and explanatory. In the third and finally, Pearce argues that the explanatory advantages of this hypothesis cannot be obtained within the limits of naturalism.³¹ We can now examine these claims through his views in his different works, the first claim through argument, and the others through explanations respectively. Since this is the main purpose of this study, the points that we are particularly interested in are Pearce's second and third claims, namely the content, limits, nature and advantages of being explanatory and intelligible over naturalism.

Pearce emphasizes that arguments to be used in the comparison of theism and naturalism must have certain criteria. First,

An argument is a collection of beliefs (the premises) that are meant to provide rational support for some other belief (the conclusion). The strongest kind of rational support is known as validity. A valid argument is one where, if the premises are true, then the conclusion must necessarily be true. In other words, it is impossible for the premises of a valid argument to be true when the conclusion is false.³²

In this respect, the first criterion Pearce puts forward is internal consistency.

Second, Pearce tries to determine whether one worldview is more explanatory of the universe than another. He lays down two basic criteria: simplicity and explanatory comprehensiveness. To be simpler means to say that a worldview is simpler to the extent that it posits fewer things or fewer kinds of things or to the extent that it is more elegant and less convoluted in other respects. Having explanatory comprehensiveness means to say that one worldview is more explanatory comprehensiveness than another in the degree to which it explains more and leaves less unexplained.³³

Based on these criteria, the question we focus on is to what extent is Pearce's argument explanatorily comprehensive, simpler, valid, and therefore more plausible and convincing against naturalism? To seek the answer to this question,

30 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 12-13, 91.

31 Pearce, "Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency", 245.

32 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 13.

33 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 15.

Pearce's argument:

The Positive Argument

1. History stands in need of explanation.
2. (Classical Theism) provides a good explanation of History.
3. If a theory provides a good explanation of something that stands in need of explanation, this is a good reason for endorsing that theory.
4. Therefore, there is a good reason for endorsing [Classical Theism].³⁴

In this argument, the first premise states that History needs explanation.³⁵ By explanation of History is meant that it is reasonable to ask why it occurring. As Pearce states in his first thesis on which he bases his argument, there can be no causal explanation of History, because History is the totality or sum of all causal events. In this respect, to say that x caused History means that x caused itself, because x would be a part of History, and therefore x cannot explain History. AC demands an explanation of History as a whole. This demand means asking for a non-causal explanation. The way to provide such an explanation is to posit God as the foundational ground of History.³⁶

There is a point to be emphasized here. Pearce thinks that the cosmological argument based on the Principle of Sufficient Reason isn't successful enough in reaching the ultimate explanation to the question of "Why is there something rather than nothing?"³⁷ To succeed, a sufficiently strong Principle of Sufficient Reason must be endorsed. Therefore, Pearce doesn't assume that everything that needs explanation has an explanation. Because if we keep asking why?, we may eventually reach a point where all we can say is it just is.³⁸

This conclusion becomes clearer when compared to a classical objection to the cosmological argument. The question of why the total series of cause and effect (History) occurs is one of the fundamental debates of the cosmological argument. In this debate, the non-theist objection is that it is sufficient to explain the individual parts and that there is no need for an explanation of the whole. In other words, it is sufficient to explain the causes in themselves and that there is no need for an explanation.³⁹ But can History really be self-explanatory? That is, can we not need anything outside of itself to explain History? To answer this question, it is necessary to review the premises.

34 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 32 (emphasis mine).

35 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 35.

36 Pearce, "Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency", 248.

37 Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, n. 210 (italics in original).

38 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 35.

39 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Ernest C. Mossner (London: Penguin Book, 1985), 192-193,216; David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1989), 33; Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1917); Bertrand Russell, *Why I am not a Christian* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 125-152.

In a sense, what is emphasized in the first premise isn't actually a question of why is there something rather than nothing?, but rather a historical question of why are beings as they are and not otherwise. In another sense, when we formulate Leibnizian question as why does x exist or happen rather than not?, Pearcean question becomes why does x exist or happen rather than y?. In both respects, even if the explanation of History in general is given by the individual causes in the series, the total series still needs explanation. History either has an uncaused beginning or extends back to infinity or goes in a circle. Whichever of these alternatives is preferred, it is logical to wonder why History is the way it is. Therefore, History is a subject in need of explanation.⁴⁰

What is remarkable here is the second premise. The claim in the second premise that classical theism provides a good explanation for History isn't a comprehensive premise for all theistic explanations. This is only the basic claim of Pearce's argument. Indeed, according to Pearce, the method by which cosmological arguments arrive at a temporal or causal supernatural first cause is problematic in three respects. The first problem is whether the concepts used are appropriate. Many philosophical causality theories utilize certain physical concepts such as natural laws, matter, time, and energy, etc. These concepts create serious difficulties in applying to God in the conception with definitions in the field of physics.⁴¹ Secondly, there is no obstacle to such a theistic approach being copied by a naturalist and providing a naturalistic explanation for the universe. Thirdly, other cosmological arguments only push the questioning of the first cause back a step. Therefore, no final solution is presented and History still needs to be explained.

It is clear that Pearce made a categorical mistake in the justification for the first problem. Indeed, cosmological arguments don't address the theory of causality on a completely scientific basis or as defined in science. Neither version of the cosmological argument states that the necessary first cause is a material first cause. These arguments state with transcendental attributes that there are many ontological differences between the necessary first cause and the universe. The second point he claims to be a problem is that he ignores the important differences between theistic and naturalistic explanations. Therefore, the reason why Pearce admits non-theistic view⁴² that allows a naturalistic interpretation of theistic explanations as convincing⁴³ in certain respects is that he doesn't take this difference into account.

Continuing the discussion through the positive argument, the third and fourth premises are conditional on providing a good explanation. If we can have

40 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 40.

41 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 41.

42 Graham Oppy, "Cosmological Arguments", *Noûs* 43/1 (2009), 35; Oppy, *The Best Argument against God*, 23-27; Oppy, "Ultimate Naturalistic Causal Explanations".

43 Pearce, "Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency", 247.

good reasons to support this explanation, then for Pearce these reasons will also provide reasons to endorse classical theism. To assess whether argument can have or not, we can focus on the conclusion of argument.

In Pearce's argument, History is part of the content of space-time. Thus, History itself exists because of God's choice. God's choice itself must not be understood causally. If it is understood in a causal way, the explanation would be part of History, and that explanation goes in a circle. History is different from God's choice, but still there is nothing beyond God's choice. God chooses that History occurs. This fact isn't beyond God's choice. God doesn't need any cooperation from an external world to make it occur, because nothing can continue to act apart from God's choice. Therefore, whatever God chooses must happen necessarily.⁴⁴

As Pearce emphasizes;

History is explained by God's choice; God's choice is explained by God's reasons; God's existing and having those reasons is explained by God's real definition; God's real definition is an autonomous fact [a fact that needs no explanation].⁴⁵

With this explanation, Pearce concludes that theism provides an explanation of History. This explanation allows that the world could have been otherwise. In this respect, Pearce emphasizes God's perfect will, omnipotence and freedom. For him, perfect efficacy of the will is one component of omnipotence and another component is perfect freedom.⁴⁶

These explanations of Pearce aren't yet at a satisfactory level and don't provide a strong justification for preferring theism to naturalism. Because there are many views that don't follow the same path as these explanations but nevertheless produce opposite results. To give a specific example, Russell's explanation that we cannot ask the cause of a whole like the universe "I should say that the universe is just there, and that's all"⁴⁷ and Pearce's statement that it is the perfect activity of the will⁴⁸ are like two sides of the same coin. Both don't actually provide an ultimate explanation and are merely claims that are not well-founded. We can examine whether this inference is justified through the version of Pearce's argument formulated against naturalism.

44 Kenneth L. Pearce, "Counterpossible Dependence and the Efficacy of the Divine Will", *Faith and Philosophy* 34/1 (2017a), 3-16; Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 46.

45 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 58 (attachment mine).

46 Kenneth L. Pearce - Alexander R. Pruss, "Understanding Omnipotence", *Religious Studies* 48/3 (2012), 405-407; Kenneth L. Pearce, "Are We Free to Break the Laws of Providence?", *Faith and Philosophy* 37/2 (2020), 158-180; Kenneth L. Pearce, "God's Impossible Options", *Faith and Philosophy* 38/2 (2021), 185-204.

47 Russell, *Why I am not a Christian*, 134.

48 Pearce - Pruss, "Understanding Omnipotence", 411-412; Pearce, "Counterpossible Dependence and the Efficacy of the Divine Will".

2.2. Argument from Contingency against Naturalism

To show that there is no way out for naturalism with the positive argument, Pearce puts forward the negative argument in a similar form as follows:

The Negative Argument

1. History stands in need of explanation.

2n Naturalism cannot explain History.

3n If a worldview cannot explain something that stands in need of explanation, this is a good reason for rejecting that worldview.

4n Therefore, there is a good reason for rejecting naturalism.⁴⁹

The first premise of the Positive and the Negative arguments is based on the same grounds. However, Pearce doesn't include the discussion of whether naturalism needs to explain History. A theist can express the cause-effect relationship with a concept within the totality of past, present and future events and seek an explanation for it. Moreover, this search for an explanation can also be valid for many other phenomena. To what extent is it reasonable to expect all kinds of theistic concepts, phenomena and questions to be equally important for everyone? Does every issue that naturalism focuses on and needs to explain require the same level of explanation for theism? The fact that these questions remain unanswered necessitates the questioning of the second premise. Because whether naturalism has a problem or purpose such as explaining History is an important question. Nevertheless, let's accept that the first premise is valid, and let's see what kinds of explanations are put forward in the other premise to make the argument valid and sound.

First, Pearce aims to show that there is at least one theistic hypothesis that can explain History. For this purpose, the hypothesis that he puts forward, "God is the foundational ground of History", is understandable according to him and God is the explainer of History.⁵⁰ Naturalism, on the other hand, cannot explain History because any explanation of History must be a non-causal, non-necessary explanation. As we have mentioned in the theistic version of the argument, since all causes are part of History, the explanation must be non-causal and therefore the causal explanation of History would be circular. Perhaps the strongest objection that can be raised in the negative argument is whether this explanation is necessary or not. However, since the causal History of the universe may have a structure completely different from our real History, according to Pearce, the explanation must not be necessary.⁵¹

49 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 35.

50 Pearce, "Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency", 247,249.

51 Pearce, "Classical Theism An Exposition and Defense", 60.

Although Pearce seems to have put forward similar reasons in both arguments, there are actually some differences. For example, what Pearce means by why it should not be necessary is that there is no compulsion by God for this universe to be this way rather than another. Pearce doesn't claim that God, who is the explanation of History, is not necessary but possible. In other words, according to Pearce, determinism doesn't prevail in the universe; God could have created a different universe if He wanted to, and the fact that He created it this way rather than another is the result of God's free will. As a result, God himself is necessary, but since He has free will, God is not necessary in terms of causing History.⁵²

This inference is based on Pearce's interpretation of the answer sought to the question why does History occurring the way it is? The answer to this question can be given as because God so willed. Although this answer seems like a causal explanation, it is not, because God's act of will doesn't cause History, but rather constitutes it. The question that will come up in the next step is why did God so will? Although Pearce here encounters the problem of explaining free actions, he assumes that God's act of free will is explained in the same way that free actions are generally explained.⁵³

Pearce states that examples of explanatory claims are widely accepted and demonstrates that the justification he puts forward is understandable by referring to Fabrice Correia. Pearce explains that "History exists and is as it is because God's act of will exists and is as it is, and God's act of will exists because God performs it"⁵⁴ by using examples such as "The redness of this apple exists because the apple is red", "The set {Socrates} exists because Socrates does."⁵⁵

The controversial issue in this explanation is that it is vague. In addition, the explanation doesn't present anything new in addition to existing explanations. Therefore, it is still questionable whether this explanation provides advancement in the current discussions and whether it makes a positive contribution to theism. Moreover, such an explanation is no different from saying "the universe is just there" as mentioned above.

From another perspective, let us examine why History cannot be explained within the boundaries of naturalism. One of the most important debates in the tension between theism and naturalism is whether it is necessary to assume brute facts.⁵⁶ While some philosophers consider this necessary, they have tried

52 Pearce - Pruss, "Understanding Omnipotence", 411-412; Kenneth L. Pearce, "Foundational Grounding and Creatively Freedom", *Mind* 131 (2022b), 1108-1130; Kenneth L. Pearce, *God's Perfect Will: Remarks on Johnston and O'Connor*, ed. Lara Buchak - Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022c).

53 Pearce, "Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency", 260; Kenneth L. Pearce, "Infinite Power and Finite Powers", *The Infinity of God: New Perspectives in Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Benedikt Paul Göcke - Christian Tapp (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 233-257.

54 Pearce, "Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency", 257-258.

55 Fabrice Correia, "Ontological Dependence", *Philosophy Compass* 3/5 (2008), 1013-1032.

56 Adolf Grünbaum, "The Poverty of Theistic Cosmology", *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 55/4 (2004), 561-614; Ludwig Fahrbach, "Understanding Brute Facts", *Synthese* 145/3 (2005), 449-466.

to accommodate the ultimate explanation within the boundaries of naturalism. However, according to Pearce, as long as we remain within the boundaries of current natural science, the only kind of non-necessitating explanation is indeterminate causation. However, a causal explanation of History cannot be given. Hence, naturalistic explanations of History must be necessitating explanations. However, giving a necessitating explanation of History is to limit the scope of possibility, namely, to restrict it in a way that contradicts current science and therefore cannot be accepted by the naturalist.⁵⁷

Well, can't the naturalistic approach claim that certain features of space-time constitute History? According to Pearce, even though naturalism provides an explanation of History from certain perspectives, it cannot provide the kind of explanation that Leibniz demands. The ultimate explanation sought not only by Pearce but also by AC and even many other theistic claims, the explanation of "why the thing is as it is and not otherwise"⁵⁸ as Leibniz said, cannot be provided by naturalism. This is because in the naturalistic approach, any feature of space-time, and even itself, is either deterministic or contingent, physically and therefore metaphysically. Neither option can originate from the essence of space-time nor can everything be explained causally. Therefore, a naturalistic explanation of History isn't possible.⁵⁹

Based on all these explanations, we can draw the following conclusions from Pearce's views. The simplest expression of AC is a demand for an explanation of History. However, such an explanation cannot be a causal explanation. Therefore, although a non-causal explanation of History is possible from the perspective of classical theism, it is impossible from the perspective of naturalism. Therefore, AC succeeds in providing an excellent reason to prefer theism over naturalism. This reason, which is an explanation of History, will only be decisive if a sufficiently strong Principle of Sufficient Reason is endorsed or approved. But Pearce hasn't presented any argument in favor of such a principle. He simply thinks that if Principle of Sufficient Reason is rejected, it will come at a greater cost, that is, a more complete comparison of theistic and naturalistic claims will be required. Even if all these theistic explanations fail, there are many possible classical theistic models other than his own. Thus, there is still a long way to go before his classical theistic version is shown to be the best explanation of History. However, the existence of such a model shows that theism has a significant explanatory advantage over naturalism.⁶⁰

57 Pearce, "Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency", 261.

58 Leibniz, "On the Ultimate Origination of Things", 149-155; Leibniz, "Principles of Nature and Grace, Based Upon Reason", 210.

59 Pearce, "Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency", 263-264.

60 Pearce, "Foundational Grounding and the Argument from Contingency", 265.

Conclusion

Cosmological arguments appeal to logical principles or principles related to the general structure of the universe, such as causal, temporal, modal, and compositional order. Although these arguments have some structural similarities and differences, they all share a common conclusion: God, who is a transcendent, necessary, and personal agent, a perfect being. Pearce's privilege of AC may or may not make theism a more plausible alternative to naturalism. But it is clear that Pearce's approach weakens other theistic explanations against naturalism. Because, on the one hand, Pearce claims that I will not be defending the superiority of my model over other theistic models, and on the other hand, he evaluates the other cosmological arguments on the same track with naturalism in many respects. If one aims to show that theism is more plausible than naturalism with AC, he or she should view other theistic explanations as supportive, not eliminative. Of course, defending theism doesn't necessarily require unifying all theistic explanations. However, not making consistent inferences about alternative theistic explanations will cause the boundaries between theist and non-theist views to become blurred. After all, everyone knows that the explanations for cause-effect offered by naturalism are quite different from the ultimate explanations offered by theistic arguments, including AC.

It is also very difficult to say that Pearce meets the criteria he puts forward to show that theism has significant advantages in worldview comparison. Because his argument isn't clear, simple and explanatory comprehensive enough. Therefore, its persuasive power and what positive contribution it makes to theism becomes more controversial. Moreover, he doesn't make a clear statement such as the results of the argument strongly support theism; it is as if he is simply saying my argument is slightly better in degree. His argument in favor of theism doesn't target the errors and inconsistencies of naturalism; the argument only suggests that theism has better explanatory power.

Something being better than another is valid for things competing on the same track. Theism and naturalism aren't two rival alternatives competing on the same track, but rather two completely opposite poles. Therefore, the statement theism explains better than naturalism is not sufficient and convincing to build a strong argument, as if there is a choice between existing good alternatives. Obviously, naturalism, whose foundations and limits are determined in science, cannot have an agenda such as reaching the ultimate explanation. Therefore, it is not the case that naturalism offers the ultimate explanation. This is not due to being unable to give the ultimate explanation, but because of not making it. Naturalism has no such problematic due to its purpose, method and limits. Attributing a deficiency to an issue that is not intended or is not a problem doesn't make opposing views more reasonable. Such an approach means providing an explanation based on the absence of any explanation. Therefore, it is difficult to think that theism can be strongly defended with Pearce's argument.

This study critically addresses one of the current debates in the philosophy of religion, the defense of theism against naturalism with the Pearcean method. The results show that even without comparing with non-theist objections, this method has no internal consistency and no better explanatory power. Philosophical discussions on the existence or non-existence of God have a long history. Anyone interested in this subject clearly realizes how consistent, powerful, philosophical contemplation has been made not only in the past but also today. However, the Pearcean method hasn't been as successful as the current theism versus naturalism discussions.

I should also point out that believing in the existence of God doesn't necessarily mean not being able to make objective philosophical discussions. There are many philosophical analyses examining classical and current arguments on the existence of God. Most of the analyses conclude that theism has more explanatory power compared to opposing views. Only a few find non-theist objections reasonable in some respects and state that contemporary theist defenders need to provide more explanations. This study will add a new one to the existing studies and participate in current philosophical discussions. Since the subject of the existence of God attracts more attention and more studies are produced every day, I think it is important to keep up with and participate in current philosophical discussions on this subject.

The results of this study clearly show that Pearce's argument is not convincing enough in terms of the internal coherence, truth value and validity and therefore does not add any positive value to theism. Therefore, many people can agree with Oppy on one point, as Pearce admitted on some issues. In his article criticizing an argument for the existence of God, Oppy states that "... I would also like to hope that this article will help to ensure that we shan't hear a great deal more about them [theistic arguments] in the coming years."⁶¹ After Pearce defends theism in this way, not only atheists but also theists will approve Oppy's idea, unwillingly.

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