

## NATURALISM

### 1. Philosophical naturalism is the “presuppositional belief that only natural laws and forces (as opposed to supernatural forces) operate in the world.”<sup>1</sup>

#### a. Sub-beliefs include:

- (1) The space-time-matter universe is all there is.
- (2) Nothing exists beyond the natural realm. Nature comprises “the whole show.”<sup>2</sup>
- (3) There is no spiritual realm or afterlife.
- (4) Everything can (and must) be explained by natural processes.
- (5) Everything can and must be explained by the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system.
- (6) Miracles do not and cannot occur.
- (7) The existence of supernatural agents, powers, beings, or realities must be rejected.
- (8) God does not exist.
- (9) Supernatural forces are excluded by definition.
- (10) Supernatural explanations must be eliminated.
- (11) Natural laws and forces alone account for every phenomenon in our universe.
- (12) We will ultimately find a natural answer for everything we once thought to be supernatural.
- (13) If something can’t be tested with our five senses, it doesn’t exist.

#### b. Illustrations:

- (1) A pitch-black room with no way out. The oxygen is running out!
- (2) A closed box.
- (3) Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, and Leah in the garbage compartment.



#### c. Naturalism is not:

- (1) Love of nature or the natural world.

#### d. Sisters of naturalism are:

- (1) Materialism:
- (2) Atomism:

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<sup>1</sup> J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, 27.

<sup>2</sup> H. Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 141.

- (3) Mechanicalism: The whole universe is mechanical. All the operations of life may be reduced to mechanical laws.<sup>3</sup>
- (4) Determinism: people act as they do solely because of antecedent experiences. They do things because they must do them.
- (5) Atheism:
- (6) Secular humanism:
- e. The goals of naturalism are:
  - (1) To provide a natural explanation for everything.
  - (2) To naturalise everything that is supernatural.

## 2. The Naturalism Hall of Fame includes:

- a. Epicurus.
- b. Lucretius.
- c. Pierre Gassendi.

## 3. Naturalism is the fundamental presupposition of modern (but not postmodern) man.

- a. The age we live in is hostile to the supernatural. We have been taught a:
  - (1) Naturalistic philosophy (becoming, not being).
  - (2) Naturalistic science (eliminate design from the universe).
  - (3) Naturalistic politics (French Revolution, atheistic socialism).
  - (4) Naturalistic history (no place for human personality among the causes of events).
  - (5) Naturalistic religion (God does not exist or is irrelevant).
- b. Francis Schaeffer:
  - (1) Modern man has already accepted, with an implicit faith, the presupposition of the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system.<sup>4</sup>
- c. Richard Lewontin:
  - (1) “Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science *in spite* of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite* of its failure to fulfil many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door. The eminent Kant scholar Lewis Beck used to say that anyone who could believe in God could believe in anything. To

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<sup>3</sup> Rene Descartes, paraphrased in W. Durant, *The Age of Reason Begins*, 642.

<sup>4</sup> F. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, in *The Complete Works*, 1:[].

appeal to an omnipotent deity is to allow that at any moment the regularities of nature may be ruptured, that Miracles may happen.”<sup>5</sup>

#### **4. In the view of naturalists, supernaturalists are dinosaurs.**

- a. Jean Bottero:
  - (1) “[H]uman beings, after first deeply involved in the supernatural and the divine, whose existence and intervention, humans believed, explained everything around them, gradually become detached from those beliefs, henceforth seeking only in the here and now the answers to the questions raised by the here and now, thus ‘disenchanted’ their way of viewing things, cutting it off from the heavens, and...laicising it.”<sup>6</sup>
- b. In actuality, there are far more supernaturalists than naturalists in the world today. Supernaturalism endures despite the concerted efforts of naturalists to eradicate it.
- c. It has been 150 years since Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, yet there is no sign theism is going away anytime soon.

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Lewontin, “Billions and Billions of Demons,” review of *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*, by Carl Sagan, *New York Review*, 9 January 1997, 31.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Bottero, *Ancestors of the West*, 35.

## *The Death Knell of Naturalism*

### **1. Compared to supernaturalism, naturalism is extremely narrow-minded.**

- a. J. Warner Wallace:
  - (1) Supernaturalists don't have to rush to supernatural explanations every time they fail to find an easy or quick natural explanation. But they are open to following the evidence wherever it leads, even if it points to the existence of a supernatural designer.<sup>7</sup>
  - (2) Supernaturalists must be careful not to jump to supernatural explanations when nature causes are supported evidentially. Not all of God's activity is overtly miraculous.<sup>8</sup>
  - (3) Supernaturalists respect the claims of naturalists when they: (1) are evidentially supported;<sup>9</sup> and (2) do not directly contradict Scripture.
- b. Supernaturalism has the advantage over naturalism. While many supernaturalisms are possible, only one naturalism is possible.
- c. It only takes one miracle to destroy naturalism.
- d. "[T]he primary motivation for denying the early authorship of the Gospels is simply the bias against supernaturalism."<sup>10</sup>

### **2. Naturalism can't explain why there is something rather than nothing.**

- a. Naturalism says the universe is all there is, but it cannot explain why the universe exists in the first place.
- b. Nothing cannot create something.
- c. Science has proven the universe had a beginning. It is not eternal. This means neither space nor matter is not eternal.
- d. If matter is not eternal, naturalism cannot be true.
  - (1) Thomas Paine:
    - (a) "[A]ll the principles of science are of divine origin. Man cannot make, or invent, or contrive principles; he can only discover them, and he ought to look through the discovery to the author. When we examine an extraordinary piece of machinery, an astonishing pile of architecture, a well-executed statue, or a highly finished painting where life and action are imitated...., our ideas are naturally led to think of the extensive genius and talents of the artist. When we study the elements of geometry, we think of Euclid. When we speak of gravitation, we think of Newton. How then is it, that when we study the works of God in the creation, we stop short, and do not think of God? It is from the error of the schools in having taught those subjects as accomplishments only, and thereby separated the study of them from the Being who is the author of them.... The evil that has resulted from the error of the schools, in teaching natural philosophy as an accomplishment only, has been that of generating in

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<sup>7</sup> J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, 31.

<sup>8</sup> J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, 32.

<sup>9</sup> J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, 32.

<sup>10</sup> J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity*, 176.

the pupils a species of atheism. Instead of looking through the works of creation to the Creator himself, they stop short, and employ the knowledge they acquire to create doubts of his existence. They labor with studied ingenuity to ascribe everything they behold to innate properties of matter, and jump over all the rest by saying, that matter is eternal.”<sup>11</sup>

- e. Given the universe is not eternal, the Kalam Cosmological Argument comes into play.
- f. The existence of the universe itself is the one miracle that destroys naturalism.
- g. Naturalism may dance with Madame How, but he doesn’t get near Lady Why.

### **3. Naturalism undercuts science itself.**

#### **4. Naturalism cannot explain the existence of semiotics, intelligence, and language.**

- a. Naturalism says “material precedes information,” but science has proven “information precedes material.” Where did the information come from?
- b. Study semiotics/information/intelligence/language.

#### **5. Naturalism cannot explain personal human reality.**

- a. “...[C]an human reality, which is personal, result from an absolute reality that is impersonal, or can an impersonal absolute reality only result in things that are less than personal? ...[T]he Christian answer is *No*—only a personal absolute reality can create a personal human reality.”<sup>12</sup>
- b. “If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true...and hence I have no reason of supposing my brain to be composed of atoms.”<sup>13</sup>
- c. Naturalism reduces everything to matter in motion. Thus, even this thought is itself just the effect of one molecule randomly hitting another.

#### **6. Naturalism cannot explain the existence of moral absolutes.**

#### **7. Naturalism cannot explain the existence of altruism.**

#### **8. Naturalism cannot critique materialism because it is materialism.**

- a. Materialism is the philosophy, “Give me more stuff!”
- b. “Only voluntary, inspired self-restraint can raise man above the world stream of materialism.”<sup>14</sup>
- c. Capitalism based on supernaturalism is much different from capitalism based naturalism. Under naturalism, there is no basis to hold in check human greed and selfishness.

#### **9. Naturalism abolishes man.**

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<sup>11</sup> T. Paine, *The Age of Reason*, in *Life and Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Daniel Edwin Wheeler (1908), 2-8.

<sup>12</sup> Ellis Potter, *3 Theories of Everything*, 106.

<sup>13</sup> J. B. S. Haldane, *Possible Worlds*, 209.

<sup>14</sup> A. Solzhenitsyn, “A World Split Apart” (The Trinity Forum, 2002), 26.

- a. Under naturalism, human life is not intrinsically good. Naturalism doesn't allow for intrinsic value.
- b. Naturalism destroys human free will.
- c. "This error [naturalism] plunges man into complete irrationality, because mind, reason, will, thought, and knowledge can have no ontological existence in such a [naturalistic] world. They are epiphenomena, mere shadows of the only world that exists, the world of matter. Everything that distinguishes man from nature disappears in this outlook, and that can only mean that man himself disappears. That is why C. S. Lewis was right to call the triumph of such a conception 'the abolition of man.'"<sup>15</sup>

#### **10. Naturalism doesn't pass the liveability test.**

- a. "Although man may say that he is no more than a machine, his whole life denies it."<sup>16</sup>

#### **11. Naturalism results in purposelessness and existential despair.**

- a. "If this world had been created by some divine being with a particular goal in mind, it could be said to have meaning, at least for that divine being. If we could know what the divine being's purpose in creating us was, we could then know what the meaning of our life was for our creator. If we accepted our creator's purpose (though why we should do that would need to be explained), we could claim to know the meaning of life. When we reject belief in a god we must give up the idea that life on this planet has some preordained meaning. Life as a whole has no meaning. Life began, as the best available theories tell us, in a chance combination of molecules; it then evolved through random mutations and natural selection. All this just happened; it did not happen for any overall purpose."<sup>17</sup>

#### **12. Naturalism becomes more improbably everyday.**

- a. Naturalism's fatal flaw is that it claims too much for itself. It claims not that it explains everything but that it must explain everything.
- b. There is so much scientific evidence now for the integrated complexity, precision, programming and sophistication in the design of all living things - That mindless "Naturalistic Evolution" is simply a total impossibility that becomes more and more improbable everyday.<sup>18</sup>
- c. "Even the old certainties about the measurement of matter have fallen by the wayside. Following discoveries by German physicist Werner Heisenberg, modern physicists believe that the act of observing subatomic particles imparts to them sufficient energy to alter their movement; thus they conclude that they can measure precisely either the location or the velocity of a particle but not both. Many physicists have become... idealists who believe that mind is the ultimate reality with matter being the epiphenomenon. As Max Planck put it: 'I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness.' And Sir James Jeans said that things

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<sup>15</sup> H. Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, Kindle Locations 3209-3213.

<sup>16</sup> Francis Schaeffer, *Complete Works*, 1:122.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 2nd. ed. (1993), 331.

<sup>18</sup> Kiwi Dave Stanton.

seem objective due to their ‘subsisting in the mind of some eternal spirit.’ Philosopher Mortimer Adler has even predicted that immaterialism will become the new scientific orthodoxy.”<sup>19</sup>

- d. Many Kiwi Baby Boomers do not realise naturalism has been totally discredited.

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<sup>19</sup> H. Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*, 147-48.

## *Naturalism and Christianity*

- 1. In the 19th and 20th centuries, liberals sought to desupernaturalise Christianity.**
  - a. From a naturalistic perspective, miracles and prophecy are impossible.
  
- 2. With the demise of naturalism, liberal theologians are caught with their pants down.**
  - a. It is never wise for Christian theology to follow the fads and fashions of philosophy.
  
- 3. Christianity is supernatural at its core.**
  - a. The absolute supernatural pervades the Christian faith—a supernatural God, a supernatural redemption, accomplished by a supernatural Savior, interpreted by a supernatural revelation, and applied by the supernatural operations of the Spirit. Supernaturalism is the very heart of the Christian faith.
    - (1) God is supernatural.
    - (2) Jesus is supernatural.
    - (3) The universe (nature itself) is supernatural.
    - (4) The Bible is supernatural.
    - (5) The Christian is supernatural.
  - b. Quotes.
    - (1) “Supernatural Christianity is the only historical Christianity. It is the desupernaturalized Jesus which is the mythical Jesus, who never had any existence. There never was a Christianity of which the deity of Christ was not a prime tenet.”<sup>20</sup>
    - (2) “The deity of Christ is the presupposition of every word of the New Testament. He is the supernatural Savior who entered supernaturally into this world to accomplish His supernatural work. The New Testament does not provide any data whatever that would support an inference that the Christian community ever held a different view.”<sup>21</sup>
    - (3) “Those who heard Jesus were forced into a dilemma. Supposing Christ’s claims were false, how could they be accounted for? Was He a wicked man? A wild fanatic? A liar? Insane? None of these options explains the case. Grant that Jesus is God, and everything falls orderly into its place. Deny it, and you have a Jesus and a Christianity both equally unaccountable. If Christ were not God, we should have a very different Jesus and a very different Christianity. That is the reason modern unbelief bends all its energies in a vain effort to abolish the historical Jesus and to destroy historical Christianity. Its instinct is right: but its task is hopeless. A naturalistic Jesus could never have risen to the stature that this testimony bears of Him, particularly in such a brief time. It was Jesus’ supernaturalism that captured the attention of his contemporaries and gave rise to Christianity. Apart from His supernaturalism, it is impossible to explain its origin and advance.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> B. B. Warfield.

<sup>21</sup> B. B. Warfield.

<sup>22</sup> B. B. Warfield.



#### 4. Deal with naturalists as Jesus did.

- a. **Mk 12:18-27** 18 And Sadducees came to [Jesus], who say that there is no resurrection [based on their philosophic naturalism]. And they asked him a [tricky] question [for the purpose of making Jesus' supernaturalism foolish] saying, 19 Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up seed for his brother. 20 There were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and when he died left no seed. 21 And the second took her, and died, leaving no seed. And the third likewise. 22 And the seven left no seed. Last of all the woman also died. 23 In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife. 24 Jesus said to them, Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the [supernatural] Scriptures nor the [supernatural] power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead [a supernatural act], they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? 27 He is not God of the dead, but of the living [humans have supernatural souls]. You are quite wrong.

## *The Victory of Supernaturalism*

### **1. In the context of the supernatural, the natural thrives.**

- a. **Ge 1:31** 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.
- b. “Christianity is the most man-centered religious that has every existed.”
- c. Our natural rights must have a supernatural basis.
  - (1) “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *U.S. Declaration of Independence.*

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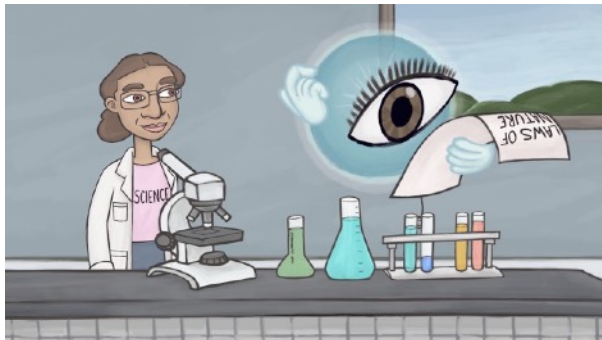
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## *Videos*

Center for Philosophy of Religion, "Where the Conflict Really Lies."



William Lane Craig, "Is Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism a Good Argument?"

