

Dear Bishop Robert Barron:

I listened to your interview by Lex Fridman last night, and I was impressed, as I was with your interview by Jordan Peterson some months ago, with the coherence of your explanation of Christianity. You are closer to what I believe is the truth than anyone else I can think of. But I am a naturalist, and I am writing to alert you to an opportunity that naturalism will offer the Church before long. You were right to reject Peterson's explanation of the meaning of life as a Jungian psychologist that reduced God to an archetype. I agree that the incarnation of God is not a Kantian moral lesson built into individual minds but, rather, a historical fact about Earth. What struck me as I listened to your conversation with Jordan Peterson was that there is a naturalistic explanation of our spiritual nature that explains everything that both of you want to say about the goodness of morality. The meaning of life depends on an objective difference between good and evil, and this kind of naturalism explains what both you and Peterson have to say about it. But your conversation with Lex Fridman raised deeper issues concerning the existence and nature of God, and I want to alert you to an opportunity that will be open to the Church before long.

Believe it or not, a coming scientific revolution will conclude that God exists by showing that the Christian God is identical to the natural world. This revolution will be triggered by a discovery that physicists will make about what exists most basically in the natural world, and by revealing that a kind of efficient cause, not recognized by physics, called geometrical causes, are at work in nature, science will be able to discover a series of stages in the evolution of life that lead inevitably to the existence of beings like us on suitable planets throughout the universe. Four kinds of life come into existence, each on a higher level of geometrical organization (prokaryotes, eukaryotes, multicellular organisms,

and spiritual organisms). Since they all have the same cause, they are all forms of life in the same sense, and we have a spiritual nature in virtue of being members of spiritual organisms. Recognizing that fact is what would enable you and Peterson to agree that being moral is a necessary condition of the goodness of all other goals: choosing good over evil even when it is not in our self-interest or opposed by strong desires is how we must choose to share in the life of a spiritual organism. To put it more completely, we are reflective subjects, or animals with the use of a language that enables us to see into one another's minds, so we recognize the moral equality of reflective subjects as part of our essential nature. As Christians put it, we must not sin, and since that is not always easy, the struggle to be moral in this sense is the meaning of life. Or to put it more positively, as you do, it is love, as willing the good of others—as other.

The Church could welcome this scientific discovery as confirming what it has always believed. But considering the issues raised in your discussion with Fridman, it might be seen as posing a serious challenge to the Church. To paraphrase you, for it to continue being the “spiritual organism” that celebrates the glory of God, the Church will have to admit that science has proved the existence and nature of the Christian God.

One of the two best arguments that you acknowledge that naturalists have for denying the existence of a God that transcends the natural world is its intelligibility. Physics has undeniably learned a great deal about the universe, and cosmologists are so worried about the unlikelihood of any such thing in the physical world that they now commonly defend the multiverse theory, in which we are one of some  $10^{500}$  possible universes in which intelligent life happens to exist. You rightly reject that argument. But I believe that physicists are on the verge of making a discovery about the nature of space that will trigger a

scientific revolution in which Western civilization is explained as a distinct stage of evolution (I call it the metaphysical stage) that discovers not only how the mind is identical to the brain but also how God is identical to the natural world. It will be a scientific discovery in the same sense as the discovery that H<sub>2</sub>O is identical to water. And you are not in a position to dismiss this prediction out of hand because you understand that there is a problem whose solution is this discovery about space.

You point to Eugene Wigner's claim that the "unreasonable effectiveness" of mathematics in discovering laws of physics is a "miracle" as a way of pressing your point about the need to explain the intelligibility of the universe. You suggest that is explained by God as the logos or word, and since that essential nature is the origin of everything in the natural world, you attribute it to God's nature as mind. But physicists will discover that the "unreasonable effectiveness" of mathematics can be explained by the nature of the substances constituting the natural world. They currently assume that mathematically formulated laws of nature are the deepest possible empirical explanation of what exists. But they will discover that the truth of mathematics can be explained by its correspondence to a natural world constituted by two opposite substances, space and matter, because all the regularities generated by their interaction are quantitative. They can all be explained mathematically, but there are problems because physics uses mathematics in a way that hides some of them, including those responsible for geometrical causes.

There is a detailed defense of the prediction that the discovery of spatio-materialism will solve those problems in the first volume of a trilogy that I am self-publishing as I write to you, and the argument showing how the discovery of geometrical causes triggers a scientific revolution is presented in the second volume. But its relevance here is that the discovery of the kinds of

substances constituting the natural world (called ontological causes because they are causes of existence) makes it possible for science to show that the evolution of life on suitable planets throughout the universe brings into existence beings like us who know the necessity of their own existence in the natural world, not to mention that they also know that they ought to be moral, or as you put it, ought to will the good of others—as other. Love in that sense is the meaning of life for beings with a spiritual nature.

If the natural world is constituted by space and matter in this sense, I do not see how you can deny that it satisfies Saint Thomas' definition of God as Being, or as you say, being in which existence and essence are one. It is being as existence because substances are ontological causes, that is, causes of existence by constituting what is found in the natural world. But these ontological causes are also being as essence because they are the first cause, as the pre-Socratics understood it. That is, they are the cause of everything found in the natural world, including the difference between good and evil, because they explain all regularities that hold necessarily. Scientists will insist that this theoretical identification of God and the natural world has the same status as their earlier theoretical identification of water and H<sub>2</sub>O.

This is not to disagree with you about God being transcendent but, rather, to disagree with you about what transcendence means. You say that belief in God is not faith, like a feeling or a Kierkegaardian leap into the absurd, but, rather, faith as a way of knowing that is beyond reason, or as you say, super-rational. But scientists will not agree because they use the empirical method to know the first cause, and that is surely reason. However, they will agree that God is transcendent in the sense of transcending the physical world, that is, the natural world as it is understood by physics. That is what they will do when they discover that space is

a substance that interacts with matter because that enables them to explain how consciousness is part of the natural world in a way that explains how the exchange of metaphysical arguments in Western civilization caused a stage of spiritual evolution that follows the stage represented by other civilizations on Earth. By metaphysics, I mean the belief that we have a cognitive power called Reason that enables us to know Reality behind Appearance, and that knowledge was transcendent because Reality was behind Appearance. What metaphysicians meant by Appearance and Reason were parts of consciousness, and since an illusion inherent in consciousness allowed them to believe that knowledge depends on intuition, their beliefs about Reality were all mistaken such fundamental ways that philosophers were eventually forced to abandon metaphysics and allow science to take center stage. God was the Reality known by Christianity as a metaphysical religion, and the third volume of my trilogy shows in detail how discounting the intuitionist illusion inherent in consciousness will enable ontological scientists to explain Western civilization as the metaphysical stage of evolution. They will find themselves knowing Reality behind Appearance, and that is knowledge of a transcendent Reality. But since they use the empirical method to discover the first cause and explain the Christian metaphysical belief in God, they will insist that the cognitive power they have is naturalistic Reason. This discovery about Reality depends on explaining mathematics in a way that reduces physics to ontology, so what it transcends is the physical world. That is, the physical world is a phantom Reality conjured up by a basic branch of science that believes that mathematics is known by a faculty of rational intuition. In a somewhat different way, the Cartesian mind is a phantom Reality because it is conjured by modern intuitionistic metaphysics. But in the same way, the God who created the natural world from outside space and time was a phantom Reality conjured up in the ancient world by a marriage of Christianity with Platonic metaphysics.

I call this empirical discovery about God Christian pantheism because it agrees with Christianity about the incarnation of God in Christ. It is historical, rather than mythical, as you insist. But it explains the divinity of the Son as the historical process of evolution by which reflective subjects acquire the perfections of God. The Father is the first cause, and God will become human when the first cause discovers its own nature as the first cause in reflective subjects who acquire naturalistic Reason and understand the necessity of their own existence in the natural world. The Holy Spirit is the spiritual organism whose life they all share as they see into one another minds, and since they will the good of others as other, it is what you call Love.

Notice that this explanation solves the problem of evil, the other naturalistic argument that you admit carries some weight against the belief in God. There is not too much evil in the world because there is just enough evil for an evolutionary process that depends on natural selection to make the natural world a perfect being. Substances exist only at present because they endure through time, and science will discover that the natural world has made the most out of a world constituted by substances by their constituting an evolutionary process in which the first cause acquires self-knowledge.

There are only two ways that I can see that you might be disappointed, if Christian pantheism turned out to be true. One is that there is no summum bonum, that is, no ultimate purpose that God had in choosing to create the natural world. What makes the good good is that choosing the good is what matters to life because of its very nature. A form of life begins as a geometrical cause with the function of choosing between goals (originally, growth and reproduction), and as it takes on the function of choosing between other goals, what matters to life, as life, is

choosing the goal that is good in each situation that arises. Goodness exists necessarily. But there is no purpose that explains its existence. Why life and goodness are entailed by the kinds of substances that constitute the natural world is a mystery. Or as Eugene Wigner might put it, it is a miracle that we neither understand nor deserve. It is a gift, and we know that we share it with beings like ourselves everywhere in the universe.

The other way that it might disappoint you is what it implies about immortality. There is no life after death outside space and time. The only afterlife we have is the life we share as members of a spiritual organism that is potentially immortal. There is, as you say, a “pattern” that we have from birth that distinguishes our identity over time from others. But that pattern is just a particular, gradually changing geometrical cause, and when we die, the pattern is not lost because it contributes to the culture of a spiritual organism that is potentially eternal. But the particular pattern is never given a “spiritual body,” as you say you hope. Heaven is on Earth, or whatever planet beings like us may inhabit.

The only basic change in Christian doctrine is the discovery that God’s transcendence is part of the natural world. Since knowledge of God depends on discounting the illusion inherent in consciousness on which intuitionistic metaphysics is founded, God does transcend Appearance. But a naturalistic explanation of God’s transcendence is a gift because it proves God's existence and explains God’s nature. This scientific revolution is coming, and the question is whether the Church will treat its discovery as an opportunity and continues to be the spiritual organism that celebrates the glory of God in a more certain way.

I alert you to this opportunity with the highest admiration for the clarity of your understanding of the most profound issues. It

occurs in the midst of a culture war in which the great treasure that we inherited from Western civilization seems to be slipping away, and I believe that you (and some orthodox Jews) are on the right side of that battle. The complete argument is presented in a trilogy, called *Naturalistic Reason*, that I am self-publishing as I send you this message, and it is presented in enough detail that, if it is on the right track, it will cause the scientific revolution it predicts. The first volume, *Unification of Physics*, shows how interactions of space and matter explain laws of physics of all kinds in quantitative detail. The second volume, *the Unification of Science*, shows how the reduction of physics to spatio-materialism reveals a kind of efficient cause, not recognized by physics, called geometrical causes, and shows how specialized sciences use it to explain the regularities they study completely enough to discover that evolution brings beings like us into existence on suitable planets throughout the universe. The third volume, *the Unification of Science and Philosophy*, explains how consciousness is part of a world constituted by matter and space and uses the illusion inherent in it to show that Western civilization is a distinct stage in the evolution of life caused by the exchange of metaphysical arguments that culminates in the Second Enlightenment.

But since this I am predicting a scientific revolution that sounds too good to be true, let me say something about myself and the origin of this argument. I have been working on this argument, pretty much on my own, for over 45 years, while teaching philosophy at American University for 30 years and since retiring from teaching over 20 years ago. As a philosopher, I have written this argument with a care that justifies expecting it to stand up under such scrutiny. There may be incomplete or mistaken arguments in it. But I am confident that the discovery that space is a substance that interacts with matter will eventually cause the scientific revolution I predict, and I am prepared to defend it on all



fronts. My reason for writing you and a few others at this time is to make what I have discovered public. I am about to turn 83, and I believe that it is my duty to tell others about my discoveries because my spiritual organism has given me the leisure and privilege to enjoy a life spent in such an exceedingly meaningful way.

Even to those, like you, who believe in the rational pursuit of truth, the prospect of reading a detailed all-inclusive explanation of the natural world in three volumes is daunting, so I am offering an easier way of learning more about it. An executive summary of the argument is presented in a short (150 page) book titled *Sapere Aude* that I am also self-publishing now. I am including a free Amazon link to an eBook version of it. (See below.) And there is more information about this argument at [natReason.com](http://natReason.com), including an introduction to the trilogy, a Table of Contents for it, a bookstore, and more information about me. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have and very grateful to learn about any problems that you think may cast doubt on it. You can reach me personally at [philliphscibner@yahoo.com](mailto:philliphscibner@yahoo.com).