

Dear Jordan Peterson:

I started watching you around the time that your four debates with Sam Harris about the nature of the good became available on YouTube. They gave me hope for the rational pursuit of truth in this troubled era, and it seemed time to make my own work public because I had discovered an explanation of what is good for beings like us that you and Sam Harris could both accept. I have watched you many times since, and your more recent exchange with Bishop Barron about the meaning of life spurred me on because I realized that my explanation of the morally good might even draw you and the Bishop into agreement about our spiritual nature. This expectation is not just speculation. It is based on an explanation of Western civilization that I predict science will accept after physicists make a discovery that solves the seemingly intractable problems of modern physics and triggers a revolution that solves the problems of all the other branches of science. A scientific explanation of the origin of life will reveal that goodness is an essential aspect of the nature of life, show how a series of inevitable stages of evolution brings beings like us into existence, and explain our spiritual nature. That is what will draw you and Sam Harris into agreement. But what is more, the triggering discovery by physicists will also make it possible to explain how consciousness is part of the natural world, and that will enable science to explain Western civilization in a way that restores Enlightenment confidence in reason, including belief in God. That is what will draw you and the Bishop into agreement.

Admittedly, this sounds too good to be true. But since it all depends on a discovery that physicists will make about the nature of space, this prediction has a unity and comprehensiveness that makes it plausible, and since my argument justifying it is detailed enough to bring about the revolution it predicts, if it is on the right track, I believe that taking it seriously will be rewarded. And I

believe that you will find it interesting because you are an individual psychologist with Jungian intimations of something real that transcends science. Since you see the Bible as the foundation of the narrative by which you understand what is special about Western civilization, you will find in this prediction a scientific explanation of the divine sovereign individual, by which you summed up your basic lesson in your interview at the Hoover Institution last spring. And if this argument is on the right track, it is the weapon that will win the “civil war of ideas” that you say—in your 10 July 2022 video, *Russia Vs. Ukraine Or Civil War in The West*—must be fought to defeat the “radical Marxist inheritance” that is currently “destabilizing” our society, for example, by demanding “diversity, inclusion, and equity.” It will do the job that you say must be done by “classical liberals, small-c conservatives, and adherents of the Abrahamic tradition to bring about that defeat in the realm of ideas where the true battles most truly rage.”

Let me say, first, what will draw you and Sam Harris into agreement and, then, what will draw you and Bishop Barron into agreement.

Jungian insights enable you as an individual psychologist to use religion and myths to point to something about goodness that seems to transcend the natural world, but since Sam Harris is a naturalist who believes that the natural world is all that exists, he insists that goodness can be explained by what physics has discovered. Since neither of you claims to have knowledge of something that exists outside space and time, both of you could accept an explanation of moral goodness and why we ought to be moral that depends on the nature of what exists in the natural world. That is what I predict science will discover. Furthermore, it includes an explanation of free will that even Sam Harris could accept.

This explanation of the nature of the good depends on a scientific revolution that will be triggered when physicists make a discovery that solves all the problems of modern physics. That is not as unlikely as it may seem, because it is a discovery about space and we know that space exists. It is the discovery that space is a substance that interacts with matter, and that fact is hidden from physics by its assumption that laws of physics are the deepest possible knowledge about the natural world. The secret sauce that has made physics so successful for centuries is the use of mathematics as a language to formulate its laws. But physicists are trapped inside a box because mathematics also causes the seemingly intractable problems in modern physics, and they can think outside that box by abandoning the assumption that mathematics is known by a faculty of rational intuition and recognizing that its truth can be explained by its correspondence to a world constituted by two substances, space and matter enduring through time. Since interactions of substances with the essential natures of space and matter can generate only quantitatively precise regularities, scientists can infer spatio-materialism as the best explanation of what Eugene Wigner called the “unreasonable effectiveness” of mathematics in discovering laws of physics. This discovery will be confirmed by discovering powers that enable interactions of space and matter to generate all the regularities described by laws of physics. The problems of modern physics will be solved because we will be able to understand what corresponds to those laws by using geometry to picture how bits of matter interact with space.

Ontology is the study of existence, and since substances are the cause of what exists, this discovery will reduce physics to ontology. These ontological causes entail a kind of efficient cause, not recognized by physics, called geometrical causes. Since they work together with physical causes, their discovery will trigger a

scientific revolution, and by filling all the explanatory gaps in specialized sciences, science will explain the nature of the good. Geometrical causes are at work in nature because space gives the matter that helps constitute atoms (and bodies composed of atoms) the power to impose their unchanging geometrical structures on what happens by physical causes. The recognition that they constrain what happens by physical causes will clear up puzzles about the nature of entropy in thermodynamics in a way that gives the life sciences a deeper and more complete explanation of evolution than Darwinism. Biologists will be able to explain why life evolves on suitable planets throughout the universe, and they will discover a series of inevitable stages of evolution that brings beings like us into existence.

This discovery about evolution will explain the origin of life, and since that reveals its nature, it will show that goodness is an essential aspect of the nature of life. Life begins when geometrical causes acquire the power to go through reproductive cycles on their own by choosing between incompatible goals, such as growth and reproduction. Life is basically a choosing machine, so what matters to living organisms is choosing goals that are good over those that are bad. This explanation of the nature of life also implies that there are four forms of life. As each form of life evolves, it gives rise to a new form of life in basically the same way that the first form evolves from nonlife, except that it is a choosing machine on a higher level of geometrical organization. First, there are prokaryotic cells, then eukaryotic cells, followed by multicellular organisms, and finally there are spiritual organisms. The use of language is what coordinates the behavior of their parts, and I call them spiritual organisms because they have no body except the multicellular animal bodies of their members. So, they have a spiritual nature. They are subjective animals because they have a faculty of imagination, and they become reflective subjects when the use of language enables them to represent the

causes of their behavior as part of the very process of causing it. That enables them to see into one another's minds and understand the causes of one another's behavior, so recognition of the equality of all reflective subjects is part of their spiritual nature. Cooperation is essential to the way that spiritual organisms survive, so obeying rules about how they treat one another that promote conditions under which they can cooperate is basic to their spiritual nature—as basic as cells following a genetic plan is to the development of a fertilized egg cell into a multicellular animal. In short, morality is an essential aspect of the spiritual form of life. Choosing good over evil is good for beings like us because that is what we must choose to live the form of life we have. Science will explain why we ought to be moral.

Let me also mention that this naturalistic explanation of the origin of beings like us explains our moral nature in a way that reconciles free will and determinism. Though every event in a world constituted by space and matter is completely determined, reflective subjects have a free will because their behavior is guided by a geometrical cause. As a choosing machine, its function is choosing between goals, including the basic function of choosing good over evil. And reflective subjects are responsible for what they choose because the ability to represent the causes of their behavior as part of the process of guiding it means that they can choose the desires on which they act in particular situations, and they have a spiritual desire that enables them to do what is required by moral rules (or some other parts of culture) even when it is contrary to self-interest or opposed by strong animal desires. Since they can always have acted otherwise when they do wrong, they are justly held responsible for what they do. And since the spiritual desire derives from the desires constituting the dominance hierarchy in pack animals, public punishment for wrongdoing can be justified in some cases because it strengthens the spiritual desire in much the same way

that young alpha males that are defeated in challenging the leader of their pack acquire a new desire to be a follower. By strengthening the spiritual desire, punishment, like tough love, makes it easier for them to choose good over evil. And it enhances their autonomy because it also increases their power to defer gratification in doing what is in their self-interest, for example, in carrying out long-term goals.

As far as I can tell from your debates, when science explains human nature in this way, you and Sam Harris will be able to agree about the nature of the good. Moral goodness is normally a necessary condition for the goodness of other goals, so the way that members of spiritual organisms are responsible for what they do is the foundation, at least, for explaining meanings of folk stories, myths, and religion. It seems to transcend the natural world because when the natural world is explained as the physical world, the existence of beings like us is just an evolutionary accident and our spiritual nature is a mystery. But since ontological science is based on interactions of substances, rather than mathematically formulated laws of physics, you and Sam Harris will be able to accept the same explanation of the nature of what is good for beings with a spiritual nature. What is more, it will show that his denial that beings like us have a free will is a mistake caused by assuming, as a physicalist, that events are completely determined by physical causes.

My argument predicting this scientific revolution is presented in a trilogy that I am self-publishing, called *Naturalistic Reason*. The first volume, the *Unification of Physics*, gives my reasons for believing that the problems of modern physics will soon be solved, and the second volume, the *Unification of Science*, gives my reasons for predicting that a revolution in the life sciences, caused by the recognition of geometrical efficient causes, will enable naturalists to explain the difference between good and evil

in a way that resolves disagreements about the nature of the good. But there is a third volume because this is not the only consequence of the predicted discovery about space. It also predicts an explanation of Western civilization that will enable you and Bishop Barron to agree that its contribution to humanity is the discovery of Reason, or what you call the divine sovereign individual. Indeed, the history of the West can be seen a biography of Reason.

The upshot is that ontological science will explain Western civilization as a stage in the evolution of spiritual organisms that follows the stage represented by other civilizations on Earth. Each new stage in the evolution of life is caused by a higher level of organization in evolving geometrical causes, and since culture is what evolves at each stage of spiritual evolution, stages in the evolution of spiritual organisms are caused by levels of linguistic organization. They determine the criteria for the natural selection of linguistic representations during that stage, and Western civilization is a distinct stage of spiritual evolution, called the metaphysical stage, because the linguistic representations exchanged are metaphysical arguments, not just the psychological sentences used by reflective subjects in other civilizations on Earth. The history of the West can be seen as a biography of Reason because it is the story of how Reason discovers its own nature, and a brief telling of that story is the easiest way to show how you and Bishop Barron will agree about the meaning of life.

What is distressing about what you call the current civil war of ideas is that we seem to be losing the great treasures that we inherited from the Enlightenment. They came from confidence in the rational pursuit of truth. Everyone was a Rational being. Scientific discoveries were expected to settle disagreements about what is true in a way that everyone would accept. Since

Rational beings could be trusted to be moral, political institutions were expected to respect their moral autonomy and protect their freedom. And free markets were seen as rewarding entrepreneurial initiative and producing affluence for everyone. But these days, no one believes that science will discover the complete explanation of the natural world expected of science when it began. What physics claims to have discovered at bottom is so different from what we ordinarily believe about the natural world that no one can understand what corresponds to its laws. Worse yet, what researchers in specialized fields currently believe is called “the science” and used as a political weapon to silence objections to administrative edicts. Though respect for the moral autonomy of rational beings was built into the US Constitution, the claim that the rights it protects are prior to government is defended only by those who believe in God, and they are expected to admit that the premise of their defense is a leap of faith. And capitalism is portrayed as the inequality of wealth protected by government because it is rule by the rich, if it is not attributed to systemic racism.

As you know, the decline is so complete that our population is divided into opposing political camps that cannot agree on facts about current events, much less values. Never in the lifetime of anyone alive has there been so much pessimism about the direction of change, so little trust that existing institutions will see us through, and so much willingness to consider radical changes of all kinds. You rightly characterize it as destabilizing, and it can't be explained by the historical events that have led to it. The cause lies much deeper, though not so deep that it can't be understood. Both the Enlightenment and the aftermath of disillusionment with Reason are effects of the same cause. The Enlightenment was a product of the ancient Greek belief that beings like us are capable of perfect knowledge, or literally, a complete explanation of what is found in the world. That cognitive power was called Reason.



But it took two forms in ancient Greece because of an illusion inherent in consciousness, and their incompatibility set them on different careers in history. Their interactions carried Western culture to the Enlightenment, and then, the inability to reconcile them caused endarkenment.

Pre-Socratic philosophers expected to explain everything by using the empirical method to discover the first cause. In the end, they agreed that the first cause is all the substances constituting the natural world, but they never discovered kinds of substances that can explain everything found in it. The other way of acquiring perfect knowledge was metaphysics, which can be defined as the belief that Reason is a cognitive power that knows Reality behind Appearance. It began when Plato argued that rational intuition knows about the Forms in a realm of Being that are responsible for everything intelligible about the visible objects found in space, or the realm of Becoming, and the problem posed by this dualism led to metaphysicians defending other ways of showing how rational intuition knows Reality behind Appearance.

Despite the difference in their methods, both kinds of perfect knowledge were attributed to Reason, and after the Renaissance, the rebirth of ancient confidence in Reason as both natural philosophy and modern metaphysics blossomed into Enlightenment optimism about progress leading to perfect knowledge of the true and the good. Its offspring took two forms, which were irreconcilable in a similar way. One offspring was empirical science, which was expected to explain all the kinds of things found in the world. The other offspring was a religion based on metaphysics, which held that everyone is a Rational being because they were all created in the image of God. Rational beings could be trusted to be moral because knowledge of the difference between good and evil would cause them to choose freely to be moral, even when it was contrary to self-interest or opposed by strong desires. And respect for the moral autonomy of

Rational beings was the foundation for justifying liberal political institutions and capitalist economic institutions in Western civilization.

The cultural change currently distressing us is the loss of Enlightenment confidence in Reason. Scientific explanations of human cognition, such as those defended by Freud, Darwin, and Marx, have led to disillusionment with Reason. Though science is still our most reliable knowledge, it doesn't enable us to understand the basic nature of the world. For example, no one can believe that change is unreal, though that is true, if Einsteinian spacetime is what really exists. However, science is naturalistic, and the undeniable advance of science during the past few centuries has made belief in a supernatural God untenable. Belief in a God who created the natural world for a purpose is just a leap of faith. And since science cannot explain the nature of the good, it cannot explain why we ought to be moral, so trust in liberal political institutions has given way to the belief that we need an administrative state, run by experts, to promote the common good. Indeed, the contemporary commonplace about there being no such thing as the True, with a capital T, has replaced the rational pursuit of truth with relativism. Everyone is supposed to have their own reality. Even major scientific discoveries are seen as tentative because solutions to scientific problems always turn up new problems. These days, no one claims to show how Reason can give us perfect knowledge.

Reason will, however, triumph in the end. There is a deep cause of both the Enlightenment and endarkenment, and when a discovery made by physicists enables science to discover it, science will reverse the rising tide of endarkenment and restore the genius behind the 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Enlightenment as what I call the Second Enlightenment.

The deep cause of the metaphysical stage of evolution is intuitionism, the belief that knowledge comes from objects that are immediately present to us, as if they were given in a faculty of intuition. That is false because all knowledge depends on efficient causes at work in the brain, and intuitionism is a deep mistake because it is caused by an illusion inherent in the nature of consciousness (as the phenomenal aspect of experience). Like optical illusions, the illusion of intuitionism does not go away when it is recognized to be illusory. And this cause is so deep that it has been at work throughout the history of the West. After enabling metaphysics to give rise to the confidence in Reason that blossomed during the Enlightenment into science and liberal political institutions, it caused a decline of confidence in Reason in both philosophy and science.

Metaphysicians assumed that perception depends on a faculty of intuition, and assuming that there is also a faculty of rational intuition, they argued that intuitionistic Reason enables us to know Reality behind Appearance. But advances in science made the beliefs about the nature of the Reality that metaphysicians claimed to discover behind Appearance seem downright foolish, and since they included the belief that God created the natural world, theists were forced to admit that belief in God was just an act of faith. Without a way to defend the claim that Reason knows the True with a capital T, intuitionistic metaphysics gave way to romanticism, the belief that intense feelings or acts of extreme courage put us in touch with Reality behind Appearance. And after romanticism, intuitionism led to critical theory and post-modern philosophers, who preach the gospel of relativism and spread it to popular culture.

To be sure, science doesn't seem to be affected by intuitionism because it is a form of naturalism. It began by rejecting the metaphysicians' assumption that perception depends on a faculty

of intuition, and since scientists took themselves to be animals with sensory organs, they followed the pre-Socratics and used the empirical method to learn about the natural world. But what made science credible was the astonishing success of physics. As history shows, its success came from assuming that mathematics is known by a faculty of rational intuition. The Newtonian revolution gave physics a method that implicitly assumed that mathematically formulated laws of nature are the deepest possible empirical knowledge of the natural world. The use of a priori mathematics as a language to describe regularities blinded physics to some other regularities about change, so the method of physics itself caused the intractable puzzles that now confront it—and deprived other branches of science of a second kind of efficient cause, which is needed to explain the regularities they study. That mistake is what will be corrected when physicists infer spatio-materialism as the best explanation of the “unreasonable effectiveness” of mathematics in discovering laws of physics and recognize that mathematics is true by correspondence to the natural world.

Intuitionism was responsible for the rise of confidence in Reason in the West after ancient Greece as well as its decline after the Enlightenment, and science will be able to explain how intuitionism caused both the rise and fall of its culture because what physicists discover when they trigger a scientific revolution will also enable science to explain how consciousness is part of the natural world. This ontological explanation will expose the illusion inherent in consciousness, and the key to explaining Western civilization is discounting the illusion of intuitionism and using it to explain how consciousness allows language-using brains that exchange metaphysical arguments to cause the kind of cultural evolution that occurred in Western civilization. [This scientific explanation is tricky because it runs contrary to what we all naturally assume. It requires us to distinguish between

consciousness (as phenomenal properties that are immediately present) and reflection (as what a language-using brain can know about the brain states causing its behavior by representing them as causes as part of the process of causing it) and to recognize that consciousness is not the efficient cause of any event but merely helps constitute what happens in the brain.]

The discovery of the cause of the metaphysical stage will give us knowledge that pre-Socratics as well as metaphysicians would recognize as perfect because it will turn science into a cognitive power that naturalists and metaphysicians will both recognize as Reason. Parts of consciousness are what intuitionistic metaphysicians mean by Appearance and Reason, so when ontological scientists discount the illusion of intuitionism, they will find themselves knowing Reality behind Appearance. But since science uses the empirical method to discover the first cause, they will insist that their cognitive power be called naturalistic Reason (or natReason, for short). The certainty of this knowledge will not come from a faculty of rational intuition but, rather, from discovering an explanation of everything that leaves no grounds on which a refutation can be founded. It will be universally accepted because science is empirical knowledge and everyone will know that their beliefs are true by how they correspond to the natural world where they find their bodies. It will explain goodness as an essential aspect of the nature of life, and since that will show that beings like us have a spiritual nature by virtue of being parts of a form of life on a level of organization higher than multicellular animals, we will know why we ought to be moral. NatReason will solve the hard problem of mind because it will show that language-using brains that exchange metaphysical arguments while falling for the intuitionistic illusion inherent in consciousness eventually conjure up a phantom Reality called mind.

This is where natReason will draw you and Bishop Barron into agreement about the meaning of life. Besides explaining the Cartesian mind by the brain, natReason will explain the Christian God by the natural world. It will explain the divine by showing that the world itself has all the perfections attributed to the Judeo-Christian God—except for creating the natural world from outside space and time. It will explain the incarnation of God as the evolution of reflective subjects with naturalistic Reason on suitable planets everywhere, because they will have perfect knowledge, they will choose good over evil because they will know that moral goodness is the condition of the goodness of all other goals, and together, as parts of spiritual organisms, they will be as powerful in pursuing goals as anything that can exist in the spatio-material world. NatReason will solve the problem of the Trinity because it will explain the Father as the substances constituting the natural world, the Son as the Rational beings that evolve in the natural world, and the Holy Spirit as the spiritual organisms of which they are parts. Indeed, It will turn out that there is much truth in other religious beliefs, such as the origin of our spiritual nature in the Garden of Eden and the meaning of the crucifixion of Christ. And I believe that Bishop Barron will eventually accept this ontological explanation of God because a Pre-Socratic first cause that entails the essential nature of everything in the world (including an explanation of why it is good to be moral even when it is contrary to self-interest and strong desires that will cause Rational being to choose good over evil) satisfies Saint Thomas' definition of God as Being whose essence is to be and is also Logos (which I point out in an email that I am sending to him at the same time as this one).

When science explains Western civilization as the metaphysical stage, endarkenment will ebb and the genius of the Enlightenment will be reborn as the Second Enlightenment. That will do the job that you say needs to be done and win the battle “in

the realm of ideas where the true battles most truly rage.” It will draw you and Sam Harris into agreement about the nature of the good for beings like us, not to mention that it will settle the dispute about the nature of reality and truth that divided you before you chose to continue the rational pursuit of truth by debating only the nature of the good. And having listened to Bishop Barron on the Lex Fridman show, I believe that natReason will enable him to accept what I call Christian pantheism and the Church will continue to be the spiritual organism that celebrates the glory of God.

There may be incomplete or mistaken arguments in this trilogy. But I am confident that the discovery about space will cause a scientific revolution and cut the Gordian Knot of philosophy, and since this sounds too good to be true, let me say something about its origin. 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 scrutiny, and I am prepared to defend it on all fronts. My reason for writing you and a few others 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.

I send you this message to you because I know you to be a young man with deep insights, impeccable intellectual integrity, and exceptional courage. I hope that it will enable you to teach your lesson about the divine sovereign individual more effectively. But since the prospect of reading a detailed all-inclusive explanation of the natural world in three volumes is daunting, 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).