

## Naturalism Misapprehends the Nature of Nature

“... they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened” (Romans 1:21)

The suffix “*ism*” changes every noun it is attached to, *away* from being a *particular* to instead being a *category*. For example, a “commune” is a specific cluster of people gathered in a particular locale, while “communism” by contrast describes an *entire* political system defined by Karl Marx as a social arrangement where all property is publically owned and where goods are distributed “*from each according to his ability, to each according to their needs.*”<sup>1</sup> So it is likewise with the word “naturalism.” On the one hand the word “nature” refers to the physical realm or universe, while the word “natural” refers to the *way* the physical laws within nature bring about causes and effects as they occur *within*, I repeat, nature. One may reasonably state that, **left to itself**, causes and effects can *only* occur in nature *within* the parameters of its *physical* laws. By the way Christians ought to embrace this position since it is consistent with our doctrines of creation and the providence of God. It is the Bible alone, for example, which teaches that nature is both intentionally-created and purpose-filled precisely because, in the words of Genesis 1:1, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” This is the one and only reason to *expect* that creation will reflect rationality by the laws of nature. At the same time it is this same verse which identifies that event in nature which I will show **utterly undermines naturalism**.

Philosophical Naturalism (PN) moves beyond embracing (just as we do) the existence of nature<sup>2</sup> as the arena of physical entities (PEs). But PN **in addition holds** that PEs constitute the **entirety** of existence. According to PN there is no such thing as spiritual beings or entities of any kind; that is to say, no transcendent<sup>3</sup> God, no angels, no personal agents with free-will, no individual seat of personality commonly identified as the soul, no minds, and no supernatural forces at all. Stark matter is all there is!

Yet there are two brute realities in the physical realm which **utterly contradict naturalism**. The first one pertains to the body of observable empirical<sup>4</sup> data which accounts for the very existence of the material world, while the second one highlights the major problem of *soul-less* entities (IF naturalism was actually true) having a capacity to so much as even *conceptualize* the same. The first of these is the body of scientific facts which point to an absolute beginning to the universe from out of nothing through the singular, scientifically-verifiable event known as the Big Bang.<sup>5</sup> Since prior to that beginning there existed neither matter nor energy nor space nor even time,<sup>6</sup> there was consequently neither means nor an arena from which matter could conceivably bring *itself* into being. Yet in a manner that is consistent with John 1:1, God who is *Spirit* is shown *logically* to fulfill that absolutely necessary means (Agent) by which the physical universe *can* come into existence. Indeed Spirit both *precedes* matter and *brings it about*! Secondly, were it actually the case that humans are **only** a complex mass of chemicals, then it would be conceptually impossible for such beings to comprehend, let alone persuade others to embrace its philosophical system. By its failure to reconcile itself with the above two challenges, philosophical naturalism utterly disqualifies itself from being deemed a viable interpretation of the nature of nature.

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<sup>1</sup> “What is communism?” [www.businessdictionary.com](http://www.businessdictionary.com)

<sup>2</sup> This aspect of its teaching sets it in opposition to Hinduism which denies the reality of the physical world. See Kenneth Richard Samples. [A World of Difference: Putting Christian Truth-Claims to the Worldview Test](#). (Baker, 2007), p.235.

<sup>3</sup> A being who exists entirely outside of the physical cosmos.

<sup>4</sup> While it is true that many cosmologists don’t acknowledge singular beginning of the universe, they do so not by appealing to scientific data, but instead theoretical speculations about matters that cannot be investigated scientifically. For a rebuttal of these errors see Hugh Ross. [The Creator and the Cosmos](#). 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (RTB, 2018), ch. 13.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed account of the history of, nature of, and the ramifications which follow from the Big Bang, see my heavily documented paper, “Was the Big Bang the Big Beginning?,” which can, together with all of my essays, be found at my website: [www.christianityontheoffense.com](http://www.christianityontheoffense.com)

<sup>6</sup> Op.cit. (4), p. 111. \*\* David Filkin. [Stephen Hawking’s Universe](#). (Basic Books, 1974), p. 80.