

Rationality & the Inescapable God: Foundations in Christian Worldview

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The Inescapable God

“... we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter” Isa 28:15

– Part 1 of 3 –

An Inescapable Goal

The goal of fallen man^[1] throughout history, as defined in Genesis, is “to be like God, knowing [or determining] good and evil” (Gen 3:5). While man’s place in the cosmos, as a creature, is found in total dependence on his Creator, Adam and Eve grasped for equality with God, seeking to be an independent source for interpreting and defining reality. They did this by presuming the neutrality of human reason in objectively weighing two competing claims about reality – God’s word vs. the serpent’s word – coming to their own ultimate determination of the facts. As the progenitors of the human race, this representative action is the inception of humanism in all its various expressions throughout history. In essence it is man’s attempt to redefine reality through a human-centred philosophy: man as the final reference point, the determiner of the terms of his life. This original human temptation – to be like god – is perpetually a choice between a God-interpreted and a humanly-interpreted reality, the latter rendering man autonomous. Consequently, man does not approach the cosmos and life neutrally. By necessity, he approaches it in view of an ultimate reference point for knowledge—God or autonomous-man.

As the Creator and Ruler of all that is, there is no area of life outside God’s concern or government. This means that the totality of life and culture is religious in nature, represented in the Calvinist notion, pithily expressed in Henry Van Til’s maxim, “Culture is religion externalized.” Man’s ultimate point of reference for determining reality is logically outworked in every dimension of his life, individually and societally. Society, as the collective expression of the basic perspectives and commitments of a people, is inescapably ordered toward a particular end: either in adherence to God’s design or in resistance to it. The secular humanistic impulse in contemporary society, to determine and organise life without reference to God, far from being religiously neutral, is founded on the belief in man’s ultimacy. This presupposition determines in practice that man will either deny God’s existence or diminish his sovereignty and jurisdiction over humankind and history, delimiting his dominion narrowly to the ‘private sphere’ of personal values only. In either case, it empties the universe of God’s total meaning and order so that man, desiring to be like god, can impose his own interpretation onto the universe—determining the terms of his existence.

This is the inescapable goal of modern man and his social agenda.

Modern Man’s Inescapable Irrationality

As heirs of the Enlightenment, secular western society celebrates the explanation of all things in purely naturalistic terms as a triumph of the human intellect^[2]. This commitment to a closed universe of natural law by definition precludes any notion of supernatural intervention in the world. A Kansas State University professor exemplifies this position, stating in the prestigious journal *Nature*, “*Even if* all the data points to an intelligent designer, such a hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not naturalistic.”^[3] Far from a position of neutrality – able to access the facts and meaning of the world in an unbiased objective fashion – it is the unquestioned pre-commitment to a naturalistic worldview that excludes any evidence or logic that contradicts its approach to reality.

This phenomenon ought not be surprising. As Paul teaches, what can be known about God is ubiquitous, being clearly perceived in the created order (Rom 1:19-20). Why then does man refuse to acknowledge God “*even if*” all the evidence points that way? Because fallen man is not religiously neutral. Wishing to be his own authority, the human mind and reasoning is at moral enmity with God. Biased in a trajectory away from God, man actively suppresses the clear truth about the world to escape his moral culpability—thus becoming his own judge and ‘justifier’, the determiner of right and wrong. By exchanging true knowledge about the world for a lie, man lives in denial of reality, constructing false intellectual ‘fortresses’, i.e. worldviews, which are merely ‘fig-leaves’, to obscure his moral and intellectual nakedness. While “professing to be wise”, in reality man has become a “fool” and “futile in thinking” (Rom 1:19-22). Living in denial of the truth about the world – its

clear meaning and rational order – man inescapably ends up in irrationality.

This is the crisis of modern man. His naturalistic worldview reduces his own claims to nonsense. If the universe is an impersonal mindless product of chance, then there is no rational order or purpose inherent in the world or in man—who is redefined as a meaningless mutation fortuitously materialising through blind cosmic forces. Postmodern philosopher Richard Rorty recognises the logical implications of Darwinian naturalism, explaining that all man’s most esteemed beliefs and moral convictions arise by random variation in the brain and “are as much products of chance as are tectonic plates and mutated viruses.”[\[4\]](#)

Darwin likewise saw the absurd implications of his own theory for human rationality. He reflects,

With me, the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind, which have been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of *any value or at all trustworthy*.[\[5\]](#)

This exposes the *reductio ad absurdum*[\[6\]](#) of naturalistic man. If ideas and convictions in the brain do not correspond to the world objectively, but are randomly determined by chemistry and chance for the purpose of survival, then there is no reason why one ought to accept the hypothesis of Darwinian naturalism to have *any value or be at all trustworthy* in the first place. An Oxford professor of mathematics and philosopher of science, John Lennox, humorously illustrates this fatal flaw as Darwinian naturalism “shooting itself in the *head*.”

Not only is naturalism a self-refuting theory, it doesn’t cohere to the experience of everyday life. If the universe is impersonal and mechanistic, then humans, as a product of this, are not genuine personal agents with the capacity to choose, think and act intentionally. Nor do they inherently possess any more value or meaning than a mutated virus. Man is merely a collection of molecules functioning by deterministic natural laws. This means human behaviour is not the result of making conscious decisions; it is programmed entirely by involuntary processes in the brain. This, of course, leaves no room for free will and its corollary moral responsibility. Evolutionary biologist, William Provine, evangelizing university students, emboldens the continuation of the Darwinian revolution until it is fully realized that it means, “There is no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning in life, and no free will”.[\[7\]](#) In a naturalistic universe, where there is no transcendent moral good and evil, humans are biological machines bound by no law greater than survival. Moreover, death is extinction indiscriminately taking all people – the just and the unjust – into oblivion. If there is no absolute moral Being to whom mankind is accountable then those who perpetrate atrocities in this life and those who seek to do good all meet the same bleak fate, rendering our sense of right and wrong a mocking illusion and, as law professor Jerome Hall concludes, “justice is a mirage”.[\[8\]](#)

If naturalism were true, far from mankind attaining freedom, it becomes a victim enslaved by an indifferent universe of conflicting forces in the struggle for survival, annihilating moral absolutes and responsibility. Thus even leading cognitive scientists who espouse naturalistic determinism confess openly that they cannot accept it as a workable theory to live by.[\[9\]](#) In everyday life man is faced with the reality of personal agency, making moral decisions that have real consequences. One materialist, while affirming that Darwinian naturalism means that human consciousness and the sense of free will are only illusions, admits, despite this, that no one “can help acting like at some level really feeling that he or she is free.” Instead humans seem “constitutionally incapable of experiencing ourselves and [others] ... as robots”.[\[10\]](#) In practice, naturalism, and its consequent determinism, is a worldview that doesn’t cohere with human experience and cannot be lived out—it has an *inescapable conflict* with reality as God has made it.

Thus while our contemporary society believes that it has conveniently emptied the universe of God and his law, seemingly escaping any ultimate responsibility for how we live our lives, contemporary man, repeating history, has merely “made lies ... [a] refuge, and in falsehood ... taken shelter” (Isa 28:15). Contrary to the irrationality of naturalism’s impersonal universe of chance, where man is poised to impose his own arbitrary order onto the chaos, God’s reality – his meaning and order – imposes itself unceasingly and inescapably on human experience.

Man is without excuse.

The *Inescapable God* Series:Part 1: [An Inescapable Irrationality](#)Part 2: [An Inescapable Reality](#)Part 3: [An Inescapable Revelation](#)

Footnotes

[1] ‘Man’ throughout this article is used, not in the sense of male, but as a gender neutral term for the entire race of human beings—both male and female as the image of God as per Genesis 1:27: “God created man [ha·’a-dam] in his own image ... male [zakar] and female [u-ne-qê·bah] he created them”.

[2] Naturalism is the philosophical belief that only natural – as opposed to supernatural – laws and forces operate in the world. It is premised on a closed system of natural law whereby the supernatural, by definition, is ruled out as impossible. Everything is therefore to be explained by purely material properties and causes.

[3] S. C. Todd, “A View from Kansas on That Evolution Debate,” *Nature* 401 (September 30, 1999): 423.

[4] Richard Rorty, “Untruth and Consequences,” a review of *Killing Time* by Paul Feyerabend, in *The New Republic*, July 31, 1995, 32-36.

[5] In Francis Darwin, ed., *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, vol 1 (New York: D. Appleton, 1898), 285.

[6] Latin for "reduction to absurdity"; a logically fallacious argument because it inevitably leads to a ridiculous, absurd, or impractical conclusion.

[7] A debate between William Provine and Phillip Johnson at Stanford University, “Darwinism: Science or Naturalistic Philosophy?” April 30, 1994. Transcript available here: <http://arn.org/docs/orpages/or161/161main.htm>

[8] Nancy Pearcey, *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism and Other God Substitutes*, (CO: David C Cook, 2015), 148.

[9] Pearcey, *Finding Truth*, 149.

[10] Pearcey, *Finding Truth*, 150-151.

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