The Accidental New Atheist

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Abstract

Jedediah Purdy argues that (1) the age of the Anthropocene requires rejecting the idea of a singular logic of nature for guiding environmental ethics, and (2) seeking such a logic ("naturalism") is a legacy of monotheism. This essay accepts (1) but challenges (2) by demonstrating the history of anti-naturalism in Jewish and Christian theology and pointing out New Atheist attachment to naturalism, and it hopes to prompt Purdy into a more considered dialogue with theology.

Introduction

In *A Theory of Justice*, political philosopher John Rawls explained that he wasn't taking up the issue of environmental ethics because that would require something outside the scope of his project. It would require "a theory of the natural order and our place in it." In a word, "metaphysics."[1] Rawls seemed to be both acknowledging the secularity of justice as fairness and nodding toward a possible space for the sacred in the natural world, just not one that he was interested in dealing with. At least that is how Laurence Tribe saw it in "Ways Not to Think about Plastic Trees," which can be read as an attempt to make a start on that metaphysics and ended with this:

> Saint Francis of Assisi could embrace Brother Fire and Sister Water, but Western societies in the last third of this century may be unable to entertain seriously the notion that a mountain or a seashore has intrinsic needs and can make moral claims upon our designs.
>
> Still, we can try.[2]

[1] Purdy turns to this moment in Rawls in *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2015), 208, and ends *This Land Is Our Land: The Struggle for a New Commonwealth* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2019), 141, with it.

[2] Lawrence Tribe, "Ways Not to Think about Plastic Trees," *Yale Law Journal* 83, no. 7 (June

This was the 1970s, the era of the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Endangered Species Act in the US, when environmental legislation was embraced and pushed by a bi-partisan coalition led by the Nixon administration,[3] when a former Sierra Club director, William O. Douglas, could famously argue for nature's standing from his seat on the Supreme Court, and when a law professor as distinguished as Tribe could hope that modern science was on the verge of recognizing "something sacred in the natural."

Nicolas Howe looks back on this period with a tone of wistfulness in *Landscapes of the Secular.* He mourns the loss of a time when "legal thinkers participated in the high-minded discussions of religious ideology" and regrets the way, in the last few decades, "environmentalists sought to sweep their 'spiritual values' under the rug."[4] "Even Purdy, who argues for a return to ethical speculation, leaves religion out of his account."[5] *Even* Purdy, because Purdy also recognizes the centrality of this period, and of Tribe's essay, as a major turning point in the history of environmental law, the point when "environmental ethics and law stood briefly back to back and strode rapidly in opposite directions."[6] The lawyers became cost-benefit analysis technocrats while the philosophers (and theologians) spun elaborate "New Stories" of cosmological unity that "proved dramatically unhelpful in solving practical problems."[7] Purdy, as much as Howe, understands environmental law's turn to an exclusive reliance on one particular method and theory of ethics, utilitarian cost-benefit analysis, as a loss.

Howe is both right and wrong here. He is right that at least in "Our Place in the World," the essay he is citing, Purdy doesn't assume as Tribe did that metaphysics had to be religiously or spiritually inflected.[8] And he is definitely right that Purdy thinks we will do well to leave religion out of it.

1974): 1345-46.

[3] See Purdy, *This Land Is Our Land*, 107.

[4] Nicolas Howe, *Landscapes of the Secular: Law, Religion, and American Sacred Space* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2016), 121.

[5] Ibid., 147.

[6] Jedediah Purdy, "Our Place in the World," *Duke Law Journal* 62, no. 4 (January 2014): 870.

[7] Ibid., 861.

[8] Though he does note the frequent environmentalist claim that "Ecology…had better become something like a religion."—"Our Place in the World," 869.

But it isn't just that Purdy passively neglects religion. He actively rejects it, at least in its monotheist versions, as a foundational problem. He banishes it from the field of environmental ethics. This creates some confusion for me, because I admire his work and read him as a kindred spirit. Either there is something I have failed to understand about his work or something he has failed to understand about theology. While the chances are good that it is the former, in what follows I try to make the case for the latter.

Naturalism and Monotheism

The basic argument of *After Nature*, as well as many of Purdy's essays over the last decade, can be summarized in three parts. First, we have entered the age of the Anthropocene, in which there is no longer any aspect of nature that has not been changed by human action and when, therefore, we are forced to recognize the collapse of the old nature/culture divide and that "discussions about 'nature' have always been less a description of the natural world than means for humans to talk to and about other humans."[9] Second, this means we will need to give up on "naturalism," the idea that there is a singular logic of nature that could provide moral guidance about how we should live with each other or with it.[10] Third, in the absence of such naturalism, answers to

[9] Jedediah Purdy, "Coming into the Anthropocene," *Harvard Law Review* 129, no. 6 (April 2016): 1637.

[10] "Naturalism" as I use it in this essay is shorthand for this specific claim about the relationship of nature and ethics. This is potentially confusing, because naturalism is more commonly used in philosophy as a synonym for physicalism or materialism and argues that "the image of the world provided by the natural sciences is all the world there is." To avoid confusion, I will call this latter philosophical use *physicalism*. The challenge for physicalism is how it can adequately account for things with no counterparts in the natural sciences—meanings, reasons, values—and what epistemic status it can accord to the humanities.

Philosophers' responses to this problem can be divided into positivist and pragmatist physicalisms. Positivists claim that the natural sciences provide the only genuine source of knowledge and that all other disciplines "are either illegitimate or are reducible in principle to scientific knowledge or understanding." (The two quotations are from Mario de Caro and David Macarthur's introduction to their *Naturalism and Normativity* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2010).) This reductionism forces positivists to be dogmatically anti-religion and to be naturalists in Purdy's sense because they think morality is reducible in just this way.

Pragmatists find positivists to be unnecessarily fundamentalist and reductionist. Some, like John McDowell and Alice Crary, contend that objective and subjective are not in a zero-sum relationship. Others argue that the results of science are largely irrelevant to morality

those questions must now be political, and, in histories like the one Purdy tells, we can see that they always have been so. "The Long Environmental Justice Movement," the closing chapter of *This Land Is Our Land,* shows what this politics might look like when it is thoroughly democratic.

The critique of naturalism is in part simply the logical conclusion of the Anthropocene condition. "If human action is part of what creates the world, how can the character of the world guide human action?"[11] But Purdy doesn't say the Anthropocene creates this condition. He says it ought to force the recognition that talk about nature has *always* been tangled up with human projects and imagination. Anecdotal evidence is simply the variety of human practices for which nature has been employed as authority. At one extreme, the Athenians cite nature as authority for their conquest of Melos and social Darwinians cite evolution to justify unbridled capitalism. At the other, Peter Kropotkin and contemporary environmentalists claim that mutuality and cooperation are the deep truths of nature that should guide any social philosophy. So with hierarchy and egalitarianism; heteronormativity and queerness; slavery and freedom.

If we leave it at this, it sounds like Howe is right. Religion is left out. To claim, as I did, that religion is banished in Purdy is to add that for Purdy naturalism is a product of religion or, at least, of monotheism. Here is how he put it in a 2013 lecture:

> The idea of nature as a whole having a point of view or a meaning or a purpose that speaks in any direct way, certainly in any complete way, to the question of how we ought to live with respect to one another or even what we ought to do with nature is an idea that is only available if you are a monotheist. It's only available if you are committed to the thought that the world is the product of a mind and a mind that in some form, in some

and so create space for other discourses (sometimes including theology). See Robert Pippin's response to McDowell, "Leaving Nature Behind: Two Cheers for 'Subjectivism,'" in Nicholas Smith, ed., *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World* (London: Routledge, 2005), 58-75, and his "Natural and Normative," *Daedalus* (Summer 2009), 35-43. See also Nicholas Lash's remarks on "Christian Materialism" in *A Matter of Hope: A Theologian Reflects on the Thought of Karl Marx* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 135-52.

[11] Purdy, "Coming into the Anthropocene," 1638.

way, we can understand as speaking the questions we have.[12]

Note what Purdy is *not* saying. He is not content simply to point to the flexible and contrary uses of nature and allow that alone to generate skepticism about naturalism. Nor is he making the now commonplace argument that Christianity has a harmful understanding of nature. He is not saying that, for example, the Genesis 1 command to "subdue and have dominion" or Christianity's frequent tendency to embrace a hierarchical dualism of spirit and matter, means that Christianity's view of nature is intrinsically bad for environmentalists. As a historian, he is aware that any religion is a rich and complex thing and can contain, and has contained, multiple understandings of nature.

Purdy's question is prior to the question, What is the view of Christianity or religion toward the natural world?

> The question I want to address concerns a distinction between all religious views of the natural world and an alternative. The alternative is the idea that the very thought there is such a thing as a logic of nature, a purpose to nature, an order of nature that can teach us something about how we ought to live together and how we ought to treat the natural world is mistaken and misleading.

In the Utah lecture he quickly adds, "I'm willing to be talked out of that. . . . I look forward to being challenged on that point." So, is he right?

I lack the capacity to evaluate the entirety of the 2500-year story Purdy elaborates of, on one hand, a tradition of monotheist naturalism stretching from Plato to Emerson to the Sierra Club and, on the other, a counter-tradition of atheist anti-naturalism stretching from Epicurus through Hobbes and on

[12] "Religion, Faith, and the Environment," 18th Annual Symposium, University of Utah, August 2, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLgsdUaOSUc. This claim gets worked out briefly in *This Land Is Our Land*, 69-72, in more detail in *After Nature*, and extensively in the unpublished essay, "The Case Against Nature." While he doesn't cite any sources for this claim, William Cronon made it before him, footnoting Raymond Williams, but even in Williams it remains an assertion, not an argument. See Cronon, "Introduction: In Search of Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Towards Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), 35 and Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 222.

to John Stuart Mill.[13] But I do think the story is more complicated and far more interesting than Purdy is aware. First, Purdy could easily expand his anti-naturalist counter-tradition to include, at its beginning, the Hebrew Bible and, at its end, Karl Barth. Second, he could expand his naturalist tradition to include a great many atheist physicalists. Both points would make his story much more interesting (not to mention accurate), but would require that he give up his convictions about monotheism and be clearer about what kind of physicalist he is. The point is not to mount a defense of monotheism but to add some biodiversity to Purdy's historiography—and to invite him to join in a far more interesting 21st-century conversation about theology than the one he is currently in.

The Accidental Barthian

It is certainly true that eco-theology's overriding agenda since Lynn White has been to elaborate a version of naturalism. Most of that work has been dedicated to the appropriation of ecology as foundational to a communal, cooperative environmental ethics.[14] In this work ecology names a complex but discernible system of harmonious relationships among inextricably interdependent creatures. Environmental degradation happens when humans fail to recognize that they too are just another part of that system. When humans choose anthropocentrism over biocentrism, they choose (unnatural) individualism and competition over (natural) community and cooperation. Essential to this argument is that "the ecological ethic that

[13] Purdy, "The Case Against Nature." It remains unclear to me how Hobbes can be understood as not having a unitary account of nature, expressed as "red in tooth and claw." And Emerson can only be included here if one stops with his first work, *Nature*. Stanley Cavell was right to say that "To begin with *Nature* is apt to grant Emerson a relation to philosophy as essentially (though doubtless not wholly) neo-Platonic…. I am at present among those who find *Nature* … to not yet constitute the Emersonian philosophical voice, but to be the place from which, in the several following years, that voice departs."—Stanley Cavell, *This New Yet Unapproachable America* (Albuquerque, NM: Living Batch Press, 1989), 79.

[14] See Lisa H. Sideris, *Environmental Ethics, Ecological Theology, and Natural Selection* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2003), 3: "There is a tendency, especially among some Christian environmentalists, to invoke a model of nature as a harmonious, interconnected, and interdependent community…. Many environmentalists argue that nature presents us with a model and this model has normative import for all our relationships…." Her examples include Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sallie McFague, Michael Northcott, and John Cobb.

corresponds with this model is understood to be consistent in important ways with Christianity's ethic of love and care for the neighbor—particularly the neighbor who is suffering, oppressed, and in need, as our 'natural' neighbors appear to be."[15] A conventional, if very general, conception of Christian ethics, in other words, is shown to be part of the order of nature.

So, while Purdy's modern examples are largely 17th-century English natural theologians, the last fifty years of eco-theology emphatically reinforce his claim. Yet there remain good reasons to be hesitant. Just as the richness and complexity of a religious tradition means it will have competing naturalisms, so it will also have competing accounts of whether there ought to be any at all. Purdy is well aware of the former but less so of the latter. Instead of saying that Christianity or monotheism is committed to naturalism, it is historically more accurate to say that it is embedded in a millennia-long argument about the status of naturalism.

Christine Hayes traces this back to the confrontation between competing Hebrew and Greek conceptions of divine law.[16] Ancient Greco-Roman accounts of divine law identified it with natural law. The divine law was rooted in the order of the cosmos and, as such, was very much what Purdy is calling an "order of nature."[17] But in the Old Testament, divine law was revealed law. Its authority came from the will of the legislator, not the order of creation, and in the cases when the gap between the divine law and the order of creation is collapsed, it is only because something about the order of creation has been revealed not by human reason but by divine revelation.[18] It is worth pointing out that Jerusalem, and hence both the Israelite monarchy and Temple cult, are conspicuously absent from Genesis 1 and 2. That is, these origin myths make no attempt to do what Purdy's natural theologians do, namely tie the monarchy or the religion into the nature of things.

Hayes's point is not to assert and maintain a Hebraic/Hellenist dualism on these grounds. For her, this dualism is only the beginning. She thinks it is still with us, present in both Judaism and Christianity (often caricatured

[15] Sideris, *Environmental Ethics*, 3.

[16] Christine Hayes, *What's Divine about Divine Law?: Early Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2015).

[17] Purdy's description of natural law in Plato and Cicero is consistent with Hayes's description. See Purdy, "The Case Against Nature," 1-2.

[18] See Ben C. Ollenburger, "*Isaiah's* Creation Theology," *Ex Auditu* 3 (1987): 54-71.

as Catholic Thomists versus Protestant Barthians), and in modern legal theory.[19] But the real burden of her book is a history of how this dualism was variously reinforced and challenged, undermined and reframed, already in competing strands of the OT and Second Temple literature and later in both Paul and the Talmud. As such, it doesn't just challenge Purdy's account of the relationship between monotheism and naturalism. Her careful tracing of the twists and turns of her dualism also models a way of writing a grand narrative that stands in instructive contrast to the rigidity of Purdy's storytelling.

Karl Barth was arguably the greatest of 20th-century theologians and arguably most famous, or infamous, for the viciousness of his attack on natural theology.[20] That attack first took the form of a pamphlet written in response to his old friend, Emil Brunner, just a few months after he drafted the Barmen Declaration (1934). Article 1 of Barmen said, "We reject the false doctrine that the Church could and should recognize as a source of its proclamation, beyond and besides this one Word of God, yet other events, powers, historic figures and truths as God's revelation."[21] Here those rejected sources are Hitler and National Socialism. In the reply to Brunner, the rejected source was nature. For Barth they amounted to the same thing and came together in a "German nature- and history myth" of blood and soil. The same identification remains when Barth rejects Brunner and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "orders of creation" (work, family, gender, state, nation, tribe) because they grant these orders knowability and autonomy outside the revelation in Christ and therefore produce not an ethic of radical discipleship but "North German patriarchalism"[22] instead.

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[19] Hayes says her book is written in "the firm conviction that the Western conversation about the nature of law and law's claims upon us has been unable or unwilling to escape the consequential paradigms generated by that confrontation [between the radically diverse conceptions of divine law in ancient Israel and ancient Greece]."—*What's Divine about Divine Law,* 1.

[20] Willis Jenkins is the best guide to questions of Barth's eco-theology. See his *Ecologies of Grace* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 153-87, and "Karl Barth and Environmental Theology," in Paul Jones and Paul Nimmo, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Karl Barth* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2019), 594-608.

[21] See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1, trans. T.H.L. Parker, et al. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), 172-78 for his account of the relationship between natural theology, Barmen, and the rise of Hitler.

[22] *Church Dogmatics* III/4, trans. A.T. Mackay, et al. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 22.

We see a striking convergence between Barth and Purdy both in their contempt for naturalism and in their reasons for it, primarily its use to undergird political formations but also in the way it produces fear.[23] While I admire Barth, my intention is not to defend his position on natural theology[24] but to raise the possibility of a thoroughly monotheist anti-naturalism.

The Accidental New Atheist

I came to Purdy late, discovering him not in his first and most famous book, *For Common Things*, but in the pages of *N+1*, where in 2014 he published an extraordinary essay called "The Accidental Neoliberal." That piece, as I read it, was a confession for an entire generation's, my generation's, failure of political imagination as well as a record of his penance.[25] Later, I came to know him as an interpreter of the November 2016 US elections. Purdy seemed to me then and now the surest guide to understanding the significance of both Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump.[26] Coming across those essays over the course of 2016 enabled me to clear my head by elaborating arguments that I knew to be true but was having trouble articulating: that the rise of Trump didn't teach us something about an excess of democracy but about its lack, and that hopefulness about the possibility of a socialist future for the

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Barth's reliance on scripture in contrast to nature did not prevent him from reproducing his own egregious forms of "North German patriarchalism," especially when it came to gender. Scripture, as much as nature, needs its own Anthropocene insight. Also, I do not endorse the way Barth identifies Brunner (or Schleiermacher) with National Socialism.

[23] For Purdy's remarks on fear, nature, and God, see *This Land Is Our Land*, 69-72. For Barth's, see Church *Dogmatics* III/1, trans. J. W. Edwards, et al. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), 169.

[24] Barth's position on natural theology mellowed as he grew older, as evidenced by the section on "Secular Parables of the Truth" in *Dogmatics* IV/3 and by his late letter to a friend of Brunner: "If I were more active after my two-year illness I would take the next train to press Emil Brunner's hand again. If he is still alive and it is possible, tell him I commend him to our God. And tell him the time when I thought I should say No to him is long since past, and we all live only by the fact that a great and merciful God speaks his gracious Yes to all of us." Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., *Karl Barth: Letters* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981).

[25] Jedediah Purdy, *N+1* 19 (Spring 2014), 15-23.

[26] Jedediah Purdy, "Against the Political Grown-Up," *Dissent*, February 6, 2016; "A World to Make: Eleven Theses for the Bernie Sanders Generation," *Dissent*, April 21, 2016; "What Trump's Rise Means for Democracy," *Dissent,* May 4, 2016; "America's New Opposition," *The New Republic*, February 1, 2017; "What I Had Lost Was a Country," *N+1* December 20, 2016, https://nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/what-i-had-lost-was-a-country/.

US can come because of, not in spite of, a darkly pessimistic understanding of its present. So I think of Purdy first and foremost not as a scholar and historian of environmental law but as a theorist of democracy. I could call him prophetic, but in those days I treated him as more like a pastor. Those essays functioned for me as sorely needed sermonic exhortations to keep the faith, to resist the temptation, common in November 2016, to believe that Trump meant liberalism, not democracy, was the best the resistance could hope for.

I came to *After Nature* while preparing for an upper-level seminar in eco-theology in the Spring semester of 2017, and found in it a model of how to treat competing environmentalisms with generosity and a warning about how any position was prone to use nature in order to skirt the necessity of the democratic negotiation of claims about nature and to displace our responsibility for our convictions onto nature. This latter claim still seems to me to be the beating heart of Purdy's work. But, perhaps because I was reading it in the wake of November 2016, I missed how that claim is one piece of a wider argument that is as much anti-naturalist as it is pro-democracy.

Let me back up a couple of steps. Purdy appears to have four distinct, if interrelated, problems with naturalism. The first is the Anthropocene argument. Because we have entered an age when every corner of nature has been transformed by human activity, it doesn't make much sense to turn to nature as an independent guide to human activity. Purdy calls this the Anthropocene Condition. The second is what I will call the postmodernist argument, as advanced in William Cronon's *Uncommon Ground*.[27] There has never been, not even before the Anthropocene, a natural nature, only "cultural constructions that reflect human judgments, human values, human choices."[28] Sometimes Purdy calls this the Anthropocene Insight. The third is the anti-reductionist argument, which doesn't require the collapse of the nature/culture distinction in the same way as the other two. Instead, the problem is that naturalism reduces the astonishing variety and complexity of nature to a singular over-arching principle. It manufactures unity out of diversity. Fourth is the democratic argument:

[27] Especially in Cronon's "Introduction: In Search of Nature," and "The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature."
[28] Cronon, *Uncommon Ground*, 34.

> Each form of American environmental imagination has called on the natural world to underwrite, to "naturalize," one version of politics while excluding others from the debate…. Each version has evaded politics, tried to shut down imagination and mobilization, by claiming that certain collective questions must be decided by nature, not by human judgment.[29]

I mostly agree with these arguments. My affection for Purdy and my abiding debt to *After Nature* and *This Land Is Our Land* is precisely because of my agreement. What confuses me is that we seem to agree for opposing reasons. While Purdy associates these arguments with a challenge to naturalism and with a philosophical tradition of monotheism, I associate them with a challenge to positivism, a philosophical tradition that claims the only truths are scientific truths and is therefore committed to caging not just theology but the humanities in general on one side of a fact/value dichotomy made possible by a fundamental misconstrual of mind and world.[30] Importantly, it is acutely vulnerable to the latter three of these criticisms. It cannot accept that there are no natural natures, is inclined toward reductionism, and wishes to evade politics in exactly the way Purdy decries.

Take, for example, "Consilience." E.O. Wilson's dream of ending the fragmentation of the disciplines in a unified theory of knowledge grounded in evolutionary biology is naturalism on steroids. Sam Harris's *The Moral Landscape* presents a logic of nature that is similarly totalitarian in scope and ambition. Purdy thinks that "The idea that nature is morally instructive in any straightforward way is nearly impossible to maintain unless one starts by assuming that the world was created by a benign and omnipotent God with unified moral purpose." But Harris subtitles his book "How Science Can *Determine* Human Values" (my italics) and finds utilitarianism to be written into the logic of nature. Steven Pinker, too, ends his *Enlightenment*

[29] Purdy, *After Nature*, 31. Arguments about proper behavior in the coronavirus pandemic illustrate this evasion. We have been unable to say both that social distancing and masks are necessary and that such a decision is not simply scientific but political. Like climate change, this conflict has been painted as one between those willing to listen to the scientists and those turning it into a political issue, instead of competing political judgments.

[30] See n. 10.

Now with an attempt to naturalize utilitarianism.[31]

This desire for naturalization is not confined to these sorts of vulgar physicalists. Even Romand Coles, who could never be confused with Harris or Pinker, has found himself tempted to naturalize democracy. Early in his latest book, Coles voices a worry shared by many of us that in face of the enormous powers wielded in defense of inequality, domination, and exclusion, we have to ask "does this mean that radical and receptive democracy is merely an illusion," an ideological smokescreen concealing our entanglement in systems of power in which freedom is no longer a possibility? Are we "not trapped in ways that are nearly ontological?" In order to respond in the negative, Coles turns to neuroscience, announcing that "these challenges need not lead us to despair. Instead, I venture here that recent work on mirror neurons helps illuminate the character of our capacities for a politics of resonant receptivity in ways that suggest indispensable possibilities for ethical and strategic modes for organizing a powerful radical democratic movement." [32]

My point is not to criticize Coles's turn to neuroscience, nor to pile up more counter-examples to Purdy's dualism. Instead, it is to suggest that perhaps Purdy is right that there is some kind of ur-source for naturalism, even if he is wrong that it is monotheism. Purdy suggests one possibility: the temptation to think that certain questions must be decided by something other than human judgment. That temptation, often born of despair and fear, can overcome anyone, not just monotheists, and it can be filled by science just as easily as God. Despite his curious inability to recognize that, Purdy remains among the best guides we have for courage in facing such fear and hope in resisting such despair.

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[31] Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (New York: Penguin, 2019), 416-19. It is no accident that both Harris and Pinker settle on utilitarianism. Purdy observes that "questions that masquerade as technical are really ethical and political" (*After Nature*, 264). Utilitarianism transforms moral questions into technical questions.

[32] Romand Coles, *Visionary Pragmatism: Radical and Ecological Democracy in Neoliberal Times* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2016), 35, 36.