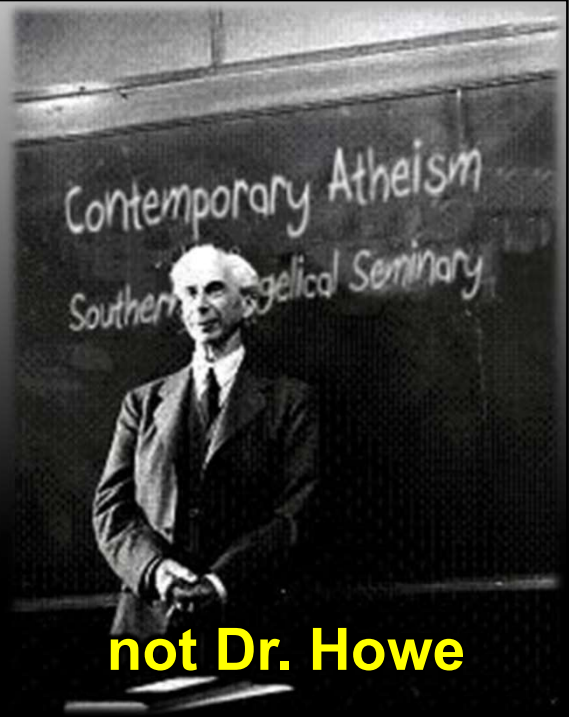


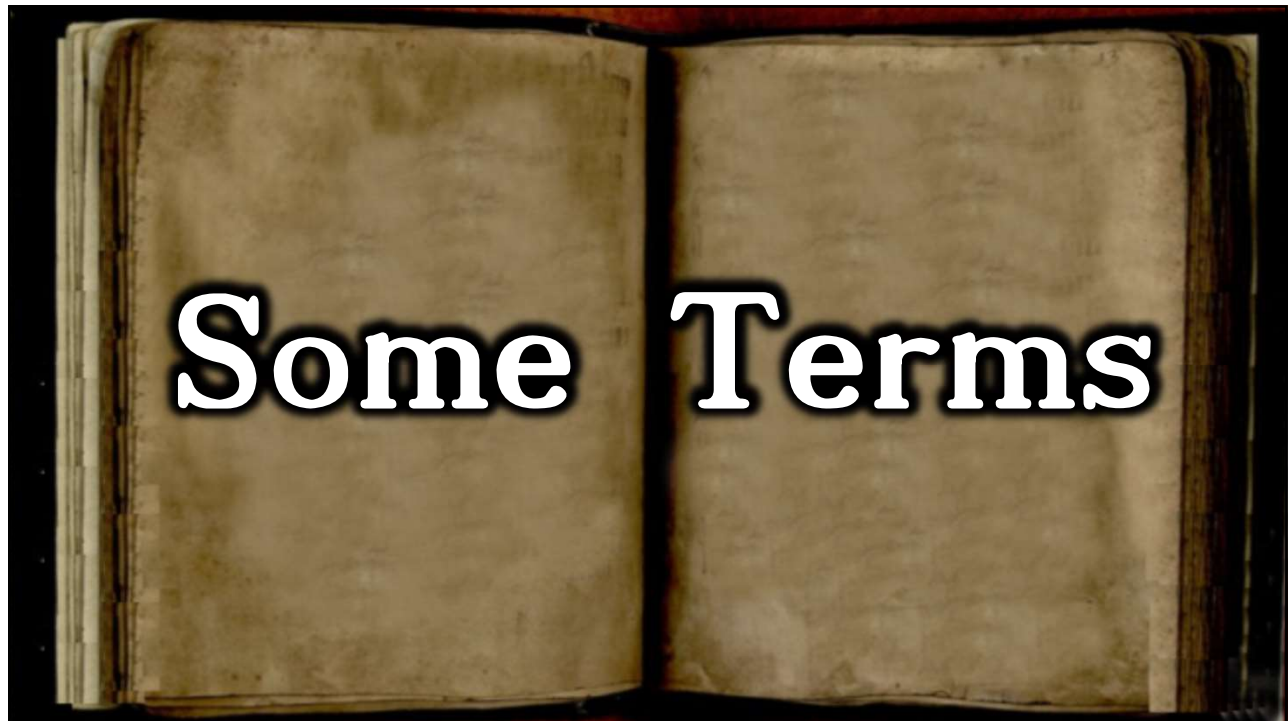
Contemporary Atheism

Dr. Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

Provost
Norman L. Geisler Chair of Christian Apologetics
Professor of Philosophy and Apologetics
Southern Evangelical Seminary



not Dr. Howe



Some Terms

Theism

- ✓ from the Greek word θεός (*theos*) meaning 'God'
- ✓ the world view that affirms the existence of God



Theism

the view that says:
"God exists."



Theism

∞ monotheism ∞

only one God

∞ polytheism ∞

many gods

∞ pantheism ∞

all is god

∞ panentheism ∞

all is in god



Agnosticism

- ✓ from the Greek word γνῶσις (*gnosis*) meaning 'knowledge'
- ✓ with the negation α (*a*) meaning 'not' or 'no'
- ✓ the suspension of judgment on the question of God's existence



Agnosticism

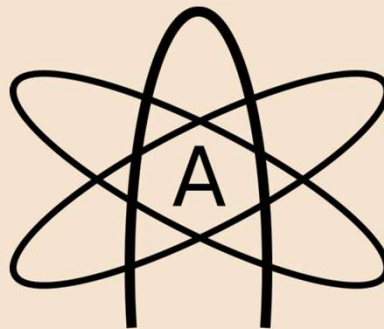
the view that says:

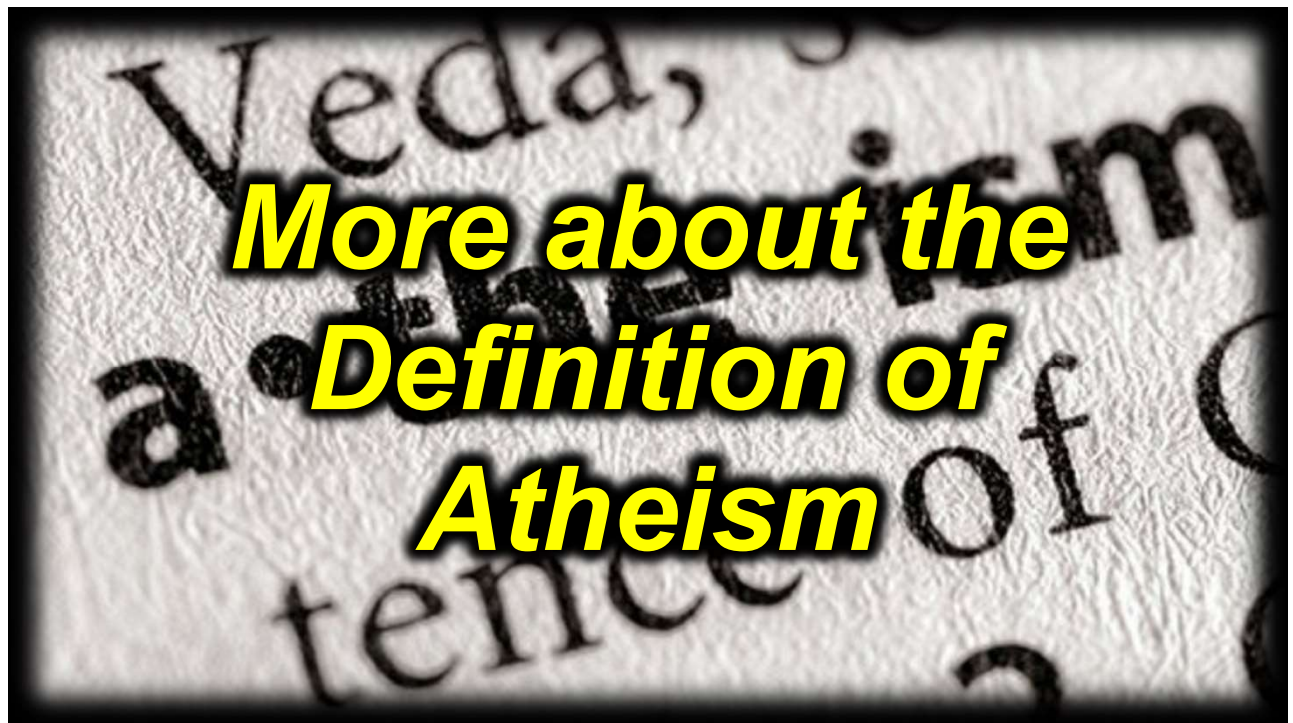
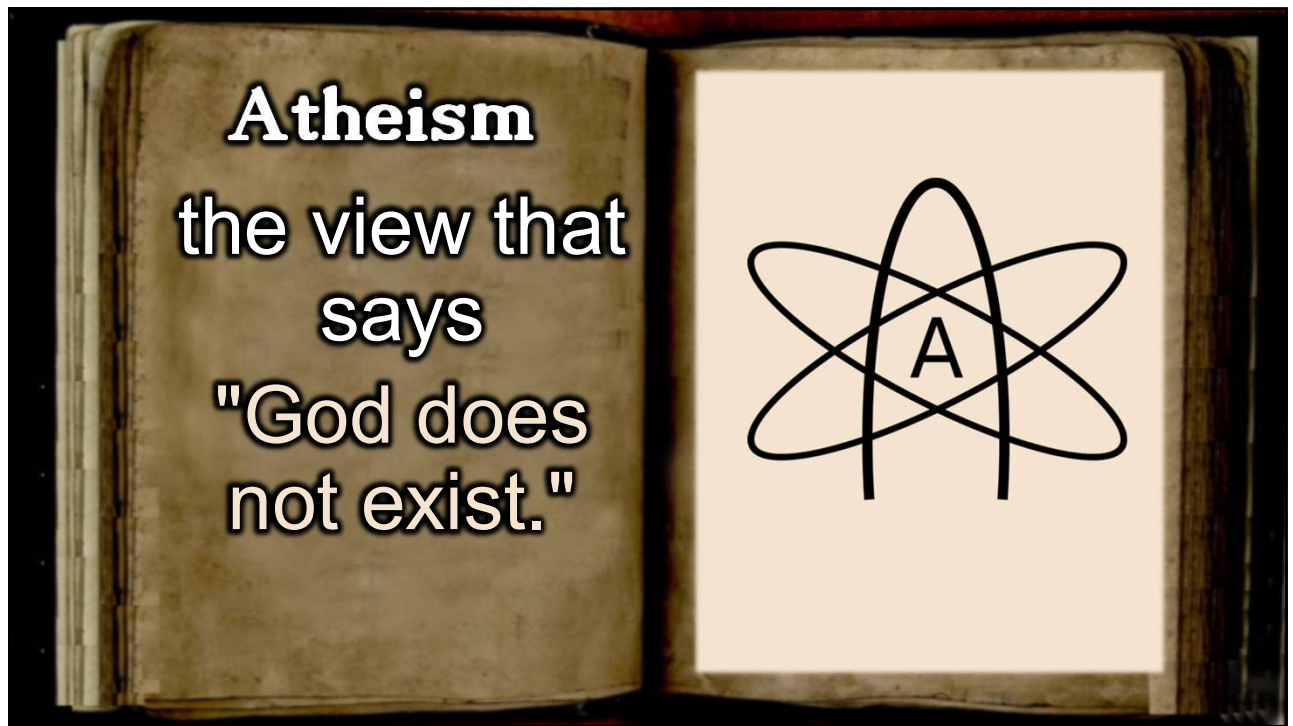
"I don't know whether God exists."

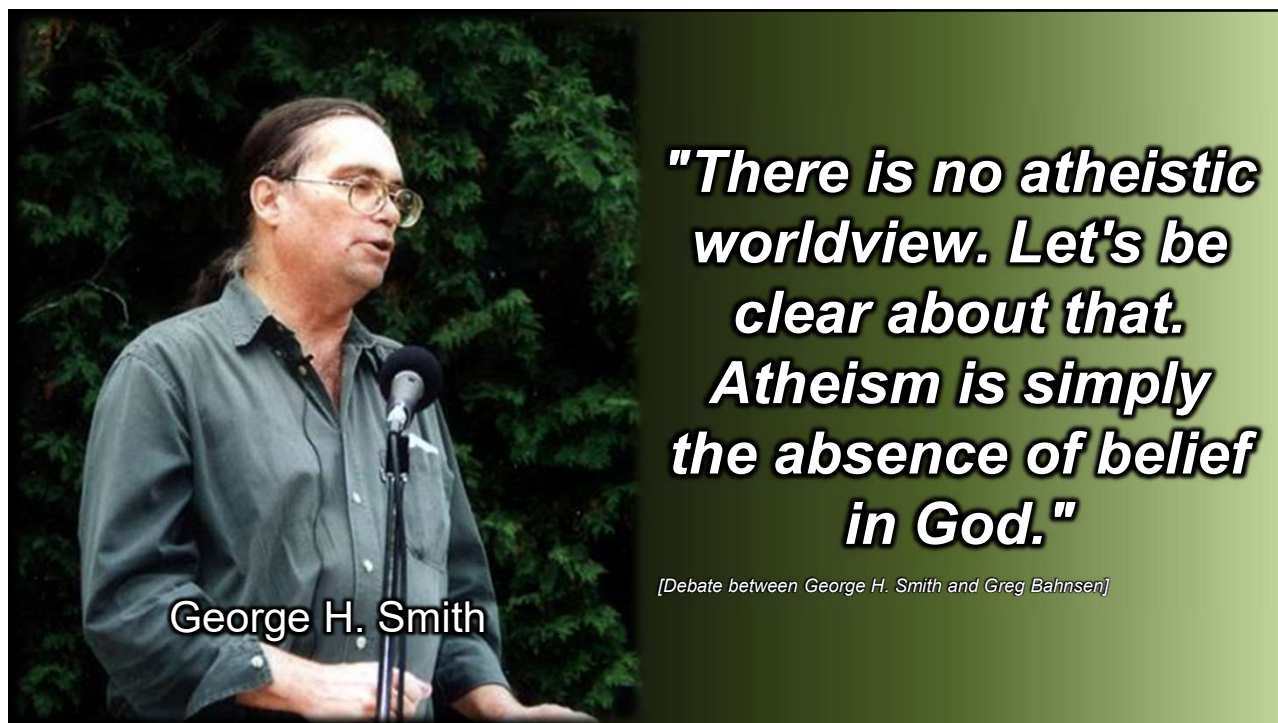


Atheism

- ✓ from the Greek word θεός (*theos*) meaning 'God'
- ✓ with the negation α (*a*) meaning 'not' or 'no'
- ✓ the worldview that denies the existence of God









George H. Smith

ATHEISM

THE CASE AGAINST GOD

BY GEORGE H. SMITH

The Skeptic's Bookshelf



George H. Smith

"As used throughout this book, 'theism' signifies the belief in any god or number of gods. The prefix 'a' means 'without,' so the term 'a-theism' literally means 'without theism,' or without belief in a god or gods."

[George H. Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1989), 7]

Granted that the suffix "ism" constitutes a belief system, Smith still illicitly has the negation "a" negating "belief" rather than negating "God."

Thus, rather than
"no belief in a God"
it should be
"a belief in no God."

"As used throughout this book, 'theism' signifies the belief in any god or number of gods. The prefix 'a' means 'without,' so the term 'a-theism' literally means 'without theism,' or without belief in a god or gods."

[George H. Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1989), 7]



"Atheism, in its basic form, is not a belief: it is the absence of belief. An atheist is not primarily a person who believes that a god does not exist; rather, he does not believe in the existence of God."

[George H. Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1989), 7]



George H. Smith

"From the mere fact that a person is an atheist, one cannot infer that this person subscribes to any particular positive belief"

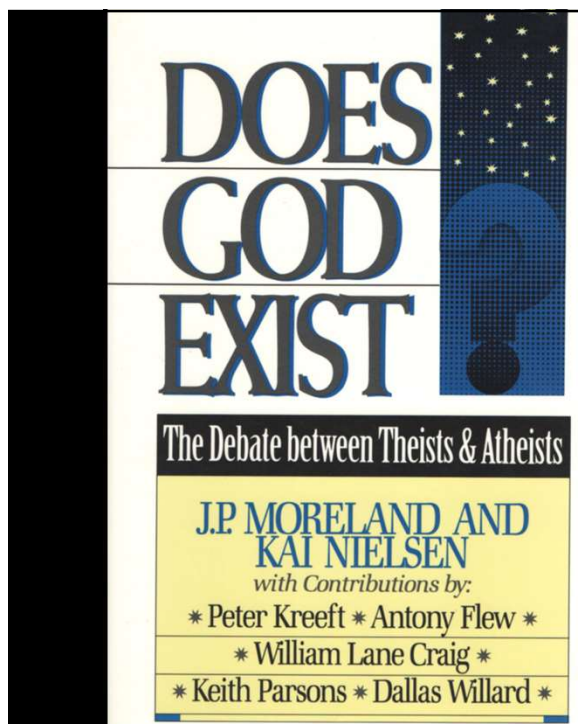
[George H. Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1989), 21]

"From the mere fact that a person is an atheist, one cannot infer that this person subscribes to any particular positive belief"

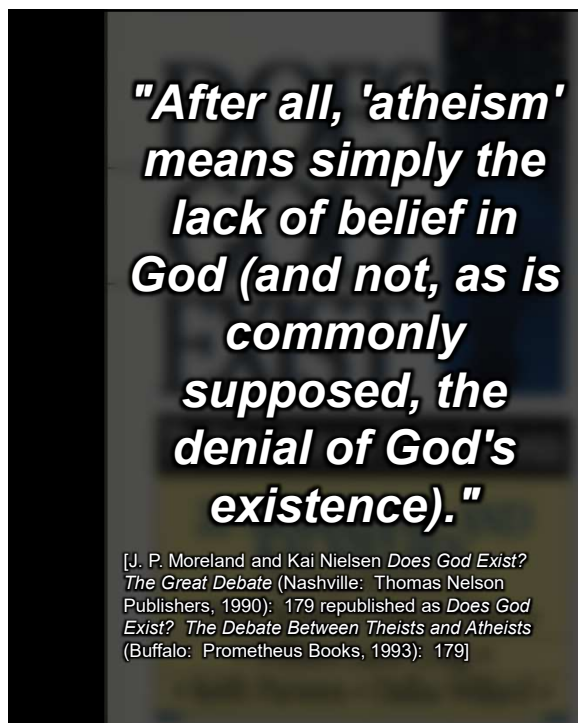
[Smith, *Atheism*, 21, cf. p. 27]

"If atheism is correct,

- *man is alone*
- *there is no god*
- *for knowledge, man must think for himself*
- *for success, man must work*
- *for happiness, man must strive to achieve it*
- *all of these are sole responsibility of man*



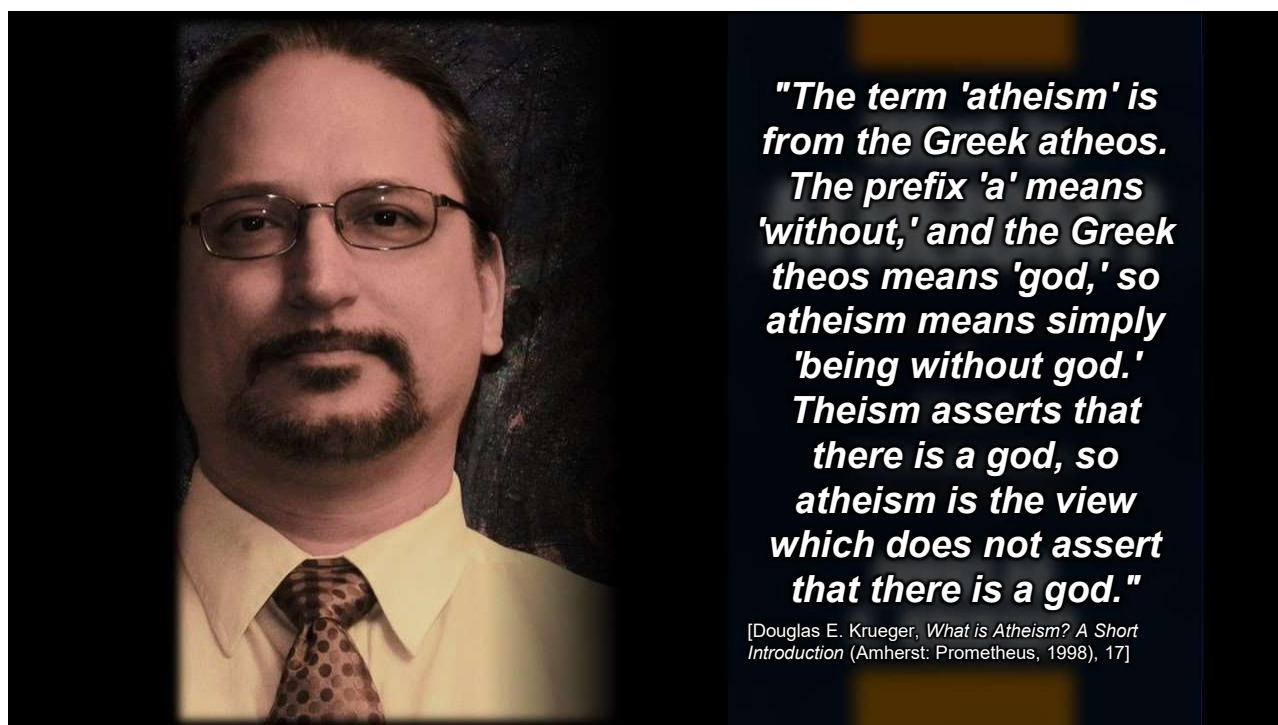
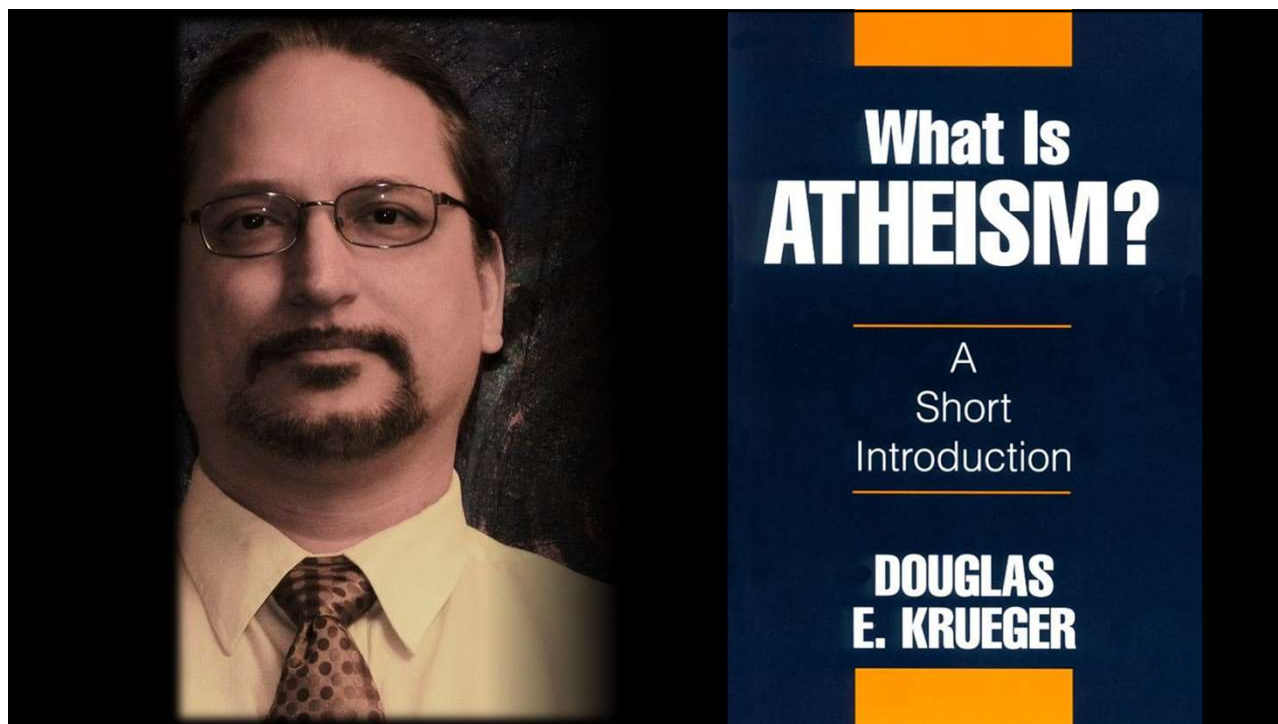
Keith Parsons



[J. P. Moreland and Kai Nielsen *Does God Exist? The Great Debate* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990): 179 republished as *Does God Exist? The Debate Between Theists and Atheists* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1993): 179]



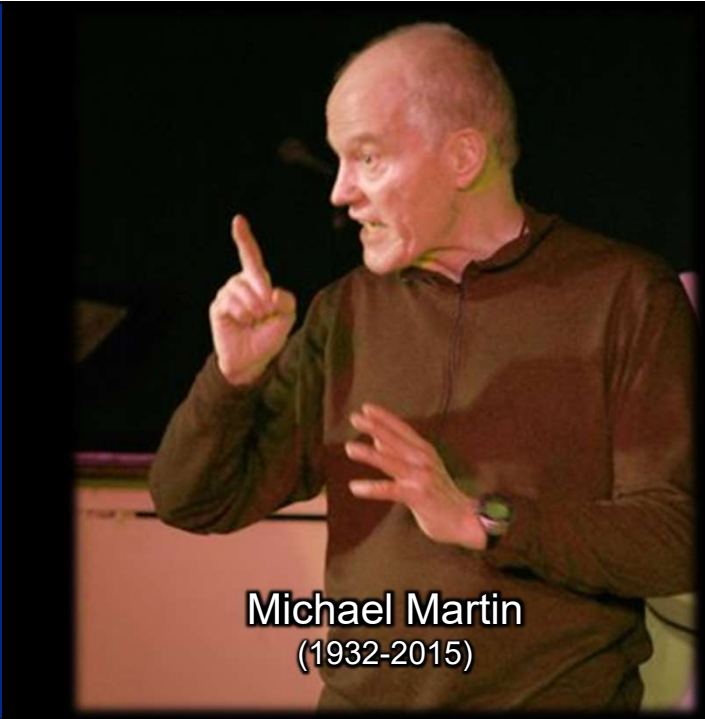
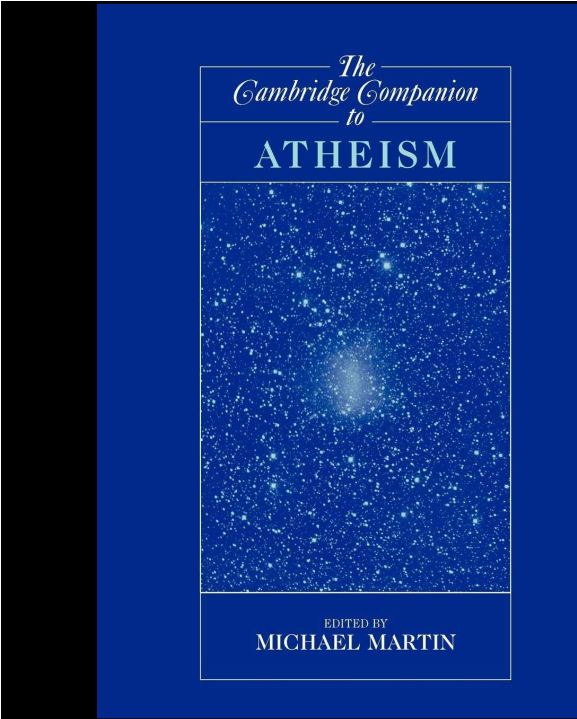
Keith Parsons



Notice that Krueger moves from the alpha negating 'god' (which would mean 'without god' or 'not-god') to the alpha negating the **assertion** (which means the absence of the assertion of god instead of the absence of god).

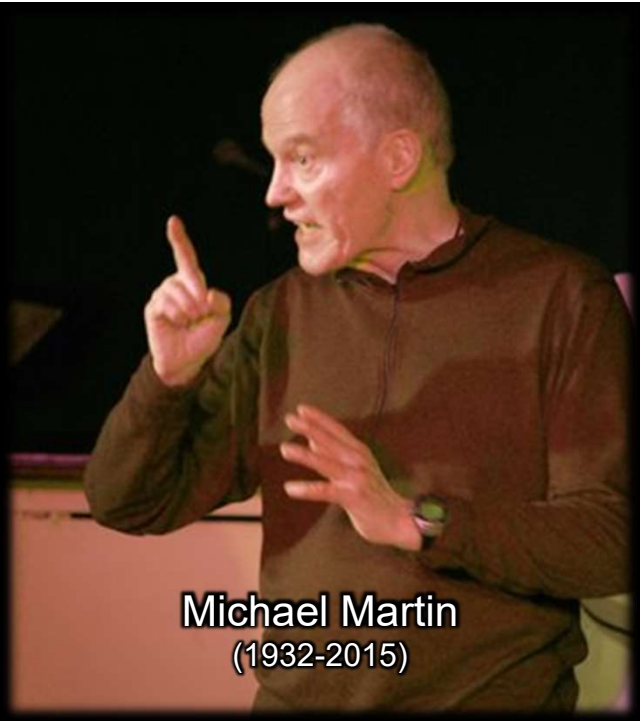
"The term 'atheism' is from the Greek atheos. The prefix 'a' means 'without,' and the Greek theos means 'god,' so atheism means simply 'being without god.' Theism asserts that there is a god, so atheism is the view **which does not assert that there is a god.**"

[Douglas E. Krueger, *What is Atheism? A Short Introduction* (Amherst: Prometheus, 1998), 17]



"If you look up 'atheism' in a dictionary, you will find it defined as the belief that there is no God. Certainly, many people understand 'atheism' in this way. Yet this is not what the term means if one considers it from the point of view of its Greek roots. In Greek 'a' means 'without' or 'not' and 'theos' 'god.' From this stand point, an atheist is someone without a belief in God; he or she need not be someone who believes that God does not exist."

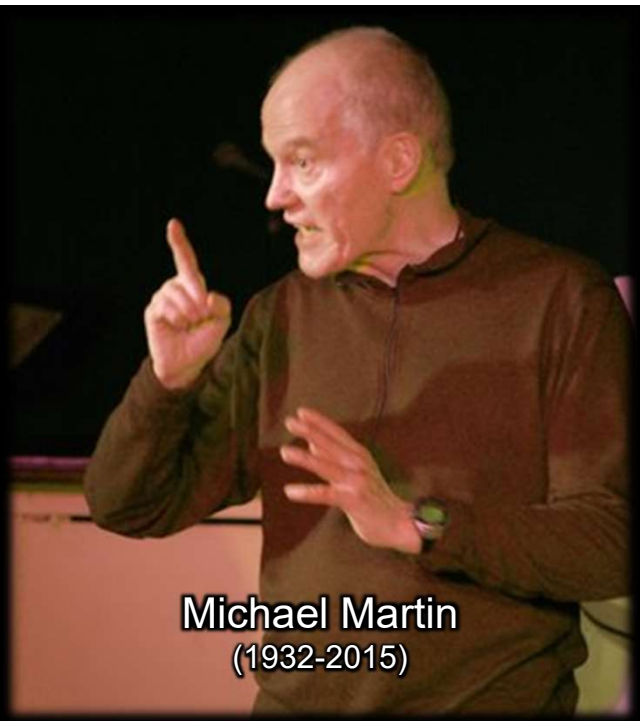
[n.a., "General Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1]



Michael Martin
(1932-2015)

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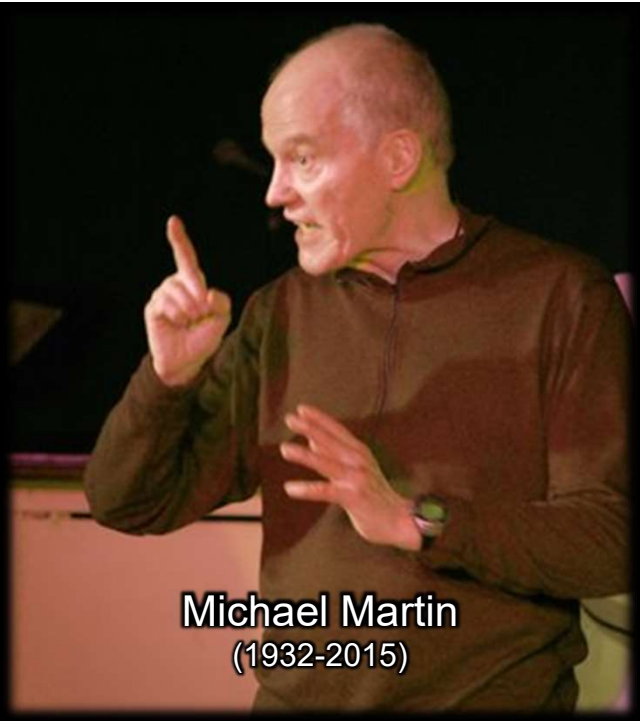
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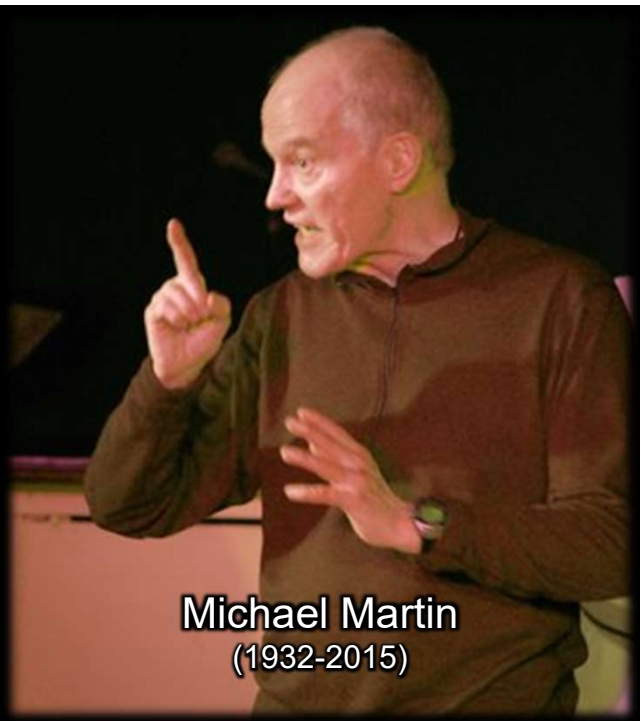
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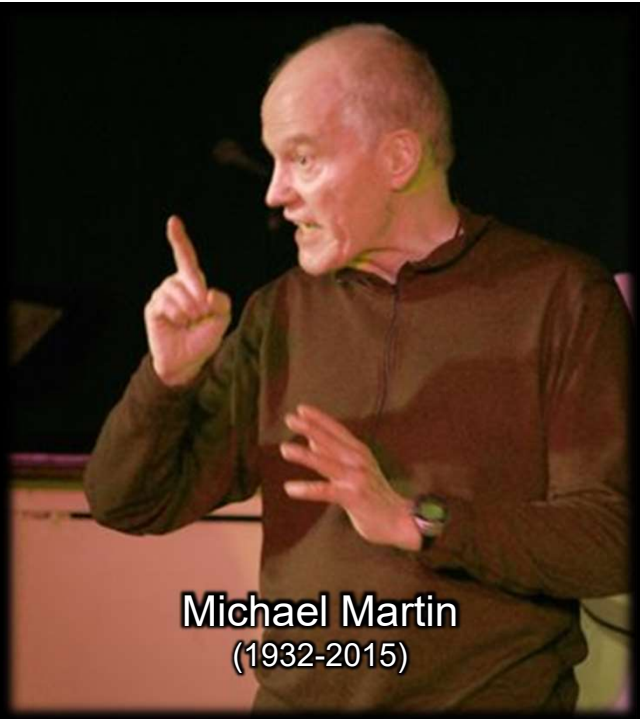
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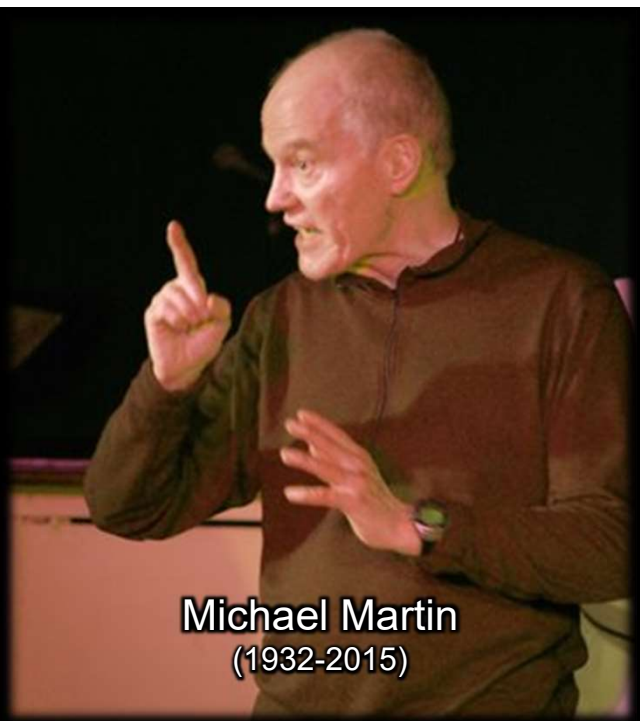
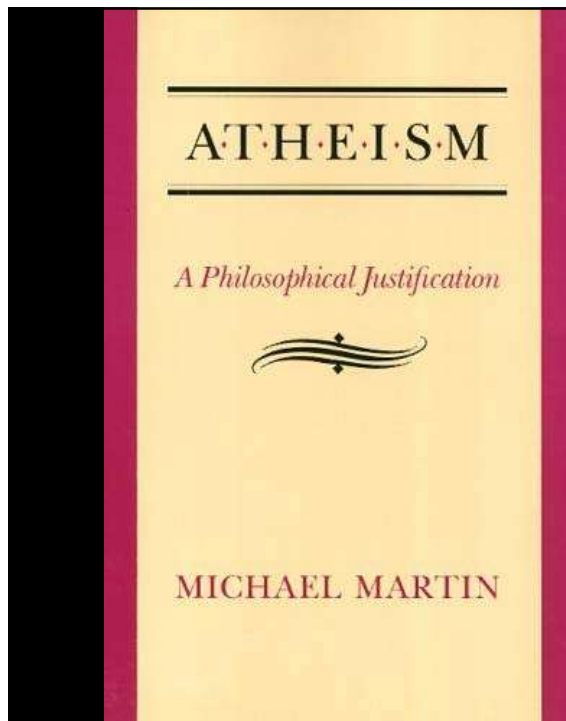
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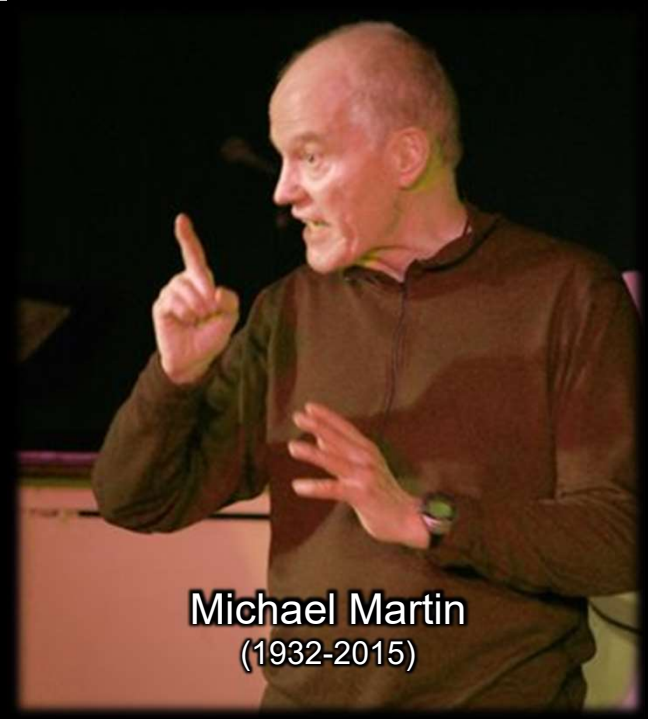
Michael Martin
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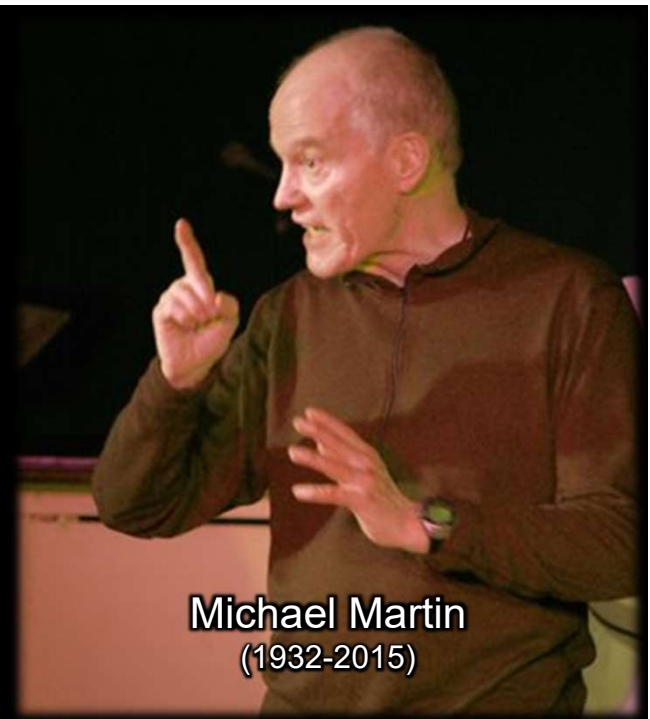
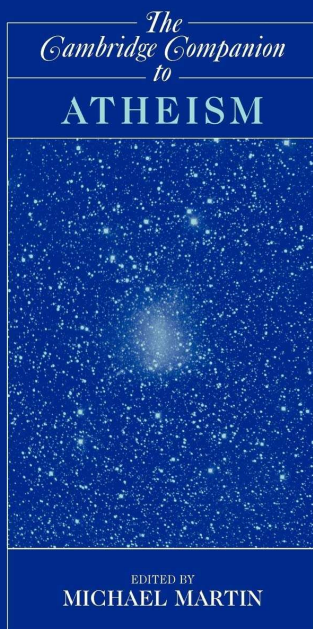
Michael Martin
(1932-2015)

"Negative atheism [is] the position of not believing in a theistic God. ... Positive atheism [is] the position of disbelieving that the theistic God exists."

[Michael Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 26]



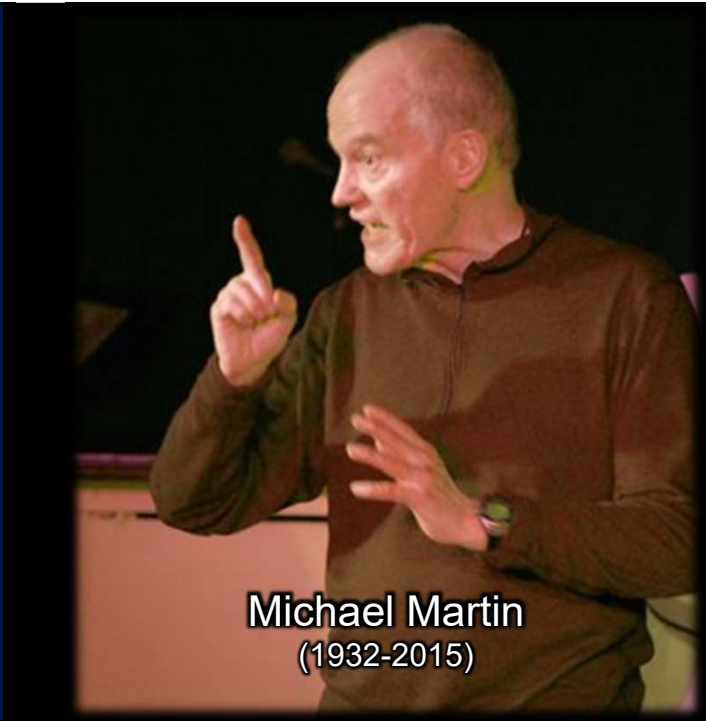
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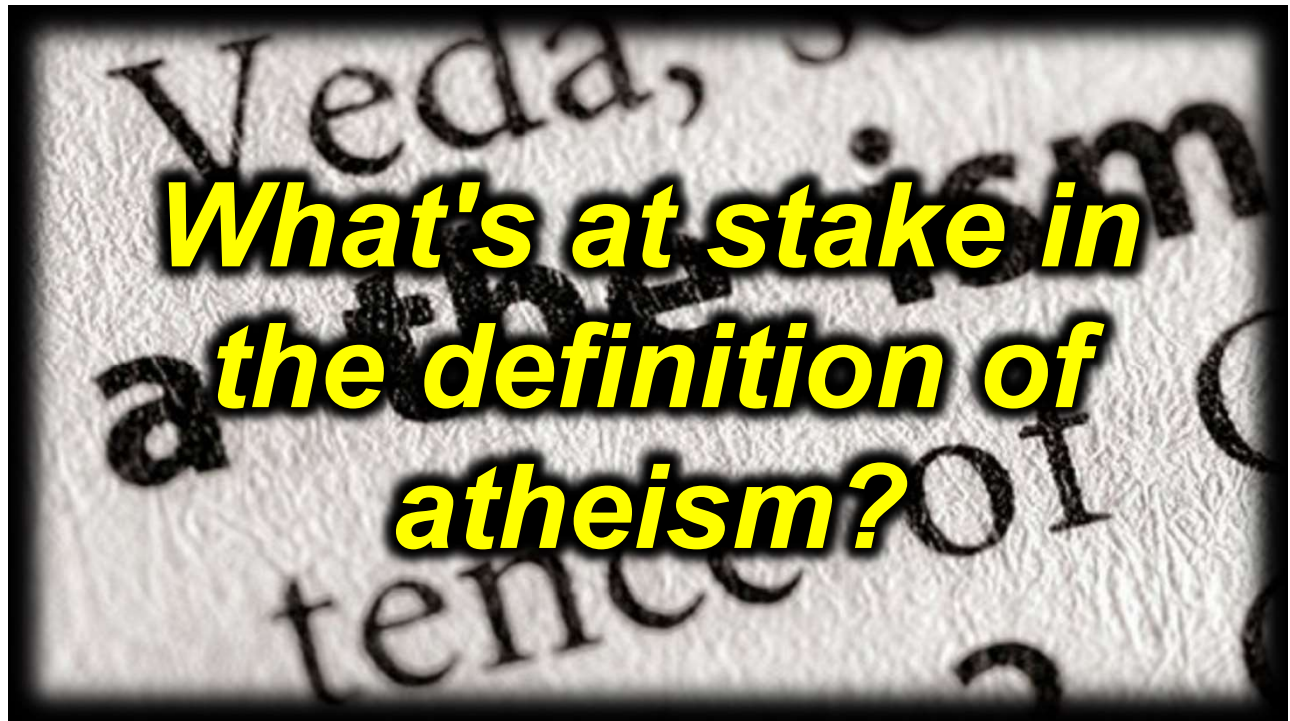
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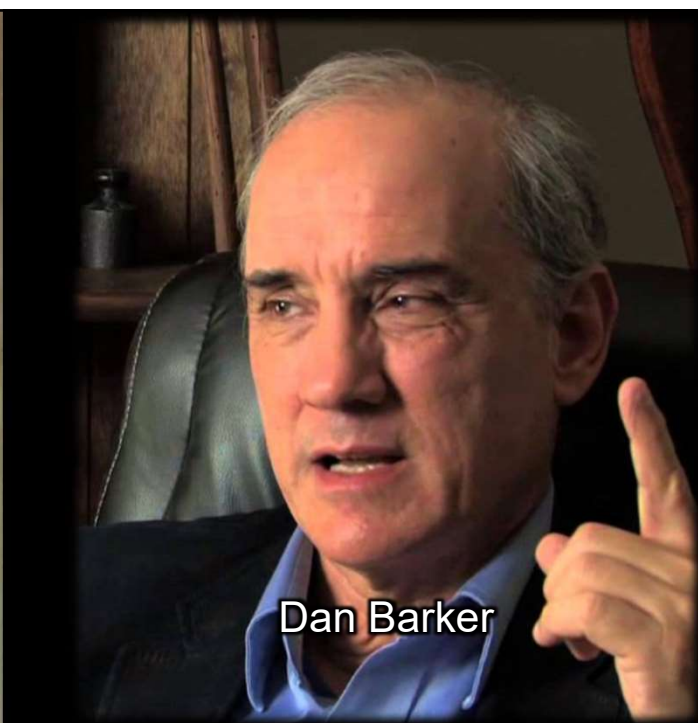
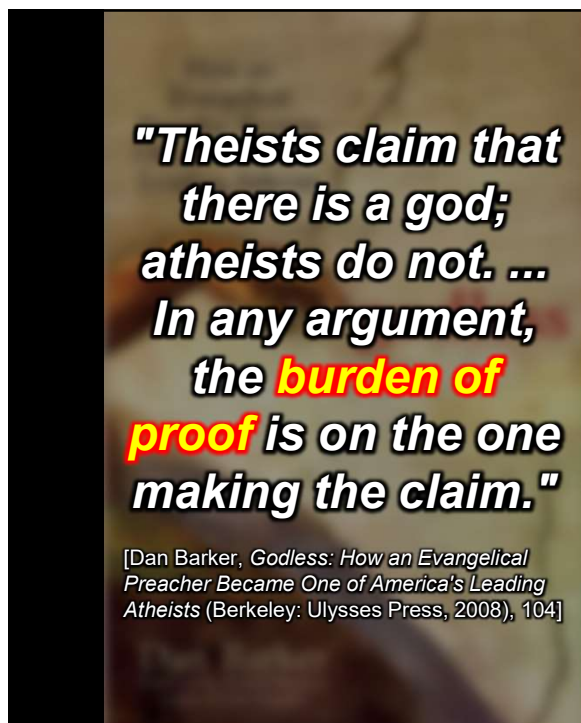
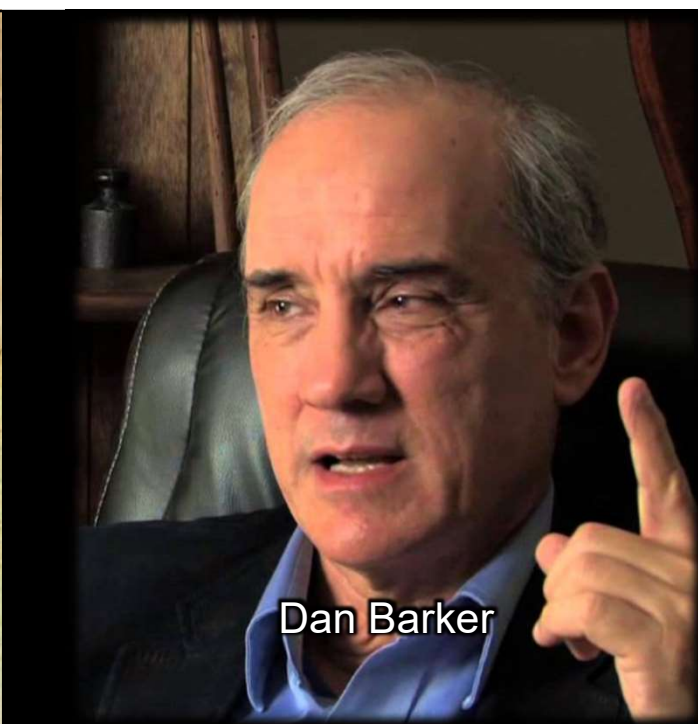
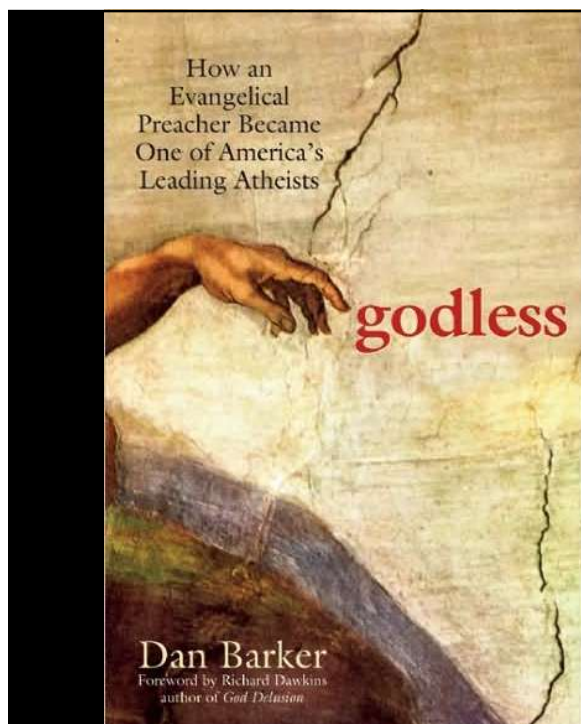
"Negative atheism in the broad sense is then the **absence of belief** in any god or Gods, not just the **absence of belief** in a personal theistic God, and negative atheism in the narrow sense is the absence of belief in a theistic God. Positive atheism in the narrow sense, in turn, **disbelief** in all gods, with positive atheism in the narrow sense being the **disbelief** in a theistic God."

[Michael Martin, "General Introduction," *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2]



Michael Martin
(1932-2015)





"Theists believe in God, while atheists do not have such a belief. Many theists insist that it is the responsibility of the atheist to offer evidence justifying his lack of belief in God. But is the theist's demand rational? Must the atheist justify his lack of belief in God? Or does the burden rest with the theist?"

[B. C. Johnson, *The Atheist Debater's Handbook* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1983): 11]

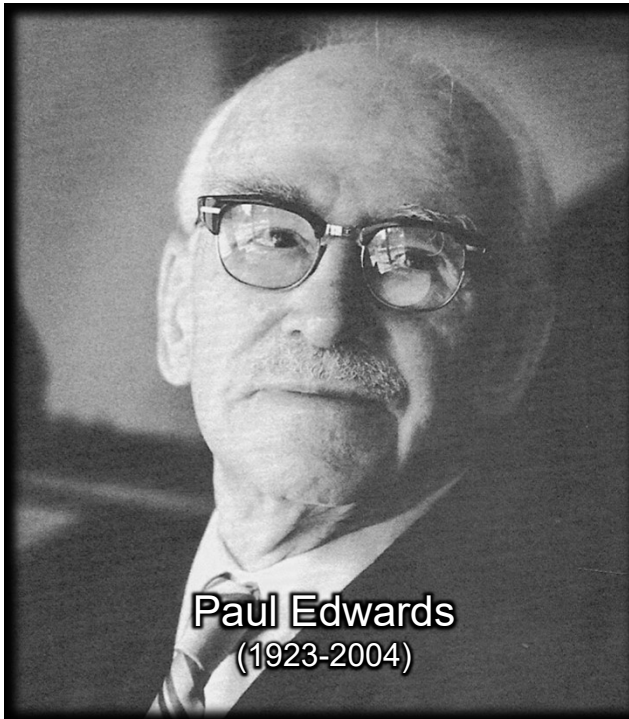
The Atheist Debater's Handbook

by B. C. Johnson

**What can be said
about this attempt
to redefine
atheism?**



First, this definition conflicts with the standard academic definition of atheism.



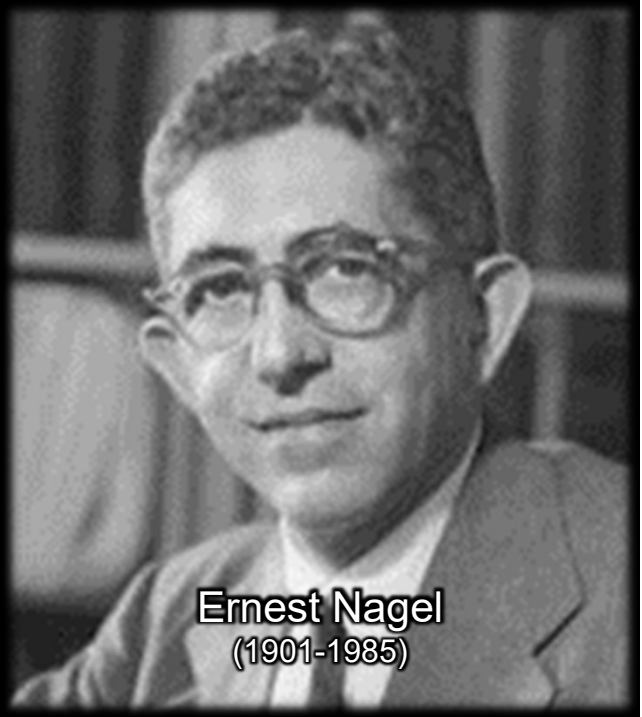
Paul Edwards
(1923-2004)

"According to the most usual definition, an 'atheist' is a person who maintains that there is no God, that is, that the sentence 'God exists' expresses a false proposition."

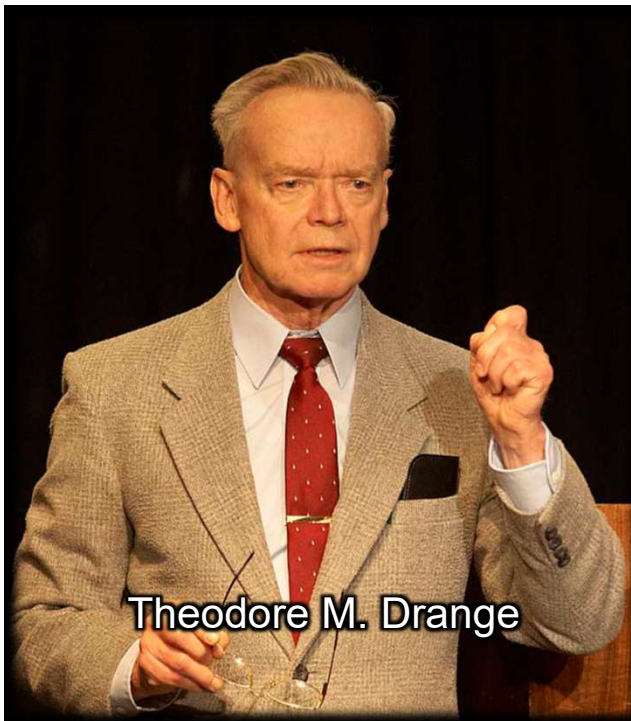
[Paul Edwards ed. in chief, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1967): s.v. "Atheism," p. 175.]

"[A]theism is not to be identified with sheer unbelief.... A child who has received no religious instruction ... is not an atheist—for he is not denying any theistic claims."

[Ernest Nagel, "Philosophical Concepts of Atheism" in *Critiques of God: Making the Case Against Belief in God*, Peter A. Angeles, ed. pp. 4-5]



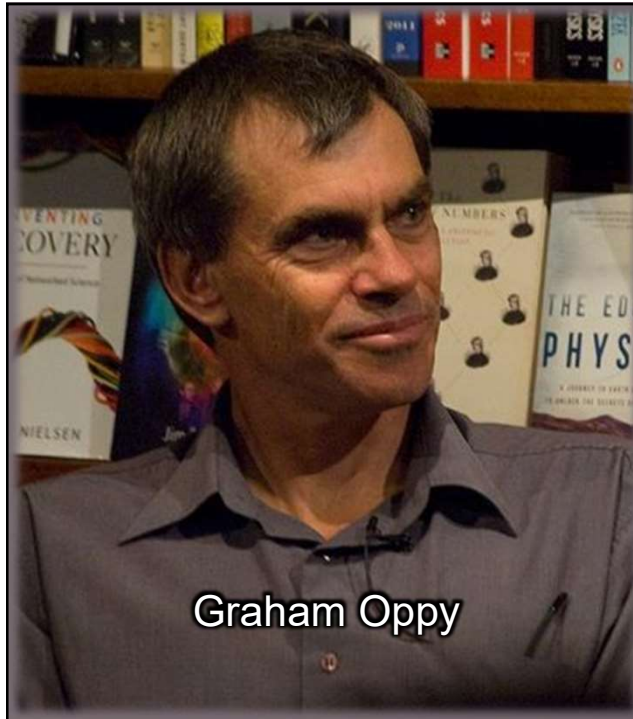
Ernest Nagel
(1901-1985)



Theodore M. Drange

"Is the proposition that God exists true or false? You are a theist if and only if you say that the proposition is true or probably true, you are an atheist if and only if you say that it is false or probably false, and you are an agnostic if and only if you understand what the proposition is, but resist giving either answer, and support your resistance by saying, 'The evidence is insufficient' (or words to that effect)."

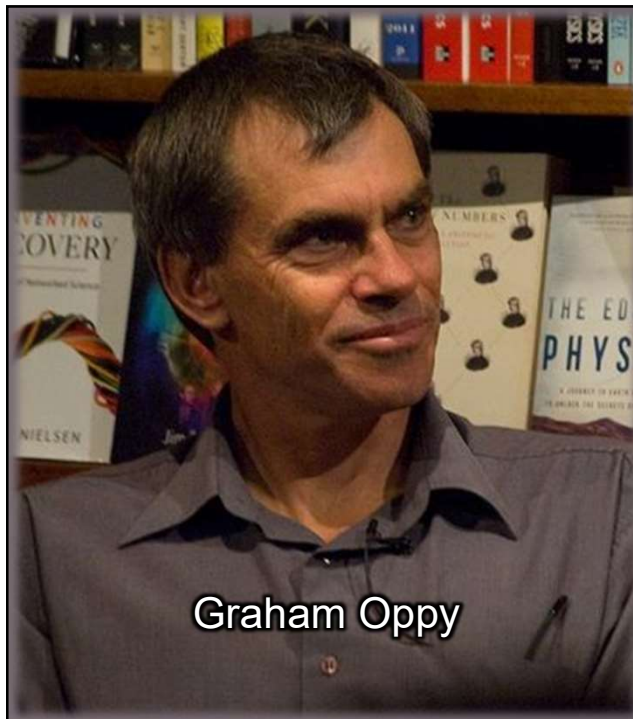
[Theodore M. Drange "Atheism, Agnosticism, Noncognitivism," from https://infidels.org/library/modern/theodore_drange/definition.html, accessed 01/15/19]



Graham Oppy

"Properly, we should define theism as the view that there's at least one god and atheism as the view that there are no gods, and monotheism then as the view that there is exactly one God and we call that one God with a capital 'G'. Atheists then are people who believe that there are no gods and particular in our context, they believe that God doesn't exist.

...



Graham Oppy

"Other people like to say that atheism is just lacking the belief that God exists which lumps together ... the class of agnostics with the class of atheists; if you define it that way, which I don't like."

[Graham Oppy vs. Ben Arbour, "The Ontological Argument" on *Capturing Christianity*, You Tube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udxfuPgq4TY>, @1:05:20, accessed 04/29/20]



Second, this definition entails an absurdity if not an outright contradiction.



Three Categories of Contemporary Atheism

Popular Atheism



The "New" Atheism

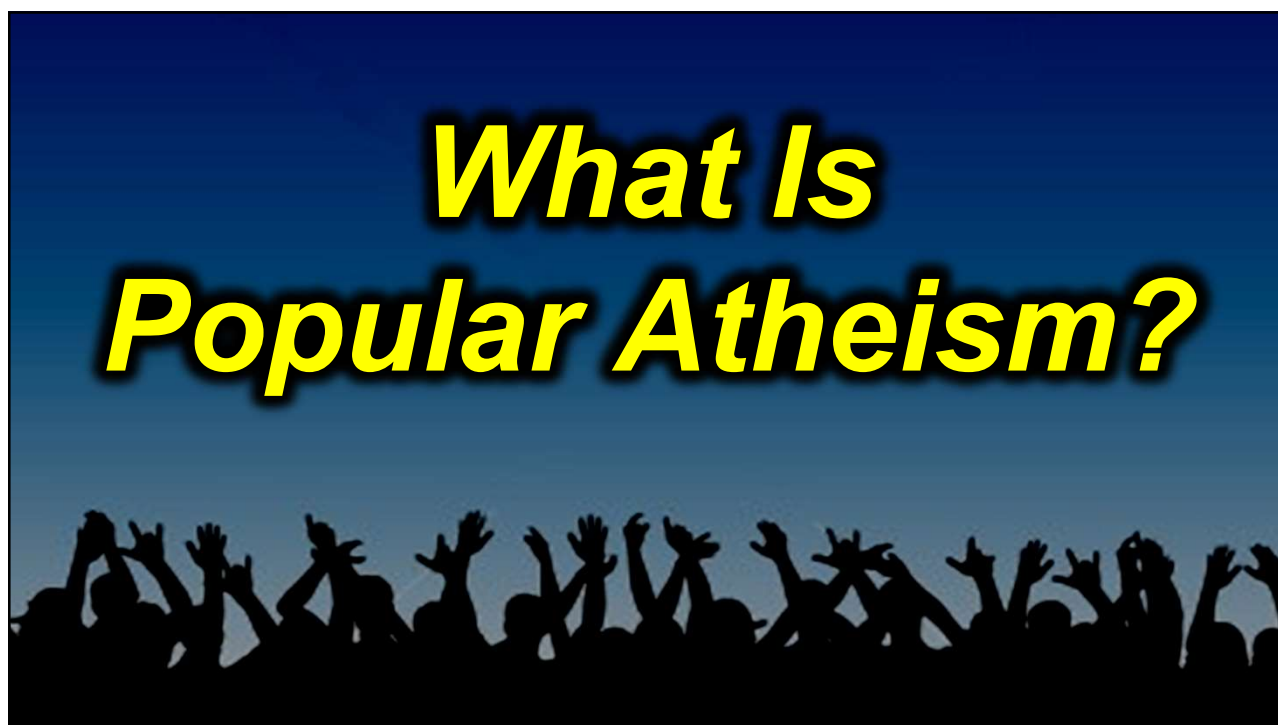
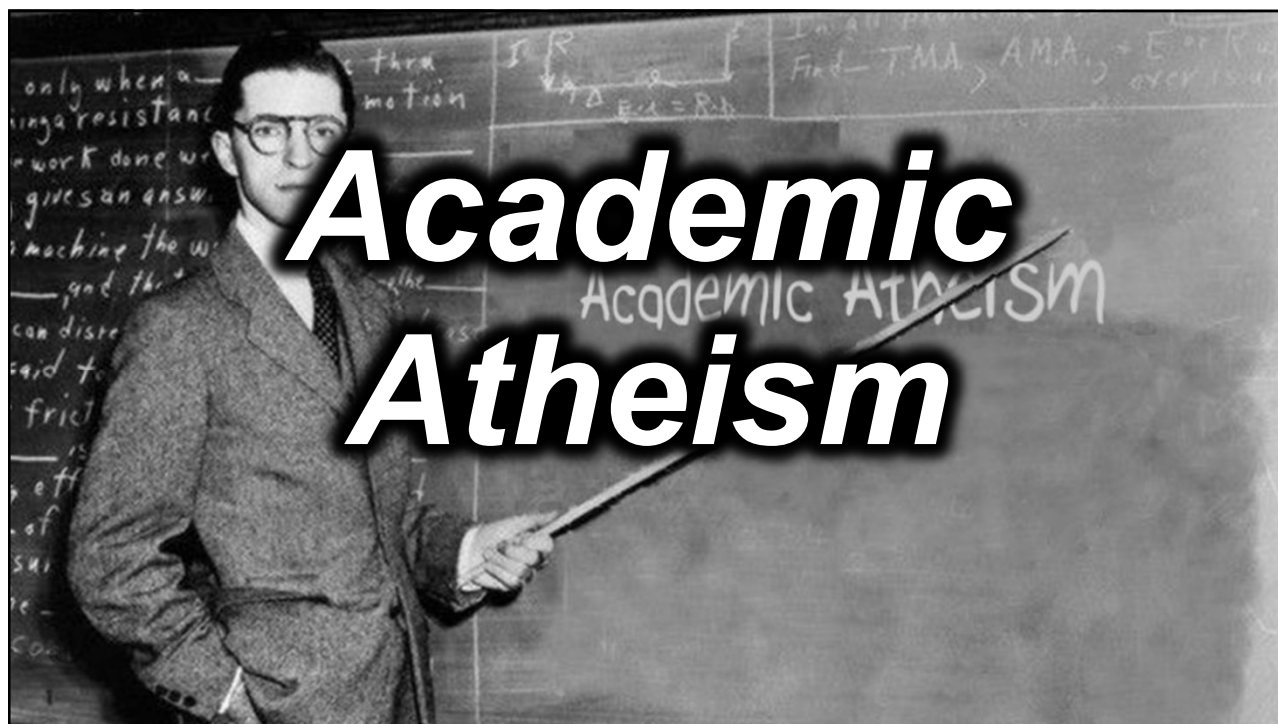


Richard Dawkins

Sam Harris

Daniel Dennett

Christopher Hitchens



The term 'popular' here does not mean that it is well liked or well known.



Rather, in this context, 'popular' is in contrast to 'scholarly.'



It means that the writing is for a more general audience instead of the experts or technicians in the field.



As such, it requires of the reader less background knowledge and is generally free of technical terminology.





The expression "New Atheism" refers to an atheism characterized by the influences of four main figures:



Richard Dawkins

Sam Harris

Daniel Dennett

Christopher Hitchens

These "apostles" of the New Atheism sometimes refer to themselves as "The Four Horsemen," an obvious reference to the four horsemen of the Book of Revelation.

It is now the name of a CD you can purchase from Richard Dawkins' website as well as the title of a book.

DISCUSSIONS WITH
RICHARD DAWKINS



EPISODE ONE

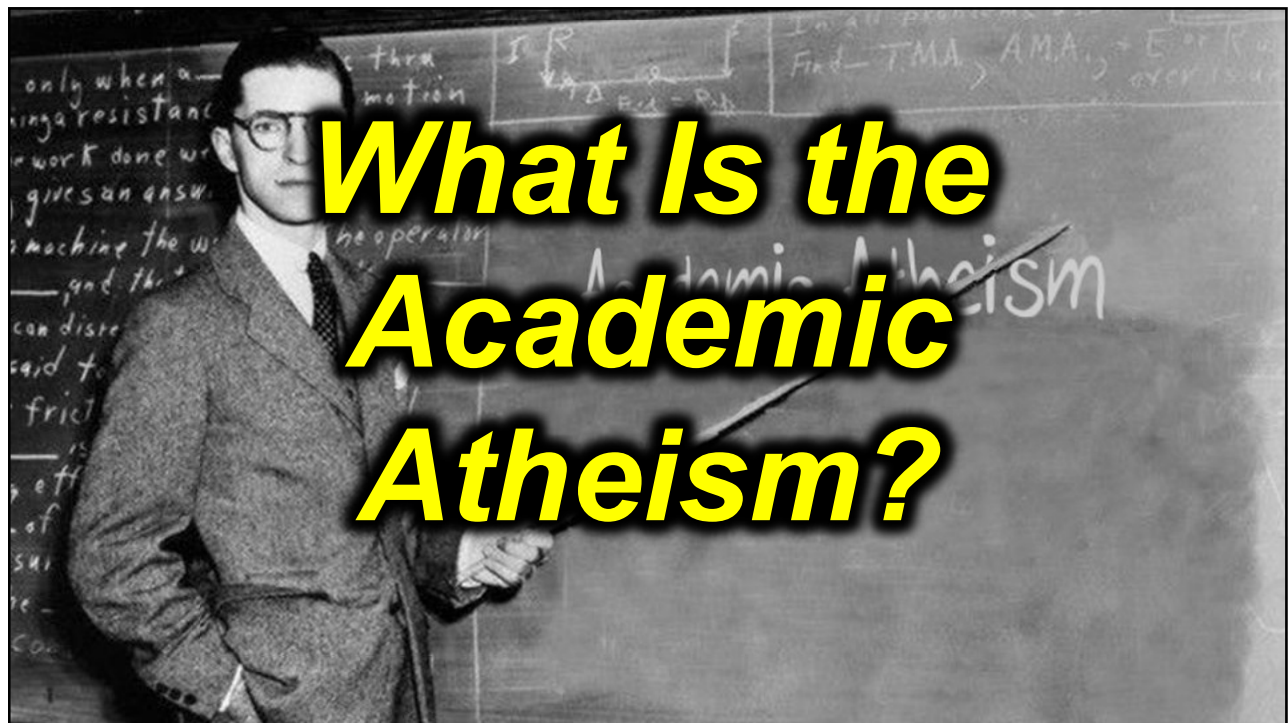
**THE
FOUR HORSEMEN**



A Round Table Discussion With:
RICHARD DAWKINS • DANIEL C. DENNETT
SAM HARRIS • CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

HITCHENS
THE CONVERSATION THAT SPARKED AN
DAWKINS
THE FOUR
HORSEMEN
HARRIS
ATHEIST REVOLUTION
DENNETT

FOREWORD BY STEPHEN FRY



The phrase 'Academic Atheism' is more or less my own for the purpose of this course.

Academic Atheism depends much more on academic philosophy than does either Popular Atheism or the New Atheism.

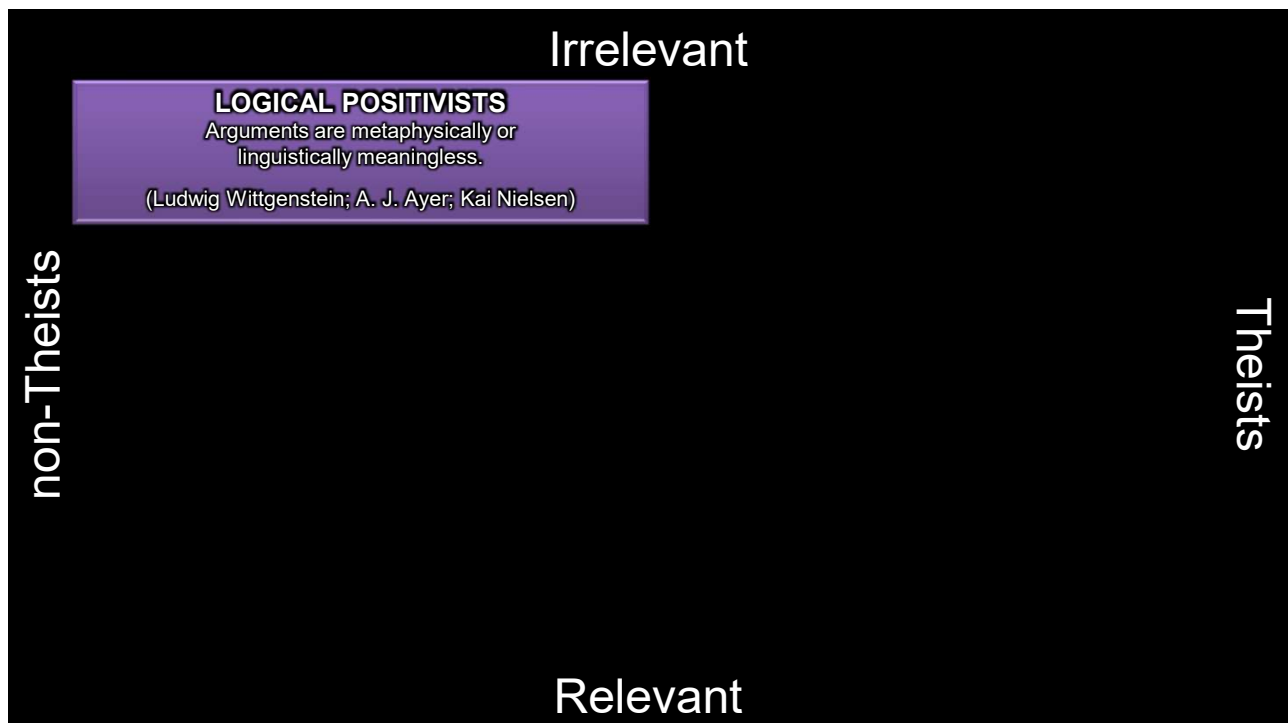
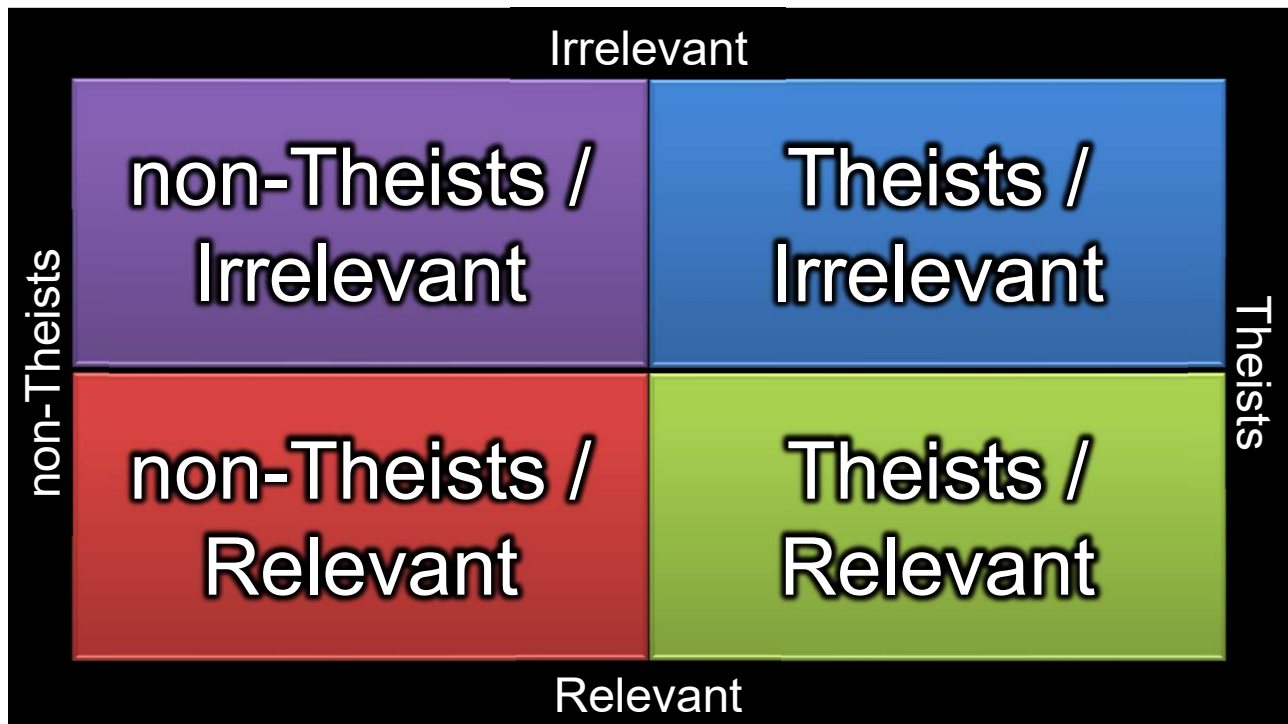


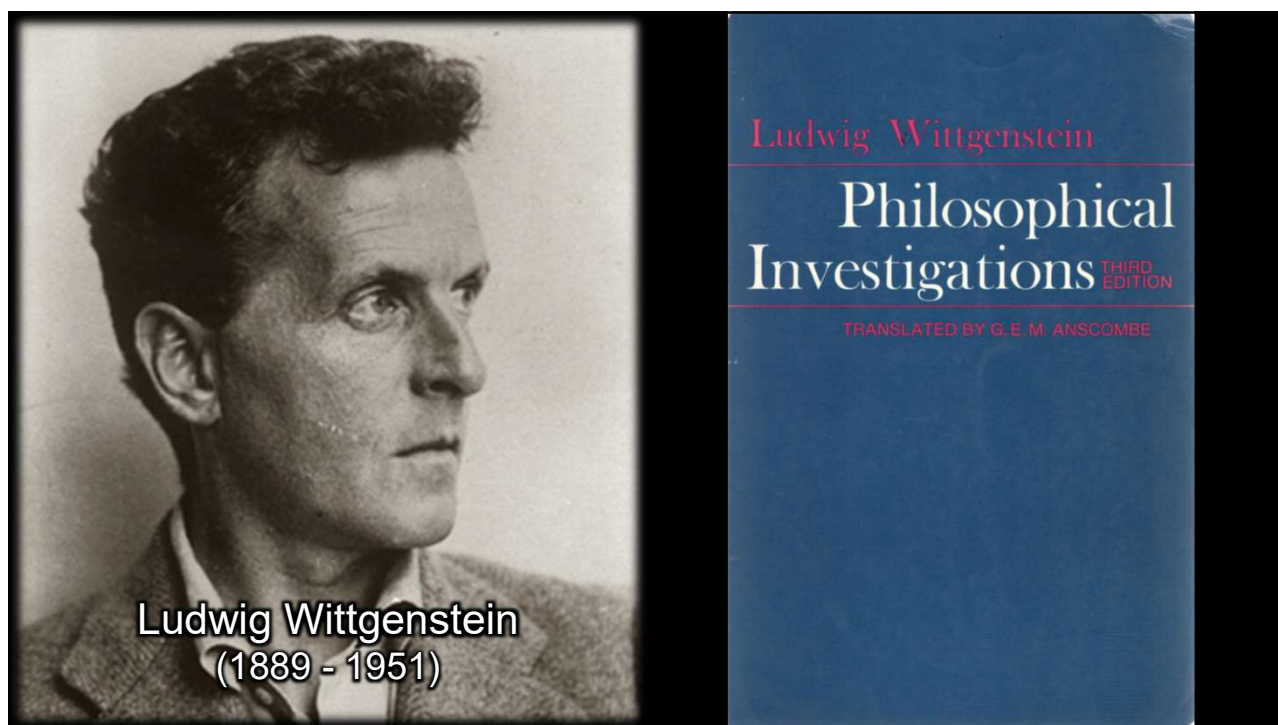
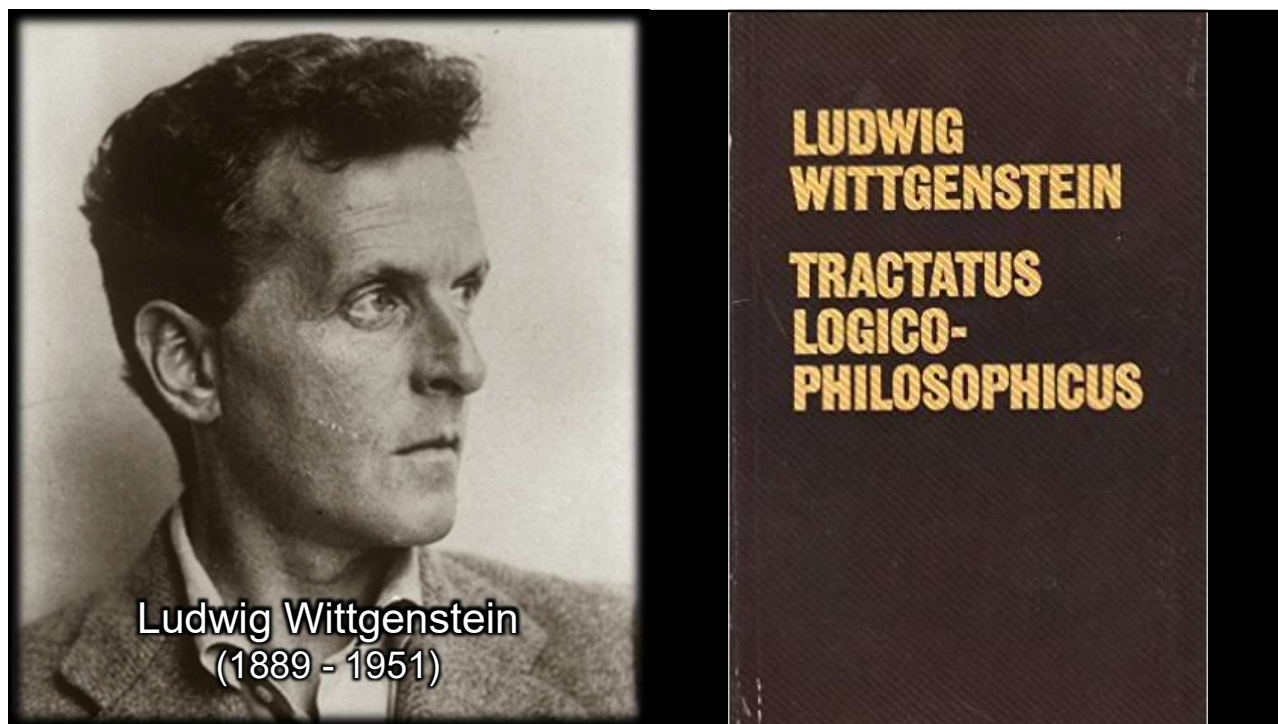
***Positions on
Arguments for
God's Existence***

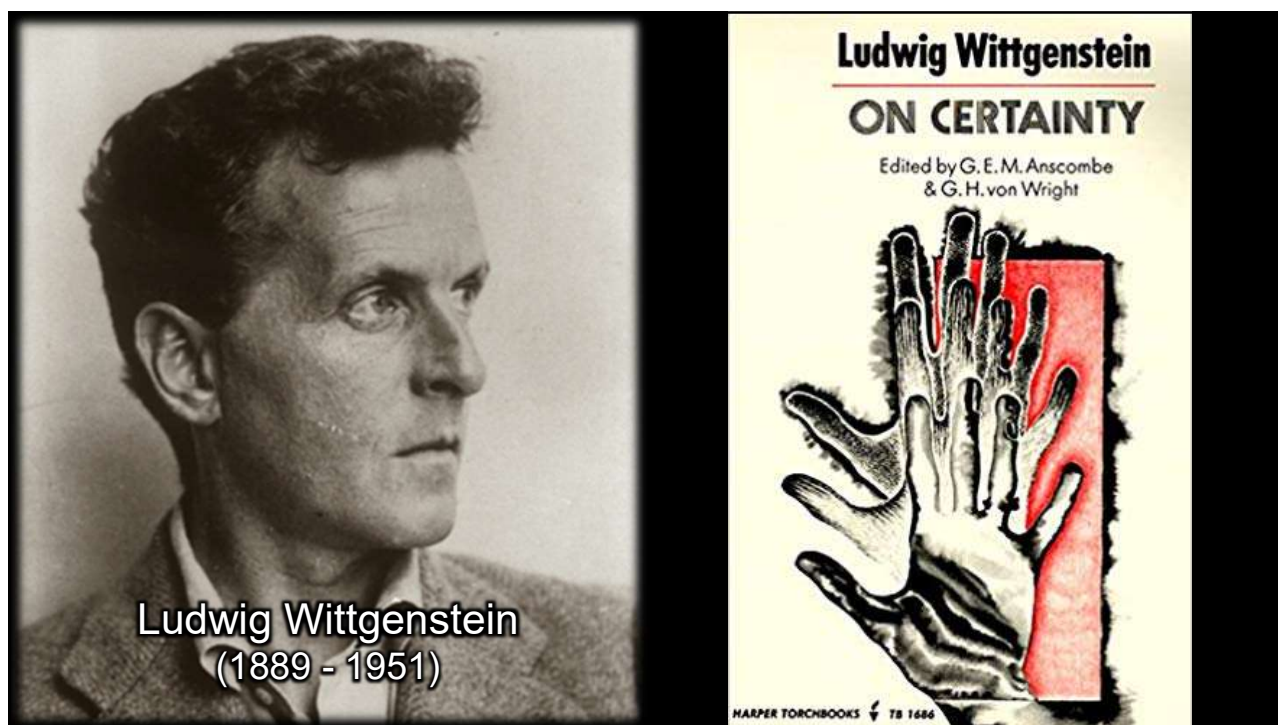
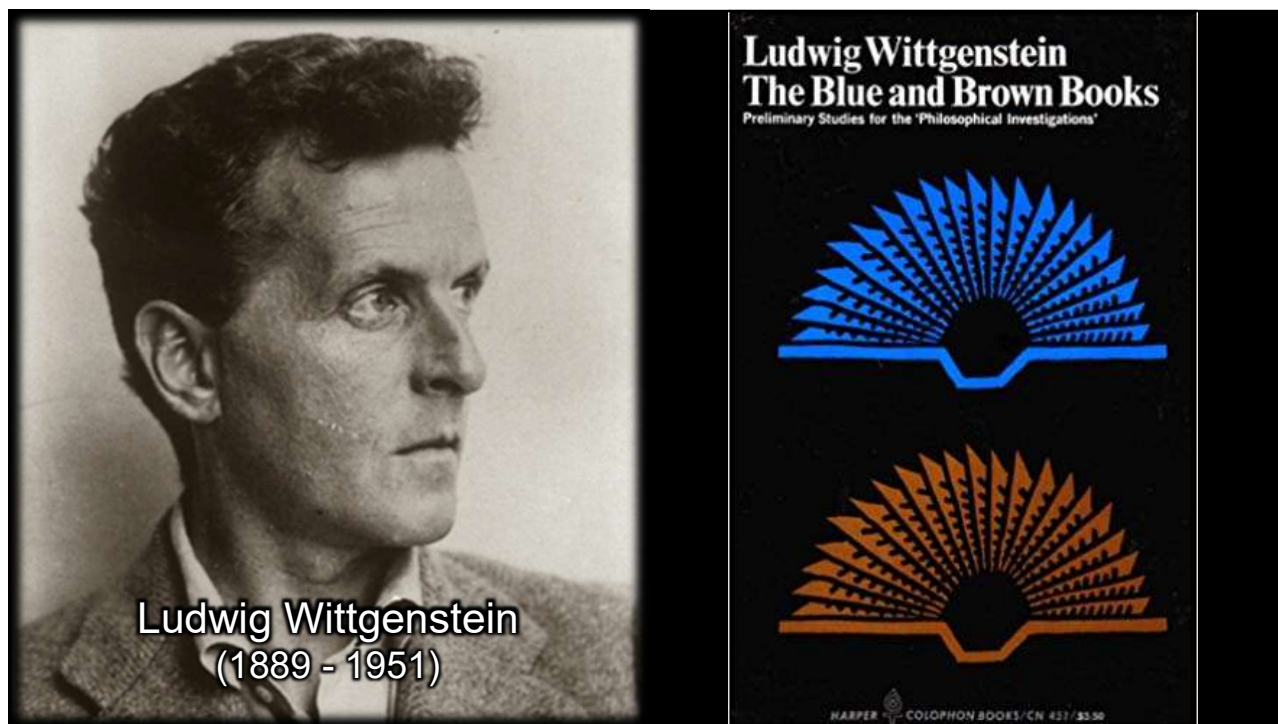
***Perhaps it is not surprising that
there are different views on
whether or how there is any
relevance for the arguments for
the existence of God.***

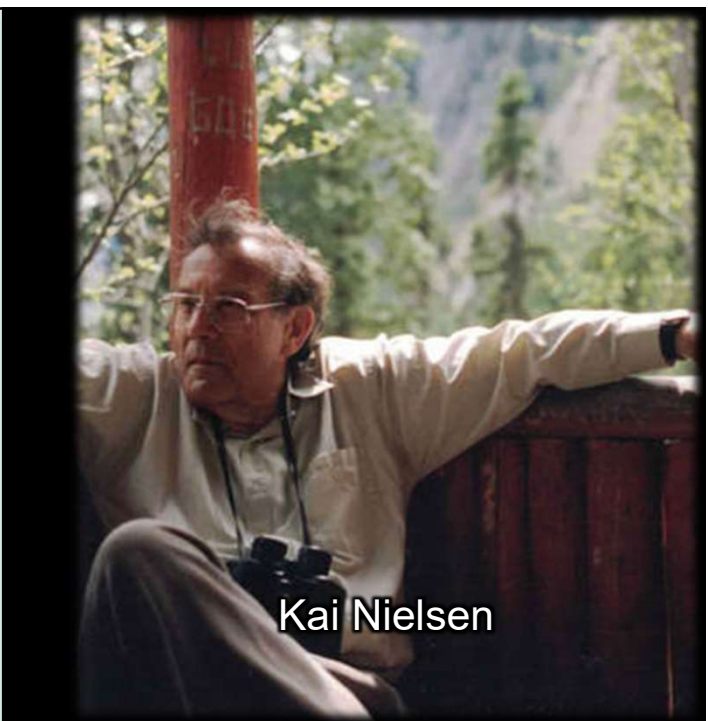
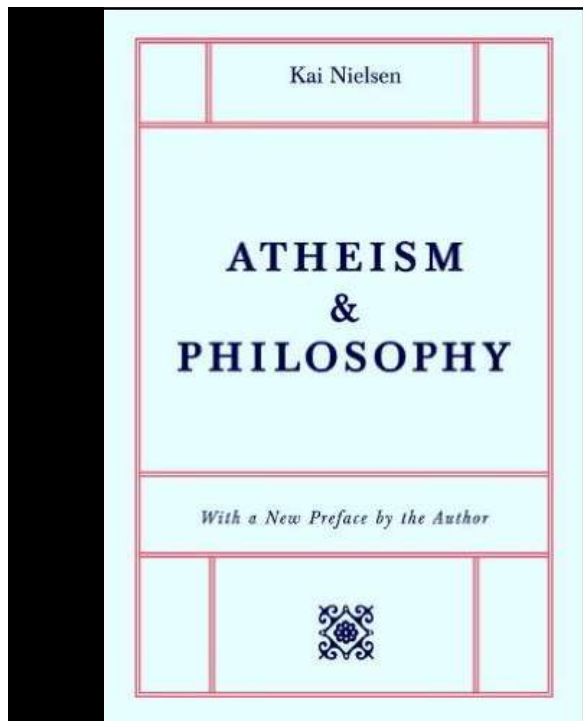
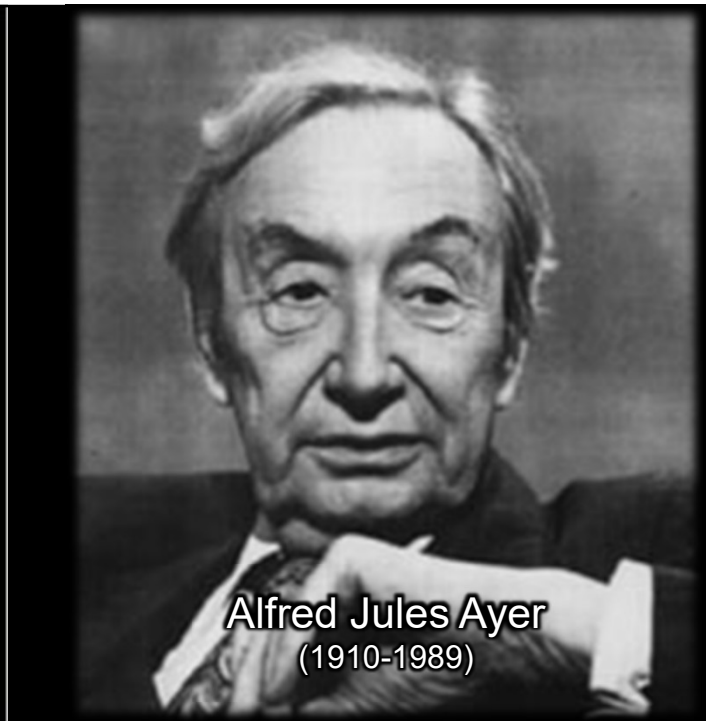
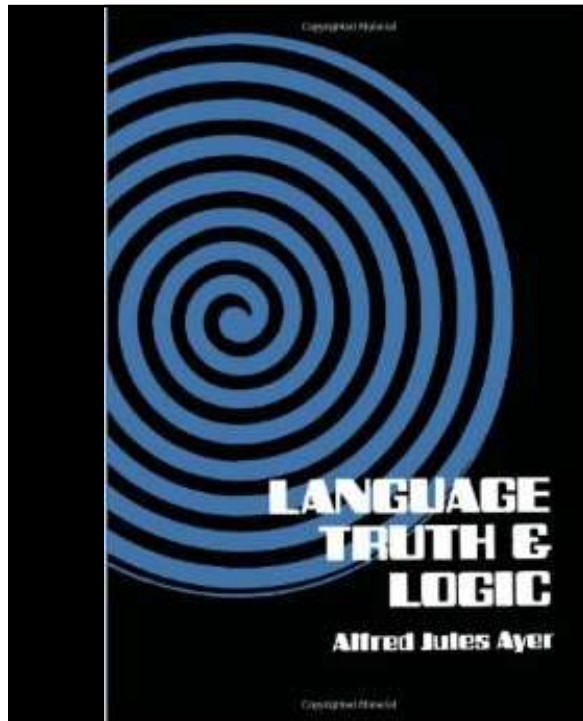
It might be surprising to some, however, that the different views do not fall along the lines of theists and non-theists.

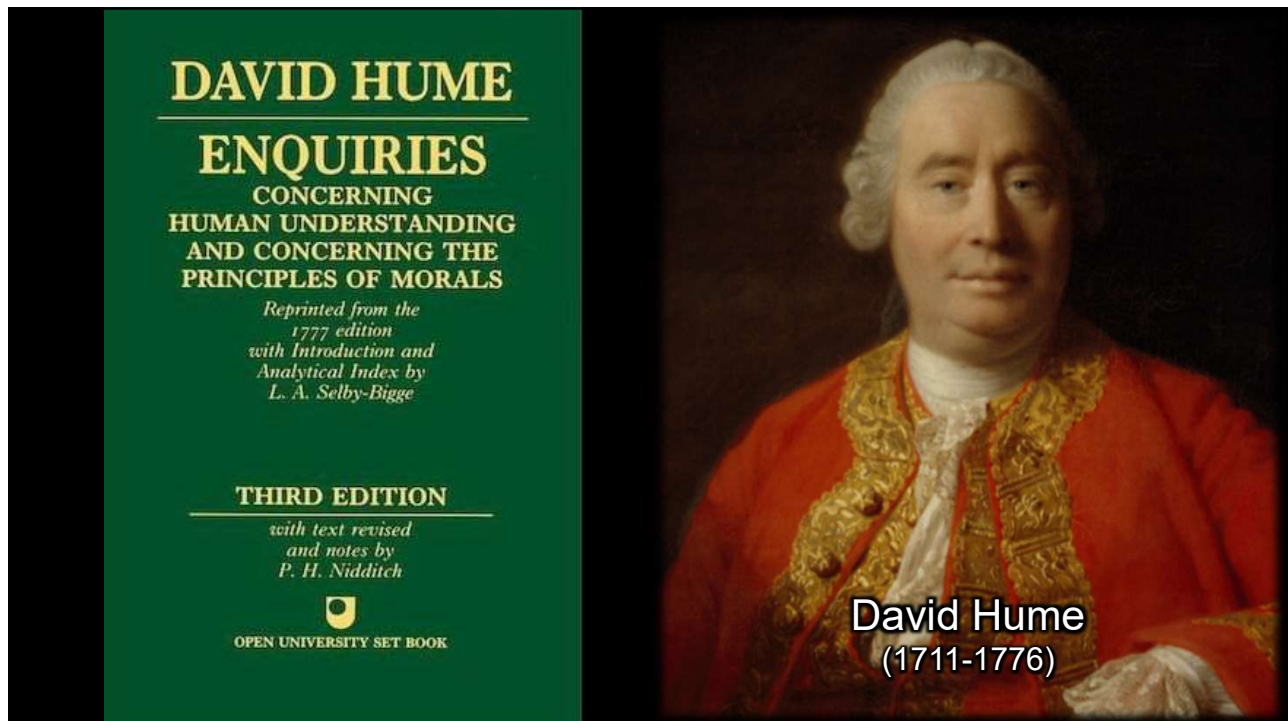
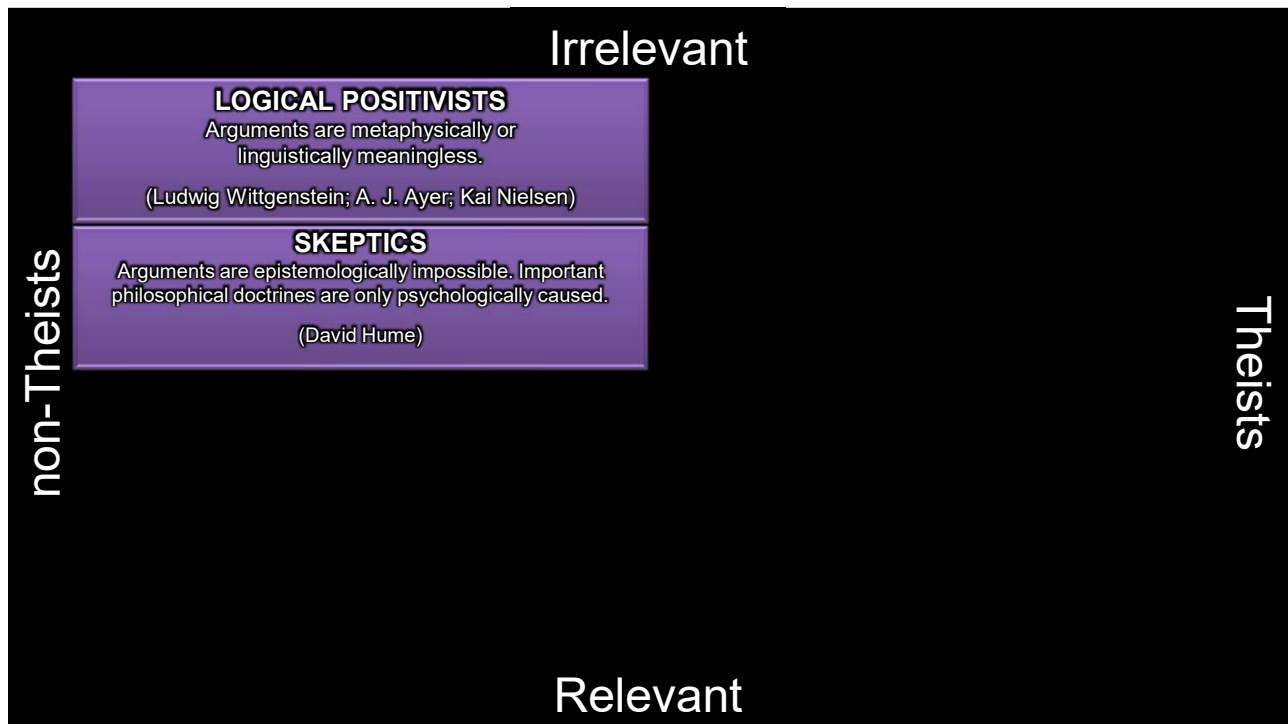
In combining the options of theists and non-theists together with the options of relevant and irrelevant we get these results.

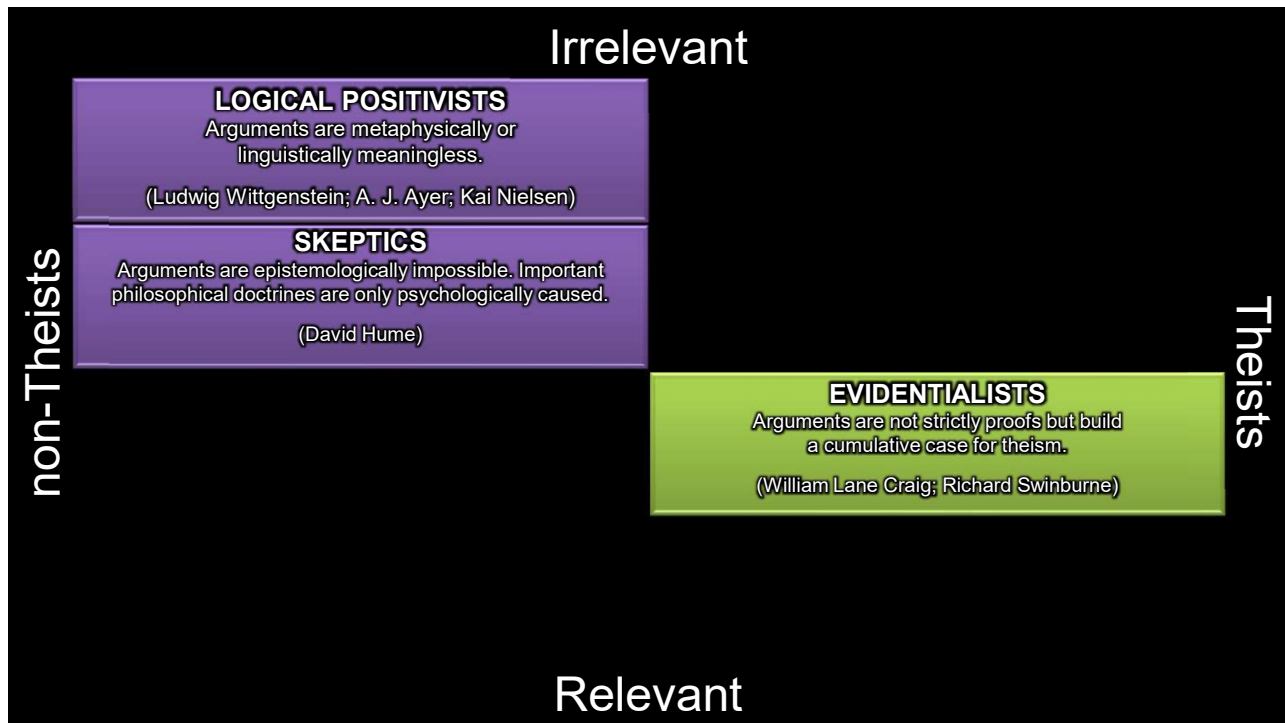
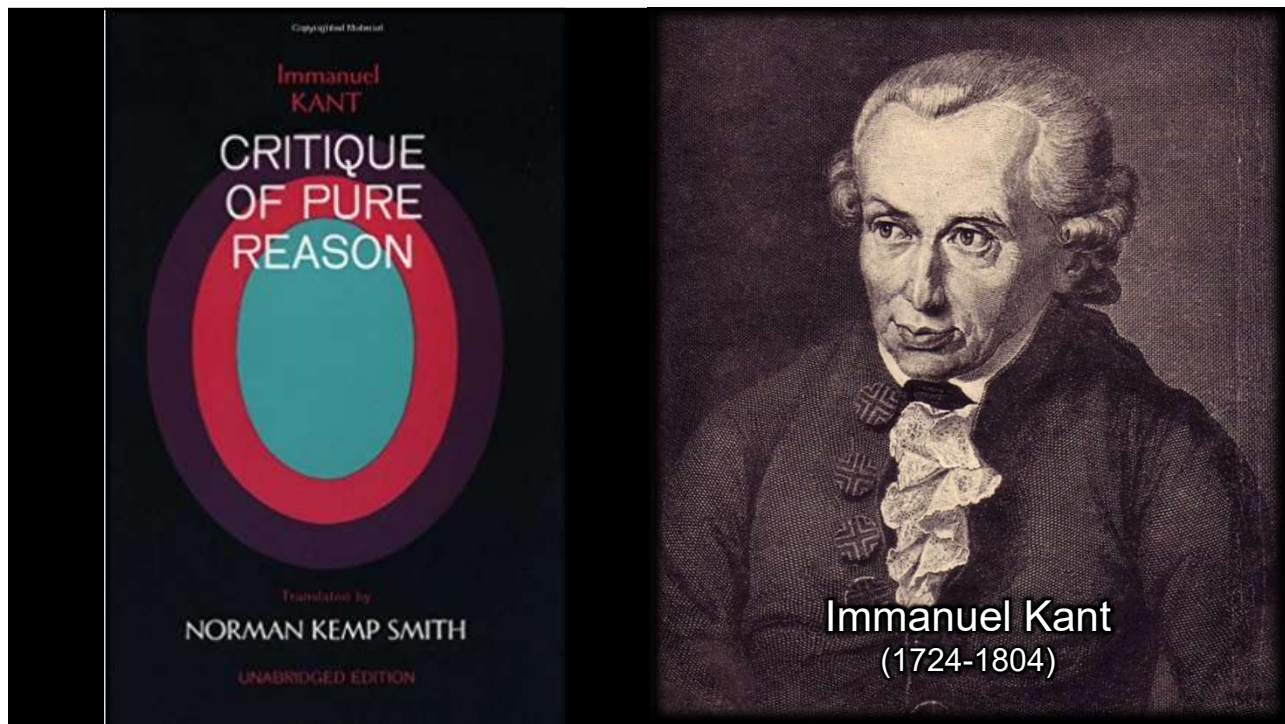


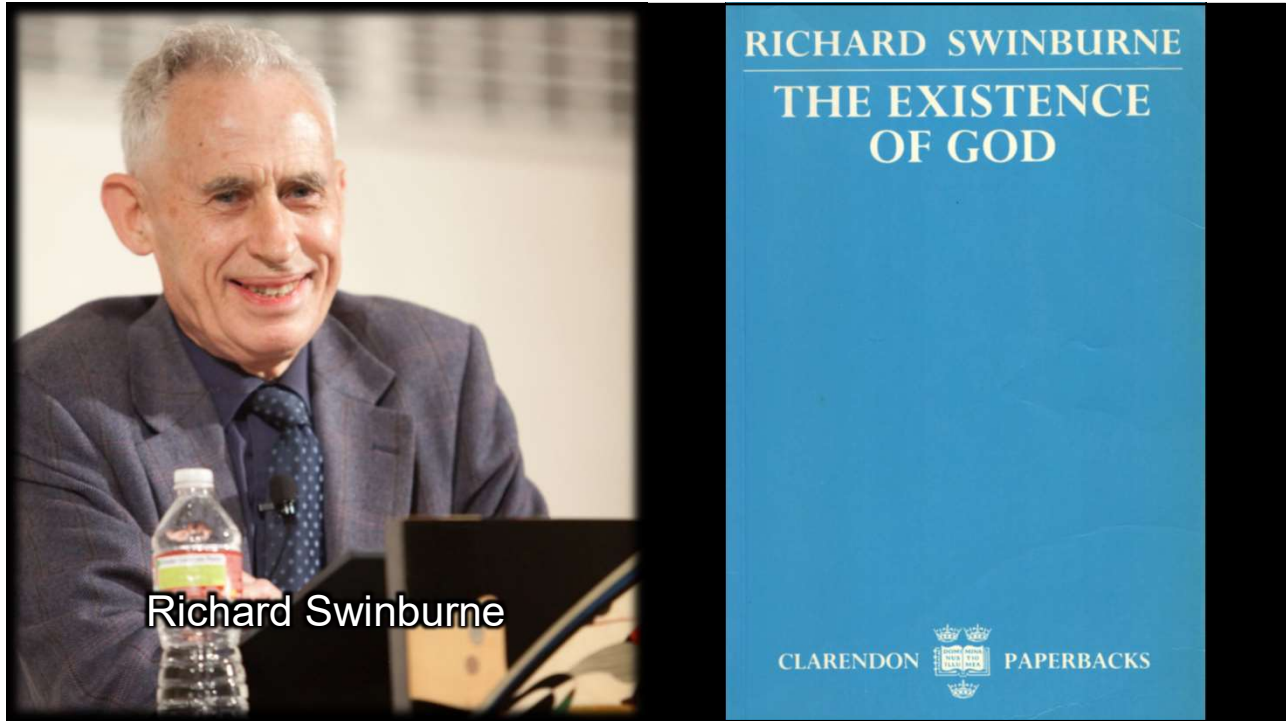




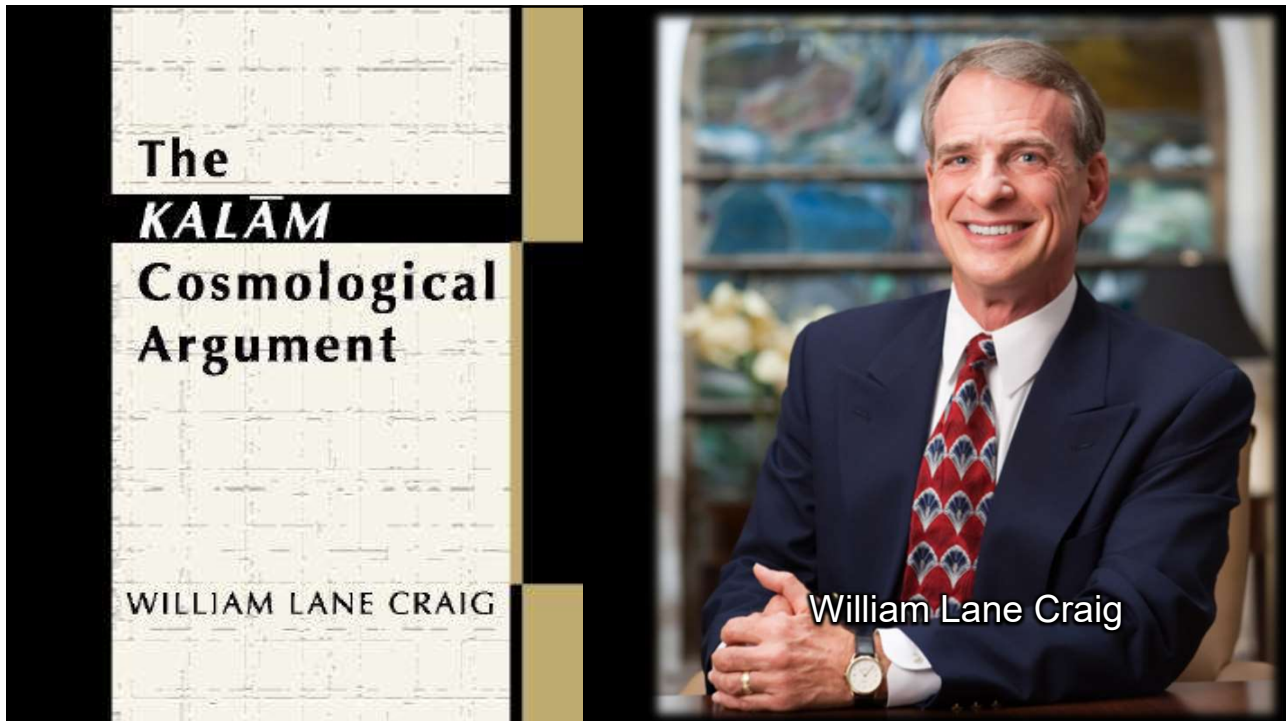




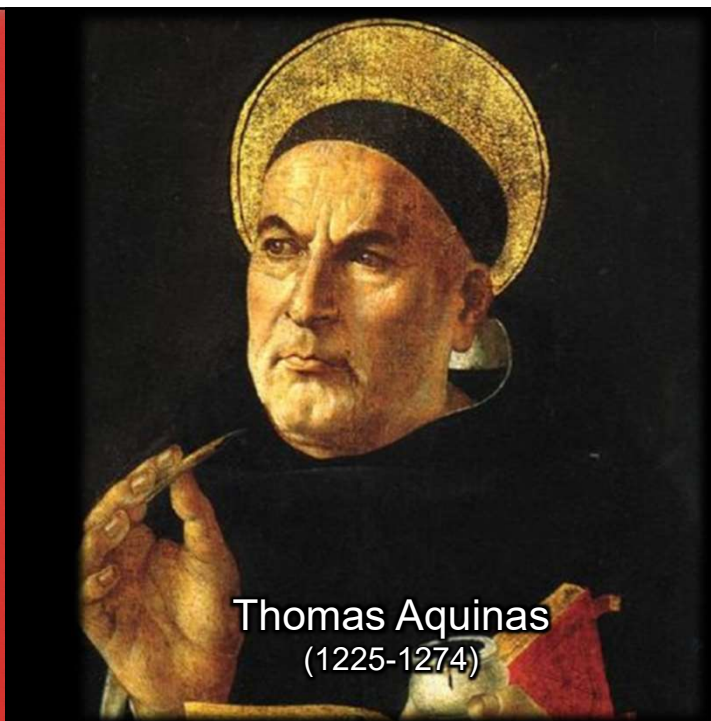
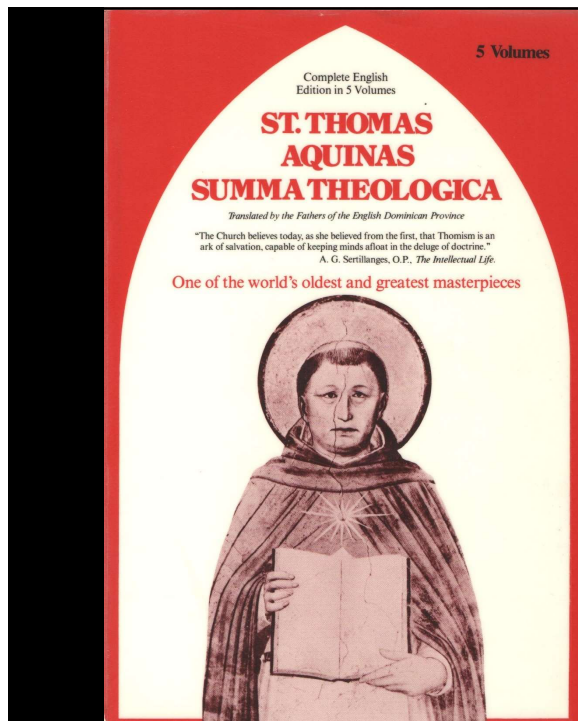
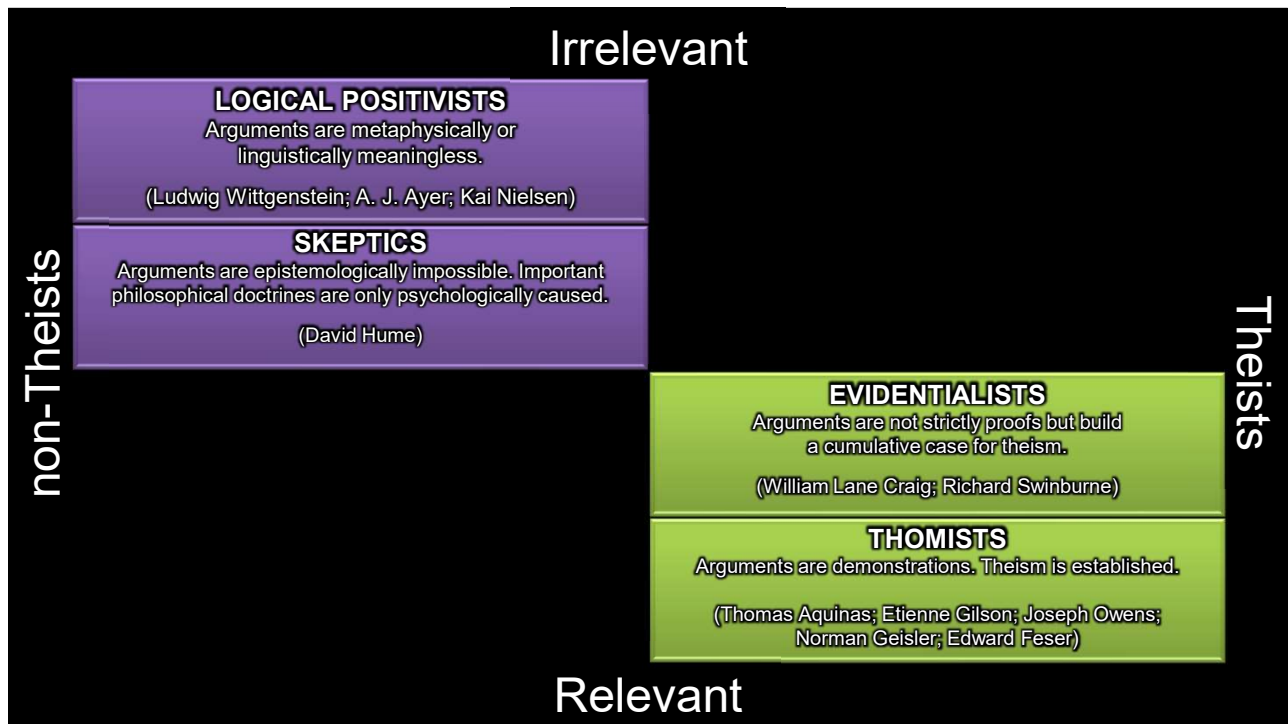




Richard Swinburne



William Lane Craig



Thomas Aquinas's "Five Ways"

- *Argument from motion*
- *Argument from efficient causality*
- *Argument from necessary being*
- *Argument from degrees of perfection*
- *Argument from final causality*

Thomas Aquinas
On being and
essence

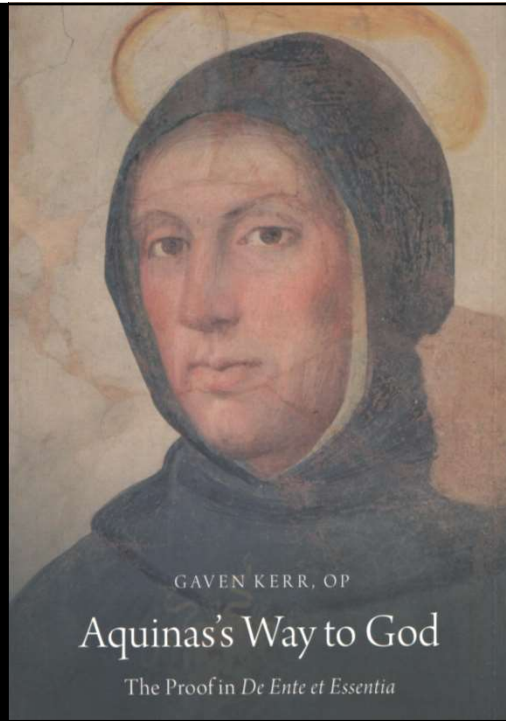
Translated by
Armand Maurer



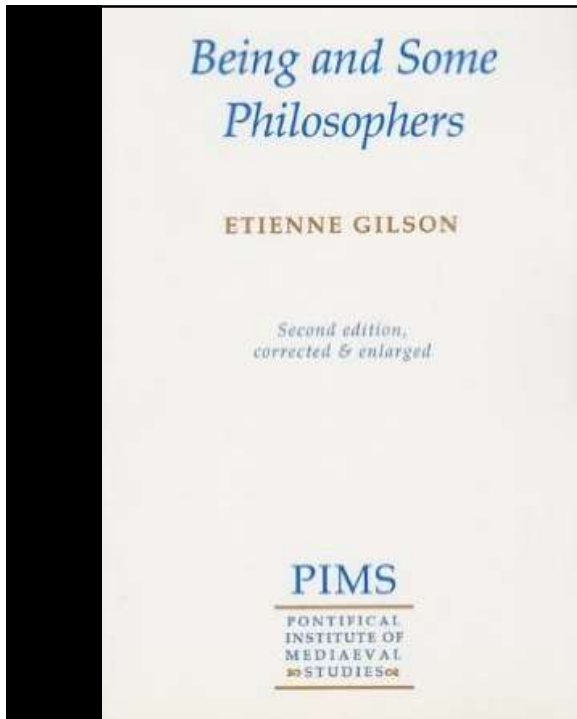
Thomas Aquinas
1225-1274



Gaven Kerr



GAVEN KERR, OP
Aquinas's Way to God
The Proof in *De Ente et Essentia*



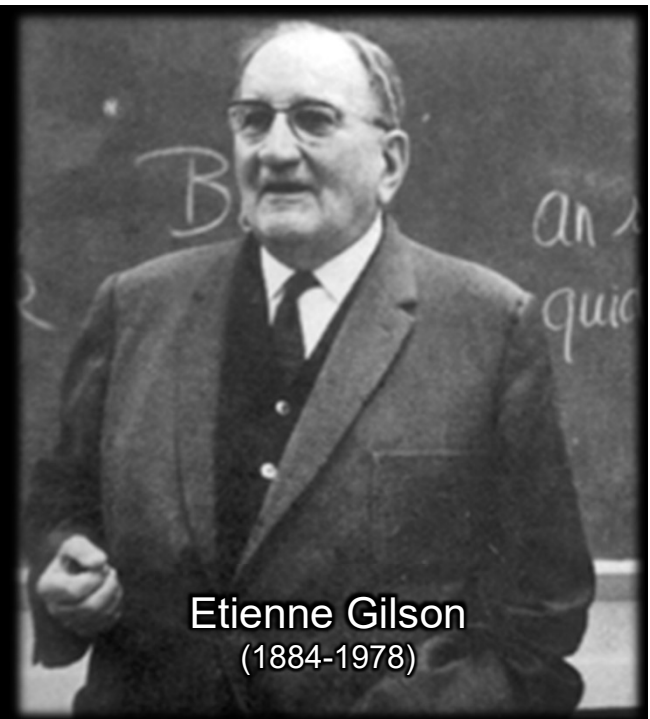
*Being and Some
Philosophers*

ETIENNE GILSON

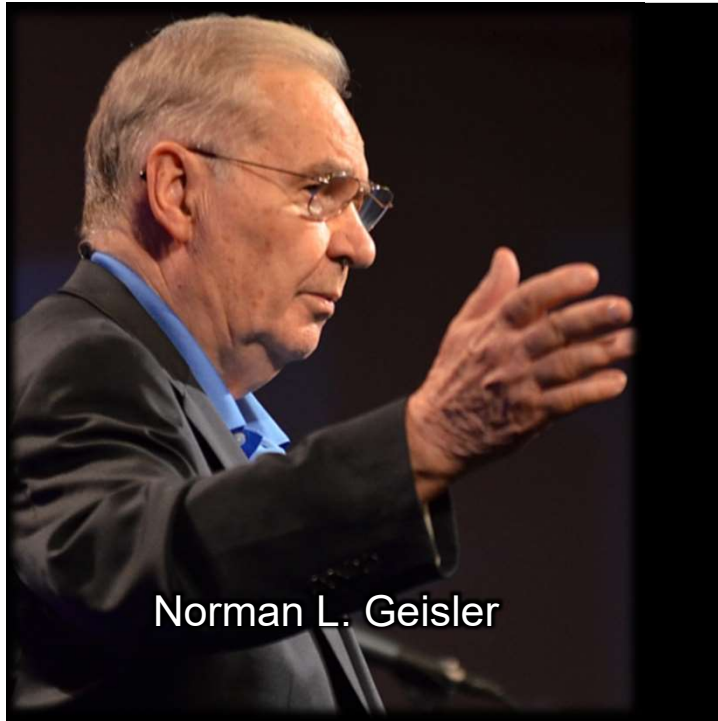
*Second edition,
corrected & enlarged*

PIMS

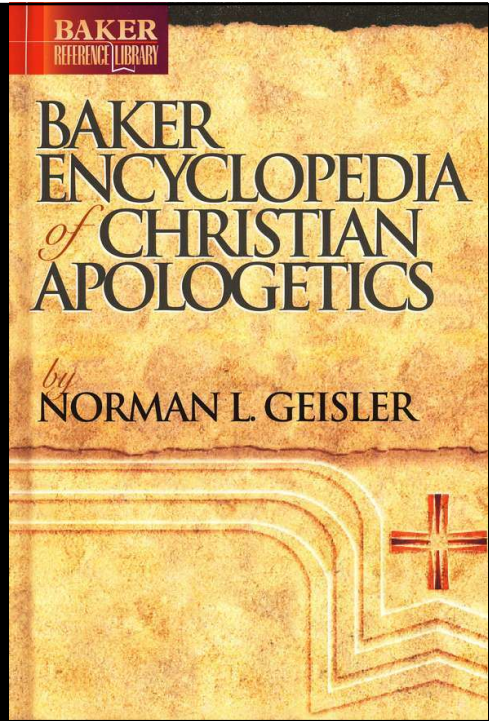
PONTIFICAL
INSTITUTE OF
MEDIAEVAL
STUDIES



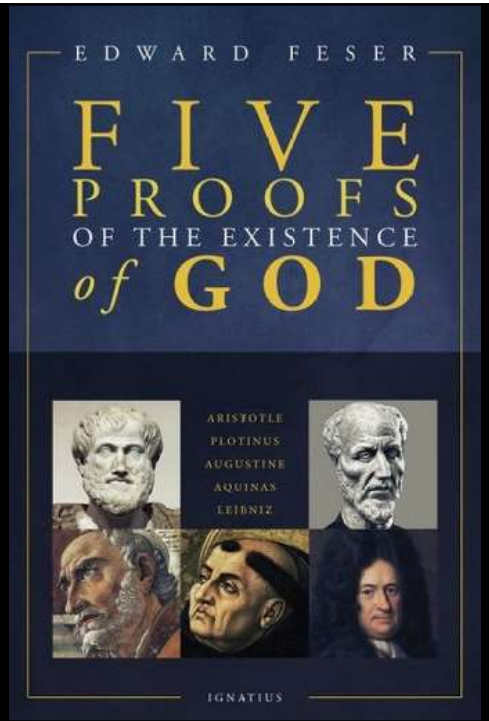
Etienne Gilson
(1884-1978)

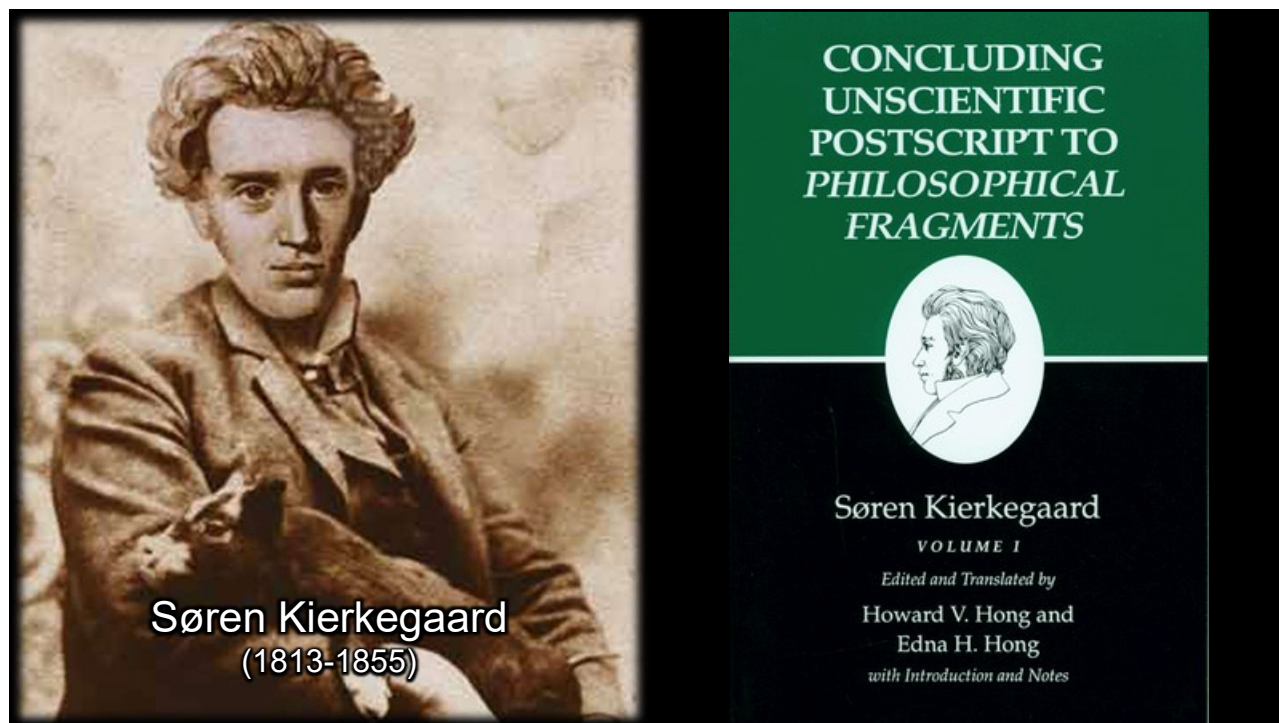
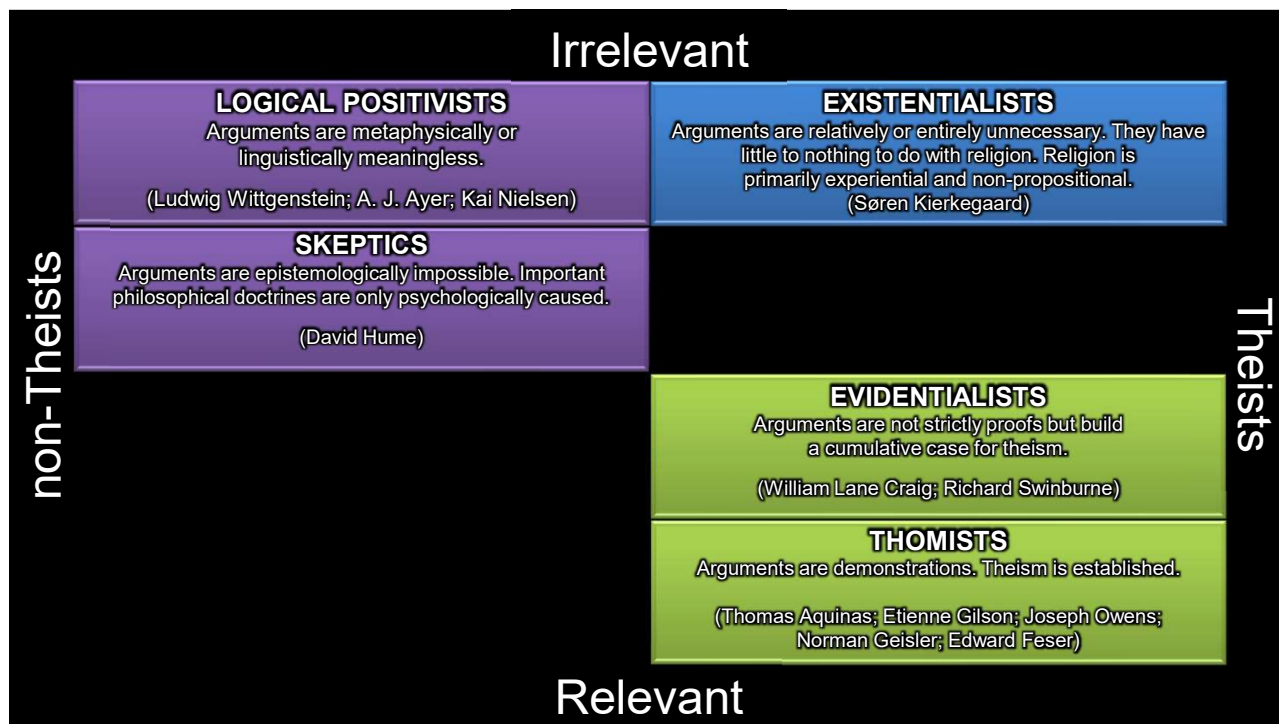


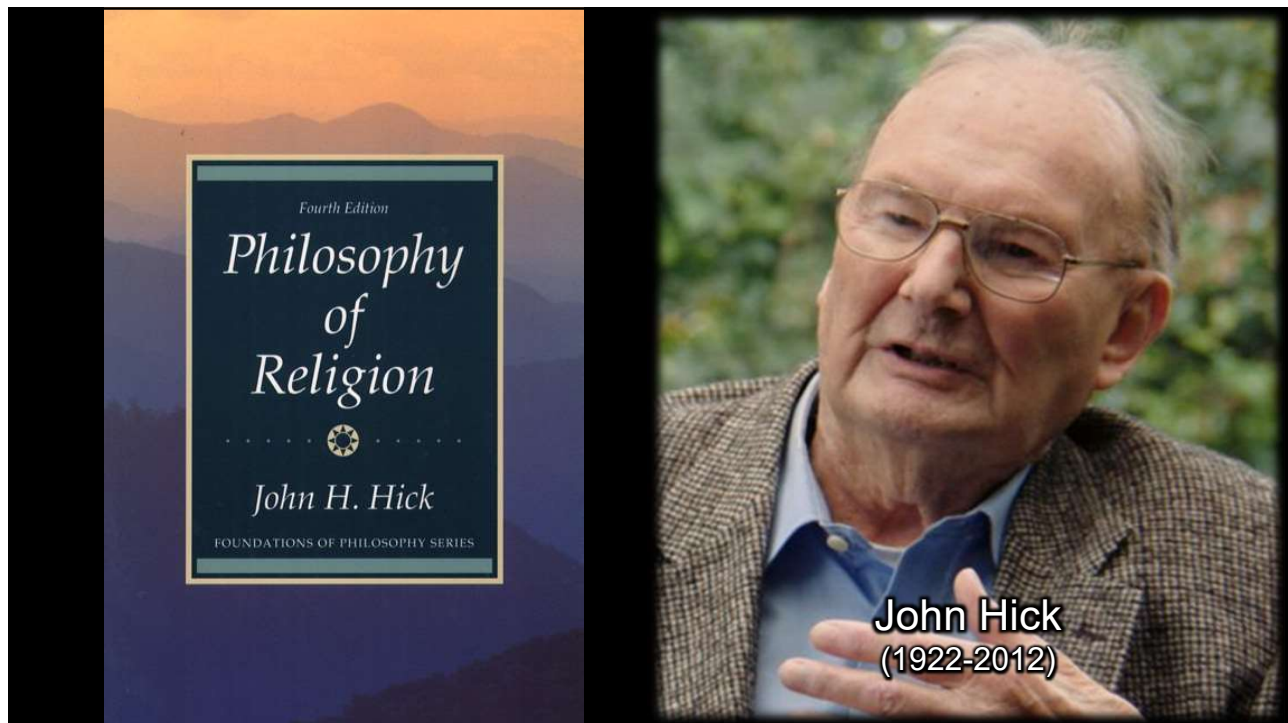
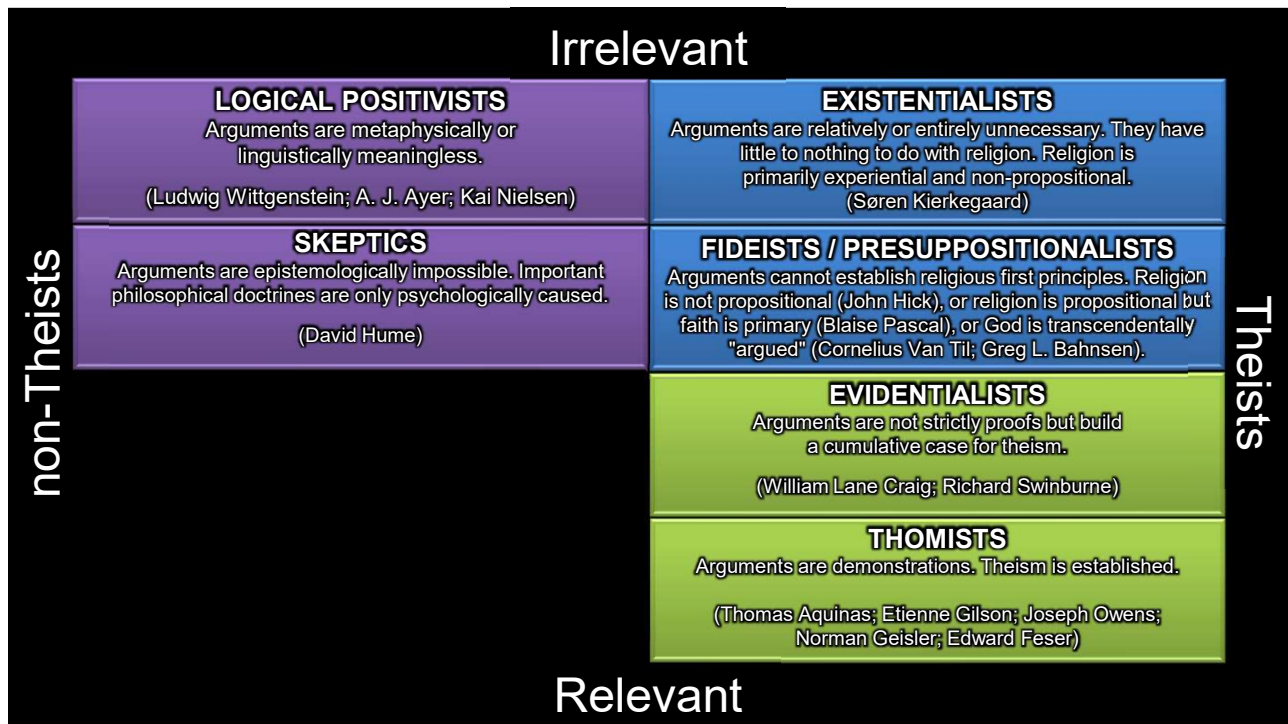
Norman L. Geisler



Edward Feser

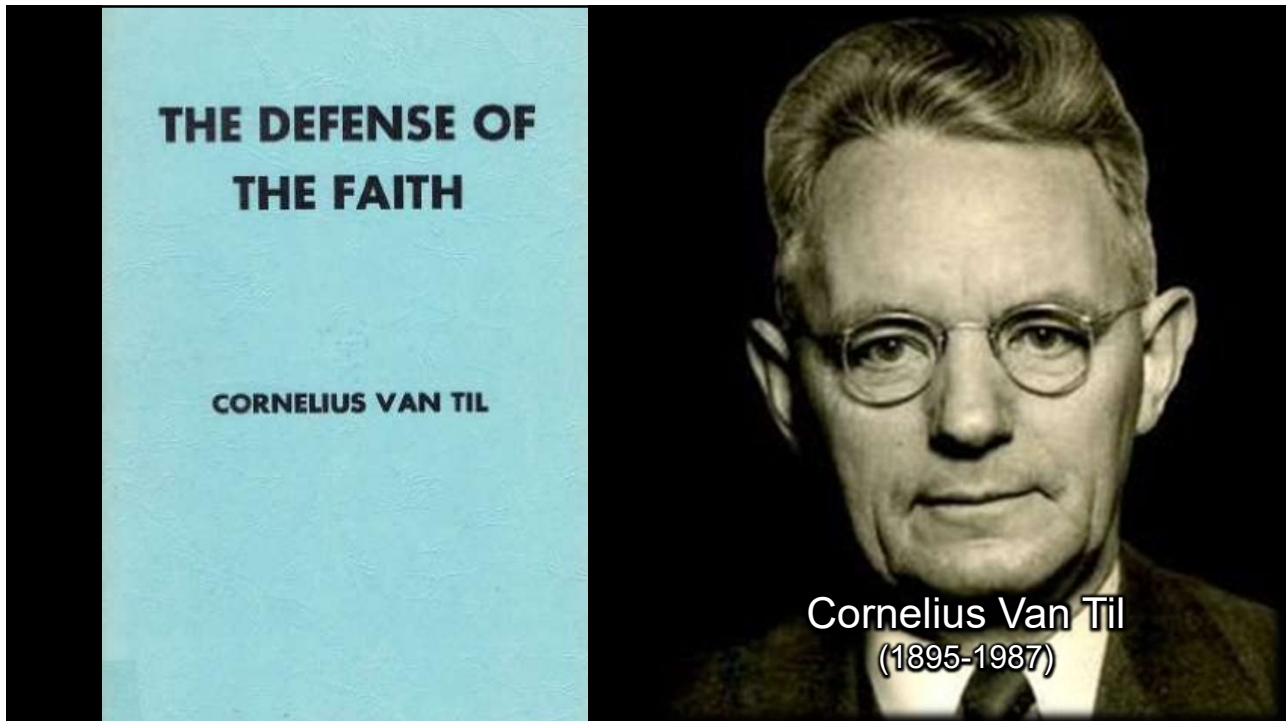




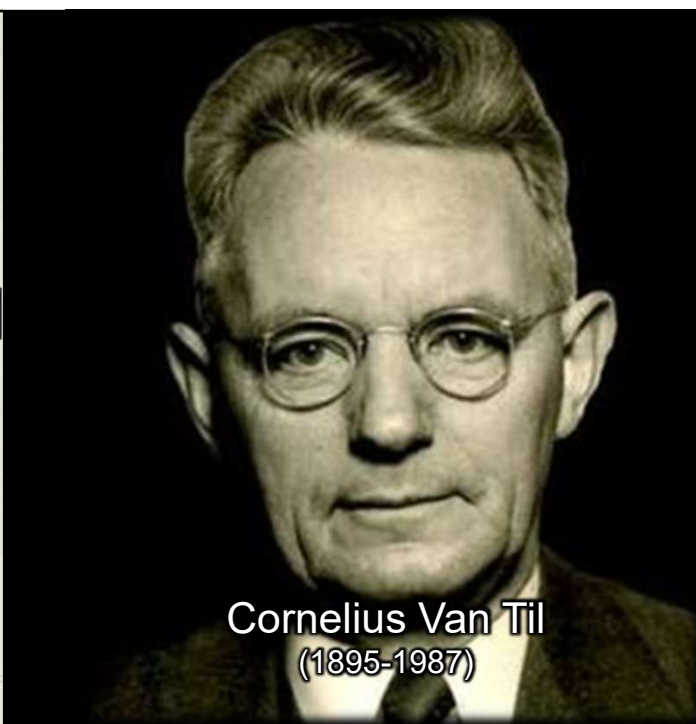
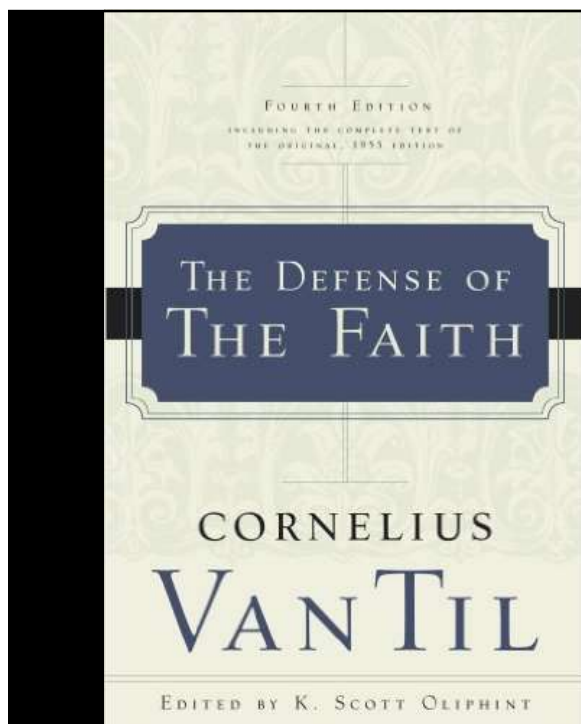




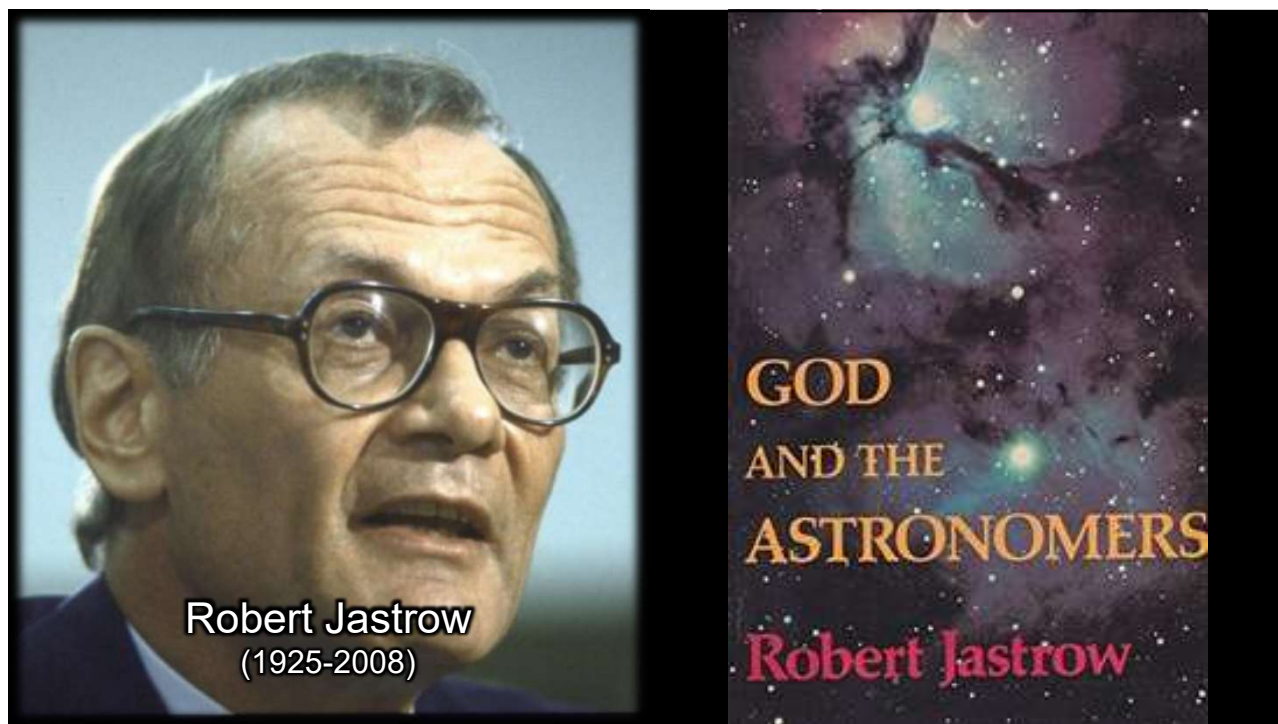
Blaise Pascal
(1623-1662)



Cornelius Van Til
(1895-1987)



| | | |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Irrelevant | | |
| non-Theists | <p>LOGICAL POSITIVISTS Arguments are metaphysically or linguistically meaningless. (Ludwig Wittgenstein; A. J. Ayer; Kai Nielsen)</p> | <p>EXISTENTIALISTS Arguments are relatively or entirely unnecessary. They have little to nothing to do with religion. Religion is primarily experiential and non-propositional. (Søren Kierkegaard)</p> |
| | <p>SKEPTICS Arguments are epistemologically impossible. Important philosophical doctrines are only psychologically caused. (David Hume)</p> | <p>FIDEISTS / PRESUPPOSITIONALISTS Arguments cannot establish religious first principles. Religion is not propositional (John Hick), or religion is propositional but faith is primary (Blaise Pascal), or God is transcendentally "argued" (Cornelius Van Til; Greg L. Bahnsen).</p> |
| | <p>AGNOSTICS Not all of the evidence is in. Theism may be established with further proof. (Robert Jastrow; Anthony Kenny)</p> | <p>EVIDENTIALISTS Arguments are not strictly proofs but build a cumulative case for theism. (William Lane Craig; Richard Swinburne)</p> |
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| | Relevant | |
| Theists | | |



Robert Jastrow
(1925-2008)

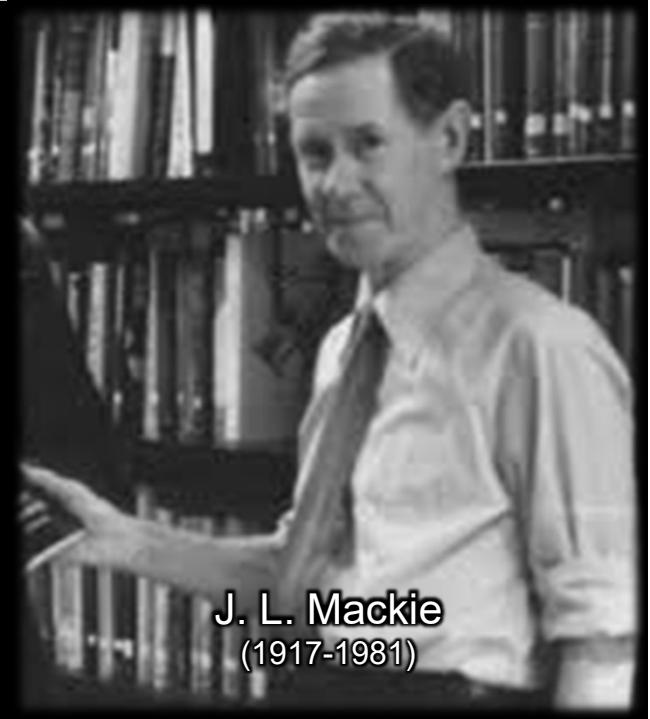
GOD
AND THE
ASTRONOMERS
Robert Jastrow

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|--------------------|---|--|
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| Theists | | |

J.L. Mackie

THE MIRACLE OF THEISM

Arguments for
and against the
Existence of
God



J. L. Mackie
(1917-1981)

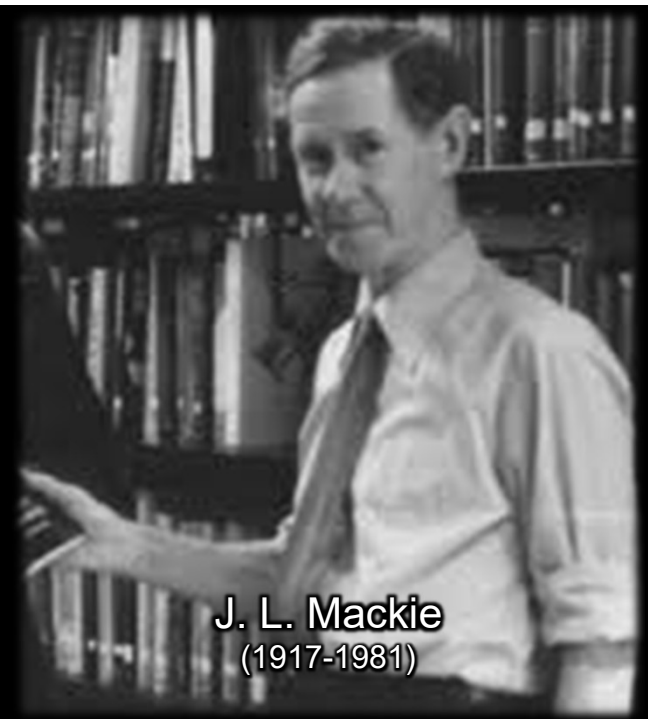


ETHICS

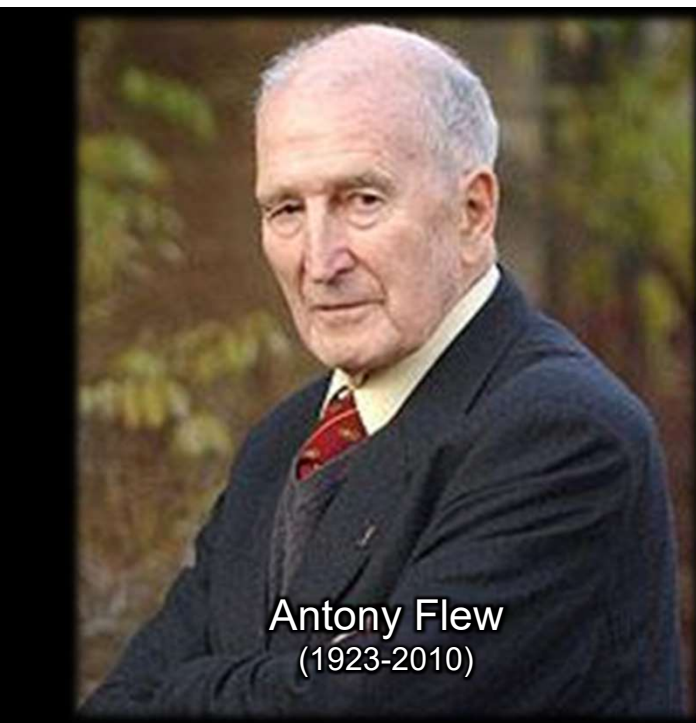
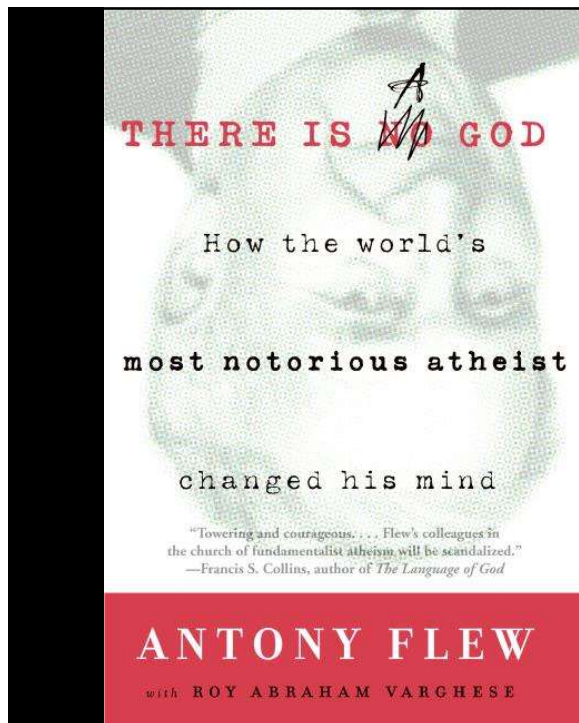
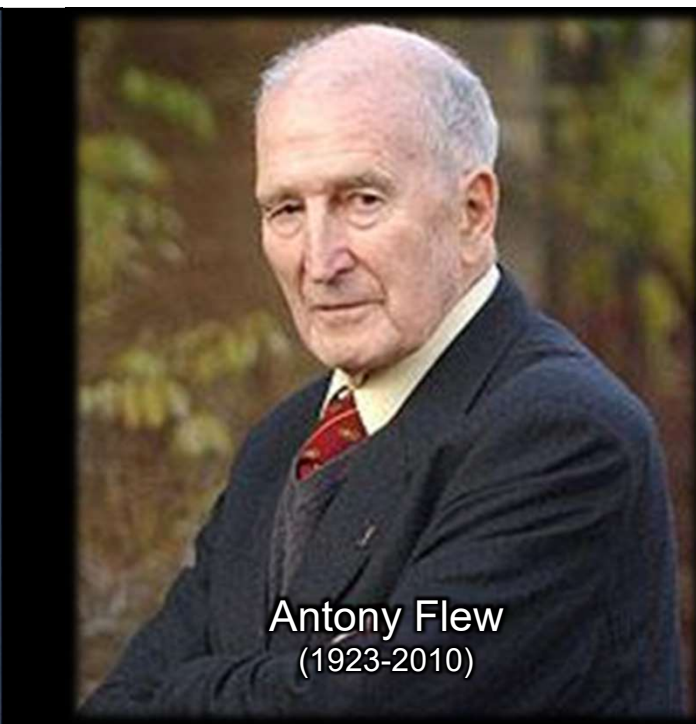
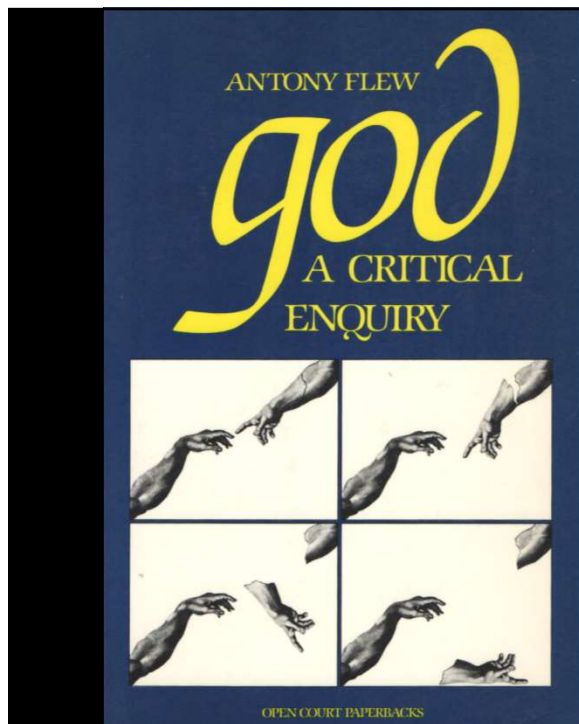
INVENTING
RIGHT AND WRONG

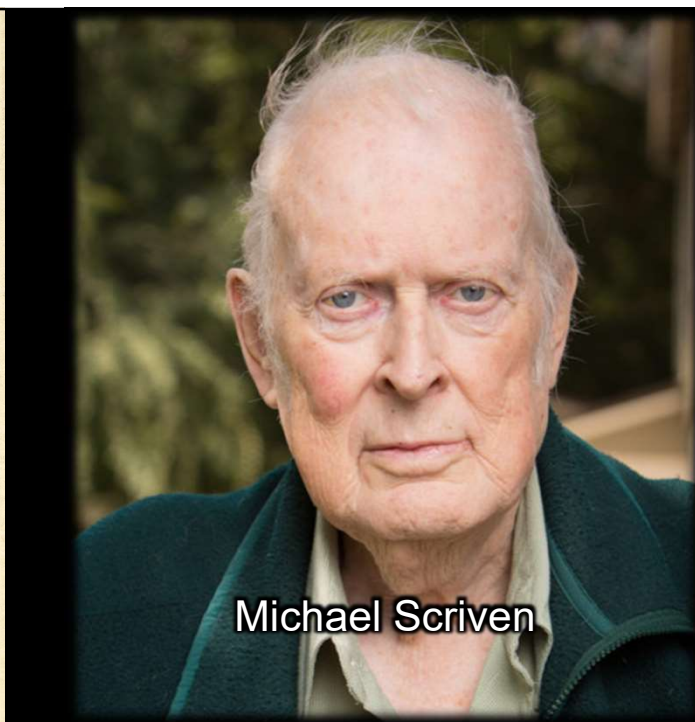
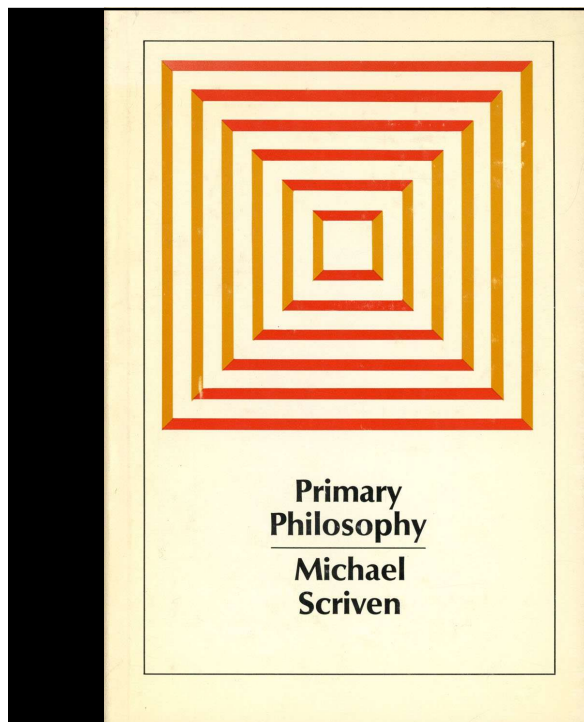


J. L. MACKIE

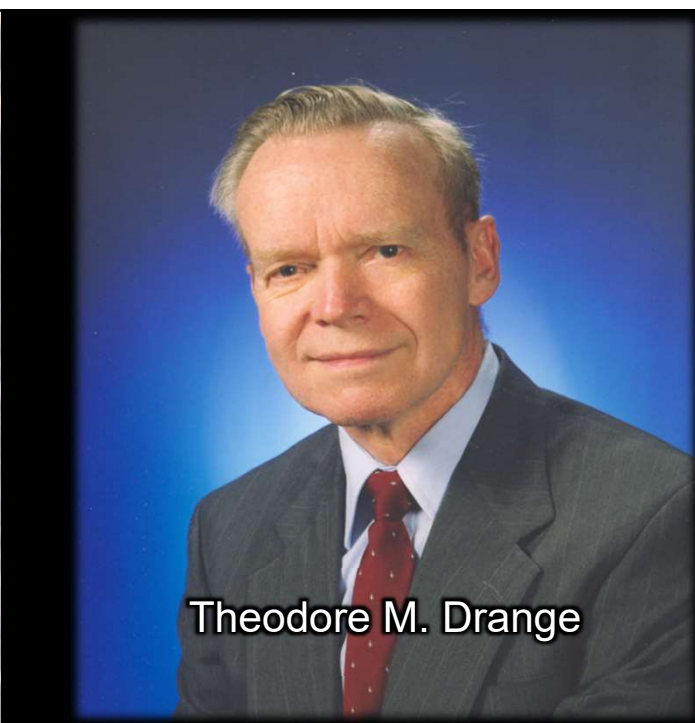
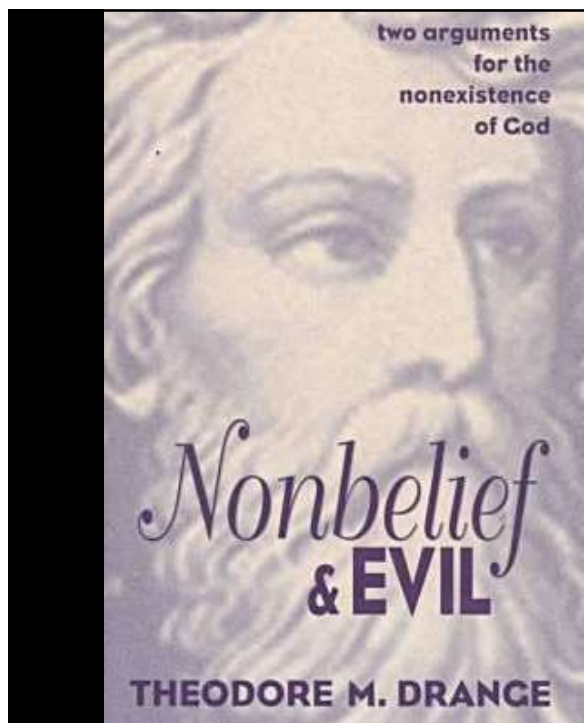


J. L. Mackie
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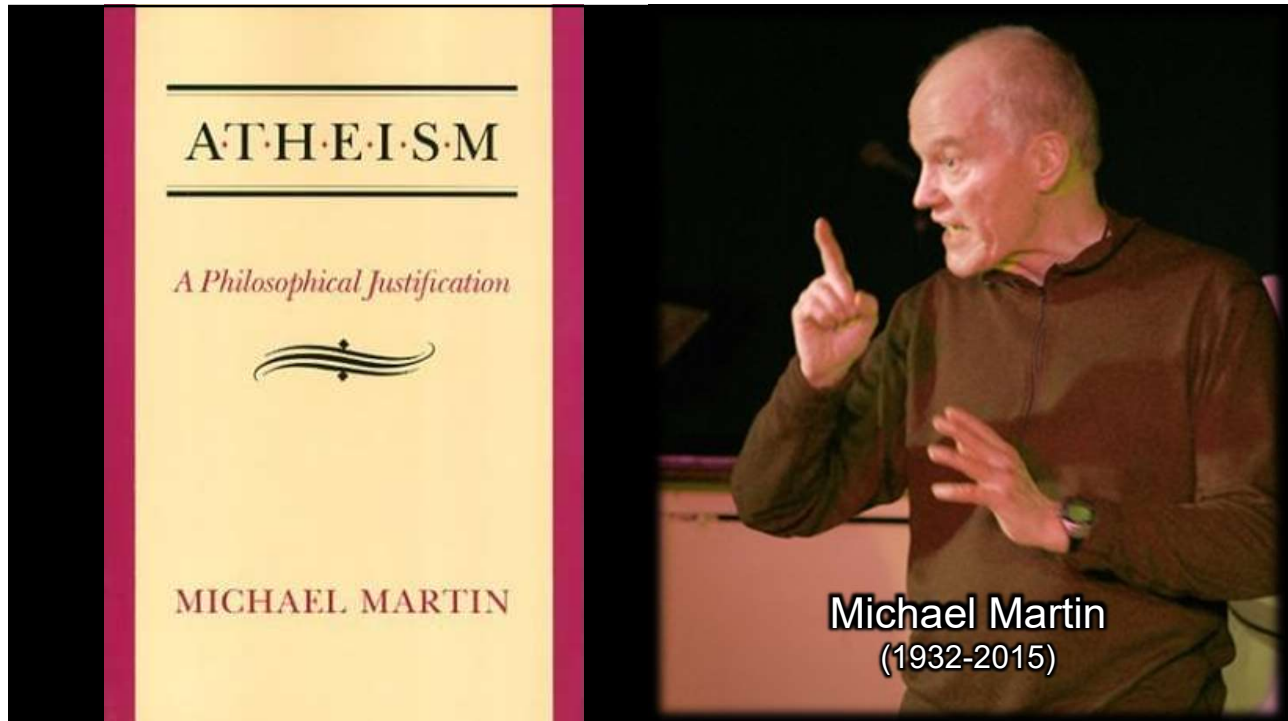




Michael Scriven



Theodore M. Drange



A·T·H·E·I·S·M

A Philosophical Justification



MICHAEL MARTIN

Michael Martin
(1932-2015)

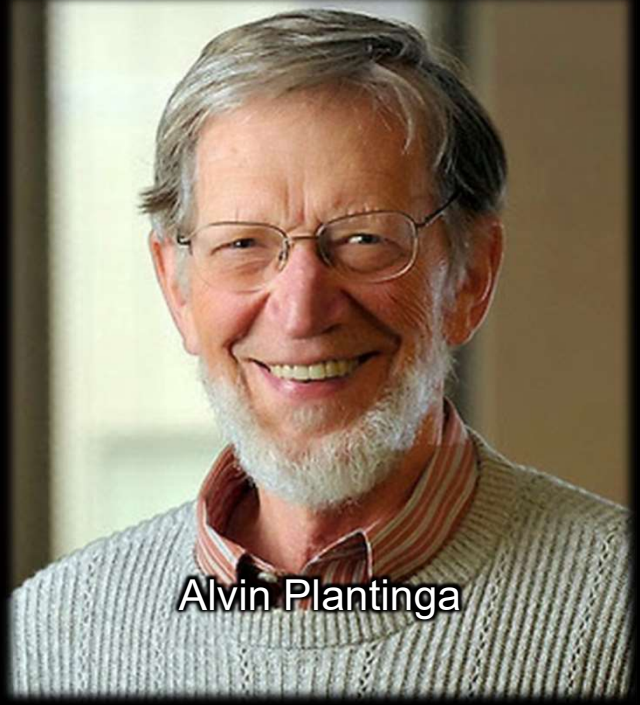
| | | | |
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| | Relevant | | |

GOD
AND
OTHER
MINDS

A Study of the
Rational Justification
of Belief in God

With a new Preface by the author

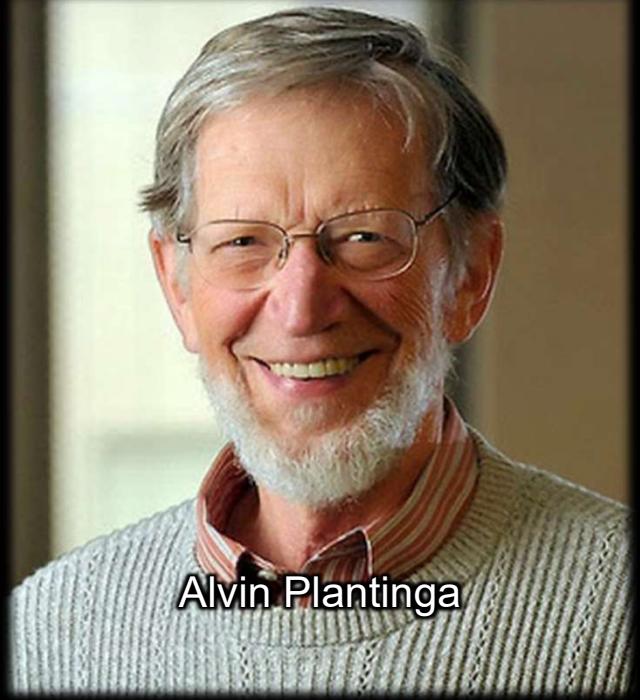
ALVIN PLANTINGA



Alvin Plantinga

Warrant:
THE
Current
Debate

Alvin Plantinga



Alvin Plantinga

