

❖ supernatural ❖

Some use the term 'supernatural' to refer not only to God, but also to any spiritual or immaterial being or action.

❖ supernatural ❖

Thus, according to this usage, the supernatural would include the being and actions of God, angels, and the paranormal / demonic.

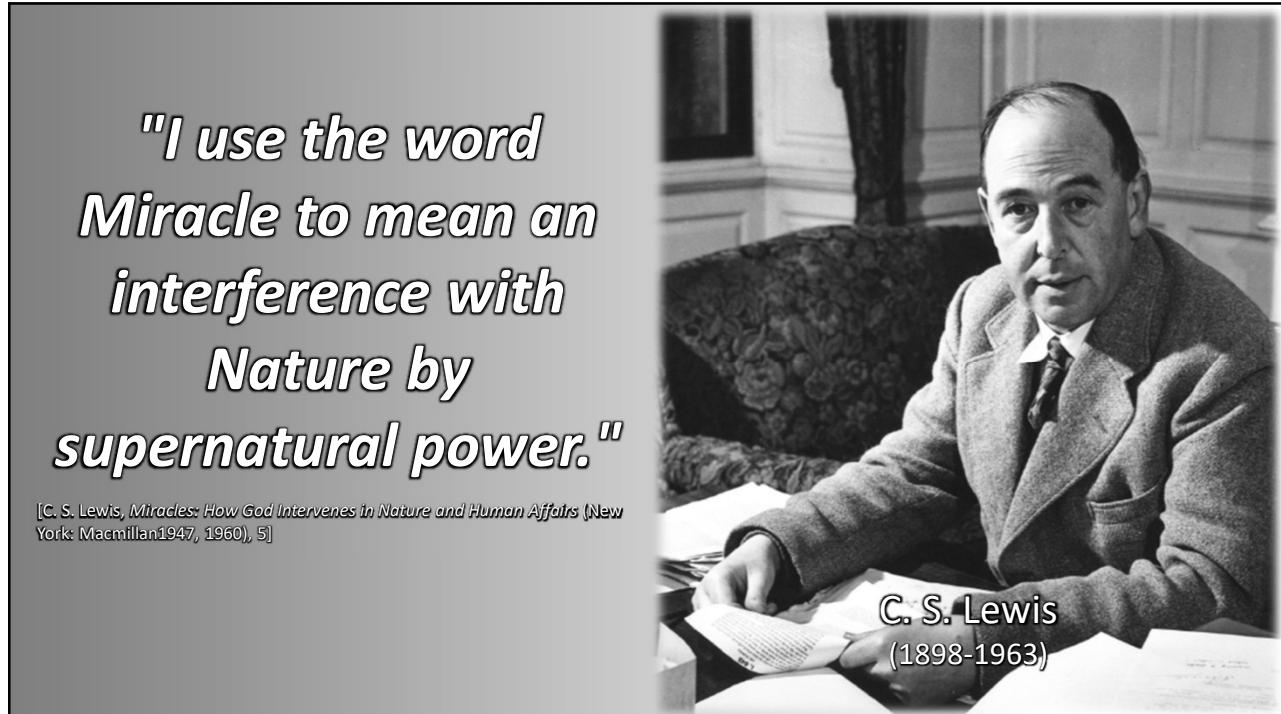
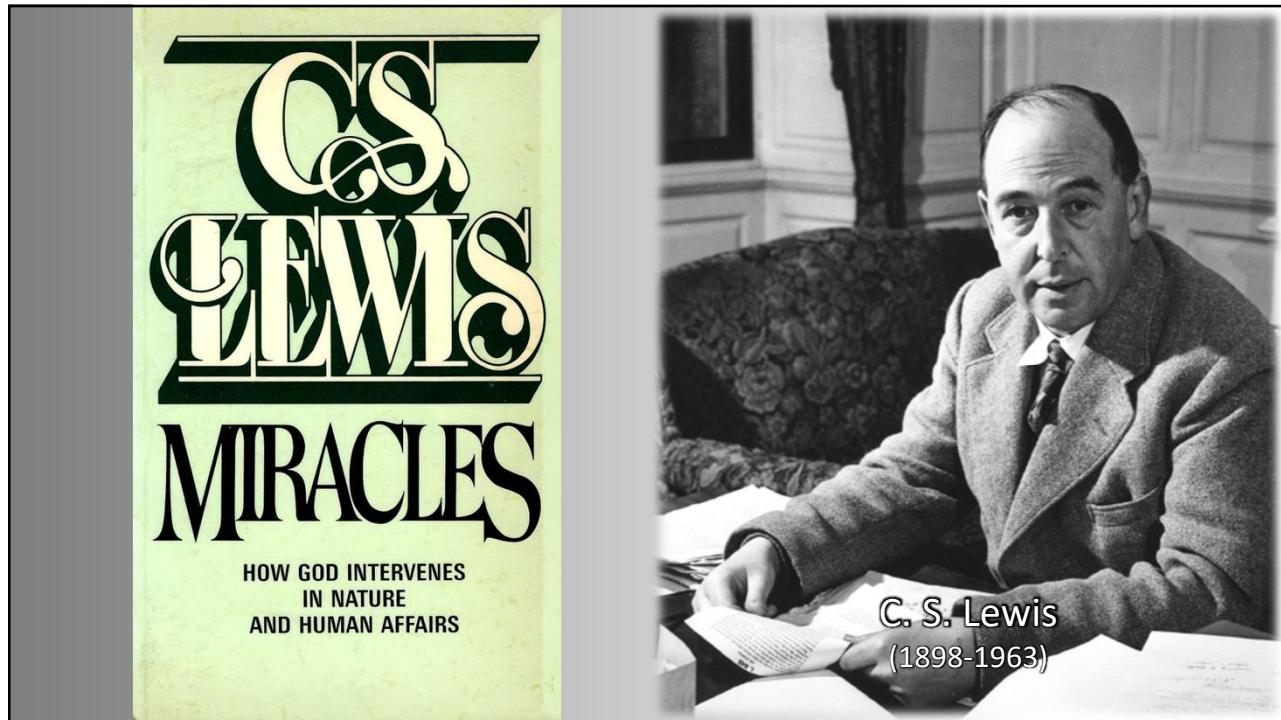
∞ supernatural ∞

I would encourage one to reserve the term 'supernatural' for acts of God alone inasmuch as only God is truly super (i.e., beyond) the natural (i.e., the created).

∞ miracle ∞

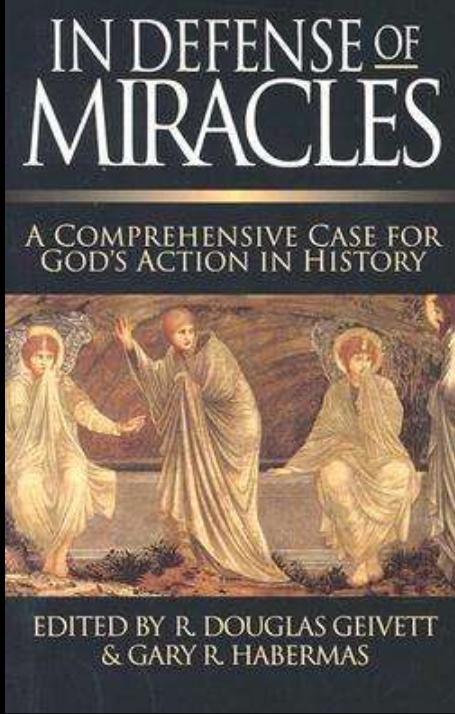
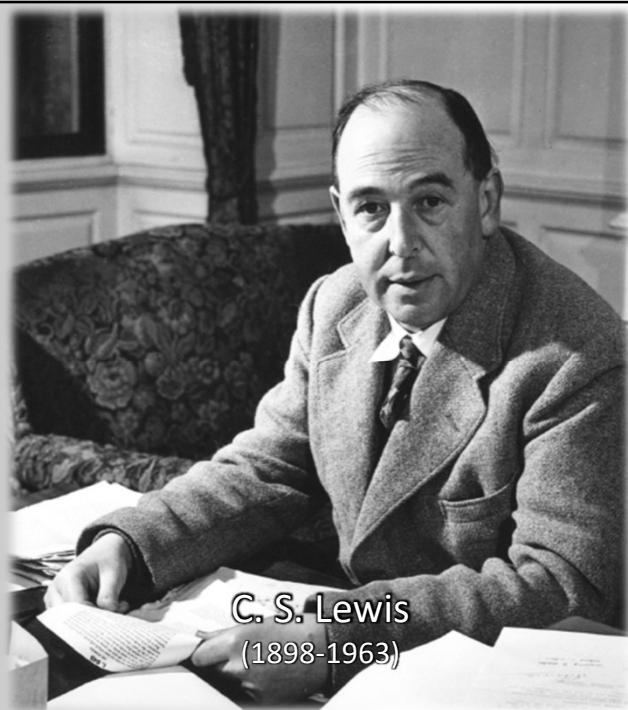
preliminary definition

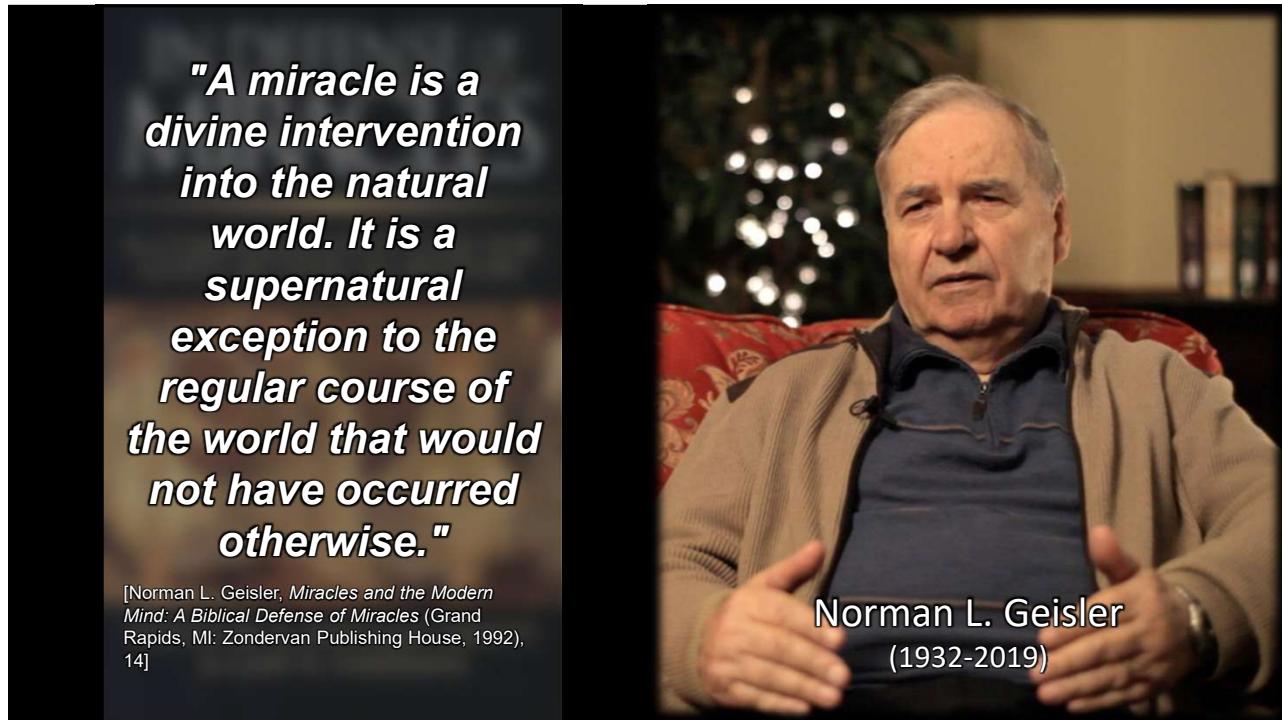
A miracle is an intervention of God into the natural (i.e., created) world that interrupts the natural course of events.



"Unless there exists, in addition to Nature, something else which we may call the supernatural, there can be no miracles."

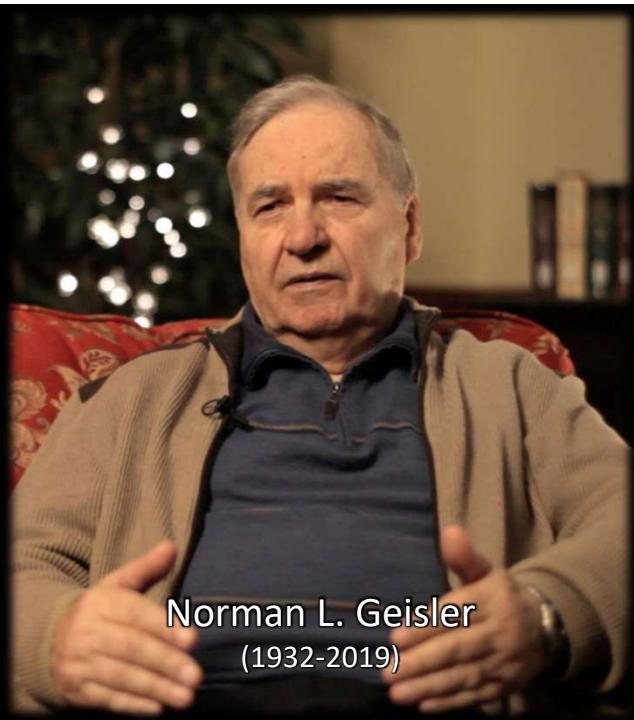
[C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: How God Intervenes in Nature and Human Affairs* (New York: Macmillan 1947, 1960), 5]





"A miracle is a divine intervention into the natural world. It is a supernatural exception to the regular course of the world that would not have occurred otherwise."

[Norman L. Geisler, *Miracles and the Modern Mind: A Biblical Defense of Miracles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 14]



Norman L. Geisler
(1932-2019)



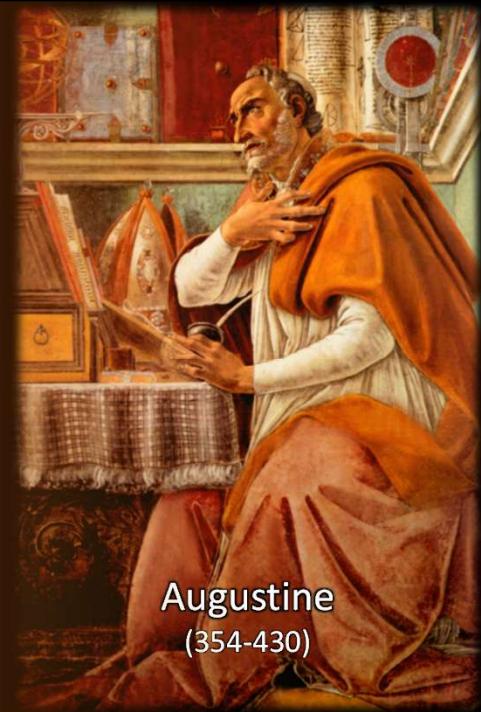
miracle

fuller definition

A miracle is an intervention of God into the natural (i.e., created) world that interrupts the natural course of events for the purpose of vindicating His messenger and confirming His message.

"Men would have laughed [Christ's resurrection and ascension to heaven] out of court ... had not the possibility and actuality of these events been demonstrated by ... the truth of the divine power, with confirmation by miraculous signs."

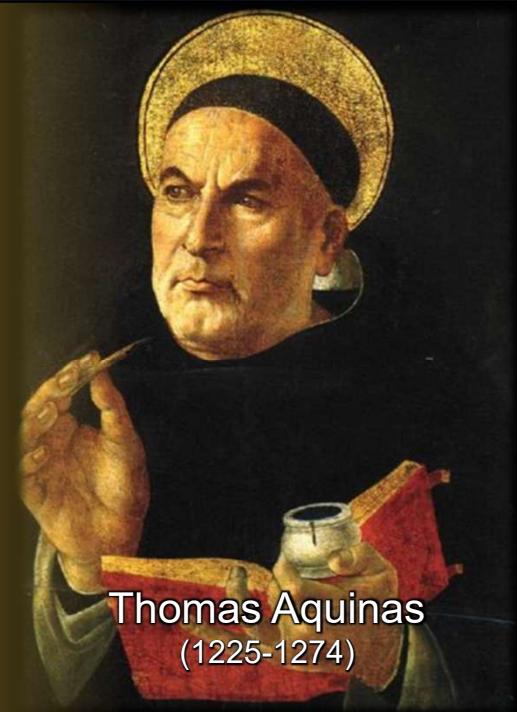
[Augustine, *City of God*, XXII:8, p. 1033]



Augustine
(354-430)

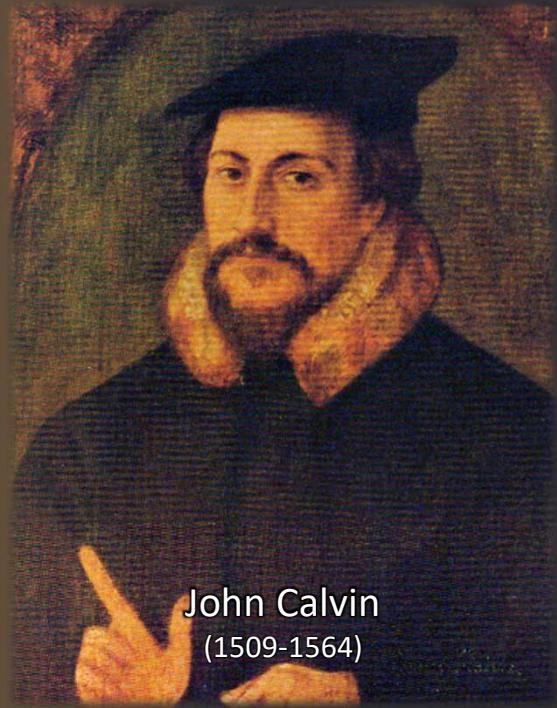
"Just as man led by his natural reason is able to arrive at some knowledge of God through His natural effects, so is he brought to a certain degree of supernatural knowledge of the objects of faith by certain supernatural effects which are called miracles."

[Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, 178, 1; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Complete English Edition in Five Volumes*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981)]



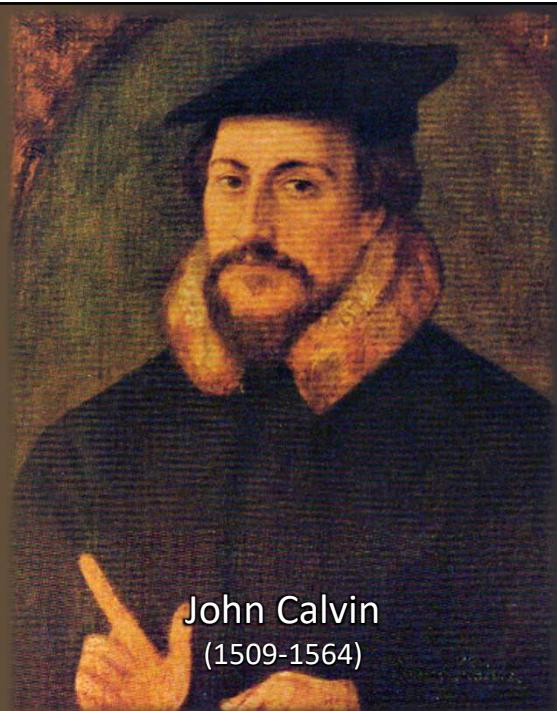
Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

"We have not coined some new gospel, but retain the very one the truth of which is confirmed by all the miracles which Christ and the apostles ever wrought. ..."



John Calvin
(1509-1564)

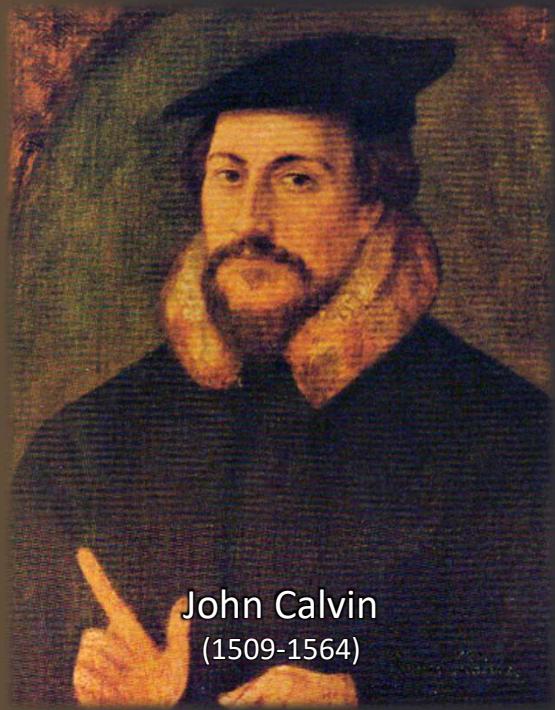
"Mark tells us (Mark xvi. 20) that the signs which followed the preaching of the apostles were wrought in confirmation of it; so Luke also relates that the Lord 'gave testimony to the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done' by the hand of the apostles (Acts xiv. 3).



John Calvin
(1509-1564)

"Very much to the same effect are those words of the apostle, that salvation by a preached gospel was confirmed, 'the Lord bearing witness with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles' (Heb. ii. 4)."

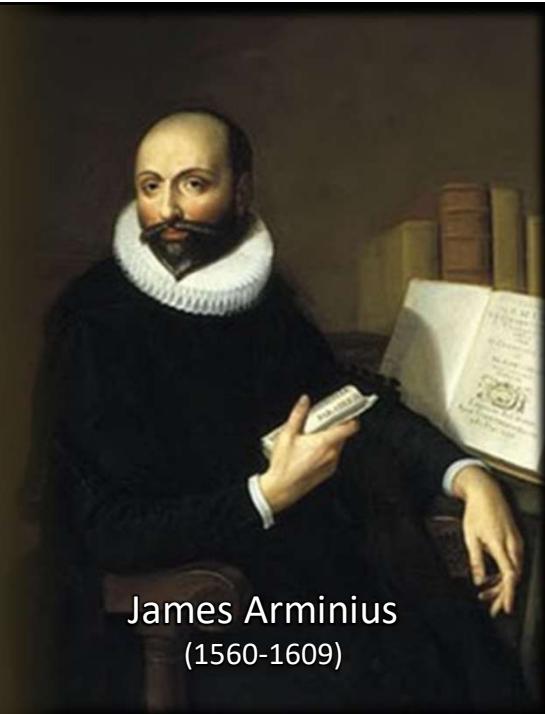
[John Calvin, "Prefatory Address by John Calvin to Francis I., King of France" in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1975), I, I, pp. 8-9]



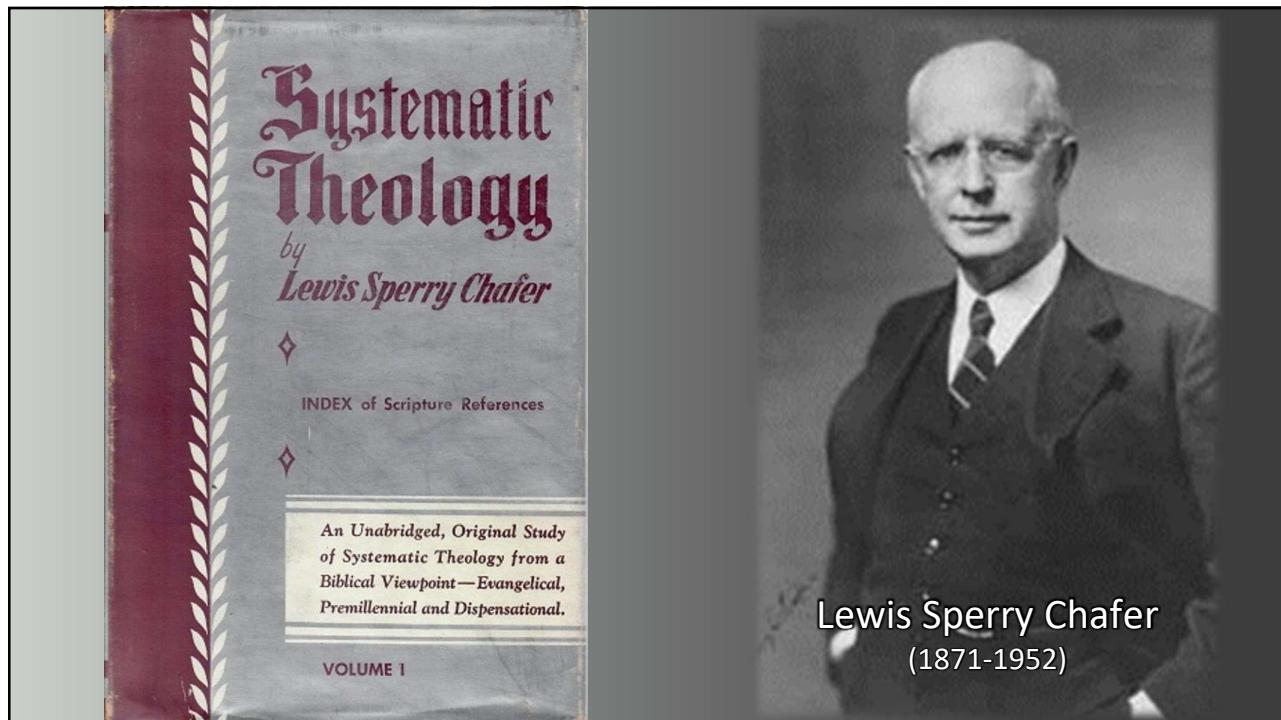
John Calvin
(1509-1564)

"An illustrious evidence of the same divinity is afforded in the miracles, which God has performed by the stewards of his word, his prophets and apostles, and by Christ himself, for the confirmation of his doctrine and for the establishment of their authority."

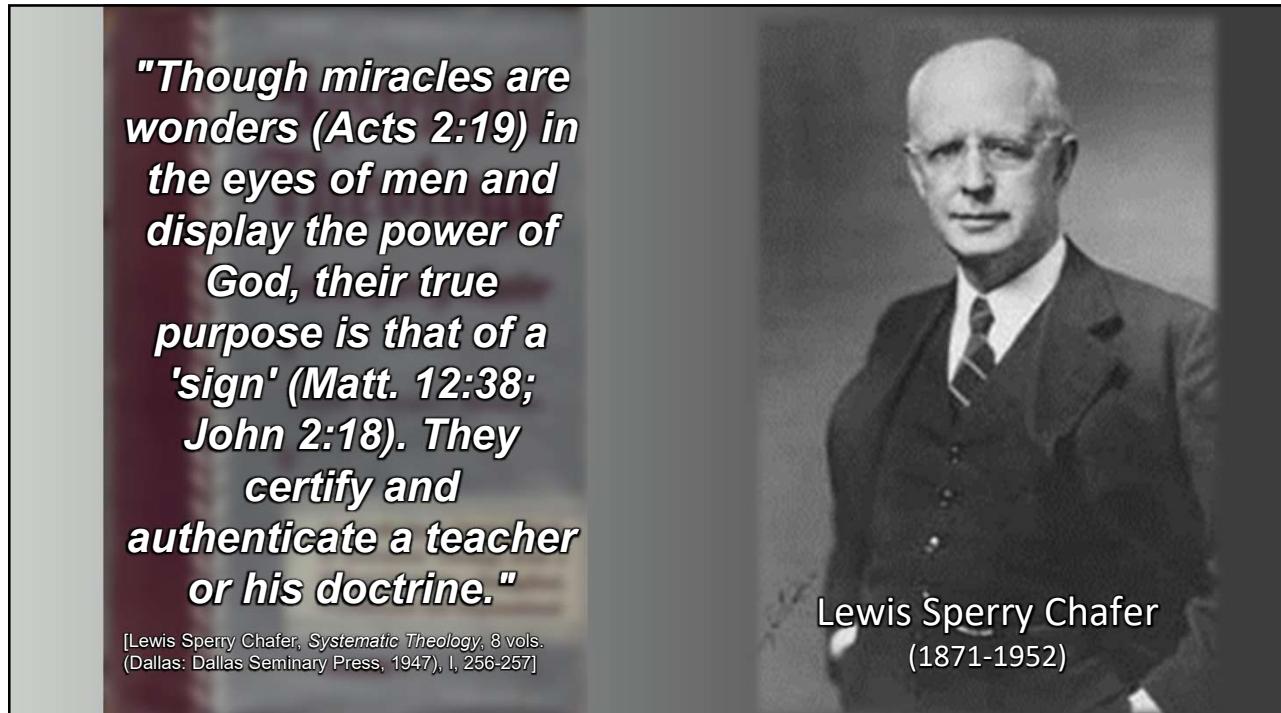
[James Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius*, 3 vols., trans. James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), I, 129-130]



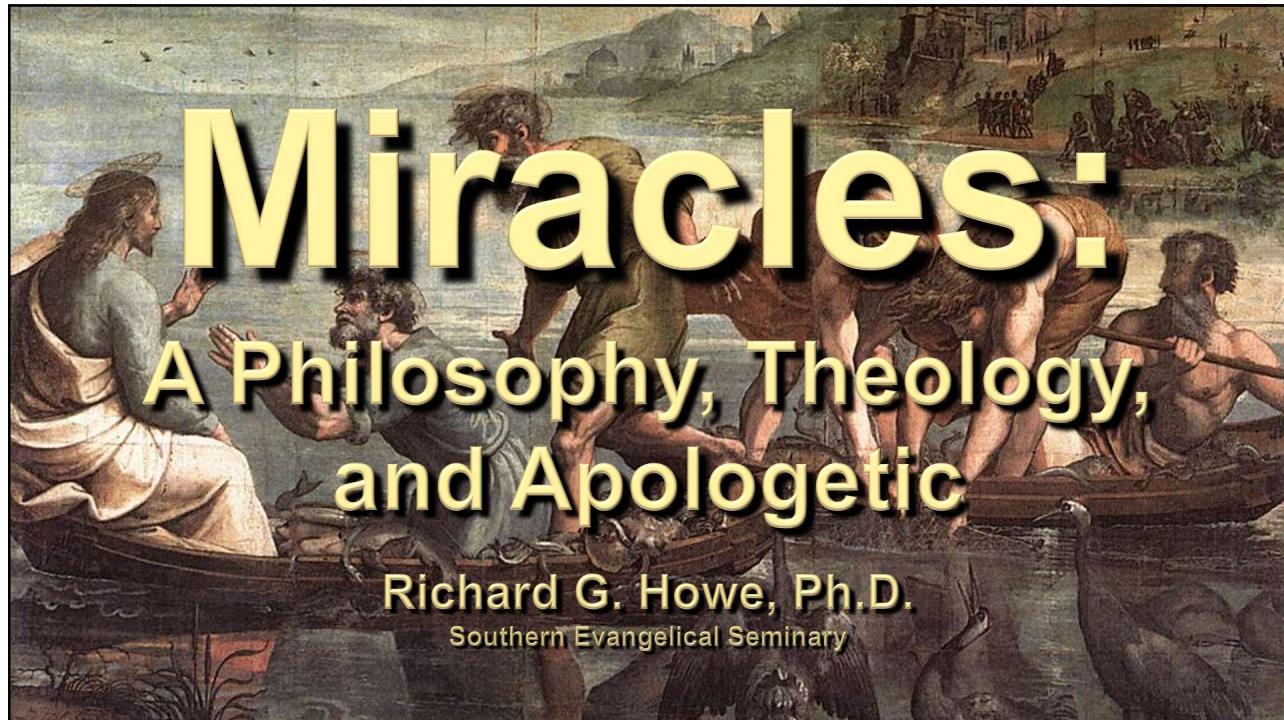
James Arminius
(1560-1609)



Lewis Sperry Chafer
(1871-1952)



Lewis Sperry Chafer
(1871-1952)



∞ science ∞

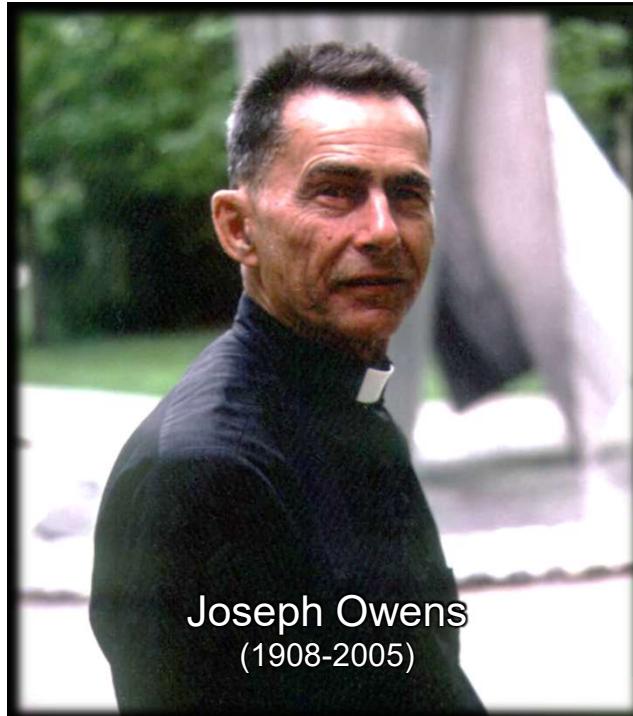
ancient and medieval use of the term

Here 'science' is any area of study and body of knowledge whose truths can be reduced to the first principles of that area.

∞ science ∞

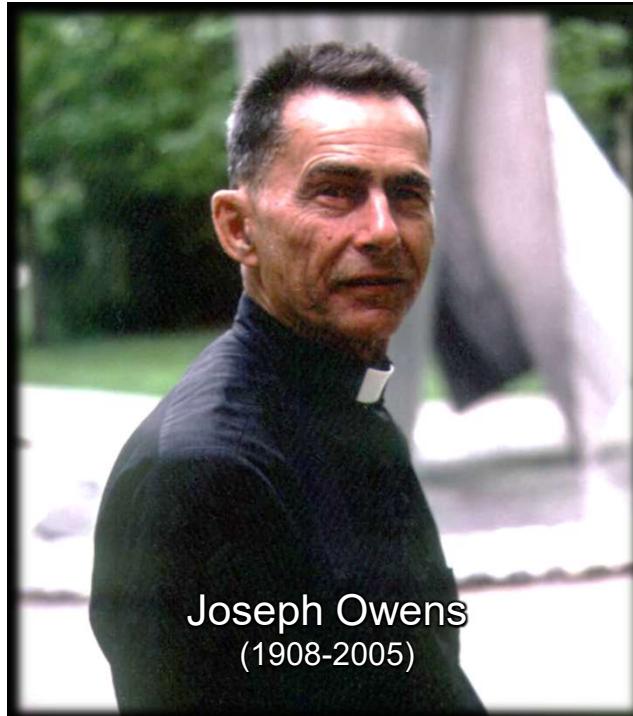
ancient and medieval use of the term

As odd as it may sound to contemporary ears, by this ancient and medieval usage of the term 'science', both theology and philosophy would be sciences.



Joseph Owens
(1908-2005)

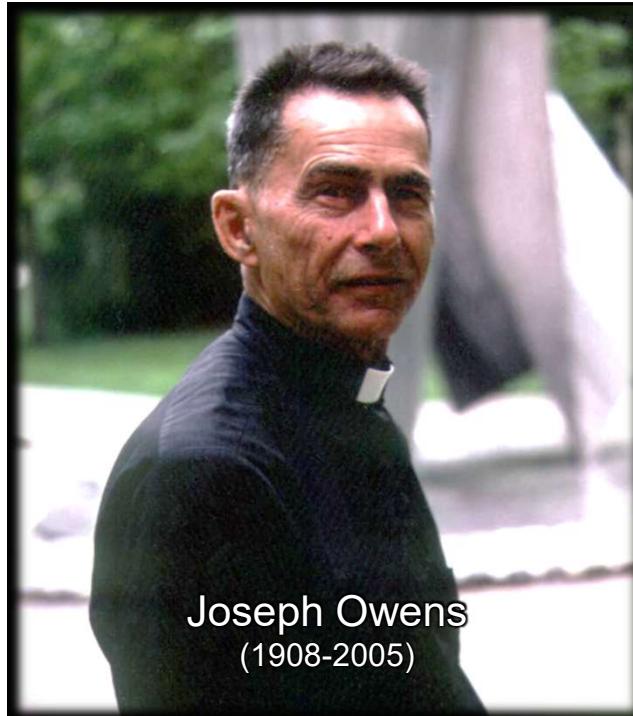
"In this tradition [that goes back to Plato and Aristotle], 'science' has a much wider and richer meaning than it has in the popular understanding of the word today. It means knowledge of a thing in light of its causes. It extends to any kind of explanation of things through the causes that account for their nature, their origin, and their function,



Joseph Owens
(1908-2005)

"whether the causes are in the sensible or the supersensible realm. In this tradition 'science' or 'scientific knowledge' includes mathematics, philosophy of nature, metaphysics, logic, and ethics, as well as the experimental sciences. ..."

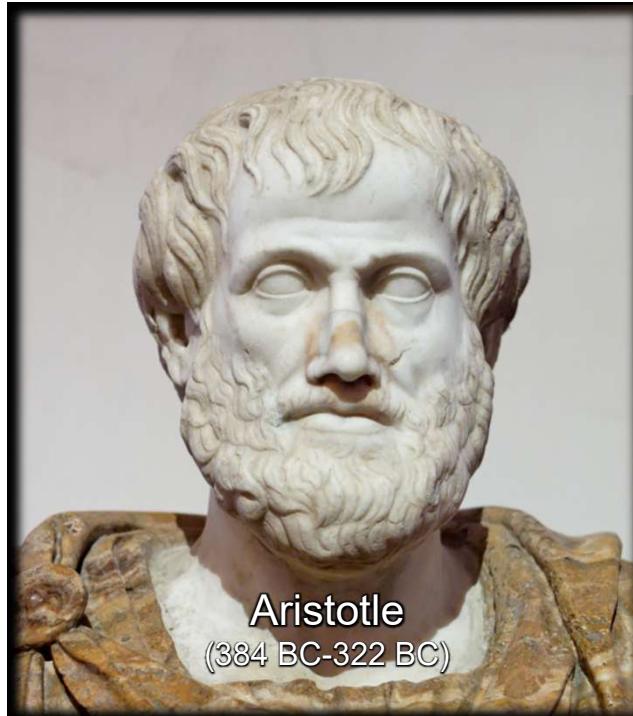
[Joseph Owens, "The 'Analytics' and Thomistic Metaphysical Procedure," *Mediaeval Studies* 26 (1964): 83-108 (87-88)]



Joseph Owens
(1908-2005)

"This traditional [i.e., ancient and medieval] use of the word "science" is still alive today, in spite of the way in which the term has been appropriated to the experimental sciences in popular use."

[Joseph Owens, "The 'Analytics' and Thomistic Metaphysical Procedure," *Mediaeval Studies* 26 (1964): 83-108 (87-88)]



Aristotle
(384 BC-322 BC)

"And the most exact of the sciences [ἐπιστημῶν; epistēmōn] are those which deal most with first principles."

[Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, trans. W. D. Ross in Richard McKeon, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, (New York: Random House, 1941), 691]

"Sacred doctrine is a science [scientiam]. We must bear in mind that there are two kinds of sciences. There are some which proceed from a principle known by the natural light of the intelligence, such as arithmetic ... There are some which proceed from the principles known by the light of a higher science. ... So it is that sacred doctrine is a science, because it proceeds from the principles established by the light of a higher science, namely, the science of God and the blessed."

[Summa Theologiae I, Q.1, art. 2]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

science
ancient and medieval use of the term
In this regard, not only would areas like physics be regarded as a science but also metaphysics and theology.

∞ science ∞

contemporary use of the term

In contemporary usage, the term 'science' has become difficult to define to everyone's satisfaction.

∞ science ∞

contemporary use of the term

But one relatively uncontroversial aspect of a definition of science is that it is confined to the study of the physical or material world.

∞ science ∞

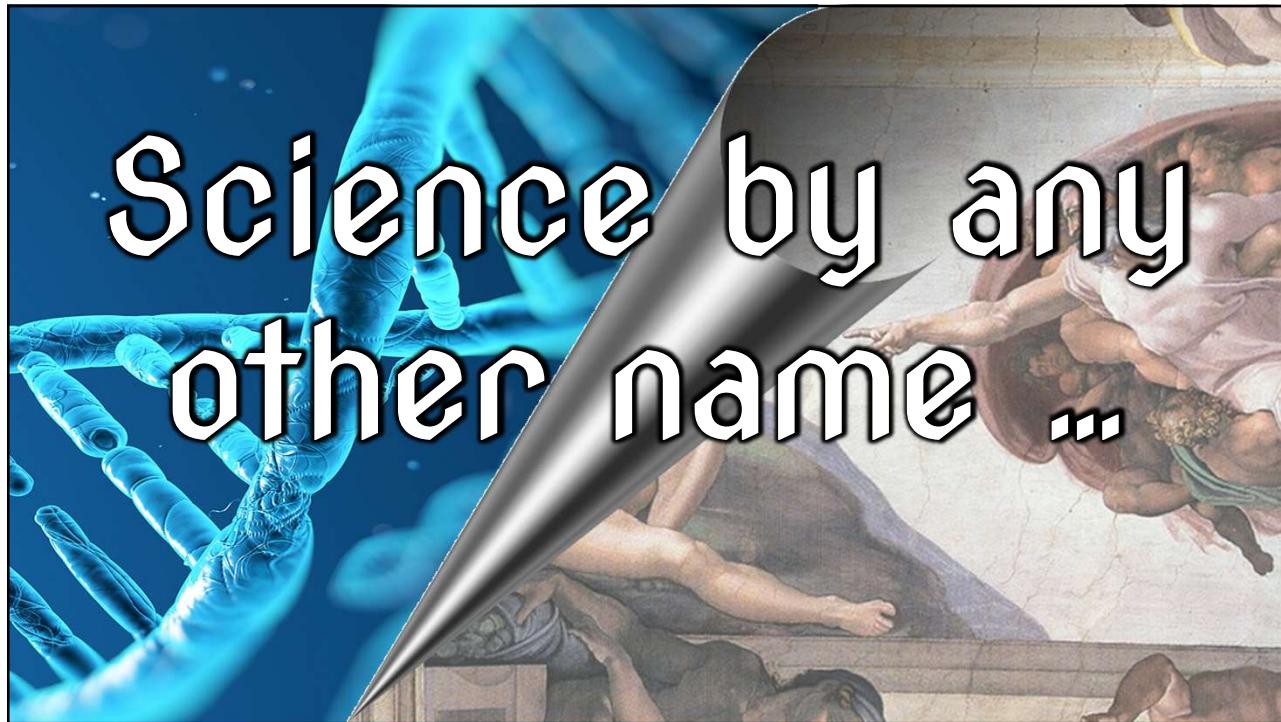
contemporary use of the term

In this regard, while physics would be considered a science, metaphysics (i.e., a branch of philosophy) and theology would not.

∞ science ∞

contemporary use of the term

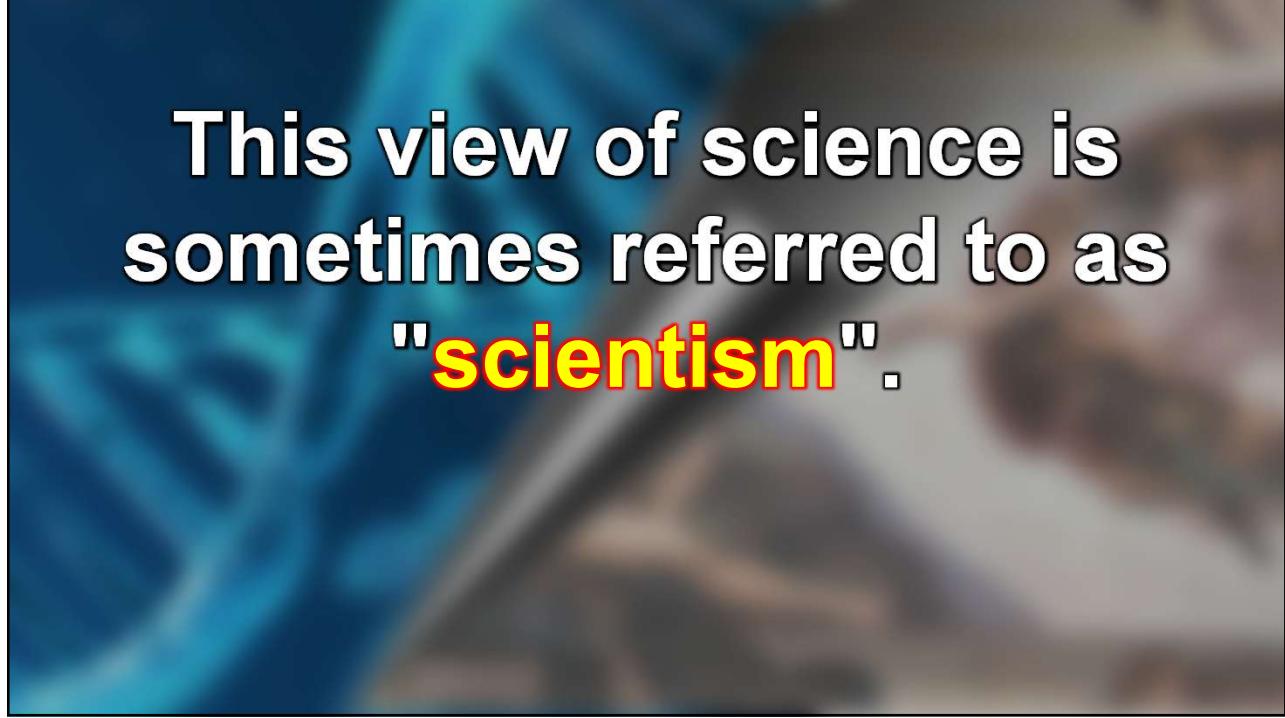
The issue before us is whether there is any aspect of reality that is beyond the physical or material world and is thus beyond science in the contemporary sense of the term.



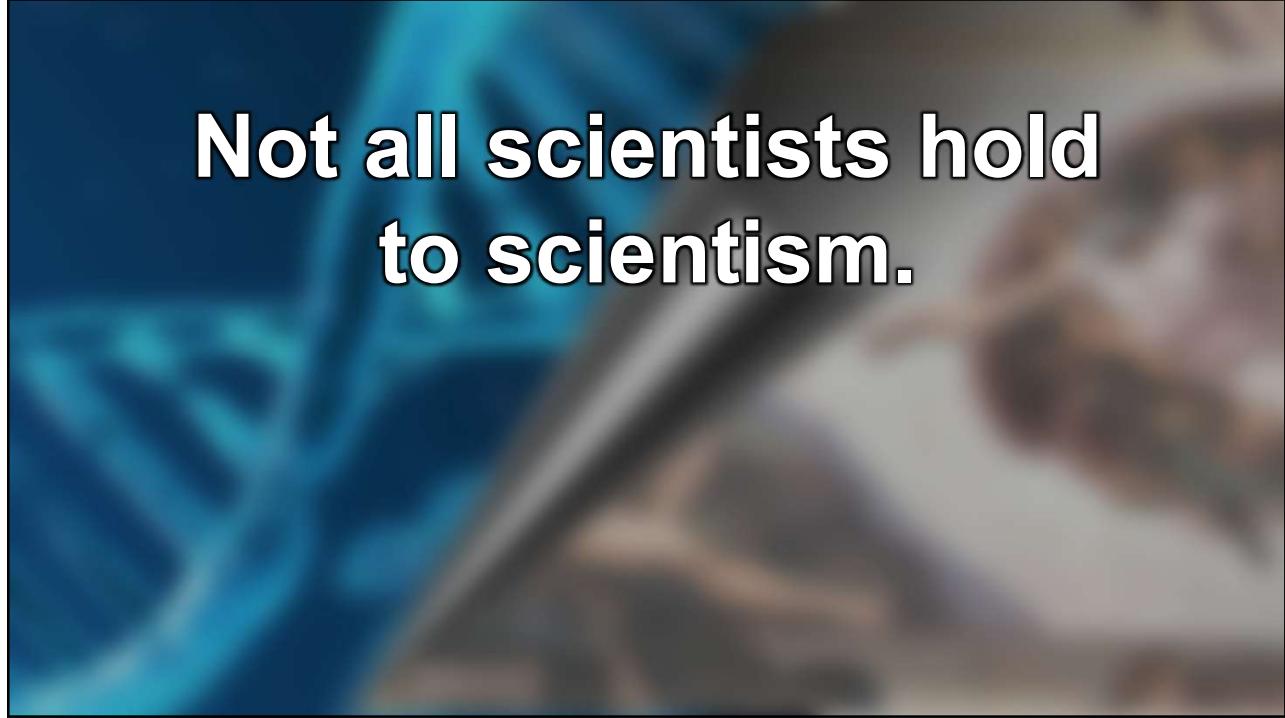
**Some scientists insist that
that science and its
methods are the only way
to discover or measure
truths about reality.**

**They maintain that
miracles and the
supernatural fall outside
the scope of the
"scientific method."**

**In effect, this amounts to
saying that that miracles
and the supernatural
are not real.**



This view of science is sometimes referred to as "scientism".



Not all scientists hold to scientism.

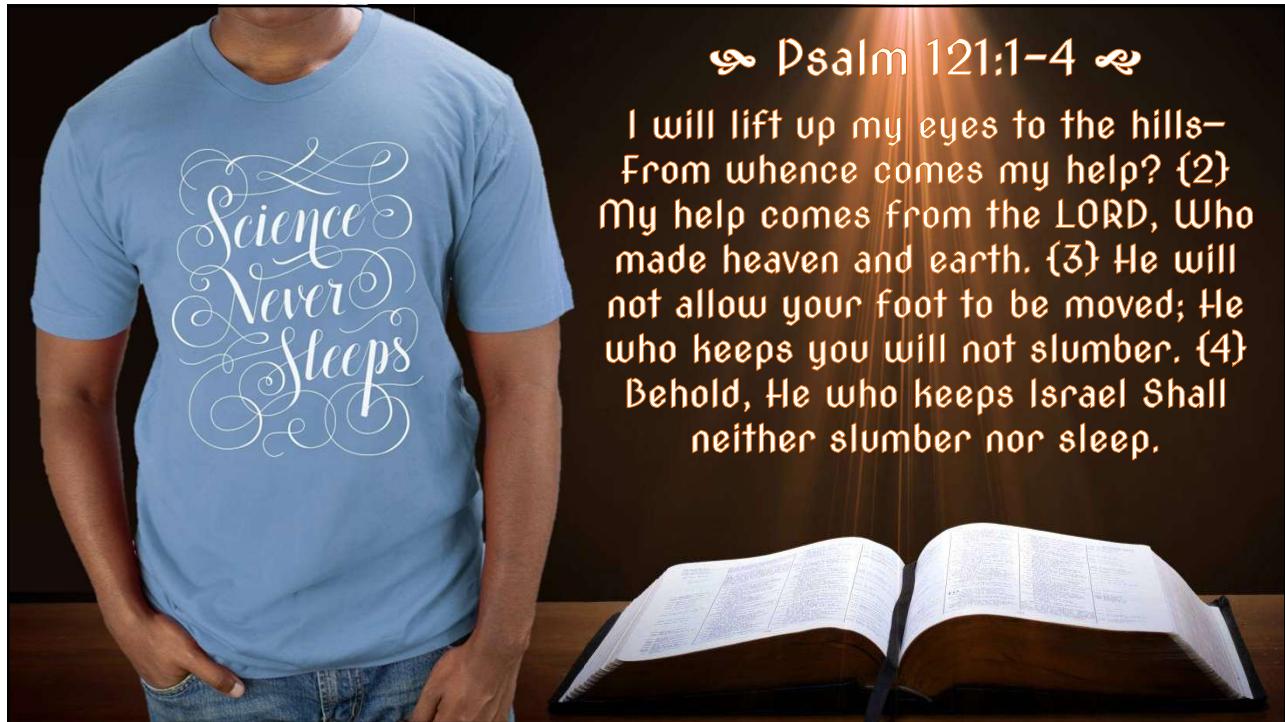
For the most part, those who hold to scientism do not use this term to refer to their own views.

It originated more or less as a pejorative term used by critics of the view.

It would seem, however, to be no less an appropriate label of the view.





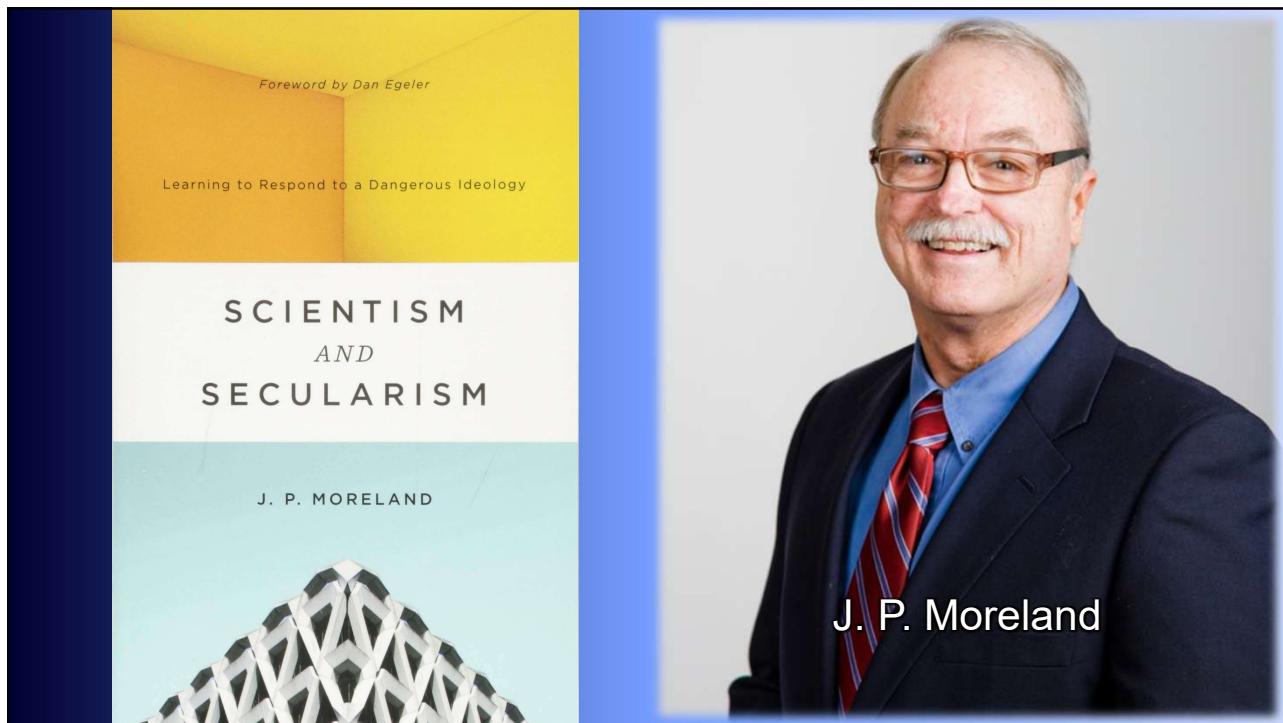


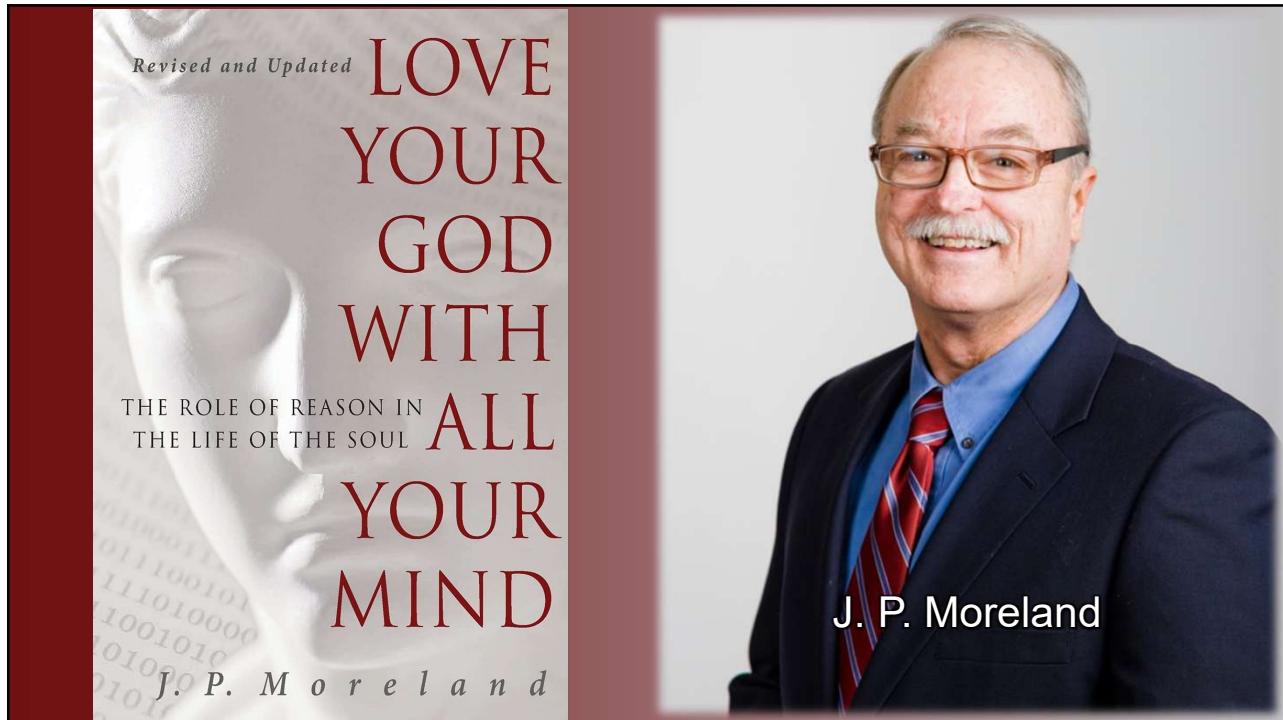
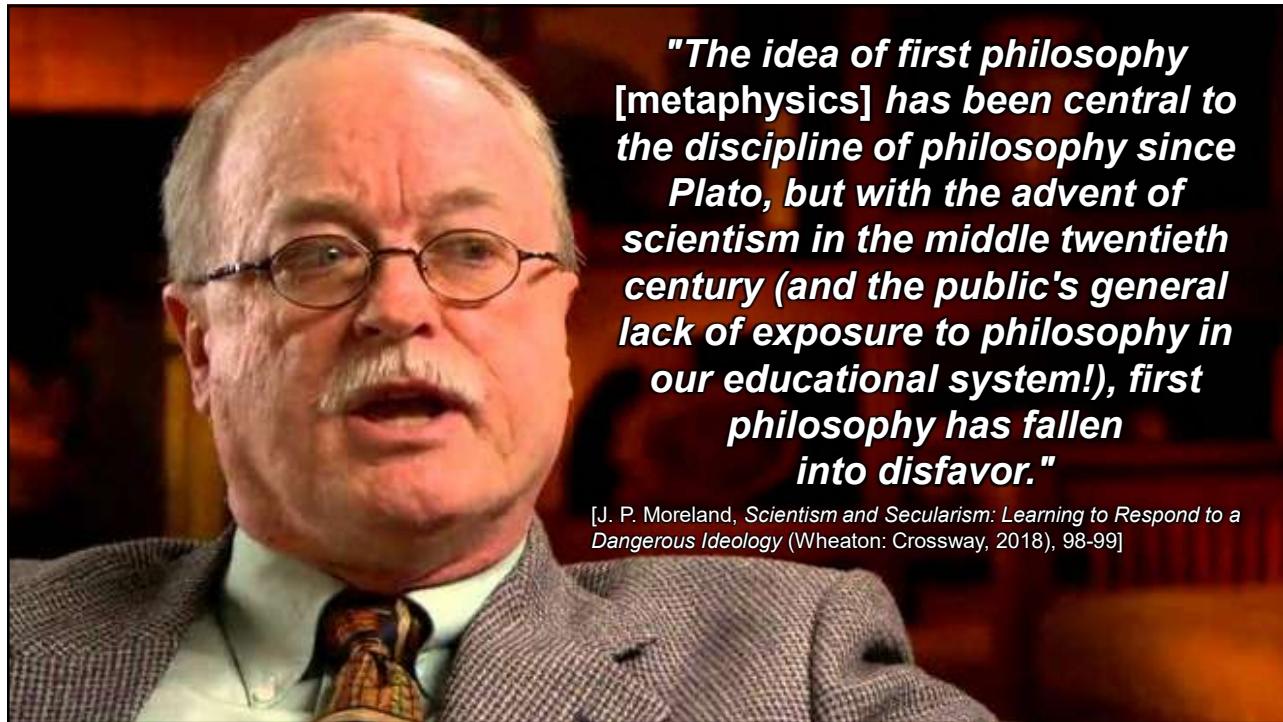
Psalm 121:1-4

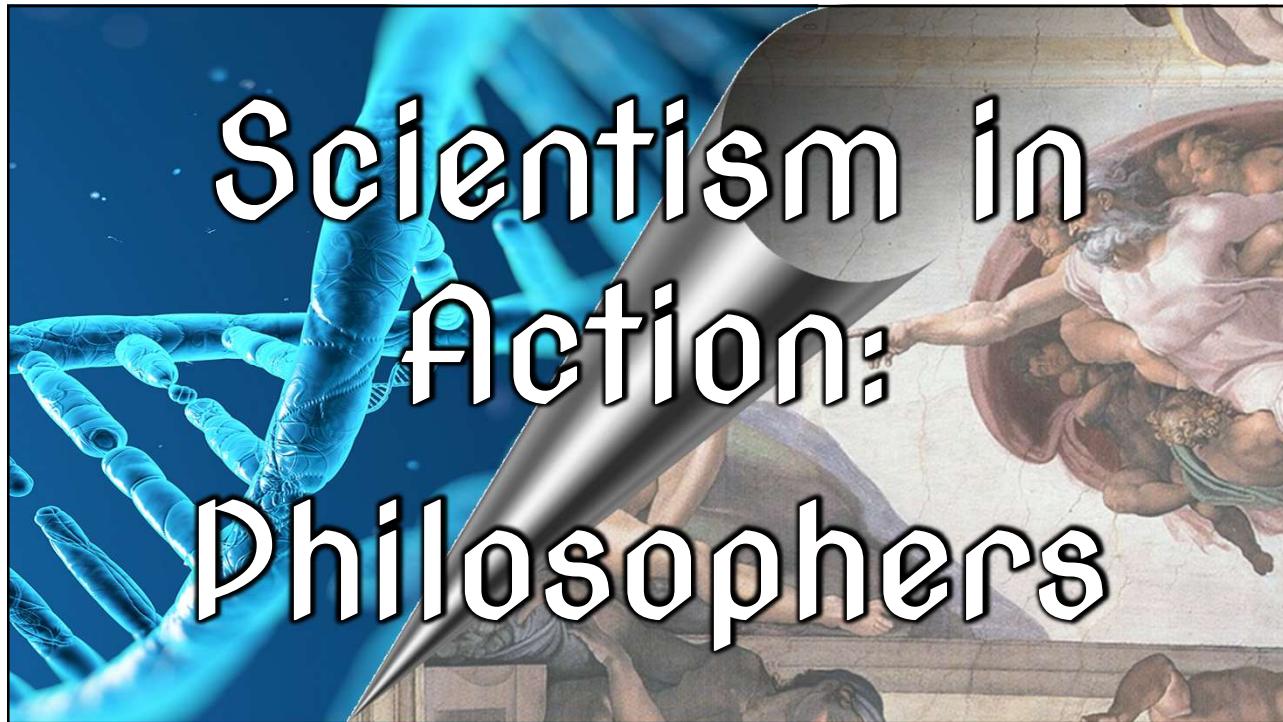
I will lift up my eyes to the hills—
From whence comes my help? {2}
My help comes from the LORD, Who
made heaven and earth. {3} He will
not allow your foot to be moved; He
who keeps you will not slumber. {4}
Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall
neither slumber nor sleep.



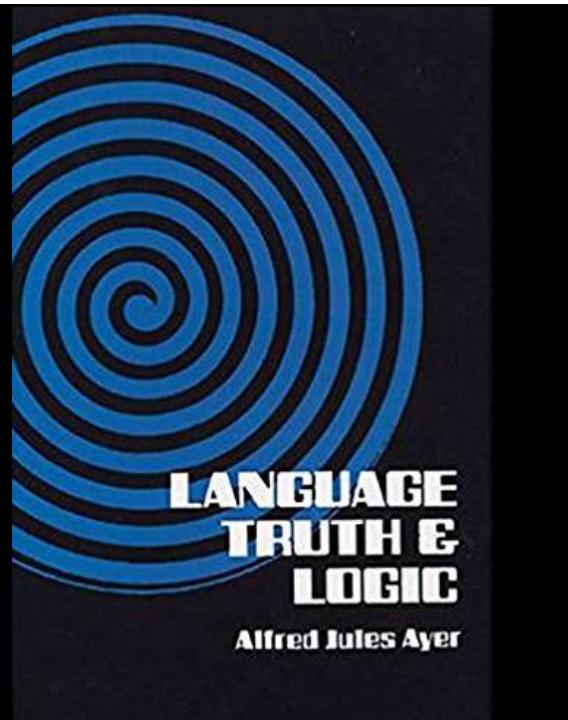
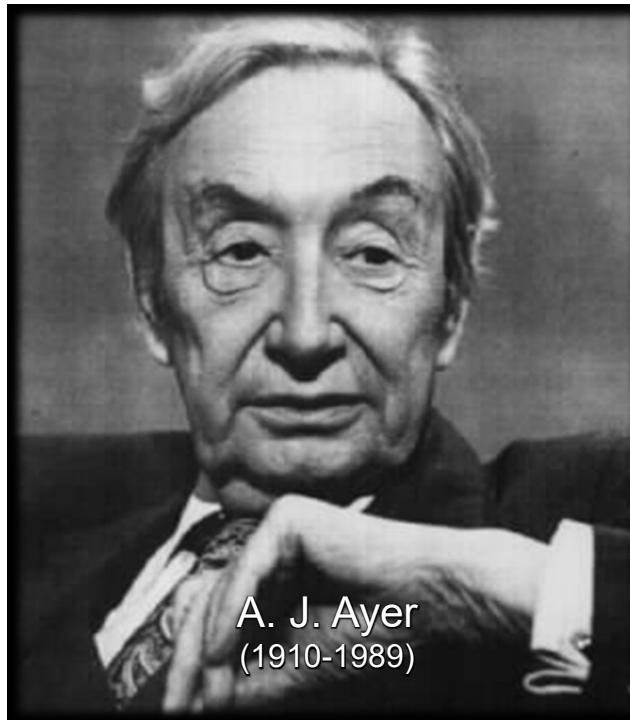


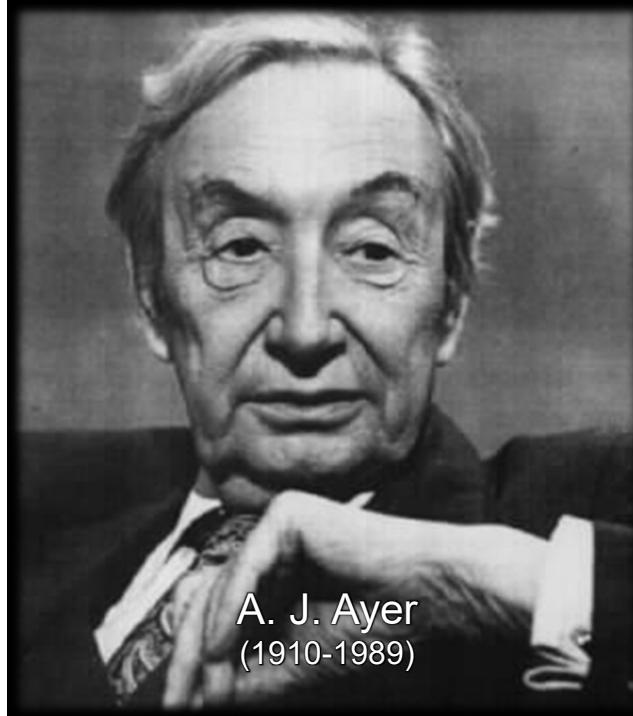






Scientism in Action: Philosophers

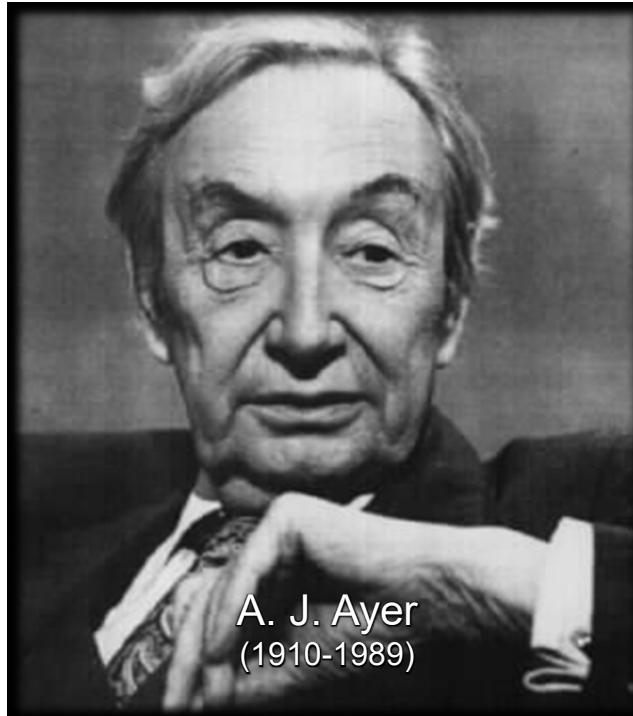




A. J. Ayer
(1910-1989)

"We mean also to rule out the supposition that philosophy can be ranged alongside the existing sciences, as a special department of speculative knowledge."

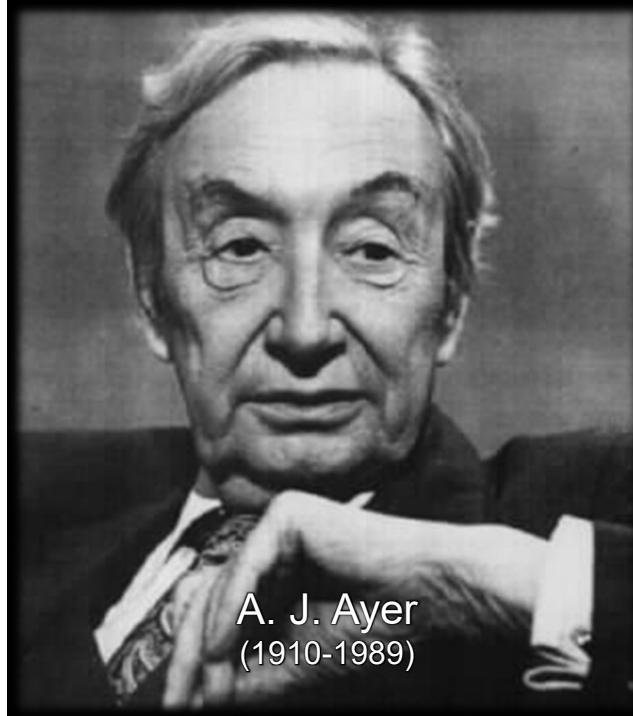
[A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), 48]



A. J. Ayer
(1910-1989)

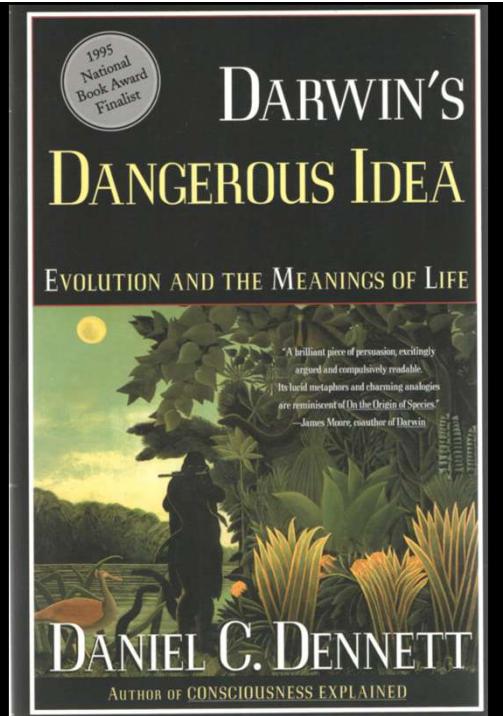
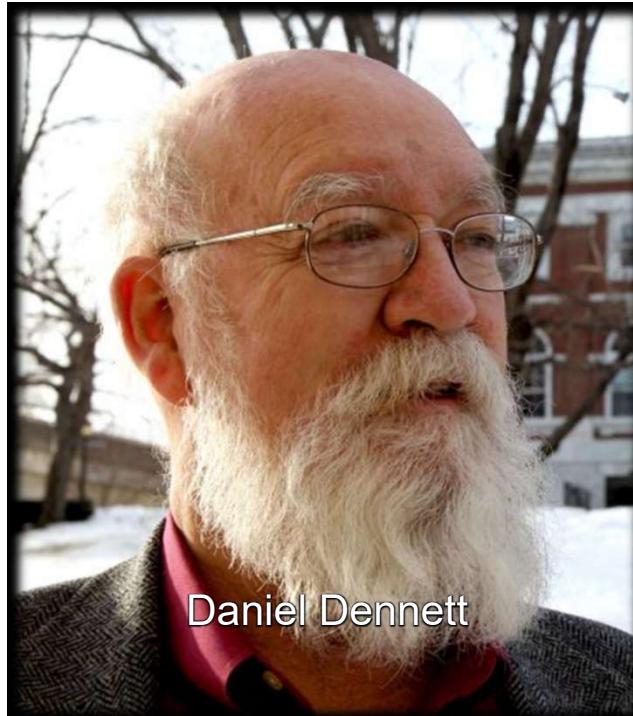
"There is no field of experience which cannot, in principle, be brought under some form of scientific law, and no type of speculative knowledge about the world which it is, in principle, beyond the power of science to give."

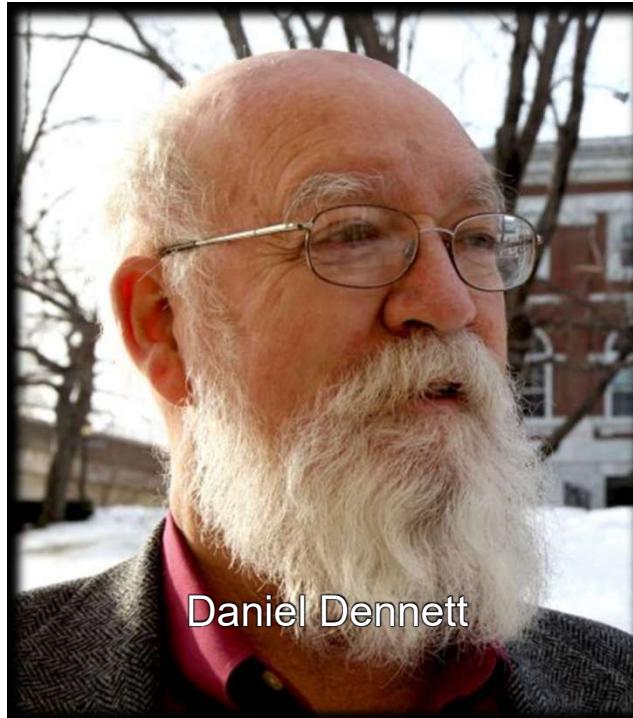
[Ayer, *Language*, 48]



"The philosopher, as an analyst, is not directly concerned with the physical properties of things. He is concerned only with the way in which we speak about them. In other words, the propositions of philosophy are not factual, but linguistic in character."

[Ayer, *Language*, 57]

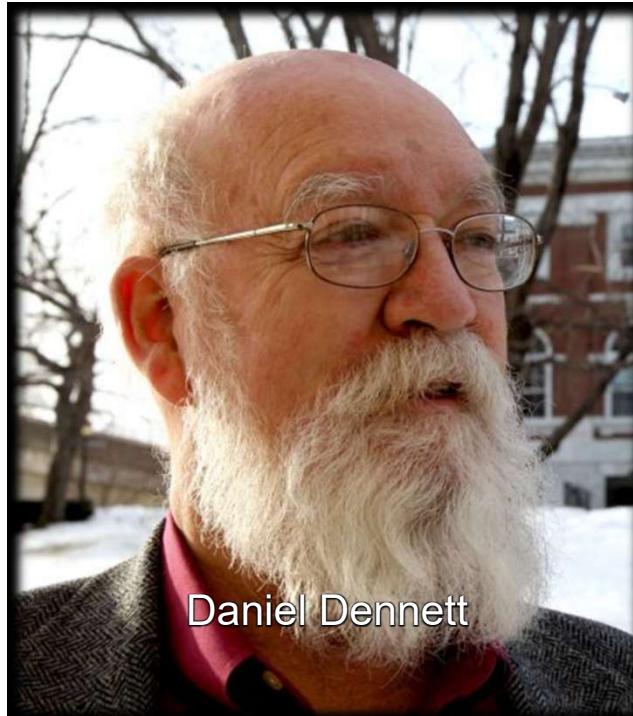




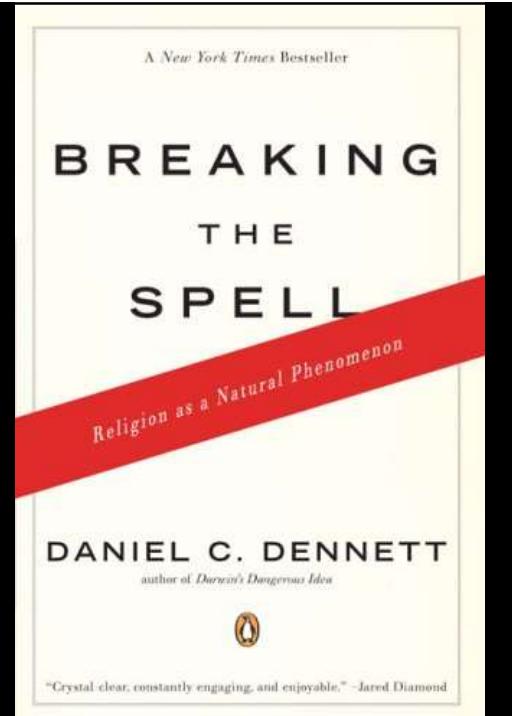
Daniel Dennett

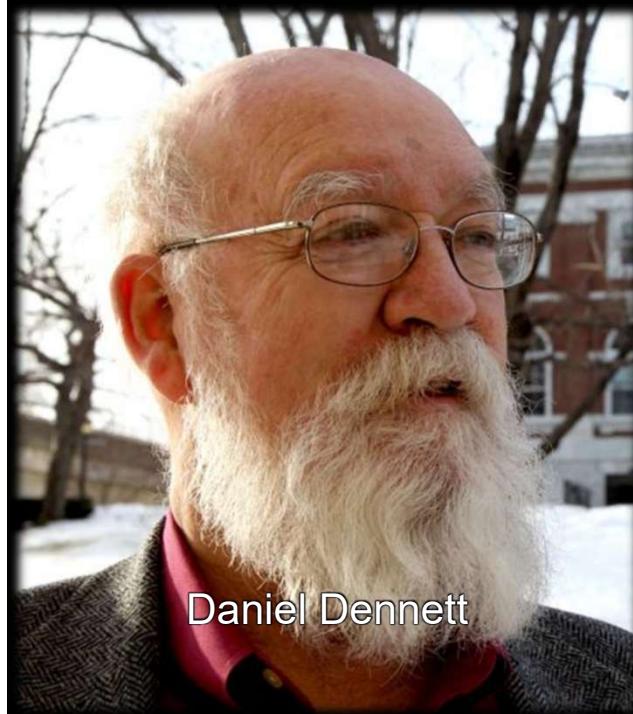
"It is not 'scientism' to concede the objectivity and precision of good science, any more than it is history worship to concede that Napoleon did once rule in France and the Holocaust actually happened. Those who fear the facts will forever try to discredit the fact-finders."

[*Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life*
(New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 495]



Daniel Dennett





Daniel Dennett

"Perhaps some cancer cures are miracles. If so, the only hope of ever demonstrating this to a doubting world would be by adopting the scientific method, with its assumption of no miracles, and showing that science was utterly unable to account for the phenomena."

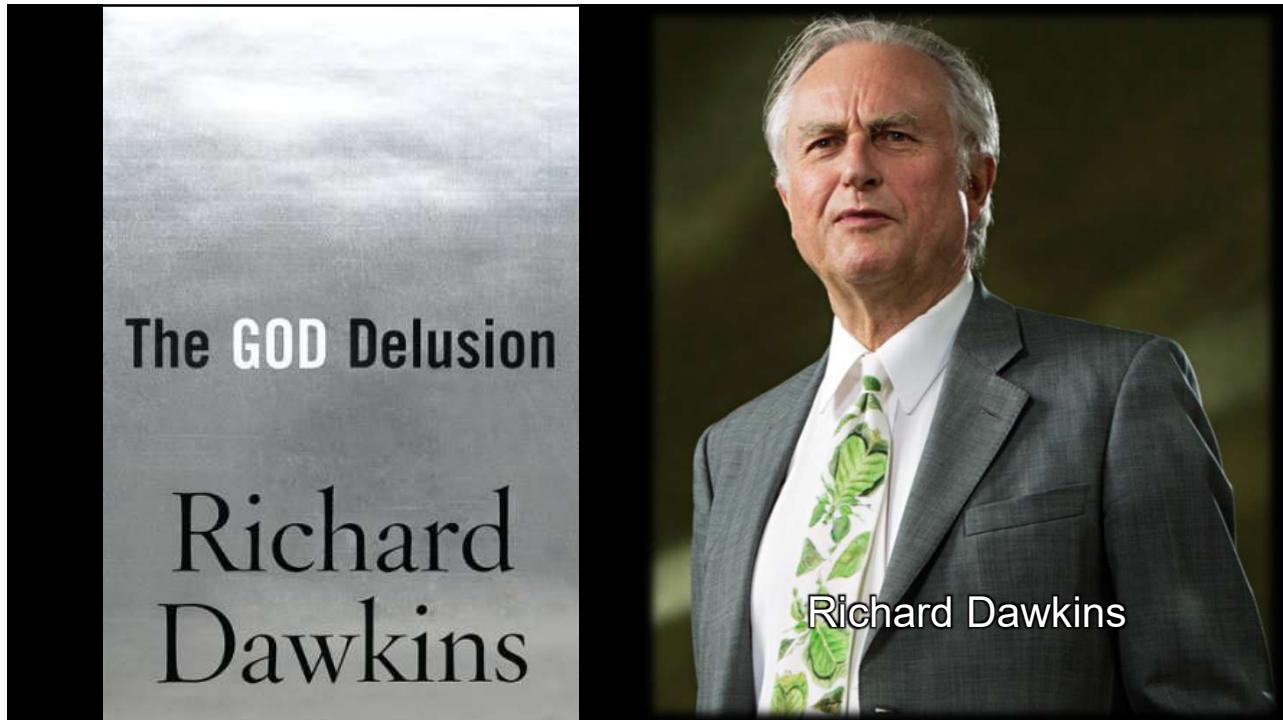
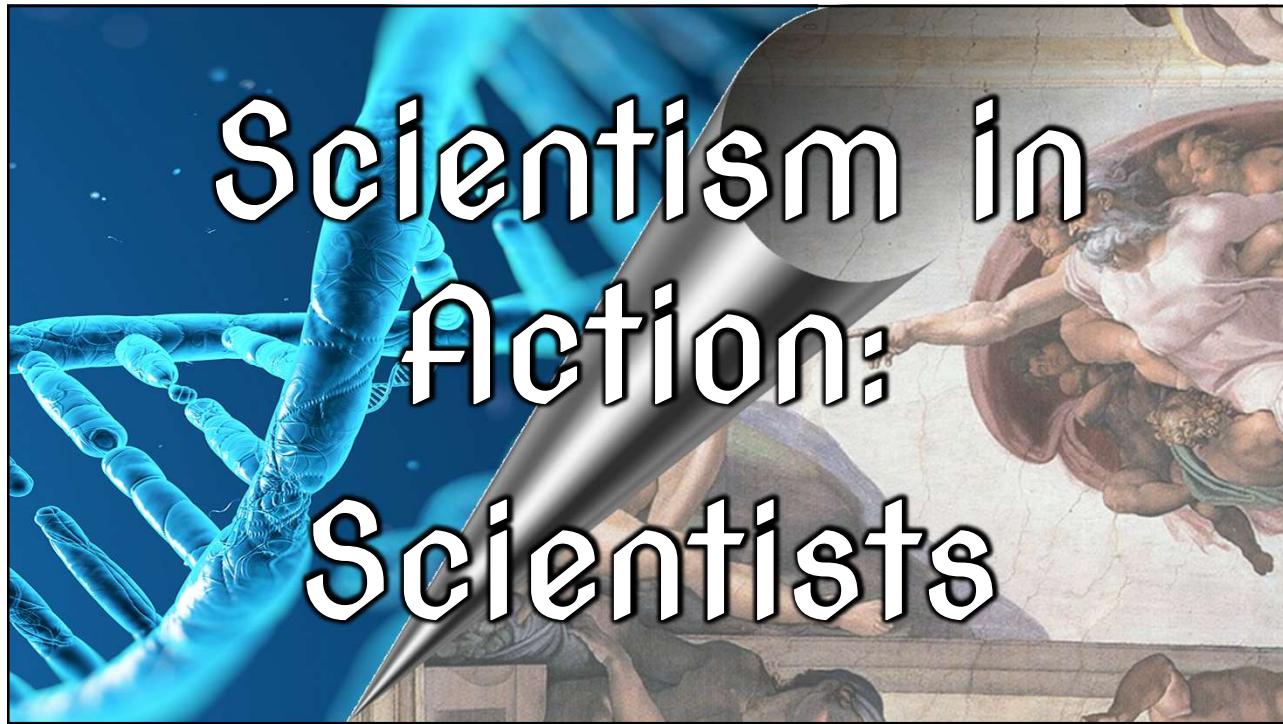
[Breaking the Spell, 26]



John Shook

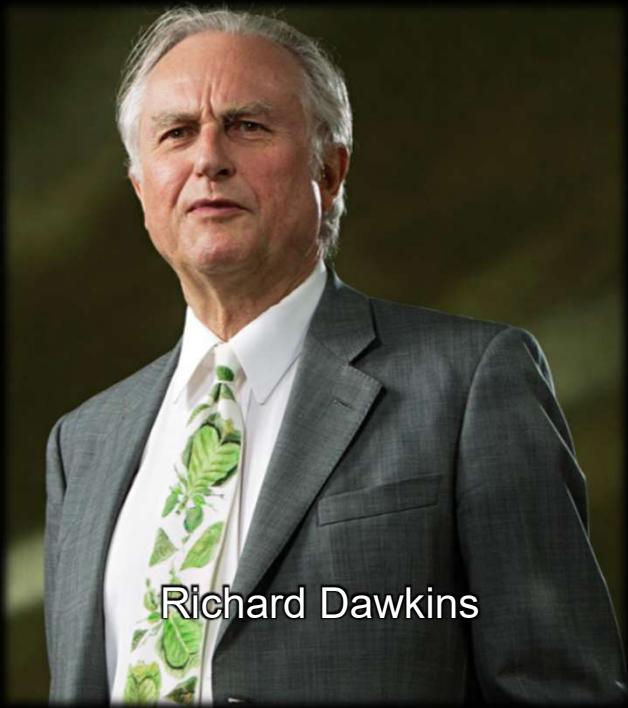
"Philosophical naturalism undertakes the responsibility for elaborating a comprehensive and coherent worldview based on experience, reason, and science, and for defending science's exclusive right to explore and theorize about all of reality."

["The Need for Naturalism in a Scientific Age" https://centerforinquiry.org/blog/the_need_for_naturalism_in_a_scientific_age/, accessed 06/22/22, emphasis added]

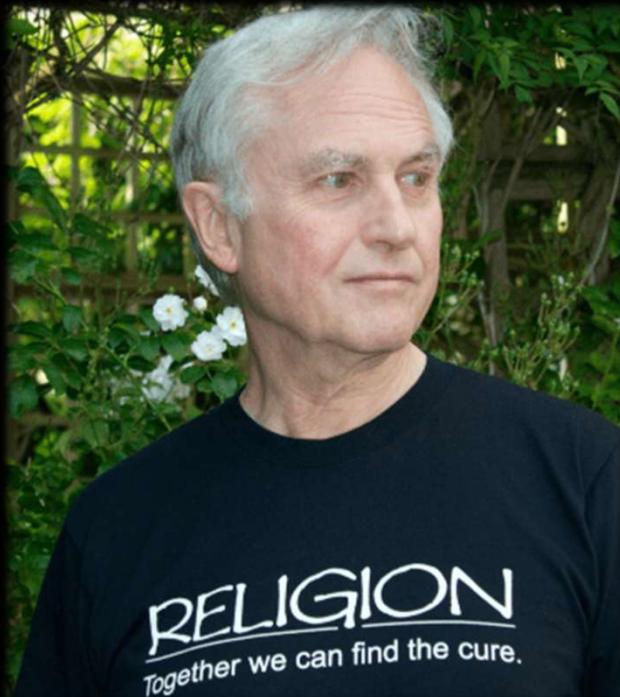


"The presence or absence of a creative super-intelligence is unequivocally a scientific question, even if it is not in practice—or not yet—a decided one."

[*The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 58-59]



Richard Dawkins



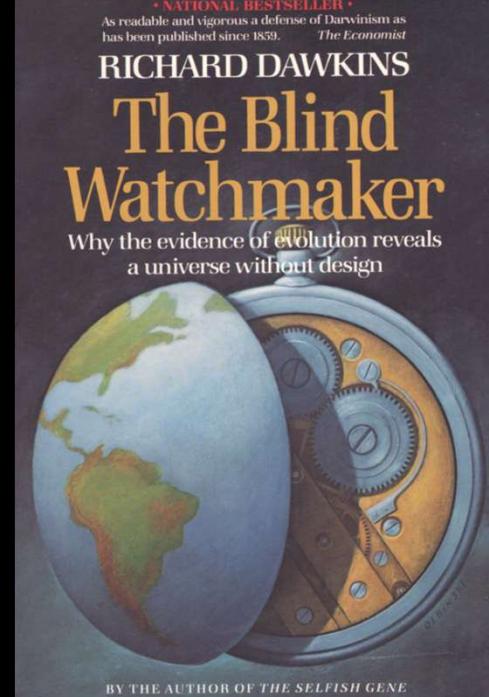
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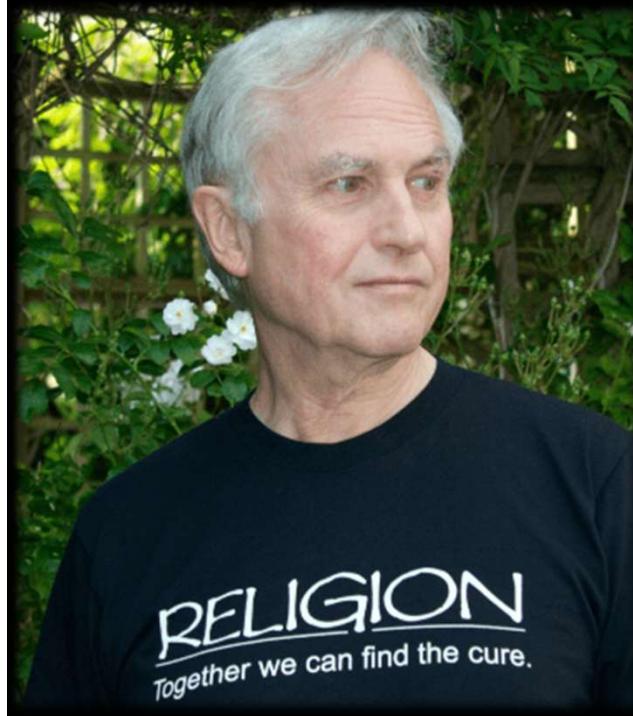
RICHARD DAWKINS

The Blind Watchmaker

Why the evidence of evolution reveals a universe without design

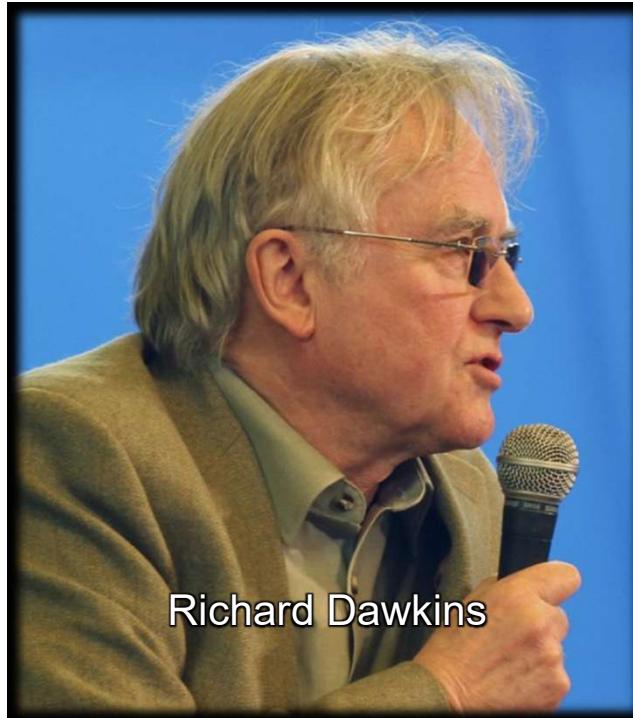


BY THE AUTHOR OF *THE SELFISH GENE*



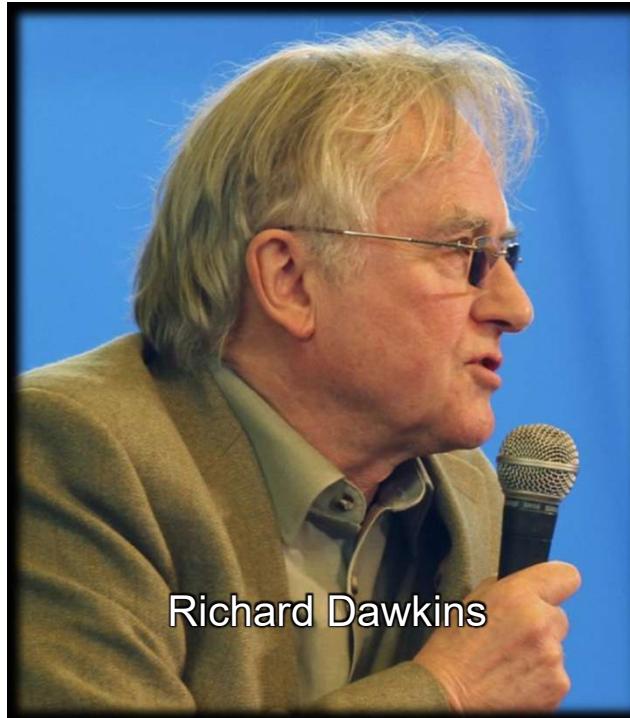
"Unlike some of his theological colleagues, Bishop Montefiore is not afraid to state that the question of whether God exists is a definite question of fact."

[*The Blind Watchmaker*, 37-38]



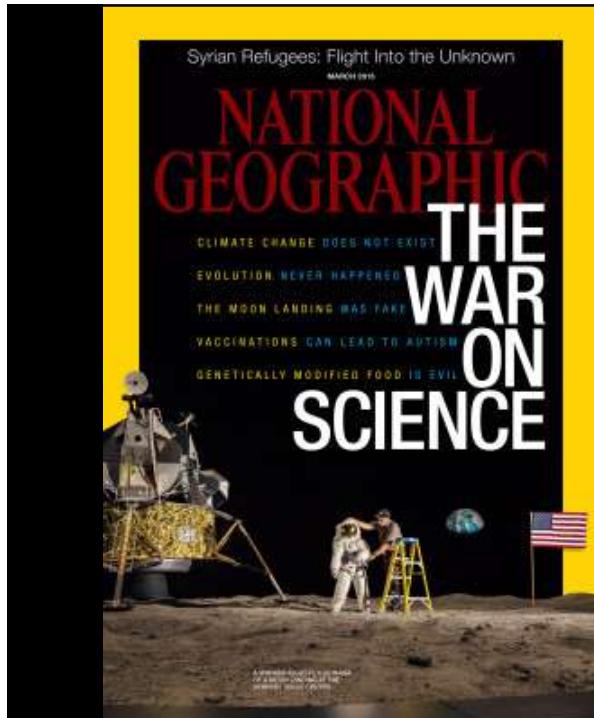
Richard Dawkins

The GOD Delusion
Richard Dawkins

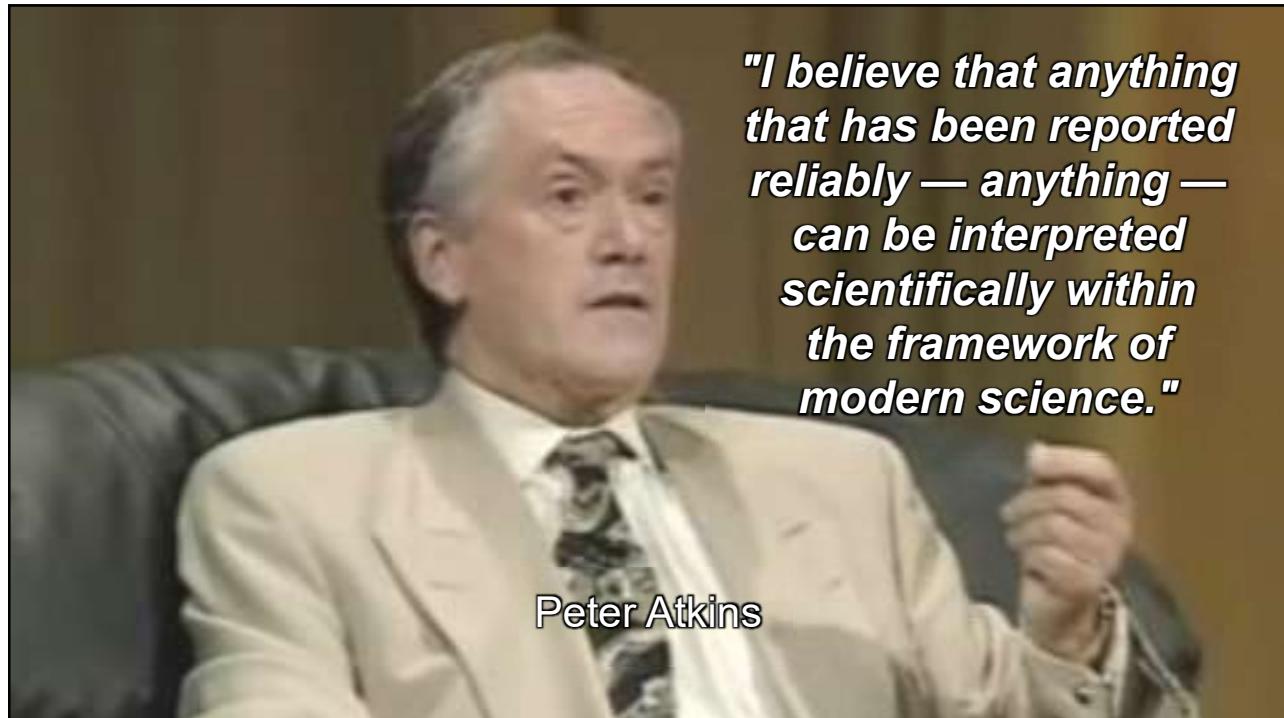
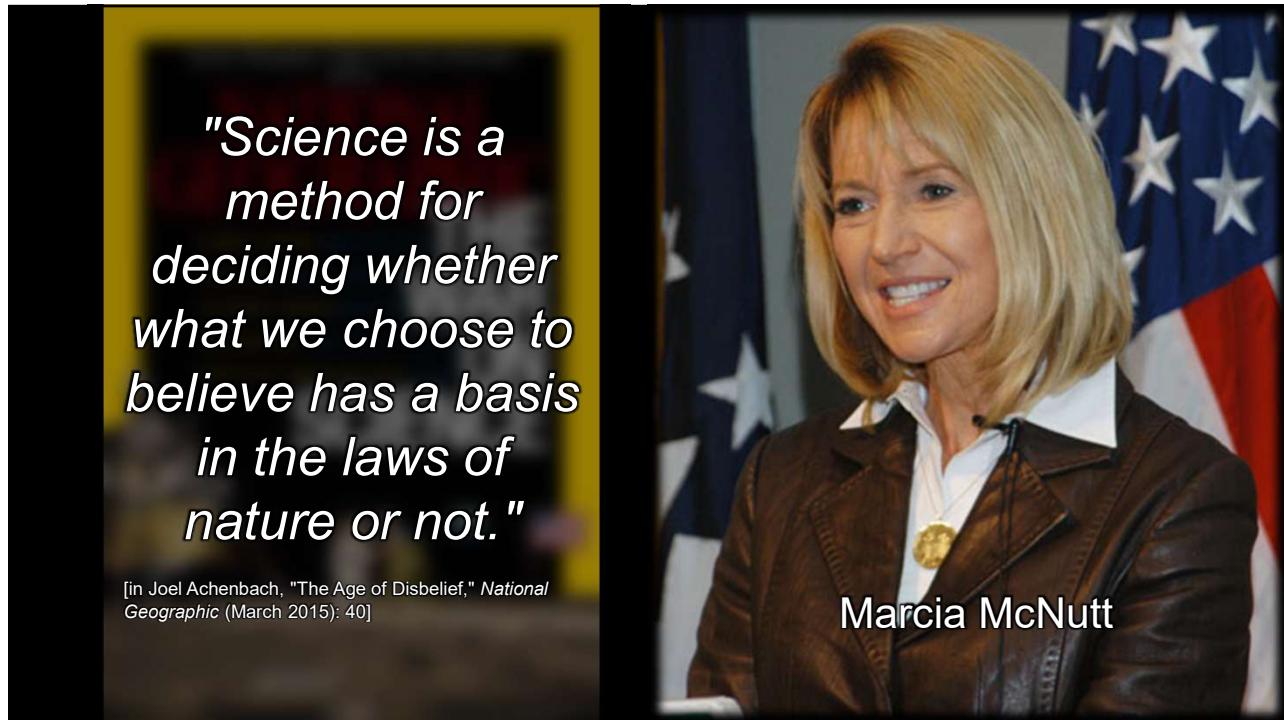


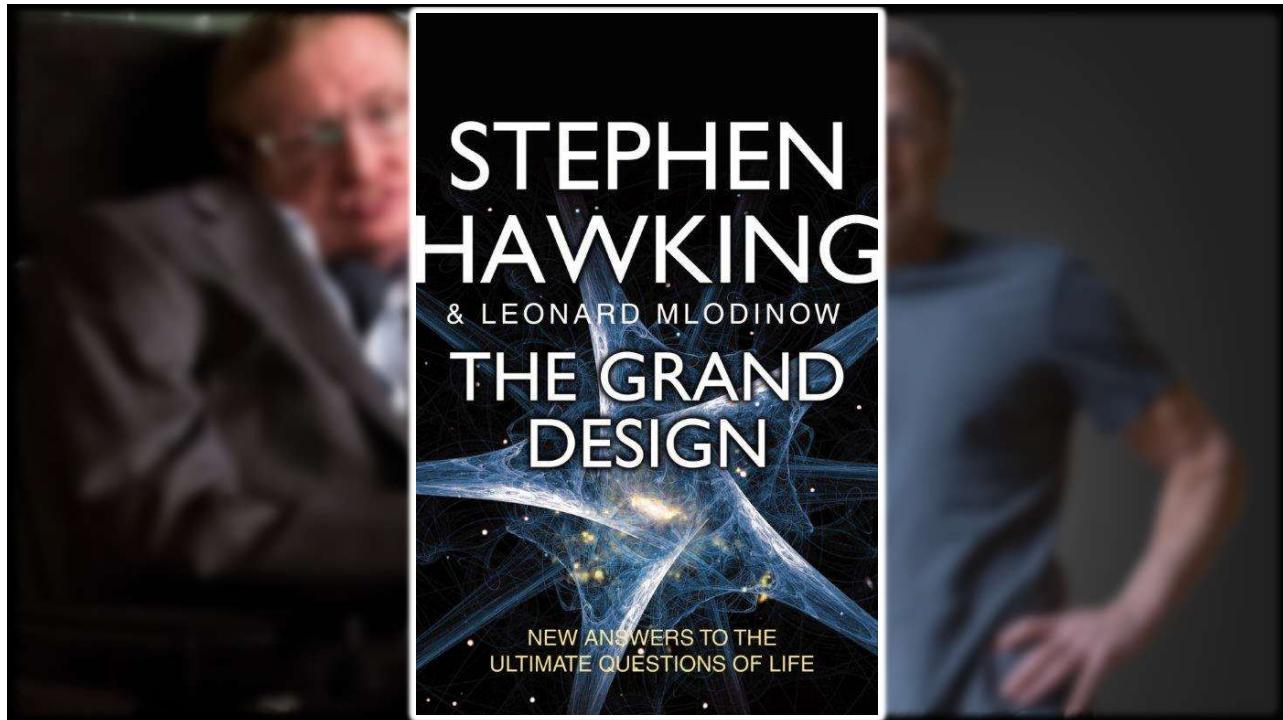
"There is an answer to every such question [about God and miracles], whether or not we can discover it in practice, and it is a strictly scientific answer. The methods we should use to settle the matter, in the unlikely event that relevant evidence ever became available, would be purely and entirely scientific methods."

[Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 59.]



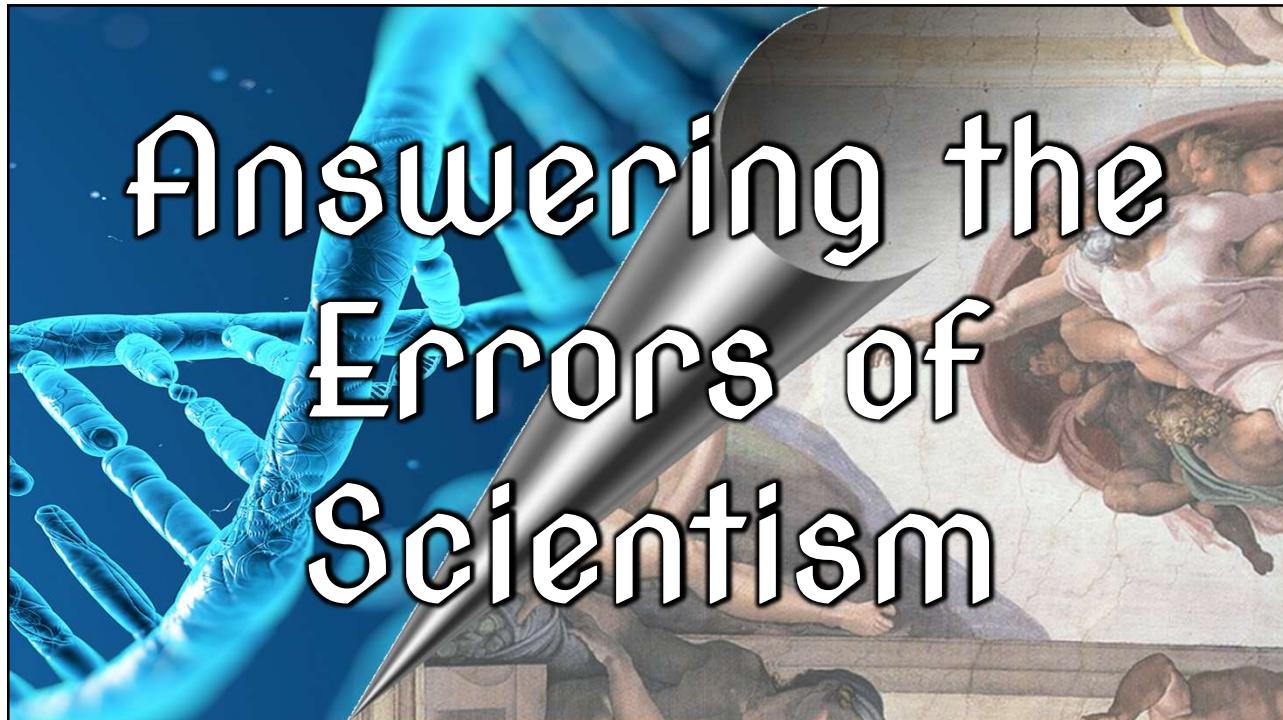
Marcia McNutt



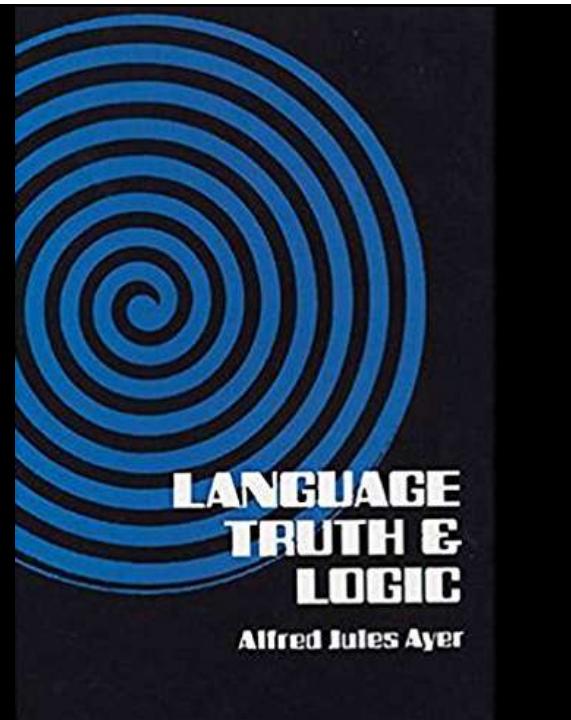
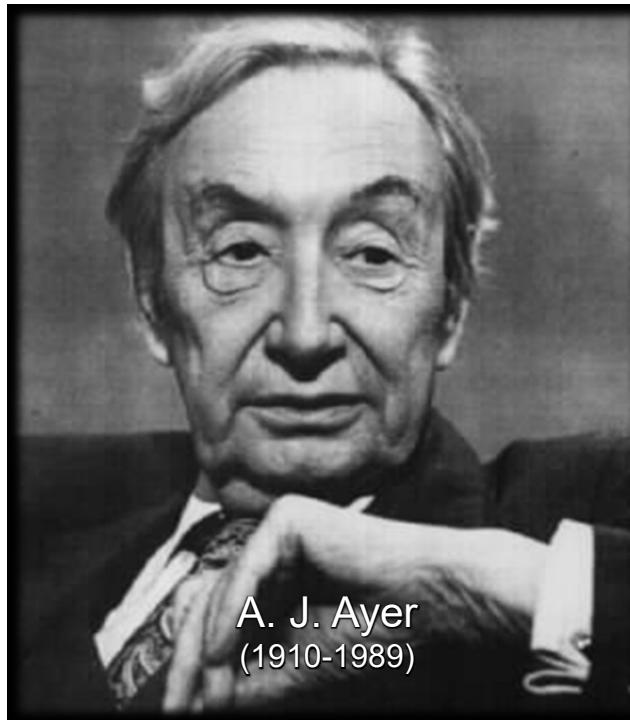


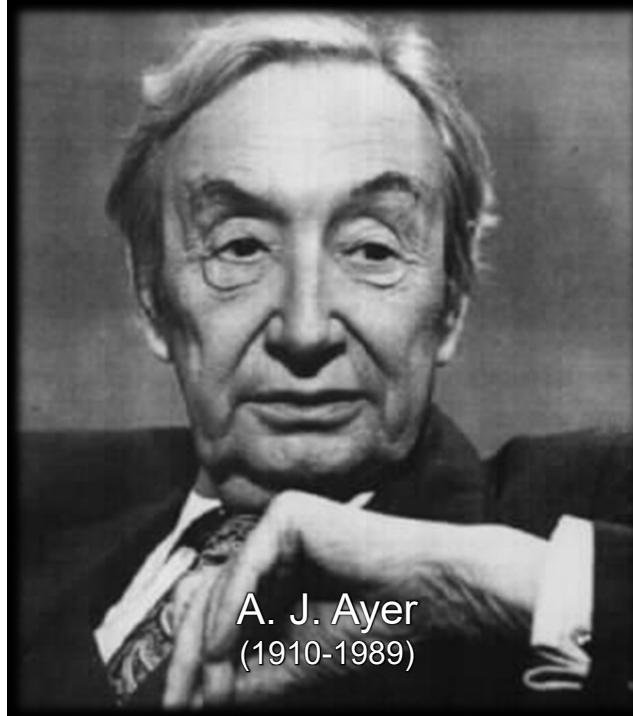
*"How can we understand the world in which we find ourselves? How does the universe behave? What is the nature of reality? Where did all this come from? Did the universe need a creator? ... Traditionally these are questions for philosophy, but **philosophy is dead**. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics."*

[Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010), 5]



Answering the Philosophers: A. J. Ayer

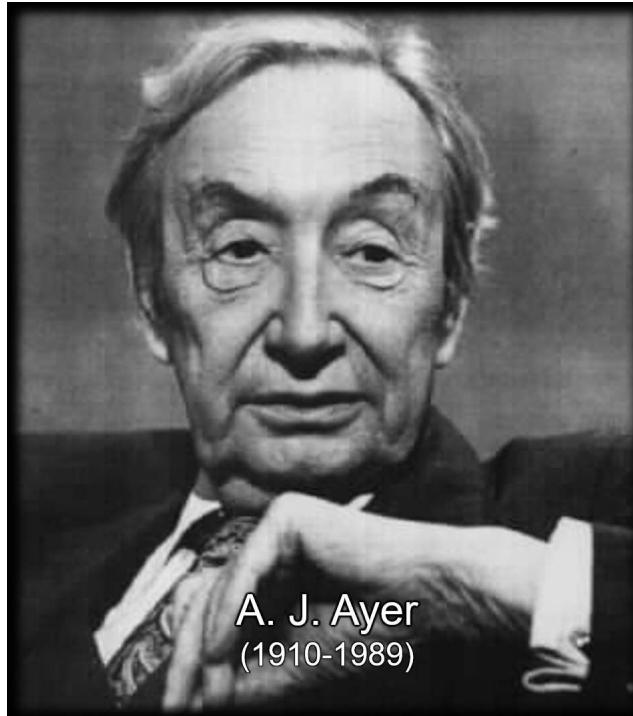




A. J. Ayer
(1910-1989)

"We mean also to rule out the supposition that philosophy can be ranged alongside the existing sciences, as a special department of speculative knowledge."

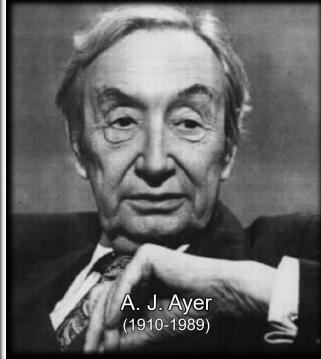
[A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), 48]



A. J. Ayer
(1910-1989)

"There is no field of experience which cannot, in principle, be brought under some form of scientific law, and no type of speculative knowledge about the world which it is, in principle, beyond the power of science to give."

[Ayer, *Language*, 48]

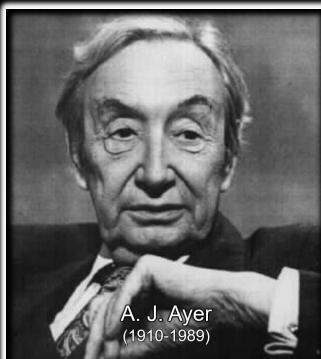


A. J. Ayer
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"There is no field of experience which cannot, in principle, be brought under some form of scientific law, and no type of speculative knowledge about the world which it is, in principle, beyond the power of science to give."

[Ayer, *Language*, 48]

Can this statement be "brought under some form of scientific law"?

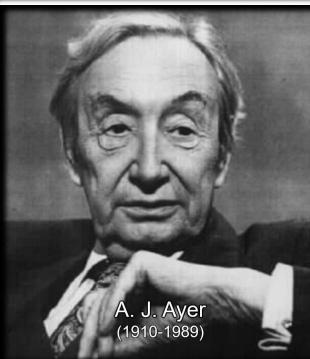


A. J. Ayer
(1910-1989)

"There is no field of experience which cannot, in principle, be brought under some form of scientific law, and no type of speculative knowledge about the world which it is, in principle, beyond the power of science to give."

[Ayer, *Language*, 48]

If the answer is no, then this statement is not a scientific statement.

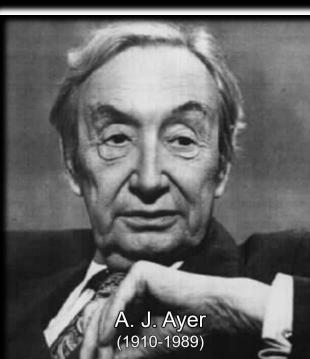


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If this statement is not a scientific statement, what kind of statement is it?



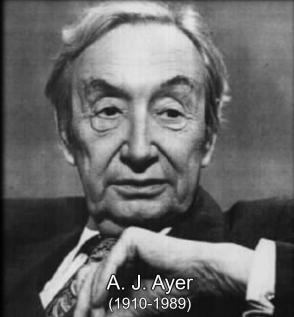
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If this statement is not a scientific statement, what kind of statement is it?

It is a philosophical statement.

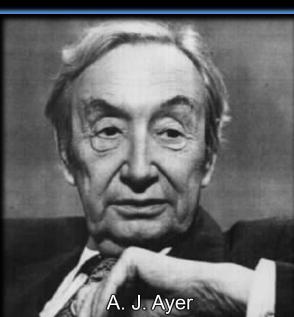


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"The philosopher, as an analyst, is not directly concerned with the physical properties of things. He is concerned only with the way in which we speak about them. In other words, the propositions of philosophy are not factual, but linguistic in character."

[Ayer, Language, 57]

Is this statement factual or linguistic?

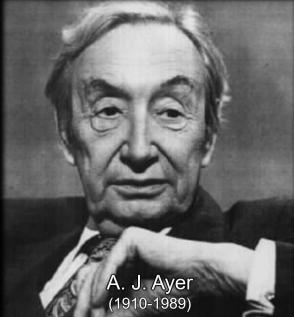


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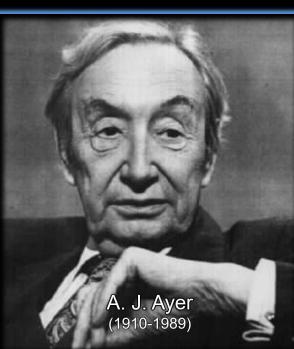
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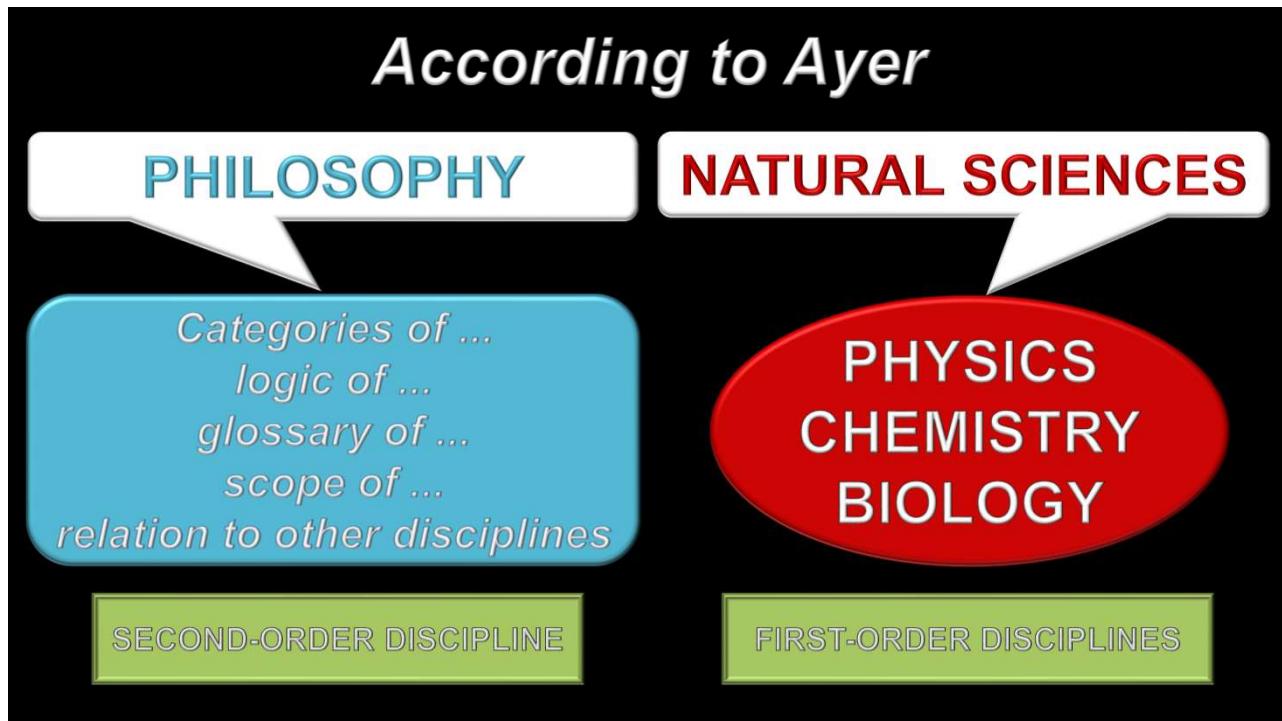
For Ayer, exactly what is it about which the philosopher is concerned?

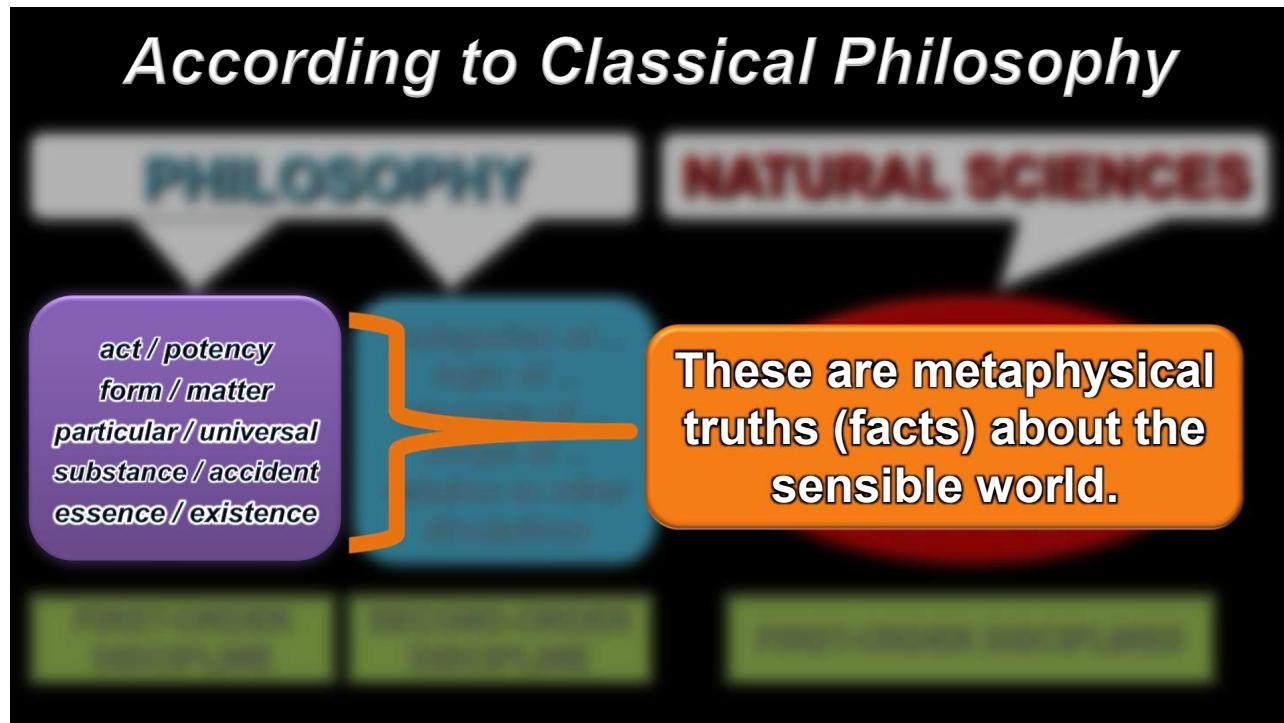
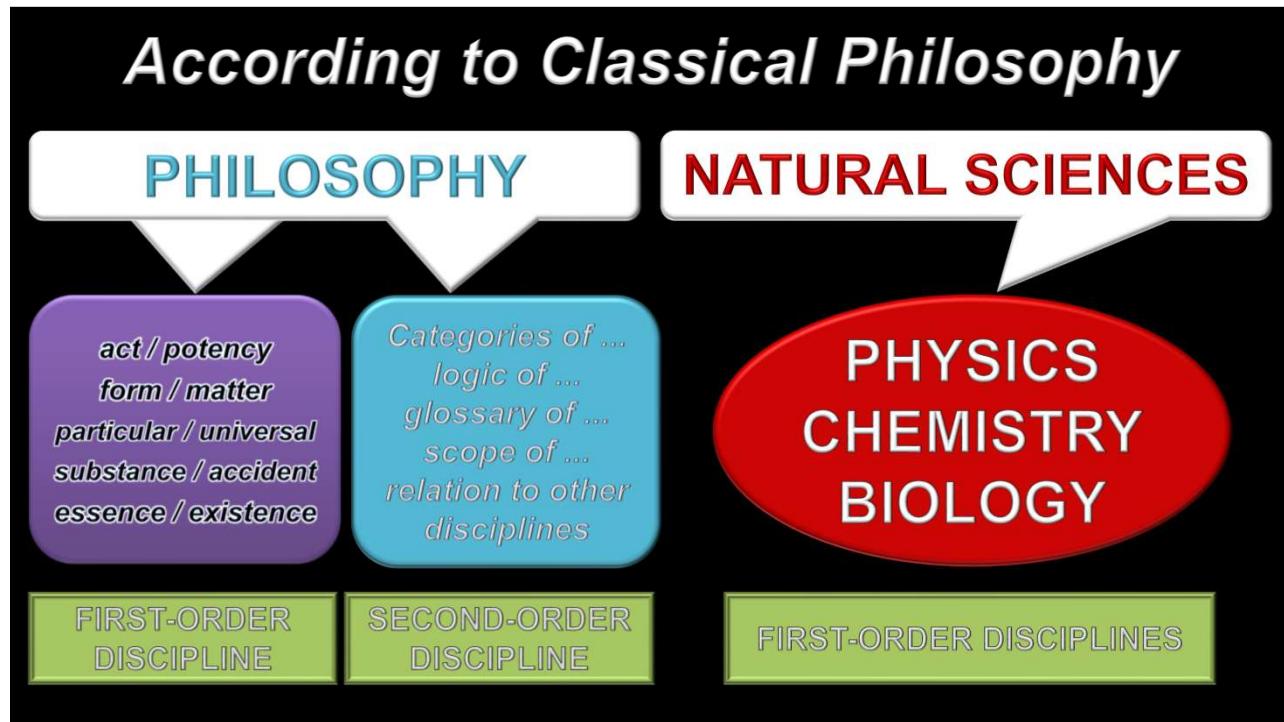


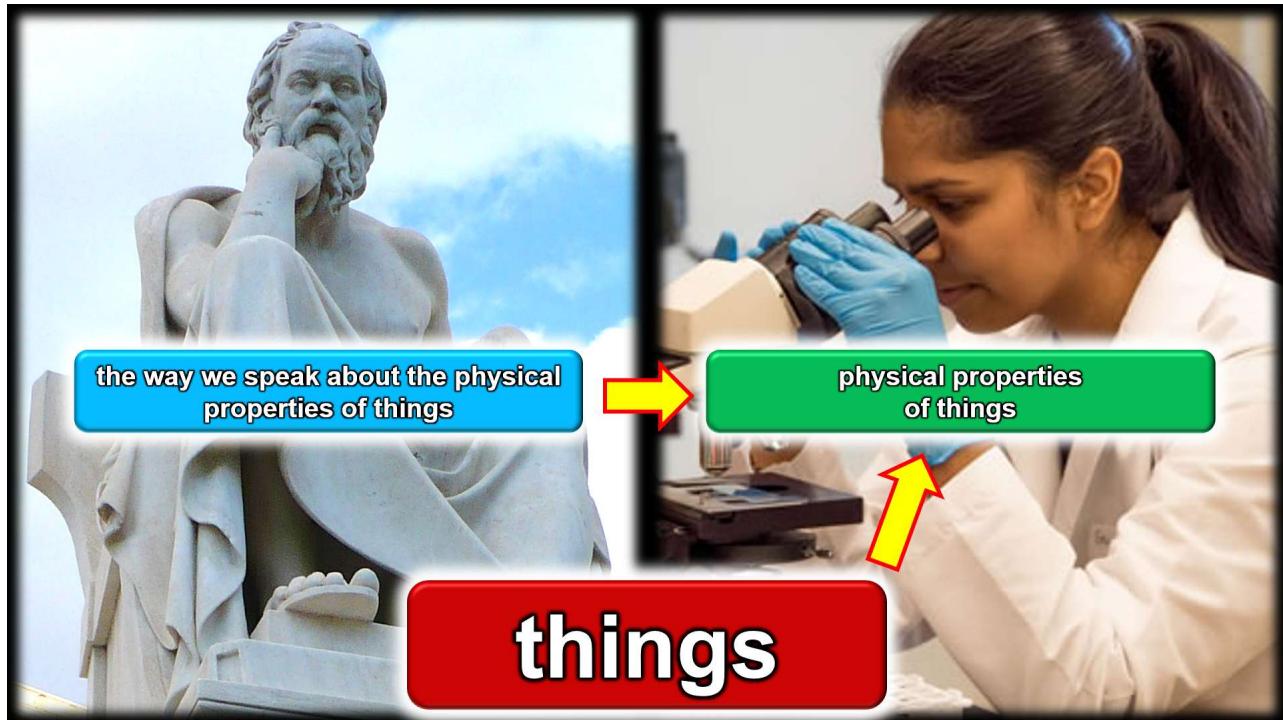
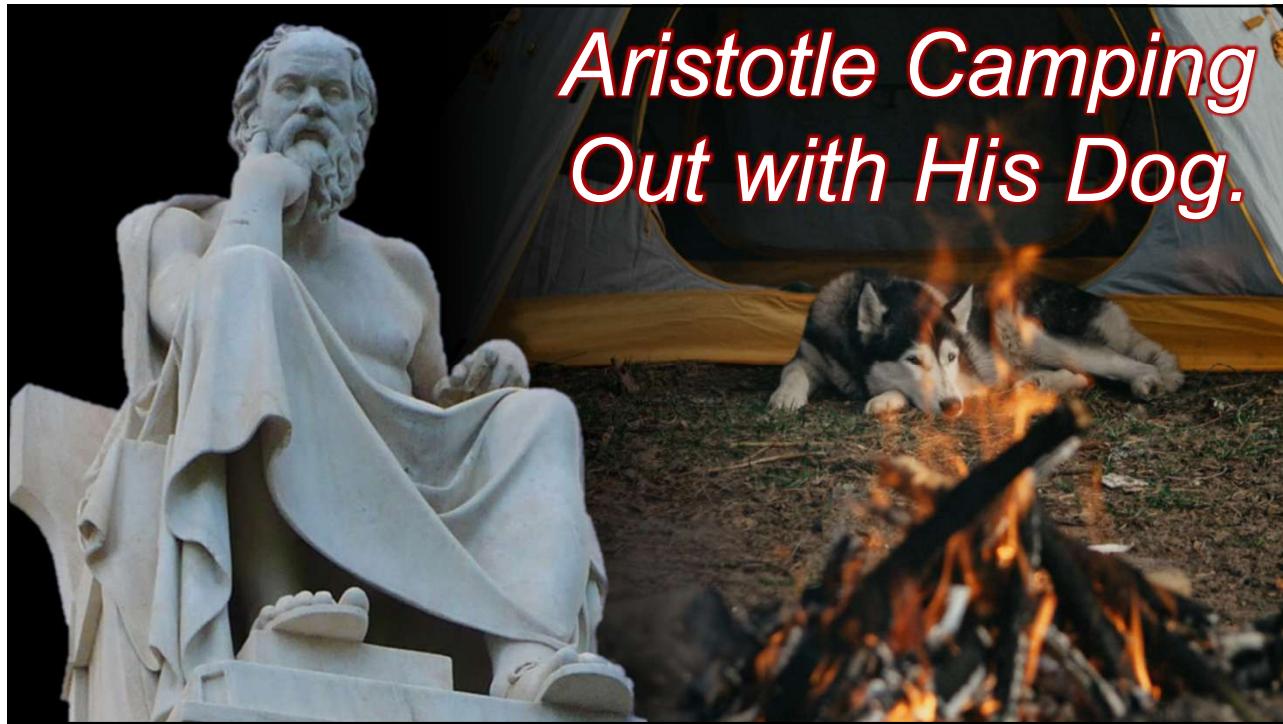
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For Ayer, exactly what is the way we speak about things philosopher is concerned?







Note that this entire position that Ayer puts forth is neither a physical property of a thing nor is it the way we speak about the physical property of a thing.

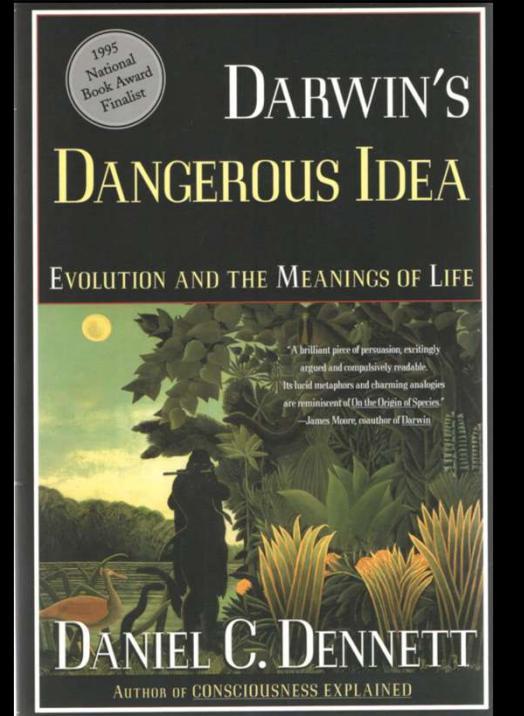
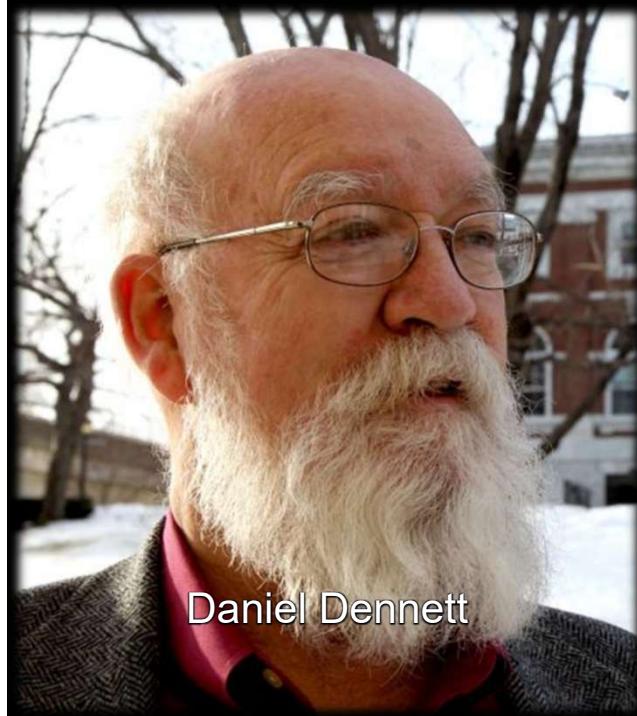
Rather, it is speaking about the way we speak about the physical properties of things.

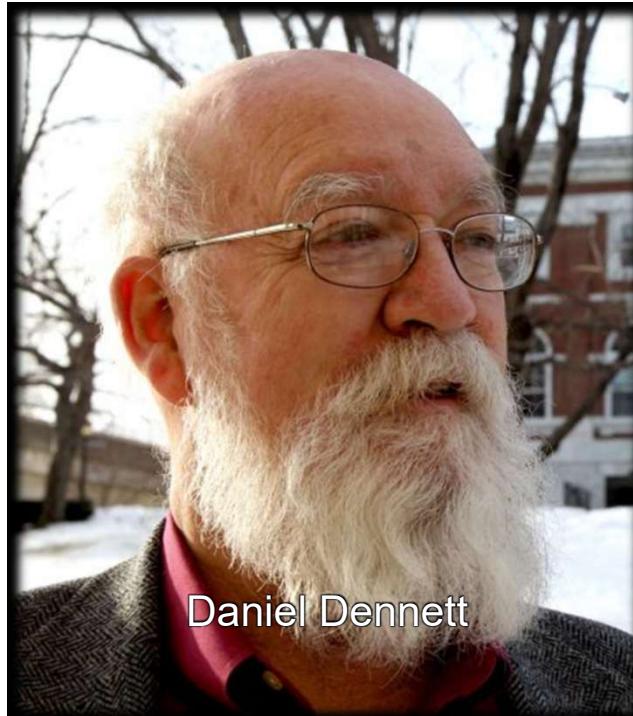
Thus, Ayer's view does not fit the criterion of Ayer's own view!

The reason is because, since his view is a philosophical view, it is about the philosophical aspects of physical things.

This make it just as factual a statement as are statements about the physical properties of things.

Answering the Philosophers: Daniel Dennett





Daniel Dennett

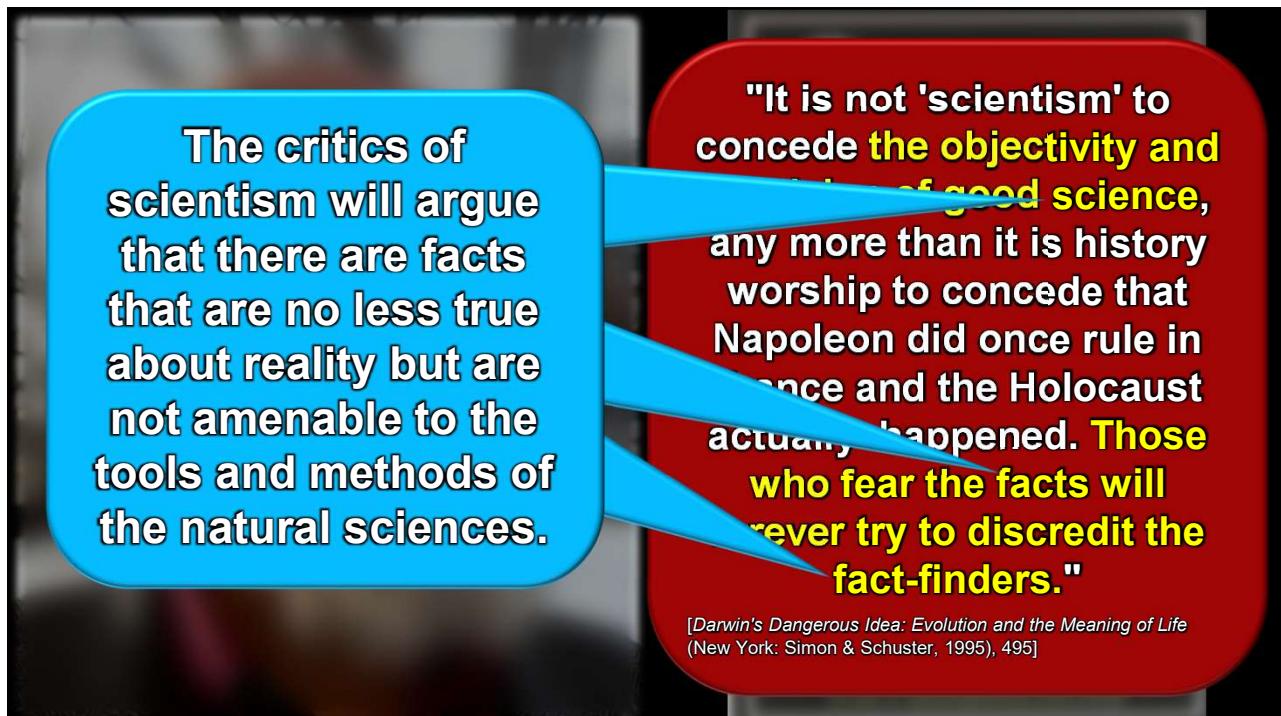
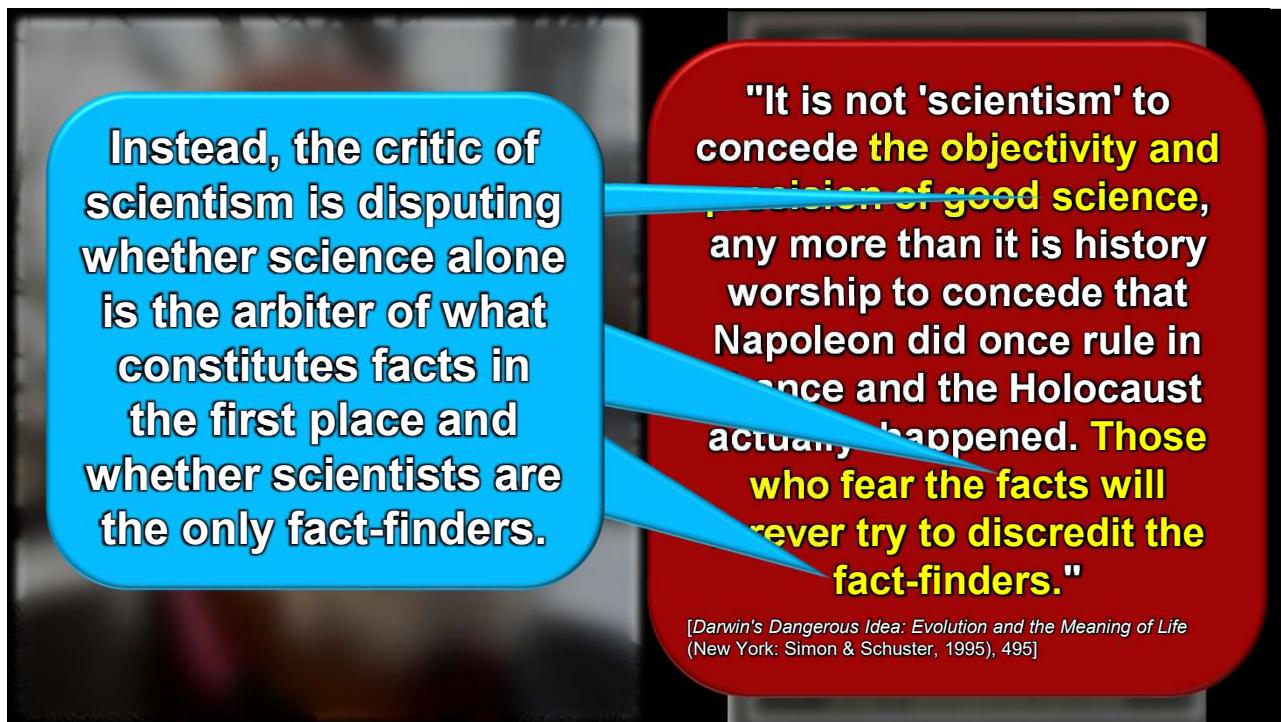
"It is not 'scientism' to concede the objectivity and precision of good science, any more than it is history worship to concede that Napoleon did once rule in France and the Holocaust actually happened. Those who fear the facts will forever try to discredit the fact-finders."

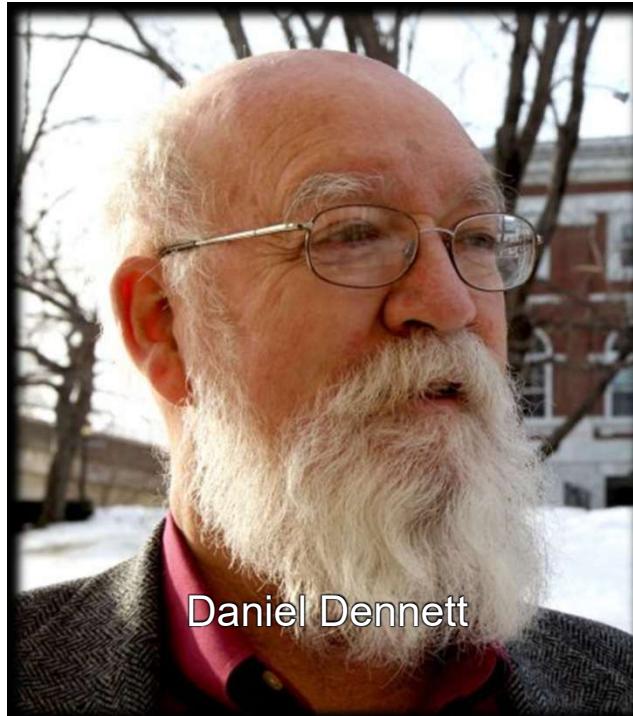
[*Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life*
(New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 495]

This is a straw man fallacy.
The critics of scientism are not denying the objectivity and precision of good science.
Thus, this ad hominem does nothing to respond to the critics of scientism.

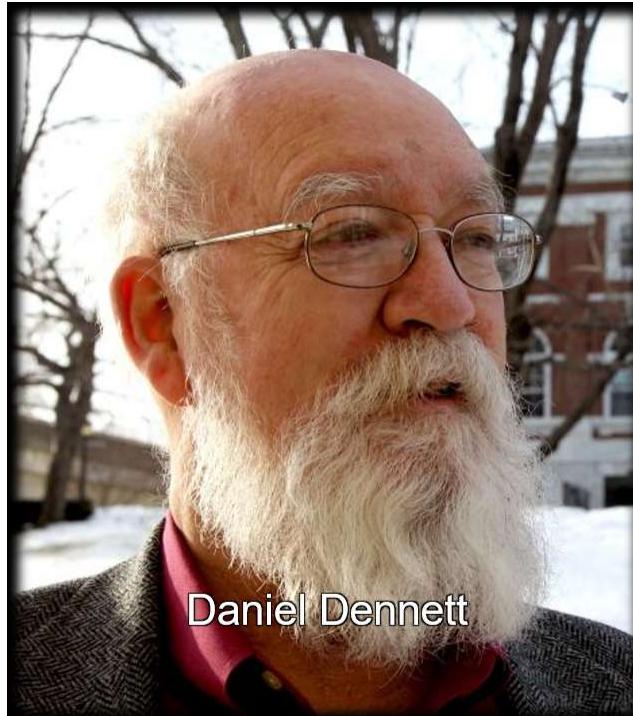
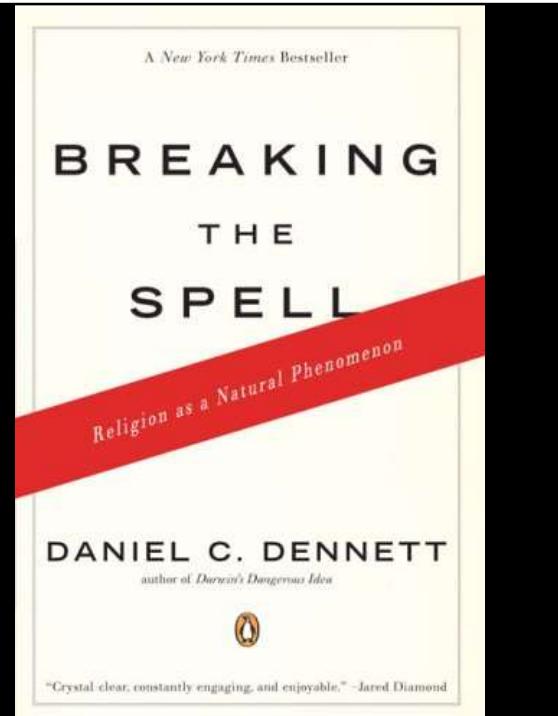
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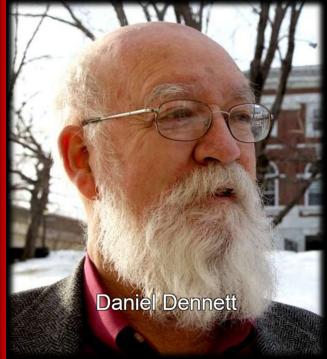
Daniel Dennett



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"Perhaps some cancer cures are miracles. If so, the only hope of ever demonstrating this to a doubting world would be by adopting the scientific method, with its assumption of no miracles, and showing that science was utterly unable to account for the phenomena."

[Breaking the Spell, 26]



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[Breaking the Spell, 26]

What is the argument offered to support this claim?

Whatever that argument might be, what KIND of argument would it have to be?



Answering the Philosophers: John Shook



John Shook

"Philosophical naturalism undertakes the responsibility for elaborating a comprehensive and coherent worldview based on experience, reason, and science, and for defending science's exclusive right to explore and theorize about all of reality."

["The Need for Naturalism in a Scientific Age" https://centerforinquiry.org/blog/the_need_for_naturalism_in_a_scientific_age/, accessed 06/22/22, emphasis added]



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[The Need for Naturalism in a Scientific Age: https://centerforinquiry.org/blog/the_need_for_naturalism_in_a_scientific_age/; accessed 06/22/22, emphasis added]

Is Shook's statement a part of reality?

Given that it is, what scientific method could possibly be used to prove that this statement is true?

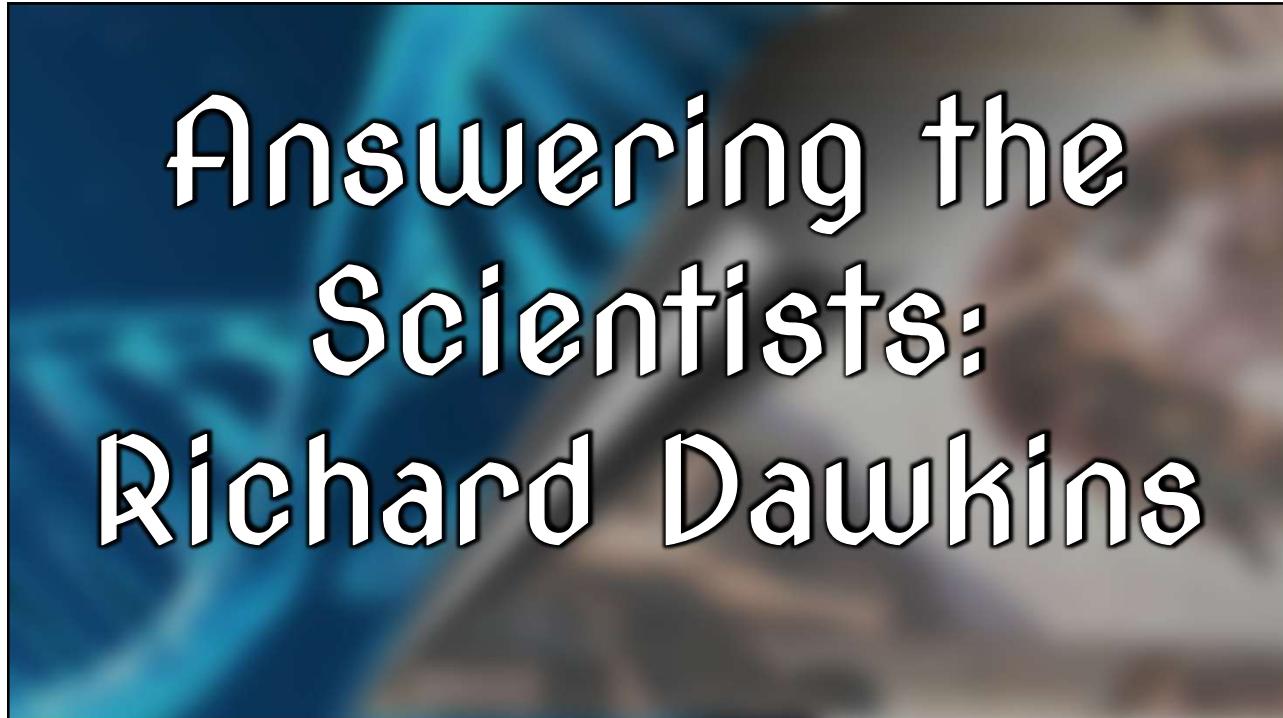
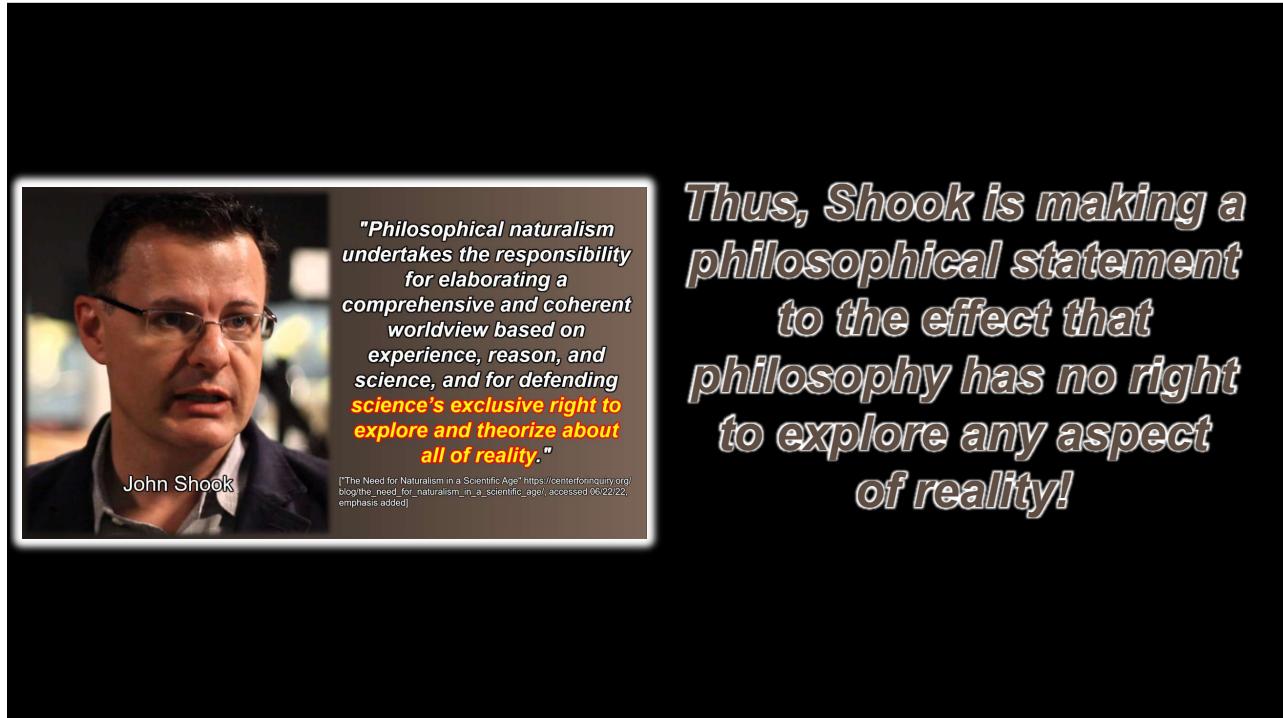


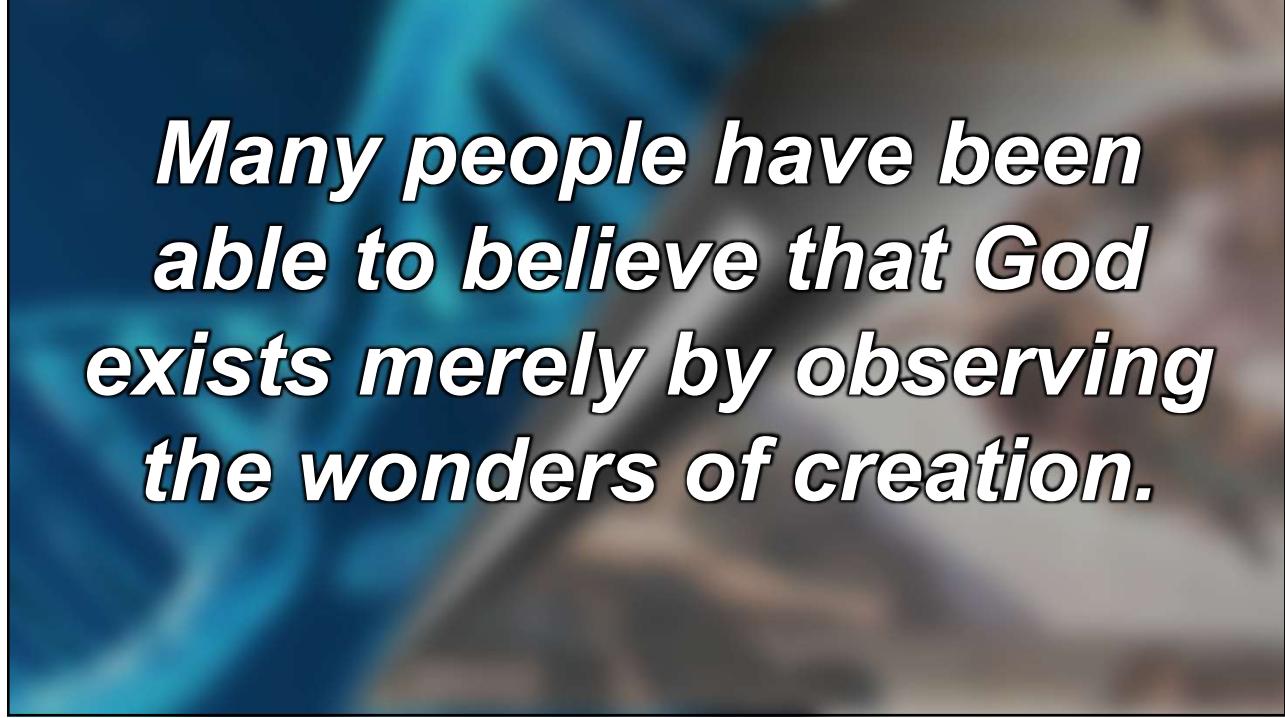
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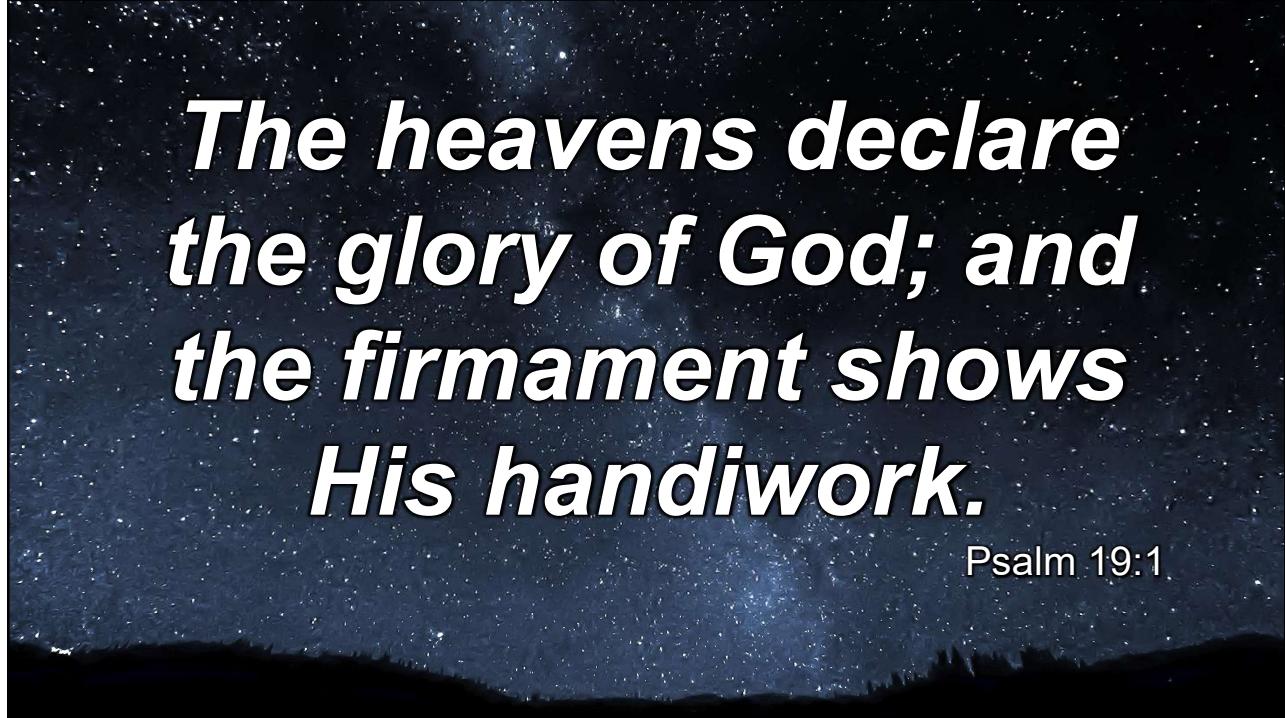
The fact is, there is no scientific method that could possibly prove Shook's statement.

The reason is because it is a philosophical statement.



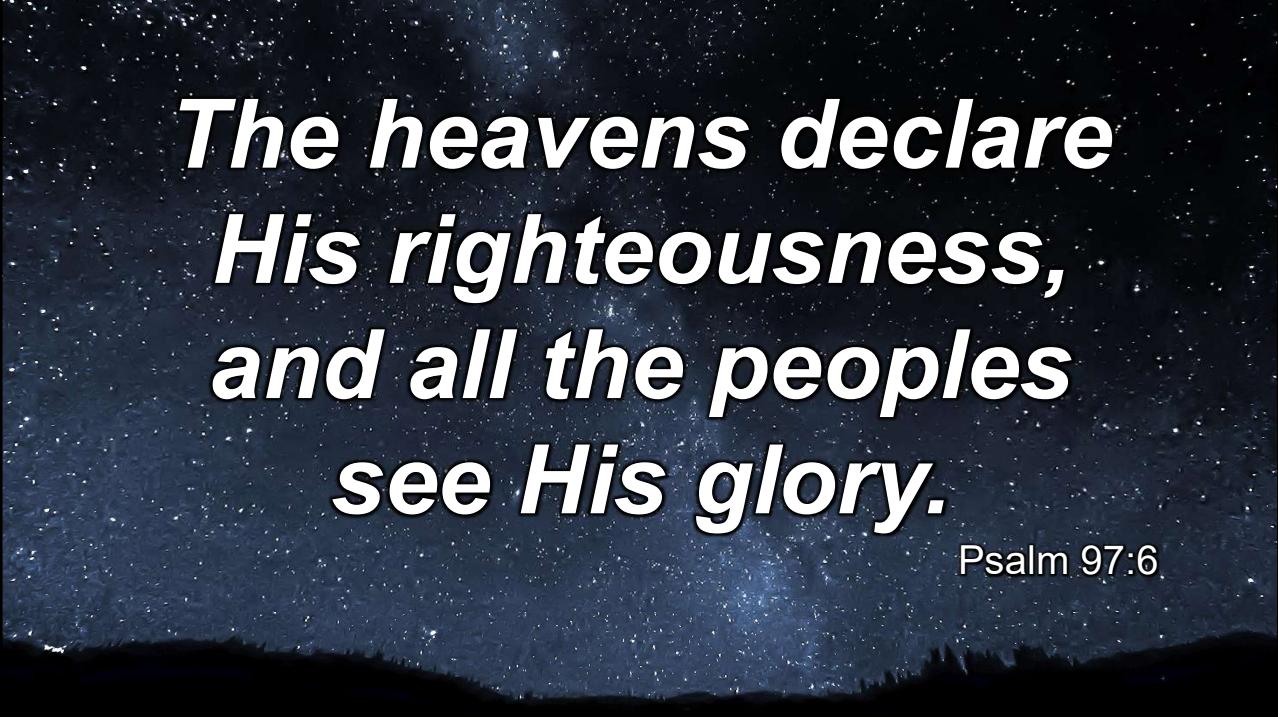


***Many people have been
able to believe that God
exists merely by observing
the wonders of creation.***



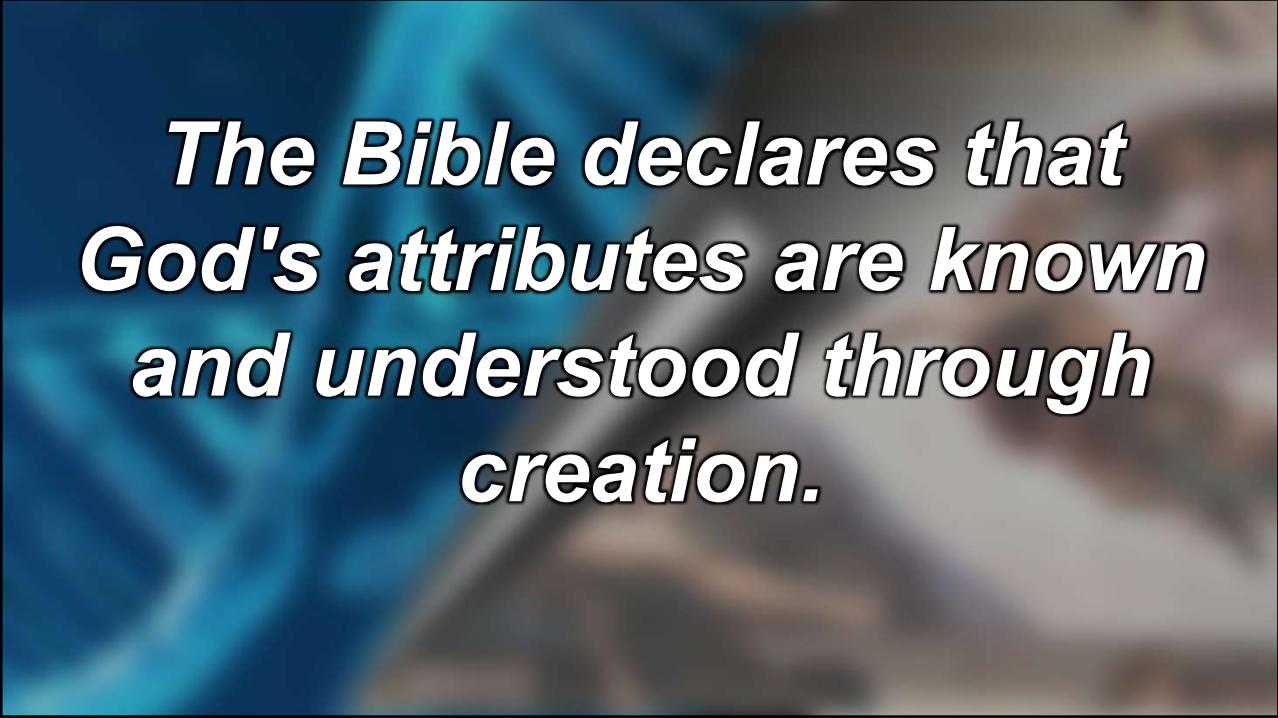
***The heavens declare
the glory of God; and
the firmament shows
His handiwork.***

Psalm 19:1

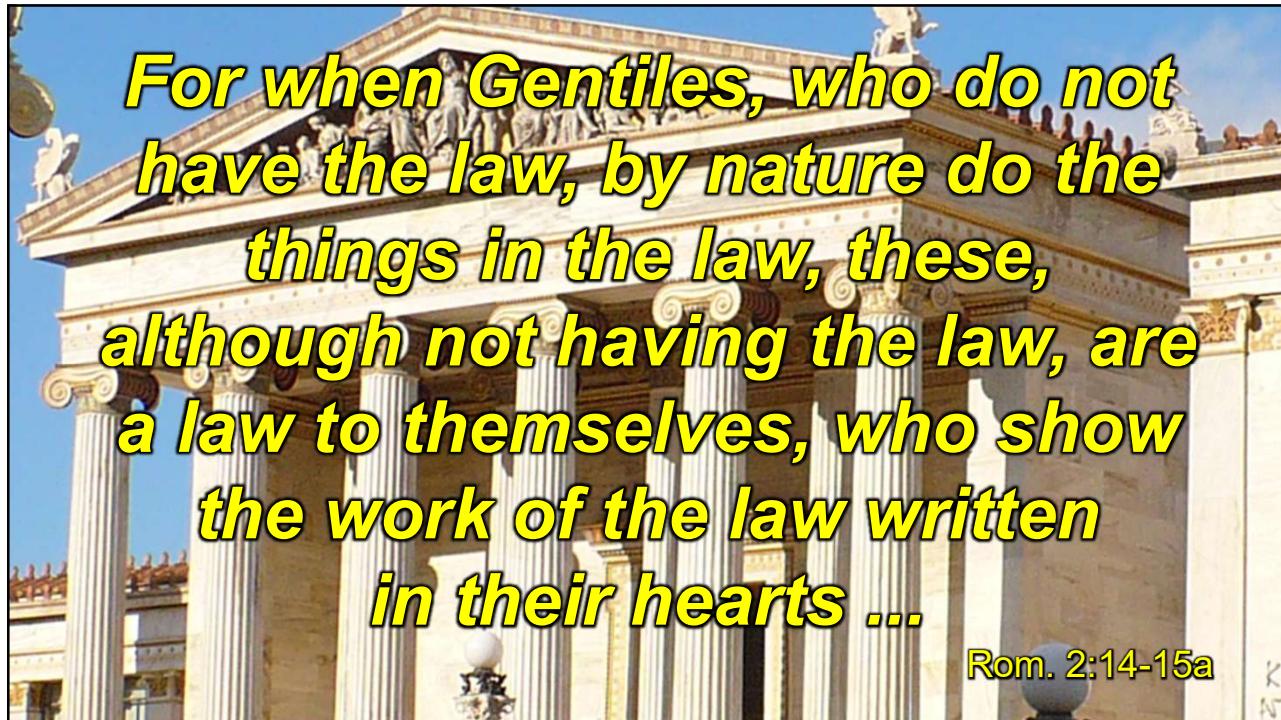
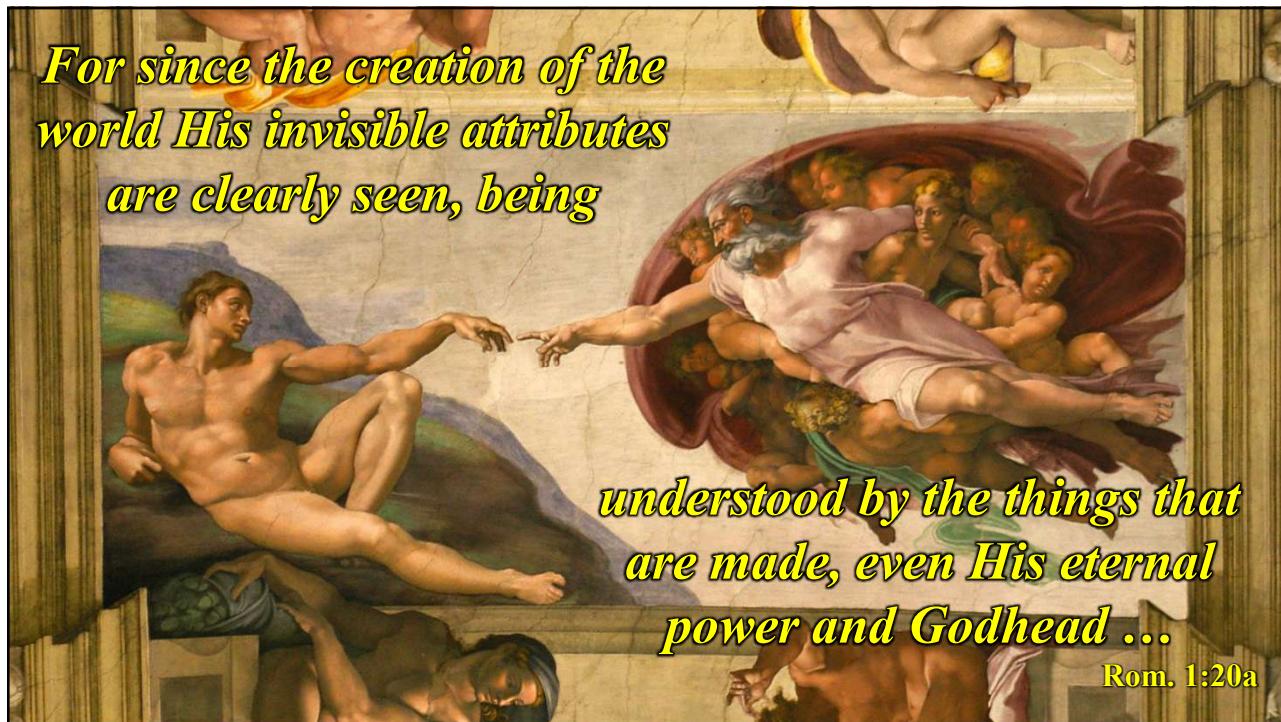


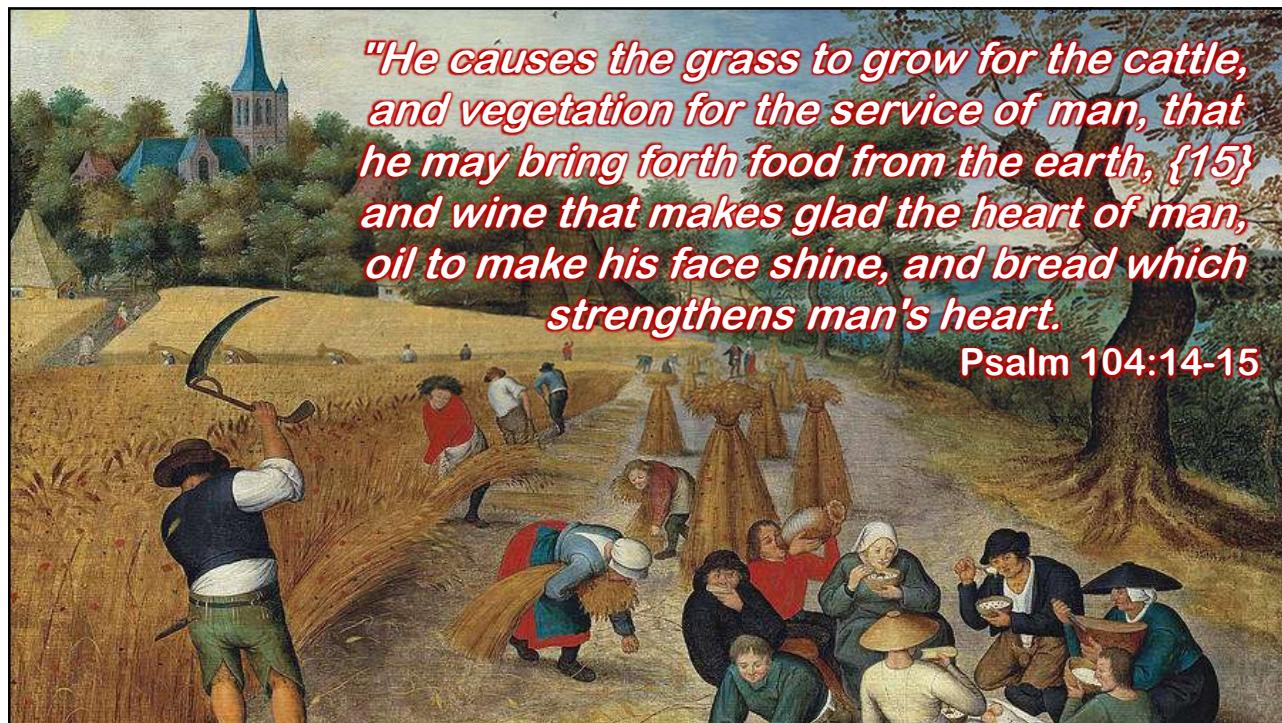
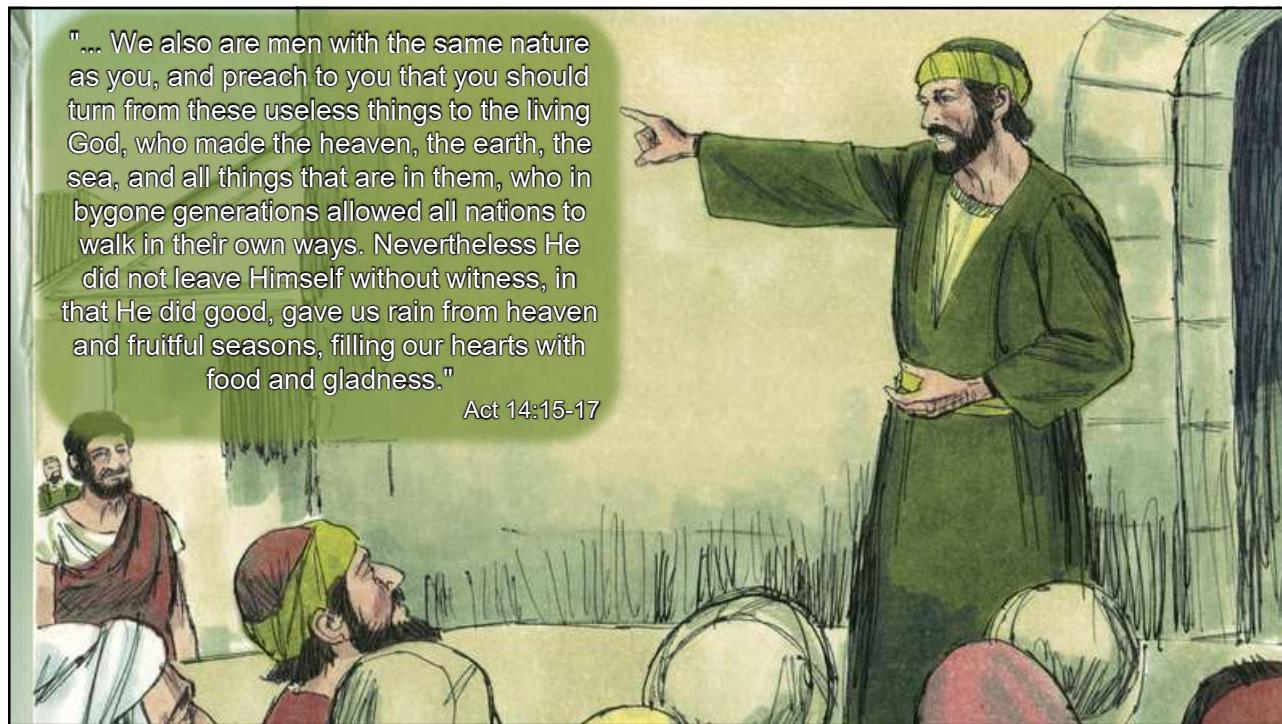
***The heavens declare
His righteousness,
and all the peoples
see His glory.***

Psalm 97:6

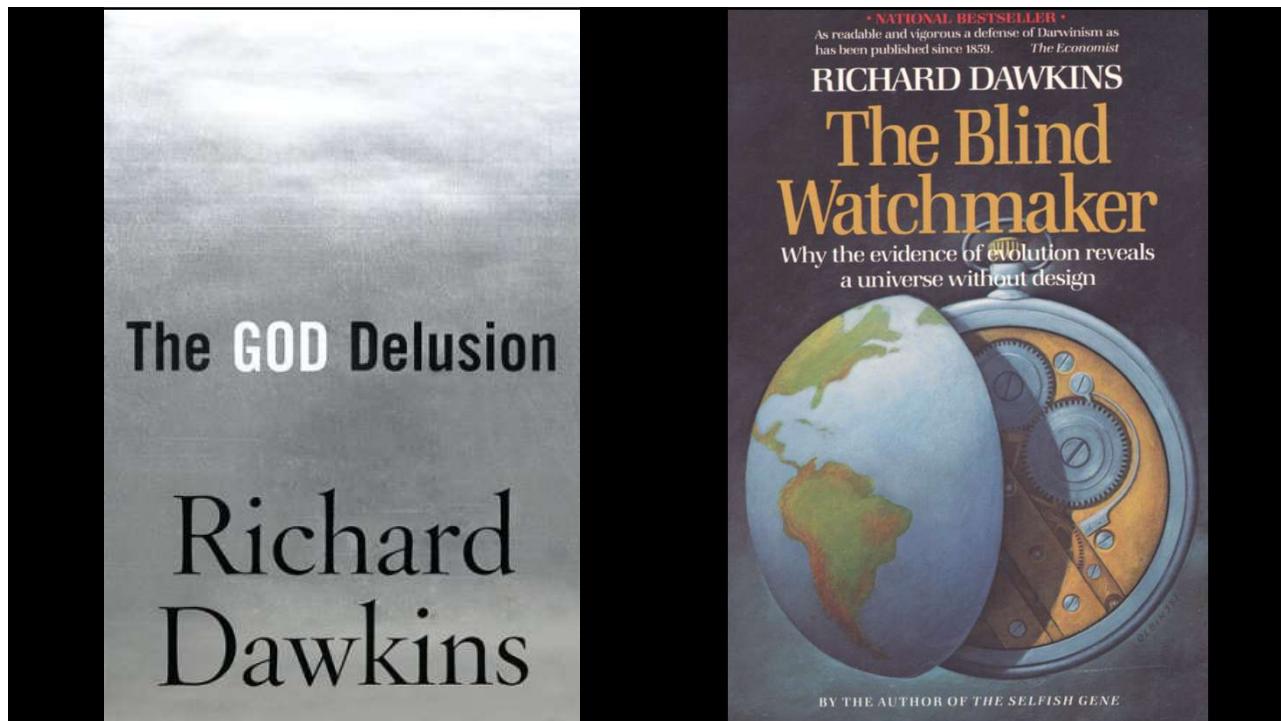


***The Bible declares that
God's attributes are known
and understood through
creation.***





But as more toxic philosophical voices (and scientific voices impacted by those toxic philosophical voices) have fogged the conversation throughout history, the need arises to appeal to deeper issues in philosophy.



"The presence or absence of a creative super-intelligence is unequivocally a scientific question, even if it is not in practice—or not yet—a decided one."

[The God Delusion, 58-59]

"Unlike some of his theological colleagues, Bishop Montefiore is not afraid to state that the question of whether God exists is a definite question of fact."

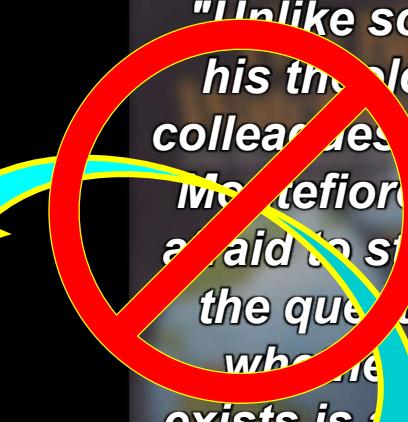
[The Blind Watchmaker, 37-38]

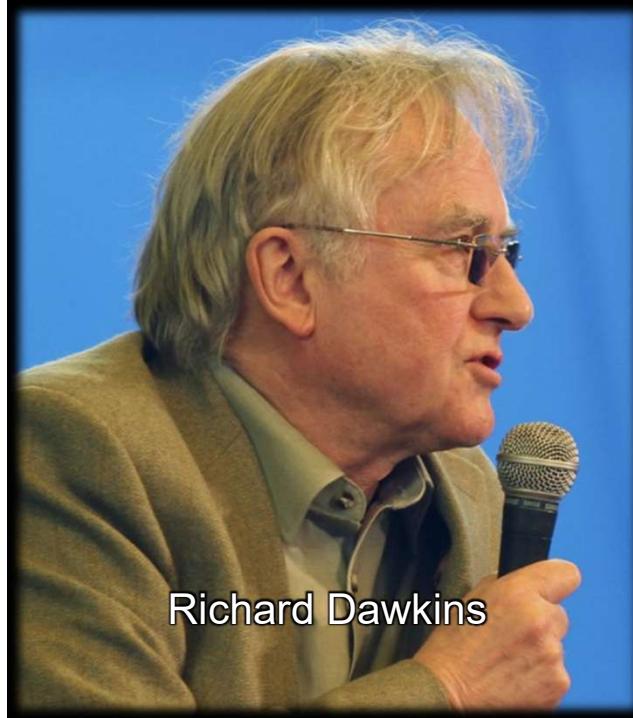
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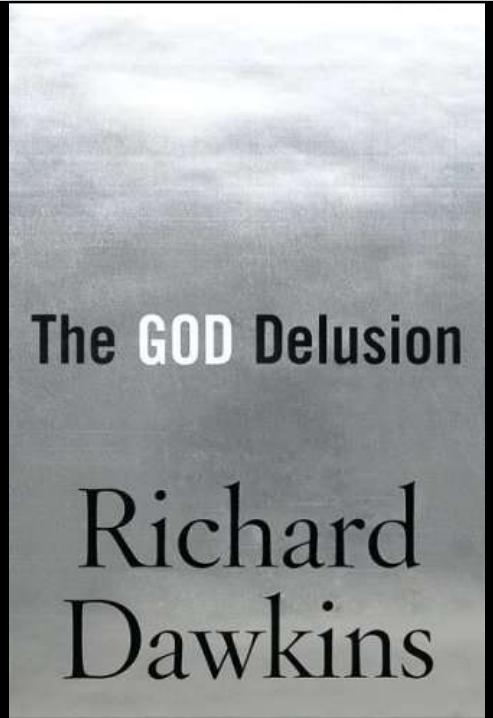
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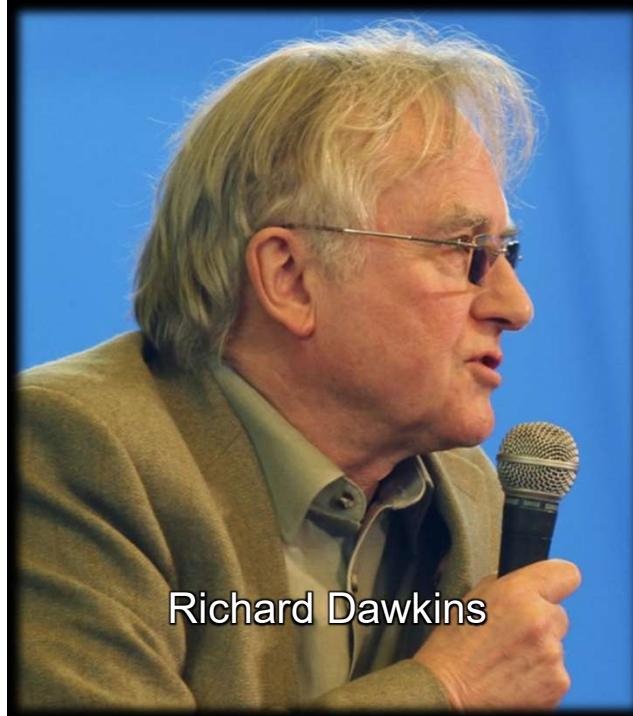


Richard Dawkins



The GOD Delusion

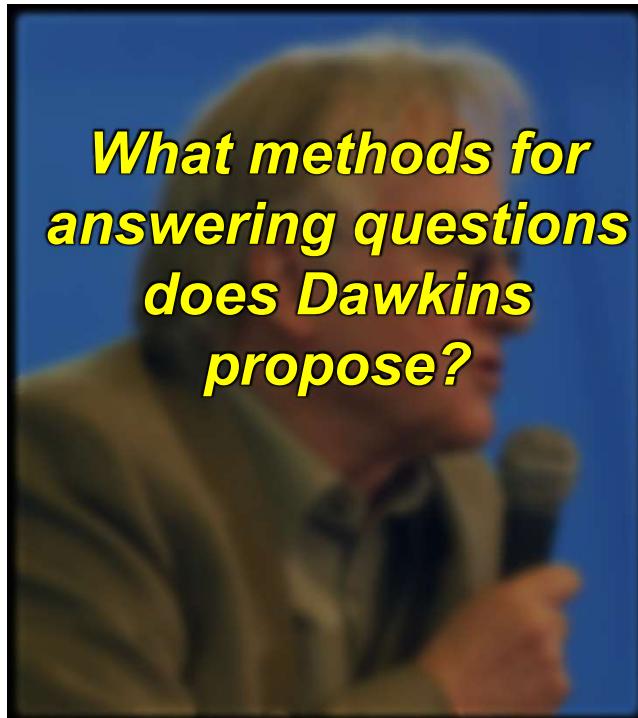
Richard Dawkins



Richard Dawkins

"There is an answer to every such question [about God and miracles], whether or not we can discover it in practice, and it is a strictly scientific answer. The methods we should use to settle the matter, in the unlikely event that relevant evidence ever became available, would be purely and entirely scientific methods."

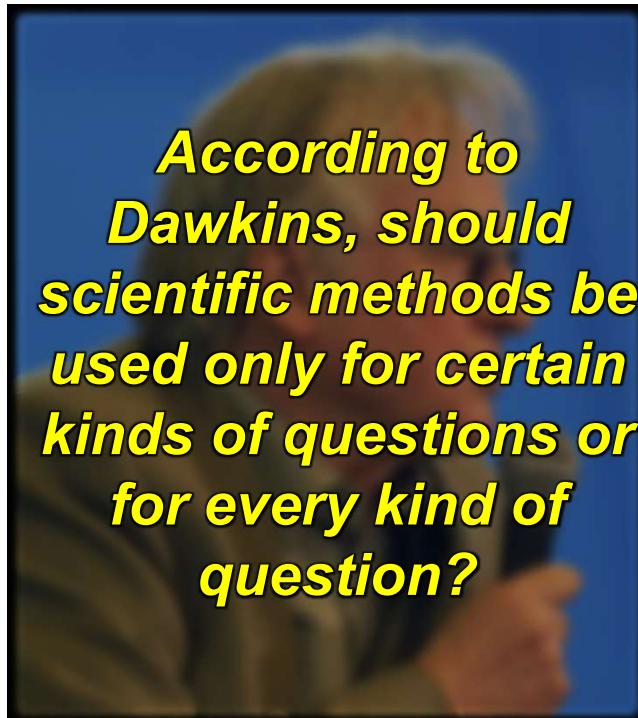
[Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 59.]



What methods for answering questions does Dawkins propose?

"There is an answer to every such question [about God and miracles], whether or not we can discover it in practice, and it is a strictly scientific answer. The methods we should use to settle the matter, in the unlikely event that relevant evidence ever became available, would be **purely and entirely scientific methods.**"

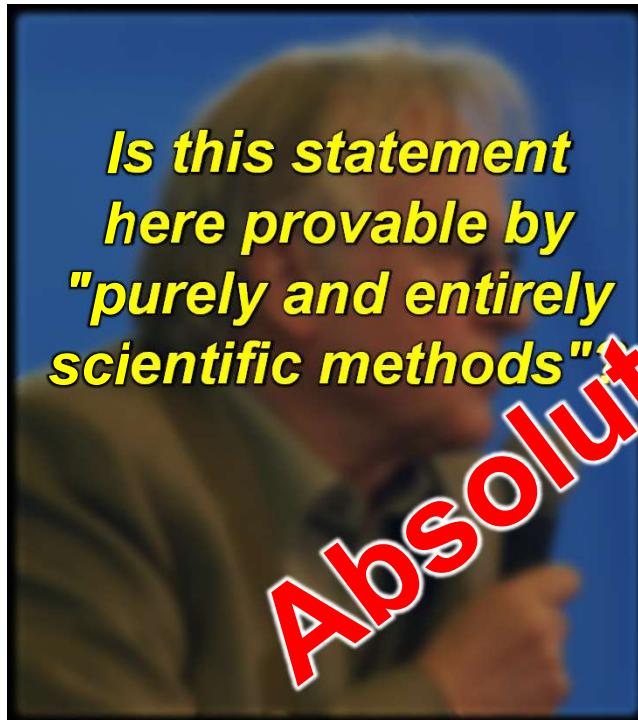
[Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 59.]



According to Dawkins, should scientific methods be used only for certain kinds of questions or for every kind of question?

"There is an answer to **every such question** [about God and miracles], whether or not we can discover it in practice, and it is a strictly scientific answer. The methods we should use to settle the matter, in the unlikely event that relevant evidence ever became available, would be **purely and entirely scientific methods.**"

[Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 59.]

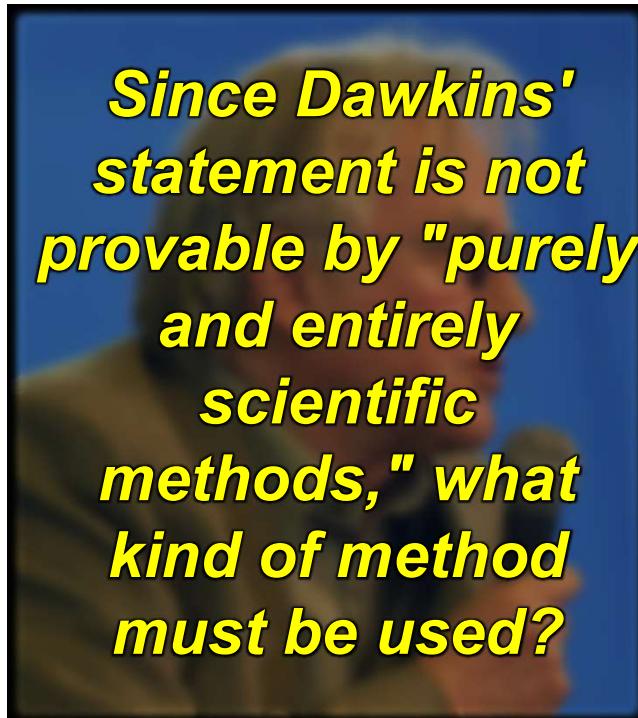


Is this statement here provable by "purely and entirely scientific methods"?

Absolutely Not!

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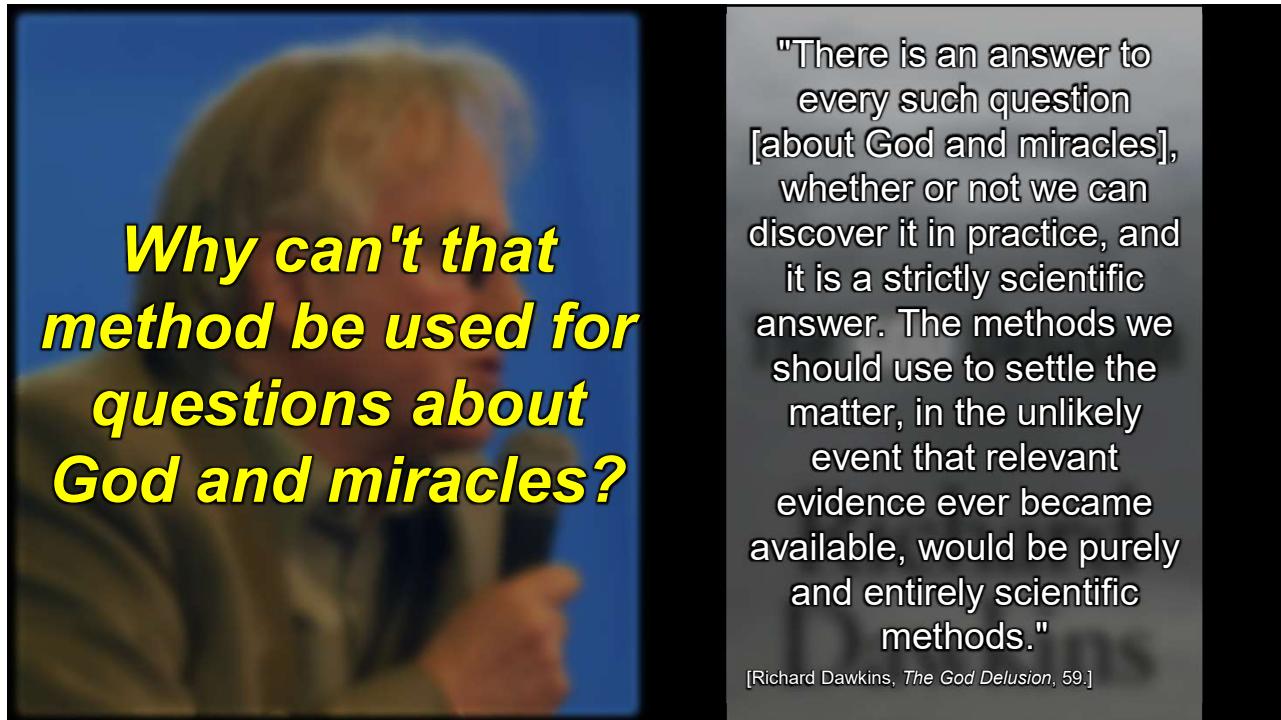
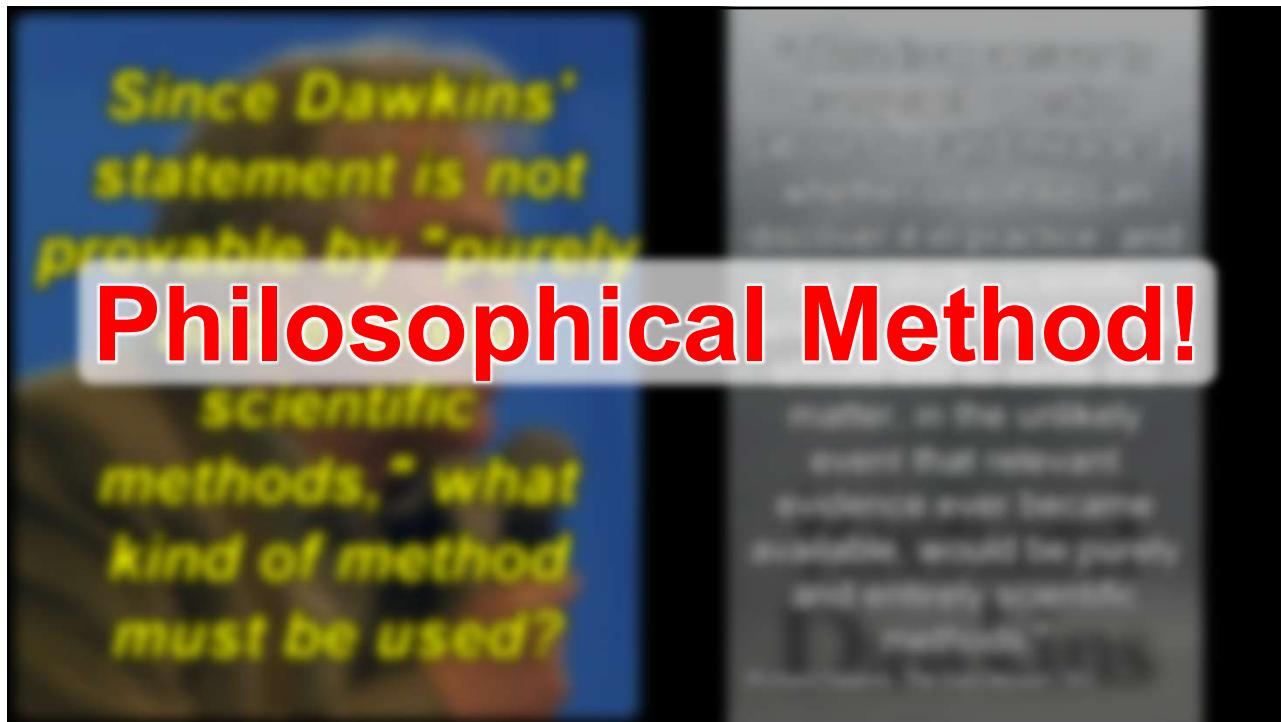
[Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 59.]



Since Dawkins' statement is not provable by "purely and entirely scientific methods," what kind of method must be used?

"There is an answer to every such question [about God and miracles], whether or not we can discover it in practice, and it is a strictly scientific answer. The methods we should use to settle the matter, in the unlikely event that relevant evidence ever became available, would be purely and entirely scientific methods."

[Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 59.]



Answering the Scientists: Marcia McNutt

"Science is a method for deciding whether what we choose to believe has a basis in the laws of nature or not."

[in Joel Achenbach, "The Age of Disbelief," *National Geographic* (March 2015): 40]

Marcia McNutt

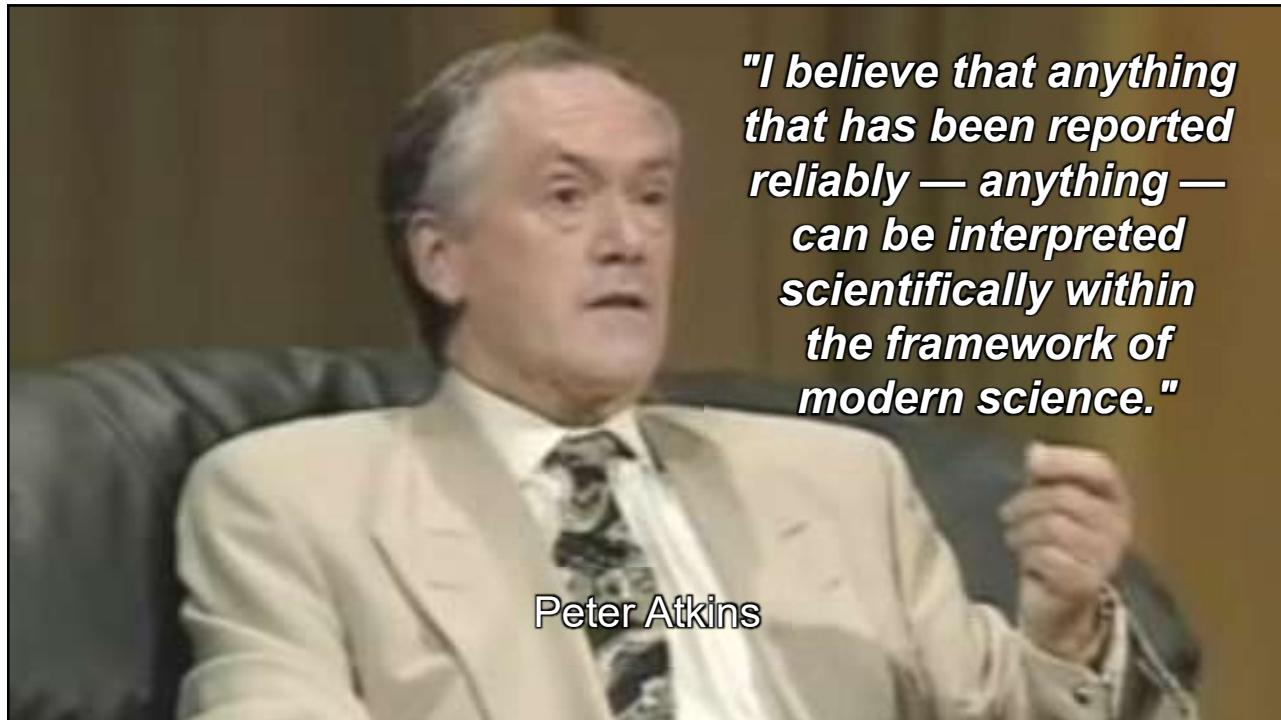


- **Presumably, Marcia McNutt believes her own statement.**
- **If so, what *scientific method* did she use to decide whether this belief "has a basis in the laws of nature or not"?**
- **Further, exactly what "*laws of nature*" could possibly be the basis for this belief?**



self-refuting statement

Answering the Scientists: Peter Atkins



Can Atkins' statement "be interpreted scientifically within the framework of modern science"?

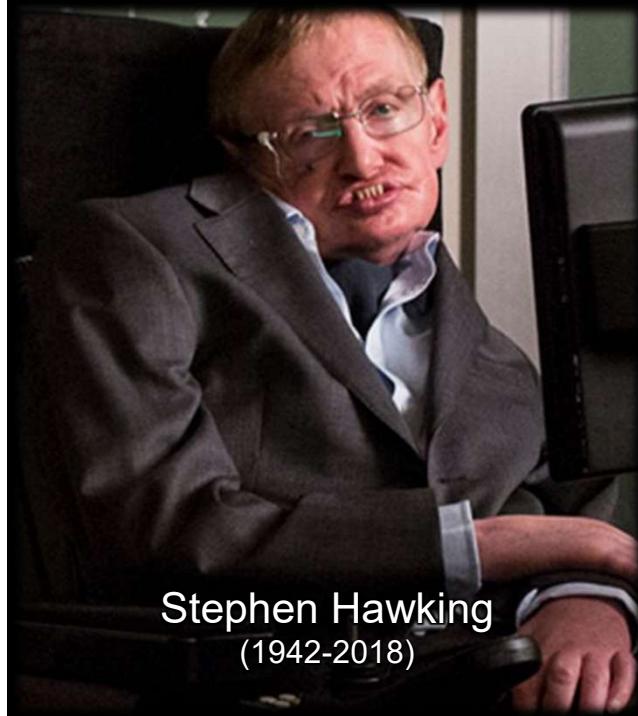
"I believe that anything that has been reported reliably — anything — can be interpreted scientifically within the framework of modern science."

It would seem one could interpret any statement within any framework.

"I believe that anything that has been reported reliably — anything — can be interpreted scientifically within the framework of modern science."

Can Atkins' statement "be CORRECTLY interpreted scientifically within the framework of modern science"?

"I believe that anything that has been reported reliably — anything — can be interpreted scientifically within the framework of modern science."



Stephen Hawking
(1942-2018)



Leonard Mlodinow

"How can we understand the world in which we find ourselves? How does the universe behave? What is the nature of reality? Where did all this come from? Did the universe need a creator? ... Traditionally these are questions for philosophy, but philosophy is dead. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics."

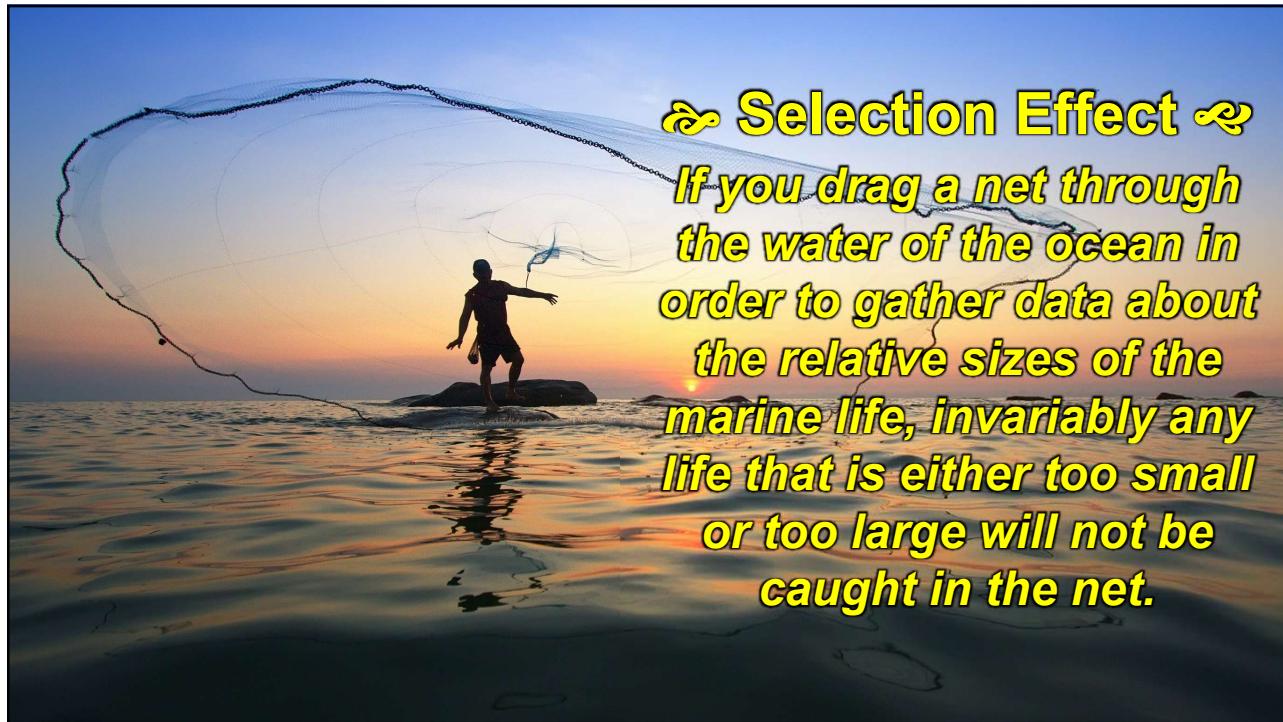
[Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010), 5]



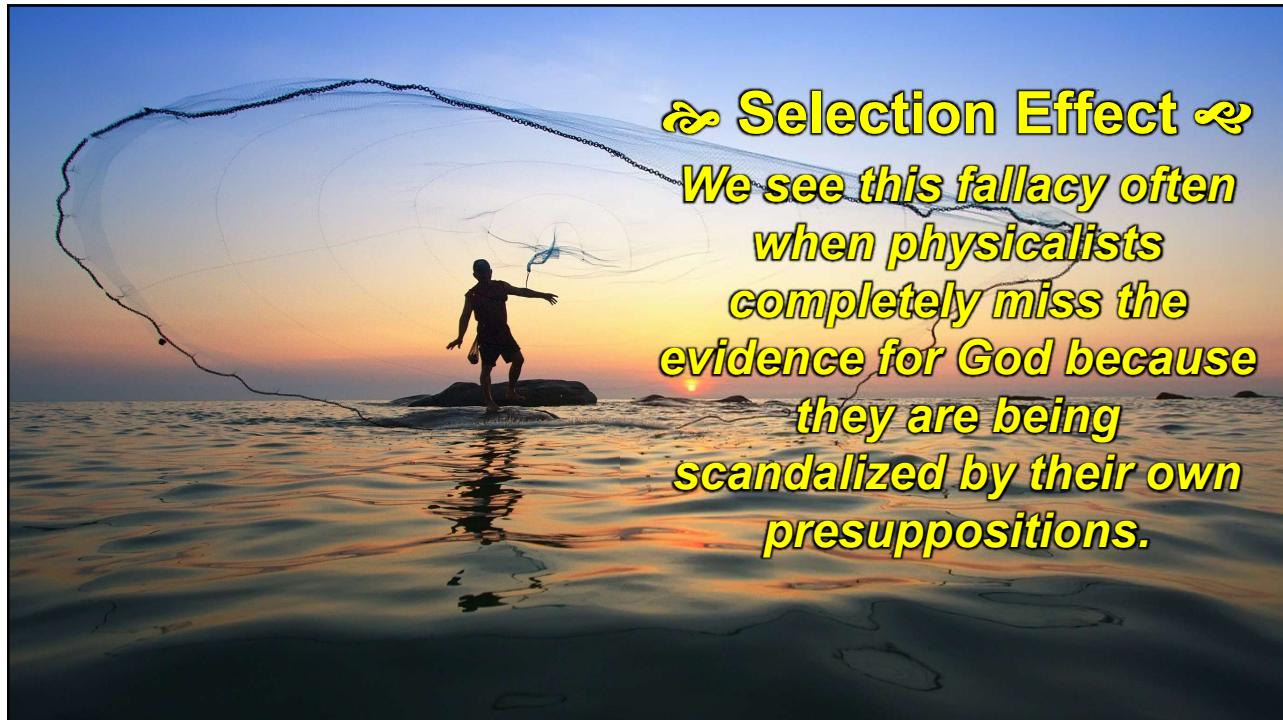
So, what good is philosophy?







❖ Selection Effect ❖
If you drag a net through the water of the ocean in order to gather data about the relative sizes of the marine life, invariably any life that is either too small or too large will not be caught in the net.



❖ Selection Effect ❖
We see this fallacy often when physicalists completely miss the evidence for God because they are being scandalized by their own presuppositions.

What sense would it make for someone to insist that there are no sea shells on the beach because his metal detector failed to indicate any!



Scientism is doomed by its very method to miss much of the evidence for the existence of God and the reality of miracles.



The Failure of Scientism

- ❖ *We have seen that one of the fundamental mistakes of scientism is its failure to distinguish questions that are scientific from questions that are philosophical.*
- ❖ *The methods of science (as that term is commonly used today) are limited in their ability to plunge the depths of the nature of reality.*

- ❖ Contemporary science often seeks to give answers along the contours and categories of mathematics.
- ❖ But on the occasion of our encounter with the sensible world around us, the human intellect is able to know truths that are beyond the physical, which is to say, metaphysical truths.

- ❖ Examples would be:
 - ✓ teleology
 - ✓ four causes: Efficient, Formal, Final, Material
 - ✓ the distinction between substance and accident
 - ✓ the distinction between universal and particular
 - ✓ the distinction between form and matter
 - ✓ the distinction between act and potency
 - ✓ the distinction between essence and existence

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With these metaphysical truths, the classical philosopher (i.e., the Thomist) can demonstrate the existence and attributes of the God of Classical Theism.

Further, since God exists, then miracles are possible.

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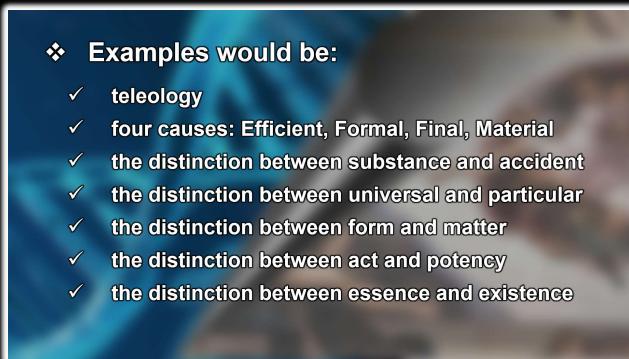
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It remains to show whether miracles have actually occurred.

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It remains to show whether miracles have actually occurred.

From here, we move from philosophy to history.

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