

# Prayers for Healing Does God change His “Mind”?

**Paul Lange, MD, FACS**

Pritt Chair in Urology Research

Professor and Chairman Emeritus: Department of  
Urology

Director: Institute for Prostate Cancer Research  
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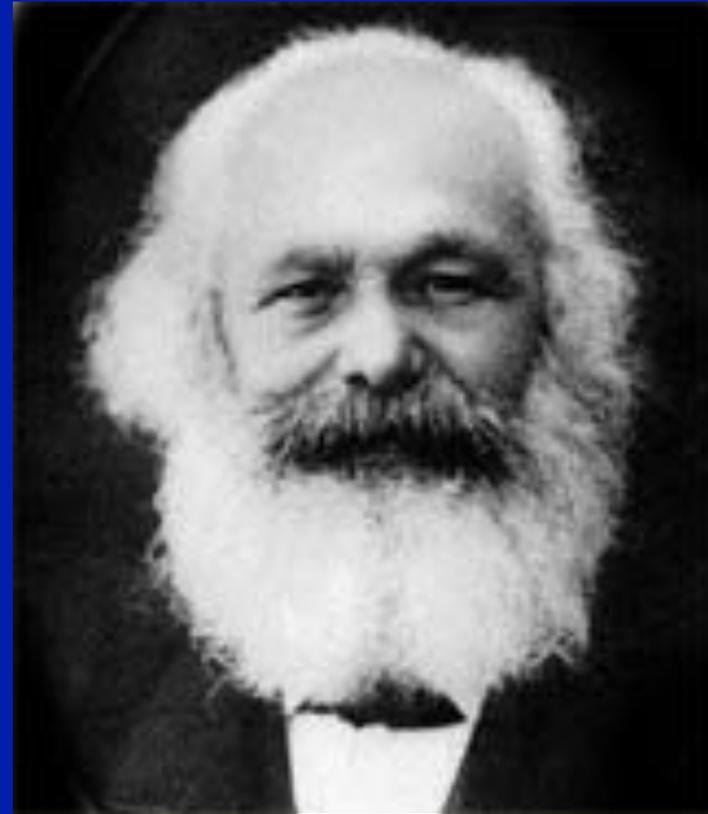


# The Christian physician's dilemma

- From Monday through Saturday we treat the human body as a “machine” and on Sundays many of us squirm in our pews while the congregation prays for healing
- Some questions:
  - What is purpose of prayers for healing (PFH)
  - How should physicians ‘reaction’ to patients who “rely” totally or partially on PFH
  - Should physicians (ask to) pray with their patients
  - What should physicians think about the efficacy of PFH
    - Current research on intercessory PFH
    - What is the hoped for efficacy
      - “psychosomatic”
      - Change the laws of the biology/the universe
      - Something else?

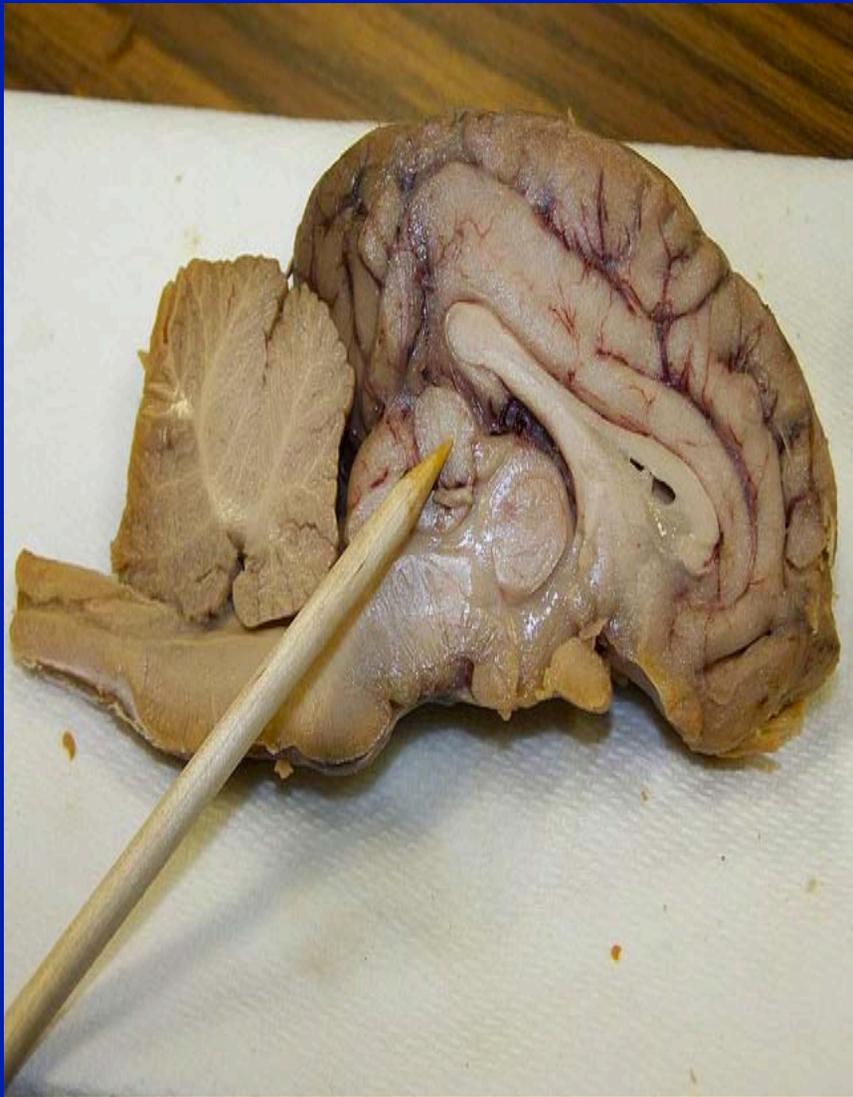
# outline

- Background (how I got here)
- A bedside encounter and “essay”
- My current activity on PFH with physicians and/or medical scientists
- Will NOT discuss:
  - Placebo effect
    - Medical/scientific benefits of optimism, stress reduction, etc
  - Research into prayer
  - Recommended activity of physicians at bedside



**“Genetic Lutheran”**

**“God is an opiate!”**



Pineal gland



Rene Descartes

Forming Life,  
Forming Youth:  
Lutheran Perspectives  
on Contemporary  
Ethical Issues

A Founders' Weekend Conference at  
Valparaiso University  
September 22-23, 2000



Celebrating 75 Years  
As A Lutheran University

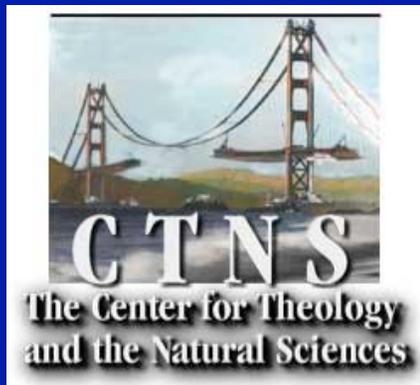
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# UW Program to Increase Interdisciplinary Dialogue Between Medical Science & Faith/ Value Traditions (2004-5)

Paul Lange, MD & Denise Dudzinski, PhD, MTS  
University of Washington (UW)  
Department of Urology & Biomedical Ethics



\*



## UW/Seattle wide lecture by science/religion expert



*The Department of Medical History & Ethics and Department of Urology at the University of Washington, are pleased to present a public lecture supported by the Center for Theology & the Natural Sciences:*

**Ted Peters, PhD**

### **“The Evolution Controversy: From Creation to New Creation”**

**Tuesday, March 2, 2004  
at 7:00 p.m.**

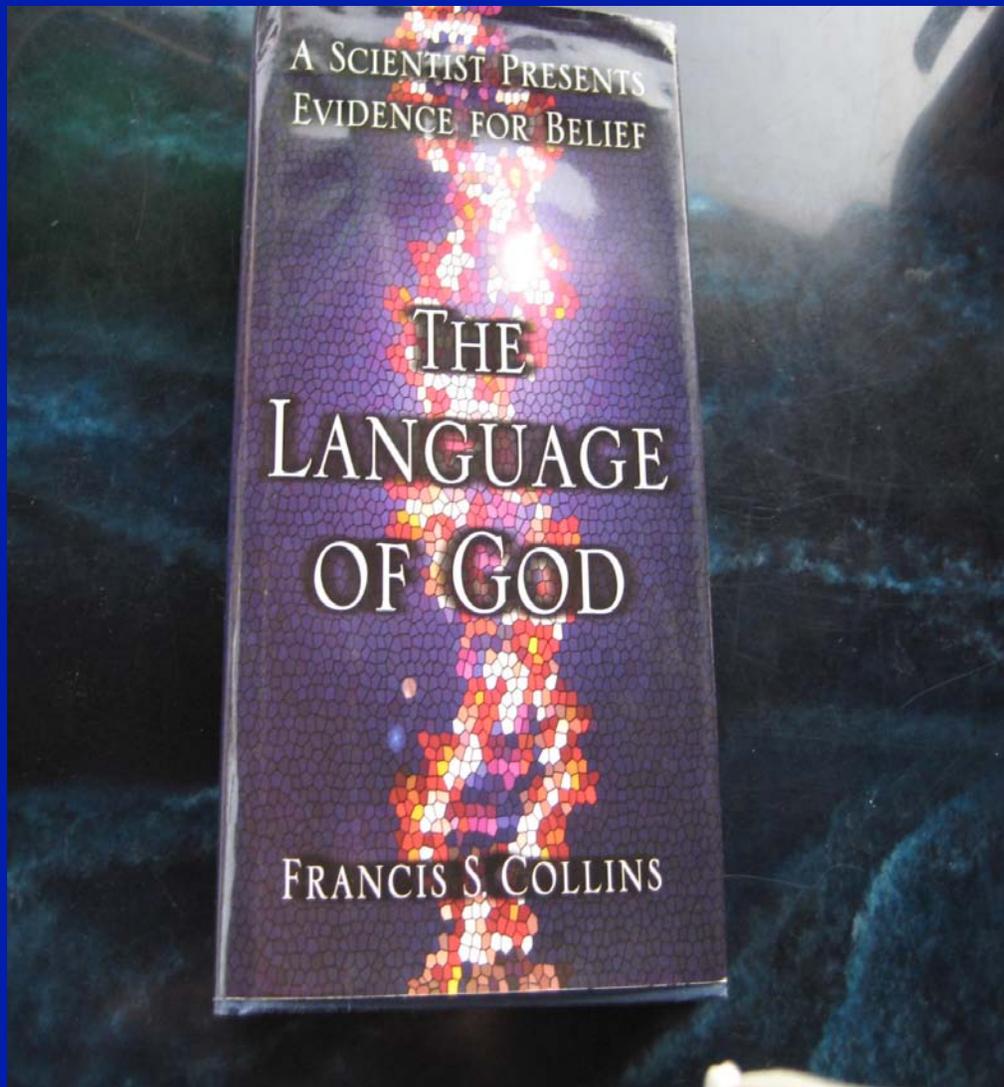
**Room 130, Kane Hall  
University of Washington  
Campus**



Author and theologian Ted Peters, PhD, will lecture on his recent book (co-written with Martinez Hewlett) entitled *Evolution: from Creation to New Creation* (Abingdon 2003). Dr. Peters is an academic theologian and ordained pastor and currently serves as Interim President of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. He teaches at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, California, and is a research scholar affiliated with the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS).

Dr. Peters is the editor of *Dialog, A Journal of Theology* and co-editor of *Theology and Science*. He has authored many books, including *Science, Theology, and Ethics*; *Playing God? Genetic Determinism and Human Freedom* and *God, Life, and the Cosmos: Christian and Islamic Perspectives*.

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Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.  
NIH Director

2006



**The BioLogos Foundation's *Theology of Celebration II* Workshop**

**November, 2010**

# Lectures on the Big Questions of life\*#

1. Where did we come from?
2. Who are we?
3. What should we do while we are here?
4. Where are we going after we die?
5. Can (should) we ask these questions?

\* P.H. Lange: 5 lecture series (churches)

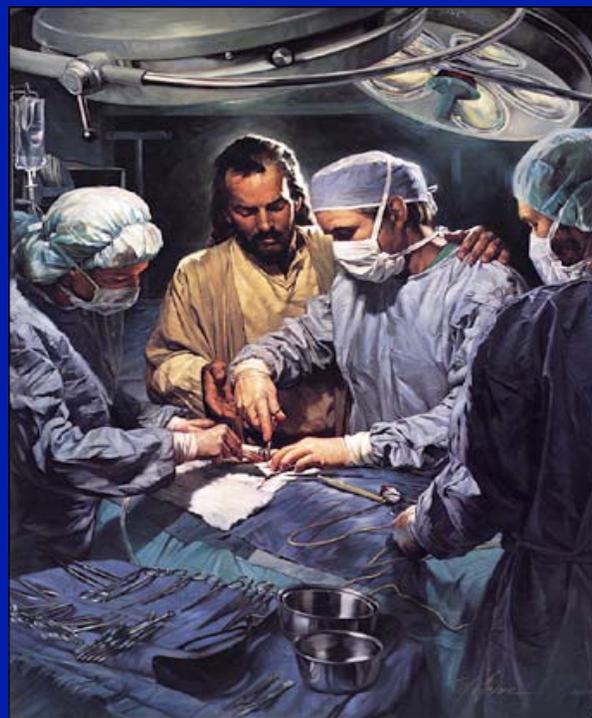
# Revealing the sci/religion sophistication: showing books and reciting quotes from them

# University Presbyterian Church Sci/Rel series(2011)

1. April 3: “Life’s big questions: An introduction to the field of Science and Religion”—Lange,
2. May 1: “Where did we come from? Cosmology, evolution and belief”—Lange.
3. May 8; “Who are we? Imago Dei, the soul, mind, brain, and neuroscience”— . Lange
4. May 29: “What do we do while we are here? The origin of morality and the problem of evil”— Lange,
5. **Sept 11: “What do we do while we are here? Prayer and miracles: Does God change His mind?”— Lange**
6. Sept. 18: “So You're Dead. What's Next?: Theological and Psychological Notes on Life After Death”-- Tim Weber PhD, MDiv ; Lutheran pastor, practicing clinical psychologist and Prof Psychology Saybrook U.
7. Oct 2: “Life Beyond Death: What Can Christians Expect?” Ted Peters PhD, MDiv: Lutheran pastor, Prof Systematic Theology Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary & Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California
8. Oct 30: “The history of the universe and the origin of planets: where did we come from?”-- Thomas Quinn, PhD; Prof of Astronomy, UW  
Nov 13: “Some evidence: What the fossils, archaeology and genes tell us about becoming human”--Cara Wall-Scheffler, PhD; Assist. Prof. Biology SPU
9. Nov 27: “Are life’s big questions worth asking? Truth in science, philosophy, and religion” -- ( Patrick McDonald, PhD; Assist Prof of Philosophy, SPU;
10. Dec 1: “Who are we: View from a Christian neuroscientist”-- John Medina, PhD; affiliate Prof Bioengineering UW & director of the Brain Center for Applied Learning Research SPU
11. Dec 18: “What do we do while we are here? Faith, tribalism, pluralism and interfaith”--Don MacKenzie, PhD, MDiv; former sr. pastor University Congregational, now founder “Interfaith Amigos”

# Seminal experience that started PFH series for inquiring residents/medical students/researchers

- ‘teaching rounds’ at post operative bedside of prostate cancer patient “Mr. Jones”
  - An ‘essay’ on PFH written in 2 hours (2002)
    - This will take 8 minutes to read!

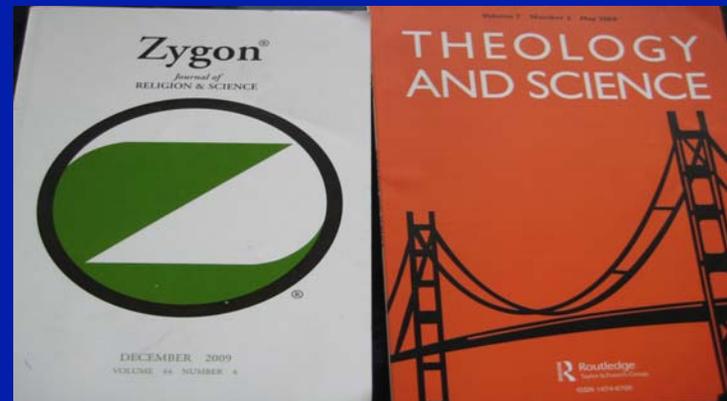


# PFH series for inquiring residents/medical students/ researchers

- 2-3 one-hour sessions
  - churches, department library
  - adherents of all faith pathways welcome
    - emphasis Christian
- This is 15 minutes, so hang on!!!

# My purpose (and approach)

- Purpose:
  - Demonstrate the sophistication of the field
  - Stimulate a similar personal “journey”
  - Not to persuade or cajole
- Approach:
  - Show important books and read quotes from them



# Cognitive Dissidence

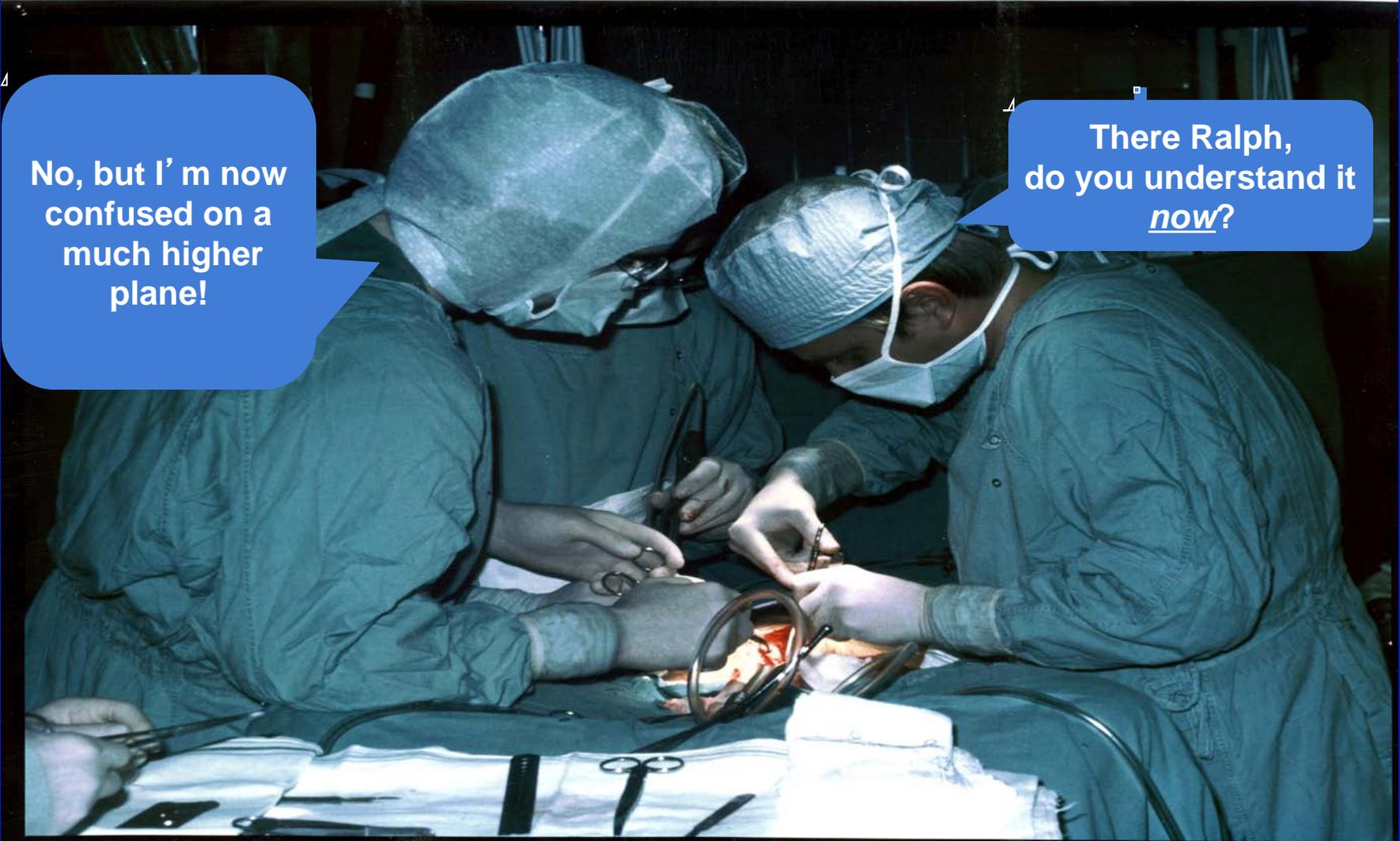


The uncomfortable feeling caused by holding conflicting ideas simultaneously

# The Goal

No, but I'm now  
confused on a  
much higher  
plane!

There Ralph,  
do you understand it  
now?



For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. 1 Corith. 13:12

## Templeton Prize (100K > Nobel prize)

Honors living person who's made sig. contributions to affirming life's spiritual dimension

- \* Michael Heller(2008)
- \* Charles Taylor(2007)
- \* John D. Barrow(2006)
- \* Charles H. Townes(2005)
- \* George F. R. Ellis(2004)
- \* Holmes Rolston III(2003)
- \* John C. Polkinghorne(2002)
- \* Arthur Peacocke(2001)
- \* Freeman J. Dyson(2000)
- \* Ian Graeme Barbour(1999)
- \* Sigmund Sternberg(1998)
- \* Pandurang Shastri Athavale(1997)
- \* William R. "Bill" Bright(1996)
- \* Paul Davies(1995)

- **Paul Davies (1995)** -theoretical physicist and cosmologist from Arizona State University.
- **Ian Barbour (1999)**- one of the world pioneers in the integration of science and religion. Physicist and theologian from Carleton College.
- **Arthur Peacocke (2001)** biochemist, Anglican priest and Dean of Clare College, Cambridge,
- **John C. Polkinghorne (2002)** mathematical physicist, Anglican priest and Dean Magellan College, Cambridge
- **George F. R. Ellis (2004)** - theoretical cosmologist and Professor Emeritus of Applied Mathematics at the University of Cape Town, South Africa.
- **Charles H. Townes (2005)** - Professor in the Graduate School at the University of California, Berkeley, 1964 Nobel Prize winner in Physics.
- **John D. Barrow (2006)** - Professor of Mathematical Sciences at Cambridge University and Gresham Professor of Geometry at Gresham College in London.

## Other Luminaries in Sci/Rel Dialogue

- **Francisco Ayala**: Geneticist, Prof. UC Irvine; member of the U.S. President's Committee of Advisor on Science and Technology
- **Philip Clayton**: Philosopher, author of *God and Contemporary Physics*, and Director of the Science and the Spiritual Quest Project
- **Ronald Cole-Turner**: Theologian and author of *The New Genesis: Theology and the Genetic Revolution*
- **Francis Collins**: Physician-Geneticist, director of the National Human Genome Research Institute
- **George V. Coyne**, S.I.: Astronomer, director of the Vatican Observatory
- **Antonio R. Damasio**: Neuroscientist, author of *Descartes' Error*
- **Ursula Goodenough**: Biologist, author of *The Sacred Depths of Nature*
- **John E. Haught**: Theologian, author of *God After Darwin*
- **Kenneth R. Miller**: Biologist, author of *Finding Darwin's God*
- **Nancy Murphy**: Philosopher, author of *Whatever Happened to the Soul?*
- **Ronald Numbers**: Historian, author of *The Creationists*
- **Wolfhart Pannenberg**: Theologian, student of Karl Barth, editor of *God and Nature*
- **Joel Primack**: Physicist, co-developer of 'cold dark matter theory'
- **Steven P. Rose**: Neurobiologist, editor of *From Brains to Consciousness: Essays on the New Sciences of the Mind*
- **Michael Ruse**: Philosopher, author of *Can a Darwinian be a Christian?*
- **Philip Hefner**: Philosopher/theologian, editor of *Zygon*
- **Robert John Russell**: Physicist, Theologian, and founding Director of the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS)
- **Ted Peters**: Theologian, co-director CTNS



Jennifer Wiseman

Head: Laboratory for Exoplanets and Stellar Astrophysics-NASA  
Director, Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion –AAAS  
President-elect : ASA, Christian

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**Themes:** The Relation of Science & Religion | Purpose & Design | Hope | Origins | Controversy | The Future | Global Perspectives | Faith | Aging | Health | Pain and Suffering



**Questions:** Does God Exist? | What Makes Us Human? | Are we Free? | Does God Act? | Where did we Come From? | Was the Universe Designed? | Did the Universe Have a Beginning? | Ares We Alone?

## Topic Sets Available

- ▶ AAAS Report on Stem-Cells
- ▶ Agency: Human, Robotic and Divine
- ▶ Becoming Human: Brain, Mind, Emergence
- ▶ Big Bang Cosmology and Theology (GHC)
- ▶ Cosmic Questions CD-ROM Preview...
- ▶ Cosmic Questions Interviews
- ▶ Cosmos and Creator
- ▶ Creativity, Spirituality and Computing Technologies
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- ▶ Demystifying Information Technology
- ▶ Divine Action (GHC)
- ▶ Dreams and Dreaming: Neuroscientific and Religious Visions'
- ▶ E. Coli at the No Free Lunchroom
- ▶ Evangelical Atheism: a response to Richard Dawkins
- ▶ Ecology and Christian Theology
- ▶ Evolution and Providence
- ▶ Evolution and Creation Survey
- ▶ Evolution and Theology (GHC)
- ▶ The Expelled Controversy
- ▶ Faith and Reason: An Introduction
- ▶ Faith in the Future: Religion, Aging, and Healthcare in the 21st Century
- ▶ Francisco Ayala on Evolution
- ▶ From Christian Passions to Scientific Emotions
- ▶ Genetic Engineering and Food
- ▶ Genetics and Ethics
- ▶ Genetic Technologies - the Radical Revision of Human Existence and the Natural World
- ▶ Genomics, Nanotechnology and Robotics
- ▶ Getting Mind out of Meat
- ▶ God, Humanity and the Cosmos: A Textbook in Science and Religion

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Paul's Adam, Part 2  
Mar. 16, 2010 • Paul Enns  
"This is the problem in a nutshell: Paul says something of vital theological importance anchored in an ancient view of human origins."

Does ID Explain a Complex, Puzzling World?  
Mar. 15, 2010 • Karl Giberson  
"Such examples conflict easily with explanation. Little is 'explained' by saying a pattern has moved from one place to another."

Intelligent Design and Me  
Mar. 10, 2010 • Francis Beckwith  
"Whether ID 'works' as a theory was not my point. It was to critique the dominant legal view of how religion and public life ought to interact."

Accommodationist and Proud of It, Part 2  
Mar. 10, 2010 • Michael Ruse  
"I didn't read David Hume and become an instant skeptic. The helms and battle just went. They have never returned."

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The Week in Review - 3/15 - 3/19  
See this week's top posts and news stories from Biologos.org and our blog Science & the Sacred.

British Journalist Peter Hitchens Discusses Turn from Atheism to Faith  
He has also made amends with his brother Christopher Hitchens, the well-known atheist author of *God is Not Great*.

Faith Groups Join Other Advocates in Washington for World Water Day  
Faith leaders will join coalition of organizations for "most significant gathering for safe water" in nation's history.

Is All Real Knowledge Scientific in Nature?  
Philosophy professor Edward Feser looks at academic in two short essays for online publication Public Discourse.

Scientists Studying How Climate Changes Affected Human Evolution  
Department headed for new human origins exhibit at the Smithsonian claims that because habitats kept changing, humans followed suit.

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# Am. Scientific Assoc.

AMERICAN SCIENTIFIC AFFILIATION: A Fellowship of Christians in Science

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Welcome!

The American Scientific Affiliation (ASA) is a fellowship of men and women in science and disciplines that relate to science who share a common fidelity to the Word of God and a commitment to integrity in the practice of science. In matters of science and Christian faith, we offer Christian scholarship, education, fellowship and service to ASA members, churches, educational institutions, the scientific community, and society.

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**Creation or Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?** by Denis Alexander / Kregel  
Publication (2009) / 352 pages, paperback

"Many scientists argue with an almost evangelical zeal that science has all but disproved God. It is vital that Christians are able to expose the flaws and inconsistencies in the underlying arguments. Yet this task is made harder by some Christians whose desire to uphold the authority of Scripture has led them to dismiss current scientific understanding of the Universe and especially the theory of Evolution. Unfortunately, many books that address this issue appear to generate more heat than light as they seek to justify their own polarized position and reduce the opposition." This book is a most welcome exception and deserves to be widely read. —Andrew Hahnke, Christianity Today

**Recommended Books • Book Reviews**

**News & Blogs**

- Executive Director's Corner
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- ASA News Blog
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**2010 ANNUAL MEETING INFO**  
Catholic University of America  
July 30-August 2, 2010  
About the Meeting Call for Abstracts On-line Abstract Submission

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**Publications**

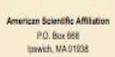
The peer-reviewed journal of the ASA is  *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith (PSCF)*. Full text of back issues and more information can be found at the [journal web site](#).

The ASA Newsletter provides news of interest to ASA members. Find the latest issue [here](#).

The December 2009 issue of PSCF is now available by subscription or by single-copy purchase.

PSCF articles and tables of contents can also be accessed via this dynamic directory. Articles through June 2009 are available on-line. Search the journal database.

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THE INSTITUTE ON RELIGION IN  
AN AGE OF SCIENCE

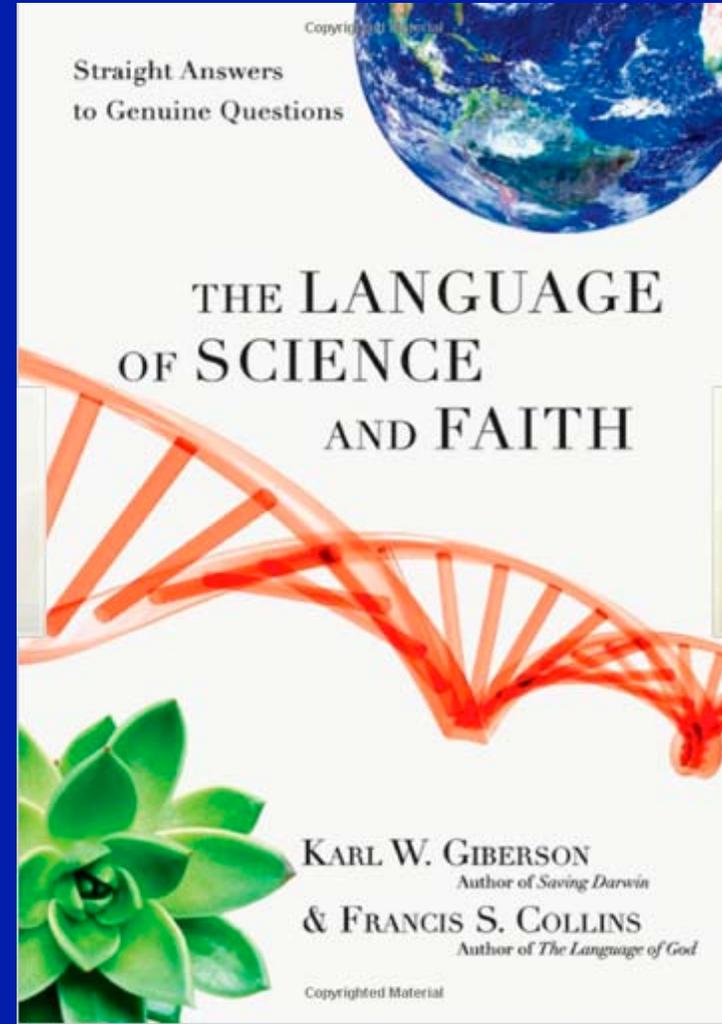
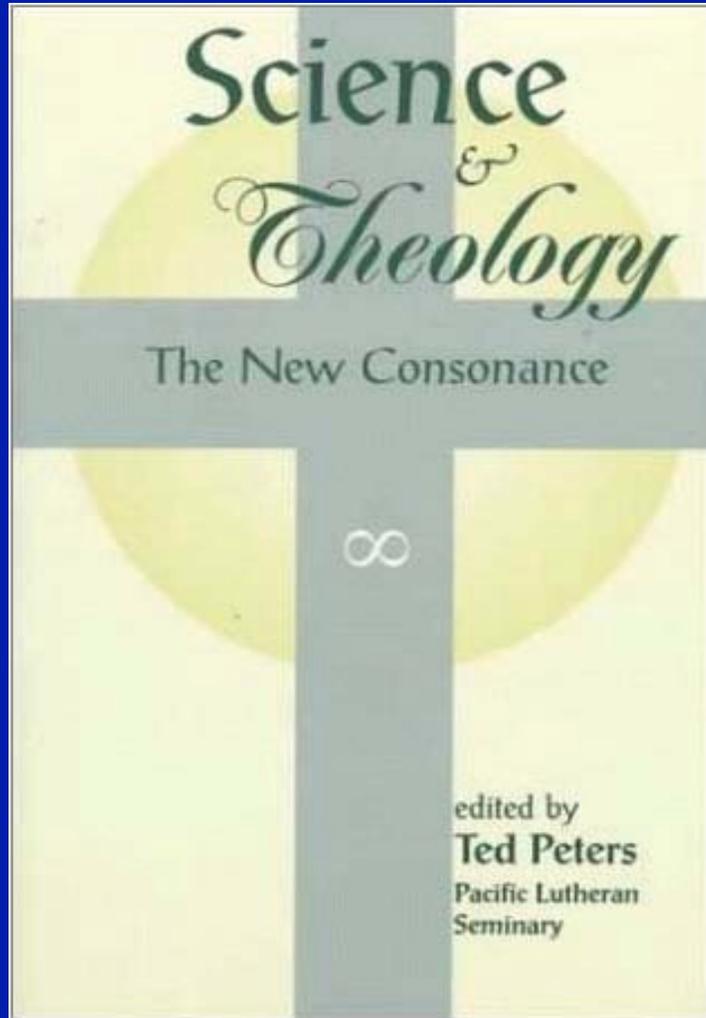


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**EVOLUTIONARY  
CHRISTIANITY**



CONVERSATIONS AT THE LEADING EDGE OF FAITH

## Introductory Books on Sci/Religion



# Essential philosophical terms

**Metaphysics**- that branch of philosophy that deals with first principles and seeks to explain the nature of being or reality (ontology), and with the theories of knowledge: their origin, nature, methods and limits (epistemology).

rationalism

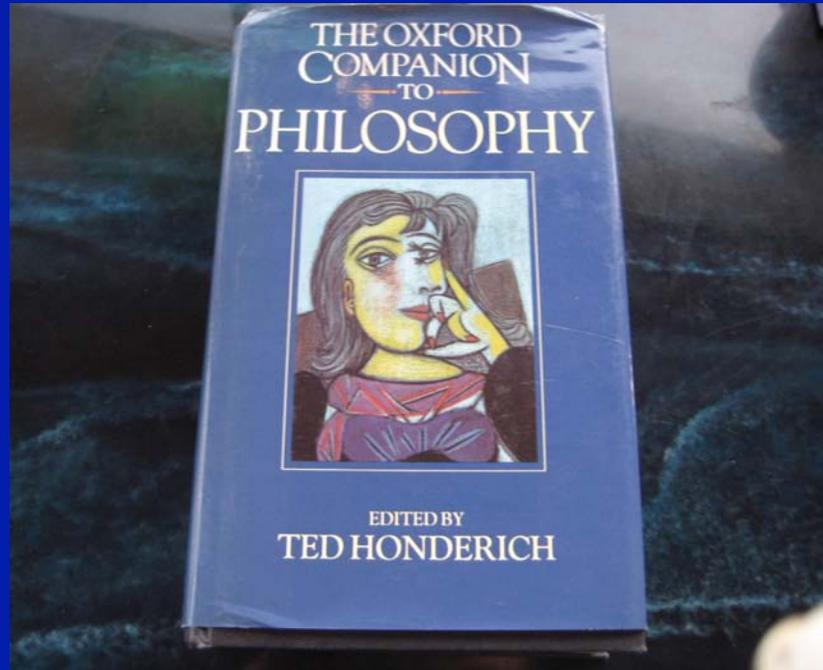
empiricism

idealism

conceptualism

nominalism

phenomenalism



a priori & a posteriori

realism

logical positivism

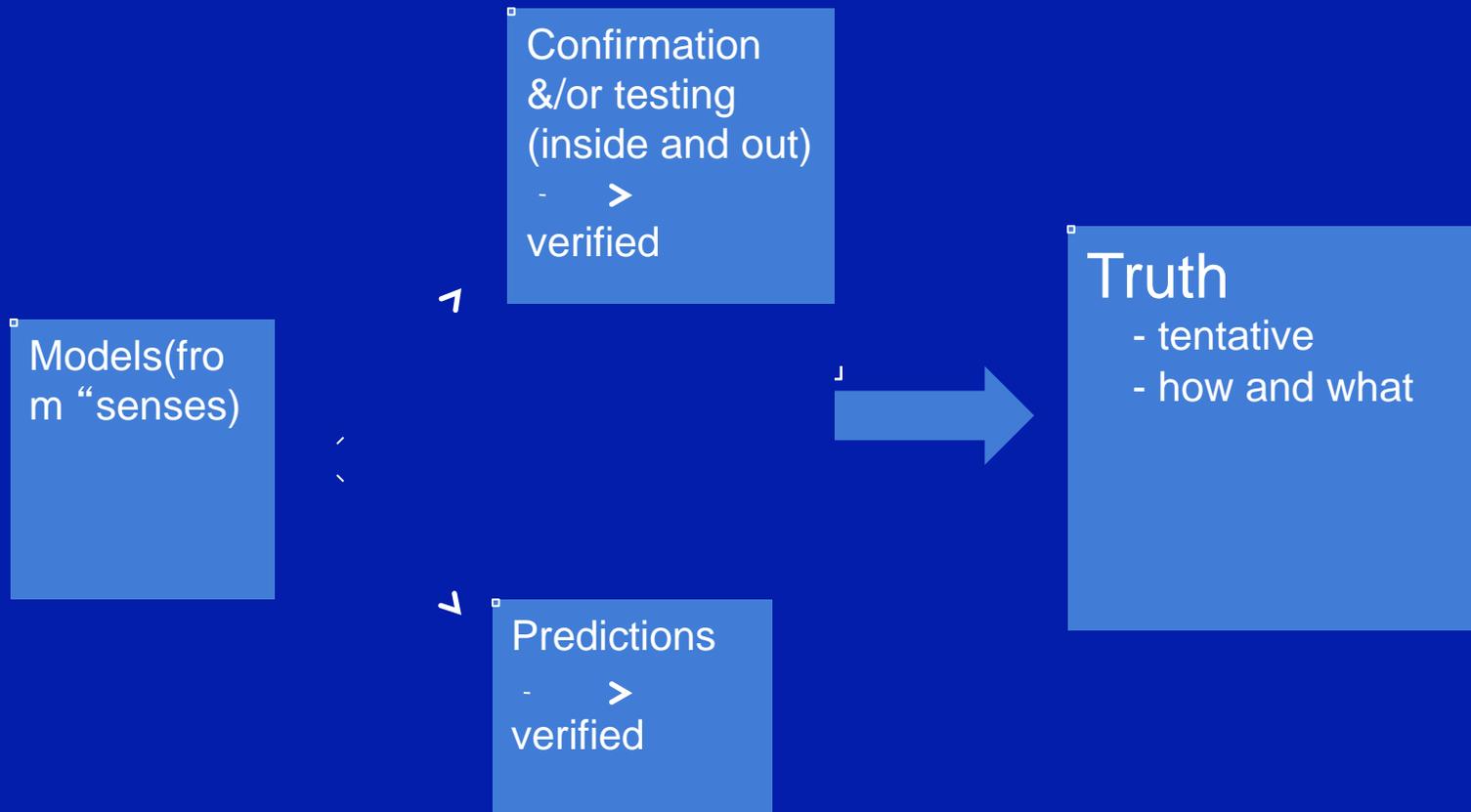
deconstructionism

postmoderanism

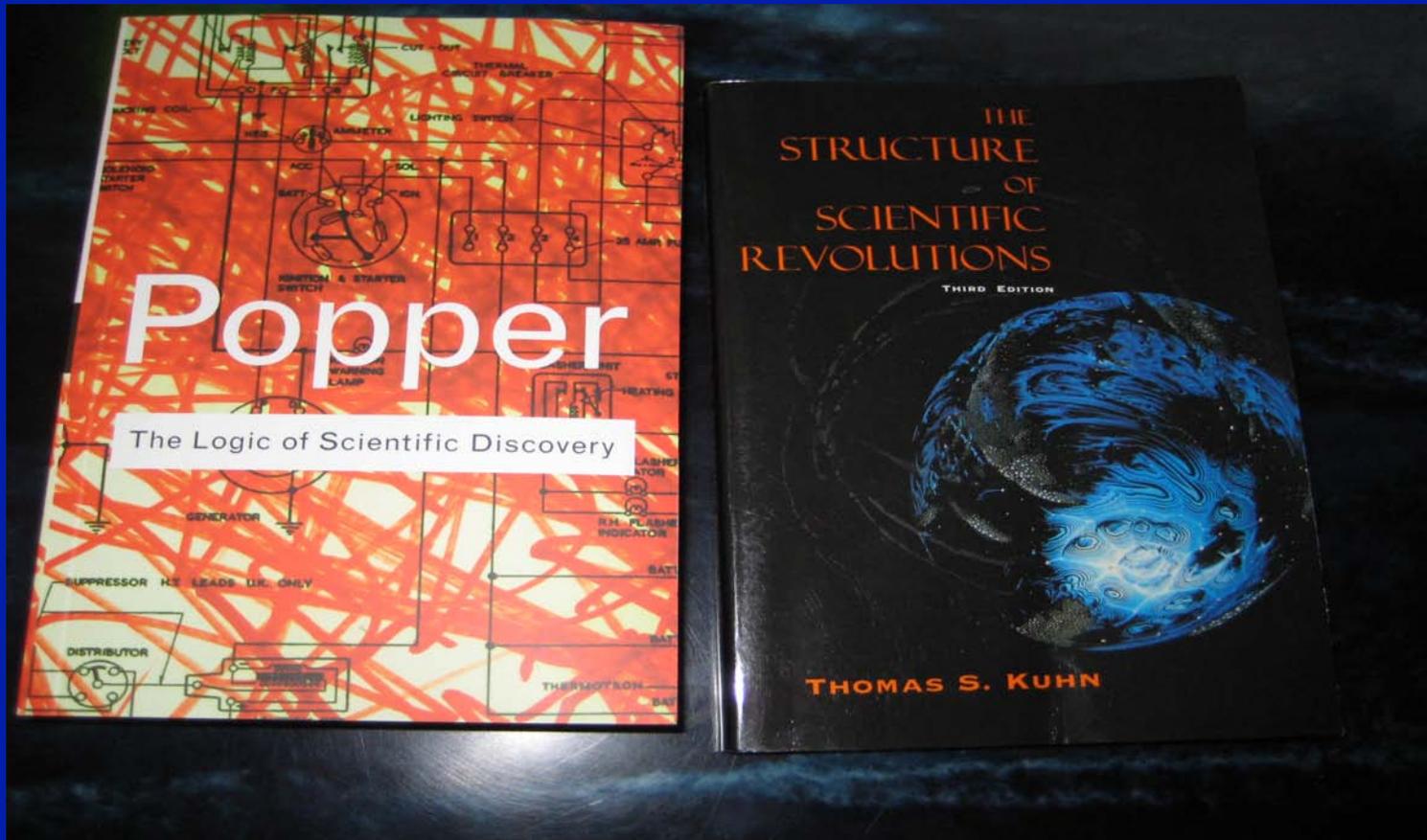
foundationalism



# The Scientific Method toward Truth



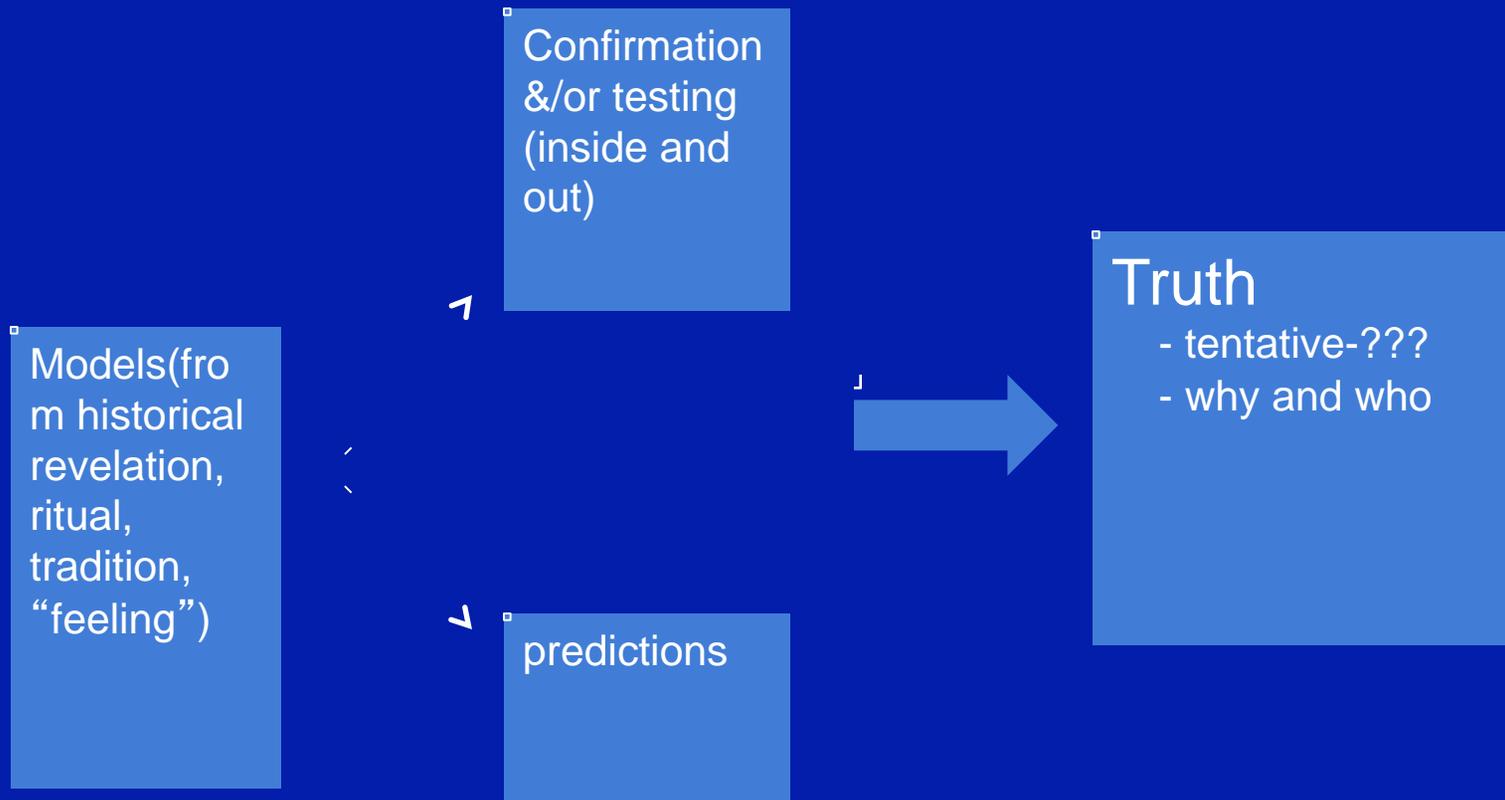
Metaphysical “leap”: scientism/reductionism/materialism:  
-only science can discover Truth



Scientific method has limits when seeking  
“truth”

- can only discover things that can be “falsified”
- requires metaphysical “assumptions”
- subject to cultural prejudices

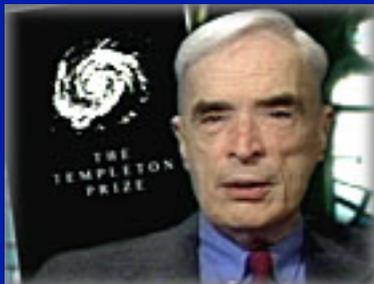
# The Religious Method toward Truth



One metaphysical "leap": Inerrancy, literalism:  
- religious "truths" trump all

## Relationships between Science and Religion: Methodological Types ( I. Balbour' s classification)\*

- Conflict: Scientific materialism vs Biblical literalism
- Independence:
  - Science = reason, facts; Religion = faith, values
- Dialogue: parallel paths using reason and values
- Integration: combining insights using common metaphysical systems
  - Science restricts, embellishes, clarifies, expands religion
  - Religion initiates, inspires, focuses science



\* T. Peters & G. Bennett: Bridging Science and Religion,

## Almost all modern commentators on Science religion adopt:

- Critical Realism: A philosophical view of science and/or theology which asserts that our knowledge of the world refers to the-way-things-really-are, but in a partial fashion which will necessarily be revised as that knowledge develops.

**“Science studies the relationship between events in the natural world. Scientists have to assume methodological naturalism; that is, they seek explanation in terms of natural causes, although they do not have to assume philosophical naturalism, the claim that nothing exists beyond the scope of science.”**

**Ian Barbour**

**“Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider field, a world in which both can flourish.”**

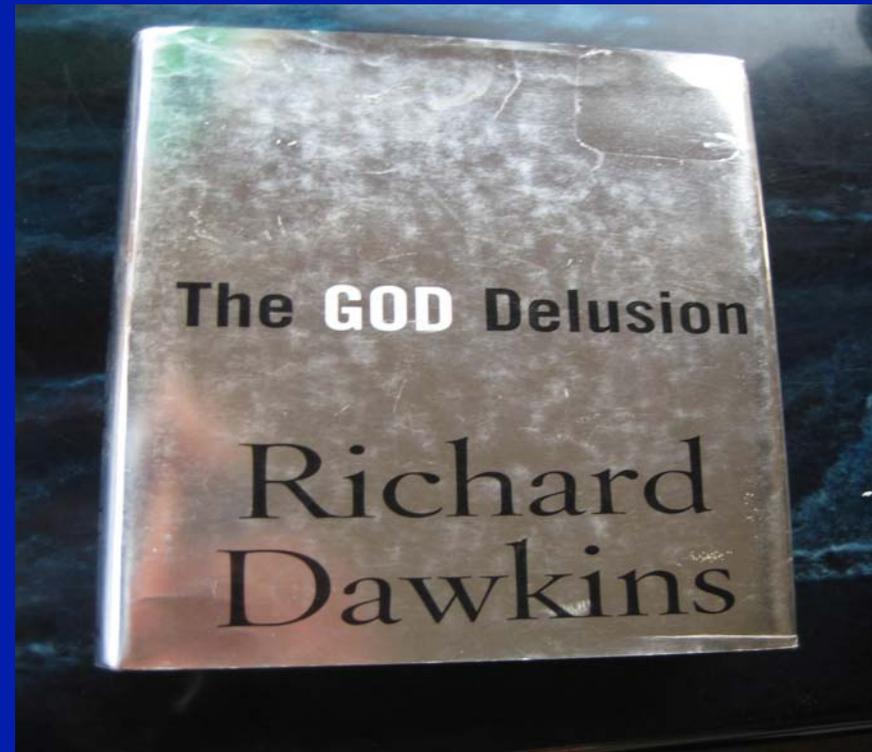
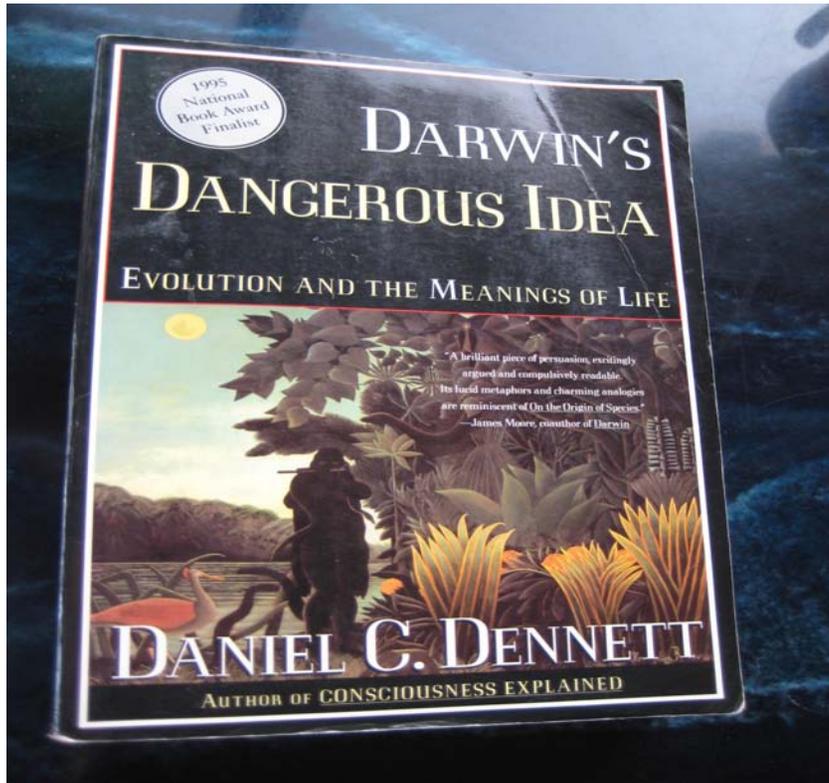
**Pope John Paul II**

**“Science is never the end of the story, because science cannot tell humans what they most need to know: the meaning of life and how to value it.”  
Science only gives us “know-how without knowing whether.”**

**John Polkinghorne**

**“Religion was forged millenniums ago. To make it relevant in an age of atoms and DNA, religion must incorporate knowledge gained from natural science into the formation of doctrinal beliefs, or it will be viewed by most people as anachronism.”**

**Ted Peters**



## The “Militant Atheists”

Only true faith is Scientism, Religion evil, believers stupid or mislead!!

- Daniel Dennett- Breaking the Spell: Religion as a natural phenomenon (2006)
- Richard Dawkins- The God Delusion (2006)
- Sam Harris-Letter to a Christian Nation (2006)
- Christopher Hitchens- God is Not Great (2007)

# Dawkin's "friends" don't agree

- "Dawkins considers that all faith is blind faith, and that Christian and Muslim children are brought up to believe unquestionably. Not even the dim-witted clerics who knocked me about at grammar school thought that. For mainstream Christianity, reason, argument and honest doubt have always played an integral role in belief...Reason, to be sure, doesn't go all the way down for believers, but it doesn't for most sensitive, civilized non-religious types either. Even Richard Dawkins lives more by faith than by reason. We hold many beliefs that have no unimpeachably rational justification, but are nonetheless reasonable to entertain...\*\*

\* Terry Eagleton: Marxist Scholar

Science  
*and*  
Religion  
*in*  
Search  
*of*  
Cosmic  
Purpose

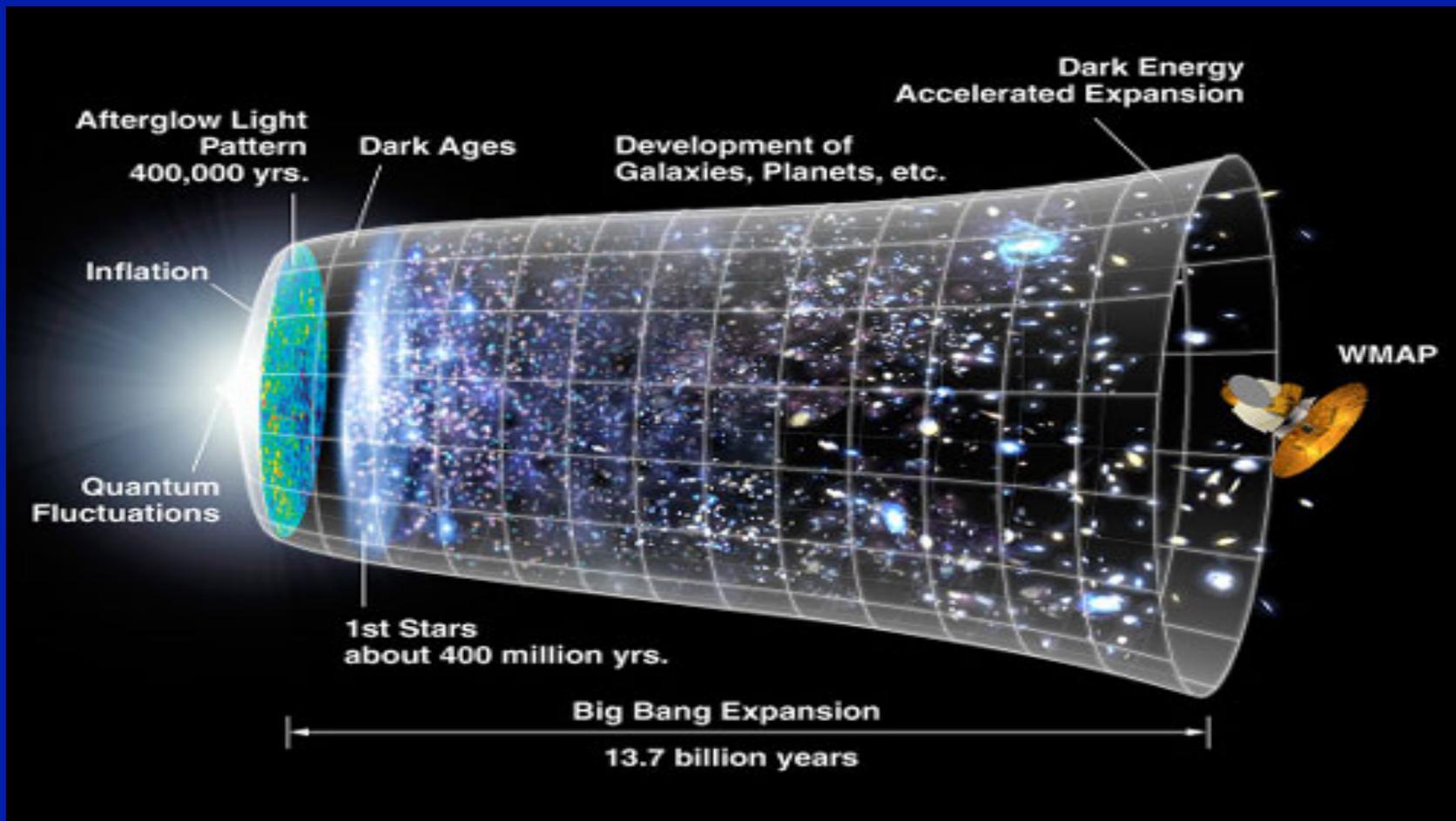
John F.  
Haught  
EDITOR

**GOD** AND THE  
**NEW ATHEISM**

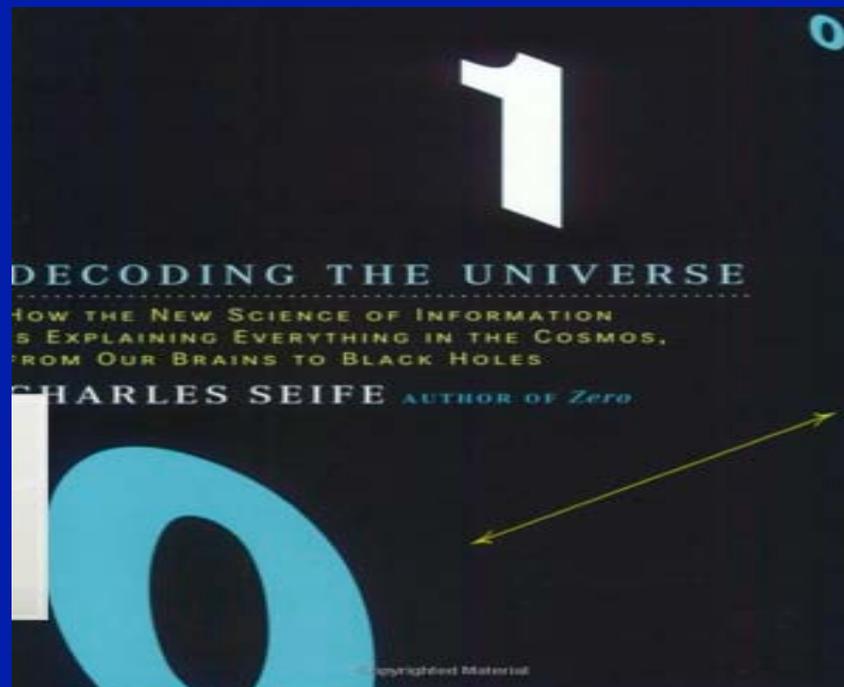
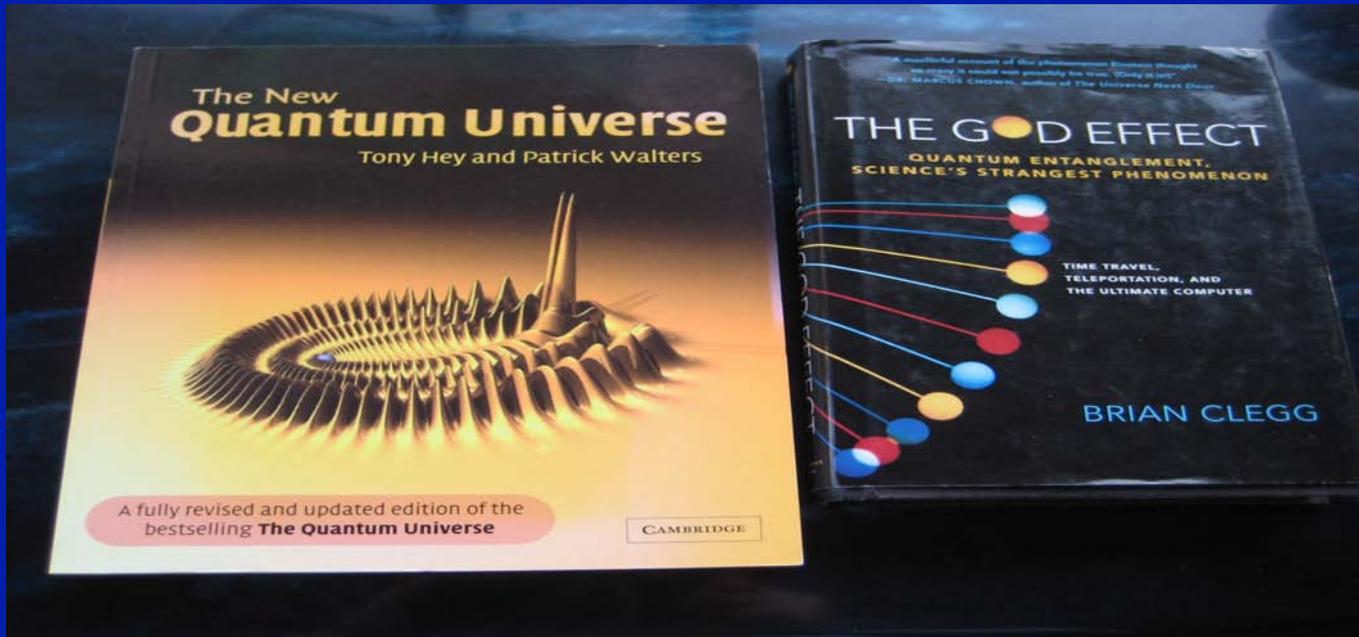
A CRITICAL RESPONSE TO

DAWKINS, HARRIS, AND HITCHENS

**JOHN F. HAUGHT**

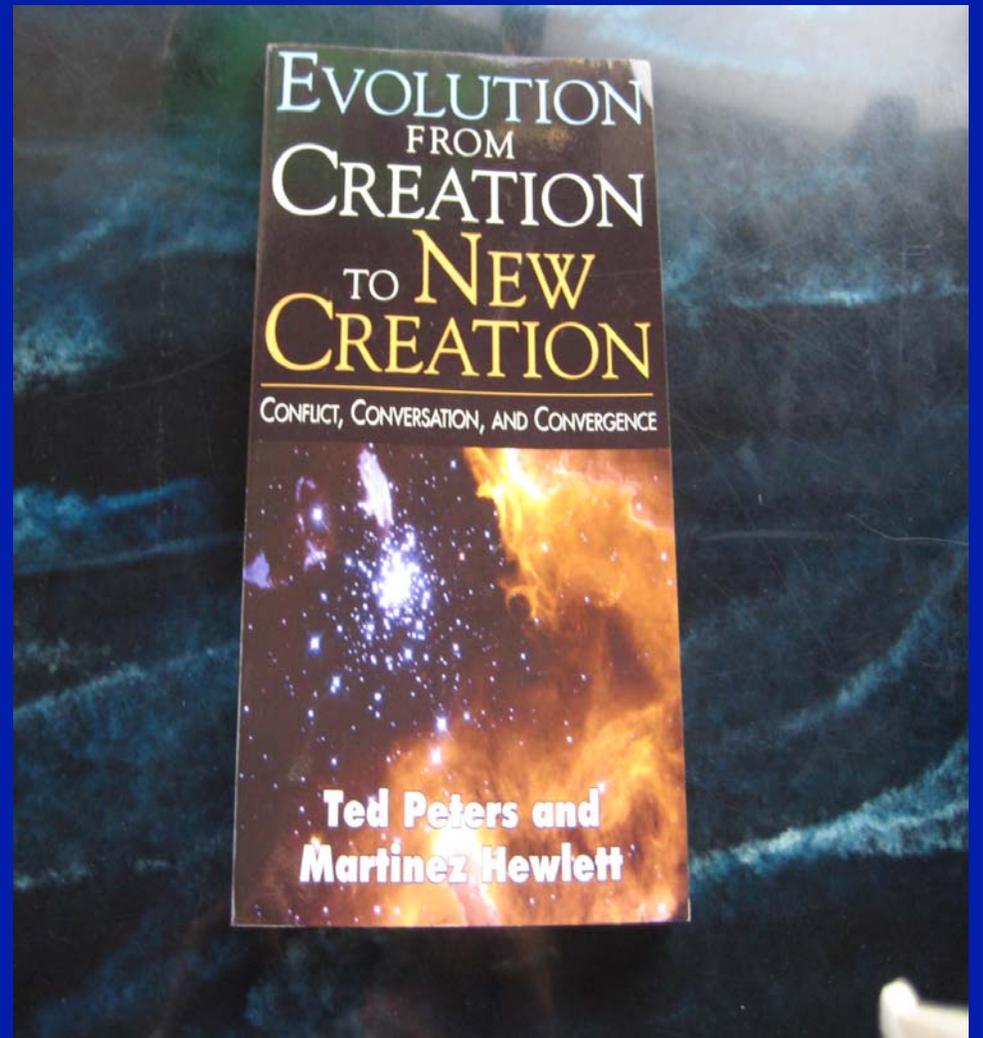
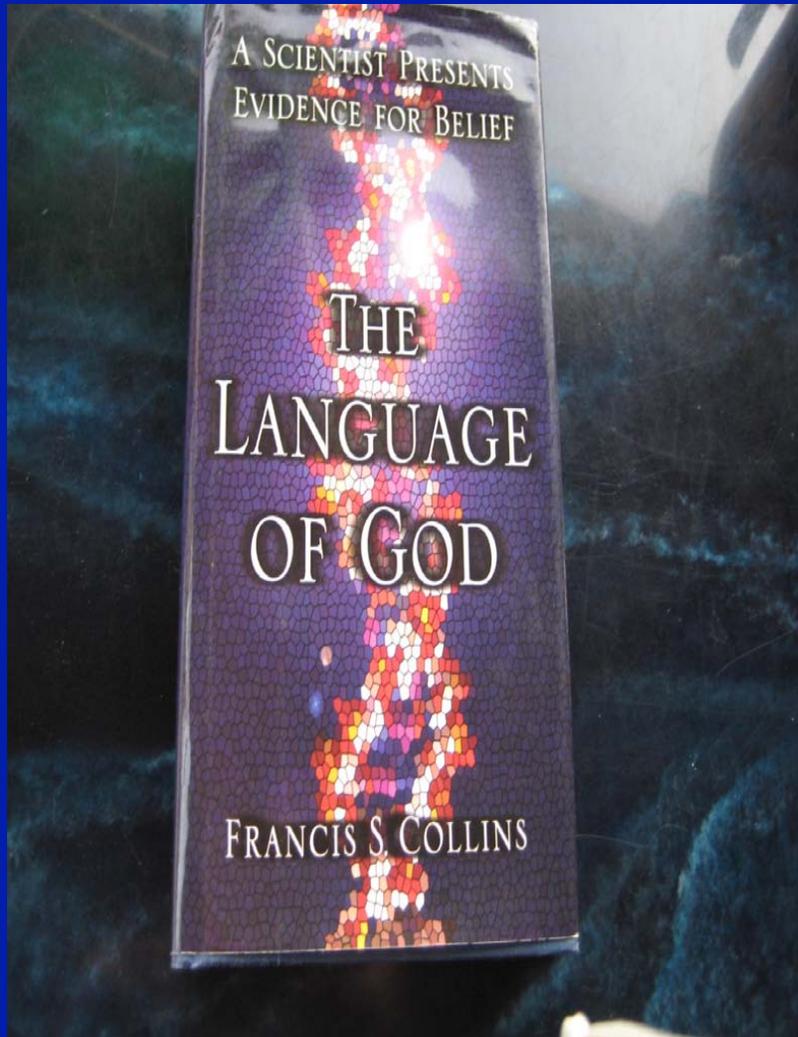


“Big Bang” > rapid expansion energy > gases –nebulae  
 - > stars( hydrogen- > helium- >heavy elements esp. carbon  
 -life!) - > galaxies



# The Cosmos is Awesome AND Weird !

- Cosmology:
  - Dark energy & matter: 96% universe and can't see or measure
  - Black holes: law of physics break down, time stops
- Mathematics (Godel and Turing): some propositions that must be true (by insight) cannot be proven mathematically (ie "bottoms up" reasoning doesn't always work)
- Quantum mechanics:
  - Uncertainty/Complimentarity:
    - cannot know everything ( e.g. position and speed, wave or particle))
    - things are both there and not there and become either only when observed
    - "things" can be both true and untrue
  - Entanglement:
    - information travels faster than the speed of light
    - information (not matter or energy) is the basic element of the universe.... (John 1:1)



# CHRISTIANS AND EVOLUTION

- YOUNG EARTH "SCIENTIFIC" CREATIONISTS:
  - Biblical 'literalists' ; 6 regular days' God did it 'supranaturally; the bible is scientifically accurate and mainline science is wrong and/or God is "testing" us.
- OLD EARTH "SCIENTIFIC" CREATIONISTS:
  - Bibilcal 'literalists"; earth/universe billions of years old ('days long periods); God did it outside "natural" order.
- THEISTIC EVOLUTIONISTS:
  - Scientific cosmology and evolution are true; God created through the laws of nature and yet God participates continually in the world (i.e. Devine Action).

## The Anthropic Principle

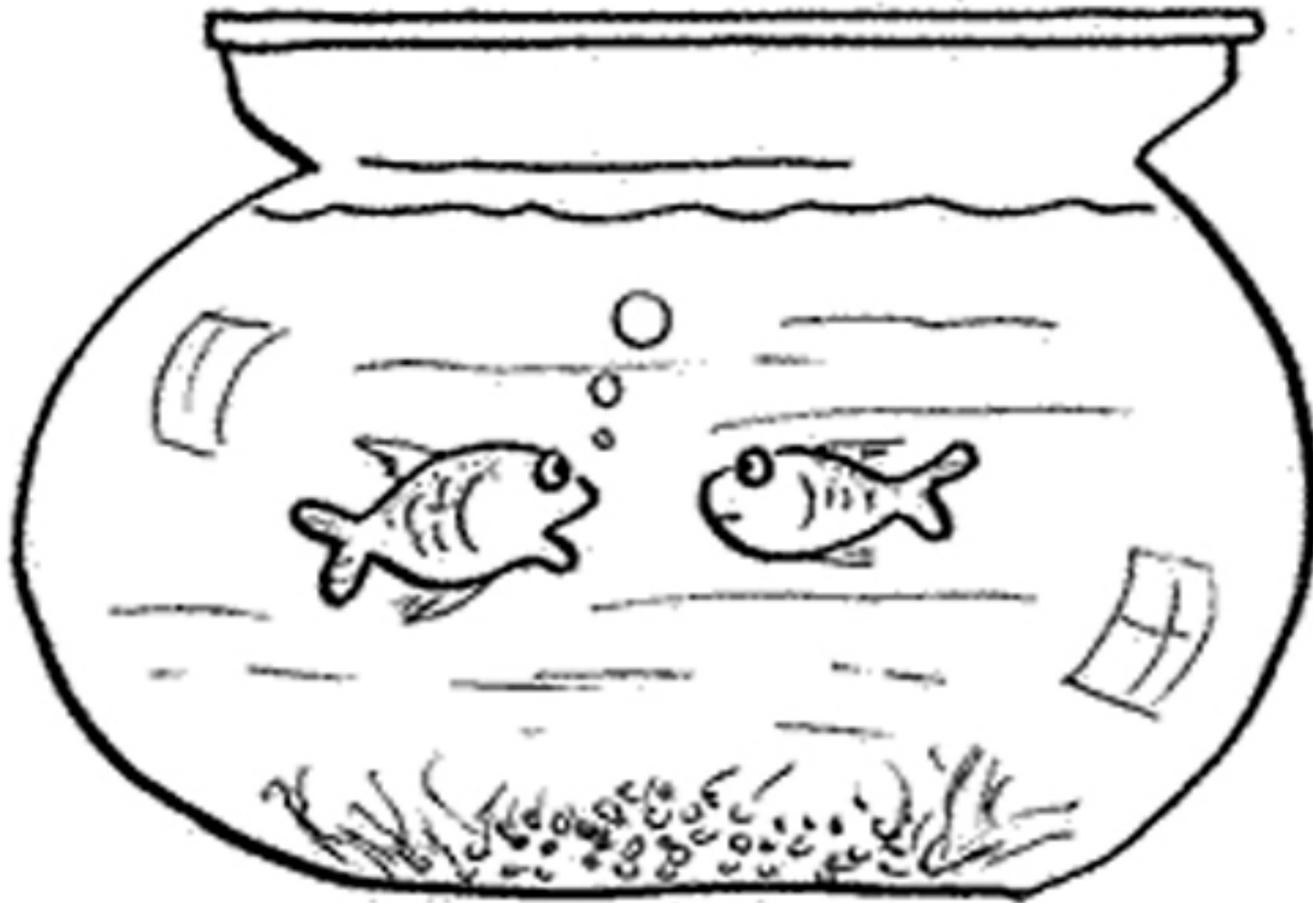
Life would not be possible if any of almost two dozen fundamental laws and properties of the universe had been even infinitesimally different.\* (The Goldilocks Enigma)

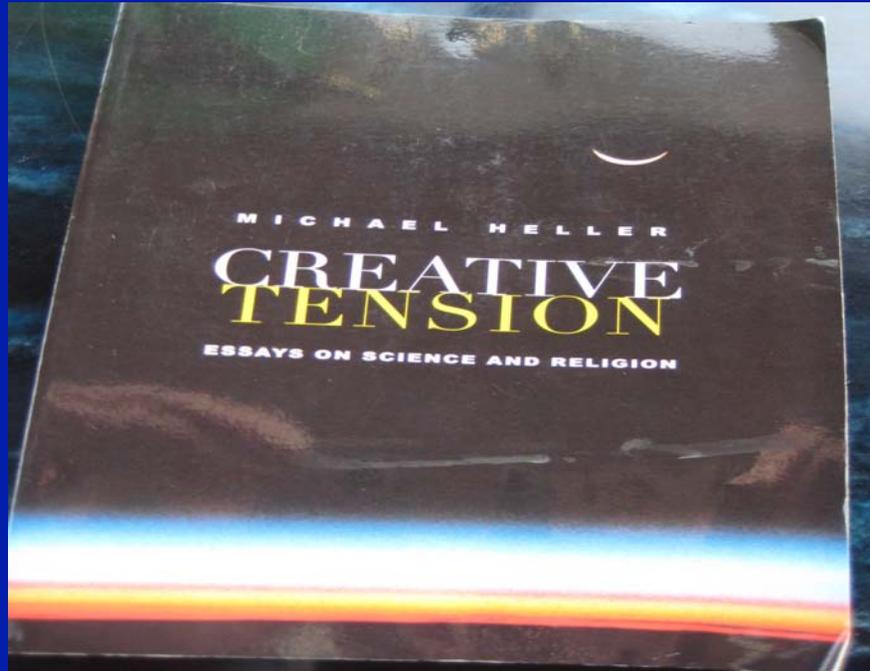
“The probability of life arising on earth (by purely random change) is less than the probability that a flight-worthy Boeing 747 should be assembled by a hurricane roaring through a junkyard.”

Fred Hoyle-astronomer (1982)

# God of the Gaps

Of course there's a God,  
who do you think changes the water?





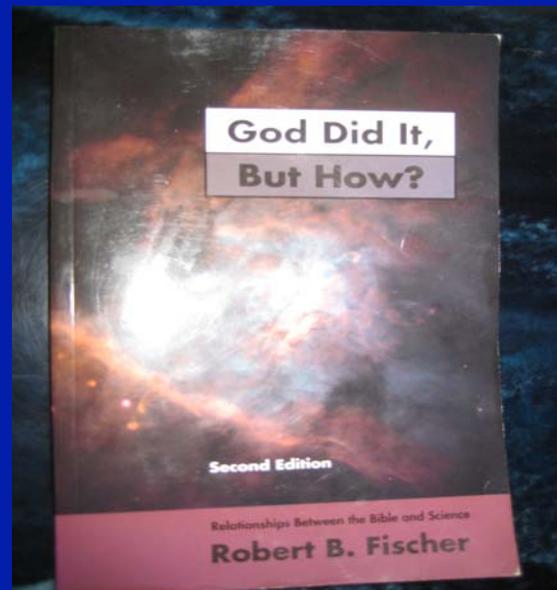
- The ontological non-gap: Why is there something rather than nothing?
- The epistemological non-gap: Why is the world comprehensible?
- The axiological non-gap: Why is there meaning and value of everything that exists.

# The Essential Question!!!

- Is the existence of the cosmos, ourselves, and all that is around us purposeful or an accident/ (meaningless) ???
  - “militant atheists” - not purposeful!!..and you’re cowardly or stupid to believe so.
  - Many others:
    - ‘agnostics’, etc: it might be purposeful
    - ‘believers’: we knew it all along!
    - both: “how can the universe be both rational and absurd”

# Another essential question in all scientific inquiries

- How did (does) it happen if there is no God  
OR
- How did God do it (b/c its understandable!)



## The great wager (or leap)

**“..If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation, that He exists.”**

**Blaise Pascal  
in Pensees (1670)**

## Awe and Humility!!!

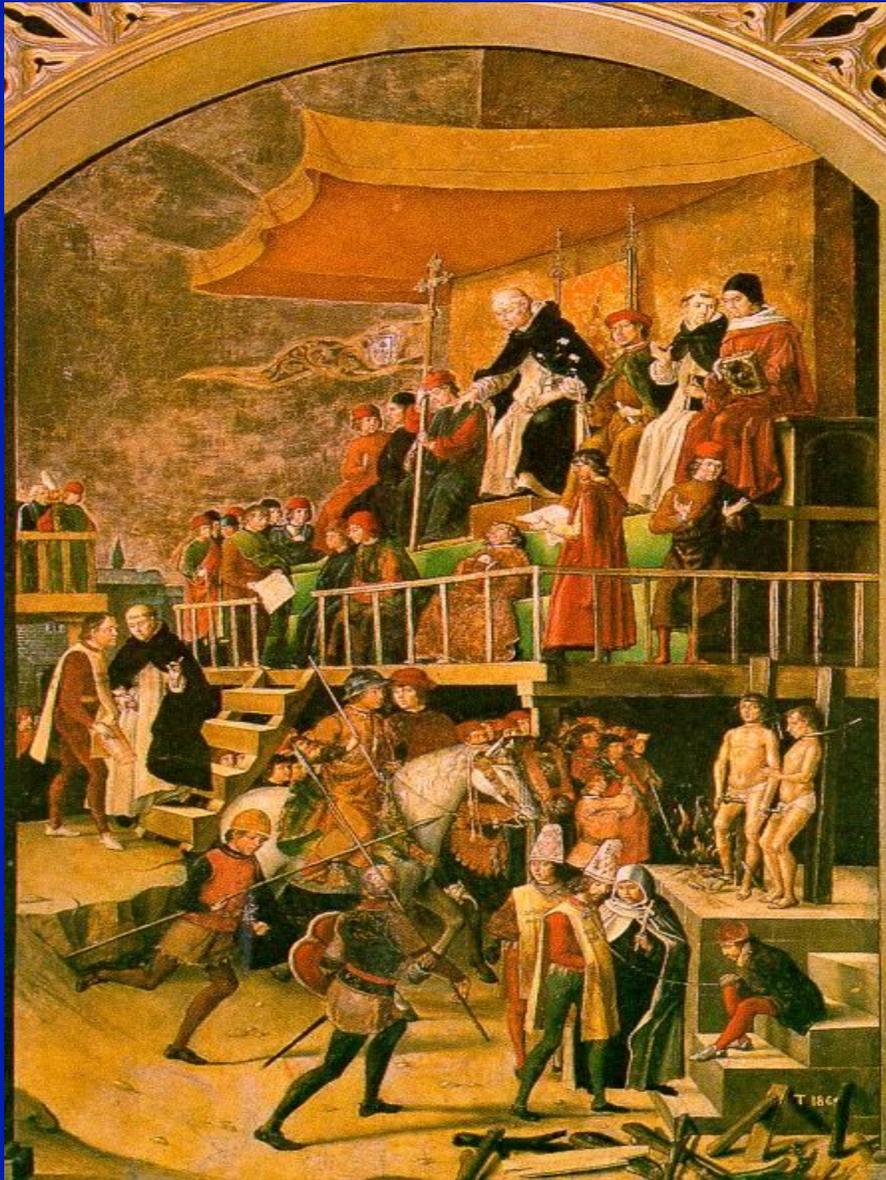
**“At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.” Robert Jastrow\***

**\*American physicist, cosmologist, founding director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, agnostic.**

**“There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle” . Albert Einstein**

# Natural Theodicy





**Religion As Evil**

**When the Centralia High School  
Band Plays Beethoven's Ninth, its  
not Beethoven's fault**

**When the Centralia High School  
Band Plays Beethoven's Ninth, its  
not Beethoven's fault**

**But it's miraculous that they can  
try!**



THE  
FAITH  
OF A  
PHYSICIST

JOHN POLKINGHORNE

THE WORK OF  
LOVE



*Creation as Kenosis*

EDITED BY  
JOHN POLKINGHORNE

## Kenosis (emptying-oneself), Process Theology

“Of course if God is the ground of all there is one has to ask about evil and suffering. That perennial question – why does God allow evil and suffering? – is the most difficult question in religion. I believe God is a God of love and, if that’s correct, then God is not a cosmic tyrant who makes everything happen in creation. God gives independence to the creatures of the earth, allows them to be themselves,. God allows the act of murder because God has given moral freedom to human beings. God interacts with the world and shares the suffering of the world but doesn’t run everything”\*

“We tend to think if we were in charge of creation we’d keep all the good and throw away the bad. But the world cannot be divided that way. Consider genetic mutation, which has driven the amazingly fruitful history of life on Earth, eventually turning bacteria into human beings. Genetic mutation is a great good, but the same process allows some cells to become malignant. So you can’t have the fruitfulness of evolution without cancer...”\*\*

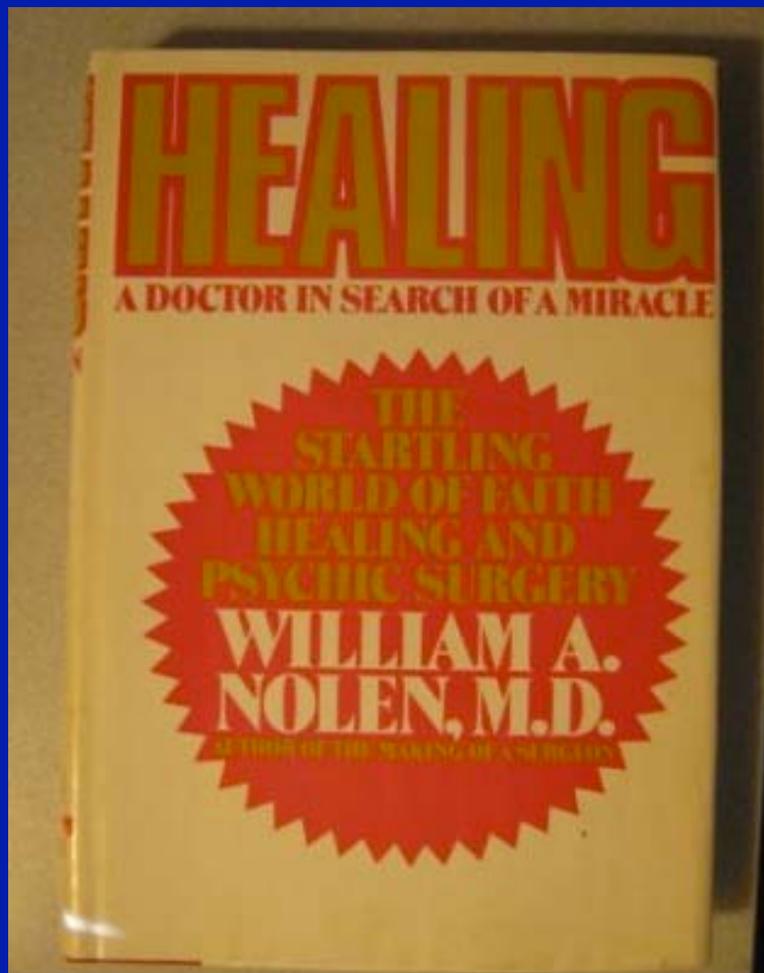
Polkenhorne- in \*Faith of a Physicist, and in \*\*The Work of Love:  
Creation and Kenosis

# Divine action

- General Devine Action:
  - Creative action in nature
- Special Divine Action:
  - Miracles
  - Incarnation
  - Resurrection
  - Answering prayer
    - Prayers for healing

## Reasons for Prayer

- Engagement (participation, fight, etc.)
- Trust (letting go, abandonment)
  - *Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done*  
(Luke 22:36)
- Move closer to God (companionship)
- Altruism, concern for others (intercessory prayer)
- Special needs (reversal of fortune, healing)



1975

“Modern-day miracles don't happen, and, when it appears they do, it is because they are "soft" miracles based on the power of suggestion rather than (necessarily) a supernatural act of God.”

Medical disease

- Functional” - controlled by autonomic nervous system
  - pain,
- Mind induced or psychosomatic
  - depression, stress related
- Organic;
  - self limited-cold
  - cyclical-MS
  - Progressive-cancer
    - WHAT ABOUT “FREAK RATE”
    - e.g “psychoneuroimmunology”

soft

Am Cancer Society:

“Available scientific evidence does not support claims that faith healing can cure cancer or any other disease. Even the ‘miraculous’ cures of the French shrine of Lourdes ,after careful study by the Catholic Church, do not outnumber the historical percentage of spontaneous remissions seen among people with cancer. However, faith healing may promote peace of mind, reduce stress, relieve pain and anxiety, and strengthen the will to live.”

supranatural  
(prenatural)

evidential  
progress

> natural

- Force at a distance
- Living same chemistry/laws as non-living
- Evolving life forms (e.g. natural selection)

Divine  
Action

Scientific  
Possibilities >

Natural  
action

God could “break” the “laws” He instituted  
But does/did He...or are we just ignorant of them

Supranatural  
(prenatural)

evidential  
progress

>

Natural

“gaps”

- Force at a distance
- Living same chemistry/laws as non-living
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Divine  
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>

?  
Supra-  
Natural  
or gaps

“Natural”  
Action

God could “break” the “laws” He instituted  
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Natural

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scientific  
possibilities

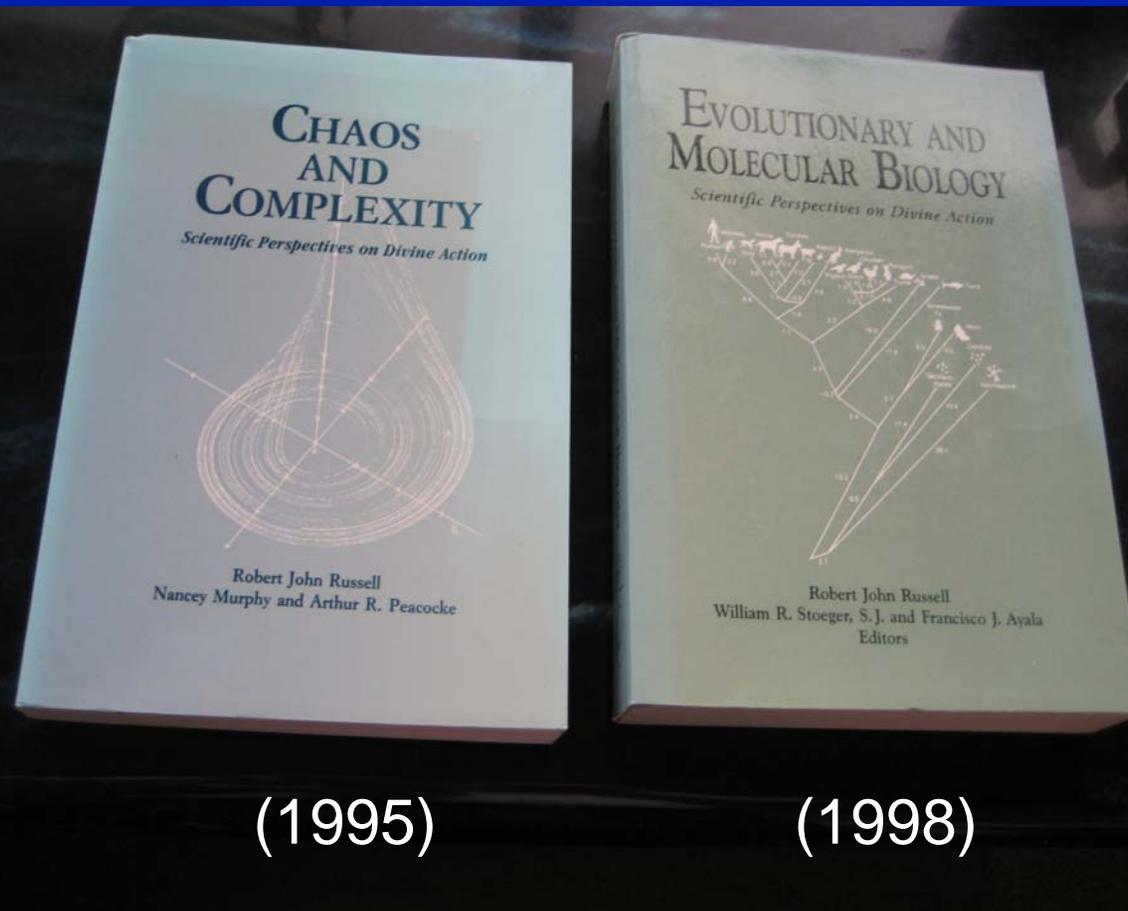
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“Natural”  
Action

?  
Supra-  
Natural  
“gaps”

God could “break” the “laws” He instituted  
But does/did He...or are we just ignorant of them

(This is methodological naturalism NOT philosophical naturalism)



- Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action: Russell et al (1993)
- Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspectives .....(1999)
- Quantum Mechanics: Scientific ... (2001)

Conferences and publications by:

Vatican Observatory  
Vatican City State

Center for Theology and  
the Natural Sciences,  
UC Berkeley

# SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES ON DIVINE ACTION

Twenty Years of Challenge and Progress



Robert John Russell  
Nancey Murphy  
William R. Stoeger, S.J.,  
Editors

(2008)

# Special Divine Acton

- No intervention (no God)
- Deism: set it up but doesn't interfere
  - ‘watchmaker’
- “Cessationism” -once intervened outside law, but not now (vs. “Continuationism”)
- **Interventionalism** (the future “open”)
  - God involved without ‘breaking the Laws’
    - Without “gaps” (no “causal joint”)
    - With “gaps” (a “causal joint”)

# Interventionalism without “Gaps”

- Neothomism; God behind the Laws (secondary causes)
  - Dennis Edwards, Austin Farrer
- “Body of God”:
- Panentheism: universe in God but God more than universe
  - Peakcocke

God  
and  
Universe ?  
are  
one

# Interventionalism with “Gaps” (a “causal joint”)

- Non-linear systems:
  - Chaos, complex systems, emerging properties,
    - Non-reductive physicalism
      - Polkinghorne, Murphy
- Quantum mechanics:
  - indeterminacy, entanglement
    - Ellis, Russell
- Process models:
  - Universe continually evolving
    - reality is actually changing
    - de Chardin, Whitehead, Haught

God acts within ‘laws’ which we now know are “open ended”

# Summing up

- Scientism not convincing
  - More to Reality than senses and/or falsification
- One Truth...but always tentative
  - Both science and religion (metaphysics) must continually adjust
  - Easier now with humbling revelations of physics/mol. biology and current gradual rejection of religious tribalism
- Religion susceptible to “human weakness”
  - But its something more than a “delusion” or evolutionary trick
  - Biggest challenges now are pluralism and critical analysis of scriptures
- Divine action is scientifically plausible and PFH useful in many ways and may alter reality in ways that could be "understandable".

# Summing up

- The (your) Religion science debate must intensify and be communicated widely with these characteristics:
  - Intellectual rigor (of course) but also....
  - Awe (wonder)
  - Humility
  - Curiosity
  - And.....

# Charity (Love)



# Charity

- For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity\*

\*1Chorinthians 13

كيف كثريرا ، عند الش باب ، وأصدقائي وأود الت شهير  
إذا كان لدينا المعتقدات الدينية ليست واحدة ؛  
ولكن الآن روجي قد سافر ال عالية والمنخفضة ؛  
الآن جميع انقاذ ال حب ، بالنسبة لي ، وانما هو اسم \*\*

\*\*al-Ma' arri (Arab/Islamic poet) from his "Luzumiy Yat" (obligations)  
~1010AD

How oft, when young, my friends I would  
defame

If our religious faiths were not the same;

But now my soul has traveled high and  
low;

Now all save Love, to me, is but a name



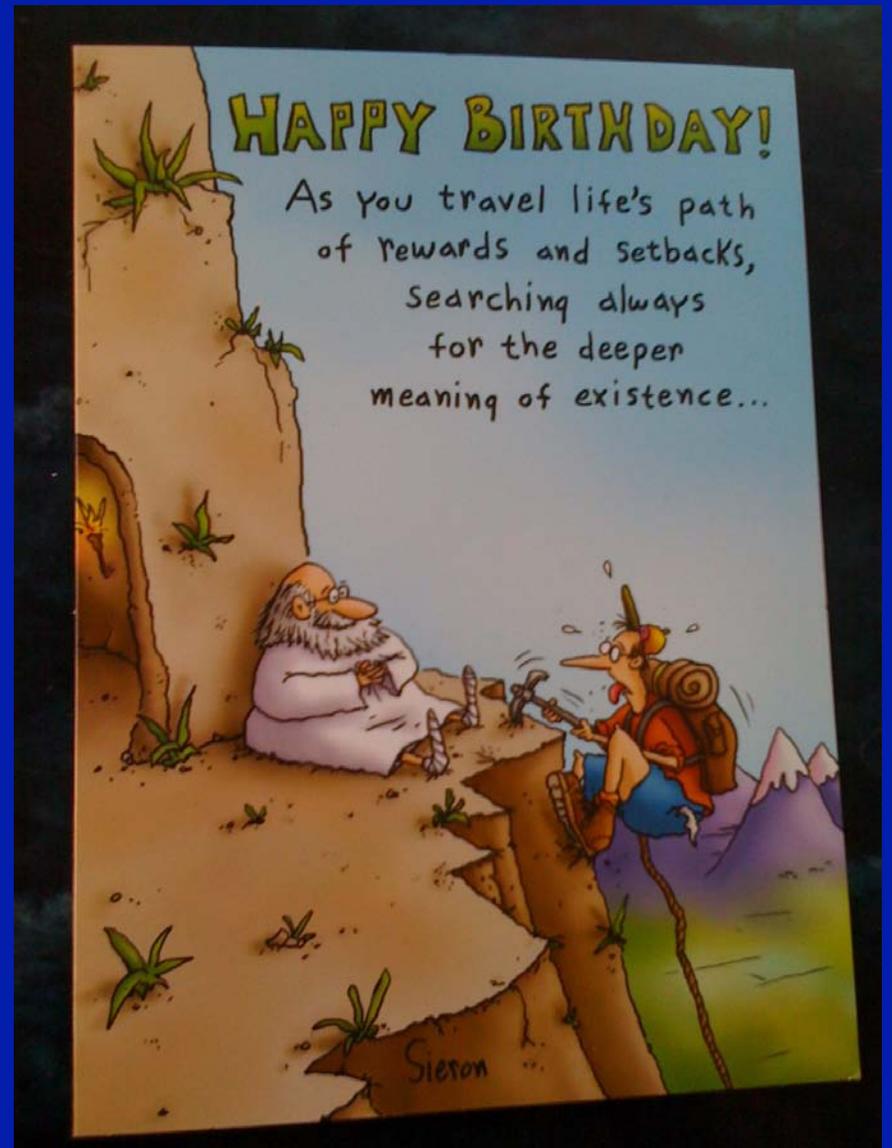
Thank you

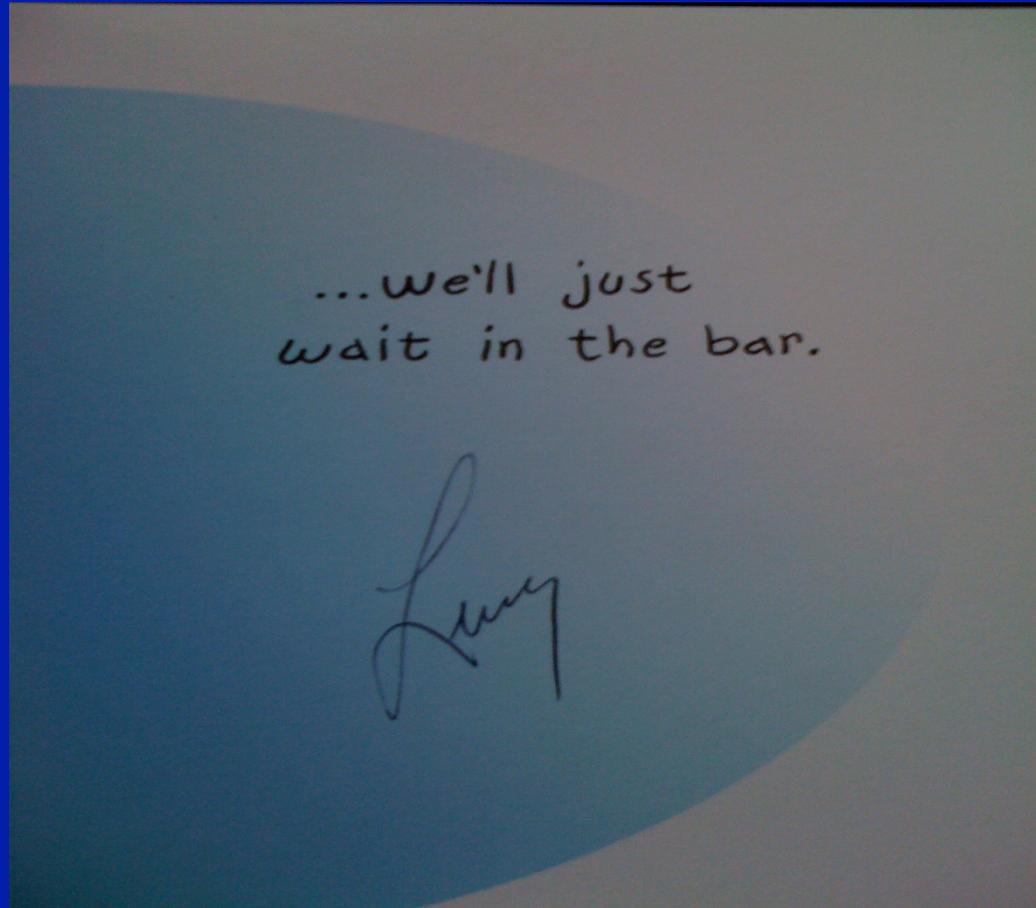
“People mostly go to church for  
community and comfort NOT  
theology”

bumper sticker



“Some shouldn’t be confused”





Some can't/won't be "confused"



## Contemplation AND action

*When you can see and hear a 2 inch tear in the IVC, you don't want someone inclined to contemplate the ontology or epistemology of that event .....You want someone who **will** move reflexively to sew the darn thing shut!*

Three conditions raise the placebo effect to 70-90% effectiveness: (32)

- 1. Patient's belief and expectancy
- 2. Caregiver's belief and expectancy  
*(professional clinician)*
- 3. Belief and expectancies generated by the relationship between patient and caregiver.

# Research on Intercessory Prayer

- Byrd & Harris(1988)
    - cardiac-yes
  - O' Laoire (1997):
    - depression-yes (both prayerer and prayeree)
  - IVF-ET Korean study:
    - -fertility-yes-FRAUD
  - MANDA Study (2005):
    - cardiac-no
  - STEP project (2006):
    - cardiac-no
- Poorly controlled
- Well controlled



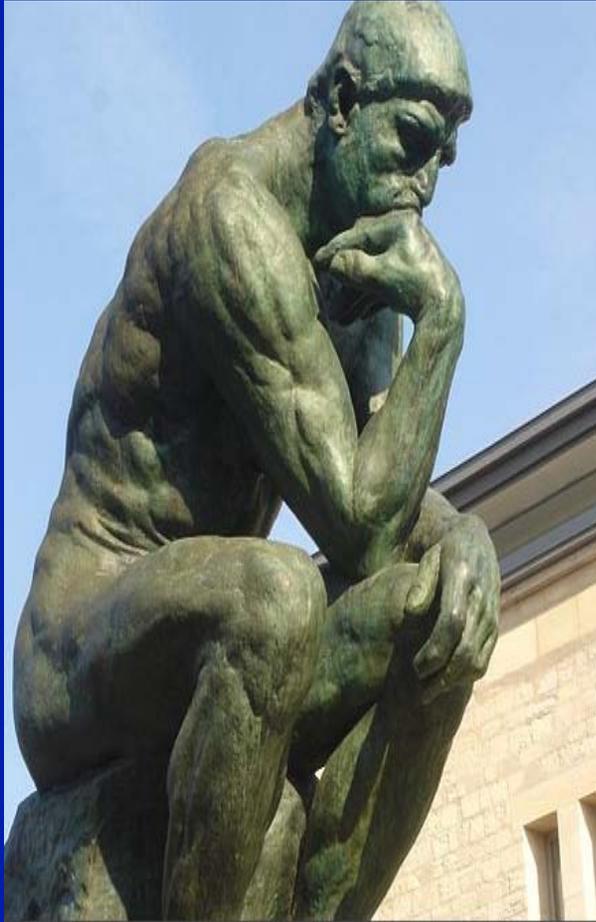
# Living in a Quantum World

Quantum mechanics is not just about teeny particles. It applies to things of all sizes: birds, plants, maybe even people

By Vlatko Vedral | May 18, 2011 | 56

- Quantum mechanics is commonly said to be a theory of microscopic things: molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles. Nearly all physicists, though, think it applies to everything, no matter what the size. The reason its distinctive features tend to be hidden is not a simple matter of scale. Over the past several years' experimentalists have seen quantum effects in a growing number of macroscopic systems. The quintessential quantum effect, entanglement, can occur in large systems as well as warm ones—including living organisms.
- Thus in the quantum world things don't exist until they are observed by a consciousness and things cannot always be broken down into their component parts (entanglement). As such, even when entangled particles are far apart they still behave as a single entity. Einstein called this “spooky action at a distance”. He tried unsuccessfully to refute these facts.
- Probably a deeper theory will supersede quantum mechanics in which space and time do not exist.

**“The implications of macroscopic objects such as us being in quantum limbo is mind-blowing enough that we physicists are still in an entangled state of confusion and wonderment”**



Self consciousness  
Agency  
Theory of mind  
Language  
Symbolic thinking  
Reciprocal altruism  
Non-reciprocal  
altruism  
Agape  
Inter subjectiveness  
Person hood  
Self awareness  
Future projection  
Moral action  
Guilt  
Symbolic thinking  
Empathy  
Compassion  
Humility  
Love  
Gratitude



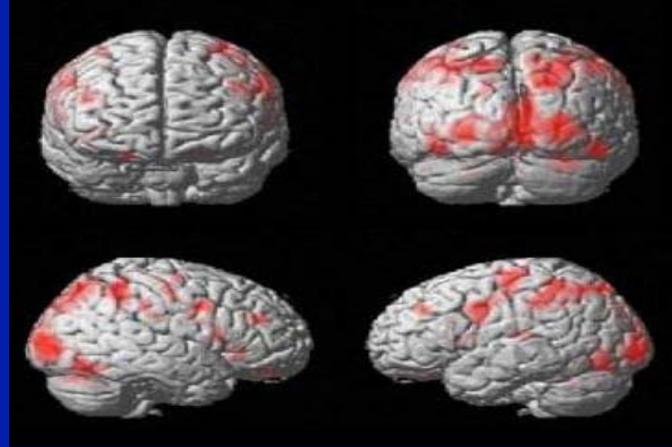
# Human nature

Soul<sup>?</sup> = Mind<sup>?</sup> = Brain → Body/Action

Non-reductive physicalism



fMRI machine



fMRI scans



Conscious open  
brain stimulation



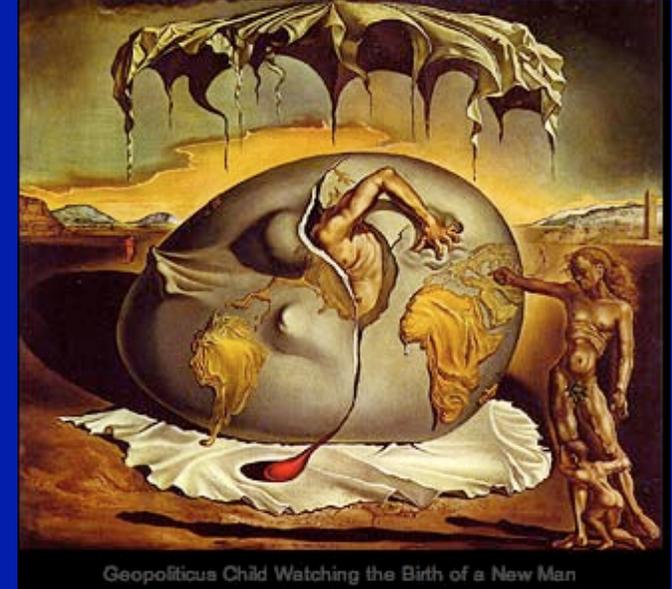
Transcranial  
magnetic stimulation

# Soul, Mind, Brain/Body-Philosophy

- Substantive Dualism: Soul(mind) and brain(body)
- Physicalism: no soul; only brain(body)
  - Reductive Physicalism-only physics
  - Non-reductive Physicalism-physics and something more



The Myth of Sisyphus



Geopolitical Child Watching the Birth of a New Man

- Secular existentialism
- Secular humanism
- Materialism
- Atheism



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ASHGATE



# GOD'S ACTION IN NATURE'S WORLD

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF ROBERT JOHN RUSSELL

EDITED BY TED PETERS AND  
NATHAN HALLANGER

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