

# OpenTheo

## Can science and God mix? | John Lennox & Pascal Wallisch

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### The Veritas Forum

This program was recorded at a Veritas Forum event on NYU in 2021. The original title was "Cosmic Chemistry: Do Science and God Mix?" and featured John Lennox, Professor at Oxford, and Pascal Wallisch, Professor at NYU. If you enjoyed this episode, please rate, review, and subscribe. And, if you're interested in more content from Veritas, check out our Beyond the Forum podcast. Visit [veritas.org](http://veritas.org) to learn more about the mission of the Veritas Forum and find more resources to explore the ideas that shape our lives.

### Transcript

This is the Veritas Forum podcast, a place for generous dialogue about the ideas that shape our lives. First of all, Galileo was not assassinated by Christians. Galileo was a believer in the Bible when he started, and he was a believer in the Bible when he finished.

The first people to attack him were the Aristoteciens. This is your host, Carly Riegel. Today, I'm sharing with you a conversation at a Veritas Forum event at NYU in November 2021.

The speakers you will hear from are John Lennox of Oxford and Pascal Wallisch of NYU as I discuss if and how rationality can intersect with belief in God. You can learn more about the Veritas Forum and talks like these by visiting [veritaas.org](http://veritaas.org). I hope you enjoy their conversation. What are your current thoughts on how science and God mix? What current findings do you find the most compelling in this conversation? And I believe Professor Lennox can take it first.

Well, thank you very much. I'm absolutely delighted to be at a Veritaas Forum at NYU, and I'm especially delighted to have Dr. Pascal Wallisch as my conversation partner. I'm looking forward to this enormously because in my experience, the Veritaas Forum is one of the best places really to intersect and discuss the big ideas.

So let's have a look at this question of science and God do they mix? And my

fundamental conviction is that science and God mix very well, but science and atheism do not mix very well. So let's have some evidence. The first I would call is the history of science.

And it has been noticed, particularly by philosophers like Sir Alfred North Whitehead, that there appeared to be a connection between the Judeo-Christian worldview and the rise of modern science in the 16th and 17th centuries. Stéés Lewis put it this way, "Men became scientific because they expected law and nature and they expected law and nature because they believed in a law giver." So that faith in God did not hinder the rise of modern science. It was the motor that drove it.

Secondly, if science and God didn't mix, there would be no Nobel Prize winners who believed in God. Yet the fact is that between 1900 and 2065% of all of them did believe in God. The so-called war between science and religion is actually phony.

Take two Nobel Prize winners in physics, William Phillips and American and Peter Higgs as Scotsman. They're both brilliant. Their science does not divide them.

But their worldviews do. Bill Phillips is a Christian, Peter Higgs, an atheist. And if you think about that, we see that the real battle is not between science and God, but it's between the worldviews of theism and atheism.

And they're scientists on both sides. Now, one of the problems in discussing all of this is the widespread idea called "scientism" that science is the only way to truth. That often leads people to think that scientific means the same as rational, that is, in accord with reason.

Now, that's clearly false. Since academic disciplines like history, literature, philosophy, etc. are rational disciplines.

Reason has a far larger scope than science. "Scientism" or "scientific fundamentalism" for that is what it really is, is false. And another way of seeing this is pointed out by the Nobel Prize winner Sir Peter Medawar.

He says that the existence of a limited science is very likely. Why? Because of its inability to answer childlike elementary questions. I have in mind, he says such questions as how did everything begin? What are we all here for? What's the point of living? And in order to approach these kinds of things, I like to talk about the nature of explanation.

Because there are different kinds of explanation. Think of boiling water. There's a physics explanation in terms of the transfer of heat and the agitation of molecules.

But then the water may well be boiling because I want a cup of tea. Or some scientist needs boiling water to dissolve chemicals. That is, there's a scientific explanation and there's an agent explanation.

They do not conflict or compete. They complement each other. And my view is that the God explanation doesn't conflict or compete with the science explanation, but complements it.

We can see this very easily. For example, in order to explain an automobile engine, we might use the physics of internal combustion. Or we might talk about Henry Ford.

Both are rational explanations, but they're different. And both are necessary for a comprehensive explanation. And if we scale this up to the size of the universe, we might say that God no more competes with science.

As an explanation of the universe, then Henry Ford competes with science. As an explanation of the motor car, God is an agent creator explanation. He's not a scientific explanation.

Now, let me come to the matter of faith because there's great confusion about it. Many people today think that faith is a religious word and means believing where there's no evidence. That is false.

That's blind faith. Faith is a normal word coming from the Latin "fidets" meaning fidelity trust. And in order to do science, you've got to have faith.

You've got to believe that science can be done. And that means more precisely believing in the mathematical intelligibility of the universe. Einstein once said he could not imagine a scientist without that faith.

Now, in any sphere, the only kind of faith worth having is evidence-based. If I say I believe x, you've every right to say on what grounds. That is as true of faith and global warming as it's true of God.

Where all people of faith, the question is what do we believe and on what grounds do we believe it? Now, the pioneers of science believe that the universe was rational and intelligible because they believe that the rational mind of God, the creator, was behind it. And I often have a very interesting conversation with my atheist science friends. I say, "What do you do science with?" And they offer me the standard reductionist explanation.

If there is no creator, no top-down causation, they say their explanation must always proceed from the simple to the complex. So they tell me that mind or brain, and they're not the same in my view, is the end product of a mindless unguided process. And I say to them, "And you trust it." If you knew that your computer was the end product of a mindless unguided process, would you trust it? And the interesting thing here is I've always got the answer, "No." So I say, "You have a problem.

You're using an instrument to do science, and you have an explanation for its existence that leads you to not be able to rationally trust it." And very often they say to me,

"Where did you get this argument?" And I say, "Well, actually, that might surprise you. I got it from Charles Darwin." He once wrote with me, "The horrid doubt always arises, whether the convictions of man's mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, or of any value, or at all trustworthy." Taking the logic of this statement further, physicist John Polkinghorn, who taught me quantum mechanics years ago at Cambridge, says, "If you reduce mental events to physics and chemistry, you destroy meaning." He says, "Thought is replaced by electrochemical and neural events. Two such events cannot confront each other in rational discourse.

They are neither right nor wrong. They simply happen." The world of rational discourse disappears into the absurd chatter of firing synapses, quite frankly, that can't be right, and none of us believe it to be so. And another leading philosopher Thomas Nagel in New York thinks in the same way.

In his book, *Mind and Cosmos*, which is a very provocative subtitle, why the neo-Darwinian view of the world is almost certainly false, Nagel's a strong atheist, he writes, "But if the mental is not itself merely physical, it cannot be fully explained by physical science. Evolutionary naturalism implies that we shouldn't take any of our convictions seriously, including the scientific world picture on which evolutionary naturalism itself depends." You see, there's one area where such ontological reductionism doesn't work, and that is where language is involved. If you see the word "exit" above a door, you instinctively know that besides whatever automatic processes go into making the sign, there must be a human mind because "exit" carries meaning.

That meaning is not to be found in the physics and chemistry of the materials out of which the sign is made. So what are we going to say about DNA? The information carrying macromolecule, 3.4 billion chemical letters long carrying meaning. If "exit" implies mind, how much more does the existence of DNA imply mind? So on the plus side, both the mathematical intelligibility of the universe and the existence of biological words plus the much more recently discovered additional levels of epigenetic information, as well as top-down causation and living cell, are pointers to the existence of mind behind the cosmos.

And I can think of no better way than putting it than the initial statement in John's Gospel in the New Testament. In the beginning was the word "all things came to be through him." To sum up then, the atheist naturalist worldview undermines, in my view, the foundations of the very rationality that's needed to construct or understand or believe in any kind of argument, whatsoever, let alone a scientific one. Atheism is therefore beginning to sound like a great self-contradictory Dawkins delusion, to use his words, "a persistent false belief held in the face of strong contradictory evidence." Of course, I reject atheism because I believe Christianity to be true, but I also reject it because I'm a scientist.

How could I be impressed with the worldview that undermines the very rationality I need to do science? So science and God mix very well. And science and atheism that don't mix. Thank you very much.

Thank you for that opener. You do make a lot of good points, but so what I want to do now is I first want to answer Eden's question, and then I'm going to respond to your very interesting remarks. That's what I'm going to do now.

All right. So first Eden's question about my science. So having now done science for a very long time, I must confess that initially it was not looking good.

Okay. From a physics perspective, this is a purely material world containing only two things. Energy, which is moving at the speed of light, and matter which moves slower than the speed of light.

And that's it. So that's a purely, entirely, and quite simple, frankly, material world. But I've since the neuroscience, and now data science, and I'll give both perspectives, both neuroscience and data science, and I must say that this changed my perspective quite a bit and kind of brings it in line of some of the things that Sean said.

For instance, the neuroscience perspective does give you pause. So if you study neuroscience seriously, you learn that say every seven to 10 years, every single molecule in your body has to turn over. So it's no longer the same, it was seven to 10 years ago, it's no longer the same.

So you are literally the ship of Theseus, like John here, is no longer the person he was, I don't know, 50 years ago. And yet you feel a very strong sense of identity. You believe or you feel that you're still the same person as your former self.

So this would imply that consciousness is not directly tied to the physical subject, there's something specific, you know, Johnness that is separate from John's physical manifest implementation or manifestation in molecules. And yet, and yet, if you take drugs like caffeine or LSD for that matter, your consciousness responds directly and changes dramatically. If you have a brain injury, you can no longer think certain thoughts.

If you become an anesthetized, you lose consciousness. So this would apply implied that consciousness, your conscious experience is directly tied to the physical substrate immediately. And as John said, there's a separation between the mind and brain, but it seems to be very clearly tied and the brain seems to be leading.

But that is the paradox, which one is it? Is your sense of self independent of the physical substrate or did not? And it has to be both for this to be true, which is a paradox. Now, paradoxes are usually a sign that you're missing something. And my suspicion is that there's something there is something going on, which John calls God.

But the brain as an evolved device is just too small to understand why it's too small. So basically, your brain is too small to understand why it's too small, much like an ant lives in a two-dimensional chemical space and has no idea what as far as we can tell is actually going on. And why it's simply not built for that.

You didn't mention evolution as a mindless process. I would disagree with that. It's not mindless.

There's quality control. The quality control is natural selection. But we'll get to that later.

But as a neuroscientist, you also realize, and this is much worse, that reality has a cursor. In other words, it's right now. Right now, it's right now.

So I find a little bit odd that since the beginning of the universe, billions of years have passed, but right now, it's right now. But what right now is, is always different. It's constantly fleeting.

For instance, let's ask John. John, do you remember when you were a little boy? Do you remember that? Okay. Or when the coronavirus pandemic started.

But where did that time go? It was now then, it is now now. It's always right now. That's not a paradox.

So that those things do lead me to believe that there's more going on than just what's what we can measure in the material world. And I want to double down on that with data science. So as I'm now studying data science, I'm frankly blown away by the very real notion that there's a third thing that is very real.

And that is information. So in addition to energy and matter, there's something like information. And data science, frankly, it's maybe not the best name for this, is the study of information itself, qualitative information data.

And it is strange. What we've already seen is data and information has very strange properties. So one thing that I agree with John, for instance, is numbers are very odd.

I'm not even, but there are things that odd entities. For instance, numbers are ideas, right? But they're very hard ideas. You can prove things about them.

You can prove that the sum of two consecutive integers has to be odd. You can prove that for all time, or you can prove that the sum of the consecutive odd numbers is  $n$  odd numbers is  $n$  squared. I find it very strange.

I also find it strange that the whole universe works around numbers. I mean, elements are just one in integer proton numbers, right? In physics, you have hydrogen, which is one, and helium, which is two, and so on. So don't be fooled by the names of the elements.

They're their instant season of proton numbers and chemistry of numbers, small integer numbers of electrons. So I find it very curious, given how many numbers there are, you can make do with under 100 integers. That's very strange.

From a mathematical perspective, I'm sure you would agree. And information behaves strangely. So if you have data, it is true that the more mistakes you make, the better of an idea you will have of what is going on.

It's very unusual. It's not like the material world. Or if you share information, it kind of grows in odd ways.

So of course, that's a central limit theorem. But it is, as far as I'm concerned, a genuine miracle that that is true in our reality. It's a glimpse of the divine, the central limit theorem.

And as a data scientist, I cannot deny that is significant in some way. In general, for instance, the theory of probability, timing, uncertainty, and chance, that's a miracle too. So I would not only say that science and divine are compatible.

I would say it's the principal object of study of my fields, data science, and to a degree in neuroscience. Now, that's my response to Eden. Now, now I want to respond to you, John.

Because you made, as I said, you made a lot of excellent points in your opener. And for instance, as far as I can tell, the idea that science did arise together of Christianity is historically accurate. All right.

I would also agree that ironically, these atheists have turned science into a cult, ironically, scientism, which is where ironic, I think. Yes, I would agree with that too. But there's one thing I do have to push you a little bit on or challenge you on.

And that is, I do believe you, at some point, you made a slight, slight of hand. You said all these things are accurate, and I think they are. And therefore, Christianity must be true.

More or less. That's what that's what he said. So let me ask you this.

And then I'm just challenging this. I would like you to challenge you on that. Don't take this personal.

I'm just curious. You're believing Christianity to be through accurate, your faith, for the likes of a better word. Will you say that hinges on the story of the crucifixion to be more or less accurate? Jesus died in the cross, was erected three days later, correct? Yes.

Yes. Well, now this is very interesting task, Carla. Thank you.

I resonate with so many of the things you said. But the very last thing you said, I don't resonate with for the simple reason that I only mentioned Christianity once in my talk. That's correct.

I was blooming. That was the Judeo-Christian worldview, and that's deliberate. Because what I was talking about was God and science.

And my argument is that what I see in science points towards God. And I'm one, absolutely one with you, that is the information revolution that gives the finest perspective, this idea that, as I often put it, that the universe is word-based. And both in biology and in mathematics, we use special language to describe what we see.

And that is in a very real way a miracle. And in fact, the famous atheist, Eugene Vigner, described it as a miracle of which we're not worthy. He didn't believe in miracles, actually.

But it's interesting that that kind of instinctive response that there's something going on here. Now, when it comes to Christianity, which I didn't deal with at all, I would say absolutely yes. My faith is centered around Christ, his death, and particularly his resurrection.

And I believe that my faith there is evidence-based, but it's not based in the natural sciences. It's based much more in, first of all, ancient history. And the ancient historians will have to tell us there.

And then it's based on my own personal experience. But I don't argue from the natural sciences to Christianity. But I do argue that Christianity is rationally based.

So may I ask you on that? Because there's no point in me challenging the things I agree with, or that are obviously true, or that the ones that were true. So you're right, the only thing that I, the only opener I found in your opener is that, where you were closed on, which is the slide of hand between God, the divine, as slo-ji and God, capital, the Christian God. So let's talk about that.

John, how does someone usually die during a crucifixion? What's the mode of death? Well, the mode of death, I know medic. I know medic. What impresses me about Jesus Christ's affection is that when the soldier stuck the spear in his side, we're going to need to get to the spear.

How do people die on the cross, usually? Well, by exhaustion, they collapse on the asphyxiation. So people can know more. Excellent.

See it too out. Okay. Now, how long does that usually take, John, would you say, typically? Crucifixion, death of crucifixion? It can take quite a while, actually.



What could you do? Depending on the strength of the person. When Jesus died very quickly, they were surprised. That's just why they stuck the spear in.

How long did it take? Six hours, would you say, about Jesus Christ? Sounds as if that's about right. Well, it's probably, tell me where you're going. I'm going with this.

I promise you have a point. What's pylons surprise that Jesus only lasted six hours? Well, the soldiers were. What pylons said, we don't know.

But let's say, I think, I'm not a bible just call about it. I do believe it says there that pylons surprise about that. It was like, really? But anyway, how did they make sure? How does usually someone make sure that someone is dead in the cross? Not Jesus.

No, Chris, a fridge of the breaking of the legs. Breaking of the legs. Where Jesus's legs broke him, sir, John.

No. So as you are, they saw he was dead already. It lands aside, yes, sir.

They have this idea. Now, you are mentioned, did something strange happen when they did that? So strange that they wrote it down. What happened when they landed aside? Well, the blood and water came out.

Large amount. As mentioned, blood and the clinics. I've read several articles by leading medics, not all of whom are Christian, saying that was very clear evidence of death.

Yeah, I was going to say, what does it usually indicate? So I'm not in, I don't have a medical degree, but from my reading, we're both a slippery grout that very slippery. So maybe we should not go there, but I'll try anyway. So from my reading, it's just interested in what you're going to teach us from this.

I promise you have a point. This is indicative of plural effusion. What that is, is that a accumulation of liquid around the lungs, which makes breathing harder and harder until the lack of oxygen leads to lack of consciousness, you basically pass out.

Now, let me ask you something, John, how could Jesus have gotten such a wound? Did anything happen before the crucifixion that could have caused a rib to break? Anything, anything of the mind? What happened to Jesus right before he was crucified? Well, he fell, actually. Yeah, a couple times. He was carrying a cross before that.

Ah, a table on, but before that, what happened before that? He was, what is the, what is the in the Roman law? What is the mandatory preliminary to every crucifixion? Oh, the, the, the, the, the, the, it's encouraging, encouraging. That was, that was brutal. Exactly.

What's so, we've such forced it could break a record, reward to now, let me ask you something, what is the medically indicated treatment to resuscitate someone from a

plural effusion to save their life? I know, I know medic. As far as I can tell, it's lancing of the size to drain the fluids they can breathe again. Now, let's change gears.

Who took the body? Remember, in the Bible, who took the body? Just half a minute. I think we'd need to check this with the medic. Lancer of the side with the spear is very different from a surgical op-sir.

So you're saying you're not. The incision to relieve fluid. That is fair.

That is fair. And what happened and what was observed is according to the medic's evidence of death. Now, it seems to me that you may be going to argue that they didn't really die, but swooned, which is a very old theory.

Swoon hypothesis. Yes. But I was recently in a paper in 2014 corroborated by this plural effusion thing, where you showed that, that's how you would relieve death, which is where I'm going.

It's, it's, it's, it's, it's a question was, who took the body? Joseph of Arrev Mathia, right? Yeah. It's just, it's this person that, that's, that's his property. Is this person wealthy enough to maybe bribe the guards, look the other way? Is that plausible? Is that, is that, is that person? No, no, it's not plausible because the guards were put there because the Jews were afraid of any story of a resurrection being spread around.

And it wasn't Joseph who paid anybody. It was the, it was the Jewish authorities that did the bribery. And the fascinating thing to my mind is nobody said anything about a resurrection until the Jewish people started.

They, the Christians didn't say anything. So the rumor of a resurrection was going around. And the story, which is patently absurd that was being told in Jerusalem, was that the guards said the disciples stole the body while we were asleep.

How on earth did they know it was the disciples that they were asleep? I mean, the thing is absolutely absurd. Okay. But let me ask you one more thing.

Have people survived the jurisdiction fictions before? Are there any historical records that people are? There are some, but very few. Yeah. So Joseph, Joseph's friends, and then the rebellion in the A70AD and Galilee recognized three of his friends on the cross.

That's correct. Last time taken down and one of them did survive. So what I'm trying to say is if, if people have survived the crucifixion, if he died, quote, unquote, several standard deviations before you would expect this, if you have a plausible evidence for plural of views and if the guy who had to buy possession was rich enough because they did put the body in like an L.O. and all that to afford that.

Why? Where's the mystery? Like, the mystery is the thing that you've left out. That not

only does the spear thrust prove he was dead, but he was not only buried, he was embalmed. Yes.

You won't survive the vast weight of spices that are put under pounds. Body was wrapped up like a mummy. A hundred pounds.

It's absolutely absurd to think, to my mind that Jesus somehow survived all of that. And not only that, the interesting thing is that when the women came and they saw the grave was empty, they left it, and then Peter and John came and they looked in and they saw something quite astonishing, which your theory doesn't cover. And that is this, they noticed the grave closed and they were wrapped exactly as they had been on the body, but there was no body in them.

And John, it says, and he's the eyewitness reporter, John says that they saw and believed. In other words, it was the way in which those grave clothes were sitting that meant a rapid train of logic went through John's head. The only explanation was that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

And so they left the tomb. There was nothing more to be seen. And of course, Jesus met them and he met them not only in Jerusalem, but in Galilee and came through closed doors, ate a fish, went the whole way to Galilee.

And are you telling me that happened? All of that was possible when he was as near dead as he could possibly be. I simply don't believe that. Okay.

Well, I, the incident is interesting. So two people can interpret the same evidence differently. So I would say, well, of course, I would say the fact that he was involved in all his antiseptic solution with 100 pounds, as you mentioned, that that is basically suggested that you could survive that.

But let's not split hairs. I want to give the floor back to you, because I think Eden, now John, John gets to respond to me. So that's I'm done with my opener.

Well, yeah, Dr. Lennox, if you have like a specific thing, you want to say, in response to that, I have another question, not really, because I've been responding to Pascal all the time. Yeah, I very much agree with his centrality of information. And I think that indicates to me, along with the other things, he said, the nature of consciousness, that there is a supernatural dimension.

And Thomas Nagel has hit it absolutely directly in observing that naturalism has a fatal intellectual flaw. And therefore, I'm very much was see as Lewis that you don't have to start looking for the supernatural with say the miracles or the resurrection of Jesus. You can find them in the fact that we can think and in the fact that information is not reducible to physics and chemistry.

Now I'm intrigued, of course, Pascal, I'd love to know more about it. The brain mind problem. I can I can tell you what's in my mind.

You can tell me what's in my brain. But you can't do that the opposite way round. So there is some clear distinction, although, of course, there's an intimate connection between the brain and the mind.

But I'm fascinated that you go to the crucifixion and the resurrection. I would want to add to that the series of events that John in his Christian document, which we call his his narrative of the life of Jesus, he adduces a series of events which he calls signs in Greek semion that is pointers beyond themselves. Yeah, and there are healings and so on.

But one of them is the fact that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. And of course, the culminating one is that Jesus rose from the dead. Now, Christianity started out of Judaism that's not commonly known as a proselytizing religion.

And it started because certain people announced that Jesus had literally risen from the dead. Now, that was checkable. The emptiness of the tomb was checkable.

And your theory seems to me to that he didn't actually die, which many of my Muslim friends believe that he was taken straight up and had. I think the evidence, as I see it, historically that he died and was buried and rose again. And the ancient historians, interestingly enough, tend to, I think, disagree with you.

They believe that Jesus was actually crucified and died and was buried under Pontius Pilate. And they think there's a lot of evidence supporting that even the most skeptical of them like Gerd Lüderman in Germany. So how do we decide? You're quite right.

People look at the same set of information, they come to different conclusions and they're perfectly entitled to it. I mean, I believe that what we're doing now, to present evidence and say to people, right, you make up your own mind in the end. I can't make up anybody's mind for them.

Well, all I'm saying is that the reason I went there is because, as you said, if that actually happened, Jesus died, rose from the dead, then we're done. You have to believe this. Yes.

But it's just enough to have to believe. All I'm saying is that's wonderful. So you're well on the way that hang on, hang on, but all I'm saying is that's an extraordinary claim.

And extraordinary claims. It is extraordinary claim. And there's David Cunz said, extraordinary claims need extraordinary.

That's exactly my point. So that's a request, extraordinary evidence. Nothing I've seen in the historical record rises to that.

There's an alternate explanation. Six hours is odd, very odd. Other people have survived it.

The guy was risen up to steal the body, rob the gardens, plural of fusion. But wait a minute, to stay. That's an immoral act theft.

So what? And if the disciples, if Jesus had not died, and not risen, how is it that these men and women went out into the world to preach forgiveness on the basis of the death of Christ, a new life on the basis of his resurrection, if they knew this to be a lie? They might not have been in on that. So I'll kind of bad news for you. No, no, and that is as a psychologist then, it is not that hard to make people believe things that are not true, particularly if they want them to be true.

That's not that hard. That's correct. But so many of them through history have paid for this kind of thing with their life.

And one of the very interesting things is the studies that psychologists have made of the different temperaments of the disciples. They were pretty tough guys, most of them. And of the various conditions under which Jesus met them and convinced them that he was risen.

To say that he'd recovered from a spear wound and all of that, and actually convinced them that he'd risen from the dead. That's well, you believe it if you like. Um, big enough that, um, so belief, right? I mean, one thing that also is obvious from, uh, neuroscience and psychological research is that people have a very strong, um, I don't know, almost almost need to believe something.

Need to believe what Pascal, um, that's a good question. So, so, so my, my point is that, uh, my concern about the new atheists, if you want to call them, you know, Dawkins, Haitians, people like that, they thought all we need to do is kill off those old beliefs. And then people will just, uh, from pure reason and rationality come up with, I don't know, some enlightened, uh, watchable call it, like worldview, as moral worldview.

And the problem is, I'm not sure if these brights ever talk to any actual people, but that's not what happened. Okay. In the mid-thousandth.

No, that's not what happened. I would agree with that. Absolutely.

Having interacted with most of them several times. Oh, so basically once you have this vacuum of belief, uh, people usually become susceptible and fall prey to worse beliefs, maybe, uh, that's what litigate you said long ago. They don't believe in nothing.

They believe in anything. And basically I come, yes, it is very scary. And therefore that's why I strongly emphasize people say their faith and my first question is faith in what the second question is on what grounds otherwise you end up with what's called blind faith,

which is extremely dangerous.

And psychology is shown enough of that. So we have to be very self-critical. Yes.

Yes. But my point is that, uh, if you say, kill off people's belief in like supernatural things, divine things, they then become susceptible to believe, I know, political religions, right? Which I might want to take. That's absolutely, that's true.

That's perfectly true. Because you can get killed people in the real world. But my point is the, the, the need of people to believe things.

I don't find that surprising. You said, like, you know, isn't that extraordinary? These disciples believed this. No, I don't think that extraordinary.

I think that's expect to be expected. People want to believe things. Well, particularly if they want to.

I mean, it makes them like, let me ask you something. Go ahead. No, go ahead.

I apologize. No, you're, you're perfectly right. But you see, the question of whether beliefs are true is not answered in terms of need.

You see, that's where Freud got it wrong. He talked about the need to believe in a father figure in the sky. Well, if there is no God, if there is no God, then Freud is a very good explanation for religion as a delusion.

But as has been pointed out many times, if there is a God, then it's atheism is a delusion, the need to not wish to meet God and be accountable for the mess ones made of one's life. And Manfred Lutz, I'm sure you know him, psychiatrist in Germany, very well known. He's written a marvelous book called Inoclinic Ischichte discoristen.

And in it, he says that the interesting thing about Freud's argument is, if there's no God, it works brilliantly for religion, if there is a God, it works brilliantly for atheism. But it doesn't answer the question whether it's a God or not, it doesn't answer the truth question. So dealing with these things in terms of need is okay.

But let me let me address this right now before we get too carried away. So, first of all, the less said about Freud, the better, because this is a debate about science and Freud stopping a scientist after his dissertation on the ill testicles, which he found because that's not how he'll work. But the point is, I mean, Freud's whole ideology has nothing to do with modern psychology.

But anyway, let's talk about modern psychology. If there's one psychological law, it would be that people respond to incentives and rewards amazingly well. It's actually quite scary how well that works, right? And maybe not surprisingly, because that's what they have to be in order to live and survive in this world.

But that's what I would argue is the fundamental law of behavior, basically people respond to incentives. And the reason that matters is, you mentioned truth several times, I failed to see how truth has anything to do with it. Let me, it doesn't have to be right.

Let me give you an example. Anything to do with what? With what I was in next. So basically, beliefs don't have to be true, they just have to be useful.

So for instance, if you, you, John, by your nature would lie, cheat, steal, and murder, okay, by your nature. But you won't do that. If I promise you eternal life as an incentive, I'm okay with that.

Because then you won't steal from me or murder me, if that makes sense. So why does truth status even matter if the true nature of the system from the inside is unknowable? And also, that goes back to evolution. I want to be very clear about this.

Evolution would not yield a device that loses truth. It loses a device that gets you through the day, if that makes sense. I agree with that.

But so I failed to see how truth has anything to do with it. Well, let me do it very simply in terms of what you said. I find that I need food.

Sure. Now it would be very surprising if all of us creatures on earth who needed food, or living in a world where food didn't exist. In other words, the need for food doesn't prove that food does not exist.

It makes it more likely that it might. And we've all kinds of other needs. So that I don't see the force of that particular argument.

Now you're quite right that people respond to incentives and beliefs and all this kind of thing. But you see, Christianity doesn't hold a carrot in the way you caricatured it. If you don't mind me saying so.

Oh, no, no. Because the fundamental condition for eternal life is that we repent and face the fact that we've made a mess of our own lives. And possibly we've messed up other people's lives.

And therefore we need to face the fact that we are morally guilty. That's not an easy thing to do. There's no superficial, I promise you eternal life and you not do X, Y and Z. It's the opposite way round.

We've got to face a radical diagnosis of our relationship with God and repent of it before we can then trust God for that eternal life. And the evidence for its reality will be seen in the way in which we live and fight against these negative tendencies. I believe that is actually correct.

Like in Christian dogma, however, I want to separate that from how people, particularly when people actually believe this to be guiding the actions in the middle ages. I don't think I interpret it like that. They were like, do good things, go to heaven, do bad things, go to hell.

And the evidence for that would be that people even bought, as you know, indulgences who like that's right. But that's wonderful. Why would they do that if they didn't believe that helps them or their relatives get out of purgatory, I believe? Yes, because that is a total misunderstanding of the nature of Christianity.

It's a misunderstanding. I get that point. It is that it's an action.

It's very important that we realize just what's going on behind that. That idea that we can merit God's salvation by our behavior. That concept exists in many religions.

They're merit based. The universe is Calvinism? Calvinism? Well, not particularly that the idea that we can earn salvation. In other words, you start with some initial ceremony and you're put on the way and you try and keep on the path.

And if you're good deeds outweigh your bad deeds, God will accept you. Now, the uniqueness of Christianity is it's not a religion like that, because God's acceptance doesn't come at the end and it's not based on our good deeds, doing our bad deeds. Because what I was saying earlier is that the condition for salvation is that we recognize that we cannot earn it.

It's not in that sense by our merit. It's not like NYU University exam. We don't get the degree in our merit.

It's by repentance and realizing we can't earn it, but we receive. What Christ has done for us? And that means we are accepted at the beginning of the journey, not at the end of it. So if some people in the Middle Ages believe that millions believe it today, I meet them all the time.

And they think that God will just look at their deeds and therefore they have no idea of what Christianity teaches. And that saddens me because millions of people reject Christianity before they've heard what it offers. That's fair.

But let me ask you as one thing that you mentioned or two things, which is actually interesting. First of all, I think we should start doing that. Repentance based grading.

I'm going to give the grades based if they repent first. But in all seriousness, you do raise an important point about food, which is you're saying that the fact that something like food exists or we recognize that we need to live implies that it exists in something like food. And I think you are correct about this, but here's the idea.



Your brain creates a matrix in a way. And by the way, most people don't realize this, but the matrix, the movie is kind of like documentary, but it's a separate issue. So the point is, the point is your brain creates this debug by millions of years of evolution, a three-dimensional subspace, a low shared subspace, where you project down the higher-dimensional real world into things that do matter for survival and procreation.

But that does not mean that is all there is. There is a higher-dimensional space out there in mind and in eye-blie, and feels like data science in particular will, in the fullness of time, allow us to appreciate this full space in a way. Yes? Would you agree with that? Well, I don't know.

So we don't know. But I'm not sure about the static, it's not a real point. We don't know.

So this is unknowable or known. So I... Wait a minute. Now there's two different things there, conceptually.

We don't know it, and it's unknowable. Now, if we don't know it, how do you know it's unknowable? How does that say this? So my point is, and I do not want to go there, but it is harder as you know. I know.

You know this as a mathematician there, that it's very hard to ascertain the truths that are of a system or the purpose of a system from within the system. You know that. I don't even go there.

But that's a good... That's a very important point. Yes. And the meaning of a system is not going to be found in the system.

I think Wittgenstein made that point a long time ago, and it is important. We must go outside it. Yes.

So how do you get... So how do you do that is my question. Like how do you... Where does your faith come from? I... It comes from evidence, but on that particular point you see, I say it as follows that there are two things happening, not just one. It's not just simply us as human beings using our minds to search for God.

I believe that there's an opposite process happening, both historically and in experience, and that is God revealing himself. Otherwise God would be, as you say, completely unknowable. But I think that God has revealed enough of himself so that we can get to know him.

And that is interestingly enough, the heart of... of what drives my life. The wonderful fact that I can, to a certain extent, know God as a person, not simply as a theory, but as a person. And that has been deeply meaningful to me in life.

I don't take this view that God is utterly unknowable. No, because I do believe that

Scripture, particularly, is revealing God's word to us just as much as the universe is telling us something about him as Creator. But Scripture aside, because we already went there, he didn't go well.

You're saying you get us from the world itself. So let's talk about that. About a month.

The way the world works, like the world world is, yes? Okay, yes. Okay. So last month, an individual who's living without any ethical or moral fiber in their body, in their life, and now instead they're going to create a metaverse, yes? The question... Hang on, hang on, hang on.

This person may still living of human suffering, right? Probably enjoys it. Probably enjoys even seeing people fight online. My question is, well, how do you know this has not already happened and you're living in it? How would you know that you're not living in some metaverse right now that exists for the amusements of some entity that's called in the demi-erge who just enjoys human suffering? Wouldn't you say it live and would it make a lot of sense if there was the case? People die, people get cancer, plagues happen, bullying, people being mean, wars.

I mean, wouldn't that explain the world better if there's some demi-erge in charge who just enjoys people's suffer? Well, the interesting thing about that to me is that if you argue like that and remove God from the equation, what you're left with, you haven't solved the problem of suffering and evil. In fact, you may have made it worse because the problem of suffering and evil, I believe there's a way in turn, but that lies in the concept of a suffering God, and that's what the crucifixion death of Christ has to do with. And this idea of we're living in a metaverse or a simulation, I don't find it convincing.

Now, we all have to decide whether we find it convincing or not, but in dealing with the problem of suffering and evil, and I actually took the risk of writing a book on where is God in a coronavirus world not long ago, is that I feel that the Christian narrative gives us a way into this, that millions of people throughout history, and I've seen it happen again and again, are given hope through it. Now, that doesn't necessarily prove it's true, but it certainly doesn't prove it's false. Now, people are looking for meaning and hope, and the narrative that you have just, no, no, I really, I just not going to give anybody much hope.

No, no, I agree. People look for meaning, people look for hope, and there's great consolation in in beliefs, absolute, there's no question about that. And what doesn't mean the truth? Well, believe in redemption, I guess, but again, that does not mean that it's correct.

That just means he helps you get free day. Leaving something doesn't make it true, but it doesn't make it false. We have to ask what is the evidence? I, you know, you and I are mathematicians and scientists and so on.

And we really think evidence is very important. And I think it's important here that trouble is the new atheists have redefined faith to such an extent that the vast majority of people I meet in academia think that faith is believing without evidence. And they find it absolutely amazing that I believe in God and that I've got evidence for it.

Can I say one more thing before we close, because apparently we are running out of time. So let me say one thing, which is contrary to John, what gives me hope is not scripture, what gives me hope is data science, data science, excuse me, hope. And you know why? I always thought that a death is multiplication of the null vector, which puts you in the null space, right? So the question would be what's the point of anything if you die anywhere? It doesn't matter if you are happy or sad, rich or poor, you die anyway.

As a matter of you helped or heard others, it doesn't matter either. They all die too. But I know why I believe that.

I no longer believe that. I believe dying with more like dividing by zero. In other words, anything is possible.

Anything is possible. Maybe even John is right, although I find it right unlikely. But I am excited to see how far data science can take us in this deeper understanding of what is actually going on in this higher dimensional space, but taking the higher dimensional space of its business, seriously, to reap the blessing of the image and healthy.

So that's what I have to say as a closer. Okay. Well, thanks.

You know, this has been really great talking with you Pascal. I've enjoyed it more than anything for a very long time. I only take on this and I'd love to go into detail.

I've just read the book on artificial intelligence 2084, AI in the future of humanity. And I think data science is vastly important. But the thing that gives me real hope is that the data, which is me, I consist of a great deal of data, is not going to be lost because of my faith in Christ and his resurrection that one day he will raise me and all the data.

And what amuses me sometimes when the AI people tell me, you know, we're going to solve the problem. We're going to upload you into silicon and so on. And we're going to give you some concept of eternal life.

I say, guys, you're too late. And they say, what do you mean? I said, the solution of physical death 20 centuries ago for Christ and I stopped loading. The biggest uploading that will ever happen to me is when God raises me from the dead, as I sincerely believe.

So there's my closer. The wonderful, wonderful. Thank you so much to both of you.

That was really great. I didn't even have to ask any like, prompting questions. You both took it out.

So while I do want to get into at least one Q and R question, since we are running out of time, this is a question from one of our sponsors, Victor, who is a part of co sponsor from NYU. He's one of, I think he's on the eboard of the NYU chapter of the society for the advancement of jicana slash Hispanics and Native Americans in science. So yeah, so I think this question is probably mainly directed for Professor Lennox, but Professor Wallace, you can definitely respond to it after.

We will have to keep it short though, because we do want to end somewhat on time. So the question is, it is interesting to cite scientists and phrases from people that live in the most stringent civilization centuries or decades ago. Nevertheless, we have not talked at all about the social pressure from the representatives of gods, gods on earth.

For hundreds of years, Christianity has even assassinated philosophers and scientists. For example, Galileo, science can believe in God, but Christianity has not believed in science. Now that the society has changed and the laws above religion, Christianity had to start accepting science by obligation and not belief.

Therefore, how can scientists believe in Christianity if Christianity does not believe in science? Because there has not been any declaration apologizing for all of the crimes Christianity executed against scientists in the past. I noticed for John, but can I actually also say something and actually maybe even go first? Yes? No? I'm happy with that. So I would say that is a misunderstanding actually, or caricature of what actually is going on.

That's just not true. For instance, there is a papal academy of sciences. I believe John is the one of the oldest scientific academies.

There is, is that true? And most of the most renowned? I think that's just not true. This is, most people don't understand this or realize this, but religion. I'm not sure if I actually don't know enough to know if it was just Christianity, but maybe it was.

What's actually, as John said in his opener, instrumental for the scientific revolution. So for instance, goes starts with Gutenberg. Why did he make that printing press? Well, to print Bibles, yes.

Now, once you have a printing press, you can also do other things. But as far as I know from the beginning, Copernicus was a monk. Am I wrong about this, John? Yes, you're right.

What I'm saying is I don't think that is true. I think that's the caricature. I think that Christianity has been extremely supportive of science, at least 1500 or so.

Am I wrong, John? No. And I think it's a caricature as well. First of all, Galileo was not assassinated by Christians.

Galileo was a believer in the Bible when he started, and he was a believer in the Bible

when he finished. The first people to attack him were the Aristotelians. It wasn't the church.

Unfortunately, the Catholic church at the time had got on the bandwagon of believing that the earth was unmoving in the center of the universe. So the conflict was not actually between science and religion at all. Secondly, although there have been tensions between science and Christianity at some time, that has not been the general case at all.

And what was omitted in the question is the horrific record of atheism as a destroyer of human beings. I've been a lot to Russia, particularly to Siberia. And very often I've heard from leading scientists who told me, you know, John, we thought that we could get rid of God and retain a value for human beings, but we found far too late than we that we couldn't.

And Alexander Solzhenitsyn, as he gave his speech in the United States when he arrived there, said, if I have to give an explanation of why 100 million of my fellow countrymen perished, it's because we have forgotten God. I come from Northern Ireland where there's been a lot of sectarian tension. And I would like to say that the tension between Catholics and Protestants there has nothing to do with true Christianity because Jesus Christ himself forbade his servants from using weapons.

And I want to say this as an Irish person who still believes in God and whose family has suffered from sectarian violence. My brother was nearly killed by it. I would want to say that people that take up weapons on whatever side to defend Christ or his message are not Christian.

They're disobeying Christ. They are not following him. So I think there are a lot of false assumptions in your question.

I'm sorry to say, but I have written about this in my book, *Gunning for God*. Can I say one sense on that, John, which is that if the 20th century showed us anything is that you do abandon religious messaging at your peril, particularly Christianity, which I hope forgive me, the caricature is for me, basically, maybe we should be nicer to each other, maybe more kind. And if you give up on that, 20th century shows anywhere you go, Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, Cambodia, it's not ending well.

It usually ends in millions of people dying. That's right. And one of your most famous thinkers, you're going to have a mass in his book called the *Transations*.

Habermas said that look, when we look at the origin of civilized morality, it lies in a Judeo-Christian tradition. And very interestingly, he said, everything else is postmodern chatter. We nourish ourselves from that legacy even still.

That's a huge and interesting subject and a very important one. Great. Great.

Thank you to both of you. I will ask one more question from the audience. This one is from Faya.

Professor Lennox mentioned that 60% of Nobel Prize winners were religious. But before he mentioned that science and atheism do not mix. If science and atheism do not mix, then how come there were 45% non-religious winners of the Nobel Prize? Oh, thank you for that question.

When I say science and atheism don't mix, I'm talking conceptually. In other words, I'm basing that on the argument that I said that if you follow atheism to its logical conclusion, it undermines rationality. What I'm not saying is that there aren't brilliant atheist science tests.

And you see, when we're thinking of science, very little of science impinges on the God question, very little of it. And so an atheist scientist or a believing scientist or a scientist of any worldview whatsoever, they will do almost exactly the same thing in the same place. It's only certain areas, particularly to do with origins and meaning that have anything to do with it.

So I'm not suggesting that atheists don't do brilliant science. I'm just saying that people that say that science and God don't mix are confronted with statistical evidence from the Nobel Prize winners. But intellectually, atheism undermines the rationality that we need to do science.

But I find many of my atheist friends have not seen that argument ever before. And they don't know what to do with it when they do hear it. So thanks for the question.

Professor Wallish, do you have any thoughts about that as well? I mean, I see John's point. I mean, there's a basic existence proof. If you can do world-class science being not an atheist, then the fact that they don't mix cannot be true.

I just think it's irrelevant, I guess, meaning, for instance, Newton had some very adventurous personal beliefs. But so what? I mean, it's his personal belief, right? So I think it's almost orthogonal. I think also, it's kind of irrelevant.

But I see John's point is an existence proof that this strong statement that they don't mix cannot be true. Great. Thank you.

I think we're going to squeeze in one more question. And for the both of you, you mentioned that the mind and the brain are different. And the question is asking, could you just describe a little bit more about like what the difference is, specifically between the mind, the brain, and then also the soul and the conscience? If I knew that, then I would get one of those no prizes.

John says, John just talked about it. But in all seriousness, that is, okay, let me just

briefly. So on a brain level, Eden, there are only voltages.

Yes. The wall just pass around between neurons, neurons are made out of matter. Actually, usually, you know what? Fat, fat, your brain is mostly fat.

Okay. So, so the question does arise. How does a fatty tissue like that that passes voltage around in it become self aware of itself? That is bizarre.

You understand how crazy that is? That is very, very strange. But if I knew that, I mean, that there is all kinds of issues, which is, for instance, like, hey, why am I me and not you? Why is my brain tied to my mind and not you, you mind? Makes no sense. Well, that's what I'm saying.

That's what I'm trying to get to John, which is like, the whole thing makes no sense. It's very strange, very odd, makes no sense. But that's where I can leave it.

And it's for me, then it doesn't go, oh, and therefore, I believe, you know, Jesus Christ is this or that, you know what I mean? Like, but John, what do you think? Well, I tend to sympathize with you, but I do wish you well at wedding a Nobel Prize for a cognitive neuroscience. Yes, cognitive science. The thing is that we don't know what consciousness is.

Correct. And therefore, answering these questions is at the moment impossible at a scientific level. We just don't know.

But you're wondering, I'm curious, a specific state of this complexity, a competing meat that says, says about vultures is self-aware and claims to be John and has a mind. Oh, sure. Yes.

Very odd. We go, it's, it's, it's utterly mysterious. There's a huge mystery here.

And that's a wonderful thing about science. We investigate these things, but we realize that there are limits to them. But the point I made earlier, why is there a difference? It seems to me to be elementary in the sense that there's a mind story and the brain story.

And if you are a cognitive neuroscientist with equipment like Pascal, you can look at my brain and tell me what's in my brain in terms of electrical impulses and so on. But you can't tell me what's in my mind. I can tell you what's in my mind.

I cannot tell you what's in my brain. So there's a difference of some kind. But John, I mean, that might be a guard of the gaps of cognitive neuroscience.

The hope of cognitive science is that we will eventually find out these neural subjects. I'm quite aware of it. But it's even if we do, it's still, if and if we do, it still raises the question, why? And, and Eden, just to be clear, you understand how weird this is.

Are you, you're telling me that for billions of years, the universe had no consciousness and now it has one, the light of consciousness that we, that we embody? I find it very strange. Oh, well, wait a minute. The universe may have had no consciousness, but the God who made it is conscious.

I wish John I had your faith. I really, okay, well, you can. Wow.

Well, yeah, thank you both so much. I'm serious. I wish I'm curious.

What do you actually mean? How do you know, John, like, how do you have that faith? Like, I wish I had that faith. I'm never been sincere. I wish I had that.

Well, that that's a marvelous, the honest thing to say. And I respected vastly an icon only answer that, you know, if you tell me that there's a Ferrari, a red Ferrari outside my door and I can drive it away, we can argue philosophically about it for years. But unless I go and look and make the experiment, I'll never find out.

That's right. But therefore, I feel that Christ was very fair. He said, if someone wills to do God's will, they will know of the teaching.

In other words, if I'm open and honest, as I say it, with God and say to God, well, you show me, you show me and give me evidence that convinces me everything I read in the New Testament tells me that God takes that seriously and he will in time give you the evidence that is up to what you particularly need in order to convince you in your own experience, not simply intellectually. Thank you for listening to this podcast episode from the Veritas Forum event archives. If you enjoyed this discussion, please rate, review, and subscribe.

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