

³⁰ Marin Mersenne, *L'Impiété des Déistes, Athées, et Libertins de ce temps* (Paris: Pierre Bilaine, 1624), preface, unnumbered, page 12. The number of atheists in Paris is delivered by Mersenne a year previous in his *Quaestiones in genesim* (Paris: Sebastiani Cramoisy, 1623), cols. 669-674. This was at a time when the entire city numbered 400,000.

³¹ Lessius, *De providentia numinis*, I.2.16-19, 235-238.

³² James Collins, *God in Modern Philosophy* (Chicago: Regnery, 1959) 51.

³³ René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, translated by Laurence J. Lafleur (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1978) 7. For the Latin text, see the standard edition of Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Leopold Cerf, 1897-1909) VII, 1-3.

³⁴ Descartes to Vatier, AT I, 564. See Jacques Maritain, *The Dream of Descartes*, translated by Mabelle J. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1944) 205.

³⁵ Denis Diderot, *Pensées philosophiques* #11 as in *Oeuvres philosophiques*, edited by Paul Venniere (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1961) 17-18.

³⁶ Ernst Mach, *The Science of Mechanics*, translated by Thomas J. McCormack, 6th ed. (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1960) 552.

³⁷ Roger Hahn, "Laplace and the Vanishing Role of God in the Physical Universe," *The Analytic Spirit: Essays in the History of Science in Honor of Henry Guerlac*, ed. Harry Woolf (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981) 85-86.

³⁸ Denis Diderot, *Lettre sur les aveugles à l'usage de ceux qui voient*, in *Oeuvres philosophiques*, 121.

³⁹ Richard S. Westfall, *Force in Newton's Physics: The Science of Dynamics in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: American Elsevier, 1971) 450.

⁴⁰ Ernan McMullin, *Newton on Matter and Activity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978) 29-56.

⁴¹ Denis Diderot, *Lettre sur les aveugles*, 123.

⁴² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, translated by H. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1983) III, 387.

⁴³ David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia. A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World 1900-2000* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1982) 6.

⁴⁴ Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, translated by Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton University Press, 1951) 135-136. Cf. Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, vol. 1, *The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: Norton, 1966) 18.

⁴⁵ Baron Paul d'Holbach, *Système de nature ou des lois du monde Physiques et du Monde moral*, new edition (London: 1771) 30.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁴⁸ R. P. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939) 215.

⁴⁹ Alfred J. Bingham, "The Abbé Bergier: An Eighteenth-Century Catholic Apologist," *Modern Language Review*, 54, no. 3 (July 1959) 349.

⁵⁰ Nicolas-Sylvain Bergier, *Examen du matérialisme, ou Réfutation du Système de la nature* (Paris, Chez Humbolt, 1771) I. 154, 174-176, cited in Alan Charles Kors, *D'Holbach's Coterie: An Enlightenment in Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976) 65n.

⁵¹ Louis-Mayneul Chaudon, *Anti-Dictionnaire philosophique* (Paris: Saillant and Nyon, 1775) II, 125-129, as cited in Kors, *op. cit.*, 56n.

⁵² Thomas V. Morris, "A Door that Proved Most Narrow," *Commonweal* January 29, 1988) 58.

⁵³ Buckley, *Modern Atheism*, 363.

IS A NATURAL THEOLOGY STILL POSSIBLE TODAY?

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Introduction

The enterprise of Natural Theology (or the Philosophy of God) is a particularly difficult one to carry out in our day. Philosophically it has come under heavy attack from empiricists and Neo-Kantians, from analytic philosophers tinged with both of the above, from historical and linguistic relativists appealing to hermeneutics, and more recently from Deconstructionists. We shall take up these philosophical roadblocks presently. But first, given the context of this book, we turn to the relations between natural theology and contemporary science, in particular theoretical physics and cosmology.

Relation to Science

Natural theology is, from one point of view, on better terms with contemporary science than it has been for a long time. The notion that mind has a place in nature, that nature points to mind as its completion, is much more acceptable, even plausible, to many scientists today, especially theoretical physicists and cosmologists. One example is that advanced by Fred Hoyle in his recent book, *The Intelligent Universe*. Many scientists are favorably impressed by the now famous Anthropic Principle, which seems to point to an extremely precise fine tuning of the four basic forces of the material universe, with its enormous statistical improbability, as a sign that the universe was planned from the beginning in view of the appearance of conscious observers like ourselves in it. Indicative is the comment of the physicist Freeman Dyson:

I conclude from the existence of these accidents of physics and astronomy that the universe is an unexpectedly hospitable place for living creatures to make their home in. Being a scientist, trained in the habits of thought and language of the twentieth century rather than the eighteenth, I do not claim that the architecture of the universe proves the existence of God. I claim only that the architecture of the universe is consistent with the hypothesis that mind plays an essential role in its functioning.¹

Two points are noteworthy here. The first is the openness to, or "compatibility" of the scientific picture with, the theistic hypothesis, rather than the former closedness that used to predominate. But the second is the warning that from inside the scientific outlook this hypothesis is only compatible with the results of contemporary science, not authorized or