

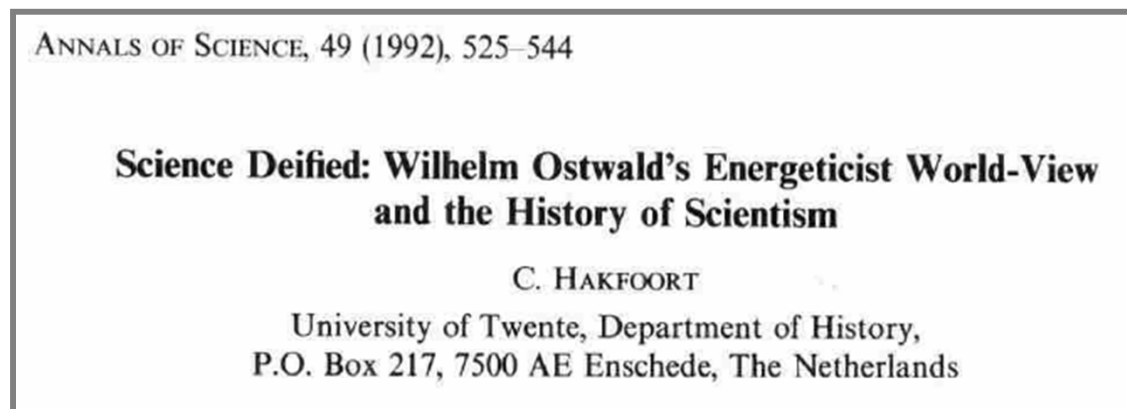
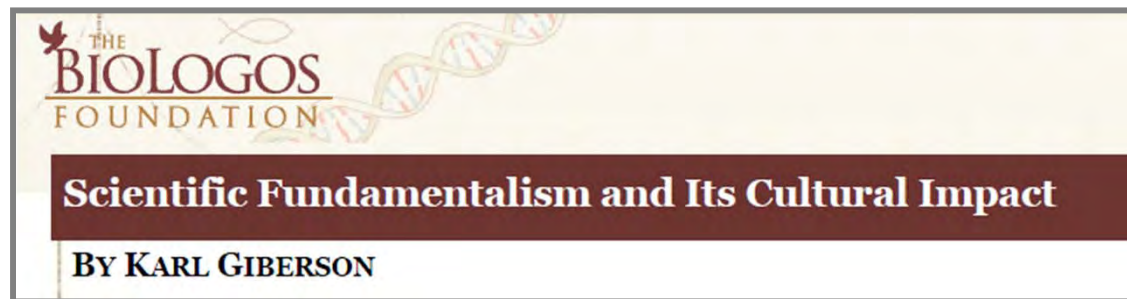
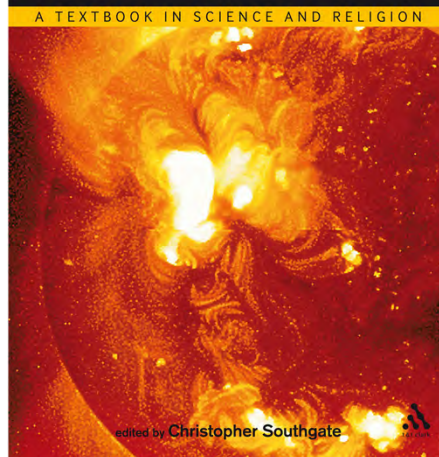
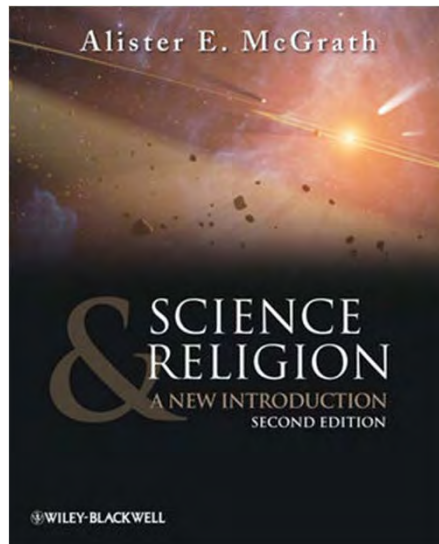
Exploring the New Atheist Movement with Wilhelm Ostwald, Early Physical Chemistry's “New Atheist”

Stephen M. Contakes

Department of Chemistry
Westmont College

scontakes@westmont.edu

The History of Physical Chemistry Provides an Opportunity to Discuss the New Atheism



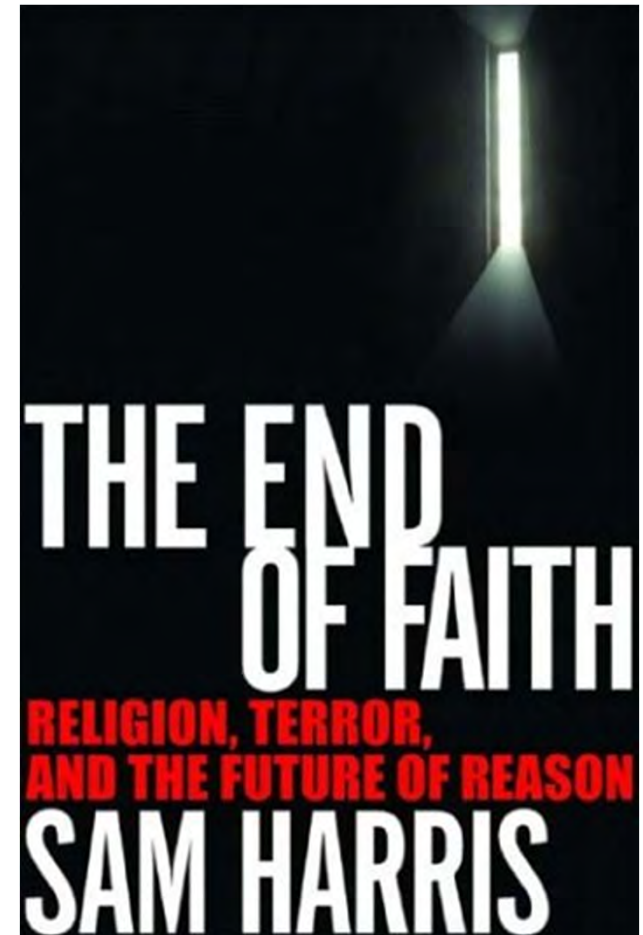
The New Atheism and Why It Matters



September, 11, 2001



August, 2004

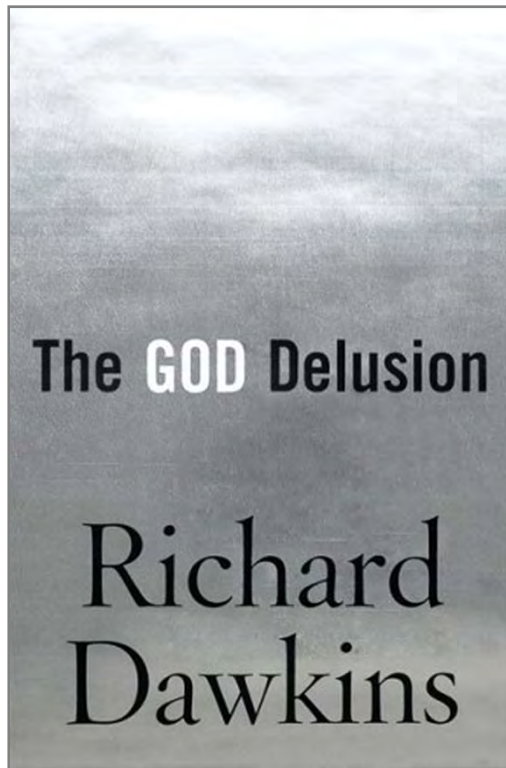


The picture of 9/11 is taken from www.september112001.com/

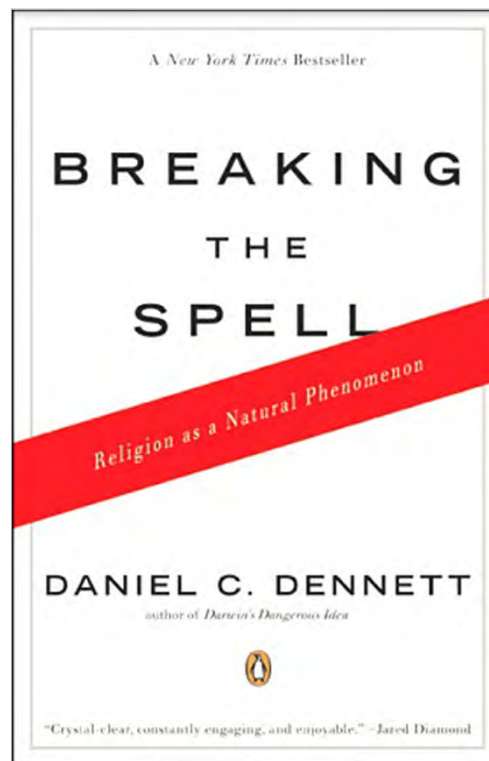
The picture of Sam Harris is taken from <http://www.amazon.com/Moral-Landscape-Science-Determine-Values/dp/1442300140>

The cover image is taken from <http://www.uncrediblehallq.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/End-of-Faith.jpg>

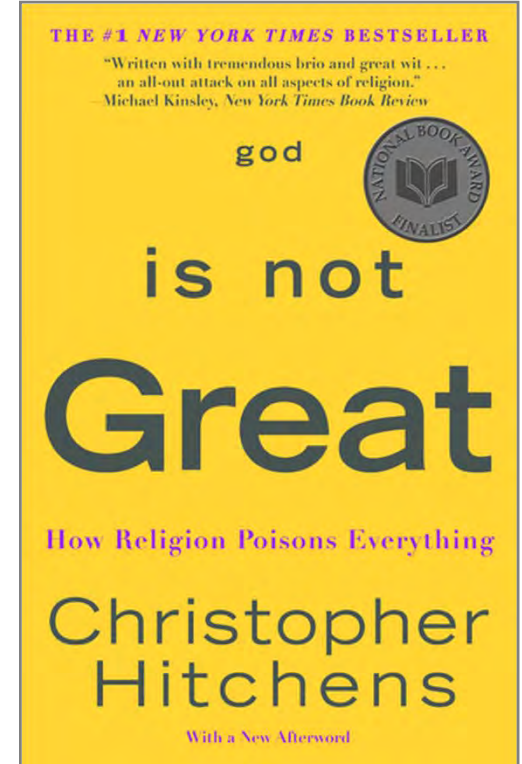
The New Atheism and Why It Matters



2006



2006



2007

THE FOUR HORSEMEN

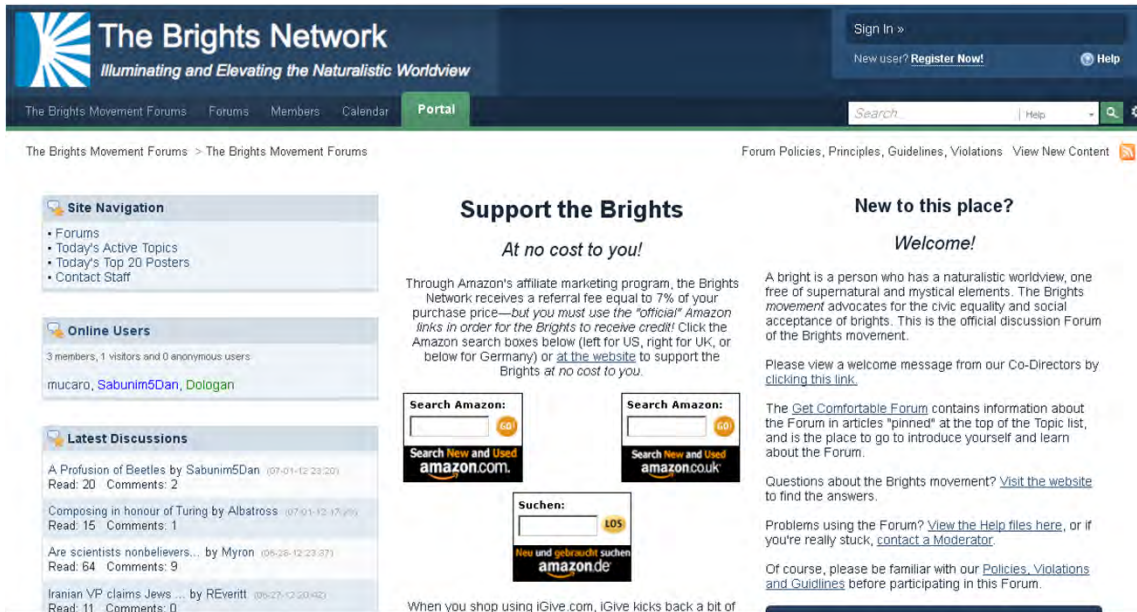


A Round Table Discussion With:

RICHARD DAWKINS • DANIEL C. DENNETT
SAM HARRIS • CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

The four horsemen movie image is taken from <http://atheistmovies.blogspot.com/2009/01/four-horsemen.html>

The New Atheism is a Social Phenomenon



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New to this place?

Welcome!

A bright is a person who has a naturalistic worldview, one free of supernatural and mystical elements. The Brights movement advocates for the civic equality and social acceptance of brights. This is the official discussion Forum of the Brights movement.

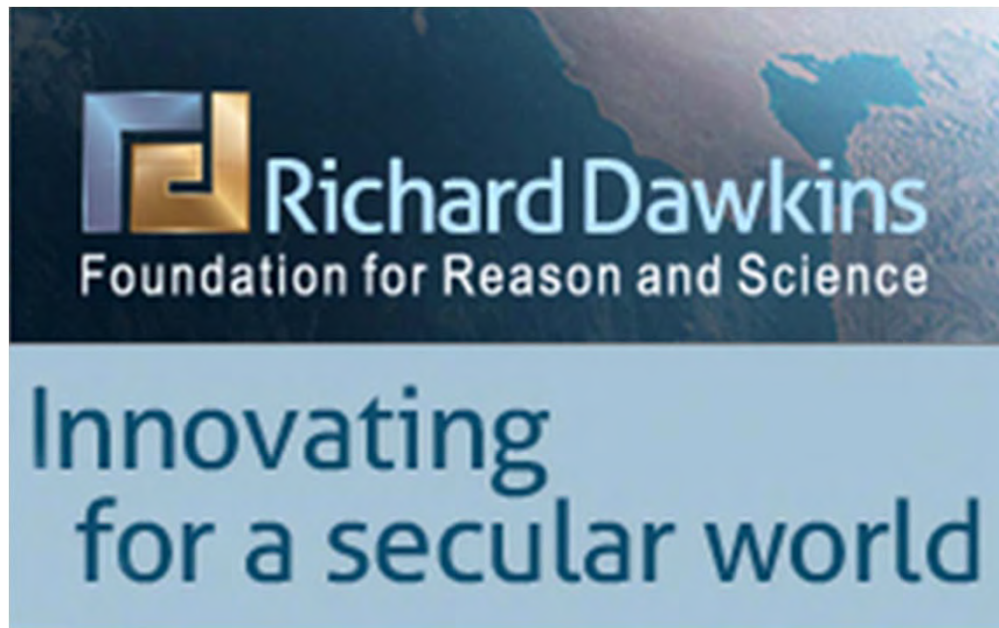
Please view a welcome message from our Co-Directors by clicking this link.

The [Get Comfortable Forum](#) contains information about the Forum in articles "pinned" at the top of the Topic list, and is the place to go to introduce yourself and learn about the Forum.

Questions about the Brights movement? Visit the website to find the answers.

Problems using the Forum? View the [Help files here](#), or if you're really stuck, [contact a Moderator](#).

Of course, please be familiar with our [Policies](#), [Violations and Guidelines](#) before participating in this Forum.



Richard Dawkins
Foundation for Reason and Science

Innovating
for a secular world



10/23/06

Richard Dawkins
Author, "The God Delusion"

RANDOLPH-MACON
WOMAN'S COLLEGE

Book TV
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36:22 share

Characteristics of the New Atheism

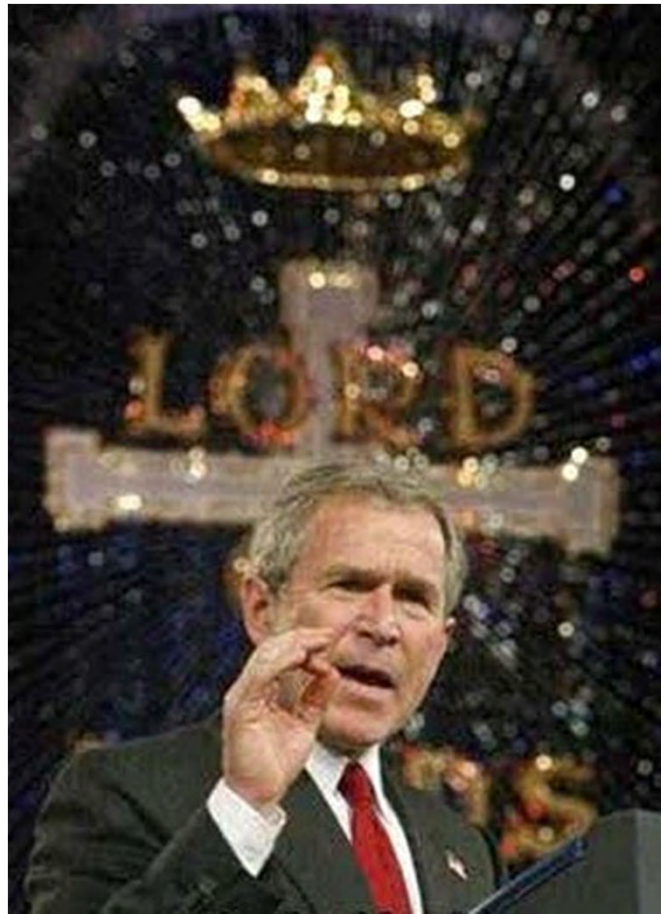
1. Evangelistic anti-theism, coupled to the claim that religion is harmful.



The figure at left is taken from <http://richarddawkins.net/articles/3567-science-flies-you-to-the-moon-religion-flies-you-into-buildings>
The figure at right is taken from <http://deadwildroses.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/imagine-no-religion-towers1.jpg>

Characteristics of the New Atheism

2. Antagonism to the religious right and political advocacy of secular humanism.



Secular Student Alliance at the University of Texas at Austin
presents

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by

**SECULAR
STUDENT
ALLIANCE**

**ATTACK
OF THE
THEOCRATS!**

HOW THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT HARMS US ALL—
AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

FOREWORD
BY
RICHARD
DAWKINS

A HARROWING TRUE TALE TOLD BY
SEAN FAIRCLOTH

Sean Faircloth
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND POLICY FOR
THE RICHARD DAWKINS FOUNDATION FOR REASON & SCIENCE

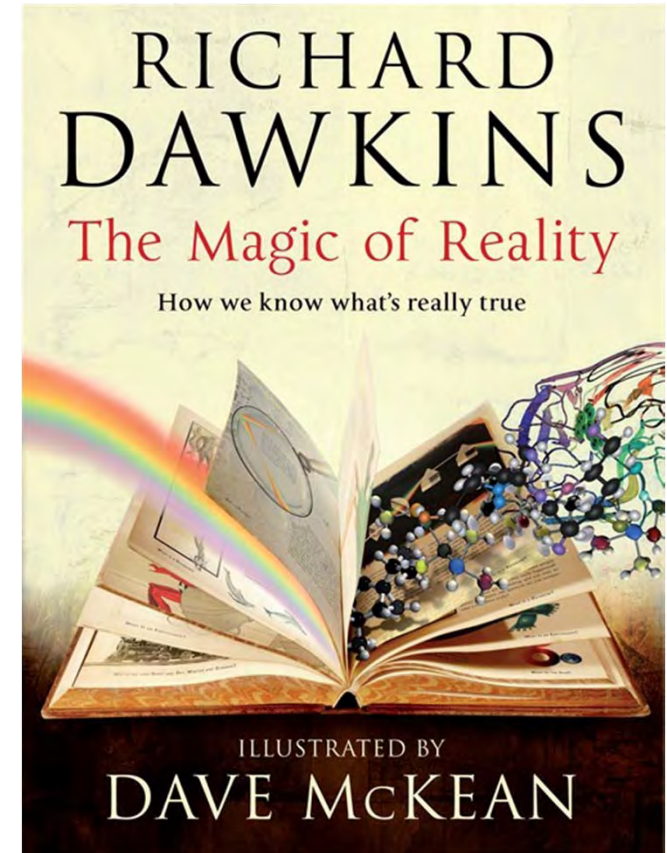
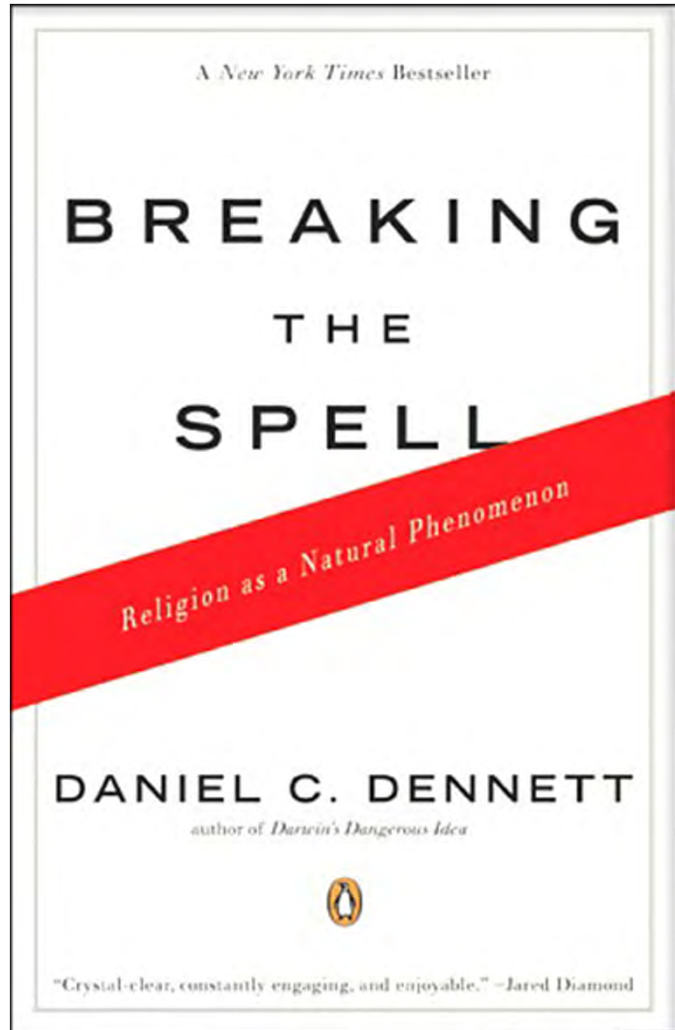
on his **strategic plan** to return America to its
secular roots.

April 12, 2012 7 pm GEA 105

The image of George W. Bush speaking in front of a cross is taken from <http://blogs.e-rockford.com/applesauce/files/2008/01/bush-theocracy.jpg>
The Poster is taken from http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-UcJncBwixxY/T6Mj7Pew1wI/AAAAAAAAABel/zD9beM4PssU/s1600/attack%2B_image.jpg

Characteristics of the New Atheism

3. Elevates evolutionary biology as the “grand narrative” of the universe...



...while using the cognitive science of religion and Dawkin’s meme hypothesis to explain away religion as an unimportant “natural phenomenon.”

Wilhelm Ostwald was Early Physical Chemistry's "New Atheist"

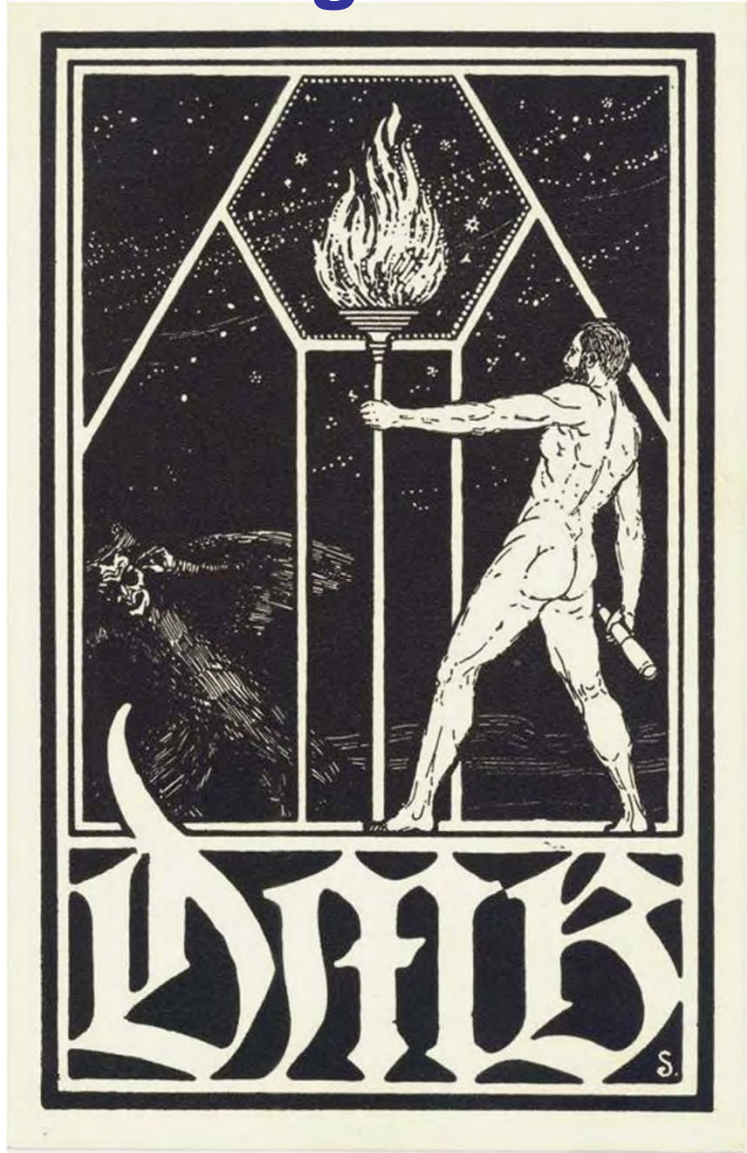
"... mankind's appreciation and acceptance of scientific progress has steadily accelerated. ... nowadays ...the Church is at pains to prove that its teachings are compatible with those of Science. In other words, the Church acknowledges Science as the higher authority."

Wilhelm Ostwald

Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, 1909



Ostwald's Abilities and Views Led Him to take a Leading Role in the German Monist League

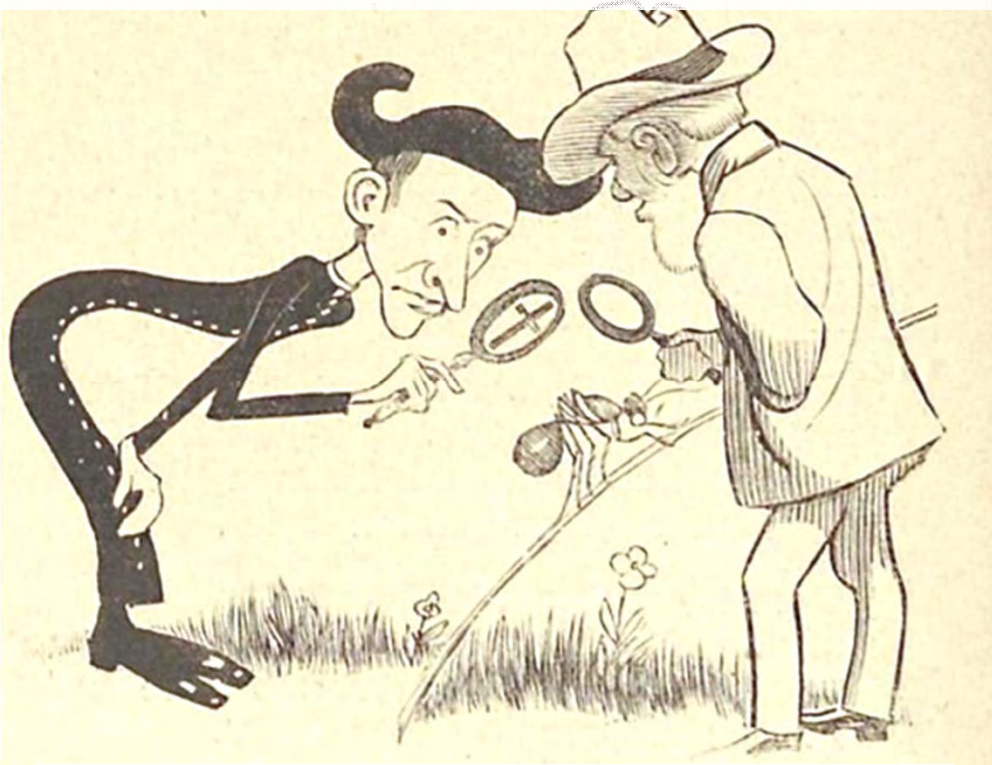


The figure at left is taken from http://idw-online.de/pages/de/image?id=26710&display_lang=de_DE

The figure at right is taken from <http://www.freigeistige-aktion.de/weltanschauung.htm>

Haeckel's Monism Emphasized Evolution & Took on an Anti-Clerical Character

Haeckel and Wassmann



H [Haeckel]: "Yes, sir, but when you use the magnifying glass the cross will be a hindrance."

The Battle Over the Evolution-Problem in Berlin



The book at right is from <http://www.zvab.com/buch-suchen/titel/der-kampf-um-das/autor/wasmann> The photograph of Wassmann is taken from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Erich_Wasmann.jpg The cartoon at left is from <http://www.payer.de/religionskritik/karikaturen135.htm>

Under Ostwald, the Monists Helped Lead the Wider German Church Withdrawal Movement

Ketschendorf!

Oeffentliche Verlammlung

Sonntag, den 28. Dezember 1913,
nachmittags 4 Uhr
im Lokale von Weidemann

mit dem Thema:

**Der Massenstreik
gegen die Staatskirche.**

Referent: Schriftsteller Genosse Ernst Reuter-Halensee.

Nach dem Vortrag freie Diskussion.

Der Einberufer.
Karl Grassick.

KAISERIN FIGHTS ENEMIES OF CHURCH

Agitation Going On in Prussia
for Withdrawal from the
State Institution.

MEETINGS WERE FORBIDDEN

Arranged for Last Wednesday, Re-
pentance Day, and Prohibition Is
Said to Have Been Due to Empress.

Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

The figure at left taken from http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Ernst_Reuter_Sprecher_Veranstaltung_Kirchenaustrittsbewegung_1913.jpg
The headline is from the November 23, 1913, *New York Times*.

Under Ostwald, Thermodynamics Became the Central Science of the German Monist League

“There is really an idea which bridges not only the chasm between force and substance but also that between mind and matter, and which is of a nature sufficiently manifold to embrace the totality of all our experiences, the interior as well as the exterior. That idea we term energy.”

Wilhelm Ostwald, “The Philosophical Meaning of Energy”, 1903*

“energy [is] the sole universal generalization. All phenomena are reduced to properties and relations of energy, and especially matter, in so far as such a concept would at all prove useful, is to be defined in terms of energetics.”

Wilhelm Ostwald, “The Modern Theory of Energetics”, 1907**

* *The International Quarterly* **1903**, 300-315.

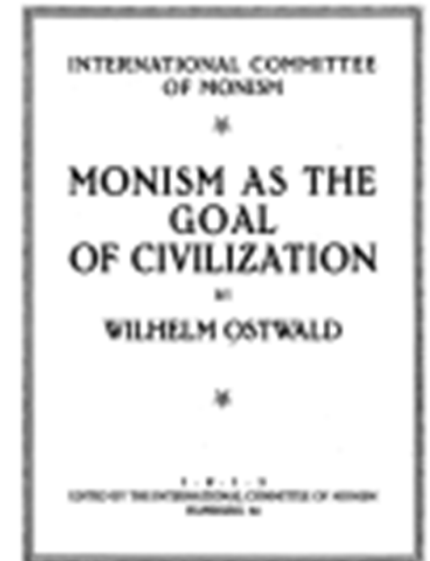
** *The Monist* **1907**, 17(4 October), 481-515.

Ostwald Even Developed Ethical & Social Programs Based on “Energetics”

“The energetic imperative [is] ‘Waste no energy; turn it all to account!’

... there is no human action which could not be brought within the viewpoint of this energetic imperative. Here, therefore, we have a genuine and far reaching Monism.”

Wilhelm Ostwald, *Monism as the Goal of Civilization*, 1913



$$\text{Happiness} = E^2 - W^2 = (E + W)(E - W)$$

where E = energy willingly applied and W = energy exerted unwillingly

Ostwald's Ethical System Provided a “Scientific” Basis for Monist Morality

“the suggestion [of the churchmen is] that virtue is possible only in the path of religion; on the contrary ... just as the other sciences have gradually freed themselves from the influence of the church, ethics must now also be set free from the old influences which the different churches have exerted on it, and still at present claim to exert.”

Wilhelm Ostwald, *Monism as the Goal of Civilization*, 1913*

“A particular merit of Ostwald's monistic nature-philosophy [is] that he constantly endeavors to promulgate in all directions not only its theoretical part, the rational worldview, but also its practical manifestation, a wholesome conduct of life.”

Ernst Haeckel, 1914**

* Pages 34-35.

** Haeckel, E. “Wilhelm Ostwald: President of the German Monist League” *The Open Court* 1914, 97-102.

Ostwald's Monism Made Science into an Ersatzreligion (Substitute Religion)

“We expect from science the highest that mankind can produce and win on this earth...Everything that mankind, in terms of its wishes and hopes, its aims and ideals, combines in the concept God, is fulfilled by science.”

Wilhelm Ostwald, *Monism as the Goal of Civilization*, 1913*

* The quote is taken from “Science Deified: Wilhelm Ostwald’s Energeticist World View” *Annals of Science* 1992, 49, 525-544.

Ostwald's Monism Made Science into an Ersatzreligion (Substitute Religion)

**Monistische
Sonntagspredigten**
(Monistic Sunday Sermons)

von
Wilhelm Ostwald

—
Erste Reihe

Bibliotheksausgabe.



Leipzig
Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft m. b. H.

Erste Predigt.
(sermon one)

Warum sind wir Monisten?
(Why are we Monists?)

Dreizehnte Predigt.
(sermon thirteen)

Der energetische Imperativ.
(The Imperatives of energy)

Sechzigste Predigt
(sermon sixty)

STOFF, KRAFT, GEIST UND ENERGIE
(Matter, Power, Spirit, and Energy)

Ostwald's Monism Made Science into an Ersatzreligion (Substitute Religion)

Monistische Sonntagspredigten (Monistic Sunday Sermons)

von
Wilhelm Ostwald

Erste Reihe

Bibliotheksausgabe.



Leipzig
Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft m. b. H.

Sechszwanzigste Predigt.
(sermon twenty-six)

Das Gebet.
(Prayer)

Neununddreißigste Predigt.
(sermon thirty-nine)

Weihnachten.
(Christmas)

...Secularizing Christian Symbols and Rituals in the Process

“Given [prayer’s positive effects on mental states], it is valuable to examine more closely the effects of praying to determine to learn how these are achieved ...[as] a natural science of long-term human experience...”

Wilhelm Ostwald

“Through the appropriate development of [the Christmas festival] ... the importance of energy will be moved out of the realm of the purely intellectual into the more varied and impressive realm of feelings.”

Wilhelm Ostwald

Sechszwanzigste Predigt.
(sermon twenty-six)

Das Gebet.
(Prayer)

Neununddreißigste Predigt.
(sermon thirty-nine)

Weihnachten.
(Christmas)

Ostwald Supported Singing Monist “Carols”

Up to the Light*

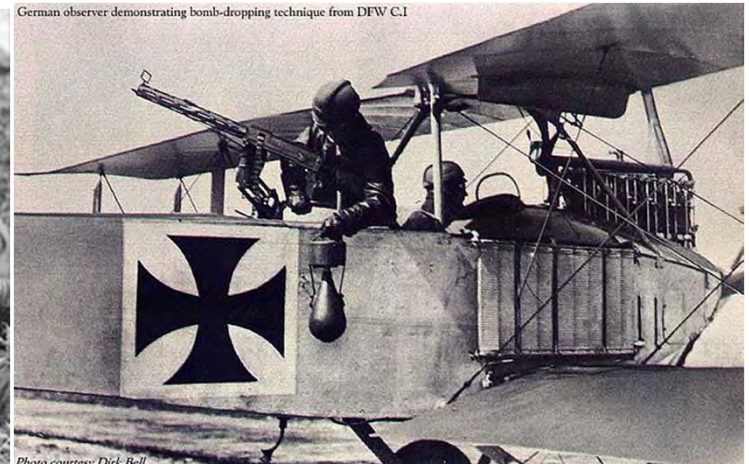
According to: Silent Night, Holy Night

Out of the dark night / intellectual power /
climbing upwards, / above /
it's former beginnings in the animal kingdom./
From ages ago life came;/
:/: fighting and struggling to the light :/.

Flame, Spring, Wind. / Stone, Tree, and Bush/
Each animal / he feels there/
in the innermost being related /
for he detects the meaning of life /
:/. from the Law of nature :/.

* Translated from the German in F. Theime; Ruppert, P. (eds.) *Liederbuch für monistische Kreise zu Geselligen, Ernsten, und Heiteren Stunden* (Songbook for Monistic Groups for Sociable, Serious, and Cheerful Hours), Leipzig, 1910, as quoted by Haakfort, C. *Annals of Science* **1992**, 49, 525-544.

Ostwald's Monist Activities Diminished During and After World War I

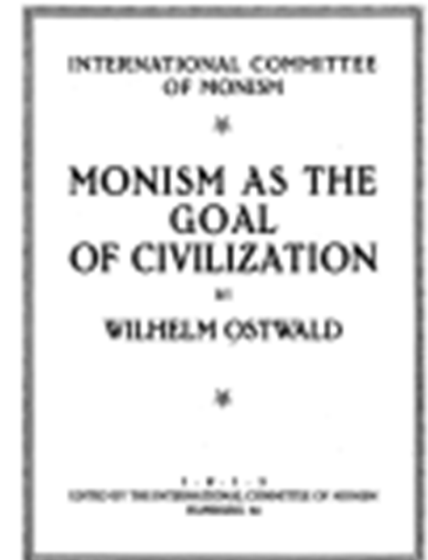


The flamethrower image is taken from <http://www.firstworldwar.com/weaponry/flamethrowers.htm> The machine gun picture is taken from <http://www.battlesofwar.com/media/wwi-pictures.php> The bomb dropping picture is taken from <http://www.flickr.com/photos/landoni/3630904103/> The image of John Singer Sargent's painting "Gassed" is taken from <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/33/Gassed.jpg>

Wilhelm Ostwald's Life and Work Exemplify the Ideas of the New Atheism

“Success in probing the secrets of nature...fostered an impatience with revelation and a generous optimism concerning what could be accomplished ...through science. ...Ostwald, as a chemist, translated the doctrines of his time into terms of energy.”

Morris E. Opler*



* Morris E. Opler *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 64, No. 3, Part 1 (Jun., 1962), pp. 524-547.