Two Ways with Two Books: Answering the Secularist Materialists pt. 1

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[0:00] Well, thank you, Bill, and I'm glad to see you all... Well, I'm not glad. I was hoping that there would be nobody here. Well, actually, I forced my family to come so at least there'd be four people. This is... I want to share with you today...

Well, not today, but this is a two-part series, a two-part talk, on two books that helps to answer the secular materialists, which I will explain momentarily.
So, there'll be an introduction of who, what, and why. And then I'm going to talk today specifically about this book, Modern Physics and Ancient Faith, by Stephen Barr.
Many of us heard him speak. Oh, there you are. You can probably do a better job than I can on this, but I'm still going to give a crack at it.
But he came here in the spring and got us all quite excited about it. So, this is the book today, and the next...
[1:04] God willing, next week, I'll be talking about this book, Dinesh D'Souza's book, What's So Great About Christianity? And the two books are quite different.

Barr's a physicist, high-energy physicist, looking at... Well, I'll tell you more about him in a minute. D'Souza is actually an economics consultant in the U.S., and you think, how's this guy going to ever know anything?
But he actually has done a lot of good research, and his book is much broader. He covers all sorts of areas, which, when I talk about them next week, I'm going to be in deep trouble, because everybody knows way more about some of these topics than I do.
Even this... Today, I'm a little nervous, but we'll see what we can do. It's doubly nervous, because you're one, you might object to what the person says, and you might also object to what I say, so I can really get into trouble.
Okay. All right. My title was rather strange. I was secular materialist, and I picked it mostly because it would confuse you, because it's redundant.
[2:09] All right? Obviously, a materialist would probably be secular, and what we just say might be the opposite. A sacred materialist, well, I guess you could find some of them maybe as bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada, or the...

No, that wasn't the book. So, I just want to point out that we've got to find a way of describing who we're talking about and why we want to answer them, all right? So, one of them is a scientific materialist, and Barr refers to that person, his antagonist, as a scientific materialist, and for the sake of brevity, I'll just say the materialist.
It's a person who believes in philosophical materialism and approaching it from the field of science. And materialism is a philosophical theory that regards matter and its motions as constituting the universe and all phenomena, including those of the mind, as due to material agencies.
In other words, there's not much spiritual in these characters. We also have secular humanists, and it's a humanist philosophy that upholds reason, ethics, and justice, and specifically rejects supernatural and spiritual as a basis for moral reflection and decision-making.
We also have atheists. It's a person who denies and disbelieves the existence of a supreme being, or beings. D'Souza uses this term as his antagonist.
[3:32] I'm just going to use the word materialist all the way through, just to keep it simple. Oh, there's one more. It's called the Brights. These are self-named individuals whose worldview is naturalistic, free from supernatural or mystical elements.

So that's the group of people that we're generally talking about. Who are they? Well, really specifically, there's a whole bunch of names.
Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, Leo Wilson, Carl Sagan, Daniel Dennett, Stephen Pinker, and there are others. I would include anybody who has bought into these guys' agenda and are aggressively evangelizing the theory of materialism, atheism, or whatever.
These are the ones we're talking about. So why do we want to have a talk about these characters? Well, both Dinesh D'Souza and Stephen Barr would agree that they're not simply people who don't believe in God, but they're aggressively campaigning to see God removed from society.
And they disguise their faith as science, claiming that they have arrived there by reason alone. And I hope these talks and these two books will give you some confidence that there is a reasonable evidence, mostly scientific, that materialists are wrong.
[5:06] So, before we actually get right into the details, I would like to give you just a little brief word of scripture and a prayer. The word of scripture is from 1 Peter 3, 3, 15.

Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is within you. Yet do it with gentleness and reverence.
Keep your conscience clear so that when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. Let's just pray. Lord, we ask that you would open our hearts to your word, open our ears and our minds as we contemplate these things.
May we be filled with your spirit and be prepared to give a defense for the faith that is within us. We pray this in Jesus' name.
Amen. Amen. Okay. Stephen Barr. He's a Christian. Now, that's not him, by the way.
[6:12] That's just... He's a graduate of Columbia and Princeton Universities with degrees in theoretical nuclear physics with particular focus in grand unified theories, the theory of charge conjugation and parity violation, the problem of the origin of the quark and lepton masses, with extra space-time dimension, the theories of extra space-time dimensions, including super-string and Kaluza-Klein theories.

Everybody followed that? Okay. And the interface between particle physics and cosmology, which I think he does a lot of. He's currently on staff at the University of Delaware.
Now, what you see here is the artist's rendition of the hyper-dimensional figures. That's to say they have more dimensionality than our three space dimensions at one time.
They actually have eight or nine or ten, whatever it is. And they're called Kali-Bi-Yau shapes. It's part of the super-string theory. So, better to look at than listen to me, I actually think.
But anyway, that's... Okay, his book. The book here is a 300-page book written in 2003. It's comprised of 26 chapters into five parts, plus an appendix, references, and index.
[7:31] Much of it's written for the non-expert, but it is not light bedtime reading. It's intended for the person, I really believe, it's more intended for the person who has a real technical bent and wants to understand these things.

But I think there's still things that we can all take away from it. My plan is to take you through the highlights, at least in my opinion they are, of each section. And if you're hoping for a critical analysis of Bars physics, you're going to be disappointed.
I am a non-practicing nuclear physicist. When I was practicing, I wasn't very good at it, all right, the first thing. But just to make it so you understand the difference is, it's kind of like a non-practicing Christian deciding to write a critique of Dr. Packer's latest book.
It would be very unwise to do that, all right? You know, if you haven't been thinking about the subject or involved with the subject, I'm not going to deal with the physics stuff or some of the in-depth stuff, but I am going to deal with the things that I think we can all share and understand.
Okay, here's the layout of the book. The five parts, the conflict, the beginning, the universe, the design of the universe, man's place in the cosmos, and what is man? And then I have a reflection and summary.
[8:54] Oh, yeah, the conflict, that's what we're going to talk about now. It's the conflict between religion and materialism. That's the whole topic. He quickly established two points.

That it's not about proofs concerning science and faith, but it's all about evidence and credibility.
And that the opposition to faith, the Christian faith, is not science, but scientific materialism.
So he says, we're not dealing with opposition to science, it's materialism that's the problem. And it's, I'm not going to, he says, I'm not going to present you any proofs, but they actually don't either.

All they present is evidence, and we can look at the evidence. And I think in my previous talks I've argued we can't, it's really tough to prove anything in terms of science because it's all by experiment.
You can prove things mathematically because mathematics is generally, and I say this carefully because it's generally a closed system and you can make proofs, but science, you can gather data to be very confident, but never ever prove.
[9:56] Okay, he defined scientific materialism here which I've already discussed to you. And he points out the materialist according to him, adopts the view that the only real knowledge is scientific and that religious knowledge is dogma and anti-scientific.

To address that point, Barr deviates from modern to ancient science and philosophy by presenting discussions about early Christians, including Aquinas and Augustine who had no opposition to scientific investigations, but in fact encouraged them as a support to faith by revealing God's hand at work in nature.
He briefly touches on Galileo who is often trotted out by the materialists as proof of the conflict between science and religion. But Barr points out that this conflict was more personal than it was religious.
He notes that Galileo and his chief detractors were both Christians and scientists. There's lots more we'd say there, but I don't want to...
Oh, I actually have forgotten to make these points up. Sorry, my coordination here needs a little improvement here. All right. Okay. All right. An interesting aspect of the conflict between Christianity and materialism has to do with the concept of mystery.
[11:26] Christians consider as mystery the limitlessness of knowledge which we will never be able to comprehend with our limited reasoning. The materialists consider such a concept as contrary to reason.

Curiously, I think this makes the materialist an unwitting opponent to science as his position does not allow for consideration of anything outside of physics.
areas of psychology and human consciousness for example are not easily accepted by the materialist and ultimately areas of intellectual reasoning should be a problem for the materialist.
Bar is not interested in discussing the interpretations that the materialist makes against religion in this book.
But he does want to talk about the interpretation they've applied to science about the facts and theories of science. He presents several quotes from prominent materialists which suggest very strongly that the world as seen by science is very different from the world portrayed by religion and that man's place in it is very insignificant.
[12:35] Now, for example, Bertrand Russell declared regarding man's place in the cosmos as a curious accident in a backwater. Bar points out the two problems with the materialist position.

First, from a Christian perspective, man was never the center of the world. It was always God that was the center. And secondly, there are five what he calls plot twists that he'll expand further than the book and I will just outline them here.
The world does not appear to be eternal. That there's a beauty in the laws of physics defy a randomness that would be expected by the materialist.
That there are anthropic coincidences. The wildest, we'll come back to them in all of these, that the mind is not a computer. And he uses some arguments by Guterl and Penrose to suggest otherwise, which we'll come to.
And that the world is not deterministic. All right. So here is his, here's his laying the groundwork and now he wants to go back to the beginning and talk about the beginning.
[13:52] Genesis 1.1. And we start with God as the first cause of creation. Early theologians did have differing opinions.

Aquinas believed that the universe was eternal, but Augustine believed, based on the simple reading of Genesis 1.1, that God created both space, space and time and matter so that time had a beginning.
And I think that's generally the accepted Christian position here. From a scientific perspective, the scientists would have agreed with, a century ago, scientists would have agreed with Aquinas that the universe has always existed and would have pointed out that according to Newtonian mechanics, matter and energy are constant.

However, early in the 20th century, support for the Big Bang Theory began to appear, starting with Hubble observing that galaxies further away from us recede faster than nearer ones.
However, the materials for much of the 20th century promoted the steady state theory of the universe.
[15:26] But, when cosmic background radiation, which was first proposed in 1948, that indicates it's consistent with a Big Bang occurring, this was discovered in the 1960s, most of the opposition for the Big Bang Theory has dwindled.

Generally, there are very few people who believe in the Eternal Universe Theory, I guess you could call it.
Modern, so, Bartham ponders if the Big Bang was really the beginning of time, he finds support, I said, from Augustine, and more recently from Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose.
Most alternate theories, including the bouncing universe, it's a Big Bang followed by the Big Crunch, apparently, are not well supported, and come out of, mostly out of philosophical prejudice.
Ultimately, the Big Bang cannot be proved, but the existing evidence, as well as considerations around the second law of thermodynamics, which is the one that says in a closed system, a process can only occur if it increases the total entropy or disorder of that system.
[16:42] So, the law of second dynamics, as well as existing evidence, provide very strong support for the theory. But, as I stated earlier, no theory can ever be proven.

Okay, the next part, he looks at, was the universe designed, or is it designed? He, bar notes that human authors of the biblical view of creation, sorry, human authors of the Bible view creation as God's handiwork, which is evident everywhere, not just in miracles.
Interesting enough, the early Christians were known by the Romans as atheists, as they placed pagan supernatural, as they replaced pagan supernatural powers with only one God who is not capricious, but consistent and knowable.
And Christians continue to believe that this God is not only creator, but lawgiver. Thus, the Christian expects to find in God's creation evidence of structure.
structure. This structure is seen in two forms, symmetric, that is to say, patterns we may see in inanimate nature, and organic, patterns we see in the complexity of living things.
[17:59] Now, materialists obviously doesn't like this and argue that structure can arise naturally. They argue that it can arise from pure chance, but from the laws of nature, and from natural selection.

Now, it's easy to admit, we can admit that structure might arise as improbable as it may be by pure chance. But symmetric structures, and there's no question that symmetric structure is due to the laws of nature, but for the organic structure, materials will claim only natural selection is needed.
If you have an organic structure, you only need natural selection, but symmetric structure, they will try to use the laws of nature in pure chance.
Both, it's interesting, Bar considers the laws of nature support the argument of design. From the biblical perspective, the lawfulness of nature implies a lawmaker.
But from the materialist perspective, the laws of nature show there's no need of God. I mean, the same data interpreted two ways. To engage in meaningful discussion, therefore, Bar points out there are two kinds of laws.
[19:16] Those that are true by definition, that's mathematical laws, for example, and those that are true empirically, like laws of physics. We find that structure or order in nature, or when we find structure and order in nature, it's always about the existence of a greater order or structure that's already there, or underlying there.

The argument he makes, you take a bunch of round ball bearings, you put them in a box, in the bottom of a box, tilt it, and they all roll to one side, they all form a nice pattern there.
We say, what an amazing structure, look at that, it's just done naturally, but the point he makes is that you started with a whole bunch of ball bearings that were all the same dimensions. Try it with ones that are all different dimensions, you won't get a nice structure.
The underlying thing, there was a ball bearing factory that made nice round ball bearings, and so his point is, there's always an underlying structure, and I think you can see where he's going, he's a high energy nuclear physicist, he's going to take you right down to the depths, and you'll see this soon.

Okay. In fact, what he does point out is that physicists look for structure in the laws of physics, and the structure comes in form, they call it symmetries, so you find that you expect things to be symmetrical in their properties, and if you find they're asymmetrical, you puzzle why, and you look for something else that would cause that.
[20:52] So this is how physicists do their investigations, and he talks about just by relying, expecting the structures of the nuclear forces, regarding the properties of hadrons, which are elementary nuclear building blocks, actually led to this discovery of a hitherto unknown new nuclear particle.

It's the way they work. As physicists look for the ultimate laws, the theory of everything, as some people call it, they expect to find symmetry in them.
So Barr asked the materialists, where does this symmetry come from? These ultimate laws of physics. If the materialist claims it's by chance, this would suggest that miracles would be expected to be very frequent because we think these would be very improbable, and so if he says these laws have come about by chance, it sounds like something miraculous to most of us, or would be.
If he said by natural selection, well, we can't, he doesn't even attempt to disprove it in terms of organic structure, but he says natural selection has nothing to do with cosmic design.
There is no survival of the fittest when you're dealing with stars and the cosmos. Ultimately, if the, sorry, moreover, if the ultimate laws that physicists are seeking are generated by the laws of nature, then in fact, the laws that they're seeking are not the ultimate laws, the laws of nature are the ultimate laws, but somehow we have not discovered them yet.
[22:39] That's just a little philosophical misinformation here that I probably didn't need to say.
Okay, man's place in the cosmos. Here we see the polarization between the Christian assertion that man's place is significant and the materialist assertion that man's, that the universe is an accident and a man's place is insignificant.

Now, he doesn't do this in the book, but I'm doing a complete aside. This is free. This comes, my little explanation of man from the perspective of space.
We're creatures 1.2 meters to 2.2 meters in height. That's about our size, roughly speaking. Where do we live? Well, we live, we have a home.
That's, I apologize for the aspect ratio. It's wrong here. The earth is not a prolate spheroid.
It's an oblate spheroid, like my shape, you know. But it's come out wrong there on that screen. But I have a dual screen mode and I'm always nervous adjusting it because then it stops working.
[23:47] Anyway, so, but assume that's the earth and it's so rounder. This is our home. It's 2,500 kilometers, so a little bigger than us. If we walked at 6 kilometers an hour, it would take us three months to walk through the earth if we could do it.

Right. So this is our house. But where's our house located in the neighborhood? Well, that's our solar system. This is a drawing of our solar system. It's not a photograph. All right.
It's the block we live in. The earth to sun is 150 million kilometers. It takes nine minutes for light to get there. It takes six hours to get from sun to Pluto.
Pluto, you all know, has got demoted. It's not a proper planet, right? Two weeks ago, we were at the Smithsonian Institute, my wife and I, and it was very sad to see Pluto being demoted there.
But anyway, apparently you don't qualify if you can't clear your asteroid field and you're not a proper planet. I guess it's not dissimilar from the Catholic Church making saints or taking away their saintdom.
[24:52] Oh, that's a real thing. Okay. Anyway, this is a pretty big place, right? Well, yeah. In fact, this is a nifty little photograph, if you can see it.

This is from, this is from Voyager 1. That's a photograph. There's the Earth. This is from the edge of the solar system, right, as it was leaving. I mean, this is some amazing, I mean, you want us to talk about our technology.
This is some amazing stuff. But it's amazing the size of space. Just let's go back a little further. This is our galaxy.
Well, it's actually a drawing. Why is it a drawing? Nobody's ever got there, right? The sun is right here. And Rustle's right. It's a little backwater of this galaxy, our Milky Way.
One light year is a distance, which is what light goes in one year. It's what is 9,000 billion kilometers.

[25:58] We are 26,000 light years away from the center, and the whole galaxy is 100,000 light years across. So it's a pretty big place we're talking about.

But our town is the universe. What's it look like? It's greater than 40 billion light years from edge to edge that we believe, based on the measurements we can make and the theory of the light and all the other stuff.
Here's a world world galaxy, 23 billion light years away. This is by the Hubble telescope. It's been out there forever.
We can only see it in the last few years. What an amazing beauty in it. This is a sombrero galaxy. All right? It's amazing. That's 29 billion light years away.
The interesting point is, what do you conclude of that? It's either, we could, the Christian will probably conclude what an amazing universe it created. created. The atheist will probably say, or the materialist, what insignificant beings we are.
[27:03] Now, that isn't in his book. That's just, I just added that for a freebie to give you something better to look at than me. Okay. For many years, the materialist position were dominant in terms of man being insignificant.

I'm talking about the recent many years. Obviously, in the 16th century, I think it probably was the other way around, but certainly since the 1850s, man's materialist view arguments have held sway. But in the 70s, there was a recognition of what Barr calls anthropic coincidence, which changed the whole playing field. these coincidences are properties of matter or space that are crucial for the existence of man and the universe.
Barr presents several anthropic coincidences from nuclear physics, including the strength of the strong nuclear force. If the strong nuclear force was a little bit stronger, hydrogen would be the only element in the universe, and that wouldn't make us very comfortable for us to live.
It would be a gas, but it wouldn't be around. If it was a little bit weaker, all the stars would have already burned out in the first few milliseconds after the Big Bang.
[28:26] So we're kind of glad it's where it is. He says that the much more fundamental of the quantum nature of the universe, which we only, quantum mechanics was only discovered in the, begin to be understood in the early 20th century, but without it, if we did not have quantized energies, the electrons would just have spiraled into the nucleus and everything would have blown up.

So we're kind of glad that we have quantum mechanics, even though we didn't even recognize it was there. We thought things were perfectly continuous, but it's really good that we do have this property, otherwise we wouldn't exist.
And it goes on. There's hundreds and hundreds of things that have been noted. And now, the idea of anthropic coincidences is of some concern to those who fear that it will point to religion and will deter research.
Materialists, according to Barra, raised three objections. Their objections are that the requirements for life are unknown, that conventional and scientific explanations may exist, and there may be no room for choice for these various parameters or properties.
So Barra responds as follows. You're right, the requirements for life are unknown, but we're not looking for proof, but just evidence.
[29:50] Moreover, the materialist making the assertion that the requirements for life are unknown actually undermines the materialist's own position, because they're arguing that facts discovered by science make incredible the idea that the universe was designed with us in mind.

If they argue that, then they can't have it both ways, so his point. There may be scientific explanations for these coincidences, but a scientific explanation would in itself be an anthropic coincidence, as Barra points out.
And there's a number of physical constants that may be indeed coupled. You change this one, and this one has to change. If you can change these constants, like the speed of light, dielectric constant of space, the various force strengths, the gravitational force, if you tweak those numbers a little bit, you may affect some other ones just by the law, the mathematical laws that require them to change.
But he says there's other coincidences that are not constrained, such as the flatness of space, which depends only on the distribution of mass in the universe. So his argument is that they are indeed there.

So he says that really they are either coincidences, or they have a natural scientific explanation, or they are evidence that mankind was built in from the beginning.
[31:22] He does point out that the true coincidences could never be ruled out. You just can't eliminate them. But the materialist doesn't like coincidences because they look too miraculous to a materialist, so they would prefer not to have the coincidences.

So we're left with a natural scientific explanation and evidence that mankind was built in from the beginning. Okay, well, the materialist would like the scientific, of course, a natural explanation for these coincidences.
And it's known as the weak anthropic principle. In fact, you will probably have heard the term anthropic principle. Barr doesn't use it. D'Souza does. But the weak one is what the materialists use.
The argument is that there are a very large number of planets in the universe, so it's very likely that one would be suited to life. And we could be, I think the number of stars we estimated is something like 29, oh, is it 10 to the 22, 10 to the 22 number of stars estimated in the universe.
Well, there are likely to be planets around them. Well, hey, maybe there is some argument for a planet being suitable for life. But that's okay. That's just talking about with our current set of laws of physics, this is what you would have.
[32:38] But the other issue about the anthropic coincidences is that some of the parameters, the parameters that we deal with, like the strength of the nuclear forces, these are very specifically chosen.

And if you make them a little bit different, you will have a universe that's completely different, that won't support life or will do it differently. And the material's response is to say there are a large number of universes, whether they came serially, like the original, getting away from the Big Bang, but we actually have universes before the Big Bang, or whether they are parallel universes.
And of course, we're now starting to sound like Star Trek or something like this. It's, of course, very highly speculative and can never be tested. I'm not sure if he points it out what D'Souza says.
This position is, if you believe that there's many universes as a materialist, you say there's many universes, is actually surprising because you would say, well, why don't you just believe in three universes?
And the three universes are where we are today, heaven, and hell. Those look like three different universes, but the materialists, of course, don't want to have that. He goes from, we're going to get some math here.
[34:02] Well, I'm not going to give you much math. I've already told you it can't be tested. He talks about geometric means, say, are we right for our universe? And so what he says is, the size of the universe as we believe it is something like 10 to the 28 centimeters.

That's a 10, that's a, that's one with 28 zeros, centimeters. That's really big. The size of the atom is 10 to the minus eight centimeters. The geometric mean is you add the two together, the power, you multiply those two numbers together and take the square root of them.
That's what geometric mean means. And when you do that, you get a number of around 10 to the, 10 to the 10 centimeters, which is about the size of a large planet. If you take the mean between the size of a large planet and an atom, you get around 10 to the 1 centimeter with 10 centimeters, which is of the scale of man.
He says, this makes it, you know, it seems to be consistent that we are placed in, so that we, we're not standing on our earth and we're falling over the earth and we're not so insignificant that we can't, you know, that it's this huge, huge body.
We are rightly balanced. So, interesting stuff. It's not, no proof, just kind of interesting evidence. All right. What is man? Last topic here.
[35:12] He spends, interestingly enough, 40% of the book on this topic. The issue here is that materialists says man is just a complex material system, whereas the Christian says that man's created in God's image.

However, both agree that there's a gulf between humans and animals, that writing, research, philosophy, building things, childhood works, law courts, et cetera, et cetera, are things that we do that's different than animals.
According to Barr, the materialists would claim that biology has been shown to be reducible to chemistry and physics, that man appears to be physically like an animal, of other animals.

A man's DNA isn't, what, 98% of that of the chimps, that there is a correspondence between physical events in the brain and mental processes, and that computers have shown that machines can perform mental tasks.
Finally, what happens in the world is rigidly determined by physics. That's the materialist position, generally. On these points, Christians would agree that the human body is not different than animal bodies and that the physical events in the brain are connected to mental processes, but would disagree that we are only animals and that all mental phenomena can be reduced to physical effects.
[36:34] He then leads into a discussion on determinism and free will. For three centuries since Newton, scientists have believed that we have a deterministic universe.

This has been undermined by the quantum theory. Uncertainty associated with particles' momentum and position means that determinism could not work. By knowing the state of the universe now, we cannot predict it in any significance into the future because there's a quantum uncertainty in things.
Although some argue quantum indeterminacy explains free will, Barr points out that random behavior, which the quantum uncertainty would suggest, random behavior is not usually associated with free will but madness.
I mean, if I suddenly jumped up and whipped up all my clothes, that might be a random act, but you'd probably think I was mad. I should have used this.
You don't want to imagine that. Okay, forget that one. He does point out several problems. The events cannot be governed both by random chance and choice, and he argues that the brain structures are too large for the quantum uncertainty to be relevant to the mind.
[37:56] But it does, it has introduced a level of doubt into the whole system, but he points out it really isn't the issue of free will. That's not free will. Most materialists would agree with Barr that if free will is true, materialism is not true.

And ironically, I think the materialist position here undermines his own freedom of thought. If materialism is true, he can't have the free will to think it's true.
So I don't, now, this is philosophy and I'm out of my depth here, but I'm saying, gee, this does look pretty stupid. You know, I don't think I have the, I don't have the freedom to have free thoughts, so I can't prove it.
Anyway, you've got it. Okay, he tackles the, the issue of understanding, noting that human intellect has the power to understand abstract thoughts. And he uses the concept of the value pi, which is mathematically precise and well defined, but at the same time is abstract and non-physical.
He points out the materialist perspective that we, he, and he's quoted several of them at times, we're just a pack of neutrons firing.
[39:07] That's Sir Francis Crick. You know, and a pack of neutrons, I see neutrons, neurons firing, sorry. You know, we, we, we, we are simple physical things, yet somehow we're talking about these abstract concepts, which doesn't make sense.

If, yeah, if we're, if we are just neurons, then all of, all the things that we think about are just personal truths. They can't be universal truths, as he argues. And, so, so, the mathematical and logic processes would not have absolute truths that they do have.
I, I, I, I, he would argue that understanding any concept, not just in mathematics alone, but, but, but, any abstract concept would be difficult for the materialist to explain.
I, I'd like, I tend to think of their position in a, in a modern framework that, the materialists say that all, all theories are neurons firing is itself, well, this is what, is itself, but neurons firing.
So, it's first of all, well, there's no theoretical basis for their real argument because it's just neurons firing, which is kind of funny to think about, but, the, what, Barr points out that there are two kinds of truths, empirical and necessary truths.
[40:36] Empirical truths are what we do develop scientifically in our science and our physics experiments. Necessary truths are the ones that are developed, for example, from mathematics.

You, you make it, you make a, assume a system and then you develop the truths that math reveals. They're abstract, but they're true by definition. He, he puzzles, how does natural selection arrive at these abstract truths, which are un, quite unrelated to the survival of the species.
things. The discussion moves on then to consider, is the mind just a computer? Right? Certainly, technology gives us that impression and materialists would say, yes, yes, we're just a computer.

Somebody said, our brain is a computer, computer with meat, made of meat or something. I don't know, it sounds really awful. How do you answer this?
Well, Barr uses the work of Gödel, Lucas and Penrose to disagree. Kurt Gödel developed a theorem that shows that a consistent mathematical system, not all truths can be proved by the rules of that system.
[41:54] So, if I have a consistent set of mathematics, I cannot prove all truths within the system. Now, if you have a consistent set of mathematical system, a computer could be programmed to work with that, but it cannot arrive at all truths.

But if you're outside the system, you may develop other truths. And so, his argument is, you have to be outside the system to develop all the truths. In response, materials have argued that human mind is just an inconsistent computer, but that's actually a very weak response because if it's inconsistent, then we are, again, we're back to the irrational statements.
So, Barr concludes, that materials claim, the materials claim is a theory without much evidence that we're just a computer. There's evidence and some of it deeply mathematical that suggests it is not. Our mind is not simply a computer. He returns to quantum mechanics to discuss an aspect that's troubling to the materialist even more maybe than the lack of determinism, you know, the uncertainty, and that is the role of the observer.
Now, when I went through, I never really understood what the big deal was about the reserver, but now it's much more important. In the accepted forms of quantum theory, a particle in a system is described by what's known as the wave function.
[43:15] This is a probability density function that describes the likelihood of finding a particle at a given location if one tried to observe it. Now, when we're dealing with people, it's really easy. It's easy to find them at different locations.

I can find Bill there asleep and Daniel there reading his textbook. And they're really easy to find. But if I'm looking for a nuclear electron or something, it's very hard to find it and pinpoint it around a nucleus and that's when we talk about a probability density function. That's the uncertainty of it in it. However, when you actually go to observe it, when you go to make a measurement, you can actually find it.
You'll find it in one of those spots that the probability density function is non-zero. You don't know which one you're going to find it in but you go and measure it. But the act of measuring it, the term they say, collapses the wave function and makes the whole problem a deterministic one.
You know where it is. It's here and it's not there when you actually make the measurement. We can talk about Schrodinger's cats if you're interested and there's some interesting aspects of this whole thing that we don't want to get into.
[44:26] The issue here is that we start with an ignorance of where the particle is and by observing it, it produces knowledge and understanding.

It's kind of an interest that we have looking at it. All this suggests that the observer must have intellect and understanding distinct from what can be captured by the quantum mechanical system. So he says, and this has proved to be a very fascinating challenge to the materialists because they really want the world, they don't want to have an observer who's outside that does sound very much like human intelligence is not just described by the laws of physics.
Okay. So the materialist responds with hidden variables, pilot wave, and many worlds theories. And all of these have only a small following and introduce the many problems that they solve and I'm not even going to talk about them here.
He notes that traditional quantum theory in the past has always generated reluctant support. Einstein said it was the more successful the theory is the sillier it looks.
All right. And we still have this reluctant support of it. It bothers a lot of people. Alas, super string theory which is attempts to integrate all the elementary forces and particles, it itself indicates the fundamental principles of quantum mechanics will be unaffected.
[46:07] We'll still have these funny properties that are hard to describe. Okay. Time for a reflection and summary. This is my best effort so far, except with a few little side trips of describing what the book was.

Now, what are my comments about the book? I think it was well written and interesting. he stayed close to his area of expertise, venturing only lightly into theology as a thinking Christian might do, and into philosophy as one might expect a doctor of philosophy to do.

Clearly, he stays away from the most controversial areas of science and biology, controversial areas of science, that's biology, that's where many of the biggest arguments are.
He is no expert in that. more of his apparently, he focused on areas where there are sharp disagreements between himself and the materialists, but he didn't say much about the areas where there's a disagreement amongst Christians.
I just comment about that because I'm quite happy being a young earth creationist, because I believe that's a theological position, not a scientific position. He dismissed some of the young earth discussions quite readily, which I'm not that bothered about, I'm used to that.
[47:30] But we talk about the age of the universe and it was presented as fact, and I sometimes think we have to be a little humble, and he's humble in a lot of the book, but he's confident about some of these numbers.

Okay. He doesn't claim any proofs, and I think that's great. And my concern, though, that one concern is what he calls a scientific materialist.
You know, was this person a straw man? Did he pick somebody really stupid, you know, way out, and so we've been throwing darts at him for a whole book worth. In fact, I thought that might be the case, but then you read a few of them, a few of the things that they actually say, like Nobel laureate and materialist Sir Francis Crick, who says, we are in fact no more than the behavior of vast assembly of nerve cells and molecules.
Well, all right, you know, he's certainly, if he's able to say that, I guess you can be freely able to say, you know, if we're just that, then it seems really inconsistent with all the data we can observe, so, about, that is outside the realm of science.
Just quickly, as I pop through the various sections, I found it interesting that although the materialist views the Christian as a narrow-minded person and anti-science, I think the materialist is actually the narrow-minded position, because he's saying, if it isn't physical, it isn't science, so I'm not going to consider it, you know.
[49:06] I mean, so it actually is, from my perspective, a more narrow approach. Okay.

I found the whole discussion of symmetry really fascinating, because I hadn't realized that it was so important, even when I went through physics, but it is crucial to our, in developing a lot of our scientific developments.
Let me just pop through here. It was a symmetry discussion. I don't know what else. Oh, yeah, anthropic coincidences, I think, are principles.
It's helpful. Dawkins adopts, in God Delusion, adopts the anthropic, says, invokes the anthropic principle as the originator of life, after which natural selection takes over.
The result is that the materialists require billions of wannabe earths and billions of wannabe universes in order to achieve that life. And I think that's a bigger step of faith than believing in a creator. To me, it was surprising to see this section, that what is man is the largest section, and, you know, having this, it's far from physics and math, but I think it was interesting that he brought in the discussion on good Osirom, which I had known about for a while and hadn't really figured out how to apply it to something interesting like our understanding of our mind.
[50:38] And the parallel analysis of the quantum theory that says the observer is outside these physical systems, which I think is really fascinating. Okay, all right.

I've already said all that stuff. So, Barr concludes his book by stating, it is certainly conceivable, if to many of us not credible, that materialism is true, but surely it is not irrational to ask for a somewhat stronger argument on its behalf.
And with that, I'll end part one. Thank you. You're welcome to ask questions.
I won't answer them, but you're welcome to ask them. We have a few minutes before I leave. Yes, Bill. I see a sort of, when you read Dawkins, I see a sort of high selectiveness of what he says, and a spirit of anger, a spirit of contempt, all of that.
Is that, can the non-materialist be blamed of that, the world to be selected, the way he is? He picks part of the Bible, and in a sense, he's an eyewitness himself, he's a biologist, he's an eyewitness the way he sees his instruments and so forth and so and so and for instance, the famous verse 2 of Luke in chapter 1 says that he's looking for the eyewitnesses to construct his account and the history of what happened back then.
[52:43] So, my question is, as Dawkins, if he read Luke, right, especially chapter 1, he's ignored it.

He doesn't go back to the eyewitness of Christianity. Now, do the non-materialists, are they guilty of this, that they will sort of be gravitating towards things that they can discuss and the things they can't discuss or won't discuss that they ignore?
Well, to answer your question, our materialists, sorry, our non-materialists, let's just say Christians, it's a little easier to think, okay, not that there aren't non-materialists other people, but just let's say Christians, are they likely to be selective in their looking at various aspects of things?
And, yeah, we are likely to be selective, that's absolutely true. So, it's dishonest. Well, no, we're likely to be selective, not intentionally, right? I think it's going to be quite accidental that we're selective.
Now, it depends on degree. Some people will be just blatantly very, very selective and they'll throw out everything that they don't like. And it's a pretty common principle in physics. You know, you do an experiment, you look at the data you like, you accept that, and you throw out the data you don't like.
[54:11] I mean, if you didn't do that at first-year university, I'm really surprised. How many people here in their high school or university physics found their experiments did not work out, but still their report looked really good.

That's human, all right? It's very human. You know you're going to get a bad mark so you just throw out the data. You have a theory, you throw out the data you don't like. But I'm not saying that we're all equally black in this area.
I think Dawkins is probably the worst of the group there in terms of his aggressiveness and his narrow-sightedness. I think Barr has been really balanced in his book.
He presents both sides so that's what makes it very hard in some ways to present this because you're trying to make sure you're covering both sides. There are some tricky arguments and discussions.
He's been very careful. I think you'll find D'Souza is a little more on the other side but not virulently so. He presents both sides of the arguments but he goes through a much broader range. If you think the day's talk was boring it's going to be no.
[55:22] It's a huge range. The book is really interesting and it's more easy to read but it's maybe hard to talk about. I got a violent reaction from the materialist when I said I know that you know there's a God.

The Bible says so. So everybody has the instinct to acknowledge that there is a God. And quite a violent reaction to that. Well it's in the heat that comes out of Dawkins own words.
In fact I'll quote a few of them next week. This guy is really a mean guy. D'Souza does it's all quotes he's presenting and any of that I looked up seem to be there so I don't think he's manufacturing it. But I'm sure there are Christians who will be fairly slanted and simplistic in that will only present part of the argument. Just on Dawkins and them.
Do you think it may be the very aggressiveness they're showing in their campaigns is indignant of the deep unease that intuitively they are recognizing the case that Barr is making that signs itself in the past hundred years has come up with these five major upsetting discoveries that in fact make it easier for a scientist to believe in God of the body that's believe in material of the world.
[57:00] What I'm saying is do you think that they're actually showing evidence they're becoming deep down aware of this and they have to fight against it because it undermines all their circles.

I've hardly ever noticed that when any of my children are wrong and you point this out they get mad at you. Has that ever happened Sarah? No. And so I kind of think that you've hit a nail on the head that the data is really weak.
I think I've told you this one before it reminds me of the assistant curate who's looking at reading over the rector's sermon notes and he says what's that little mark on there?
And he says oh yes that's to remind me to shout loudly and pound the lectern because the argument's weak. And so sometimes there's a lot of truth that these guys know they're weak.
In fact somebody stole the book that I wanted to write at least the title of it. I haven't actually gotten the book but it was called I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.
[58:06] And I think that when you start to consider the improbability of this accidental stuff getting to where we are it's a huge much huger oh that's terrible a much larger step of faith than it is to say there's an almighty creator who's done this.

So they're taking a much difficult road. Yes Harvey? I think it's a footnote to that very good point that this British philosopher hair who recently gave up his atheism right to give him a believer in God. Not a Christian yet but a believer in God. And he says or he quotes someone the same he quotes it provingly that we atheists in fact rely on magic. And she said that. As atheists we rely on it was a magic doing numbers.
Well how could that evolve? Well it's given a trillion years and it'll happen. So we're in fact believers in magic. That's a good point. He also says well if you want proof of the supernatural world where would I look?
He recommends Tom Wright on the resurrection. I think he's on the way to becoming Christian. How interesting is that? It's interesting. Is it worth underlining the fact that if you go to Tom Wright you are leaving behind the world of scientific speculation and entering the world of historical reasoning which is a different world.
[59:37] And the world of historical reasoning is where serious argument for Christianity is actually anchored. The basic argument boils down to this.

if what is recorded in the New Testament as having happened never did happen where did historic Christianity come from?
all this belief in Jesus in resurrection which is the theme of Tom Wright's 700 plus page book marvelous book believe in Jesus in resurrection in new life through union with him prospect of a new world where did it all come from?
Where did baptism and the Lord's Supper come from? How did they ever start? and the more you press that kind of argument well the more you see that this is what leads to the heart of the matter and that the more you try to dispose of the historical evidence well the more your arguments boomerang back at you and the less possible you find it to get rid of the history so that while all that Barr has been exploring and arguing is well yes rationally possible and rationally easier to grasp than the materialist alternative where the real crunch comes is history we inherit
Christianity where did Christianity come from the New Testament gives us a totally compelling answer I mean an answer that covers all the questions Christian experience over nearly 2,000 years has confirmed that answer in the sense I mean of people testifying to fellowship friendship with the father and the son people testifying to prayer answered lives being turned upside down and transformed morally and spiritually well this if anything confirms the historical argument and strengthens it at every turn where did Christianity come from if the New Testament facts and the Old Testament facts on which they're based were not in fact in reality events of history
[62:52] I'm sorry I must have blathered on this way but I wanted to say that to show the significance of Anthony Flew or whoever saying look at Tom Wright's book on the resurrection and start thinking well I'm prompting it now I may and start thinking about not possibility but reality the words of Packer are ended I would hope not but the words of Packer are ended I hope just briefly there not forever but I will say I think you're absolutely right but to we have an obstacle these days and we have these I'll call them virulent materialists who are attacking Christianity and if you go off and say the real thing is here and we're going to ignore what they're saying you're losing a lot of people who listen to this and there are people who have heard what they've said and say

I can't disagree and now I think we have to go through these points only to establish that hey it's an equal playing field now let's look at history and now let's look at the evidence that is so incredible why would these guys allow themselves to be killed for something that was all fictitious invented yes absolutely but actually I think this is does a little bit of that but by no means the depth that you're suggesting would want to go but I think we have to defend against these so you find somebody who really says gee I believe I really like Dawkins you might want to say hey there's some other books to read I guess I can recommend I haven't finished reading it The Dawkins Delusion by McGraw right you know I mean so people are because he wrote the God Delusion as a reply sorry just a minute I know you're in the choir so I'm going to save my question next week I do have to go momentarily is there any final urgent question that should be just what's your position do you need evidence for God's existence or do you just believe in God
I think people cannot not believe in God they can live in God heaven declare the glory of God and there's lots of evidence there's no proof although actually we're going to have some proof but I'm really scared about this because I know you and Dr.
Cracker are going to tear me apart with Anselm's proof of the existence of God because D'Souza uses it not vitally but I get into trouble I just think it's tricky anyway I think we better pack it well