

The European Leadership Forum's Philosophers Network

About the network

2012 European Philosophers Network

Europe historically was once the home of the Christian church but now is actively secular. Atheistic and agnostic belief systems permeate a spiritual environment that is antagonistic to the Gospel. The numbers of atheists and agnostics has grown from 1 to 2 million in 1900 to over 130 million in 2000. Most academics educated in Europe's secularized universities have been shaped in profound ways by a thoroughly naturalistic worldview. It is these academics who are, in turn, shaping future generations of European university students. Especially in the academic discipline of philosophy, Christian students and scholars are isolated: they often lack believing colleagues or resources to help.

To address this need, the European Philosophers Network will be introduced at the 2012 Forum. This Network has been designed to support and encourage Christian philosophers as they seek to incorporate their faith into their research projects, teaching, and mentoring. Because of this, the primary focus of the Network is the examination of philosophy from a specifically Christian perspective and to explore their integration. The Network's goal is to teach and encourage young Christian philosophers at three critical levels:

1. The European Christian Philosophers Network will seek successful, professional academic work.

The European Philosophers Network is a part of the broader philosophical community and is committed, first, to actually doing philosophy. The best way to figure out how to be a Christian philosopher isn't to talk about what being a Christian philosopher would look like in the abstract. The best way to start is to do philosophical work. Those involved with the EPN will be involved in presenting and critiquing academic work on a broad range of philosophical topics.

2. The European Christian Philosophers Network will seek to provide an opportunity to raise and think through various apologetic issues. The academy in Europe is a setting where Christian ideas, values and lifestyle come under intense intellectual pressure. The EPN dedicates time to identifying, thinking clearly through, and evaluating objections and other apologetic issues. This is beneficial to Christian philosophers, of course, but is also a service both to academics in other disciplines as well as to those outside the University community.

3. The European Christian Philosophers Network will seek to help young scholars establish a spiritual context for academic study. Many scholars experience the academic world as a spiritual desert – dry and unable to sustain spiritual life. The EPN will seek to describe both the dangers and the opportunities presented by such an environment, and to map out and help construct the spiritual foundations that are necessary both to survive and thrive in a rigorous academic environment.

Speakers featured in the 2012 Philosophers Network are William Lane Craig, Doug Groothuis, Bruce Little, Mike Ovey, Jerry Root, Mats Selander, R. Scott Smith, and Ralph Henk Vaggs. **Applicants should be those who either are pursuing or already hold a PhD in philosophy and are active scholars in the field.**

SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships are available to Network participants and will be awarded according to need. To apply for a scholarship, please email Kevin Saylor at ksaylor@euroleadership.org.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The 2012 Network will feature a twenty-minute time slot each day for one of four selected participants to present a philosophy paper. Any interested participant should be a PhD student in philosophy and submit one paper limited to 2,000 words for a 15-minute presentation. The reading of each paper will be followed by evaluation and discussion by Network speakers and participants. Papers selected will exemplify the highest standards of philosophy written from a historic Protestant point of view. All papers should be submitted to Kevin Saylor at ksaylor@euroleadership.org by **1 March 2012**.

About the network LEADER



Bruce A. Little has a Masters degrees in Apologetics and Religion and a PhD in Philosophy of Religion. Presently, he is Professor of Philosophy and Director of the L. Russ Bush Center for Faith and Culture at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he has been on faculty since 2001. For over a decade, he has travelled widely in Europe and Asia, lecturing in universities, teaching in a variety of schools, and presenting papers at conferences. He has published in various professional journals and has written or edited several books: *A Creation-Order Theodicy: God and Gratuitous Evil*; *God, Why This Evil?*; *Francis Schaeffer: A Mind and Heart for God* (ed); and *Engaging Culture, Defending the Faith* (ed).

About the network



William Lane Craig is a Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology in La Mirada, California. He earned a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Birmingham, England, before taking a doctorate in theology from the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany, where he was for two years a Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung. Prior to his appointment at Talbot he spent seven years at the Higher Institute of Philosophy of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium. He has authored or edited over thirty books, including *The Kalam Cosmological Argument*; *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus*; *Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*; *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology*; and *God, Time, and Eternity*, as well as over a hundred articles in professional journals of philosophy and theology, including *The Journal of Philosophy*, *New Testament Studies*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Philosophy*, and *British Journal for Philosophy of Science*. His website is www.reasonablefaith.org.

About the network **SPEAKERS**



Douglas Groothuis holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Oregon. He is Professor of Philosophy at Denver Seminary, where he has served since 1993. He is the author of eleven books, including *Unmasking the New Age*, *Jesus in an Age of Controversy*, *The Soul in Cyberspace*, *Truth Decay*, *On Jesus*, *On Pascal*, and *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. He has also published two-dozen papers in academic journals such as *Religious Studies*, *Sophia*, *Inquiry*, and *Philosophia Christi*, as well as articles in magazines such as *Christianity Today*, *The Christian Research Journal*, and *Books and Culture*. His comments on religion and culture have appeared in *Time* magazine, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. He often speaks at secular campuses defending Christianity.



Jerry Root is Associate Director of the Institute of Strategic Evangelism at Wheaton College, Illinois, where he is also Associate Professor of Christian Formation and Ministry and Evangelism and Leadership. He has served on the Adjunct Faculty at Biola University since 1991, teaching courses on C.S. Lewis. Jerry's lecture tours have taken him to over 31 countries on three continents, and he has pastored three different churches over twenty-three years. He has published several books, their subjects ranging from friendship evangelism to examinations of confessional literature in the medieval world. His most noteworthy work continues to be *The Quotable Lewis*. Jerry holds the PhD from Britain's Open University and the MDiv from Talbot Graduate School of Theology.



Mats Selander is a teacher at the Credo Academy, an apologetic study center in Stockholm, Sweden. He has an M.A in Philosophy of Religion and Ethics from Talbot School of Theology, Los Angeles, and the equivalence of a B.A in Theology from the Nordic Bible Institute, Säfte Sweden. Mats is currently working on his PhD in virtue ethics and abortion at the University of Stavanger, Norway. His philosophical interest is Philosophy of Religion, Ethics and Philosophy of Science. He is the editor and contributor to a soon to come book in Swedish about the New Atheist movement. Mats is married to Sophia, and they have a one year-old-son, Samuel.

About the network **SPEAKERS**



R. Scott Smith is an Associate Professor of Ethics and Christian Apologetics for the MA Program in Christian Apologetics at Biola University, USA. He earned his PhD in Religion and Social Ethics from the University of Southern California, where he was mentored by Dr Dallas Willard. He completed his MA in Philosophy of Religion and Ethics at the Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, under Dr JP Moreland and others. Scott is interested in addressing and refuting the “fact-value split,” i.e., that science uniquely gives us knowledge of reality, whereas ethics and religion are personal or social constructs. He has studied and written about many postmodern (including postmodern Christian) theologians and philosophers, as well emergent, or “post-evangelical”, leaders. He is the author of several chapters, articles, and three books, as follows: *Virtue Ethics and Moral Knowledge: Philosophy of Language After MacIntyre and Hauerwas* (Ashgate, 2003); *Truth and the New Kind of Christian: The Emerging Effects of Postmodernism in the Church* (Crossway, 2005); and *Naturalism and Our Knowledge of Reality: Testing Religious Truth-Claims* (Ashgate, 2012).



Ralph Henk Vaags is the founder of the Institute of Christian Philosophy (Norway and France). At the University of Agder, Norway, he is the Head of the Philosophy Department. He received a M.A. in theology at University of Uppsala (Sweden), a MA in Philosophy from University of Oslo (Norway), and a PhD in Philosophy of Religion at University of Uppsala. Vaags has written several books in philosophy, and has been lecturing at several institutions, including University of Oslo, University of Parana (Brazil), and the Institute of Christian Philosophy in France. Presently, he is working on a treatise on Christian philosophy.



Michael Ovey (PhD, MTh, MA) is Principal of Doctrine, Apologetics, and Liturgy at Oak Hill College, UK. Before coming to Oak Hill, Mike was a civil service lawyer drafting government legislation. He trained at Ridley Hall, Cambridge University, and worked as a curate for four years at All Saints, Crowborough, before teaching for three years at Moore Theological College, Sydney. He joined Oak Hill in 1998 and since then has finished a PhD in the field of Trinitarian theology. He is married to Heather, and they have three children.

About the network Programme

Why We Cannot Know Reality if Naturalism is True

R. Scott Smith

One of philosophical naturalism's greatest perceived strengths is that we can know truth on its basis, in particular via science. Now, Alvin Plantinga has argued that we could not trust the deliverances of our cognitive faculties if they evolved along the lines of the naturalistic story. But I will use Daniel Dennett's works as a test case to show that, due to what could be real according to naturalism, we actually cannot know reality. But, we do know reality in many cases, so naturalism is false, and a very different ontology must be true.

The Platonic Challenge to Divine Aseity

William Lane Craig

Platonism, the view that there are mind-independent abstract objects, is the most significant challenge to the classic doctrine of divine aseity. Platonism is theologically unacceptable because it posits infinite realms of beings which are uncreated and so exist independently of God. The principal argument for Platonism today is the so-called Indispensability Argument based on the ontological commitments thought to be required by the use of singular terms and existential quantifiers in true sentences. Different varieties of anti-realism challenge each of the argument's two premises. Fictionalism accepts the Platonist's assumed criterion of ontological commitment but rejects the truth of the relevant sentences. Neutralism accepts the truth of the relevant sentences but denies the assumed criterion of ontological commitment. Both of these perspectives, but especially the last, are plausible routes available for the Christian theist to meet Platonism's challenge.

The Challenge for Christian Philosophers

Bruce Little

David Brooks writes: "Philosophy and theology are telling us less than they used to....Both fields--- philosophy more than theology---have been caught within an internal logic and maybe an insular logic." This insight should seize the attention of Christian philosophers. Christian philosophers are challenged in three ways. The first challenge is to connect effectively with the culture in which the philosopher lives. The second challenge is to get our priority properly fixed—faithfulness to God and that means to be thoroughly Christian. The third is to be excellent in how we actually do philosophy. This session will examine philosophy's cultural isolation and develop a response in line with these challenges.

About the network Programme

A Theologian in the Philosophers' Den (*Combined with Theologians Network*)

Mike Ovey

A Non-Naturalistic Presumption of Christian Philosophy

Ralph Henk Vaggs

Does Christian philosophy need a presumption of Non-Naturalism, and how can it be a presumption? It seems to be in conflict with central philosophical values to presume a statement of Non-Naturalism. In this session, the speaker will try to show that Non-Naturalism is something that follows from Christianity and not in conflict with central philosophical values and that it, therefore, should be (or at least could be) a presumption of Christian philosophy.

From Humanity to Deity: Consciousness, Cognition, and Conscience

Doug Groothuis

Three salient and inescapable facts of humanity are best explained by Christian theism, and not by materialism or pantheism. (1) Our consciousness is constituted of immaterial and subjective properties that reveal an individual and immaterial mind or soul. (2) Our cognition (or rationality) discerns logical relationships that are not properties of matter or an impersonal deity (3) Our conscience intuits and infers moral properties (such as duty and love) that cannot be explained by material states or by some pantheistic deity. Taken together, consciousness, cognition, and conscience provide a cogent cluster of evidences for the truth of Christian theism and against materialism and pantheism.

C.S. Lewis and the Problem of Suffering and Evil

Jerry Root

C. S. Lewis rejected the Christian faith of his childhood because he thought it lacked the capacity to give an answer for the pain and suffering one will encounter in this world. In time, he discovered that his materialist assumptions were more lacking still. Over time he made his way back to Christianity. This seminar describes Lewis's approach to make sense of suffering after his conversion. The outline is drawn from Lewis's first book of popular Christian apologetics, *The Problem of Pain*. Lewis's argues coherently, and what he says is helpful; but, like all apologetics, his claims are incomplete. This seminar seeks to set forth both the strengths and weaknesses of Lewis's theodicy benefitting from the good elements of his argument and looking for ways to buttress the weaker elements.

About the network Programme

Answering the New Atheists Concerning the Burden of Proof

Mats Selander

This session will present an analysis of the argument that theists have the burden of proof while atheists are rational in being atheists until and unless God's existence is proven. Building upon Bertrand Russel and Antony Flew, the New Atheist movement has developed the argument rhetorically, and it seems to play a rather important role in their intellectual defense of atheism. In this session the speaker will try to show that the New Atheists' reasons for shifting the whole burden of proof to the theist are unjustified, and he will suggest a better way of looking at how the burden of proof should be distributed.