

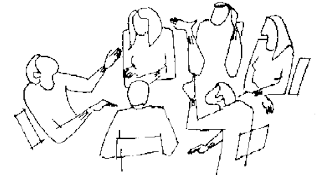
**Upcoming Events** ✧

➤ **Board of Directors Meeting** **Tuesday, January 10, 7 pm – 9 pm**

An AOF planning meeting for AOF Directors & officers, but open to *all* interested friends and members. These happen every other month, more or less. You are always welcome to join us, meet the Board, and keep us on our toes.

*Bring your ideas for AOF, your strategies, your clever suggestions for events and activities -- most of all, your volunteerism! We love lovely helping hands.*

**Location:** Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento. Map: <https://goo.gl/iVQL8z>.



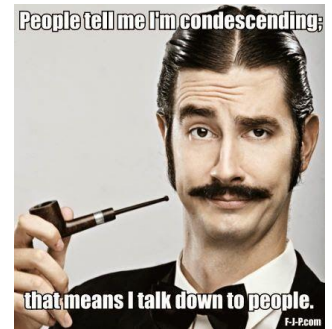
➤ **Philosophers' Table: *Those Stuck-Up Atheists!*** **Sunday, January 29, 12 pm – 1 pm**

Here we are, so precious, arrogant, full of ourselves ... sure we are right ... darlings of the truth. Hm, maybe we can work on that. Maybe atheists and freethinkers can be a *bit* less disdainful of those living in other intellectual bubbles. Because we're in a bubble too, aren't we, breathing our own exhalations? Do we not tend to dismiss faith-claims out of hand? Don't we bang square pegs into round holes to fit our ideology and paradigm? We can continue so, gazing into our navels, irredeemably lost within the echo chamber of our own stories. Or we can open our hearts. Become a bit more compassionate, more open, to contrary views. And maybe in the process, learn something.

Let's try it. Let's ask truly, who is more likely to look down on people unlike themselves -- who is most easily conned and hoodwinked -- who is kinder, gentler, more honest? Who more spiteful or cruel? In the great conversation between faith and doubt, which side is more likely to be liberal, in the original sense of the word? These are hard deep questions, each a can full of worms, wiggly ones. Studies have been done, patterns have emerged ... maybe not always what you might expect.

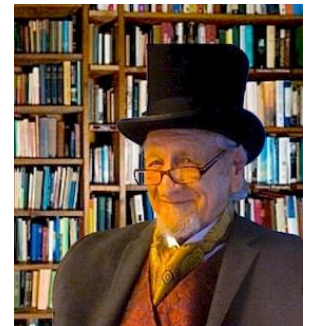
Come to the January Philosopher's Table, to take a good honest look at the image in the mirror.

**Location:** Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento. Map: <https://goo.gl/iVQL8z>.



➤ **Arthur Murchison: Hankering for Darwin** **Sunday, January 29, 1 pm – 3 pm**

*Getting-ready-for-Darwin-Day Department.* Ramping up to next month's Darwin Day event, AOF has invited our own esteemed Arthur Murchison to share his insights on Charles Darwin, history's most influential freethinker. Doctor Murchison, a practicing marine biologist for many years, now gracefully retired, has been drawn back to his first love: The History of Science. His most recent literary time-trip brought him into the company of many of Darwin's friends and colleagues and resulted in his most recent publication about the founders of modern geology, [\*War Before Science\*](#) (2014, Academica Press). Having spent much enjoyable and informative time with those 19th century British scientists (they called themselves "Natural Philosophers" in the day), Arthur is eager for another journey to their world, with an emphasis on Charles Darwin. And he would like to take us with him.



So, fire up the Wayback, Sherman! Synchronize chronometers! Our enthusiastic time-tripping tour guide will take us to the fascinating era with images and narration flavoured with a little music and sound effects. 19th century attire is optional. Cute though. Think: steampunk, without the goggles.

Don't miss this free event. But AOF and Reason Center do have expenses, so please toss a crumpled dollar or two into the foyer basket, could you? And if you can help with set-up or clean-up, call us!

**Location:** Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento. Map: <https://goo.gl/iVQL8z>.

➤ **Davis Community Meal – Feed the Hungry** **Tuesday, January 31, 4:30 pm – 7:30 pm**

Sacramento freethinkers will head west to help [Davis Community Meals](#) (DCM) serve a dinner of donated food prepared by volunteer chefs to anyone who is hungry (including seniors, low-income and homeless individuals and families). Our volunteers set up tables and chairs for about 100, serve the meal buffet style, and cleanup. It's a breeze, and fun!

After clients are fed, then we can partake. As always, there is music and dancing along with everything else. Come join us and make a difference.

**Location:** St. Martin's Episcopal, 640 Hawthorne Lane, Davis. Map: <https://goo.gl/maps/uRXBpLBPTbR2>.

**Contact:** 916-447-2169 (Don Knutson), or see the AOF Contact Page (<http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>).

➤ **Save the date: Sacramento's 20<sup>th</sup> Darwin Birthday Gala!**

**Sunday, February 12, 2pm - 5pm**

More details in the next issue, but reserve your ticket now! See: <http://sacdarwinday.info/>.

**Location:** John Smith Hall, La Sierra Center, 5325 Engle Road, Carmichael. Map: <https://goo.gl/maps/5cVyQpdsAht>.

**Contact:** 916-514-9974 (Bill), or email: president (at) hagsa (dot) org



### Donating blood?

Kudos to you for saving lives! Now when you donate at the BloodSource, please use AOF BloodSource ID# **4857**.

Numerous BloodSource Donation Centers exist -- find them listed at: <http://www.bloodsource.org/Locations>.

AOF gets no perks when members donate, but it saves lives, and proves we do good. What's more Humanistic than donating blood?

### Support the Reason Center

The Reason Center opened in July 2014. Since then it has hosted well over 200 free though events. Currently the Center has twelve partner organizations.

Its mission is to support a social and intellectual community for freethinkers, contribute to society through education and community service, advance the civic understanding and acceptance of freethinkers, and uphold the separation of religion and government.

To continue this work, "RC" relies on continued support for its members and donors. Please consider making a donation to the Reason Center, or remember it in your will or trust. To set up monthly or one-time support, visit [ReasonCenter.org](http://ReasonCenter.org).



### If you are not a member of Atheists and Other Freethinkers, let's fix that now

AOF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762. General Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movie outings, parties! To see what awaits you, visit the website, [www.aofonline.org](http://www.aofonline.org); or contact AOF at our 24/7 voice-mail: 916-447-3589; or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182. Or grab us, shake us, till we rattle.

AOF Acting President: Kristi Craven. Vice-president: Mynga Futrell. Editor: Fran Evanisko. And all the rest of us, their minions.

## Subscription / Membership Form

Mail to: AOF, PO Box 15182, Sacramento CA 95851-0182 (Attn: Membership)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP + 4 \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address (please print!) \_\_\_\_\_

*E-mail is required for newsletter delivery.*

Questions, concerns? Call AOF, 916-304-3796.

#### Your Membership Level (annual, please circle):

Patron (\$50) Family (\$30) Individual (\$20) Low-income (\$10)

Basic Dues : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

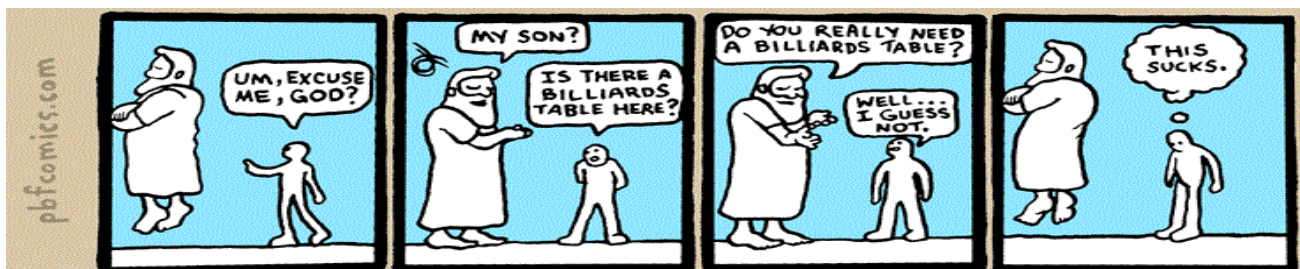
Additional Donation : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here if you do NOT want your name on lists occasionally provided to groups similar to AOF.

Please check here if you DO want to be an AOF Activist (e-mail address required).

*AOF is a 501(c)(3) Educational Association, EIN 68-0325762. Dues & Donations are tax-deductible as permitted by law. Non-members may receive the AOF Newsletter for free on request (email only).*



## On Methodological Naturalism

Adapted from Robert M. Price, [http://www.robertmprice.mindvendor.com/rev\\_ntwrong.htm](http://www.robertmprice.mindvendor.com/rev_ntwrong.htm)

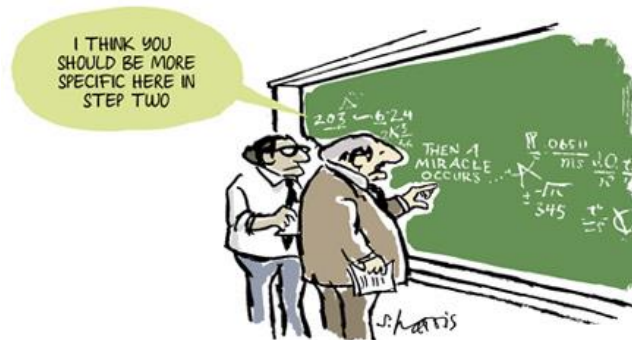
Apologists argue that science and history are “methodologically naturalistic” because of an arbitrary philosophical bias. Why not accept at least the *possibility* of miracles? A miracle might be the most simple, economical explanation of the data! If you are unalterably opposed to supernatural explanations, you’re a dogmatist.

But good reasons exist for methodological naturalism. It is not an arbitrary bias. Long ago, the Ionian philosopher Thales understood that it explains nothing if we piously claim that it rains because Zeus turned on the faucet. Even if God exists, as long as he is omnipotent and ineffable, uncircumscribed by testable rules, invoking Him short-circuits science. You get the same point in a famous cartoon, where a lab-coated scientist expounds his theory with a long equation on the chalkboard. In the middle of his scribblings is a gap and the words, “Here a miracle occurs.” It is funny, for a reason apologists apparently do not understand.

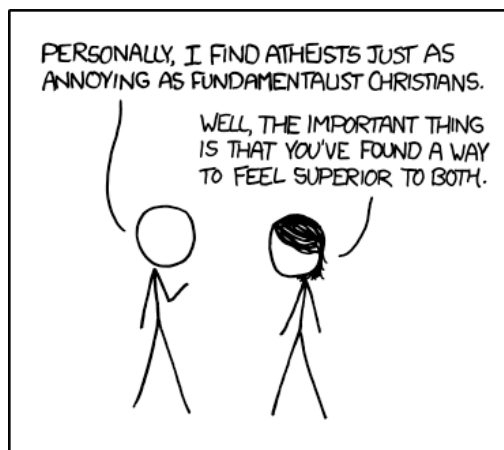
To say that divine intervention “explains” something is tantamount to saying we just don’t know. It’s a tactic of desperation. One might want to resort to it when all else fails, as apologists think naturalistic explanations have failed. But then one has not found an “explanation” at all. Like the fundamentalists who say God must have ignited the Big Bang since scientists cannot yet say what caused it. Or like the child who says the TV works because magic elves are inside. It stifles further questions; it hobbles research.

Even if God exists, how is “God” ever an explanation? In most theologies, God is ineffable, a mystery. To claim one has “explained” a problem by invoking a mystery is no advance at all. You are just using a big enigma to explain a small one. “I have the answer to X! The answer is XX!”

The instant you invokes the divine-miracle wildcard, the game of science and scientific history comes crashing to an end. Reason is broken. Only belief remains.



The purpose of Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF) is to promote the civic understanding of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives.



Thanks again to xkcd.com