John Mark Reynolds:

...have civil rights at nine months and two inches in, by court decree. What's to keep one year olds from losing their rights? Now, this seems unthinkable. But serious philosophers who are naturalists are arguing for it, because if you're just a computer made out of meat, and you happen to be running at two eighty six speed, the Pentium people can wipe you out as obsolete. Which should make some of us very frightened, cause some of us are still running at eight eighty eight speed. Some days I feel like I'm running at eight eighty six speed, uh, with no upgrade, right. I have a floppy and no hard drive. And that, that's the feeling I have. But in principle, why not? So in religion and science, there will be points in this class where you'll say, oh, man, why should I care about this? Why you should care is ultimately that the culture wars, and abortion, and homosexual rights, and all the things that everybody sits and worries about, school prayer decision, all stem back to the religion and science issue. If naturalism is true and religion is a matter of opinion, the world as it's coming to be makes perfect sense. If naturalism is false and theism is true, then naturalism is a pernicious evil lie that should be stomped out. There is no ultimate compromise possible between evangelical Christianity and naturalism. And they've got all the guns, folks, culturally, all of them. You have absolutely no say. And if you don't believe it, remember, TV evangelists pay for their airtime, Ellen got hers for free, and got paid millions and millions of dollars to propagandize the American people. Now, I'm not picking on that issue. I could care less one way or another, one sitcom or another.
But if you don't believe the cultural deck, deck is stacked, think about when the last time somebody came out on television and said, I've been saved. On a regular show. You in a controversial episode? That would be a controversial episode. Yet forty percent of the American public would identify with it. At best, two to five percent of the American public identified with last night's episode. What's the deal? The deal is you're a loser. They just are nice enough not to tell you on a daily basis. Now, losing is a good thing because when you're in the cultural outside, you get all the advantages of having no power. Power is very corrupting, and we get to throw rocks from the outside, and they have to run the establishment and all the corrupting influence that happens, and they're teetering and tottering on the edge of extinction themselves. So this is not apocalyptic, oh we're getting near the year 2000, ahhhh, something, you know, they're, they've implanted something in your brain that's going to make you eat shredded wheat for the rest of your life or something. No, it simply though is the case, that the cultural institutions are not on your side. And it comes back to this. And I think over the next six weeks, I'll tell you how that works. Now, we'll talk about evolution as one of the issues as a test case. And then in the last class, I'll tell you what the alternative is, because I'm involved with a group of people who are arguing for something that's most commonly called intelligent design. Uh, on the streets right now. It's what I do for a living, uh, which is an alternative to naturalistic science. When you talk to your secular friends, they say, oh, that's great, great, great.

We're glad to hear that naturalism is false. What's your alternative? The answer has not been very good for, let's say, the last fifty years. But we're doing a better job every day. Every day that goes by. Michael Behe recently published a book called Darwin's Black Box, which Christianity Today in its latest issue, declared the Book of the Year for Christians. Michael Behe is a Roman
Catholic biochemist at Lehigh Universities, a friend of mine. Uh, he published it with Free Press out of New York. He argues that Darwinism at the molecular level is simply impossible. Free Press would not have printed a book like that ten years ago. Period. If you don't believe that, I'll tell you a short story from my own life. Rutgers University Press came to a talk I gave at Cornell University. They liked the talk, they said, can you turn that into a book? I said, great, glad to turn it into a book, that didn't happen very often, right? Sure. We'd be glad to do it. Uh, put together an edited, collected volume. I actually had no papers in the book. So, you know, I don't have an axe to grind here. The people who were in the volume were people like Alvin Plantinga of Notre Dame, who's had books published with Oxford and Cambridge University Press, they were world class thinkers, literally, in almost every case. The book went through the review process at Rutgers, great. It's a great book. This will sell a lot of copies. Let's go forward with it. What happened to the book? Why will it never be printed by Rutgers University Press? That's right. Somebody said, look, if you print this book, this is what the editor told us. You will authenticate these people, as if Alvin Plantinga, who won the genius award, ever hear of those genius grants?

They suddenly show up on your door and give you several hundred thousand dollars to do anything you want because you're so clever. It's almost like winning the Nobel. Alvin Plantinga didn't need to be authenticated. What did they mean by authenticated? They meant the notion that God does stuff. So these are people who are very successful. So next time your secular friends tell you, well, why don't I see this from regular printing houses? You have no idea how hard it is to do it, but we're breaking through. Good friend of mine, Bill Dembski, just placed a book with Oxford University Press. We have to, we have to keep the book and the title quiet, because again, until it comes out, until it actually comes out, things like this have been kiboshed
as the thing is going to press. That's how sensitive this topic is. But you know what? I love it.

Any time an institution resorts to power, they've lost. Right, if you get them so that they have to
punch you in the nose, you've won. My momma told me that. She said the minute you get into an
argument with somebody and they raise their voice and start pounding on the table, you won. Sit
back, relax and enjoy the show. If they tell you, shut up, you can't say that, everybody's gonna be
on your side. The nice thing about being a Christian now is you get to be a martyr and they don't
kill you. So it's kind of convenient. Let me stop. [laughs] Let me stop for a moment, take some
questions. We also need to take a break. But let me see if there are questions about, this just by
way of introduction. I hope I, there were some there there. Um, but let me stop and take
questions. If there are any. Why this matters, where we're going and how we're gonna get there.
Yeah.

Audience Member 1:
Alvin, what's his last name?

Reynolds:
Plantinga. P-L-A. [writes on whiteboard] You know, it's a good, I'll put him right under Rorty
because he's a good opposite to, uh, Richard Rorty. Uh, don't rush out to a local bookstore and
pick up his books hoping for a fun read, you know, in the bathroom. Uh, he's very dense, he
doesn't write for a lay audience, he writes for professional philosophers. But if you ever you
know, if you're interested in philosophy or you have friends who are philosophers, they'll know
who he is. He was either president of the American Philosophic Association or president of the Eastern Division, which is the largest division. So he is world class in the strongest sense of the term. Yeah.

Audience Member 2:
...will you get into the fossil record...dragonfly fossils...

Reynolds:
Yeah. We'll talk about the age of the Earth, um, the week that we talk about evolution, and I'll give you my view about how this works, and my view about how Genesis should be read. But we won't begin there because the important thing to understand is, you can't begin there with your friends. See, the culture is way past that. When we control Harvard and Yale, we can argue about the age of the earth back and forth. You know, the young Earthers can run Harvard in the old Earthers can run Yale, and they can [unintelligible] what I am because I like Harvard Yard a lot better than I like Yale, which is in the middle of New Haven, which is a hole, uh, you know, I'd say never go to Yale. You'll get mugged the minute you step onto campus, but um, you can lob shots back and forth. We live in a culture where just the notion that God has a, has beliefs that he's expressed makes people scrunch their eyes up. It's really hard for them. So you have to start at the most basic level, we're at the same place the apostle Paul was. [whispers] God's real. He has opinions. We better listen to them. That's where we start. Otherwise, we're doomed. We'll just, we'll get into arguments about issues that our secular friends will listen to. And you know
what, I mean, I, I, you don't have to have this opinion I'm not going to beat up on you. I'm a young Earth creationist, I think there was a global flood. Have lots of colleagues who don't agree with me in the intelligent design movement, I have lots of colleagues who do agree with me. All right, the movement's very broad. When my secular friends ask me, I don't tell them lies. But what I tell them is this. If we talk about that, you'll just laugh at me no matter what I say.

Because if there is no God, the whole view is implausible anyway. If there is a God who is omnipotent, all powerful, then lots of what I believe fits. But we've got to start here before we can get there. And, and, you know, that's, that's good. Let me just finish one second. What I'll say to them about the flood, for example, is I'm not a scientist. I know scientists who would like to talk to you about this. But if there is no God and the gospel of John is ludicrous, then Genesis one through eleven is hopeless. On the other hand, if in the beginning was the word, if first logos and then cosmos. Not the other way around. Then even the sections of scripture I don't understand can get the benefit of the doubt, because they got the big issues right. So if I don't get how they got the poop off the ark. That is, after all, not as big a question as whether there is a God and he acts. And if I know this and the fact I haven't figured out, in fact, I have a friend who actually did a scientific study about whether you could get all the poop off the ark, and you can do it, believe it or not. But see, you know what the problem is, I never bring that up when I talk to my secular friends. Because their reaction is just like yours. Because my nerdy little science friend and, you know, he's just a stereotypical, I, it's not a put down. Philosophers are nerdier than scientists. Trust me. Go to philosopher's convention. It's like a bad clothes session.

[audience laughs]
You know, my wife likes to go to them just to see what people aren't wearing. You know, hey, look at that. You know, it's really good. Scientists are much better off because they have more money, you know, and, by and large. Anyway, uh, the problem is, my, my good friend, he's a really, uh, nice guy, but he's really naive. He ran into a secular guy who said oh, they couldn't get all the poop off the ark. I'm not going to believe in God. So you know what he did, he set up an experiment. And he went out with sledges. He invented a device using primitive technology such that eight people, he actually calculated how much biomass would be produced by that many animals. And it's very interesting, actually, to look at it. But the thought of my friend out in the field with a sledge moving poop around is just too rich even for me.

[audience laughs]

Right? You know, it's dumb. Now, if there was a flood and there was a guy named Noah on a big boat with a lot of animals, he had to have moved a lot of poop. But see how it's a different question if you believe there's a flood, well it's still kind of funny. But you do think, oh yeah, well that would be an interesting thing to study. If you think the whole thing's a fairy tale, then that becomes ludicrous on top of the ludicrous. It just proves you're an idiot that you would spend any time out in the field moving poop around. Now, here's the deal. People who don't like science. And I love science. I think science is a great thing. Like to make fun of science, scientists, because they'll say, oh, look at these scientists. They're standing around measuring how much cows fart. If you'll pardon the expression. There's a whole study done on cow flatulence? Right, and whether it contributed to global warming. Now, see, it's easy to make fun
of that, but it's an interesting hypothesis. Now, I'm glad I didn't work in the lab that studied cow flatulence. But if you think there's global flooding, there are lots of cows out there and cows, I, I grew up in rural West Virginia. Cows flatulate a lot. I mean, a lot. And there are lots of cows in some states. Go to North Dakota and look around sometime. There are a lot more cows than there are people out there. And so, you, you see the point? It's easy to make fun of a study like that, but it's actually pretty serious study. And what did they discover? If you got a lot of cows, you get a lot of methane. Lots and lots of methane. It's a problem. It turned out to be a very serious study with some very serious conclusions. Nobody I've ever met can talk about it without smiling. I mean, it's funny.

Now, my friends study on the ark is not unlike that. But it's impossible to talk about it. And so when I have somebody who presses me on it, I'd say, look, if I talk about this, I'll be like my poor friend moving poop around in a field. Even if I answer your question, you'll just laugh at me. So let's talk about this first and then talk about that. Okay. Follow up. Higher. Yes, I know.

Audience Member 3:
Good atheist friend was told by her father, a prominent scientist...that the Bible was just passed down from the hierarchy down to the peasants. And I was so flabbergasted I couldn't even reply.

Reynolds:
Yeah, this is, next week we will talk about [sighs] this is really frustrating to me. I will tell you right now that nothing you have ever been taught about Western civilization for a thousand years of it is true. I have taught in secular, Christian, every kind of school you can name. I have surveyed class after class on the Middle Ages, and I have yet to discover anything that they believed about the Middle Ages, other than the most trivial things, that were true. Period. Now, lest you think I'm making this up, I want you to think about the Middle Ages. That was a thousand years of Western history. Five-hundred to about 1500. How many chapters in your book did the Middle Ages get? If it got one, you were lucky. How much can you say in one chapter about the two hundred years of American history, one country, that would be true, and not overgeneralized? Suppose they said, tell us the whole story of American history in four pages. It's 200 years. Big country. They purport to explain to students the entire Middle Ages in about twenty pages. And you have tens of different countries, and millions of people, and hundreds of social movements. And what do they end up with? Something so generalized that it amounts to propaganda. And I will tell you right now that inside of your beady little brain, just like my beady little brain, you have beliefs about the history of the world that make it harder for you to be a Christian than if you just knew the truth about how the world went and how science developed would set you free. And what's irritating about it is I don't have one secular philosopher friend who doesn't agree with me on this. It's not even controversial.

But anybody outside of the profession was of course, haven't even thought about the history of science, even if they're scientists, since they were in tenth grade when Mrs. Beveridge told them this little story about the Middle Ages. Well, thank you, Mrs. Beveridge. And they never thought about it again. Except reading Isaac Asimov science fiction novels. The point is, I have yet to
meet a scientist who understands the history of science. Who's not a Christian. Because you don't have to understand the history of science to be a Nobel Prize winning scientist. Nothing wrong with that. I don't understand how my car goes. I still drive it. The problem is when people like your friend's father make pompous statements about the history of religion when they know nothing about it. If I got up here and said, well, this class is going to be all about biology, you'd, well, what are your qualifications? I mean an M.A. and a Ph.D. for free from the University of Rochester, which is a decent philosophy program. I've worked in the philosophy of science for several years and written on it and published. But I don't know the first thing professionally about physics. So if this were a class on physics, then you'd better head for the back door. Now, somehow that's really clear to scientists when it goes the other way. But it's not so clear to them when it comes their way. Carl Sagan, who, from what I can tell, was a fair to middling astrophysicist. Cosmologist. In his show, Cosmo's managed to say almost nothing about astrophysics. He did like first year philosophy. And my secular friends wouldn't pass what he said in a first year philosophy class for grad students. His first statement on the show, the cosmos is all there ever was, all there is, and all there ever will be. Oh, that's very scientific.

[Unintelligible], see the new priesthood. Guys in white lab jackets. Right? But just like the old priesthood, if they're talking outside of their specialty, they're no more qualified to talk about it than the mechanic down the street. People just take them more seriously because they sound pompous. You have to have the sound. We'll talk about that in the next hour. Take three more questions and then let you take a break or we'll run out of time in the next section. Yeah.
Audience Member 4:
One quick question and it's for the audience. Um, Jim Baxter, are you here?

Jim:
Yes.

Audience Member 4:
Thanks. That's all I needed

Reynolds:
Jim Baxter,

[audience laughs]

That's, now we only have two questions left. Yeah. Wow, that was a beautiful one. That changed my life frankly. It was worth all the money I paid to come here. Yeah.
Audience Member 5:
Like, you say uh, um, uh, pick the, establish the time of the flood.

Reynolds:
Um, because it's hard to do. Uh, if I were not going to be a Christian, I wouldn't be a Christian over the flood. It is not our strong suit. Now, you may think it is. You may be more qualified to talk about it. But as I look at it, I would say that Genesis chapter one through eleven, really hard to confirm archeologically. By the way, so is the Exodus. There's zero archeological evidence for the exodus. Starting from the time of David on, biblical history is very, very well confirmed, including the New Testament. We have very few problems from the time of David, if some genealogical problems we have to fool with, everything prior to David, real tough. Abraham on, consistent. It's all consistent with what could have happened. But there is zero positive evidence outside of scripture that it did happen. On the other hand, if Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, murdered somebody in Los Angeles, the FBI could do a make on it. Because we have Baruch's thumb print off of a seal. So there are some parts of scripture, the early parts, that if I'm in an argument with my secular friends, the historicity of which I say, look, you know, argument from silence, where's the flood? Well, it's very hard to tell you. We're working on it. It's a problem Here's the deal. And, make this the last question, because it's a fairly longish answer. Two kinds of problems you can have with your computer. You can have a boot up problem, or you can have software conflicts. There other kinds of problems obviously, but these are the kinds I have all the
time, both with my IBM at home and my Mac at work. Much fewer by the way, with my Mac. But, there's my little Mac evangelism, people who own Macs become this way because we're so persecuted.

One kind of problem is more serious than the other. If you get a boot up problem, you're not gonna do any work till that's fixed, at least in my job. I use my computer every minute of every day. If I have a boot up problem, I have an expensive paperweight sitting on my desk. We're going to do anything. I have an initial conflict. On the other hand, ever go to the doctor and say this hurts? And he says to you, quit doing that. You know, you've gotten to the point in your life, I, I played enough soccer and then I traveled with a dance team for a while, that I have bad knees. Short of doing something that on a 33 year old guy they don't want to do, there's nothing I can do about it. What'd the doctor say? Don't dance. You're done. So gained all this weight, and it's terrible. You know, life's hard. What, what can you say? But you get the point? You have these kinds of problems, you don't run the piece of software or you turn the extensions off on a Mac until you figure out what's causing the conflict. Now, here's the scoop. What's the heart of the gospel? Christ was incarnated in the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilot, he was crucified, dead, buried, he rose again the third day, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. It's the apostles creed, pretty simple, right? I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. That's the end of Genesis one through eleven, that's all it says. The heart of the Gospel is found in John. Pick on John 'cause it's my favorite gospel. But the heart of the gospel is there. If you buy all of that, you've got the system up and operating. Now what's my problem? I've got a problem over here figuring out how the flood works.
Would it be good if we could figure that out? You bet we should figure it out. But we haven't been seriously trying to do it except for the last twenty years. And there have been about, when they started working on it, there were about ten people. They all fit in one living room. You know how many fields of knowledge you should have multiple Ph.D.s working on this problem? It must be thirty. I'm involved in a conference right now where we're working on it, and I think we have thirty different subdivisions. In most of those subdivisions, we still only have one or two people with the requisite Ph.D.s. See it's not a big enough mass yet to get any serious work done. But we're getting there. So we've got a problem. Now, what's the problem with naturalism?

Naturalism says there's no good, there's no true, and there's no beautiful. Software crash right at boot up. I'd rather try to explain where the heck Noah's flood is in the geological column, then try to figure out why goodness, truth, and beauty are all illusions, but I can't help but live that way. It like a marriage problem. See, I love my wife, and if we have a problem over here, you know with the toilet seat, whether it's up or down. We have had big fights about that by the way. Big fights. You ever sit, oh, well, won't go into that. Right? On the other hand, fundamentally, my wife knows that I think she's the fairest flower in all of Christendom. And as long as she fundamentally believes that, I can get away with murder. It's a good trick. Try this at home. All right. That's true. On the other hand, I could be as perfect as can be. And if my wife became convinced I didn't love her, I can't do anything right. You guys know that that's right.

So here's what I suggest to my atheistic friends. I wouldn't trade my problems for your problems, but I got problems. Don't pretend you don't have problems. Don't pretend, you know everything. I don't know, I don't know the answer to that. So what? You know the answer to everything? We're not going to be critical about evolution in this class because evolutionists don't have an
explanation for everything. Well that's, it just shows they're healthy. You know, you got an explanation for everything, I don't have an explanation for everything. So we're critical of evolution because they have startup problems. Once you're in the system, it all makes sense. The problem is getting in. That's the whole problem. Let's take a break. Five minutes. We'll do a last half hour stretch.

[audio skips]

And so I'll do my best to keep you awake, too, and I'll do my best to keep things on as practical and as simple a plane as is possible. In other words, my job is not to teach a philosophy class. I'm a philosopher, I think philosophy is a wonderful thing, I teach a Philosophy of Science class at the university. But that's not what we're about. So we'll go as deeply into this as you want. If you have questions after we're done with, uh, session or during the question and answer period, we can ratchet this right down to the most technical level, put logical symbols on the board. On the other hand, you know what? I want to, I want to win the world for Jesus in our generation. And this requires being intellectually as tough minded as you can possibly be. But it doesn't require being a nerd and it doesn't require being incomprehensible. So we'll do our best to find a balance for, with those two things. I won't always succeed, and I apologize for that in advance, but I will try. Now, what I'm about to say next will seem really silly, but hang with me, it actually makes sense. And this is, believe it or not, I got a whole academic paper out of this, though as you're about to discover, I didn't use any of the analogies that I'm about to use now. So if this sounds really dumb, just listen until I'm finished. This is the way I thought about it, and it makes sense to me. And I get to teach in, you paid to come here. Ha ha ha.
You know, say, I had a student once come and say, why do you treat us differently than you, you get treated? And I suggested that I got paid to go there and they paid to come so that there was a, you know, sort of difference, right, right at the most basic level. I love cartoons. I still watch them. The best thing that ever happened to America was the Cartoon Network. Uh, probably will go home immediately after this and watch the Cartoon Network if I don't watch an old Star Trek episode. Uh, it's a good way to unwind. And I'm going to make a statement about, am I the only one who ever watches cartoons? I bet I'm the only one who still watches them. If you have grandchildren or children, uh, they watch cartoons. So, you know, Chip and Dale Rescue Rangers, they're going around somewhere in the background. I have a six year old, a four year old, and a two year old, with one on the way. So I listen to my fair share of cartoons even when I'm not interested in them. And trust me, I'm not always as interested in them as I would like. I'm going to give you the history of cartooning, uh, and relate it to the philosophy of science in three basic ways. The first cartoon I'd like to use to illustrate a point is Jonny Quest. Am I the only one, anybody other than me ever see the cartoon Jonny Quest? All right. Johnny Quest. Right. Well, if you get the Cartoon Network, go home and watch Johnny Quest, because you'll see this right away. We're talking about the original Johnny Quest. If you're a Star Trek fan, by the way, you can plug in Star Trek the original series into this same slot, the same way of thinking. Now, this way of thinking actually was dominant in the United States in about the 1950s and early 60s.
But Johnny Quest and Star Trek, the original series, are actually later holdovers of the same idea. If you know anything about Gene Roddenberry, you'll know that he never really ideologically changed from the time he was an LAPD police officer. He worked for the chief of police. His name, the building downtown's named after him. Parker, he was Parker's, um, uh, PR flack. And he developed certain views as Parker's PR flack in the late 50s, early 60s, that never really changed, even in the late 60s when no one else believed them. And part of what made Star Trek the original series work was that. Roddenberry had a certain optimism that nobody else at the time had, because he was sort of a man out of time. He never quite fit. And Jonny Quest is like that, too. All that, blah, blah, blah to say this. What's the point of a Johnny Quest episode? If you watch Johnny Quest episode, Bandit and Johnny and his friend Hodgy are traveling around the world and amazing things happen to them. But the amazing things that happen to them are always solved by Johnny's omnipotent and omniscient father, who has a solution to everything, because Johnny's father does what for a living? Does anyone know at Johnny's father does? Yeah. Yeah. Now I want you to hear that it's very important what he does for a living. He's a scientist. He's not an engineer. He's not a biologist. He's not a chemist. He's not a physicist. He's simply a scientist. And they say it exactly that way on the show. Johnny Quest's father comes in a scientist and says, now, this is very convenient because from episode to episode, Johnny Quest's Father invents a laser, this is before lasers were big.

And there's one whole episode where Johnny Quest's father rips that thing off and there he's invented the first laser, which immediately they put on a flying ship and shoot things down with. But it's a cartoon after all. And of course, the next week he's doing advanced physics, and the week after that, he's doing advanced biology. Johnny Quest has the most brilliant father in the
world. You know, he's the winner of like eight Nobel Prizes. It's like the professor on Gilligan's Island. Can just do everything and knows everything about everything. This is the attitude. Let's call this Questism. Every question can be solved scientifically. In Star Trek, the original series, Eventually, humanity, with the Vulcans, are going to solve all of, sort of the basic problems. There's no money in the future Star Trek future. Somehow they've dispensed with free enterprise and capitalism. All those problems of human nature have been solved by what? Science. Now, they never explain the science to you. They just use more and more convoluted terminology. That was Roddenberry's genius. He knew that you don't have to explain how a Colt forty-five operates to make a Western plausible. In the same way, you don't have to explain how a phaser works. Just call it a phaser and have people shoot things. Now, this has been carried to extremes in the later series where you have these whole conversations with made-up scientific words that go on for like ten minutes. They're talking about nothing, using words that don't exist for ten minutes. And they're actually people on the Internet who write it all down and try to explain it in terms of actual physical laws.

If, if you're a writer for the show, it must just be wonderful, uh, to just make fun of people. Um, but Questism was a serious belief. Questism. Science will solve all our problems. Well, the problem with science solving all of our problems is by the late 60s, everybody but Gene Roddenberry had sort of gotten a clue. Science hadn't solved all of our problems. In fact, science seemed to be making as many problems for us, hear ecology. When I was a kid, I actually had to stand in front of a room full of parents and do the following thing. We all chanted, it, talk about mind control. We chanted in unison, environmental crisis, ecology. And the girls all went, ecology. And we said, What will you do? And the girls said, What will I do? Ride a bus. Take
the, you know, it went on and on, uh, back and forth like this. Uh, people lost their faith in Questism. Now you can see this in cartoons. Uh, the, you had a real [unintelligible] in cartoons and illustrations, uh, about this time, too. But this might be called Scoobyism. Yeah, from the show [sings] Scooby Doo Doo. Where are you? Now, you can tell when Scooby Doo was made, not just because of how it's drawn, where they all run by the same gray background in every episode because they were too cheap to spend any money on backgrounds. You can tell not only because of that, but because of the philosophy that goes behind it. Now, I must be the only person in America who watches Scooby Doo analytically.

But I did do it one time. And it's actually very simple. Every episode is exactly the same. They go to a ski lodge or a resort somewhere, where a ghost appears, which looks really scary at the beginning of the show. But those meddling kids always run around, uh, out of the mystery machine. Uh, Daphne never does anything except for look good in a sweater, but everybody else does stuff, and they solve the mystery. And it's always the owner of the thing wearing a rubber mask who is doing it for the insurance money. Every single episode is exactly the same, but just the monster changes. And it always ends with Fred taking the mask off and saying, look, it's Mr. So-and-so. And everyone gasps every week, even though last week the same guy did the same thing.

[audience laughs]

And, what's the point? Some of you are really wondering what the point of this is.
The point is this: Johnny Quest, at least early on, in Star Trek early on, stayed well within the bounds of what was plausible.

I mean, even though you couldn't explain how the enterprise went to warp speed, the better episodes tried to stay within the bounds of scientific plausibility. They actually had a consultant from NASA, after all, on even the original series, trying to keep that thing within certain basic bounds as opposed to lost in space where they'd get out and walk around without masks on outside the spaceship. When they tried to stay roughly inside the bounds of reason. The problem is, the human heart won't be cheated. And Questism with the new priesthood in white lab jackets, Johnny's dad, the scientist, didn't solve all our problems. And so what did we turn to? We turned to a group of kids riding around in a psychedelic van.

Audience Member 6:
The Brady Bunch.

Reynolds:
Yeah. Who can solve all our problems in a half an hour. But you'll notice that in all the episodes, they flirt with the supernatural. There's a ghost, or the Abominable Snowman, or the Loch Ness Monster. There's something really scary, kids, of course, love it, uh, at the beginning. But then
what do they do in the end? They back off. They play around with there being something other than nature, Jonny Quest, but they never will go all the way. It always turns out to be a guy in a rubber mask hanging on a wire floating through, even though it didn't look like that early in the cartoon. When they explain it to you, it always looks stupid. If you watch the cartoon, you can tell it's fake. But early in the cartoon, it looked really real. I want you to see that that's a halfway ground. It's a halfway ground. Scientists have been stripped of their authority, but naturalism as a philosophy still pervades enough so that, uh, the supernatural isn't real. Now, in the 80s, we go full circle and we get the Smurfs.

[audience laughs]

Now the Smurfs have nothing to do with the real world. Poppa Smurf has godlike powers, which are entirely inconsistent from episode episode. You cannot make sense out of Smurfism, even in its own lights, even if you assume the Smurfs exist and Papa Smurf can do magic, you can, the episodes are utterly inconsistent from one week to another. Magic is real, and magic is irrational. And the episodes are irrational. It's simply impossible as an adult to watch the Smurfs. That's why adults hated the Smurfs when they came out. They are so treacly, sugar coated and phony, that no one could stand them. Now, here's a mistake that people make. They compare the Smurfs to fairy tales. Big error. Fairy tales were stories, at the time they were written, set in the real world. After all, stepmothers and cottages and kings and princesses were real things in the world at the time that fairy tales were written. And the people who wrote the fairy tales really thought that if you went around the corner, there really might be a witch around the corner who could do terrible things to you. And maybe we never saw one, but there really could be a dragon, after all,
Saint George killed one, go look in their church. We've got the bones from the dragon in the church. Now, whether that was a good idea or not, and whether you're tempted by the fairy tale world, it's one thing to tell children a story that you yourself believed to be true, which isn't. Or that something like it could be true. Okay, there was never a Cinderella, but it could have happened. Then to tell a kid a cartoon, which makes no sense, which is totally irrational, which you believe to be false, just to satisfy the childlike longings for something more than nature. Do you see the difference?

One is the adult in the role of teacher and mentor. Let me tell you how the world works kid. There was this girl named Cinderella. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. See that's why those stories have resonance. Because the people who wrote them believe them, and told them not at first the children, to adults, because they wanted to help you learn something they thought was important for you to learn. On the other hand, the Smurfs was simply people saying, we can't live with this. So we'll pretend. Go talk to George Lucas. You see, the whole Star Wars phenomenon, for example, and the later Star Trek series is symptomatic of a world that says, we don't like the way the cosmos turned out to be. The cosmos turns out to be hostile to goodness, truth and beauty. It turns out to be a boring place. That's the sad part of it. The sad truth is, there never will be a Starship Enterprise, warp drive is impossible, unless physics, as we know it, is totally turned upside down. We are trapped in this solar system just as effectively as we could be, as if God himself trapped us here. And the universe, no matter how much science writers like to describe it, without romance, without meaning, and without purpose, isn't worth living in. And so what have the Lucas's and others done? And if you haven't heard this, you haven't been listening to our culture. Listen to what they'll say. We are creating our own reality that we enjoy living in.
It's the difference between the fantasy novels of J.R.R. Tolkien, and contemporary fantasy novels. Tolkien fundamentally believed in the world he was creating in Lord of the Rings. No, he didn't think there was a Hobbit named Bilbo and a Hobbit named Frodo. And he didn't believe in Hobbits. But a world of meaning and purpose, where things were worth fighting for and it was worth spending your whole life to throw the ring into Mount Doom, he believed that. But the people who are producing contemporary fantasy and contemporary science fiction, know it isn't real, but they have to do something to give their otherwise futile lives meaning. What were the Smurfs? They were a marketing ploy. They were people trying to bubble kids out of their cash. And at the same time, provide them a little nice sugar coating to what is, after all, a pretty granola life. Because if naturalism is true, there isn't any sugar coating. Now, what I want you to see, and this is the importance of this.