



The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism

By Edward Feser



The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism By Edward Feser

The central contention of the “New Atheism” of Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens is that there has for several centuries been a war between science and religion, that religion has been steadily losing that war, and that at this point in human history a completely secular scientific account of the world has been worked out in such thorough and convincing detail that there is no longer any reason why a rational and educated person should find the claims of any religion the least bit worthy of attention.

But as Edward Feser argues in *The Last Superstition*, in fact there is not, and never has been, any war between science and religion at all. There has instead been a conflict between two entirely *philosophical conceptions* of the natural order: on the one hand, the classical “teleological” vision of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas, on which purpose or goal-directedness is as inherent a feature of the physical world as mass or electric charge; and the modern “mechanical” vision of Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, and Hume, according to which the physical world is comprised of nothing more than purposeless, meaningless particles in motion. As it happens, on the classical teleological picture, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the natural-law conception of morality are rationally unavoidable. Modern atheism and secularism have thus always crucially depended for their rational credentials on the insinuation that the modern, mechanical picture of the world has somehow been established by science.

Yet this modern “mechanical” picture has never been established by science, and cannot be, for it is not a scientific theory in the first place but merely a philosophical interpretation of science. Moreover, as Feser shows, the philosophical arguments in its favor given by the early modern philosophers were notable only for being surprisingly weak.

However, not only is this modern philosophical picture rationally unfounded, it is demonstrably false. For the “mechanical” conception of the natural world, when worked

out consistently, absurdly entails that rationality, and indeed the human mind itself, is illusory. The so-called “scientific worldview” championed by the New Atheists thus inevitably undermines its own rational foundations; and into the bargain (and contrary to the moralistic posturing of the New Atheists) it undermines the foundations of any possible morality as well. By contrast, and as *The Last Superstition* demonstrates, the classical teleological picture of nature can be seen to find powerful confirmation in developments from contemporary philosophy, biology, and physics; moreover, morality and reason itself cannot possibly be made sense of apart from it. The teleological vision of the ancients and medievals is thereby rationally vindicated – and with it the religious worldview they based upon it.

Winner of the 2008 Book of the Year in Religion from *ForeWord Magazine* and the only 2008 Editors’ Choice for Religion from the American Library Association’s *Booklist*, *The Last Superstition* remains the most cogent and powerful refutation of the New Atheism extant.

 [Download The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Ath ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New A ...pdf](#)

The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism

By Edward Feser

The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism By Edward Feser

The central contention of the “New Atheism” of Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens is that there has for several centuries been a war between science and religion, that religion has been steadily losing that war, and that at this point in human history a completely secular scientific account of the world has been worked out in such thorough and convincing detail that there is no longer any reason why a rational and educated person should find the claims of any religion the least bit worthy of attention.

But as Edward Feser argues in *The Last Superstition*, in fact there is not, and never has been, any war between science and religion at all. There has instead been a conflict between two entirely *philosophical conceptions* of the natural order: on the one hand, the classical “teleological” vision of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas, on which purpose or goal-directedness is as inherent a feature of the physical world as mass or electric charge; and the modern “mechanical” vision of Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, and Hume, according to which the physical world is comprised of nothing more than purposeless, meaningless particles in motion. As it happens, on the classical teleological picture, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the natural-law conception of morality are rationally unavoidable. Modern atheism and secularism have thus always crucially depended for their rational credentials on the insinuation that the modern, mechanical picture of the world has somehow been established by science.

Yet this modern “mechanical” picture has never been established by science, and cannot be, for it is not a scientific theory in the first place but merely a philosophical interpretation of science. Moreover, as Feser shows, the philosophical arguments in its favor given by the early modern philosophers were notable only for being surprisingly weak.

However, not only is this modern philosophical picture rationally unfounded, it is demonstrably false. For the “mechanical” conception of the natural world, when worked

out consistently, absurdly entails that rationality, and indeed the human mind itself, is illusory. The so-called “scientific worldview” championed by the New Atheists thus inevitably undermines its own rational foundations; and into the bargain (and contrary to the moralistic posturing of the New Atheists) it undermines the foundations of any possible morality as well. By contrast, and as *The Last Superstition* demonstrates, the classical teleological picture of nature can be seen to find powerful confirmation in developments from contemporary philosophy, biology, and physics; moreover, morality and reason itself cannot possibly be made sense of apart from it. The teleological vision of the ancients and medievals is thereby rationally vindicated – and with it the religious worldview they based upon it.

Winner of the 2008 Book of the Year in Religion from *ForeWord Magazine* and the only 2008 Editors’ Choice for Religion from the American Library Association’s *Booklist*, *The Last Superstition* remains the most cogent and powerful refutation of the New Atheism extant.

The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism By Edward Feser Bibliography

- Rank: #199990 in eBooks
- Published on: 2012-08-15
- Released on: 2012-08-15
- Format: Kindle eBook

 [Download The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Ath ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New A ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism* By Edward Feser

Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review New Atheists Richards Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris get their comeuppance from philosopher Feser in the spirit with which they abuse believers. "Their books stand out for their manifest ignorance" of the Western religious tradition, he says, "and for the breathtaking shallowness of their philosophical analysis of religious matters." Far better than such no-quarters rhetoric, however, are the review of pre-Aristotelian philosophy and the summary of Aristotelian metaphysics and Thomas Aquinas' refinements of Aristotle that make up the heart, soul, and bulk of the book. Feser chooses to argue from Aristotle because he was not arguing from any religious perspective and because Aristotle's logic, his rationality, hasn't been improved upon or refuted by modern philosophy. Aristotle's proof that there is a prime mover or pure being—God—remains solid. Ignoramuses like the four horsemen of the apostasy, whose factual errors, half-truths, and mischaracterization Feser highlights with contemptuous glee, "refute" Aristotle only by changing the playing field from metaphysics to science, from philosophical realism to materialism. With energy and humor as well as transparent exposition, Feser reestablishes the unassailable superiority of classical philosophy. --Ray Olson

Review

"A thoughtful and theologically sophisticated sally into the ranks of the New Atheism. Feser has written a lively and well informed polemic against the latest crop of Village Atheists - Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, & Co. - who have provided the public with so much entertainment and so little enlightenment these past few years. This is a serious and passionately engaged challenge to the latest effort to impose a dehumanizing orthodoxy by religious illiterates." -- *Roger Kimball, co-editor and publisher, The New Criterion*

"Edward Feser's book is a timely wake-up call to the many people who have been seduced by the amateurish attempts at philosophy of religion found in the popular bestsellers of the 'Faithless Foursome,' Dawkins, Dennett, Hitchens, and Harris.

"Feser shows that the so-called 'New Atheism' is just the old atheism, only more irrational. But at the same time as carrying out his incisive critique of all that is bad in contemporary popular atheism, he presents an admirable 101 course in philosophy for people who care. About what? About the classical metaphysical tradition going from the best of the ancient Greeks, through the medieval philosophers, and down to the neo-Aristotelianism and neo-Thomism of today.

"Anyone who comes away from *The Last Superstition* thinking that potboiler atheism has anything to recommend it, or that belief in God is irrational, will not be convinced by anything. For the rest of us, the book is, to use an apposite term, a godsend. And the caustic humour peppering the book adds just the sort of spice this fraught subject needs. If the Faithless Foursome were at all interested in a serious rebuttal, they now have it." -- *David Oderberg, Professor of Philosophy, University of Reading, UK*

"There have been largely two types of critics of the 'New Atheism.' One type grants the empiricism of the atheists and then tries to show that belief in God is consistent with it. This approach gives away the store by removing God from the realm of the knowable. The second also grants the atheists' empiricism, but argues that it leads to the detection of design in the universe and thus the existence of God. This approach gives away the store as well, by limiting knowledge to the empirically detectable. Professor Feser offers us a third

approach, one that is far more effective in defeating the New Atheism. He provides persuasive arguments that show that God is knowable and that what is knowable is larger than the set of that which is empirically detectable. This is a tour de force that should be in the library of every thinking citizen, believer or unbeliever." -- *Francis J. Beckwith, Professor of Philosophy and Church-State Studies, Baylor University*

"New Atheists Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris get their comeuppance from philosopher Feser in the spirit with which they abuse believers. 'Their books stand out for their manifest ignorance' of the Western religious tradition, he says, 'and for the breathtaking shallowness of their philosophical analysis of religious matters.' Far better than such no-quarters rhetoric, however, are the review of pre-Aristotelian philosophy and the summary of Aristotelian metaphysics and Thomas Aquinas' refinements of Aristotle that make up the heart, soul, and bulk of the book. Feser chooses to argue from Aristotle because he was not arguing from any religious perspective and because Aristotle's logic, his rationality, hasn't been improved upon or refuted by modern philosophy. Aristotle's proof that there is a prime mover or pure being – God – remains solid. Ignoramuses like the four horsemen of the apostasy, whose factual errors, half-truths, and mischaracterization Feser highlights with contemptuous glee, 'refute' Aristotle only by changing the playing field from metaphysics to science, from philosophical realism to materialism. With energy and humor as well as transparent exposition, Feser reestablishes the unassailable superiority of classical philosophy." --Ray Olson, *ALA Booklist*, starred review, October 1, 2008

Richard Dawkins, the Oxford biologist and prominent atheist, argues in *The God Delusion* that belief in God is outdated. Before 1859, it was reasonable to think that life on earth had been designed.... But, Dawkins maintains, Charles Darwin changed all that. He showed that adaptations could be explained by natural selection. No appeal to an intelligent designer is required. Darwin thus made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.

Professor Edward Feser argues in his brilliant new book *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism* that Dawkins has it all wrong. God is not a hypothesis, to be replaced if a more satisfactory theory comes up. Quite the contrary, Feser suggests, the existence of God can be proved by rationally compelling arguments. He thinks that not only is Dawkins wrong about this but so are his fellow atheists Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris, all three of whom are frequently subject to humorous and telling remarks.

Feser's is a bold claim indeed, one very much out of philosophical fashion. In mainstream Anglo-American philosophy, the dominant position is that Hume and Kant long ago showed that the theistic proofs do not work. To overturn this verdict is a formidable task, and to accomplish it Feser needs to present a great deal of background material. The principal reason, he holds, that modern philosophers reject the theistic proofs is that, since the Enlightenment, they have accepted a truncated notion of causation. Today, philosophers think of a cause as one event, preceding another in time that brings it about. As an example, if I light a match, these philosophers would take this to mean that the event of striking the match is followed by the event of the fire's appearance.

This departs from Aristotle's delineation of four causes, efficient, final, formal, and material. Aristotle's efficient cause corresponds most closely to the modern view, but even here the resemblance is not very strong. Aristotle thought efficient causation involved a substance rather than an event: I, not the event of striking the match, cause the fire.

To grasp Aristotle's doctrine of causation, developed and extended by Thomas Aquinas and other scholastics, Feser needs to go back to Plato to explain the famous problem of universals. He argues against the view that universals are merely words or concepts in our minds. Instead, he favors the moderate realism of Aristotle and Aquinas. All this may sound abstract, but it is essential to understanding the way in which Feser thinks that God's existence can be proved. Readers who are willing to cope with this rather difficult

material will gain something else, besides being in a position to understand the theistic proofs. They will learn a great deal about the history of philosophy. I have never seen the topics that Feser discusses presented so clearly. It is an effort well worth the effort. --David Gordon, Ludwig von Mises Institute, for The American Conservative Union Foundation, Issue 120, November 19, 2008

Review

"The Last Superstition should be assigned reading, and not only for those who think philosophical know-nothings like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens hot stuff. 'Secularism,' says author Edward Feser, 'is, necessarily and inherently, a deeply irrational and immoral view of the world, and the more thoroughly it is assimilated by its adherents, the more thoroughly do they cut themselves off from the very possibility of rational and moral understanding.' Feser gives the 'New Atheists' a dose of their own polemical medicine, but with a difference: Unlike them, he knows what he is doing. This rollicking counter-attack is learned, carefully reasoned, and philosophically astute."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Rose Nguyen:

What do you concerning book? It is not important to you? Or just adding material when you really need something to explain what the ones you have problem? How about your free time? Or are you busy man or woman? If you don't have spare time to perform others business, it is gives you the sense of being bored faster. And you have free time? What did you do? Everybody has many questions above. The doctor has to answer that question mainly because just their can do that will. It said that about e-book. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is correct. Because start from on guardería until university need that The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism to read.

Jacqueline Lewis:

Hey guys, do you really wants to finds a new book to study? May be the book with the concept The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism suitable to you? The particular book was written by popular writer in this era. The book untitled The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheismis the main of several books in which everyone read now. This kind of book was inspired lots of people in the world. When you read this reserve you will enter the new dimension that you ever know previous to. The author explained their concept in the simple way, thus all of people can easily to recognise the core of this guide. This book will give you a lots of information about this world now. In order to see the represented of the world on this book.

Trudy Clark:

The e-book with title The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism contains a lot of information that you can understand it. You can get a lot of gain after read this book. This book exist new expertise the information that exist in this publication represented the condition of the world today. That is important to yo7u to know how the improvement of the world. This book will bring you throughout new era of the globalization. You can read the e-book on the smart phone, so you can read that anywhere you want.

Maxine Ford:

Do you have something that you prefer such as book? The e-book lovers usually prefer to choose book like comic, small story and the biggest you are novel. Now, why not attempting The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism that give your fun preference will be satisfied through reading this book. Reading behavior all over the world can be said as the means for people to know world far better then how they react towards the world. It can't be mentioned constantly that reading practice only for the geeky individual but for all of you who wants to always be success person. So , for every you who want to start reading as your good habit, you could pick The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism become your own personal starter.

Download and Read Online The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism By Edward Feser #HRK6VL2M89Y

Read The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism By Edward Feser for online ebook

The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism By Edward Feser Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism By Edward Feser books to read online.

Online The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism By Edward Feser ebook PDF download

The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism By Edward Feser Doc

The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism By Edward Feser Mobipocket

The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism By Edward Feser EPub

HRK6VL2M89Y: The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism By Edward Feser