



Thinking Critically About:

“Do Miracles Occur?”



Introduction to Your **Skeptical** Speaker

My Name:

Bradley Bowen

My Goal (for tonight):

To promote critical thinking about miracles, and to promote *understanding and appreciation* of cynicism and skepticism, as well as of atheism and naturalism.

My Educational Background:

- BA in Philosophy from Sonoma State University (in Northern California).
- MA in Philosophy from the University of Windsor (in Windsor, Ontario, just across the border from Detroit, Michigan).
- Completed all requirements for a PhD in Philosophy from UC Santa Barbara (on the central coast of California) except for completion of my doctoral dissertation.
- Main interests in philosophy: critical thinking, philosophy of religion, and ethics.

Philosophy can
be challenging
and frustrating
sometimes...

When you start writing about one philosophical topic
and then realized it's intertwined with 9000 other ones



My Point of View

Atheism & Naturalism

Cynicism & Skepticism

Critical Thinking & Science

The Foundation

- **How we know what we know**
- **Relatively Uncontroversial**

Critical Thinking & Science

My General Approach

- > Philosophy that Guides my Thinking
- > Somewhat Controversial

Cynicism & Skepticism

My Conclusions

- > **Metaphysical views**
- > **Very Controversial**

Atheism & Naturalism



The Main Questions at Issue

QUESTION 1: Do miracles occur?

QUESTION 2: What does “miracle” mean?

QUESTION 3: Did God raise Dr. Sean George from the dead?

QUESTION 4: What does “rose from the dead” mean?

QUESTION 5: Can only GOD raise someone from the dead?

QUESTION 6: Did Dr. Sean George rise from the dead?

QUESTION 7: Did God raise Jesus from the dead?



CLARITY:
An
Intellectual
Standard

- A basic aspect of **CRITICAL THINKING** is the evaluation of questions, claims, and arguments in terms of **INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS**.
- One of the most important **INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS** is **CLARITY**.
- **CLARITY** is a “gateway standard”: if a question, claim or argument is **UNCLEAR** or ambiguous or vague, then it needs to be clarified in order for it to be rationally evaluated.
- Otherwise, we literally don’t know what we are talking about, or what we are thinking about.
- Key words and phrases are often **UNCLEAR**, and need to be **DEFINED** in order to avoid confusion and to make intellectual progress.

QUESTION 2:
What does
“miracle”
mean?

THREE POSSIBLE DEFINITIONS:

- A. An event that is contrary to natural law (**too broad**)
- B. An event that is contrary to natural law AND that was caused by God (**just about right**)
- C. An event that is contrary to natural law AND that was caused by God *in order to* reveal something about himself to humans (**too narrow**)

QUESTION 4:
What does

“rose from the dead”
mean?

Two Possible Definitions*

- A. Person X was ***clinically dead*** for over an hour and then came back to life.
- B. Person X was ***brain dead*** for over an hour and then came back to life.

* Possible sufficient conditions