



BROWN

# The Providence Roundtable Summary & Attendee Satisfaction Report

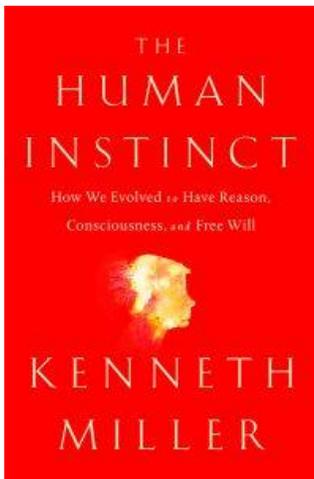
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# Roundtable Summary

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These Roundtable seminars are meant to foster conversations that explore the intersection of academic and Christian thought on issues related to science and religion. The topic of this Roundtable event was “The Human Instinct: How We Evolved to Have Reason, Consciousness, and Free Will” by Kenneth Miller.

Scientists such as Richard Dawkins, Lawrence Krauss, and Sam Harris tell us that our most intimate actions, thoughts, and values are mere byproducts of thousands of generations of mindless adaptation. We are just one species among multitudes, and therefore no more significant than any other living creature.

Now comes Brown University biologist Kenneth R. Miller to make the case that this view betrays a gross misunderstanding of evolution. Miller is the critically acclaimed bestselling author of *Only a Theory* and *Finding Darwin's God*. You can read the full event summary and Miller's biography [here](#).

## Event Schedule

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Prior to the event, invited participants received information about the discussion topic, biographies of the presenters, and any readings that were required prior to the event. Attendees sat at their assigned tables for opening remarks from the presenter on the topic for the evening. Immediately following, dinner was served and the discussion around each table began regarding the topic presented. There was no set agenda or facilitator for each table; however, attendees were to be respectful of one another's views. Following the table discussions, the presenter answered questions from the participants, and then made closing remarks to end the event.

Additionally, participants were asked in the post-event feedback survey if they had a question for Prof. Miller that they would've liked to have asked. Those questions (names removed) were then sent to Prof. Miller so he could respond to them. Those questions and his responses are posted on our site: [www.ProvidenceRoundtable.org](http://www.ProvidenceRoundtable.org).

## Attendee Demographics

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Attendees of the Providence Roundtable consisted of 73 scholars and faculty leaders. Roundtable invitations are not pre-sorted in alignment with any religious or non-religious perspective. Scholars from nearby universities and from a variety of academic departments are invited.

The departments and areas of study from which attending scholars belong to include, but are not limited to: Public Policy, Engineering, Cognitive, Linguistic & Psychological Sciences, Religious Studies, Anthropology, Biology, Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Earth, Environmental & Planetary Sciences, Portuguese and Brazilian Studies, Biostatistics, Biomed, Public Safety, Social Work, Epidemiology, Mathematics, General Surgery, Neuroscience, Outpatient Psychiatry, Nursing, Media Studies, InterVarsity's Graduate & Faculty Ministries, Ophthalmology, Psychology, English, Science, Technology, & Society, Student Affairs, Anthropology, Religious Studies, Africana Studies, Philosophy, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Elementary Education

Attending leaders also represented the following Universities and Organizations: Brown University, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Rhode Island College, Simmons College, Providence College, University of Rhode Island, Providence College, Bridgewater State University, International House RI, New England Institute of Technology, Barrington Public Schools, and Godspeed Church.

# Survey Content

Attendees were asked the following multiple-choice questions:

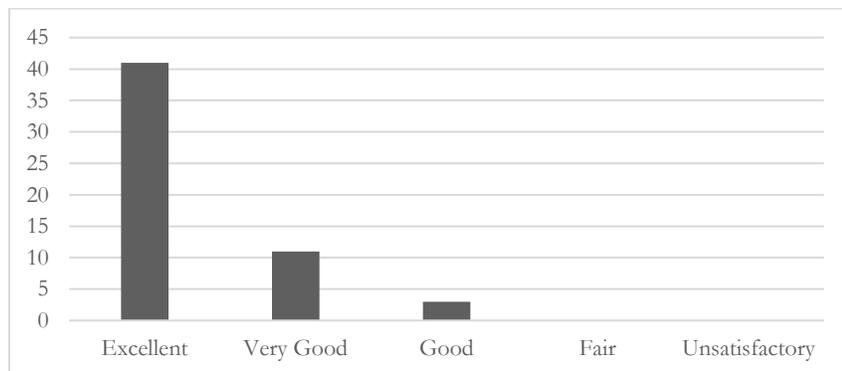
- How would you rate your overall roundtable experience?
- If you were asked to pay to participate in this event, how much would you be willing to pay?
- Have you ever had further conversation to explore the intersection of science and religion with someone you met at the RT?
- Have you ever used RT-style dialogue as a means of exploring science and religion dialogue in a professional setting or in your classroom?
- Have you ever explored the possibility that ancient scriptures anticipate anything at all in your experience in the academy or in modern science?
- Have you ever incorporated an insight from a RT into your university research, teaching, or religious activities?
- Do you think it'd be helpful to have one of the participants at each table be a designated discussion facilitator to help guide your table conversations?
- Would you like a free copy of Ken Miller's book, "The Human Instinct"? (over 50% responded yes)

Attendees were asked the following open-ended questions:

- Please share any thoughts on your dining and dialogue.
- How would you characterize and describe your table conversations?
- Please elaborate on any/all of your answers.
- Are there other colleagues that you'd like us to invite to future roundtables?
- Are there any topics/questions you think would be good to discuss at future roundtables? If so, please elaborate below.

## Result Highlights

### How would you rate your overall roundtable experience?



### If you were asked to pay to participate in this event again, how much would you be willing to pay?



### Have you gained any new insights on science, religion, and/or society?

Response	Count
Yes	42
No	7
Other	6

### Have you ever incorporated an insight from a RT into your university research, teaching, or religious activities?

Response	Count
Yes	20
No	11
Not yet	22
Haven't thought about it	2

### Please share any thoughts on your dining and dialogue.

Extremely well-organized event. Generous to provide dinner. Speaker and topic fantastic. – [Professor, Brown University](#)

The open-minded atmosphere and the sharing of personal thoughts made for a delightful dinner. – [Neuroscience, Brown University](#)

The Providence Roundtable is consistently the most academic venue I attend: always well-organized and thought-provoking. – [Assistant Professor, Brown University](#)

It was a wonderful evening with a thought-provoking lecture and stimulating conversation with brilliant people over a delicious dinner. – [Pastor, Mosaic Boston Church](#)

It was a very interesting topic. It was well presented and stimulated good discussion at the table. – [Ophthalmology, Brown University](#)

### How would you characterize and describe your table conversations?

Congenial, gently challenging, overall we were able to share (at least 4 out of the 6) our opinions and beliefs, and remain open to the differences. It seemed to me that there was no animosity between "believers" and "nonbelievers", but instead only genuine interest, no defensiveness, and an openness to learn from one another. – [Biostatistics, Brown University](#)

The conversations were truly outstanding, with people asking thoughtful questions and bringing personal stories and reflections to the table. The speaker was also engaging and provocative and I look forward to reading additional chapters of his book.. – [Media Studies, Brown University](#)

Engaging! Everyone talked and shared questions and thoughts. Our conversation was positive (not combative) and people seemed to be really listening to each other's thoughts. – [Director, Brown University](#)

Productive, interesting, amicable. – [Professor, Brown University](#)

Insightful and thought provoking. We had people from different backgrounds (cop, Professor, PhD student, etc.) and each member contributed in a unique way. – [Graduate Student, Brown University](#)

Respectful; precise in that individuals were careful in their choices of declarative words and, too, their questioning words in the sincere interest in understanding others' perspectives. – [Earth, Environmental and Planetary Sciences, Brown University](#)

# Images

