

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### **A Critical Study of Keith Ward on Mind and Free Will: Personal Idealism versus Scientism**

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# ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the comparison of two important philosophical worldviews, Personal Idealism and Scientism, in their discussions on the mind and free will. The objective is to determine which of these worldviews, either the dualistic worldview of personal idealism or the materialistic worldview of scientism, can provide a more comprehensive, reasonable, and cohesive understanding of the mind and free will. Additionally, this study seeks to establish whether these worldviews can be considered holistic perspectives for comprehending essential aspects of human existence, such as the meaning of life and self-identity.

In this research, a thorough exploration is conducted on the Personal Idealism of Keith Ward, a British theologian and philosopher. The central pillars of Ward's personal idealism are identified, consisting of three distinct characteristics of the mind: the active agency of minds, the priority given to the mind, and the belief that the mind represents a fundamental and irreducible aspect of reality.

Subsequently, the research analyses whether proponents of scientism can present compelling arguments that serve as legitimate defeaters to challenge Ward's proposals. In this study, I argue that the analysis reveals that none of the potential defeaters identified within scientism can meet the necessary criteria to be considered successful.

Furthermore, adhering to the principle of credulity advocated by British philosopher Richard Swinburne and considering the argument from human conscious life to the existence of a personal God, I maintain that Ward's proposal regarding the mind remains valid in the absence of successful defeaters. This standpoint remains plausible unless a successful defeater is identified.

I further argue, based on the evidence presented in this study, that the opposing party lacks compelling evidence to conclusively demonstrate the illogical nature of belief in the mind and God. As a result, this strengthens the credibility and provides additional validation for Ward's personal idealism, as well as his arguments for the mind and God, which are solidly grounded in logical reasoning and human experience.