In reading Dr. Andrew Cunningham's forceful reply to my article, I have great difficulty in recognizing myself. It seems that I am a kind of troglodyte, out of step and out of touch with the world of progressive historians, who have re-arranged the world as I slept. Moreover, I find little connection between what I said and what I am alleged to have said. And, finally, let me say that Dr. Cunningham has skillfully turned this discussion into a debate on the large issues concerning the nature of history. So be it.

But Dr. Cunningham also feels aggrieved. He says that I have ignored "his substantive work" in which he believes that he has made much of his case. For example, I did not "assess the arguments or the evidence" he adduced in his book, Before Science, "the only historical book on the nature of natural philosophy yet produced, and equally the only book which deals with the origins of any version of natural philosophy." Did he and his colleague Roger French make their case for the Dominican and Franciscan versions of natural philosophy? And "similarly, with respect to Isaac Newton and his book The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, have I," Cunningham asks, "produced a satisfactory account, built on his own words and intentions, of why he should have named his famous book in this way, and what he intended thereby?" "On all these matters of empirical research on my part," laments Dr. Cunningham, "Grant says not a word." Let me now say a word: No, I do not think Dr. Cunningham has made his case for either the Friars or Newton. But I plead guilty to the charges, with mitigating circumstances. After all, I was writing an article, not a book, and could not possibly consider all these matters and still present the case I wished to make. I shall try to make amends here on those two issues.

One major accusation against me is that I misinterpreted Dr. Cunningham's intent. He says that "'natural philosophy was about God and His creation' can be interpreted in many ways, and Grant explores some of them. But he does so while ignoring the sense in
which I obviously mean it. For the published examples I have given make perfectly clear the meaning I intend.” Since Dr. Cunningham does not specify any examples, or give references to any, I am ignorant of the examples he has in mind. But in my article, I gave only one citation as the basis of my interpretation. I will now cite a few more, so that readers can judge for themselves if I have ignored the sense Dr. Cunningham “obviously” intended. I present them in the order in which they occur in his article, “How the Principia Got Its Name; or, Taking Natural Philosophy Seriously”.1

In the first, he explains that

over and above any other defining feature which marks natural philosophy off from modern science... natural philosophy was about God and about God's universe. Indeed, this was the central pillar of its identity as a discipline, both with respect to its subject-matter and to its goals, its purposes, and the functions it served. This is what, more than anything else, distinguishes it from our modern science.2

In the second passage, Cunningham declares

If we were to start to take natural philosophy seriously, as the God-centred study of nature that it was for the people who conducted it (rather than as some study of nature which was struggling to be objective and to free itself from the fetters of religion, or as some odd amalgam of 'science' and religion or of 'science' and theology) then certain consequences would follow for us, and for the conduct of our historical research.3

And, finally, toward the end of his article, Cunningham elaborates further that

The point is that natural philosophy as such was a discipline and subject-area whose role and point was the study of God's creation and God's attributes. Thus, no-one ever undertook the practice of natural philosophy without having God in mind, and knowing that the study of God and God's creation—in a way different from that pursued by theology—was the point of the whole exercise. All natural philosophy was always like this; when people stopped having this understanding of their goal in their considerations of nature then they necessarily stopped doing natural philosophy, and started engaging in a discipline or enquiry which was, in this most fundamental of ways, different in its identity from natural philosophy.4

Dr. Cunningham does not mince his words. He states his position with vigor and seeming clarity. He tells us that “natural philosophy was about God and about God's universe”; that we should “start

1 Andrew Cunningham, “How the Principia Got Its Name; or, Taking Natural Philosophy Seriously,” History of Science 29 (1991), 377-392.
2 Ibid., 381.
3 Ibid., 386.
4 Ibid., 388.