

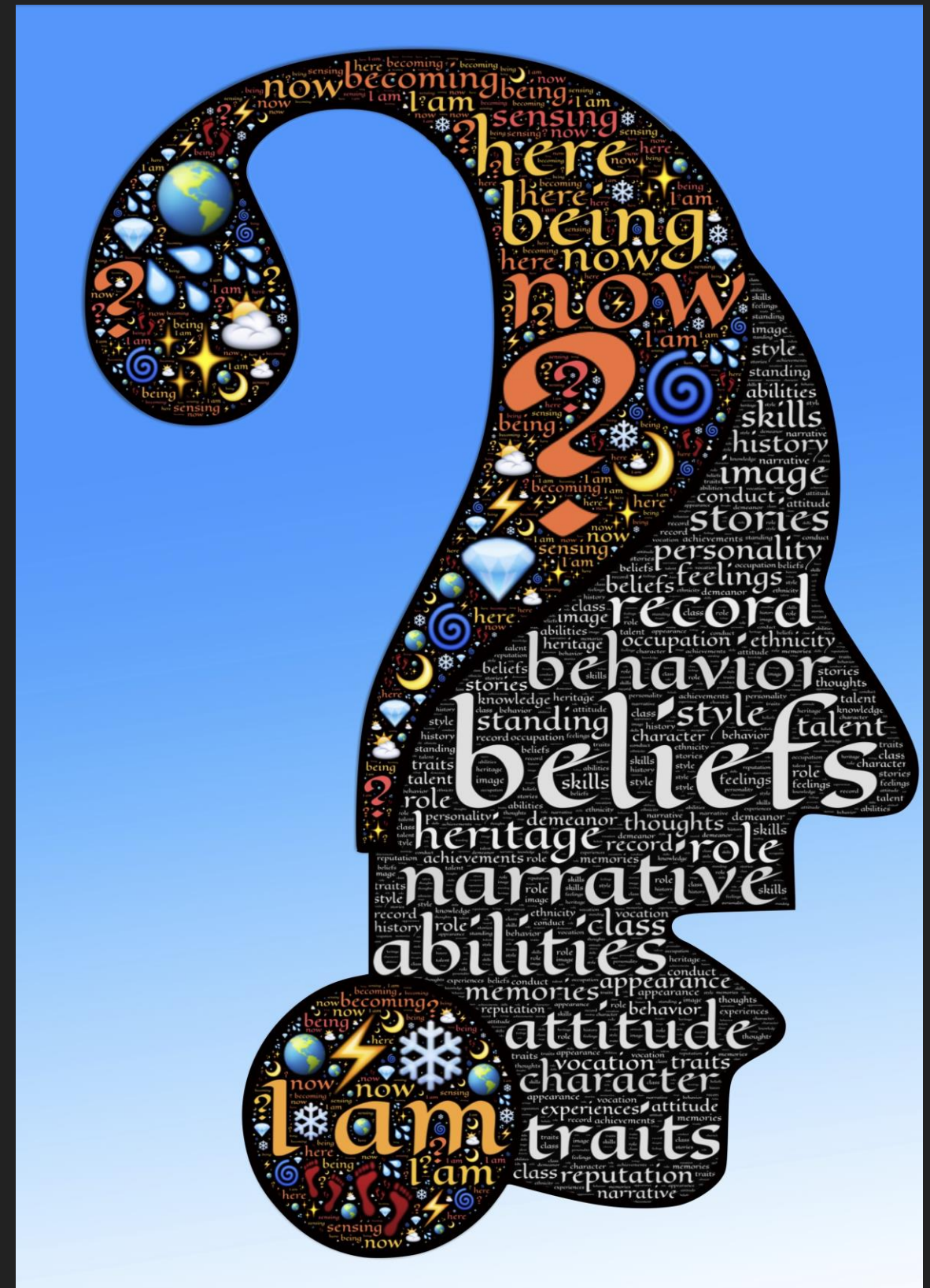
For Cercle zététique du Languedoc-Roussillon  
Université d'automne 2019

CLAIRE KLINGENBERG

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# THE SKEPTIC MOVEMENT IN EUROPE

- ▶ What is skepticism and the skeptical movement
- ▶ The modern roots and development
- ▶ Current form and issues
- ▶ What are skeptics in Europe doing



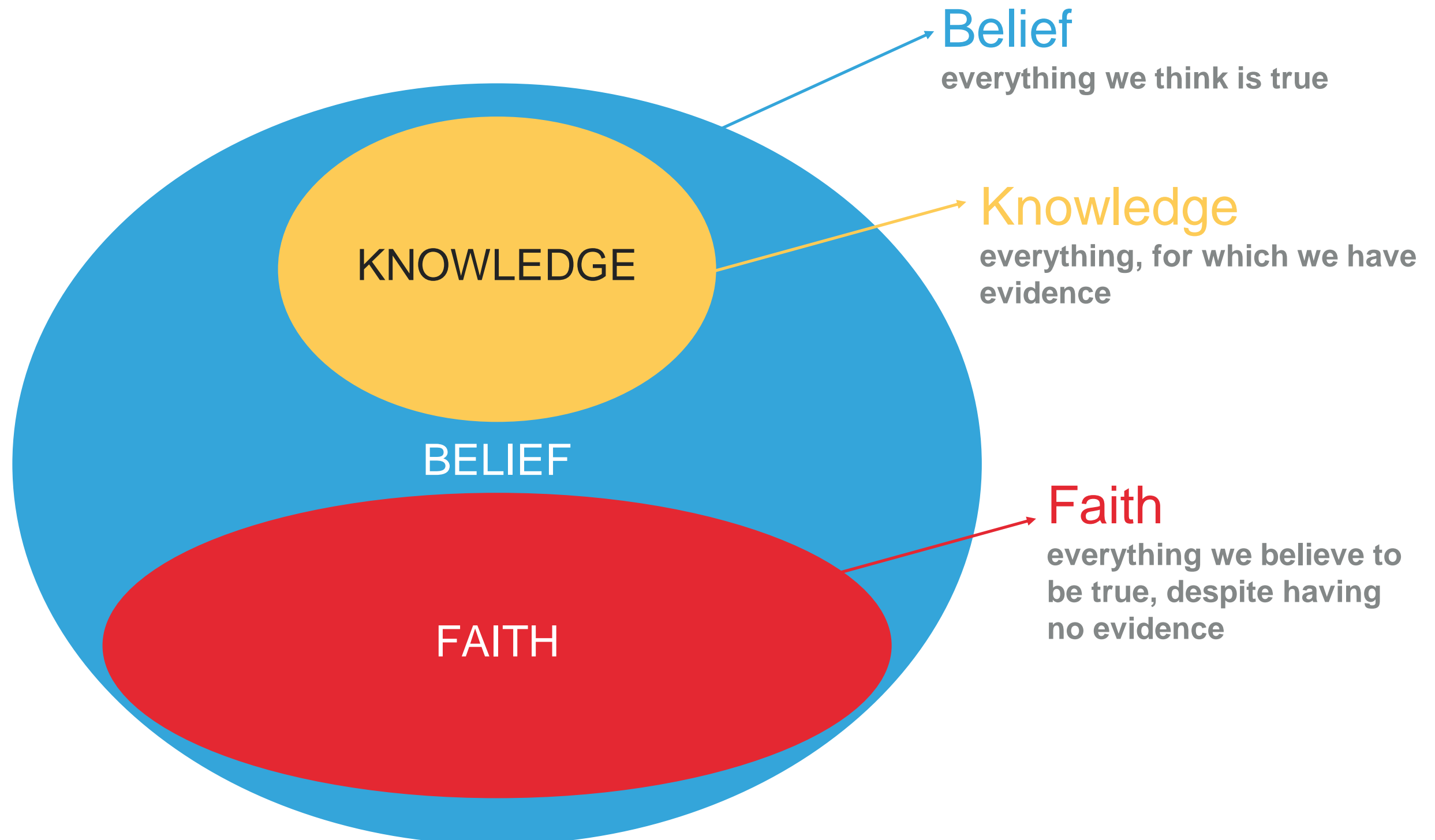


# SKEPTICIS M AND THE SKEPTICAL MOVEMENT T

# SKEPTICISM

- ▶ **Systematic Doubt**
- ▶ Philosophical
  - ▶ Gorgias: Nothing exists; even if something exists, nothing can be known about it; and even if something can be known about it, knowledge about it can't be communicated to others.
- ▶ Religious
  - ▶ Questioning various religious beliefs and claims

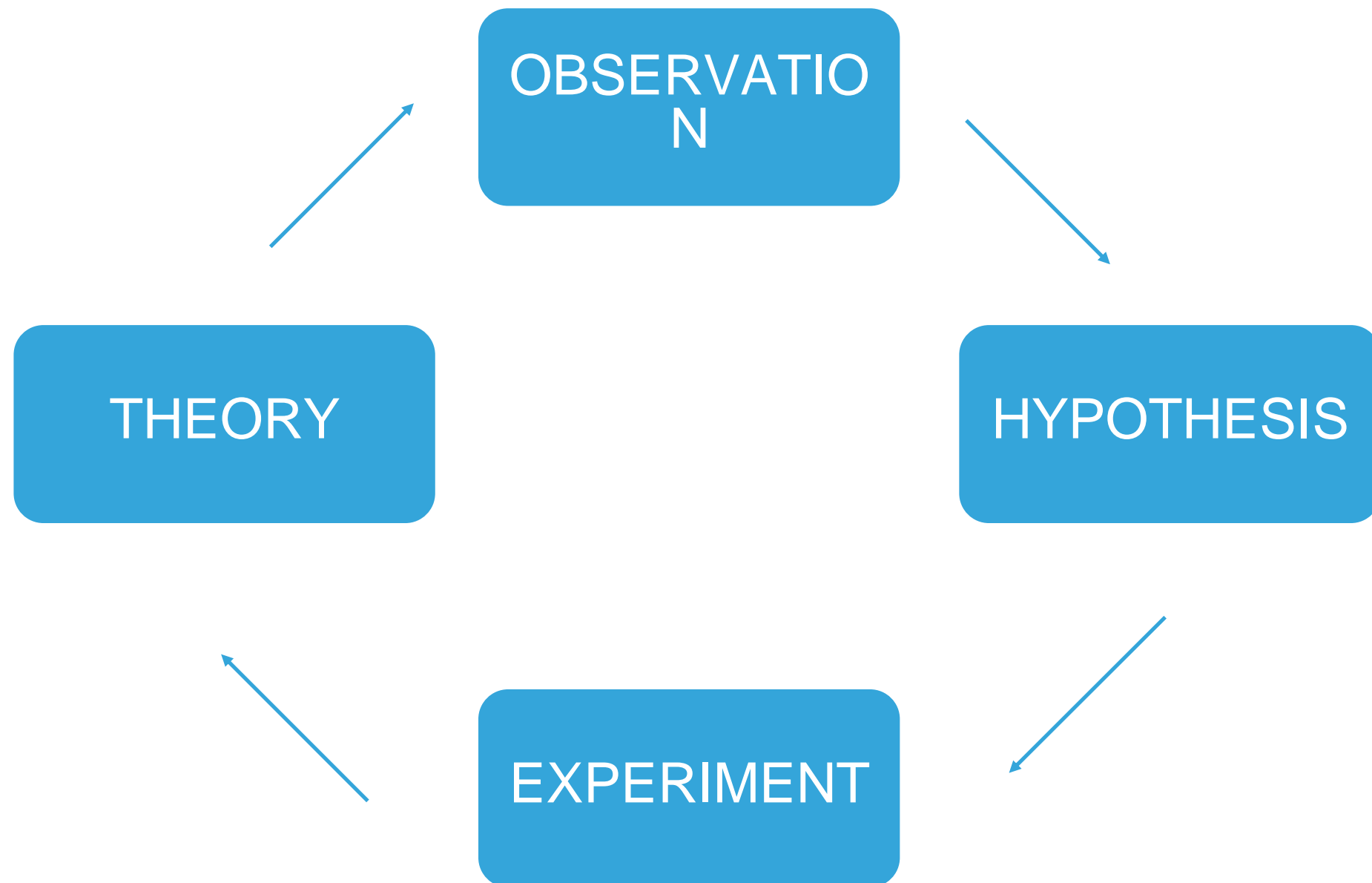
# BELIEF, FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE



# SKEPTICISM

- ▶ **Systematic Doubt**
- ▶ Philosophical
  - ▶ Gorgias: Nothing exists; even if something exists, nothing can be known about it; and even if something can be known about it, knowledge about it can't be communicated to others.
- ▶ Religious
  - ▶ Questioning various religious beliefs and claims
- ▶ Scientific
  - ▶ Questioning various beliefs and claims based on scientific findings

# SCIENTIFIC METHOD



# THE SKEPTICAL MOVEMENT

- ▶ A social movement created around the idea of scientific skepticism
- ▶ Avoiding making conclusions without thorough investigation
- ▶ Applying scientific findings and method to empirical claims across fields
  - ▶ Demanding empirical evidence
- ▶ Keeping a neutral stance towards unempirical claims and beliefs, unless they are in direct conflict of the development of the scientific knowledge base



# EVIDENCE

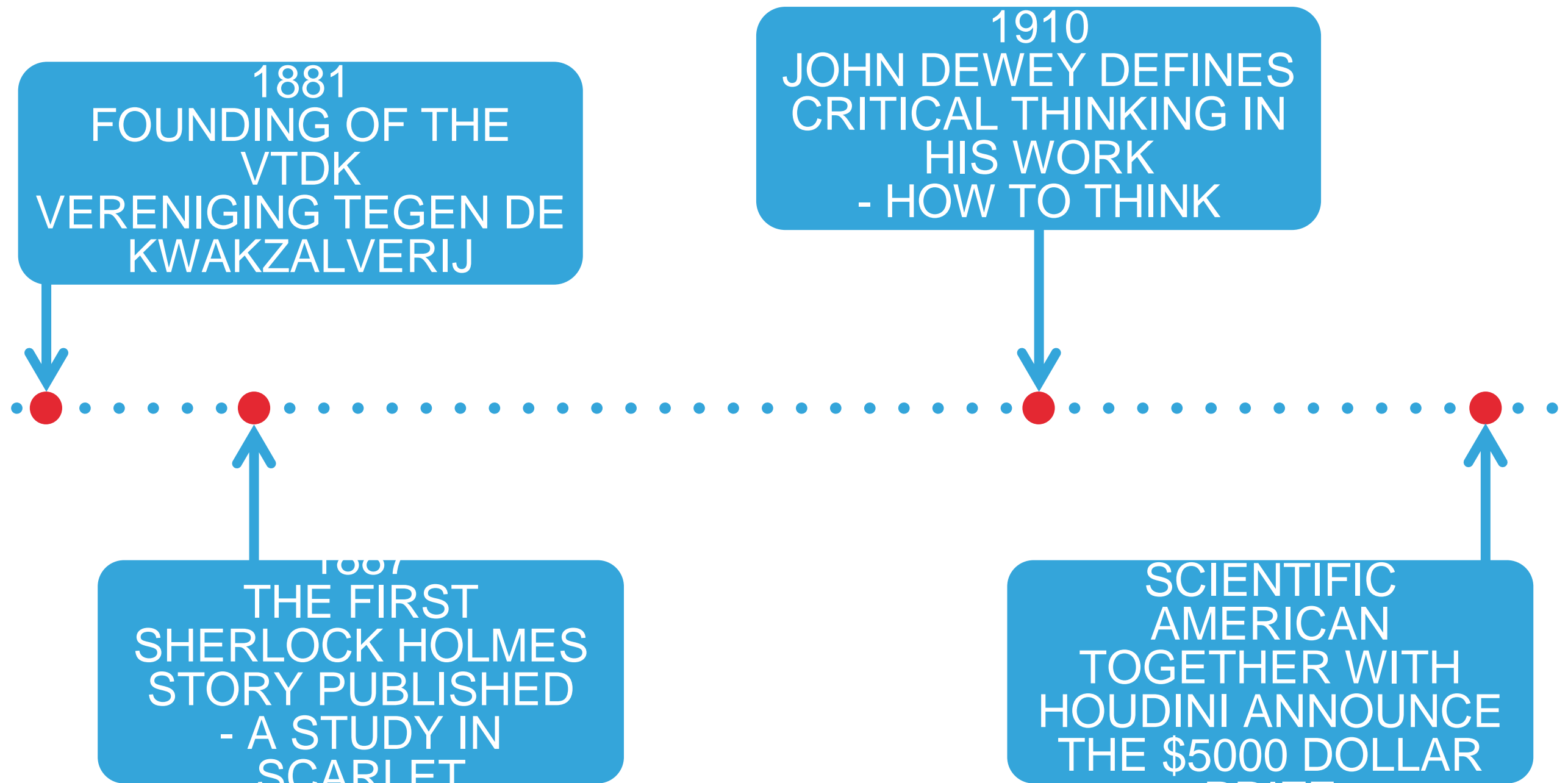
EMPIRICAL  
(GAINED USING THE  
SCIENTIFIC METHOD)

CASE STUDIES  
(WELL-DOCUMENTED  
NARRATIVES)

ANECDOTAL  
(NARRATIVE)



# ROOTS AND DEVELOP MENT



# 1881

- ▶ The Association against Quackery
- ▶ Nederlands Tijdschrift tegen de Kwakzalverij
- ▶ Main successes
  - ▶ Professionalising medicine
  - ▶ The Netherlands one of the first countries with drug/pharmaceutical regulation



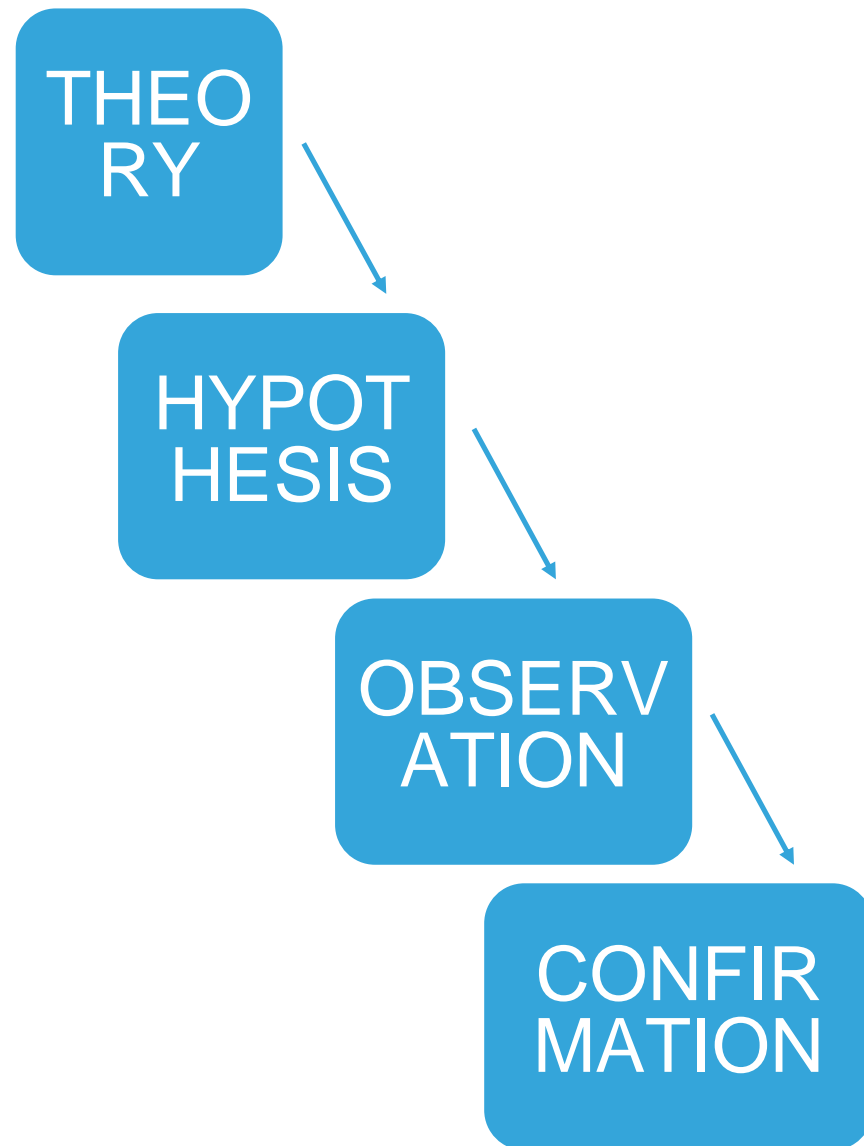
## 1887

- ▶ Arthur Conan Doyle
- ▶ Sherlock Holmes
  - ▶ C. Auguste Dupin - E. A. Poe
  - ▶ Joseph Bell
- ▶ *A Study in Scarlet*
- ▶ The Art of Induction



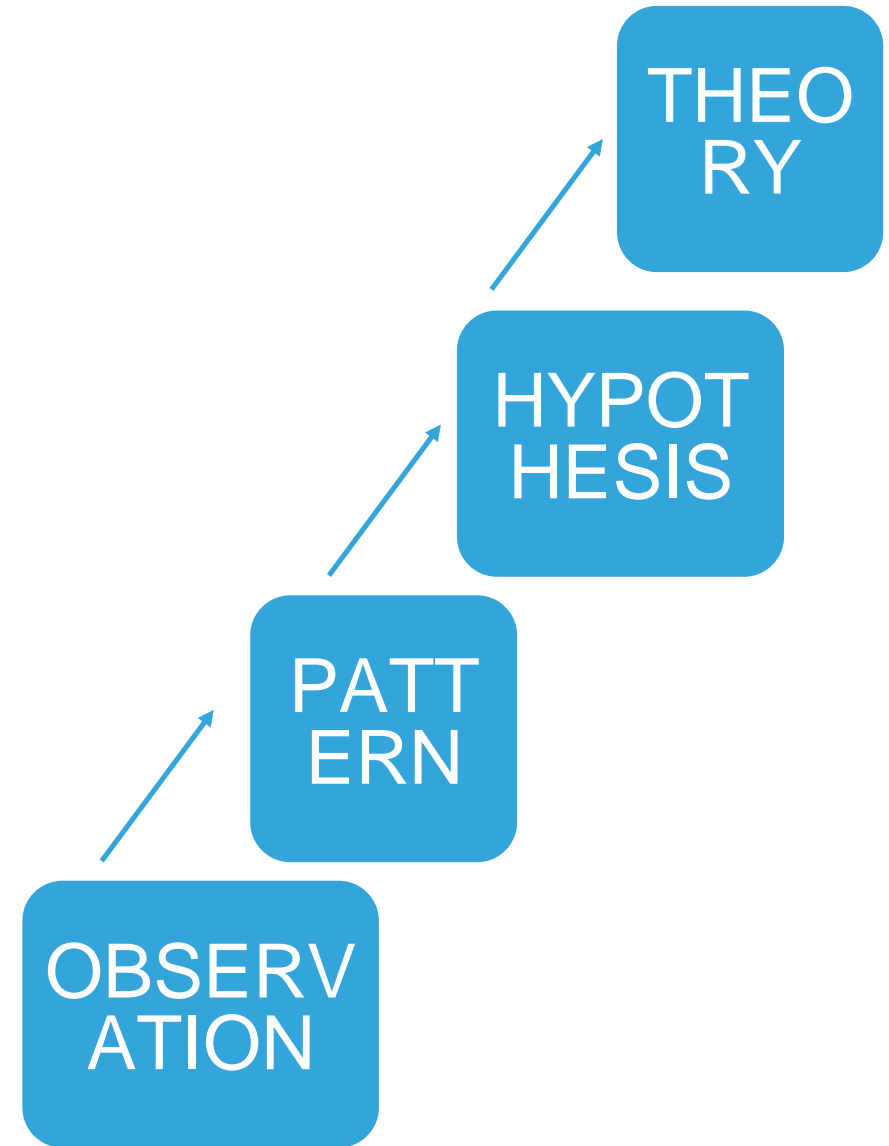


## DEDUCTION



vs.

## INDUCTION



## 1910

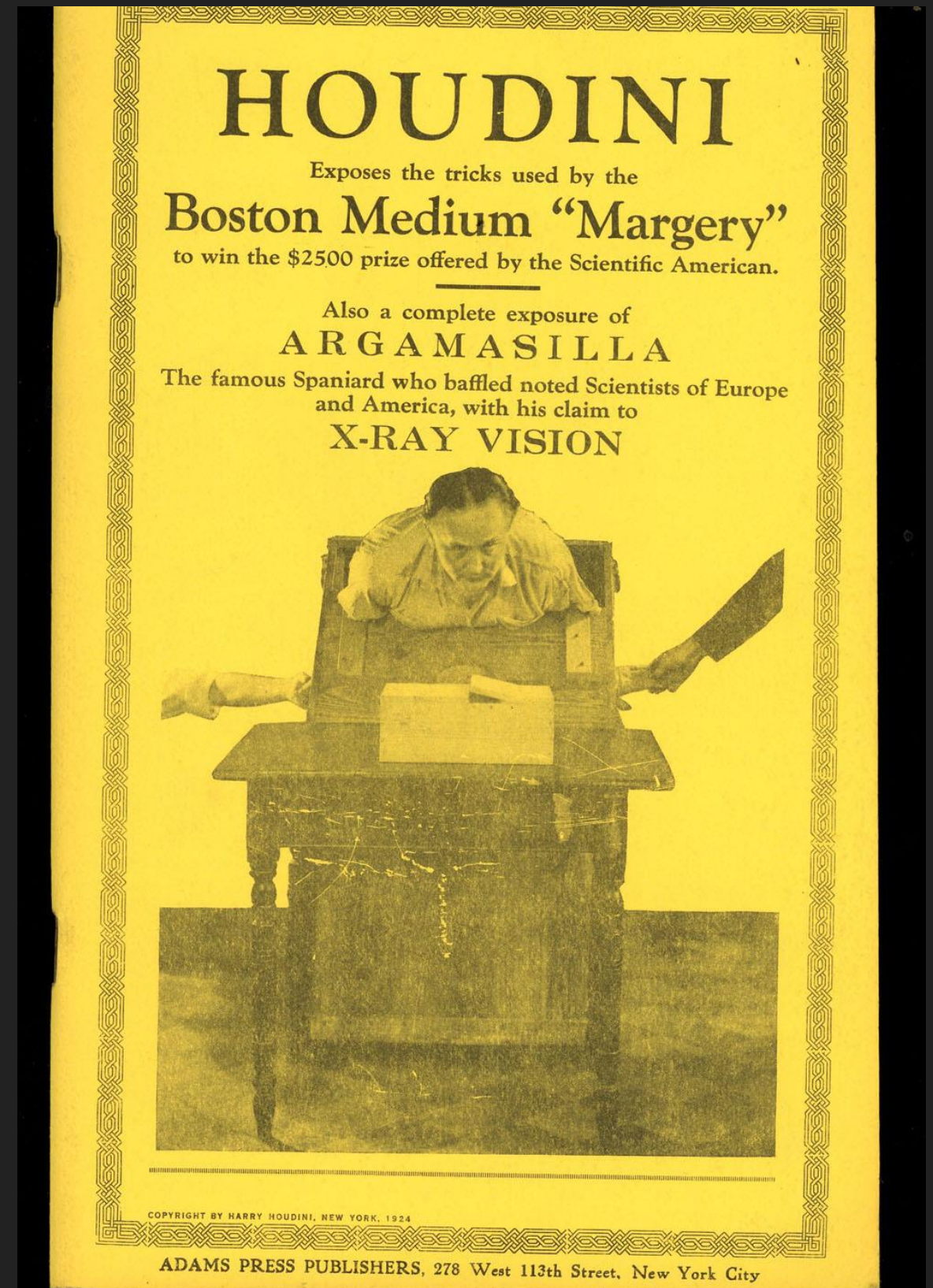
- ▶ *How We Think*
- ▶ John Dewey
  - ▶ Pedagogue
  - ▶ Pragmatic philosophy
- ▶ The definition of critical thinking as a reflection on thought
  - ▶ Pausing decision making
  - ▶ Healthy skepticism
  - ▶ Open mind



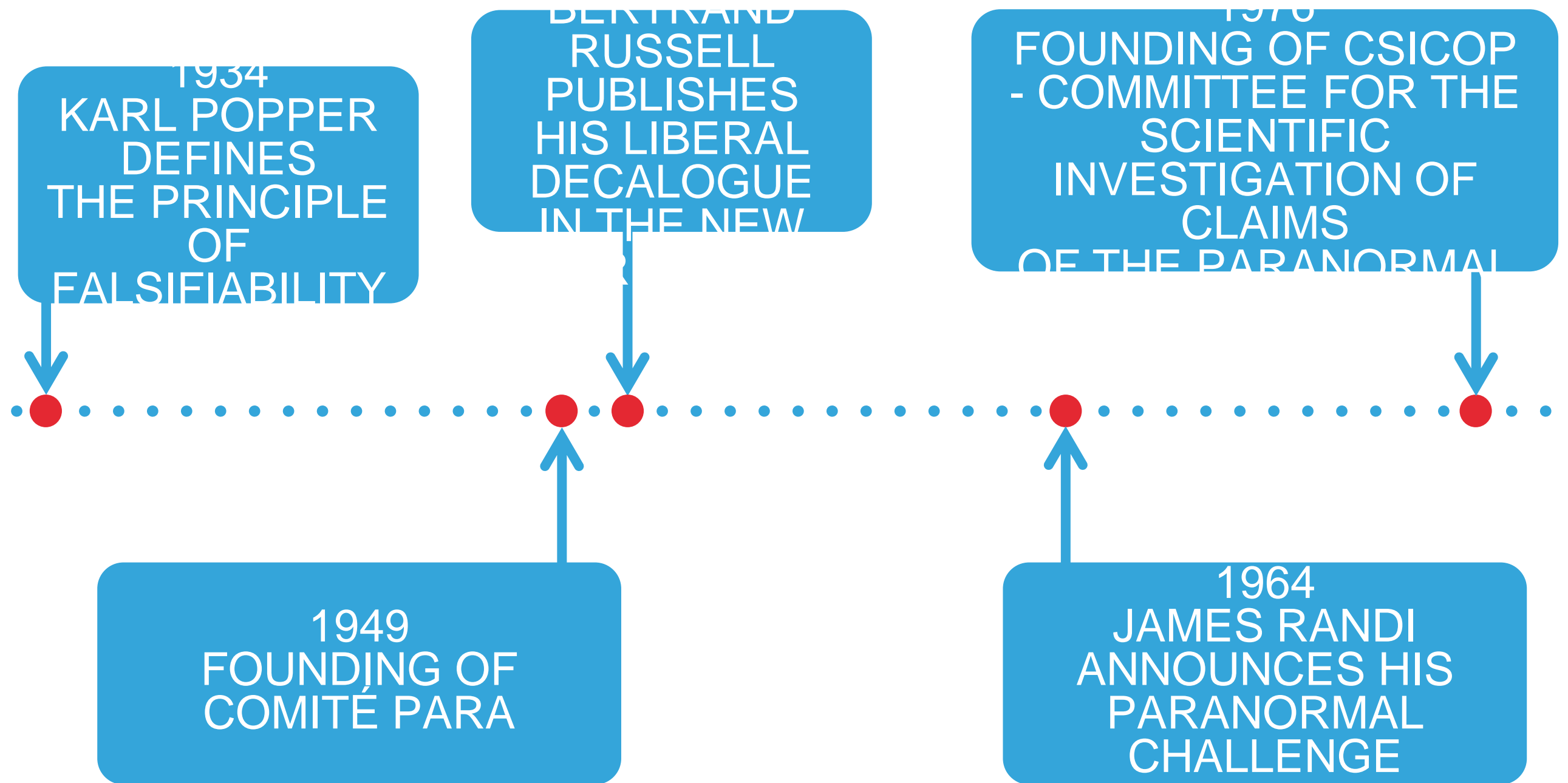


## 1923

- ▶ Harry Houdini
  - ▶ Escapologist
  - ▶ Spiritual seances
- ▶ Friends with A. C. Doyle
- ▶ After the death of his mother (1913) starts searching for real medium
- ▶ 1923 becomes member of the Scientific American Investigation Panel, looking for mediums (\$5000)

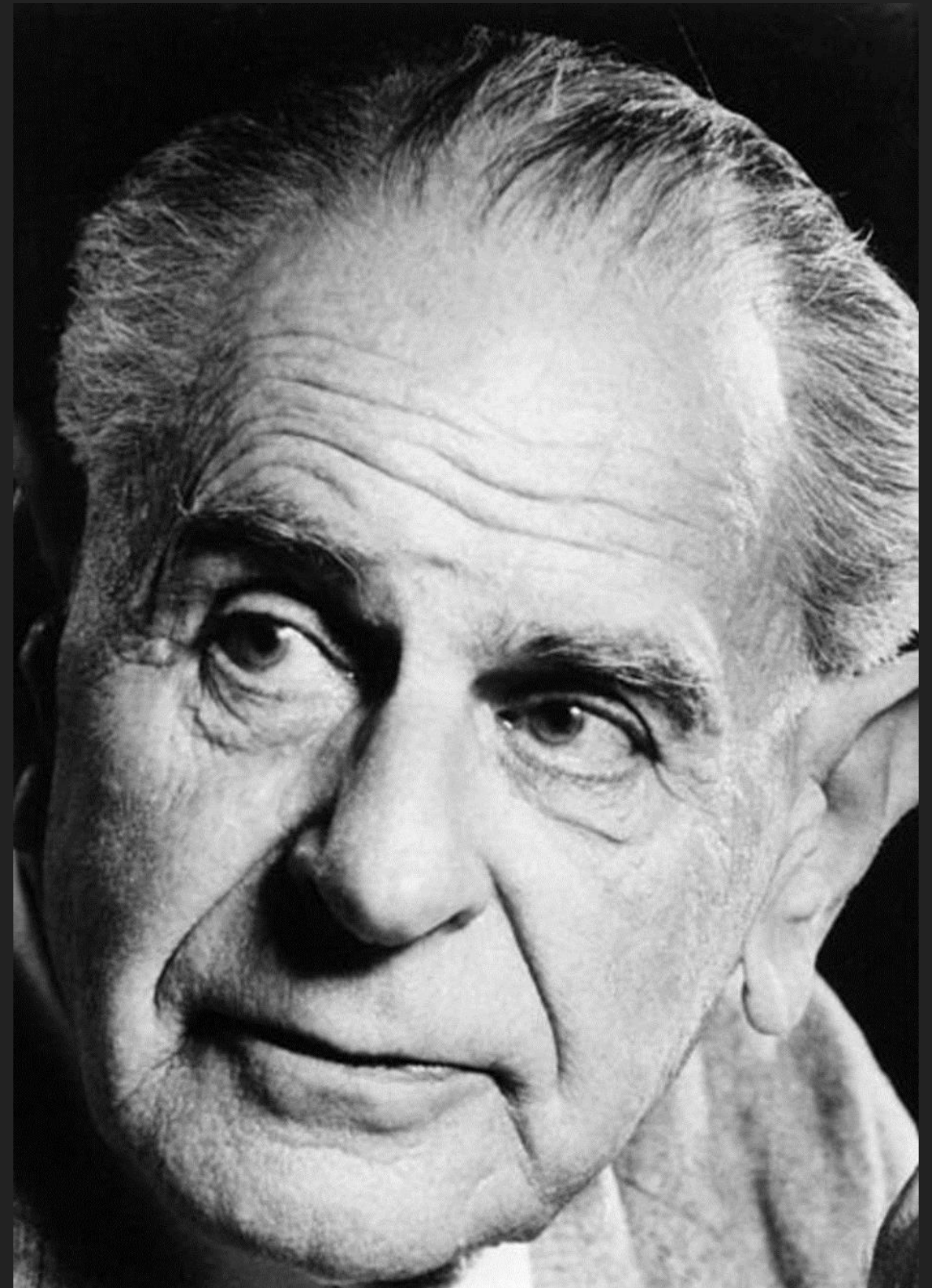






## 1934

- ▶ Karl Popper
- ▶ The father of the modern theory of science
- ▶ Critical rationalism
  - ▶ Finding the balance between opinion plurality and relativism
- ▶ Falsifiability
  - ▶ Claims must be formulated in a way that can be tested
  - ▶ A theory confirmed by experiments is only valid as long as it is not disproven



# 1949

- ▶ Comité Para
  - ▶ Comité belge pour l'Analyse Critique des parasciences
- ▶ Belgium
- ▶ They consider themselves the founders of the modern skeptical movement



## Comité Para

**Comité belge pour l'analyse critique des parasciences**

ASBL fondée en 1949 - Membre ECSO (European Council of Skeptical Organisations)

NE RIEN NIER A PRIORI,  
NE RIEN AFFIRMER SANS  
PREUVE.

DON'T REFUSE

ANYTHING A PRIORI,

DON'T ACCEPT

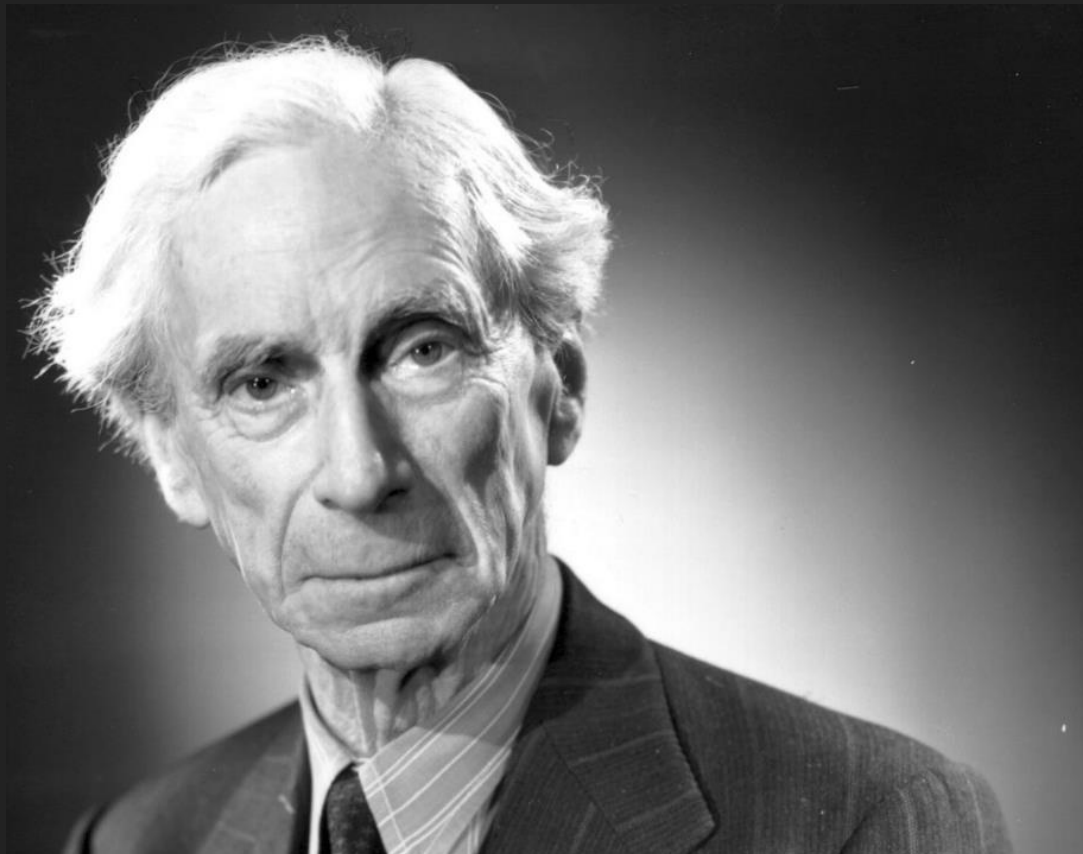
ANYTHING WITHOUT

PROOF.

Robert Rendu

## 1951

- ▶ The Best Answer to Fanaticism--Liberalism
- ▶ The Bertrand Russell Decalogue



- 1: Do not feel absolutely certain of anything.
- 2: Do not think it worthwhile to produce belief by concealing evidence, for the evidence is sure to come to light.
- 3: Never try to discourage thinking, for you are sure to succeed.
- 4: When you meet with opposition, even if it should be from your husband or your children, endeavor to overcome it by argument and not by authority, for a victory dependent upon authority is unreal and illusory.
- 5: Have no respect for the authority of others, for there are always contrary authorities to be found.
- 6: Do not use power to suppress opinions you think pernicious, for if you do the opinions will suppress you.
- 7: Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.
- 8: Find more pleasure in intelligent dissent than in passive agreement, for, if you value intelligence as you should, the former implies a deeper agreement than the latter.
- 9: Be scrupulously truthful, even when truth is inconvenient, for it is more inconvenient when you try to conceal it.
10. Do not feel envious of the happiness of those who live in a fool's paradise, for only a fool will think that it is happiness.



## 1964

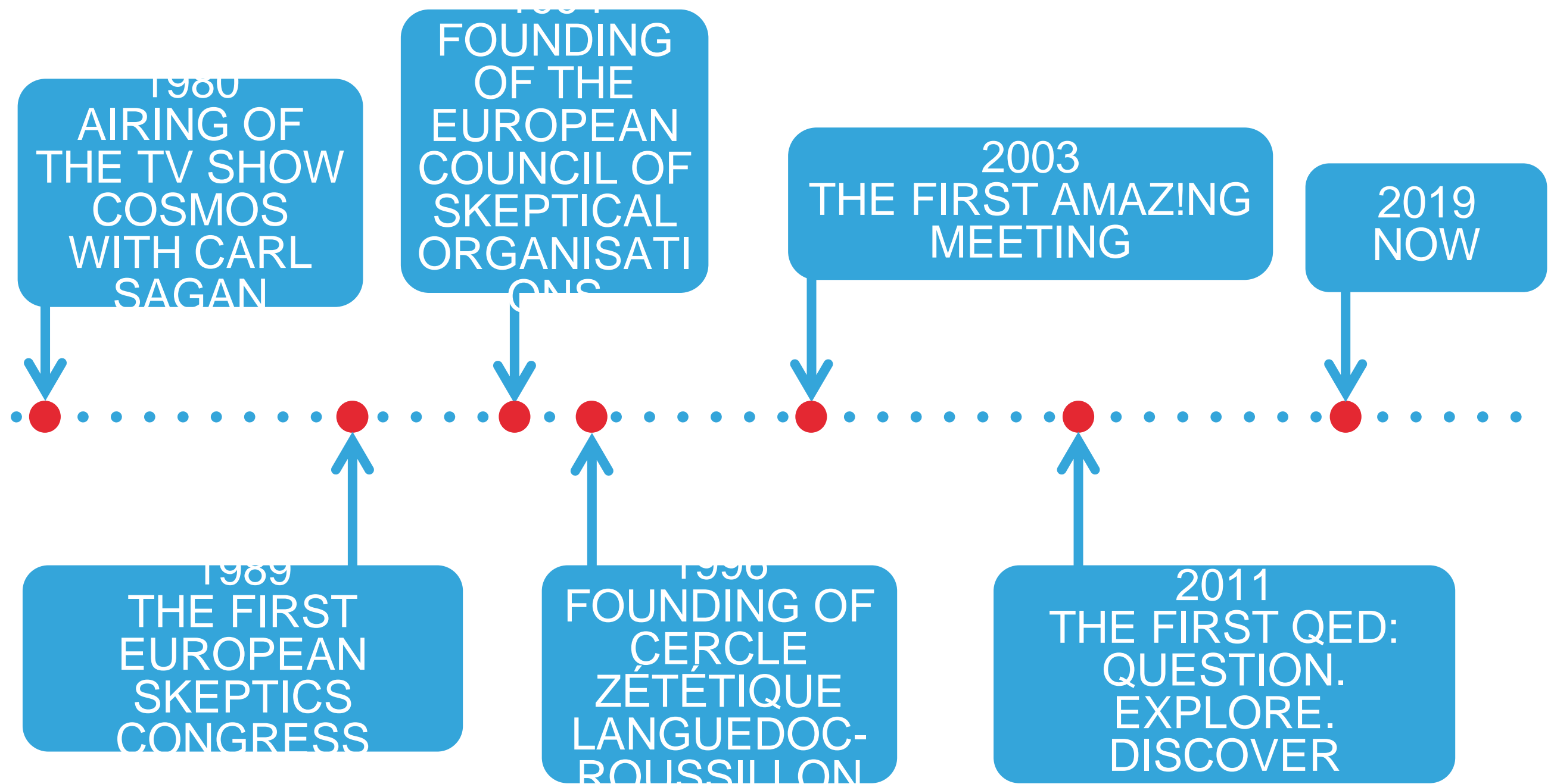
- ▶ James Randi
- ▶ Magician
- ▶ Expert on the fraudulent imitation of paranormal phenomena
- ▶ One Million Dollar Paranormal Challenge
- ▶ Project Alpha (1979-83)
- ▶ Carlos Hoax (1988)



## 1976

- ▶ CSICOP
  - ▶ Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal
  - ▶ Co-founded by Randi, Isaac Asimov, B. F. Skinner and Carl Sagan
- ▶ CSI
  - ▶ Committee for Skeptical Inquiry

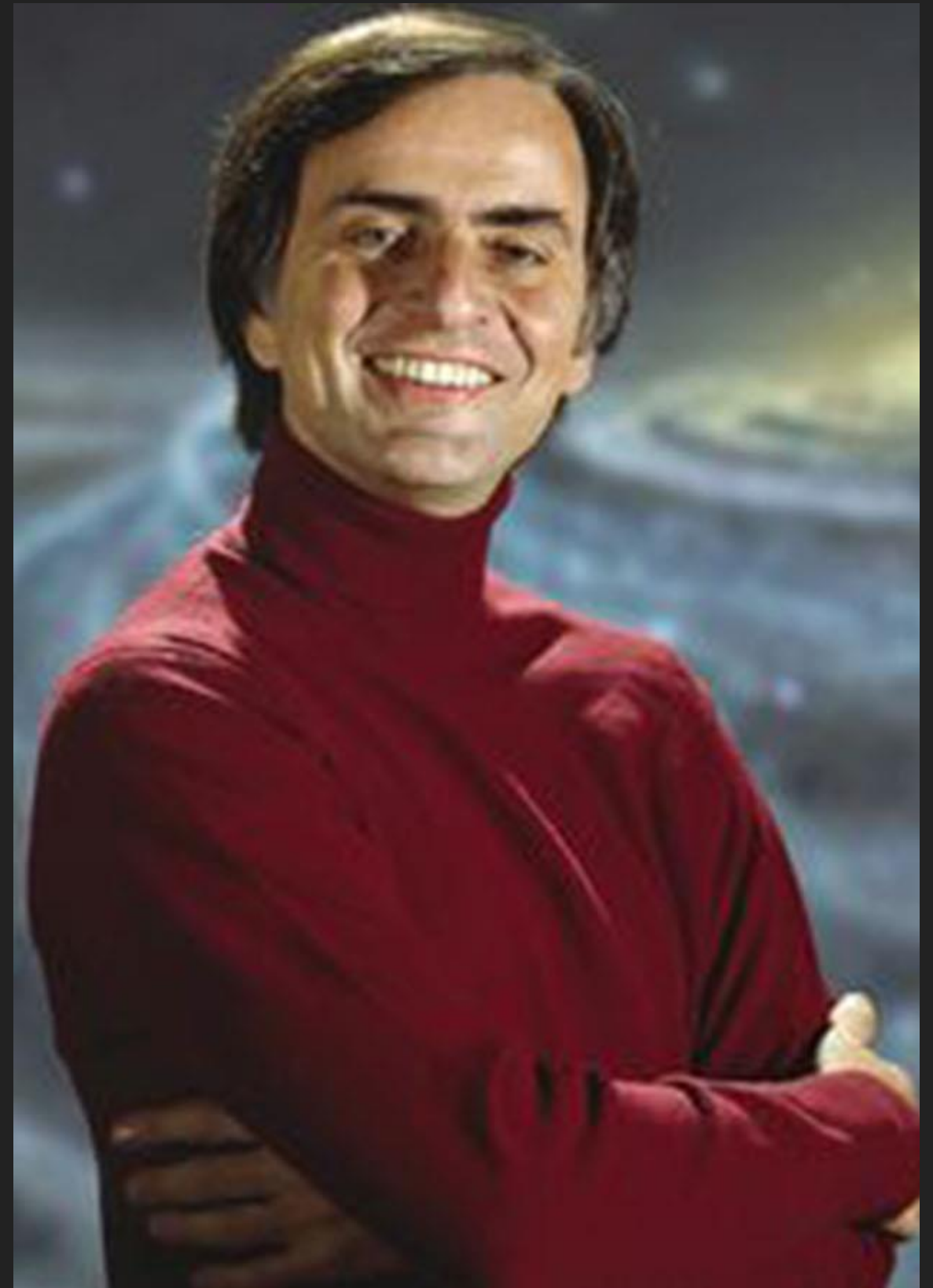






## 1980

- ▶ Carl Sagan
  - ▶ The promoter of science and the scientific method
  - ▶ Astronomer, astrophysicist, astrobiologist
- ▶ TV Show *Cosmos*
- ▶ Research of the existence of extraterrestrial life



EXTRAORDINARY  
CLAIMS NEED  
EXTRAORDINARY  
EVIDENCE.

Carl Sagan

## 1989

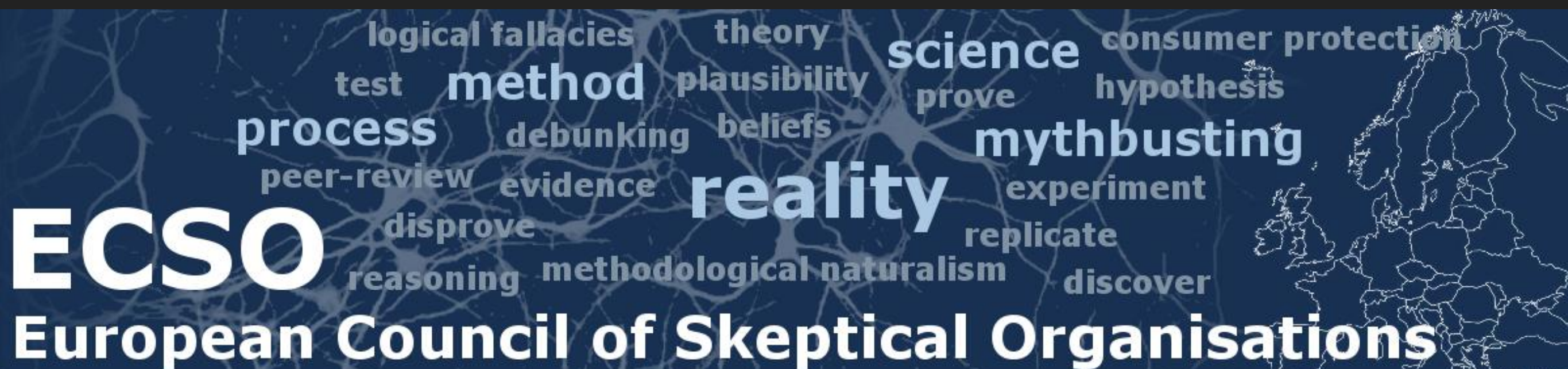
- ▶ The meeting of the members of skeptical organisations





# 1994

- ▶ Umbrella organisation
  - ▶ Skeptical
  - ▶ Rationalist
  - ▶ Science-communicating



## 2003

- ▶ The Amaz!ng Meeting
- ▶ The conference on science, skepticism and critical thinking
- ▶ Las Vegas



## 2011

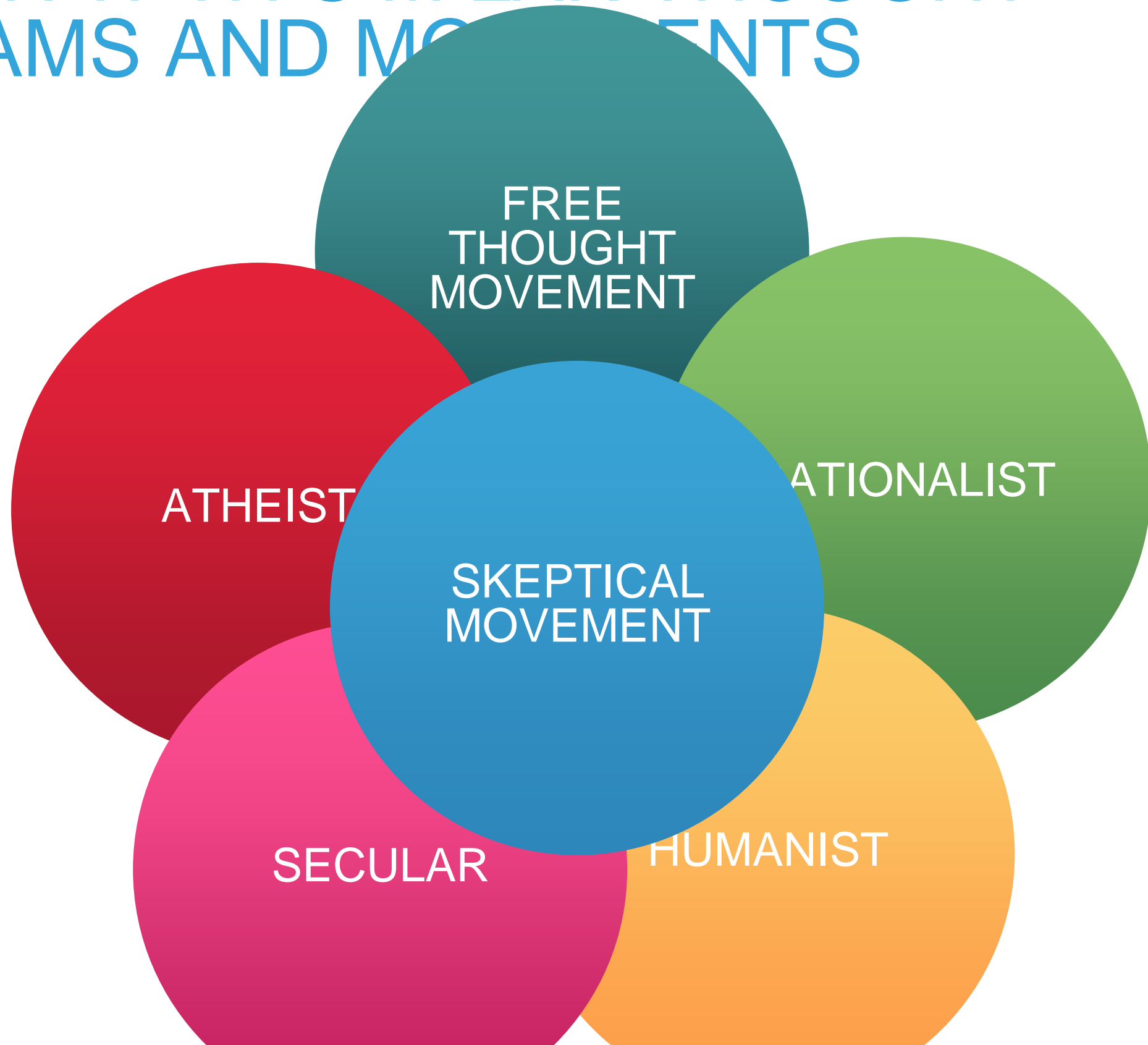
- ▶ Question. Explore. Discover.
- ▶ Manchester, UK
- ▶ A skepticism festival





CURRENT  
FORM

# FUSION WITH SIMILAR THOUGHT STREAMS AND MOVEMENTS



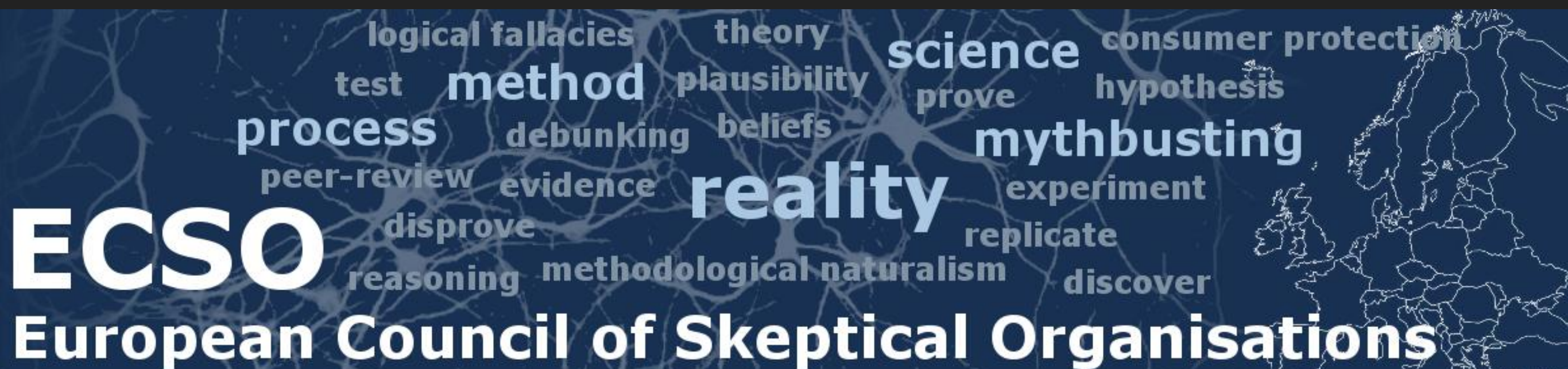


# AIMS

- ▶ To promote and defend the highest standards of scientific integrity and practice in research, education, medicine and public policy.
- ▶ To oppose the promulgation of claims and practices, including treatments, that are not supported by, or inconsistent with, scientific knowledge and research, particularly when these may have adverse consequences.
- ▶ To encourage the conducting of controlled tests and experiments on such claims and practices, one intention being to demonstrate to the public the broader applications of science and critical thinking. In particular this applies to phenomena commonly identified as 'paranormal' or 'pseudoscientific'. However, no claims, explanations or theories will be rejected in advance of objective evaluation.

## PLANNED PROJECTS

- ▶ Universal glossary
- ▶ Pan-European brochures



# CATEGORIES OF SKEPTICAL ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Timing
  - ▶ Pro-Active or Reactive
- ▶ Type of contact
  - ▶ IRL or On-Line
- ▶ Approach
  - ▶ Skeptic or Skeptical Activist

## PRO-ACTIVE

- ▶ Educational websites
- ▶ Talks and lectures on science topics
- ▶ Shows
  - ▶ TV
  - ▶ Radio
- ▶ Conferences
- ▶ Campaigns

## RE-ACTIVE

- ▶ Awards and anti-awards
- ▶ Marches
- ▶ Talks and lectures on spread misinformation
- ▶ Shows
- ▶ Fact-checking websites
- ▶ Campaigns

## IRL WORK

- ▶ Talks and lectures
- ▶ Marches
- ▶ Conferences
- ▶ Courses
- ▶ Events
- ▶ Campaigns
- ▶ Debates

## ON-LINE WORK

- ▶ Creating websites and content
  - ▶ GSoW (Guerrilla Skepticism on Wikipedia)
- ▶ Campaigns on social media
- ▶ Sharing of verified info

## DIVERGENCE IN APPROACH

- ▶ Dogmatic - Skeptic
  - ▶ Direct connection with data
  - ▶ Data is enough
  - ▶ Keeping skepticism on a high scientific level
- ▶ Popularising - Skeptical activist
  - ▶ Indirect routes to skepticism
  - ▶ Application to a larger variety of topics
  - ▶ Skepticism for kids

# PSEUDOSKEPTICS

- ▶ Using the word “skeptic” without applying a skeptical thought process
  - ▶ Climate-skepticism
  - ▶ Euro-skepticism
- ▶ Believing in one’s own judgement without doing the work

WE ARE NOT  
DEBUNKERS.  
WE ARE  
INVESTIGATORS.  
EVEN THOUGH IT IS  
TEMPTING TO REJECT  
EVERYTHING A PRIORI,  
IT IS NOT SKEPTICAL.

Joe Nickell,





# SKEPTIC PERSONAL ITIES





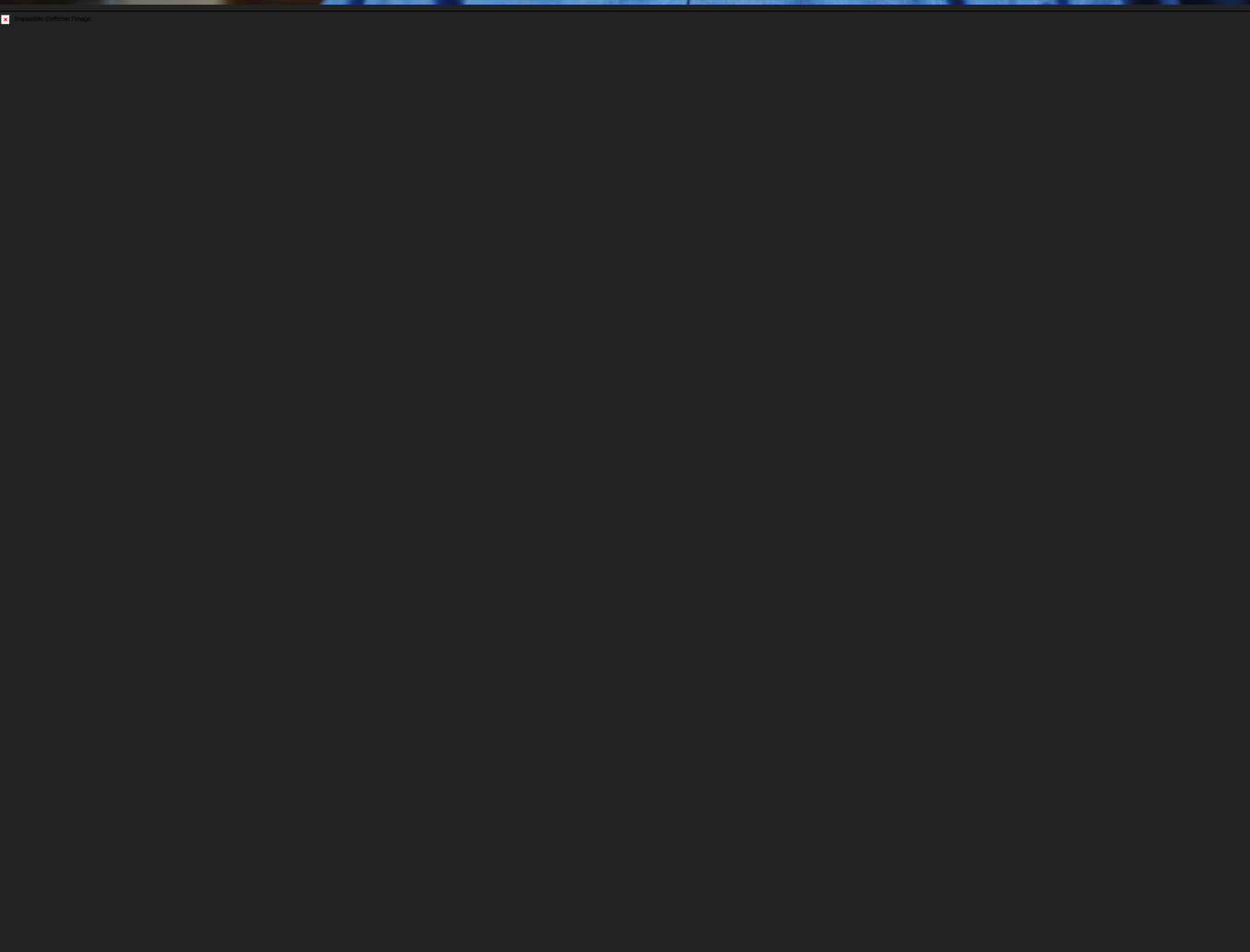




43









# SKEPTICS IN EUROPE



# AFIS FRENCH SKEPTICS - 1968

- ▶ Magazine
- ▶ Books
- ▶ Regular meetings
- ▶ specific conferences or events



## CERCLE ZÉTÉTIQUE LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON

- ▶ Monthly meetings
- ▶ Public conferences (2/3 times a year)
- ▶ Autumn University



# GWUP GERMAN SKEPTICS - 1987

- ▶ Annual central congress (SkepKon)
- ▶ Regional talks
- ▶ meetings
- ▶ skeptics in the pub
- ▶ Magazine
- ▶ INFORMATION NETWORK  
HOMEOPATHY

The logo for GWUP (German Working Group on Unsubstantiated Practices) is displayed in a large, bold, blue, stylized font. The letters are thick and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance.

# SWISS SKEPTICS - 2012

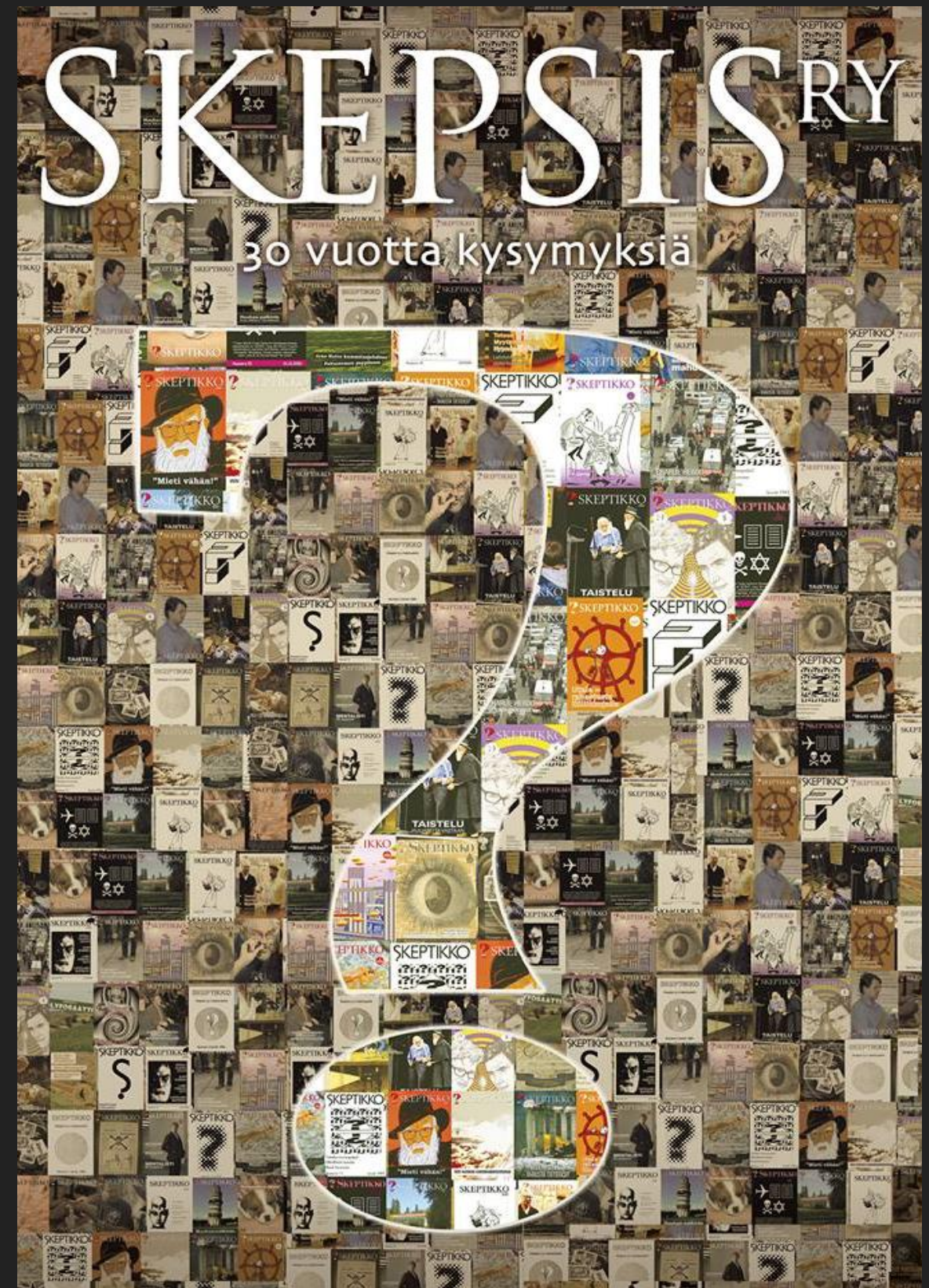
- ▶ Skeptics in the Pub
- ▶ Debates
- ▶ Panel discussions
- ▶ Skeptical film screenings
- ▶ Denkfest

**[Skeptiker]**Schweiz  
Verein für kritisches Denken



# SKEPTICS FINLAND - 1987

- ▶ Magazine
- ▶ Science lecture in the House of Sciences in Helsinki seven times per year
- ▶ Lectures recorded and online
- ▶ Homeopathy awareness events
- ▶ Foreign speakers





## ARP-SAPC SPANISH SKEPTICS - 1986

- ▶ monthly Skeptics in the Pub in four Spanish cities (Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Santiago de Compostela)
- ▶ course of critical thinking for school teachers every year, in association with the Centre of Training for Teachers of Elche (in the Region of Valencia)
- ▶ Fund skeptic and scientific events organised by other associations.
- ▶ Magazine



## CICAP ITALIAN SKEPTICS - 1989

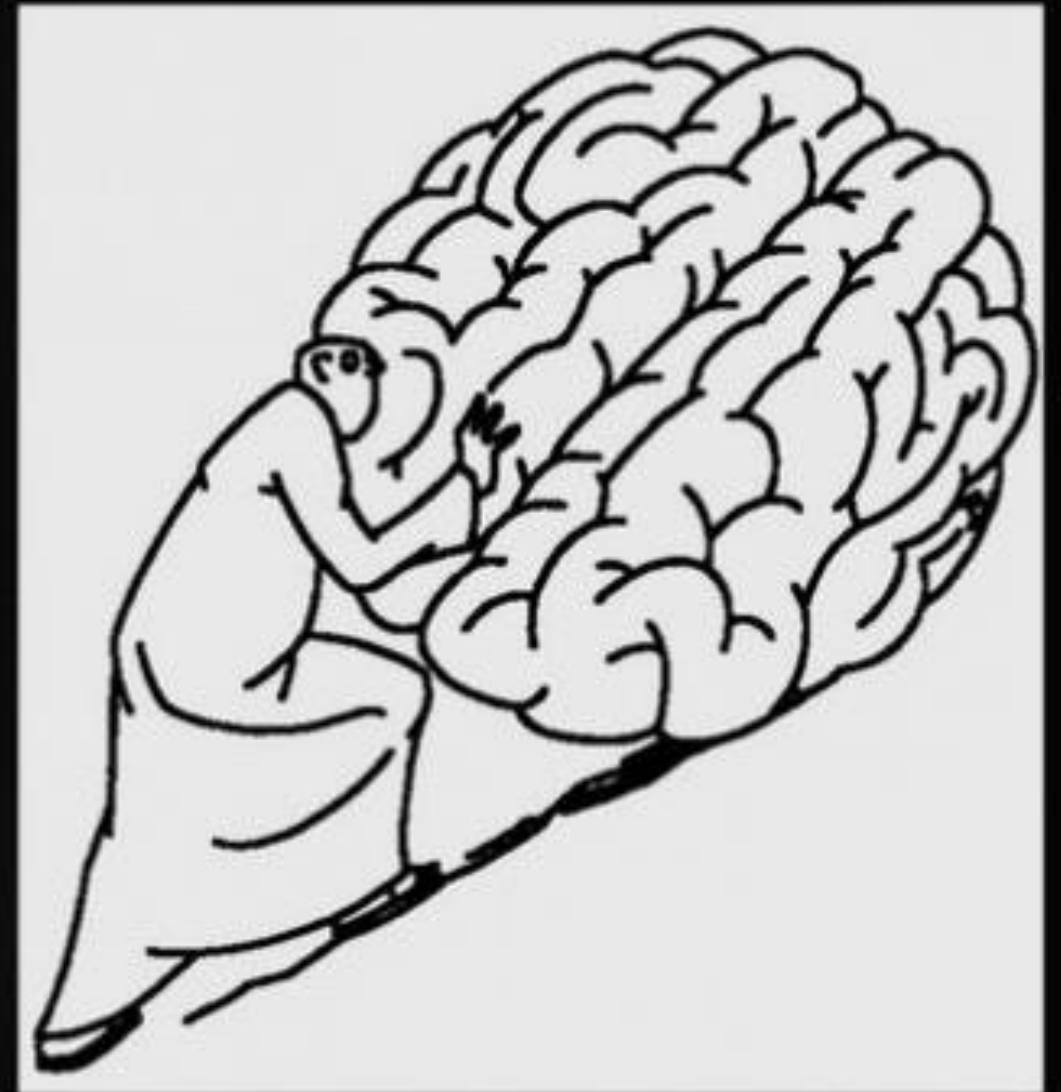
- ▶ Magazine
- ▶ Annual CICAP fest
- ▶ skeptic in the pub
- ▶ annual skeptical investigator course
- ▶ stand in main book/science exhibition, lectures series, etc.



**CICAP**  
COMITATO ITALIANO PER IL CONTROLLO  
DELLE AFFERMAZIONI SULLE PSEUDOSCIENZE

## SISYFOS CZECH SKEPTICS - 1995

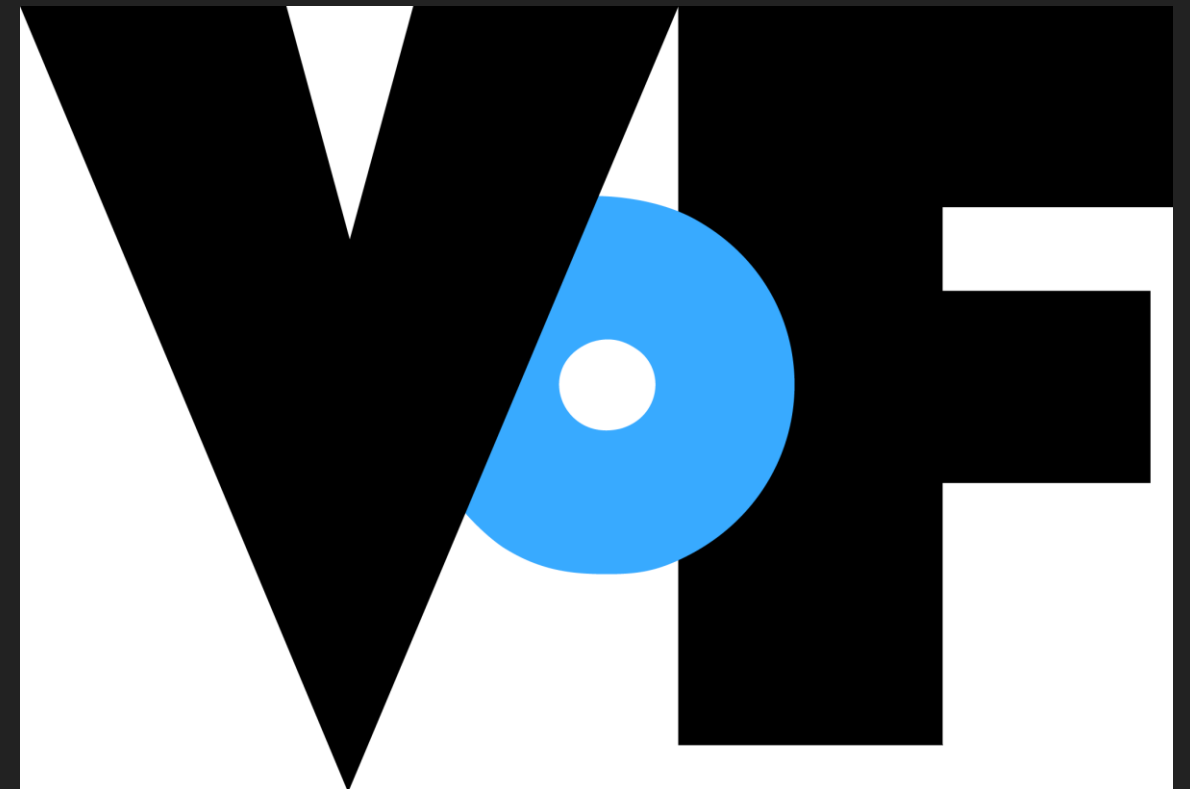
- ▶ Every third Wednesday of the month talks on Science vs. Irrationality
- ▶ every Friday a science talk
- ▶ once a year Czech skeptik conference Skeptikon
- ▶ once a year anti-award the Erratic Boulder
- ▶ Skeptics in the Pub
- ▶ Magazine



SISYFOS  
Český klub skeptiků

# VOF SWEDISH SKEPTICS - 1982

- ▶ Skeptics in the Pub in 7 cities
- ▶ Magazine
- ▶ Initiatives
- ▶ Campaigns



- ▶ Skepticism
- ▶ Past
- ▶ Development
- ▶ Present
- ▶ Personalities
- ▶ Individual Groups
- ▶ [www.ClaireK.com](http://www.ClaireK.com)
- ▶ @ClaireAccendit

