

# **The Dawkins Proof**



# **The Dawkins Proof**

*for the existence of God*

by

Richard Barns

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Published 2009

Second Edition 2010

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# Contents

Foreword	7
1. Nothing Beyond the Natural Physical World	9
2. Powerful Arguments	17
3. Apparent Design	34
4. The Entirely Unwarranted Assumption	58
5. An Unrebuttable Refutation	65
6. The Manifest Phenomenon of Zeitgeist Progression	73
7. Completely Superseded by Science	98
8. A Meaningful, Full and Wonderful Life	106
9. The Dawkins Proof	115
Notes	119



# Foreword

I found out about the problems of atheism by taking atheism seriously. I tried to be a consistent atheist and I believed the conclusions that atheism led to. But I found that what consistent atheism led to was something utterly unworkable. It was, paradoxically, my desire to be a thorough atheist that drove me towards God.

This book is a result of that experience. It is a response to Richard Dawkins' book *The God Delusion* but it is not simply a reply to Dawkins' arguments against God. I will also be looking at evidence *for* the existence of God that is provided by Dawkins himself. My argument is not only that Dawkins cannot refute theism, it is that he is unable to be consistent to his atheism. God's existence is so inescapably part of human life that even Richard Dawkins lives as if God exists.

## Notes and Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who have helped in the making of this book, in reading and correcting manuscripts and in bringing useful references to my attention. I have made much use of Internet-based resources and my thanks go to the individuals and organisations that have made them freely available. The sources are all acknowledged in the endnotes. The endnotes are primarily page references and web site addresses but some do add extra details or background information – such notes have their index numbers shown in italics.

Finally, I should say a brief word about language. In this book I have used the word “man” to refer to humanity as a type, and I have used “he” as a neuter pronoun. I have used these words for want of better alternatives and they are not intended to be gender specific.





# Chapter One

## Nothing Beyond the Natural Physical World

How can you believe in the existence of something that you cannot see – indeed that you cannot detect by any means? I hope that by the end of this brief chapter I will at least have sketched an outline response to this question that lies at the heart of atheism’s challenge to belief in God.

### **Atheism**

I will take my definition of atheism from Richard Dawkins. In the first chapter of *The God Delusion* he describes an atheist as:

...somebody who believes there is nothing beyond the natural, physical world...<sup>1</sup>

“There is nothing beyond the natural, physical world.” Nothing exists but material objects interacting with each other. Material objects are composed of atoms, and atoms are made up of protons, neutrons and electrons. Actually things are rather more complicated than this. Protons and neutrons are themselves made up of lesser components and there are a variety of other, more esoteric, particles. Ultimately, all matter is believed to be composed of twelve fundamental particles – the different varieties of quarks and leptons.<sup>2</sup>

These material particles react with each other via the fundamental interactions (or forces): gravity, electromagnetism, the weak interaction and the strong interaction.<sup>3</sup> Gravitation and electromagnetism (including radio waves and light) are familiar from everyday life; the weak and the strong interaction

## *The Dawkins Proof*

are short-range forces that operate principally at the atomic level. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “All the known forces of nature can be traced to these fundamental interactions”.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the fundamental particles interacting via the fundamental forces explain the behaviour of every material object and as Dawkins says “there is nothing beyond the natural, physical world”. If this is true it means that *everything* can be explained in terms of these particles and their interactions. All that exists is the void of space in which there are vast quantities of incomprehensibly minute fundamental particles. These particles interact with each other via the fundamental forces and that is the cause of everything that happens. What is love? It is the production of certain chemicals in the cells of the brain and the endocrine system. These cells and these chemicals are ultimately composed of fundamental particles interacting with each other, and that’s it. Every thought, every emotion, every ideal reduces to material particles interacting in space.

In the remainder of this section we will look at some of the outworkings of this belief.

**Firstly**, *if only matter exists then there is nothing special about human life.*

There is nothing special about the chemical elements in the human body. The body is composed principally of oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium and phosphorus with trace amounts of many other elements.<sup>5</sup> The oxygen, carbon, hydrogen etc in the human body are just the same as the oxygen, carbon and hydrogen found anywhere else – in the sea, soil or stones. The elements in the body may be arranged in a more complicated structure and may take part in more complicated interactions than they generally do elsewhere, but that doesn’t give life any value, it just means that it involves complex chemical reactions. The body is composed of the same fundamental particles interacting via the same fundamental forces as are found

## *Nothing Beyond The Natural Physical World*

everywhere else. A human being thus has no more value than any other material object. Indeed the idea of value has no meaning other than as an entirely arbitrary personal or social assertion. This is not saying that human life is no more important than animal life, or even plant life, but that human life (or any life) is no more important than gravel. There is nothing special about it. There is nothing special about anything because there are no standards of specialness. There are no standards of anything. There are just material particles reacting with each other. Nothing but matter in motion.

**Secondly**, *there can be no concept of “ought”.*

What about human actions? They are of no more value or significance than the actions of any other material thing. Consider rocks rolling down a hill and coming to rest at the bottom. We don't say that some particular arrangement of the rocks is right and another is wrong. Rocks don't have a duty to roll in a particular way and land in a particular place. Their movement is just the product of the laws of physics. We don't say that rocks “ought” to land in a certain pattern and that if they don't then something needs to be done about it. We don't strive for a better arrangement or motion of the rocks. In just the same way, there is no standard by which human actions can be judged. We are just another form of matter in motion, like the rocks rolling down the hill.

We tend to think that somewhere “out there” there are standards of behaviour that men ought to follow. But according to Dawkins there is only the “natural, physical world”. Nothing but particles and forces. These things cannot give rise to standards that men have a duty to follow. In fact they cannot even account for the concept of “ought”. There exist only particles of matter obeying the laws of physics. There is no sense in which anything ought to be like this or ought to be like that. There just is whatever there is, and there just happens whatever happens in accordance with the laws of physics.

## *The Dawkins Proof*

Men's actions are therefore merely the result of the laws of physics that govern the behaviour of the particles that make up the chemicals in the cells and fluids of their bodies and thus control how they behave. It is meaningless to say that the result of those physical reactions ought to be this or ought to be that. It is whatever it is. It is meaningless to say that people ought to act in a certain way. It is meaningless to say (to take a contemporary example) that the United States and its allies ought not to have invaded Iraq. The decision to invade was just the outworking of the laws of physics in the bodies of the people who governed those nations. And there is no sense in which the results of that invasion can be judged as good or bad because there are no standards to judge anything by. There are only particles reacting together; no standards, no morals, nothing but matter in motion.

Dawkins finds it very hard to be consistent to this system of belief. He thinks and acts as if there were somewhere, somehow standards that people ought to follow. For example in *The God Delusion*, referring particularly to the Christian doctrine of atonement, he says that there are "teachings in the New Testament that no good person should support".<sup>6</sup> And he claims that religion favours an in-group/out-group approach to morality that makes it "a significant force for evil in the world".<sup>7</sup>

According to Dawkins, then, there are such things as good and evil. We all know what good and evil mean. We know that if no good person should support the doctrine of atonement then we ought not to support that doctrine. We know that if religion is a force for evil then we are better off without religion and that, indeed, we ought to oppose religion. The concepts of good and evil are innate in us. The problem for Dawkins is that good and evil make no sense in his worldview. "There is nothing beyond the natural, physical world." There are no standards out there that we ought to follow. There is only matter in motion reacting according to the laws of physics. Man is not of a different character to any other material thing. Men's actions are not of a different type or level to that of rocks rolling down a hill. Rocks are not subject to laws that require them to do good and not evil;

nor are men. Every time you hear Dawkins talking about good and evil as if the words actually meant something, it should strike you loud and clear as if he had announced to the world, “I am contradicting myself”.

Please note that I am not saying that Richard Dawkins doesn't believe in good and evil. On the contrary, my point is that he *does* believe in them but that his worldview renders such standards meaningless.

**Thirdly**, *there is no such thing as “mind”*.

There is no such thing as “mind” except as a synonym for “brain”. A person's mind is simply the result of the electrochemical reactions between the cells in his brain and that is ultimately the result of the reactions of the sub-atomic particles. That is all. Everything we feel, desire or know is the result of the forces of attraction and repulsion between those particles. It is not that your mind exists as a reality and is somehow encoded in these physical reactions. Rather your mind does not exist at all; it is merely a name you give to the effect of physical reactions between particles in your brain. If only matter exists then everything reduces to material particles and the forces between them. Non-material things such as God, spirit, mind, laws, justice do not exist. They are an illusion – only arbitrary mental or social constructs that are ultimately false and meaningless.

## **Theism**

There are many differing religions in the world, just as there are many differing atheistic philosophies, and I am not going to be advocating all of them, nor some sort of lowest-common-denominator general theism. Dawkins says that he opposes all gods,<sup>8</sup> but his arguments are particularly aimed in one direction. The God for whose existence I am contending is the God whom Dawkins particularly opposes, that is the God of the Bible.

What is this God like? There is an obvious place to find out:

## *The Dawkins Proof*

God is holy: *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy...*<sup>9</sup>

He has great power and wisdom: *Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.*<sup>10</sup>

He is a spirit: *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*<sup>11</sup>

He is the creator: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*<sup>12</sup>

He made man in his image: *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...*<sup>13</sup>

He reveals himself to those who seek him: *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you...*<sup>14</sup>

That is a very brief outline of the position that I am arguing from; it is this teaching that forms the background and foundation of what I have to say. My aim is to show not only that Dawkins' arguments against God are invalid but that Dawkins lives, and indeed argues, in a way that is inconsistent with atheism but is perfectly consistent with Christian theism. The existence of God is not something "very very improbable"<sup>15</sup> as Dawkins asserts but is actually inescapable – even for Richard Dawkins.

It is not surprising, then, that all cultures are theistic in some way. Although some atheists claim that man is born an atheist and has to be indoctrinated into theism<sup>16</sup> there are no atheistic cultures except where ideological atheists have brutally suppressed theistic beliefs and tried to indoctrinate people into atheism. Even then such cultures have been short-lived. Man knows that God exists, and though that knowledge can be corrupted, leading to varieties of theism and polytheism, or suppressed, leading to atheism, it is very hard to entirely wipe it out.

## *Nothing Beyond The Natural Physical World*

The existence of God is vital to us, it is imprinted upon our nature. There are so many things that we take for granted and often do not even think about that depend upon the existence of God. Those things start to fall apart if one tries to be a consistent atheist. The belief that only matter exists cannot account for the real existence of anything that is immaterial and this has very serious consequences as we have already begun to see.

In the Christian theistic view the foundation of existence is not material particles and the forces between them, but the infinite, perfect, all-wise, personal God. And thus it is simple and straightforward for theism to deal with those immaterial issues that atheism cannot handle. For example consider the three points we looked at in the previous section:

Firstly, human life is special because man is made in the image of God. Man is not just another material object, he is to be treated in a special way as is made clear by God's law, which brings us to the next point.

Secondly, there is such a thing as "ought" and the rights and justice that flow from that concept because God has given us a moral law that we are required to live by. God is our maker and as such he has an authority that no man has. Not only can he tell us what to do but he has put a knowledge of morality in us by nature. This is why, although we may corrupt the standards of God's law, we can never fully escape from the idea that moral standards do exist. The existence of God accounts for the reality of standards not simply because it means that immaterial things exist but because God has the authority to set standards.

Thirdly, man being made in the image of God has a mind, not simply a physical brain. Indeed man has a spiritual nature including his mind which survives the death of the body.

It is not hard for the theist to be consistent to his worldview because his worldview accounts for both the material and immaterial aspects of existence, including the standards that flow from God's authority.

## **Delusion**

Dawkins asserts that theists are following a delusion, but who is really delusional here? The logical outworkings of atheism lead to a belief system that he is unable to live by. Its radical materialism destroys the notions of right, wrong and justice – indeed the reality of any concept or idea relating to values or standards. “There is nothing beyond the natural, physical world” says Dawkins and yet he talks about good and evil in his arguments against God. Standards of good and evil are not material – they *are* something beyond the natural, physical world and therefore, if Dawkins is right, they cannot exist. When Dawkins says that theism is a force for evil he is denying his own assertion about the fundamental nature of existence. Thus even his own arguments for atheism contradict atheism. It should be apparent, even at this early stage, that Dawkins is caught in a trap of his own devising.

In the following pages we will look first at Dawkins’ arguments against God (chapters two to five and part of chapter six) and then at the evidence for God’s existence and the way in which Dawkins himself lives as if God exists (chapters six to nine).



# Chapter Two

## Powerful Arguments

The paperback edition of *The God Delusion*<sup>17</sup> is covered with a superabundance of commendations. They are not only on the back cover, but inside the back cover, and inside the front cover, plus there are two extra pages in the front of the book to hold more of them. A common theme in many of them is praise for the intellectual cogency of the work. It will “delight any reader with a modicum of intelligence and intellectual regard”, it is a “coherent and devastating indictment of religion”, “a resounding trumpet blast for truth”, it displays “cutting intelligence” and “merciless rationalism”.

Dawkins has obviously managed to persuade a good number of book reviewers that *The God Delusion* (hereafter TGD) is a series of rational arguments against the existence of God. But one does not have to look very deeply to see that it does not live up to these claims. A significant proportion of the book is simply propaganda material designed to “soften up” the reader and make him feel ill-disposed towards theism, and well-disposed towards atheism. There are also many speculative assertions that are passed off as being far more weighty than their make-believe origins deserve. In this chapter we are going to look at some typical examples of the propaganda and speculation that fill the pages of TGD.

One of the most fulsome commendations of the book comes from Joan Bakewell’s review in *The Guardian*:

Dawkins comes roaring forth in the full vigour of his powerful arguments...<sup>18</sup>

However another reviewer in *The Guardian* saw Dawkins' arguments differently. In January 2006 Madeleine Bunting wrote an article bearing the sub-heading:

Richard Dawkins' latest attack on religion is an intellectually lazy polemic not worthy of a great scientist.<sup>19</sup>

That review was not of TGD but of *Root of All Evil?* Dawkins' television programme on Channel Four; though, as Dawkins acknowledges,<sup>20</sup> the two are interrelated. Bunting summarises Dawkins' arguments as "unsubstantiated assertions, sweeping generalisations and random anecdotal evidence".<sup>21</sup> Assertions, generalisations, and anecdotes prove nothing but they can still be used very effectively to influence people's attitudes, and that is what propaganda is all about. But if one reads critically it is not hard to see the techniques that are being used and the fallacious reasoning that is being employed.

## **Bad Theists**

There are fine Latin terms for the logical fallacies that propaganda delights in. *Argumentum ad hominem* is perhaps the one most favoured by Dawkins. It means:

The fallacy of attacking the character or circumstances of an individual who is advancing a statement or an argument instead of trying to disprove the truth of the statement or the soundness of the argument.<sup>22</sup>

In short it is to argue against the man rather than his message. Have this in mind when you read TGD and you will see just how often it comes up. Dawkins presents us with odd or unpleasant theists in order to create a bad impression of theism. There are many theists who have achieved a great deal of good and whose lives are worth imitating but Dawkins goes looking for the sort he wants. He is not objectively investigating the lives of theists, he is writing propaganda.

## *Powerful Arguments*

As well as presenting us with individual bad theists Dawkins also claims that theism is bad in general social terms. For example he quotes Sam Harris' argument that conservative Christianity does not have a good social effect, based on there being higher rates of violent crime in US cities that are in Republican states. The assumption is that Republican voting equals Christianity. Of course both Dawkins and Harris are aware of the problems with this argument and introduce it with caveats: "correlational evidence is never conclusive", says Dawkins; "political affiliation... is not a perfect indicator of religiosity", says Harris. But after their get-out clauses they wade in using these imperfect and inconclusive data as if they actually meant something. Not only are the data inappropriate for the use being made of them, they are so vague as to be worthless. Harris says:

Of the twenty-five cities with the lowest rates of violent crime, 62 percent are in 'blue' [Democrat] states, and 38 percent are in 'red' [Republican] states. Of the twenty-five most dangerous cities, 76 percent are in red states, and 24 percent are in blue states.<sup>23</sup>

But the political preference of a state as a whole is no indication of the political preference of individual cities within that state. And cities are large places with many distinct areas with different cultures and *different political preferences*. If Harris wants to demonstrate that a certain voting pattern is linked to a high incidence of violent crime then he needs to look at the distinct areas that have that voting pattern and investigate criminality in those areas. Other things that would need to be covered are the percentage of the electorate voting and the figures for votes polled by the major parties. But Harris offers us no relevant data at all.

More than this, even if Harris actually provided data at a sufficient level of detail to be relevant and even if he found that there were more violent crimes in districts that voted Republican what would that show other than that people in areas of high

crime vote for the party that claims to be tough on crime? Does Republicanism lead to crime or does the problem of crime lead people to vote Republican? Harris' data cannot tell us.

Harris' argument is the work of a desperate propagandist rather than that of a rational sociologist. It relies on a crude correlation between religion and party politics and ignores more contextually relevant influences on voting such as party crime policy. It lacks any attempt at detailed analysis and it has no way of distinguishing between cause and effect. Why is a professor at Oxford University reduced to using such material?

### **Oppressed Atheists**

There is another fallacy used by Dawkins that is rather more surprising than *argumentum ad hominem*; that is *argumentum ad misericordiam*, which is:

The fallacy committed when pity or a related emotion such as sympathy or compassion is appealed to for the sake of getting a conclusion accepted.<sup>24</sup>

One of Dawkins' aims in TGD is to get his readers to sympathise with atheism by encouraging them to feel sorry for atheists – or to be more specific, for atheists in the United States of America. He says that atheists there are “not organized and therefore exert almost zero influence”.<sup>25</sup> As an example of “the prejudice and discrimination that American atheists have to endure today”<sup>26</sup> Dawkins quotes an atheist journalist, Robert Sherman, who said that he had asked George Bush Senior whether American atheists could be considered citizens and patriots. Bush is said to have replied, “No, I don't know that atheists should be considered as citizens, nor should they be considered patriots. This is one nation under God.”<sup>27</sup> But before Dawkins comments on this he adds, “Assuming Sherman's account to be accurate (unfortunately he didn't use a tape-recorder, and no other newspaper ran the story at the time)”. The journalist forgot his tape-recorder! And only an atheist magazine ran the story.

## *Powerful Arguments*

One of the most senior US politicians<sup>28</sup> says that atheists should not be considered citizens and no newspaper mentions it. And Dawkins accuses theists of credulity!

A little research reveals that it is not only atheists who have to endure prejudice and discrimination in America today. For example, Dawkins own web site reports the case of Michael Dini, a member of the biology faculty at Texas Tech University, who refused to recommend for graduate study students who did not give a “scientific answer” to his questions about human origins. Despite the students’ complaints Dini was not required to change his policy.<sup>29</sup> Dini’s “scientific answer” meant one that did not involve God.<sup>30</sup> It was not the students’ ability that was at issue but their belief about origins. He was requiring students to share his belief about the origin of the human species before he would give them a recommendation for graduate study. But what if the origin of the human species did involve God? That idea was ruled out of the question by Dini and he was doing whatever was in his power to ensure that no-one who held to that idea could make progress in the sciences.

Similar problems are experienced by established scientists who raise even the slightest question about atheistic views of origins. *Intolerance and the Politicization of Science at the Smithsonian* is a staff report prepared for Mark Souder (Chairman of the US Government Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources) in December 2006. It details the case of Richard Sternberg a Research Associate at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History. Sternberg claimed that after he allowed an article favouring the theory of intelligent design to be published in a biology journal attempts were made to force him out of his position there. In its conclusion the report notes the opposition faced by scientists who do not support Darwinism:

Since the treatment of Dr. Sternberg came to light in early 2005, evidence has accumulated of widespread invidious discrimination against other qualified scientists who dissent

from Darwinian theory and/or who are supportive of intelligent design. In November, 2005, for example, National Public Radio reported that it had “talked with 18 university professors and scientists who subscribe to intelligent design. Most would not speak on the record for fear of losing their jobs...”<sup>31</sup>

No doubt Souder is a supporter of intelligent design – he would hardly be pursuing investigation of this issue if he were an opponent – but there is plenty of information in this report and the tape-recorder (metaphorically speaking) was running when these things happened and it is possible to research and investigate these issues further. It certainly seems that American atheists are far from being the disorganised, zero-influence victims of discrimination that Dawkins claims.

### **Wealthy Theists**

Another theme in TGD is that there is a lot of money available for the promotion of religion. A favourite target is the Templeton Prize. This is a prize (currently around £800,000) awarded annually, Dawkins says, “usually to a scientist who is prepared to say something nice about religion”.<sup>32</sup> According to its web site:

...the Templeton Prize honors and encourages the many entrepreneurs trying various ways for discoveries and breakthroughs to expand human perceptions of divinity and to help in the acceleration of divine creativity.<sup>33</sup>

Whatever that means. The prize has been awarded to a wide range of people including those well-known scientists Mother Teresa, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits. Most people have never heard of the Templeton Prize. Dawkins mentions it five or six times in his book, presumably to give the impression that there is a highly-funded organisation pushing religious science. Yet he never mentions funding awarded to atheists. The expenditure of the Templeton Foundation is insignificant compared to the vast state funding

given to university scientists. According to Dawkins these scientists are largely atheistic<sup>34</sup> and they are free to use that funding (much of it paid for by the taxes of theists) to pursue their science based on an atheistic philosophy. There is also a good deal of money available for the direct promotion of atheism. For example, Dawkins has had his own television programme (*Root of All Evil?* that we mentioned earlier) funded for him by Channel Four.

Nor is it only theists who receive awards from wealthy benefactors. The Oxford University Gazette of 12th October 1995 reported that:

The University accepts with deep gratitude the sum of £1.5m from Dr Charles Simonyi for the endowment of the Charles Simonyi Professorship of the Public Understanding of Science.<sup>35</sup>

And, as the web site of the Charles Simonyi Professorship says, the Professorship “was set up with the express intention that its first holder should be Richard Dawkins”.<sup>36</sup> While Dawkins complains about the Templeton Prize he is himself the recipient of what we might call the “Simonyi Prize”.†

## **Child Abusers**

For the remainder of this chapter I want to look at Dawkins’ attempt to present religion as being abusive of children. This is a significant part of his current propaganda against religion. It is not to do with any argument about whether or not God exists, indeed it takes the non-existence of God for granted.

This attack is a major theme of chapter nine of TGD, *Childhood, abuse and the escape from religion*. The chapter opens with the case of Edgardo Mortara which Dawkins says is “particularly

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† Dawkins held the Simonyi Professorship until he retired from the position at the end of 2008.

revealing of the religious mind, and the evils that arise specifically *because* it is religious”.<sup>37</sup> In 1858 the six-year-old Mortara was taken from his Jewish parents by the papal police in Bologna and thereafter brought up as a Roman Catholic.<sup>38</sup> The reason for this abduction was that Edgardo had secretly been baptised by a Catholic servant of the family. The Roman Catholic Church thus held that he was a Christian and should not be brought up by Jews. This is certainly a disgraceful episode and a deplorable abuse of power. Dawkins describes it as an example of the evils that flow from the religious mind. However, the same thing can happen as the result of a secular mindset. Consider the case of Melissa Busekros, a fifteen-year-old German girl, who was taken from her family by a group of social workers backed by fifteen police officers because a psychiatrist claimed that she was suffering from “school phobia”.<sup>39</sup> This happened in 2007, not 1858. Melissa had not been doing well in some of her classes and so her parents decided to tutor her themselves. As a result of this she was first forcibly subjected to psychiatric testing and then removed from her family as described above. She had not been beaten or tormented by her parents – she was taken from them by the state simply because she was using an educational alternative to school. In February 2008 *The Observer* mentioned her case and reported that a number of home-educating German families had been forced to flee to the United Kingdom to prevent the abduction of their children.<sup>40</sup> Home education was banned in Germany in 1938 because, as *The Observer* put it, “Hitler wanted the Nazi state to have complete control of young minds”. That same law is still being forcefully used today. One father, now settled in England said, “We can never go back. If we do, our children will be removed, as the German government says they are the property of the state now.”

As for Melissa Busekros, she was first detained in a “Child Psychiatry Unit” and later placed in a foster home. But on the day of her sixteenth birthday, at which age she had more legal autonomy, she escaped in the early hours of the morning and



returned to her family. *The Observer* reported that “she... has since been left alone by the authorities”.

In today’s Germany if you want an alternative to a state-approved school then there must be something wrong with your mind. That is why Melissa Busekros was taken by force from her family and not allowed to return home. But it was all for her own good, of course. As Dawkins says about the Mortara case, “They felt a duty of *protection!*”<sup>41</sup> The abduction of Melissa Busekros was just as disgraceful as the abduction of Edgardo Mortara. Both were abuses of state power, but the dangers of the Roman Catholic state were limited somewhat by the fact that it only claimed children upon whom a certain ritual had been performed. The secular German state, however, is willing to use its police to control the education of any child. Dawkins wants to paint the case of Edgardo Mortara as indicative of the evils of religion, but the same evils are alive and active today without religion. It is the evil of an excessively powerful state that is prepared to use force to achieve its ideological objectives. The Bible teaches a doctrine of sin. Man is sinful and inclined to use his power for evil. That is why a society needs to have a division of powers and a limitation of powers if it wants to avoid tyranny. It is that doctrine that has historically informed the constitutional order of the United Kingdom but it is gradually being undermined as our culture has rejected consistent Christianity.

In the light of the two cases mentioned above it is very interesting to study some comments of Dawkins’. These are not from his book but from an interview posted on the video sharing web site YouTube.<sup>42</sup> The authors of the video are a group of young atheists calling themselves the Rational Response Squad. Dawkins was interviewed by them as part of his tour promoting *The God Delusion* in the USA. They talk extensively with Dawkins and he gives them some tips for promoting atheism. In the course of their discussion Dawkins talks about a meeting that he had with some of the lawyers who were involved in

## *The Dawkins Proof*

Dover, Pennsylvania intelligent-design-in-schools case.<sup>43</sup> He says:

I raised the question of the rights of children to be protected from their parents. This seemed to be a complete “no no” to the lawyers. It seemed to be absolutely foreign to the American legal system. And... I read about children being homeschooled – taken out of school because their parents don’t want them to learn certain things in science... The parents can deprive their children of an education in what is absolutely normal, accepted science and that is their right. And I’m wondering what you think of this... does anybody else think that children have some sort of right to an education if their parents are trying to stop them getting an education?

“I raised the question of the rights of children to be protected from their parents”, says Dawkins. He feels a duty of *protection*! Like the Roman Catholic Church and the German Government he too wants to use the power of the state to control the education of children. As we have seen from the examples of these two institutions this sort of protection is rather unpleasant when put into practice. What will happen to parents who refuse to allow the state to teach their children what Dawkins wants? Will they find themselves in the same position as the parents of Melissa Busekros with fifteen police officers at the door? Dawkins doesn't go into details like that. He is also very coy about just what it is that he wants to use the power of the state to forcibly teach to children. What are the “certain things in science” that Dawkins cannot bring himself to name? Given that he was discussing the issue with lawyers who had won a battle against opponents of Darwinism it is presumably evolution rather than Newton’s laws of motion that he is thinking of. We will look at evolution in the next chapter but for now we need to note Dawkins’ willingness to use the power of the state to control children's education.

### ***The Origin of Religion***

Although Dawkins found that it was not possible to use US law to “protect” children from education given by (presumably) religious parents things might change if the religious instruction of children was regarded as harmful. Dawkins attempts to lay the foundation for just such a view in chapter five of TGD, *The roots of religion*. Dawkins obviously cannot accept that religion has an origin in the existence of God and so he needs to provide a naturalistic explanation for it. In chapter five he sets out various materialistic attempts to explain the origin and spread of religion. It is particularly his view of the spread of religion that is relevant to our interests here. Why is religion so widespread in human culture? The ideal explanation for Dawkins would be one that was not only naturalistic but also Darwinian. But Darwinism teaches that it is *advantageous* features that become fixed in a population by natural selection, and Dawkins does not want to promote any idea of religion being advantageous. Therefore he says that religion has spread as a side-effect of something else that does give a survival advantage. This proposal is not the product of scientific research, it is the product of Dawkins’ ideology. Indeed not only is it designed to be Darwinian without allowing that religion conveys any advantage, it is also, as we shall see shortly, designed to provide a tool with which to attack the religious instruction of children.

Dawkins example of a positive trait that enables religion to spread as a bad side-effect is that of children believing their elders:

...there will be a selective advantage to child brains that possess the rule of thumb: believe, without question, whatever your grown-ups tell you.<sup>44</sup>

There is a survival advantage in children believing their elders, as the elders will tell them how to survive, but (oh no) they will also teach the children religion. Thus it is that religion has

## *The Dawkins Proof*

spread throughout the world. But of course children do not remain children, they grow up:

And, very likely, when the child grows up and has children of her own, she will naturally pass the whole lot on to her own children – nonsense as well as sense...<sup>45</sup>

Why is it “very likely”? For Dawkins’ explanation to work there must also be a selective advantage to adult brains that possess the rule of thumb: do not question anything you were told as a child. It seems very unlikely that there would really be any survival advantage in being an unthinking, unquestioning adult. But this will pose no problem to Dawkins. Remember that we are not dealing with historical facts here, we are dealing with imaginative stories that are made up to try to explain the astonishing ubiquity of religion in a way that only denigrates religion. Any difficulties can no doubt be explained away in an ideologically correct manner by further use of the imagination.

### ***Mind Viruses***

Having set out his idea that there is an evolutionary advantage for children to believe what they are told, and then said a little about computer viruses, Dawkins continues:

If I have done my softening-up work well, you will already have completed my argument about child brains and religion. Natural selection builds child brains with a tendency to believe whatever their parents and tribal elders tell them... The inevitable by-product is vulnerability to infection by mind viruses.<sup>46</sup>

Because the elder says so we are supposed to believe that religion – but somehow not atheism – is a dangerous virus from which children will need to be protected. But what is a “mind virus”? It is just something that Dawkins has made up as a useful propaganda device. There is no such thing as a mind virus. Indeed, Dawkins himself almost admits as much when he says a little later:

The general theory of religion as an accidental by-product... is the one I wish to advocate. The details are various, complicated and disputable.<sup>47</sup>

Those details include what Dawkins calls the “gullible child”<sup>48</sup> upon which the idea of mind viruses is based. Having planted these two ideas in the reader’s mind Dawkins is now stepping back from this and saying that the details of his theory are “various, complicated and disputable”. The advantage to him in doing this is that it is then harder for an opponent to pin down errors because Dawkins is holding to a “theory” that has no specific details. But Dawkins hopes his readers will still retain the idea of mind viruses that he has been setting out and he goes on to say that he will continue to use the gullible child idea “for the sake of illustration”.<sup>49</sup> This will, of course, help to reinforce it in the mind of the reader. This is typical of a technique that Dawkins uses on a number of occasions. He promotes a dubious point in the hope that it will influence his readers while also issuing caveats to get himself off the hook should anyone challenge him.<sup>50</sup>

The gullible child who needs protecting from religious mind viruses is an important concept for Dawkins because if he could get enough people to believe this teaching it would provide a way to turn the natural human instinct to protect children and the legal idea of child protection into tools for attacking the religious instruction of children. This takes us back to Dawkins’ presentation of religious instruction as abusive of children, in chapter nine of TGD.

### ***Child Protection***

There are two related aspects to Dawkins’ attack on religious instruction. Both present it as a danger to children’s minds. One line emphasizes that it is an emotional danger, the other that it causes intellectual harm. Dawkins’ main target for emotional danger is the doctrine of hell, particularly as taught by the Roman Catholic Church. He says that teaching this doctrine is

## *The Dawkins Proof*

“child abuse”<sup>51</sup> and in an article on his web site he compares sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests with the Catholic doctrine of hell:

The threat of eternal hell is an extreme example of mental abuse, just as violent sodomy is an extreme example of physical abuse. Most physical abuse is milder, and so is most of the mental abuse inherent in a typical religious education.<sup>52</sup>

Dawkins’ aim is to construct a link in the reader’s mind between religious instruction, which he opposes, and sexual abuse, which he knows the reader will oppose. This is good propaganda, but that is all it is. It is not a rational argument. According to Dawkins, mental abuse is inherent in religious education but the doctrine of hell (or at least the Roman Catholic version of it) is extreme mental abuse because of the distress it can cause. But there are other doctrines that also cause great mental distress:

A foreign publisher of my first book confessed that he could not sleep for three nights after reading it, so troubled was he by what he saw as its cold, bleak message... A teacher from a distant country wrote to me reproachfully that a pupil had come to him in tears after reading the same book, because it had persuaded her that life was empty and purposeless.<sup>53</sup>

This doctrine that robs adults of sleep and leaves teenage girls in tears is the evolutionary atheism of Richard Dawkins. The above quote is from the preface to his book *Unweaving the Rainbow* in which he attempts to answer this problem; but all he has to offer in that book is materialistic mysticism. He tries to make his readers feel that life has meaning but he has not abandoned his belief that everything reduces to particles of matter obeying the laws of physics. Thus life *is* meaningless and so is every value and standard that we hold dear. It is materialism that causes real distress and despair to those who take it seriously. Christianity has an answer to the doctrine of hell – the doctrine

of eternal life as the gift of God<sup>54</sup> – but Dawkins has no answer to the hopeless purposelessness of atheism.

The other line of his attack on religious teaching is that it causes intellectual harm. Here he calls on a lecture by Nicholas Humphrey, an atheistic psychologist, that was given as an Amnesty Lecture in 1997. Dawkins quotes from this lecture and gives over five pages of TGD to commenting on it in a section of chapter nine entitled *In defence of children*. The lecture itself is titled *What shall we tell the children?*<sup>55</sup>

Like Dawkins' article above, Humphrey's polemic works by using an analogy that identifies religious instruction with something that people generally oppose, indeed something that distresses and concerns us. As with Dawkins' article the aim is to transfer that opposition and distaste to religious instruction. In this case the analogy is with female circumcision. The link is entirely arbitrary, it exists only in Humphrey's mind as a useful propaganda device. He says that just as female circumcision damages a girl's body so religious instruction damages her mind. We would want to protect her from that physical harm and so we should also want to protect her from intellectual harm. But this is all based on his assumption that religious instruction is harmful. One might equally well make an analogy between religious instruction and something positive, like physical exercise, and say how important it is to ensure that children get enough of it.

Humphrey is quite explicit about his aim, which is “to argue in one particular area... in favour of censorship, against freedom of expression”. That particular area is “moral and religious education. And especially the education a child receives at home”. He says:

...children have a right not to have their minds addled by nonsense. And we as a society have a duty to protect them from it. So we should no more allow parents to teach their children to believe, for example, in the literal truth of the

## *The Dawkins Proof*

Bible, or that the planets rule their lives, than we should allow parents to knock their children's teeth out or lock them in a dungeon.<sup>56</sup>

"We as a society have a duty to protect them." Humphrey never uses the word *state* for the agency that is going to enforce his agenda, but it is perfectly clear what he means. The power of the state should be used to prevent parents from teaching religious ideas to their children.

As well as having the right to be protected from these false ideas children also have "a right to be succoured by the truth". And, of course, "we as a society have a duty to provide it". The power of the state is also to be used to achieve this part of Humphrey's plan which is, he says, to "pass on to our children the best scientific and philosophical understanding of the natural world".<sup>57</sup> As Humphrey wants the state to oppose the teaching of religion it is clear that the best philosophy of the natural world is an atheistic one. State imposed teaching of atheistic philosophy was attempted for several decades in the USSR but it did not succeed in eradicating religion because man knows, at heart, that God exists. Perhaps Humphrey hopes to succeed where communism failed by his plan to control religious instruction in the home – something that, as far as I am aware, the Soviets themselves did not attempt.

In effect Humphrey is doing Dawkins' dirty work for him. Dawkins can write a positive commentary in TGD on Humphrey's idea of suppressing freedom of religious instruction without having to express that idea as his own. But it is clear that he does share Humphrey's position because in the article quoted earlier<sup>58</sup> he calls the lecture "a superb polemic on how religions abuse the minds of children" and says "I strongly recommend it". And Humphrey's view fits perfectly with Dawkins' comments to the Rational Response Squad about his desire to use the idea of child protection to control the education that parents give their children. It is disappointing that Dawkins cannot see the danger in Humphrey's position. He ought to



## *Powerful Arguments*

repudiate it rather than promote it. To put it simply, if it is the duty of the state to protect children's minds from being "addled by nonsense" by their parents then everyone stands in danger of being persecuted depending on the current government's definition of "nonsense". We are all better off not allowing the state to tell us how to think.

In his lecture Humphrey particularly mentions that he wants the state to teach children "the truths of evolution". We noted Dawkins' interest in this earlier. Clearly they both believe that the doctrine of evolution holds an important place in the promotion of atheism. It is to this subject of evolution that we will turn our attention in the following chapter.

# Chapter Three

## Apparent Design

An evolutionary view of origins is central to Dawkins' atheism. In this chapter we shall examine something of the history and content of the evolutionary idea and the methods used to promote it today.

### **The Origin of Evolution**

Thales of Miletus (circa 624 BC - 546 BC) is generally regarded as the first western philosopher. However, Moses, writing several centuries earlier, had already answered the basic questions of philosophy. Moses taught that God has always existed. God created and maintains the universe. God's creation of the universe is thus the point of unity for all the distinct particles of matter that exist, and his government of the universe is the source of the order and predictability of their behaviour. God created man in his own image to understand and rule this world, and God gave man laws that he must obey. God's law is thus the source of ethics. Man rebelled against his creator yet God provides a way for man to be reconciled to him. Man's rebellion is the source of the problems of human life and reconciliation to God is ultimately the answer to those problems. Moses wrote in terms of the creator God. The distinctive of Thales was that he was trying to do philosophy without God.

Thales and his two successors, Anaximander and Anaximenes, are known as the Milesian school after their home town of Miletus on the coast of modern-day Turkey. They were particularly interested in the question of what ultimately exists. What is everything made of? Thales answer was simple: all is water. Perhaps he came to this view because we see water all

around us. It's in the sky and under the earth. Living things all take it in and it can exist as a solid, liquid or gas. However, despite the ingenuity of the idea it is somewhat lacking. How can something dry be made of water? How can fire be made of water?

Anaximander, coming after Thales, therefore came to a different conclusion. According to the *Pan Dictionary of Philosophy*, Anaximander “apparently suggested that the first principle must be something indeterminate rather than one particular kind of matter, such as water”.<sup>59</sup>

An indeterminate something is not much of an answer though and this was perhaps the reason that Anaximenes, coming after Anaximander, promoted the idea that all is air. According to Anaximenes air takes on the different forms of everything we see around us as a result of changes in its density.

We do not know a great deal about the Milesian philosophers as all we have are some brief mentions in later writings. But other points have come down to us. One particularly interesting one is that (again quoting from the *Pan Dictionary of Philosophy*) Anaximander also believed that “all living things originated from slime, and that mankind must have evolved from some other species”.<sup>60</sup> Sound familiar? The writers of the *Dictionary of Philosophy* have perhaps deliberately cast Anaximander's beliefs in terms that will be familiar to modern ears, and if we were to look at the details of his ideas we would find them rather different from today's notions of evolution but nevertheless this was undoubtedly an evolutionary philosophy.

We smile when we think of some of the Milesians' beliefs. All is water, all is air, all is, well, something indeterminate. But the idea that man evolved from slime via other creatures? Now that's an amazing insight. Really though Anaximander's ideas about the origin of man are no less bizarre than any of the other Milesian views about existence. We only feel inclined to take them more seriously because we have been continually indoctrinated with a very similar philosophy.

## *The Dawkins Proof*

The idea of evolution did not die out after Anaximander. The Roman philosopher Lucretius (circa 99 BC - 55 BC) wrote an epic poem entitled *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things) which sets out an evolutionary view of both life and the universe. Writing about the “primary elements” from which everything formed Lucretius said:

For assuredly neither the primary elements of things disposed themselves severally in their own order by wisdom or counsel arising from a sagacious understanding; nor, certainly, did they agree among themselves what motions each should produce; but because the primordial atoms of the world, being many, were agitated by concussions, in many ways, through an infinite space of time, and were accustomed to be carried forward by their own weights, and to combine in all modes, and to try all efforts, as if to ascertain whichever of them, meeting together, might give birth to some offspring, it from this cause happens that, being spread abroad during a vast period of duration, and attempting all kinds of combinations and movements, those at length came together, which, having suddenly coalesced, became at first, and become now, from time to time, the commencements of great productions, the origin of the earth, the sea, and the heaven, and of every kind of living creatures.<sup>61</sup>

*The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* describes Lucretius’ account of the origin and development of life thus:

The fertile young earth naturally sprouted with life forms, and the organisms thus generated were innumerable random formations. Of these, most perished, but a minority proved capable of surviving – thanks to strength, cunning, or utility to man – and of reproducing their kind. This account, which has won admiration for its partial anticipation of Darwin’s principle of the survival of the fittest, is plainly using a kind of natural selection to account non-teleologically for the apparent presence of design in the animal kingdom.<sup>62</sup>

## *Apparent Design*

How was it that Lucretius writing over two thousand years ago was able to hit on ideas that are so closely related to modern evolutionism? The answer is twofold. Firstly, evolution is not a product of modern scientific discovery it is the product of a desire to explain origins without reference to God. Lucretius' views are similar to those of modern evolutionists because he shared their aim of having a materialistic explanation for things. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* discusses Lucretius' various explanations for phenomena and says that for him:

What matters is that... they should be exclusively material explanations sufficient to render unnecessary the postulation of divine intervention.<sup>63</sup>

The other reason is that Lucretius himself influenced modern evolutionary philosophy. *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* says:

...*De Rerum Natura* was from the 17th century onward a massive cultural presence and hence a ready source of evolutionary ideas. The poem formed part of the cultural heritage and intellectual background of virtually every evolutionary theorist in Europe... including (though he claimed never to have read Lucretius' epic) Darwin himself.<sup>64</sup>

Evolutionary ideas are the obvious ones to use for a materialistic doctrine of origins. By using the concept of gradual change and development it can be claimed that the origin of all things was something very simple and undeveloped. No grand design, plan or purpose is required because this gradual process of change is said to be the natural result of the properties of matter. The problem with this system is that there is no good reason for anyone to believe it until it has been empirically demonstrated that the properties of matter actually do lead to evolutionary development.

The coming of Christ, and the work of his apostles and their successors in spreading his teachings, in effect brought the philosophy of Moses to the entire western world. Perhaps for this

## *The Dawkins Proof*

reason the idea of evolution was not strong in the West. However, with the increasing interest in the ancient philosophers and the growth of Enlightenment thought in the eighteenth century, evolution began to make a comeback. Consider this extract from a poem from the late eighteenth century:

Organic life beneath the shoreless waves,  
Was born and nurs'd in ocean's pearly caves;  
First forms minute, unseen by spheric glass,  
Move on the mud, or pierce the watery mass;  
These, as successive generations bloom,  
New powers acquire and larger limbs assume;  
Whence countless groups of vegetation spring,  
And breathing realms of fin and feet and wing.<sup>65</sup>

That verse was the work of Erasmus Darwin, Charles Darwin's grandfather.

### **Darwin, Evolution and Variation**

It is popularly believed that Charles Darwin originated the idea of evolution as a result of his observations of Galápagos finches. But Darwin would have been well aware of evolutionary philosophy before he ever set sail on the *Beagle*. The finches did, however, have a place in Darwin's development and presentation of his theory. In *The Voyage of the Beagle* Darwin wrote about the variation in the size and shape of the beaks between the different species and concluded:

Seeing this gradation and diversity of structure in one small, intimately related group of birds, one might really fancy that from an original paucity of birds in this archipelago, one species had been taken and modified for different ends.<sup>66</sup>

The fact that we see a range of similar sorts of finch does not itself give us sufficient reason to believe that they all derived from one original species. We also need to have some evidence

that living things can change. We have evidence for this in the different breeds of domestic animals and different varieties of plants that man has been able to produce. This observed ability of organisms to vary, means that a naturally occurring range of similar species such as the Galápagos finches may well have derived from a common parent species. Thus, based on these observations, we might propose the idea of natural variation in living things. Our Theory of Variation would say that living things are not static, that changes occur over generations that lead to a variety of appearances and behaviours and that this results in ranges of similar types of organism.

However, as we all know, Darwin did not propose a Theory of Variation but a Theory of Evolution. The difference is this: our observation of variation shows that living things can experience changes in the parameters that describe *existing* structures (e.g. shape and size of beak) but evolution teaches that *extra* complexity can be added to living things in the form of wholly new features and structures and that by this means all life on earth descended from a very simple first organism. By proposing a theory of evolution Darwin was advocating something very different from what the evidence implied. Varying existing features is not the same thing as adding new features. Changes in beaks do not involve extra complexity. But evolution requires the addition of a phenomenal amount of extra complexity to get from some minimal first organism to the vast array of life on earth today.

Darwin used the evidence of variation in living things to promote an evolutionary philosophy of the origin of living things, and the same approach is still being used today. It's easy enough to do. Simply use the same word "evolution" to refer to both variation in *existing* features and to the *addition* of new features. Variation in living things is readily observable. So, if variation is evolution then evolution must be true because it can be seen happening. And if evolution is true that means that man has descended from a simple original creature because that is also evolution. This is, of course, a trick argument. It uses

equivocation – the logical fallacy of using the same word in two different ways – in order to falsely reach the desired conclusion.

A good example of this fallacy in action can be seen in work done on the same Galápagos finches that Darwin studied. A summary of research on these species was published in *Scientific American* in October 1991. On the article's title page under the heading "Natural Selection and Darwin's Finches" there is a sub-heading which reads:

The finches of the Galápagos – the classic example of how natural selection works over millions of years – have now been observed to evolve in real time. A single drought can change a population.<sup>67</sup>

That last sentence should be enough to warn us that what is happening here is not evolution. The article is principally about population dynamics where larger birds come to predominate after periods of drought. The larger birds have larger and stronger beaks that can break open large seeds that small birds cannot access. The larger birds may also have an advantage in driving smaller birds away when there is competition for food. This is not a process that is ever going to change the finch into a different sort of creature. It is just variation not evolution, but *Scientific American* is claiming that the birds "have now been observed to evolve in real time".

But what if an organism changes enough to become a new species. Surely the arising of a new species is evidence for evolution? It would be if the speciation arose as a result of the appearing of new features in an organism. If the speciation arose as a result of changes in the parameters that describe existing structures in an organism then it is not evolution but variation.

"Species" is usually taken to mean a set of organisms that will interbreed in the wild and produce fertile offspring. On the basis of this definition it is perfectly possible for new species to form without evolution. Speciation is especially noticeable in insects because of their shorter life cycle. For example in 1998 some



work was published regarding mosquitoes that live on the London Underground system. The mosquitoes on the Underground appear to be physically identical to an above-ground variety that preys on birds but their behaviour differs in that they reproduce all year round and, not surprisingly, prey on humans rather than birds. Significantly, as a BBC report stated, “the underground mosquitoes are reluctant to mate with their outdoor cousins, indicating that they have become a separate species”.<sup>68</sup> What we see here is simply a group of mosquitoes turning into a different variety of mosquito. This does not at all mean that they are in the process of turning into something other than a mosquito. As they have no new biological structures this is just another example of variation.

Proponents of evolution will repeatedly try to pass off evidence for variation as if it is evidence for evolution. Watch them. Every time you hear of “evolution in action”, “evolution happening before our eyes” and similar claims you will find that it is simply evidence for variation in the parameters that describe existing structures in an organism. That is not evidence for evolution. Evolution, by which all living things have descended from a first simple ancestor, obviously requires new structures to appear in organisms, yet evolutionists can provide no evidence of this in action. They do, however, have an hypothesis about how it is supposed to happen. That is something we shall examine later, but first we need to take a brief look at the underlying processes and biological mechanisms upon which that hypothesis is based.

## **Natural Selection**

The obvious process that comes to mind when one thinks of the theory of evolution is natural selection. As we saw earlier there were evolutionary philosophies long before the time of Darwin. However, Darwin was particularly successful in his promotion of evolution because he linked evolution to the idea of natural selection and claimed that this was the mechanism by which evolution progressed. Natural selection refers to the selective

## *The Dawkins Proof*

effect of the natural environment. Organisms that have features that make them better equipped to survive are (by definition) more likely to survive and therefore to reproduce and thus increase in number. Organisms less well equipped to survive are obviously less likely to survive and less likely to reproduce. This is the process responsible for the change in the population levels of finches with different sized beaks. The significance of natural selection for evolutionary theory is that if an organism could somehow gain a beneficial *new* feature then natural selection would retain that feature in the population.

It is important to understand the limits of natural selection. It is only a selecting process. It cannot add a new feature to an organism. Nor can it keep features of an organism that have no immediate benefit but that might be useful as part of some future new structure. Natural selection selects only for immediate survival advantage. It is not a “goal-seeking” process, it has no future plan or aim. Dawkins makes this point in his book *The Blind Watchmaker* where he describes a computer program that selects from randomly varied phrases those that are closest to a desired target phrase. He goes on to say that as a model of evolution the program is misleading because it selects based on resemblance to a distant target. And he adds, “Life isn’t like that. Evolution has no long-term goal.”<sup>69</sup>

Although Dawkins knows that natural selection does not work towards a future goal, when he needs to convince his readers that evolution has some credibility he falls back on using analogies that incorporate precisely this feature. There is a good example in *The Blind Watchmaker* that not only presents an intelligent, planned, goal-seeking process as analogous to evolution, but also incorporates the variation-is-evolution equivocation fallacy. This is Dawkins’ well-known presentation of dog breeding as evidence for evolution. Having referred to the eye evolving “its present complexity and perfection from nothing” over hundreds of millions of years he goes on to talk about the change that man has made in dog breeds by artificial selection. “In a few hundreds, or at most thousands, of years we have gone

from wolf to Pekinese, Bulldog, Chihuahua and Saint Bernard.”<sup>70</sup> And he says it is just playing with words to point out that these are still all dogs. His argument is that there is much more time available for evolution than was required for producing the different dog breeds, and that if the time taken to “evolve all these breeds of dog from a wolf” were represented by one walking pace then the time back to the famous “Lucy” hominid fossil would be two miles and the time back to the start of evolution on Earth would be the distance from London to Baghdad. He concludes:

Think of the total quantity of change involved in going from wolf to Chihuahua, and then multiply it up by the number of walking paces between London and Baghdad. This will give some intuitive idea of the amount of change that we can expect in real natural evolution.<sup>71</sup>

Let’s begin with the obvious logical error in this argument. Dawkins says that if we take the change that artificial selection has achieved in going from wolf to Chihuahua in about a thousand years and multiply this by the total time available then this will give us an idea of the amount of change that we can expect from evolution by natural selection. But, of course, it will do nothing of the sort. It will rather give us an idea of the amount of change that we could expect from *artificial* selection over that time span. If we want to draw a conclusion about *natural* selection from the example of dogs then we need to look at the amount of change that natural selection has achieved in wolves over the past one thousand years or so and multiply that by the time available. It is fairly obvious why Dawkins did not use that as his argument.

We should also note the important difference between artificial selection and natural selection. Artificial selection is able to produce a wide variety of dog breeds because it is an intelligent, planned process with a future aim – the very thing that natural selection is not. Natural selection has no plan, it does not work towards a goal. Natural selection selects only for immediate

survival advantage. In artificial selection, however, the breeders are aiming to produce a certain result. They have a long-term end in view and they select and breed animals in order to achieve this end. In each generation the breeders evaluate the dogs according to their goal. They then choose those which best meet the goal criteria and use these to breed the next generation and so on. It is not that artificial selection is a speeded up version of natural selection. Rather it is a very different process because, unlike natural selection, it is working to achieve a known future goal. Although artificial selection shows us that organisms can be made to vary over generations the effects of artificial selection are not a guide to what can be achieved by natural selection. Artificial selection also shows us that there are limits to variation. Despite intensive, directed selection the dogs are, indeed, all still dogs.

That brings us to the equivocation fallacy. Dawkins attacks those who point out that the dogs are still dogs by claiming that they are playing with words. But it is he who is playing with words. He talks about “the total time it took to evolve all these breeds of dog”. He is saying that the change that occurs in dog breeding is evolution. But evolution requires not change but *addition*. It involves the addition of new structures to living things. All we see in dog breeding are changes in the parameters describing *existing* structures (length of hair, length of legs, size of body, length of muzzle etc). There is no new complexity in the dogs, there has simply been selection for or against already-existing traits. Dog breeding is thus just another example of variation and is not evidence for evolution. It does not matter how much time you have – if you multiply the amount of extra complexity that appears in dog breeding (i.e. zero) by the amount of time available you will not get a different kind of animal. If you take the process that turned wolves into Pekinese, Bulldogs, Chihuahuas and Saint Bernards and run that process for a vast period of time what you will get is a very great variety of dog breeds. If, for example, you spend many years over many generations selecting for dogs that can dive and swim you may

## *Apparent Design*

well get a dog that is very good at diving and swimming but you will never, even if you spend millions of years doing it, turn that dog into a fish with scales and gills. Yet this is exactly the sort of thing that evolution requires to happen. It requires the creation of new structures that were not there before, because it claims that all biological structures arose starting from zero via natural selection.

Dawkins just cannot stop himself from giving analogies of evolution that rely upon intelligent government and control working towards a known end. Back in *The God Delusion* he gives an analogy based on a bank vault combination lock. The likelihood of opening the lock by chance is infinitesimal but if a badly designed lock caused the safe to leak a little money as the dial neared the correct setting then the burglar would soon find the solution, like children following the “getting warmer” clues in a game of Hunt the Slipper. And he concludes:

The combination lock of life is a ‘getting warmer, getting cooler, getting warmer’ Hunt the Slipper device.<sup>72</sup>

The problem with this analogy is fairly obvious. The children’s game of Hunt the Slipper with its “getting warmer” and “getting cooler” is a system in which there is an end in view, and this end is known at the very beginning. Someone knows where the slipper is and is able to give direction to the random movements of the hunters. Similarly with the combination lock. The lock “knows” what the combination is that the process has to reach at the end. But evolution has no long-term end in view, it is not working towards a known target, and there is no-one to direct it. The amusing thing is that if this is an analogy of evolution then it is not an analogy of atheistic evolution at all, but of *theistic* evolution! Theistic evolution is the view that evolution takes place but that there is a god governing over it, directing it and controlling it so that it will reach the desired end. In the analogy the god is represented by the person directing the hunters or the lock giving out clues. It is very telling that Dawkins is here unable to give an accurate analogy of what he believes about

evolution, and rather wonderful that in attempting it he scores such a magnificent own goal.

Natural selection is not a process that plans and works towards a future aim. Nor does natural selection itself make organisms better equipped to survive – it doesn't *make* anything – it is just a term to describe the fact that, in general, the less well equipped don't survive. The slow antelope gets eaten and the slow house-fly gets swatted. This means that natural selection *reduces* variety in organisms. Because of the selective effect of the natural environment there is not a wide range of speed and agility in house-flies. Now if natural selection reduces the variation in living things where does the variation come from in the first place? To understand this we need to know a little about genetics.

## **DNA**

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is a long chain molecule that is found in every cell of every living thing. It is composed of units called nucleotides which can be any one of four chemicals: adenine, thymine, cytosine and guanine. For brevity these are often referred to by their initials A, T, C and G and are known as genetic “letters”. The sequence of these letters in the DNA is very significant because cells use DNA as a set of patterns from which to construct proteins. The sequence of the letters controls the type and form of the proteins that the cell produces and thereby controls the function of the cell. As DNA controls every cell in the organism it thus establishes the form and function of the organism as a whole.

DNA is an amazingly complex thing. Human DNA has around three billion of these genetic letters. And as Francis Collins, director of the US National Human Genome Research Institute, says, it “somehow carries within it all of the instructions necessary to take a single-cell embryo and turn it into a very complex biological entity called a human being”.<sup>73</sup>

Each species has its own distinctive form of DNA. DNA describes how a man (or a finch) is made. It is like a comprehensive design, construction and operation manual. To make changes to a particular species it is therefore necessary to make changes to its DNA.

## **Mutation**

Making changes to DNA is essential for evolution. According to Dawkins:

We, like all other animals, are descended from an ancestor which, were it available for our study today, we'd classify as a bacterium.<sup>74</sup>

Without the addition of a vast array of new features it would be impossible for us to be descended from this simple ancestor. So how did all the extra features, functions and structures of all living (and extinct) animals get added to that first simple bacterium? Evolution's answer is that this happened as a result of genetic mutation. In *The Blind Watchmaker* Dawkins describes the process:

Evolution occurs because, in successive generations, there are slight differences in embryonic development. These differences come about because of changes (mutations – this is the small random element in the process that I spoke of) in the genes controlling development.<sup>75</sup>

Mutations are genetic errors caused by such things as mistakes in copying DNA or damage inflicted by radiation or chemicals.<sup>76</sup> Because mutations randomly alter DNA there is obviously a potential for them to harm the organism. Living things therefore have mechanisms to repair damaged DNA, but even so some mutations persist. Evolutionists believe that these accumulated errors have, via natural selection, caused a bacterium to become a man.

## **The Crucial Process**

If the features of an organism are described by the genetic information of its DNA then a human being is going to require much more complicated DNA than that first simple ancestor. But how are the genetic errors of mutation going to add the extra details needed to describe all these additional features?

Interestingly, in 1997 Dawkins was asked a similar question in an interview. This interview was filmed and was later published as part of the creationist video *From a Frog to a Prince*.<sup>77</sup> In the interview Dawkins was asked to:

...give an example of a genetic mutation or an evolutionary process which can be seen to increase the information in the genome.

The question is perhaps a little vague. We need to be clear exactly what we mean by “information”. For example it is easy to increase the information content of a string of digits by random processes. If we randomly add extra digits to a number we still have a meaningful number and as the string is longer it could be argued that there is more information in it. However the information in the genome is not like a sequence of numbers, the genome contains *instructions*. As we read earlier about the human genome, it “carries within it all of the instructions necessary to take a single-cell embryo and turn it into a very complex biological entity called a human being”. Genetic information is a set of instructions, and so the question for evolution is: how can meaningful instructions be produced by the random errors of mutation? Given the nature of the problem Dawkins’ reaction in the film is not surprising. Following the question he can be seen to pause for an embarrassingly long time before giving an answer saying that we can’t see fish starting to turn into reptiles today but that we could have done so if we had been there 300 million years ago.<sup>78</sup> He does not give any example of a process that can be seen to increase genetic information. In the video the question is posed by a presenter who was not there



## *Apparent Design*

at the filming of the interview. This is fairly standard practice but, coupled with Dawkins' failure to answer the question, it led to accusations that he was the victim of deceitful editing. Indeed Dawkins himself said that the film:

...had been edited to give the false impression that I was *incapable* of answering the question about information content.<sup>79</sup>

Well, you can see the original *unedited* footage on YouTube<sup>80</sup> and you can hear that the original question was not changed in the edited version, and you can see Dawkins pause for even longer than in the video and ask for the camera to be stopped while he thinks before he gives his irrelevant answer. Then you can decide for yourself whether or not he was capable of answering the question. And if you have an hour or two to spare you can read the many accusations and rebuttals that have been made on the Internet concerning this interview. But what is more interesting is that Dawkins subsequently wrote an article<sup>81</sup> (from which the above quote is taken) in which he sets out to give a thorough answer to what he calls the "information challenge". If you are interested in a full response to that article there is one from the Intelligent Design camp available on-line.<sup>82</sup> What I want to do here is to home in on Dawkins' answer to how all those extra instructions got into the genome. In the article he says:

New genes arise through various kinds of duplication.<sup>83</sup>

This is referring to mutations that cause a gene (or part of a gene) to be duplicated. That provides extra genetic material but it is only a copy of something that already exists. It doesn't provide any new instructions. For evolution to happen that copy must turn into the instructions for making a beneficial new feature. Dawkins believes that subsequent random mutations can cause the duplicated gene to turn into instructions for a new feature in the organism. When this happens natural selection then selects the beneficial new feature and the organism thus increases in complexity. This hypothetical ability of random

changes to generate new genetic instructions is the engine that drives the evolutionary system.

Dawkins' discussion of gene duplication centres around the various different globin genes that describe the proteins of haemoglobin. What Dawkins should be doing here is demonstrating the existence of a naturalistic process, by which this complex system of interdependent parts that transports oxygen through blood could have arisen from nothing. Instead he offers us only a claim that this already-existing system was modified by such a process. He says that the different globin genes all arose from one original globin gene which was duplicated 500 million years ago, with subsequent duplicates duplicating again at other stages in history. And he continues:

Careful letter-by-letter analysis shows that these different kinds of globin genes are literally cousins of each other, literally members of a family.<sup>84</sup>

But all this shows is that the genes are similar which is hardly surprising given that they have related functions. The idea that they arose through duplication is an assumption. It is only an evolutionary story about how the genes came to be, not a demonstration that this actually happened. The description of globin genes is, therefore, not an answer to the challenge to show a process that can increase genetic information. It is only a claim that such a process exists.

From discussing duplication Dawkins moves on to talk about "information in the genome" – the amount of the genome that is translated to produce proteins – and then to "information in the body".<sup>85</sup> The complexity of the body of an organism gives a good idea of the amount of information needed to produce it. For example the body of a lobster is more complicated than the body of a millipede. There is therefore more information in the DNA of a lobster than in that of a millipede. It is at the end of this section that Dawkins gives his main answer to the information challenge:

## *Apparent Design*

...the information content of a biological system is another name for its complexity. Therefore the creationist challenge with which we began is tantamount to the standard challenge to explain how biological complexity can evolve from simpler antecedents, one that I have devoted three books to answering, and I do not propose to repeat their contents here.<sup>86</sup>

Dawkins says that the challenge to give an example of a process “which can be seen to increase the information in the genome” is answered by his explanation of how biological complexity can evolve. This is to miss the point entirely. Dawkins’ explanation does not answer this challenge, it *gives rise* to it. The argument of Dawkins’ books depends entirely on there existing in nature a process by which extra instructions can be added to the genome. The challenge simply asks him to show that such a process actually exists. The practical demonstration of hypotheses is what science is all about, but Dawkins’ response to the request for empirical evidence is to refer us back to his hypothesis!

It is clear that Dawkins cannot prove the existence of a process that increases the instructions in the genome. Evolution is impossible without such a process. So why should anyone believe in it? Evolutionists will argue that the process takes so long that it cannot be observed; but this only serves to emphasize the lack of evidence, it doesn’t give us any reason for believing that evolution actually happens.

Not only is the central process of evolution unobservable we also have to ask whether the process is even credible. What is particularly noticeable here is the degree to which evolutionary theory relies on chance. Chance mutations causing random changes to duplicated genes are supposed to turn them into the instructions necessary to create new features in an organism. *Natural selection is not involved in this process.* Natural selection only comes into play once beneficial new instructions have been produced but those new instructions must first come into being

## *The Dawkins Proof*

by chance. Evolution therefore requires us to believe that random corruption can produce meaningful information.

Here's an experiment you can do at home to test the idea of producing new instructions via chance mutation. Copy out a sentence and start making random changes to it. What will be the result? A new meaningful sentence? Remember there is no process involved that knows what the result should be. There are just *random* changes. There is no process that will recognise that some letters will be useful as part of a future sentence and will protect them while changing the others. There is no knowledge, no plan, nothing that will select and retain something that is part way towards useful new information. There are just random changes that have to hit, by chance, on beneficial new information. But random changes do not produce information. They produce nonsense.

As we noted earlier Dawkins claims that man is descended from something like a bacterium. Such an organism has no bones, limbs, liver, kidneys, hair, heart, brain, blood, toenails... These are all wholly new features, for which genetic descriptions have to be added to our bacterial ancestor to produce us. And according to evolution those new genetic instructions all have to be produced by chance mutations acting on chance duplicated genes.

Not surprisingly Dawkins often plays down the role of chance in evolution. For example in TGD, talking about explanations for what he calls the "improbability" of living things, he says:

Chance is not a solution, given the high levels of improbability we see in living organisms...<sup>87</sup>

And an article in *The Daily Telegraph* quotes him as saying:

Obviously life... is not the result of chance... Any fool can see that. Natural selection is the very antithesis of chance.<sup>88</sup>

But, as Dawkins knows, the idea of evolution is just as dependent on chance as it is on natural selection. In TGD he describes natural selection as:

...a cumulative process, which breaks the problem of improbability up into small pieces.<sup>89</sup>

The idea is that while living things couldn't possibly form by chance in one go they could form as the product of many accumulated small changes. And each of these small changes has to happen by chance. Dawkins claims that "Each of the small pieces is slightly improbable, but not prohibitively so". But consider what each of these "small pieces" actually involves. To get from a bacterium to a man requires the addition of a vast array of new genetic instructions to the genome. If we break that process down into steps then each step that contributes to the addition will, if it is to be selected by natural selection, have to be the description of some beneficial new, or more complex, feature for the organism. The instructions for making that step must somehow be produced by the random corruption of genetic material. But the nature of random changes is to destroy meaning not create it. Each step that requires genetic errors to produce meaningful new instructions is not "slightly improbable", it is very very improbable indeed. And such unlikely events have to happen at every step along the way. Natural selection does not solve Dawkins' "problem of improbability". Even if we assume that natural selection always assures the survival of a beneficial new feature we still need vast numbers of these new features and the instructions to produce these features all have to appear by chance. When we string together the requirement for this immense number of incredibly unlikely events to happen we are left with a scheme that is so improbable as to be beyond belief.

## **The Self-Replicating Molecule**

Dawkins says that man evolved from "an ancestor which... we'd classify as a bacterium". This leads to the obvious question –

where did that bacterium come from? For the early Darwinian evolutionists the origin of the first organism was easy to explain. They believed that single-celled creatures were very simple. Ernst Haeckel, the nineteenth-century German proponent of Darwinism, believed that a cell was a “simple little lump of albuminous combination of carbon”.<sup>90</sup> Given their desire to believe the evolutionary system it was not hard for them to convince themselves that such basic life forms could come about by chance. Today we know better. Even the simplest single-celled creature is incredibly complicated. *Mycoplasma genitalium* is one of the simplest known bacteria. A cut-down version of its DNA has recently been synthesised – built by man in the laboratory. It is a painstaking task, as Craig Venter, the research leader, explains:

Aware of how even a single mistake in the DNA code can be lethal to the functioning bug, we had to read the 580,000 “letters” of the *Mycoplasma* genome at an unprecedented level of accuracy.<sup>91</sup>

This simple organism has 580,000 genetic letters. If you counted one letter a second and worked twenty-four hours a day non-stop it would take almost a week just to count them. No evolutionist today believes that such an organism could form by chance. So what is their alternative? Not surprisingly they claim that cellular life evolved from something simpler. But what? Viruses are simpler but they cannot reproduce themselves without infecting a more complex organism so they cannot be the original form of life. There doesn't seem to be any option for getting the evolutionary system started. Hence today's Darwinists have had to invent a new kind of life that doesn't actually exist in order to get their system off the ground. They imagine an independent, non-cellular, reproducing, hereditary form of life. In short they propose a self-replicating molecule (or SRM) as the first life. There is no evidence that such a thing has ever existed but evolutionists need it to have existed in the past and for that sole reason they claim that it did once exist. And how did this self-

## *Apparent Design*

replicating molecule come into being? Not surprisingly it happens by chance. Dawkins refers to:

...the origin of life, the spontaneous arising of something equivalent to DNA...<sup>92</sup>

Both DNA and the related molecule RNA have been proposed as the first form of life. But we don't find DNA or RNA living and reproducing in the environment. These molecules have a function in living things but they do not have an independent existence. It is possible to take RNA and make it replicate in carefully controlled conditions in a test tube.<sup>93</sup> This is not surprising as RNA is designed to replicate. But it does not provide the independent, free-living, sustainably self-replicating molecule that evolution requires.

Despite his confident talk of "something equivalent to DNA", Dawkins doesn't actually know what his proposed SRM is, he doesn't know how it could possibly form by chance, and he can't even show that an independent SRM is a viable entity in the first place. Yet without it the whole atheistic, evolutionary doctrine of origins is finished – he has to believe in the SRM in order to save his system. He believes that this unknown thing came into being by unknown chance processes and that this eventually resulted in his existence. And yet he insists that "atheists do not have faith"!<sup>94</sup>

Although he, quite literally, doesn't know what he is talking about, Dawkins is prepared to argue for the chance origin of life. He says that with up to 30 billion planets in our galaxy and 100 billion galaxies in the universe then a billion billion is a conservative figure for the number of planets in the universe. He continues:

Now, suppose the origin of life, the spontaneous arising of something equivalent to DNA... was so improbable as to occur on only one in a billion planets... even with such absurdly long odds, life will still have arisen on a billion planets...<sup>95</sup>

And he concludes:

Even accepting the most pessimistic estimate of the probability that life might spontaneously originate, this statistical argument completely demolishes any suggestion that we should postulate design to fill the gap.<sup>96</sup>

Statistical argument? How can a trained scientist seriously claim that this is a statistical argument? Dawkins has absolutely no idea what the odds are of an SRM forming by chance so he cannot possibly make any calculation about the likelihood of it happening. Yet he even claims that he is “accepting the most pessimistic estimate of the probability that life might spontaneously originate”. He is certainly not accepting the most pessimistic estimate because the most pessimistic estimate is that it is impossible. On the contrary, he is optimistically and arbitrarily asserting that an SRM *can* form by chance, which is something that he does not know at all. And he then tries to pass this off as hard-nosed pessimism. Does he really think that people will be fooled by this sort of thing?

The chance arising of an SRM is crucial for Dawkins because without it his whole system falls and shatters to pieces. It just *has* to be possible for such a thing to form by chance. But he has no evidence that this can happen; he is basing his whole doctrine of origins, and ultimately his whole worldview, on this arbitrary, optimistic assertion.

## **Conclusion**

Dawkins agrees that living things look as if they are designed:

We live on a planet where we are surrounded by perhaps 10 million species, each one of which independently displays a powerful illusion of apparent design.<sup>97</sup>

But if living things look like the products of design, why aren't they the products of design? Dawkins claims that he has an alternative, and better, explanation for their origin. What is the



## *Apparent Design*

alternative that he thinks is so convincing that it should cause us to abandon the obvious belief in a designer? Dawkins' alternative explanation is this: *it all happened by chance*. Of course he denies that this is his explanation, in fact he denies it repeatedly, but that doesn't make any difference. An appeal to natural selection cannot deliver his system from reliance on chance. It relies on chance to get it started and chance to move it on. If chance does not produce the right genetic instructions then evolution cannot advance even one tiny step. Natural selection is not involved in the production of those instructions. All that natural selection can do is to retain beneficial genetic information if chance could produce such a thing. But random mutations can only produce random results, not the instructions needed to describe every feature of every living thing.

In the end one has to wonder if Dawkins really believes that the evolutionary system is credible. Why else would he play down its reliance on chance and give analogies that present it as an intelligently directed process when he knows it is nothing of the sort? Perhaps, at heart, even he realises that it is absurd to believe that chance processes could produce the wealth of design that we see in every living creature.

# Chapter Four

## The Entirely Unwarranted Assumption

### Why Are We Here?

Why are we here? Why, for that matter, is anything here? In chapter two of TGD Dawkins quotes from *Our Cosmic Habitat* by Martin Rees:

The pre-eminent mystery is why anything exists at all. What breathes life into the equations, and actualized them in a real cosmos? Such questions lie beyond science, however: they are the province of philosophers and theologians.<sup>98</sup>

As you can imagine, this is not a popular idea with Dawkins and he quotes it only in order to reject it saying, “What expertise can theologians bring to deep cosmological questions that scientists cannot?”<sup>99</sup> The answer is that theologians should be able to answer such questions because theology concerns itself with ultimate issues beyond our material universe in a way that science does not. Science is the study of material cause and effect and it can be used to answer questions in that whole vast realm; but if we trace the chain of cause and effect backwards we come to a question that science cannot answer: what started it all? A number of possibilities come to mind as potential answers to the question of how the universe came to be:

- it has always existed
- it sprang into being spontaneously and without cause
- it was caused by something that was itself uncaused
- it was caused by something that was itself caused by something else and so on infinitely

## *The Entirely Unwarranted Assumption*

These are all variations on two basic ideas. Ultimately the universe must have its origin in one of these two alternatives:

- something uncaused
- an infinite series of causation

Clearly both of these options lie outside the domain of science. An uncaused entity is something entirely beyond our experience but so is an infinite series of events that has no beginning. Neither of these things can be investigated or understood in terms of our experience of this material universe. Either way the answer to the origin of the universe is, as Martin Rees says, “the province of philosophers and theologians”. In western thought it is the first of the two options – an uncaused beginning – that has particularly captured men’s attention. And it is this that is of interest to us here because it provides the background for Dawkins’ principal argument against the existence of God.

One of the best known philosophical considerations of the issue is that given by Aristotle. Aristotle believed that there must be a first cause for the motions of the cosmos – something that causes movement but is not itself moved by some prior cause. He reasoned that the only thing that can cause movement in this way is thought. The thought of something that we desire causes us to move towards it. And so, as *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* explains, Aristotle held that:

...the only possible unmoved source for the endless circlings of the stars is an eternal activity of thinking. Because it is deathless and because the heavens and nature and all that is depend upon it, Aristotle calls this activity God.<sup>100</sup>

Aristotle’s philosophical god is very different from the usual theistic concept; but the idea that the universe needs a cause can clearly also form the basis for a theistic proof of some kind. Probably the most influential proponent of a theistic argument based on this idea was the mediaeval theologian (and Aristotelian scholar) Thomas Aquinas. He formulated a famous

## *The Dawkins Proof*

set of five proofs for God's existence known as the *Five Ways* and the first three of these are to do with origins. For example the second "way" is an argument based on causation:

The second way is from the nature of the efficient cause. In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.<sup>101</sup>

The force of this argument is based on the denial of the possibility of that second basic option that we noted above, namely an infinite chain of causation. "Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity...". If an infinite chain of causes is impossible, Aquinas argues, then there must be an uncaused first cause "to which everyone gives the name of God".

In chapter three of TGD Dawkins responds to the arguments of Aquinas. Referring to the first three of the *Five Ways* he says:

All three of these arguments rely upon the idea of a regress and invoke God to terminate it. They make the entirely unwarranted assumption that God himself is immune to the regress.<sup>102</sup>

## *The Entirely Unwarranted Assumption*

Dawkins' main answer to Aquinas is that he assumes that God is "immune to the regress". But of course Aquinas makes no such assumption. It is clear to anyone who actually reads the *Five Ways* that Aquinas does not assume that God is "immune to the regress", rather he argues that an infinite regress is logically impossible and that therefore there must be a first cause. If you read the second way you will see that Aquinas states, as we noted above, that "in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity" and gives reasons for it. It is not an assumption that God is immune to the regress, it is an argument that there cannot be an infinite regress. It is hard to see how it could be any plainer.

Dawkins, however, does make an assumption. He assumes that God *is susceptible* to the regress – as if God were like any event or entity in the material universe. What ground does Dawkins have for thinking that he can take what is true of material things in this universe and apply that to a spiritual being outside the universe? The fact that material objects are caused tells us nothing about the origins of a spiritual God. It is Dawkins who has made an entirely unwarranted assumption and that is very significant as we shall see in the next chapter.

On one point however Dawkins is right. He goes on to point out that Aquinas has not demonstrated that his first cause has the personal attributes of the Christian God.<sup>103</sup> But this is not the only problem. Even if we accept the validity of Aquinas' argument against infinite chains of causation, he has not proved that there is only *one* chain. What if there were many parallel chains? What if there were thus many first causes? A first cause for people, another for plants and another for planets? Aquinas' arguments don't prove that a single point of origin is a necessity. Although Aquinas' arguments are serious and not to be simply dismissed, the fact is that while they are entirely compatible with the existence of God and his creation of the universe they do not *prove* the existence of God.

Aquinas' approach is not the way to prove God. He presents the existence of God as the *conclusion* of a series of arguments. But the existence of God is far more important than that. Without God there is no workable starting point. Consider: if atheism is true then only matter exists and there can be no immaterial things like laws, rules and standards. No rules of behaviour and no laws of thought. Just material particles interacting in space. But if God exists then his perfect nature and character give rise to authoritative standards. As we shall see in later chapters, the existence of God is not a questionable conclusion, it is the necessary *foundation* for human life and thought.

### **Believing in Invisible Things**

Before we leave the issue of the ultimate origin of the universe there is another question that we need to consider. Along with "why does the universe exist?" we need to ask "why is the universe so ideally suited to life?" Although science can no more answer this question than the former one it can teach us a great deal about how surprisingly special the universe is. As Dawkins says:

Physicists have calculated that if the laws and constants of physics had been even slightly different, the universe would have developed in such a way that life would have been impossible.<sup>104</sup>

Dawkins' response to the amazing suitability of the universe is to invoke the "anthropic principle"<sup>105</sup> and say that of course the universe is suited to us because otherwise we wouldn't be here to be amazed by the suitability of it. But isn't it a bit much to believe that a universe that exists for no reason should turn out to be just the right sort of universe for life? Dawkins is ready with his answer:

This objection can be answered by the suggestion... that there are many universes, co-existing like bubbles of foam, in a 'multiverse'...<sup>106</sup>

## *The Entirely Unwarranted Assumption*

All those different universes have different laws of physics and we are in one of those that have physics compatible with life. The significant thing about this is that it is all simply invented to solve the problem of the improbability of this universe. It is highly improbable that an undesignated universe should happen to be ideally suited to life; therefore, in order to solve the improbability problem, Dawkins claims that there is a huge number of universes. But there is no evidence that other universes exist, Dawkins is just pretending that they do in order to get himself out of a hole.

We have seen this sort of thing before. In the previous chapter we saw Dawkins' belief in an undetectable and unverifiable ancestral, self-replicating molecule. There is no evidence that any such thing has ever existed but Dawkins believes in it anyway. He believes in these things not because of evidence but because of ideology – they are needed to prop up his worldview. Indeed he is even prepared to give serious consideration to bizarre ideas that are not forced on him by necessity. For example theoretical physicist Lee Smolin's idea that "daughter universes are born of parent universes... in black holes".<sup>107</sup> In Smolin's "theory" the laws of physics in the daughter universes are mutated forms of the parent's ones, and you can guess what comes next. Universes giving birth to daughter universes and evolving over the eons! What more could Dawkins want? Of course this is just a product of the imagination, a fairy story. But Dawkins is quite prepared to take this fairy story seriously, not because there is any evidence for it, but because it promotes the ideology that he believes in.

It is worth mentioning here that there are a number of arguments that atheists have produced to attack or mock theists for holding to what they claim is an arbitrary and unprovable belief in God. There are the Flying Spaghetti Monster and the Invisible Pink Unicorn for example, but the one with the best pedigree is the Celestial Teapot put forward by Bertrand Russell. Russell was one of the major atheistic philosophers of the twentieth century. His Celestial Teapot argument is quoted by

## *The Dawkins Proof*

Dawkins in TGD. Russell said that if he claimed there was a teapot, too small to be seen by any telescope, orbiting the sun between Earth and Mars, no one would be able to prove him wrong. His point was that the burden of proof lies with believers:

Many orthodox people speak as though it were the business of sceptics to disprove received dogmas rather than of dogmatists to prove them. This is, of course, a mistake.<sup>108</sup>

If it is the task of dogmatists to prove dogmas where then does that leave Smolin's pregnant universes, the bubbles-of-foam multiverse and that evolutionary essential, the self-replicating molecule? Dawkins doesn't really take the Celestial Teapot argument seriously. He is quite happy to hold to and promote arbitrary and unprovable beliefs.



# Chapter Five

## An Unrebuttable Refutation

### The Design Argument

Dawkins says of chapter four of TGD, *Why there almost certainly is no God*, that “This chapter has contained the central argument of my book”.<sup>109</sup> There are two themes to the chapter. One is that evolution by natural selection explains the design of living things. We have already looked at this in chapter three. The other is an attempt to turn the design argument against theism. Before we look at this we ought first to review the design argument itself. Perhaps the best known exposition of it is William Paley’s argument based on the design apparent in a watch.

...when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive... that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose; that is to say, that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day; that, if the different parts had been differently shaped from what they are... or placed after any other manner, or in any other order than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use that is now served by it... the inference we think is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker... who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction and designed its use.<sup>110</sup>

Paley went on to a detailed discussion of the characteristics and behaviours of living things which, he observed, were also

constructed in a precise way so as to perform their particular functions. And he concluded:

The marks of design are too strong to be gotten over. Design must have had a designer. That designer must have been a person. That person is God.<sup>111</sup>

In summary, the design argument says that in man-made artefacts we see a carefully designed order and structure that lead to them performing their specific functions. Thus, when we see these same features of order, structure and consequent function in the natural world, and particularly in living things, we can conclude that they also have been designed and made by an intelligent creator.

### **Who Designed the Designer?**

A common atheistic response to the design argument is to ask, “who designed the designer?” As Dawkins says:

Indeed, design... raises an even bigger problem than it solves: who designed the designer?<sup>112</sup>

The idea is that if complex living things require a designer then the designer himself must also require a designer as he must also be a complex living thing. Thus the design argument can supposedly be turned against theism and be used to oppose the existence of an uncreated God. What Dawkins does in TGD is to take the idea of “who designed the designer” (WDTD) and express it in terms of mathematical improbability in an attempt to produce a formal argument against the existence of God. It is, it seems, a very good argument. It “demonstrates that God, though not technically disprovable, is very very improbable indeed.”<sup>113</sup> It is “a very serious argument against the existence of God”<sup>114</sup> and “Dan Dennett rightly describes it as ‘an un rebuttable refutation’”.<sup>115</sup>

In order to set out WDTD in mathematical terms Dawkins first presents the design argument itself as being an argument based

on probability. He calls it “the argument from improbability”<sup>116</sup> and he starts his discussion of it by referring to a comment attributed to the astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle that the probability of life appearing on earth was no greater than that of a hurricane in a scrapyard producing a Boeing 747.<sup>117</sup> Dawkins refers to this when summarising his form of WDTD:

However statistically improbable the entity you seek to explain by invoking a designer, the designer himself has got to be at least as improbable. God is the Ultimate Boeing 747.<sup>118</sup>

It suits Dawkins to present the design argument as being about improbability so that he can express his response in the same terms. But the design argument is not an “argument from improbability” it is an argument by analogy from observation. We observe order and structure leading to function in objects designed by man so when we see these features in living things we conclude that they also are designed. Improbability only comes into the design argument as a response to alternative explanations, that is: given that we see the features of design in living things it is improbable that living things have come about by chance. Dawkins keeps referring to improbability in his discussion of the design argument but he does not always make clear what it is an improbability of. This vagueness turns out to be a necessary part of his argument against God’s existence. Once we start to ask for a little more precision the thing falls apart. Based on his summary quoted above and bringing in his point that improbability is due to complexity<sup>119</sup> we can set out Dawkins’ argument like this:

1. Living things are complex.
2. Therefore living things are improbable.
3. A creator must be at least as complex as his creation.
4. Therefore a creator must be at least as improbable as his creation.
5. Therefore God very probably does not exist.

## *The Dawkins Proof*

This is Dawkins' central argument against the existence of God, and it is fatally flawed in two important ways. Firstly the argument is logically fallacious. It relies on the fallacy of equivocation – a word is used in two different ways in order to falsely reach a desired conclusion. In this case the culprit is the concept of probability which is represented by the words “improbable” and “probably” in lines two, four and five. The sort of probability that we are talking about in line two has changed by the time we get to line five. This is easy to see if we remove the vagueness and make the implicit meanings explicit.

1. Living things are complex.
2. Therefore it is improbable that living things could have come about by chance.
3. A creator must be at least as complex as his creation.
4. Therefore it is at least as improbable that a creator could have come about by chance.
5. Therefore God very probably does not exist.

By restating it in this form we can easily see the false move. If the meaning of probability in line two (i.e. the probability of coming about by chance) is to be used consistently then the conclusion must fit with it. Thus line five would have to say “Therefore God very probably did not come about by chance”. This is a view with which every theist would wholeheartedly agree, but it is hardly what Dawkins wants.

The sense in which living things are improbable as a result of their complexity is that it is improbable that they are the products of chance. It is not improbable that they exist – on the contrary, it is certain that they do exist. Therefore we cannot conclude that their designer does not exist as a result of his supposed greater complexity. Dawkins' argument against God's existence is thus illogical and achieves nothing.

It is worth looking further at Dawkins' argument and examining the second problem with it as it is a problem common to all forms of WDTD. Both Dawkins' argument and the standard WDTD

## *An Unrebuttable Refutation*

rely on the idea that God's existence will need to be explained in the same way as the existence of material things. In WDTD it is assumed that if the characteristics of living things imply they are designed then the characteristics of God must also imply that he is designed. In Dawkins' argument it is assumed that living things are "improbable" because they are complex and that God must be at least as improbable because he must be at least as complex. Dawkins repeatedly asserts that God must be complex<sup>120</sup> and he says:

God may not have a brain made of neurones, or a CPU made of silicon, but if he has the powers attributed to him he must have something far more elaborately and non-randomly constructed than the largest brain or the largest computer we know.<sup>121</sup>

This would very probably be true were God physical. But God is not physical. He is not composed of the matter of this universe nor of the matter of any of the many other universes that Dawkins believes in. He is a spirit. The reason Dawkins says that God would have to be complex is that a material being who does what God does would have to be complex, but God is not a material being. What we know of this material universe and how the things of this material universe are constructed in relation to their functions tells us nothing about the spiritual essence of God. We have no reason to believe that God is "complex". But even if we somehow knew that God was complex that would still tell us nothing about whether God himself required a designer, or was in some way "improbable". All that we know about design, complexity and probability derives from our experience of this material universe. It tells us nothing about the nature of a spiritual being outside this universe. Therefore WDTD arguments can only be used to oppose the existence of a physical designer, they are useless as arguments against theism.

## **If You're Convinced by that Kind of Thing, You're Welcome**

It is instructive to watch Dawkins as he tries to deal with an argument based on the spiritual nature of God. At the time of writing it was possible to watch a short video clip on YouTube<sup>122</sup> where Dawkins is answering written questions submitted by a college audience and this issue comes up. The question refers to a point made earlier in the meeting:

Question:

The problem is they are applying natural laws to God whereas he claims to exist outside of them. Therefore he does not necessitate a beginning unlike matter, on the other hand, which necessitates a beginning.

Dawkins:

Well isn't that just too easy. [laughter] You talk your way out of having to provide a rational argument by just decreeing by fiat that God, [applause] that God simply declares himself outside matter and therefore doesn't need the same kind of argument as anything else. If you're convinced by that kind of thing, you're welcome.

Some of the audience laugh and applaud but they have failed to think critically about what Dawkins says. Dawkins provides no rational response to the point raised by the questioner, he just denounces the question. Worse still, in his denunciation he does the very things that he accuses the questioner of doing.

Firstly, Dawkins dismisses the argument as being "just too easy". But the fact that an argument is easy in no way indicates that it is false. Indeed, to dismiss an argument as too easy is itself too easy. It is not a rational response, it is a cop-out tactic for avoiding reasoning.

## *An Unrebuttable Refutation*

Secondly, he claims that believing that God is not physical is an attempt to avoid “having to provide a rational argument”. But raising the issue of God’s spiritual nature *is* a rational point and it is Dawkins who is unwilling to give a reasoned argument in response to it. It is perfectly rational to say that if God is a spirit then it cannot be assumed that his origin needs to be explained in the same way as the origin of material things. If Dawkins thinks it is unacceptable to say that God is a spirit then he needs to show that only matter exists. If Dawkins had an argument for materialism then this would be the place to give it – but there is nothing. He does not give reasons to support his position, he simply behaves as if it is the only option. It is he who is avoiding rational argument and trying to decree by fiat that he is right.

Finally, Dawkins ends with an “if you’re convinced by that kind of thing, you’re welcome” response which is the stock-in-trade last resort of someone who cannot answer an opponent.

This brief interchange tells us a great deal. The fundamental assumption of Dawkins’ philosophy, his belief that only matter exists, is directly challenged and he has no rational response. He has to resort to rhetorical tricks to avoid answering because he has no reasoned argument with which to defend his position.

### **Conclusion**

Dawkins claims that he has produced “a very serious argument against the existence of God”. But his argument is not even logical. It relies on the fallacy of equivocation. Also it shares the problem common to all WDTD arguments in that it treats God as if he were a material being. It is not an argument against a spiritual God. What Dawkins has produced is a fallacious argument for the non-existence of a material God.

Belief that God is spiritual is not an arbitrary idea invented for the purpose of avoiding Dawkins’ arguments. God’s spiritual nature is inescapable because he is the source of the *immaterial* standards that human thought and action depend on. Indeed, the reality of God’s existence is unavoidable for everyone, whether

## *The Dawkins Proof*

theist or atheist, because without those standards it is impossible for us to function as human beings. For example, we have seen that Dawkins likes to talk about rational argument, but if only matter exists where does that leave reason and the rules of thought that reason depends on? If only matter exists then what becomes of rational argument? That is something that we will examine in chapter seven. First, though, we must look at what Dawkins' materialism means for morality.



# Chapter Six

## The Manifest Phenomenon of Zeitgeist Progression

Everyone lives as if God exists. Even Richard Dawkins lives as if God exists. One area where this is very apparent is that of morality. Everyone lives as if there are laws governing human behaviour. But Dawkins denies the existence of the lawgiver and hence the possibility of there being any actual *laws* that require our obedience. As we saw in the first chapter, if only matter exists then there can be no concept of “ought”. There just is whatever there is; particles of matter reacting with one another according to the laws of physics. We are like rocks rolling down a hill, and it is meaningless to say that the rocks ought to land in this pattern and not that pattern. Why then does man behave as if morality is meaningful?

### **A Darwinian Explanation for Morality**

In chapter two we looked at Dawkins’ attempt to explain how evolution had caused the spread of religion. Here we are going to examine his evolutionary story about why man has morals. This forms the body of chapter six of TGD and chapter seven follows this up by attempting a moral attack on the Bible. Firstly we will look at Dawkins’ speculations about the origin of morality. How is it that selfish genes can cause us to behave unselfishly? Dawkins starts with what he calls the “twin pillars of altruism”.<sup>123</sup> These are, firstly, kin altruism, “A gene that programs individual organisms to favour their genetic kin is statistically likely to benefit copies of itself.”<sup>124</sup> And, secondly, reciprocal altruism. Our genes will reap some selfish benefit if they cause us to help those who are likely to help us in return,

“You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours”.<sup>125</sup> In addition to these two Dawkins adds that in human society there would be survival benefits in “fostering a *reputation* as a good reciprocator”<sup>126</sup> and that “Altruistic giving may be an advertisement of dominance or superiority”.<sup>127</sup>

It is interesting that Dawkins tries to find a number of methods by which evolution can be said to favour altruism. But the count is artificially inflated. Reputation is an aspect of reciprocal altruism and altruism-as-a-demonstration-of-superiority is a speculative idea based on research on one particular species of bird (the Arabian babbler).<sup>128</sup> Really Dawkins just has his “twin pillars” of kinship and reciprocation, the other two options are thrown in to pad out the list. The reason that the list needs padding out is to de-emphasize kin altruism. The problem with the kin altruism idea is that although it is easy to understand it has some rather unpleasant corollaries. If we have evolved to favour our near relatives then what could be more natural than nepotism, xenophobia and racism? If these characteristics convey an advantage on what Dawkins calls evolution’s “one-way street to improvement”<sup>129</sup> then in what sense are they wrong? And yet Dawkins insists that they are wrong. In his book *A Devil’s Chaplain* he says:

...I am a passionate anti-Darwinian when it comes to politics and how we should conduct our human affairs... I have always held true to the closing words of my first book, ‘We, alone on earth, can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators.’<sup>130</sup>

But Dawkins fails to understand his own philosophy. If we rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators then it is only because the selfish replicators have made us do so for some selfish reason. As Dawkins himself says in his book *River Out of Eden*: “DNA neither cares nor knows. DNA just is. And we dance to its music.”<sup>131</sup> We are not free, we cannot rebel, we are the mechanistic, deterministic outworking of the laws of physics and the laws of Darwinism.

If only matter exists then there is no escape from the control of DNA. The fact that we can think about morality and evaluate the morals of Darwinism and decide that we don't like them does not in any way mean that we are free. If we do evaluate and reject the morality of Darwinism it is only because our genes have made us do so because our doing so brings some selfish benefit to them. On the other hand, if God exists then his law gives us good reason to reject the morals of Darwinism.<sup>132</sup> But why should Dawkins want to reject Darwinian morality? Where are the standards that tell him that racism is wrong? If only matter exists then there are no standards of anything. There are no rules at all. In rejecting the morals of Darwinism, Dawkins is acting as if God exists.

But to get back to Dawkins' story about the origin of morality. Referring to his view of our evolutionary past he says, "We lived in villages, or earlier in discrete roving bands like baboons".<sup>133</sup> As those bands were largely kin based and as we would have repeatedly come into contact with the same individuals this would, he says, have provided the conditions necessary for the evolution of both kin and reciprocal altruism. But this leads to a question:

...now that most of us live in big cities where we are no longer surrounded by kin... why are we still so good to each other...<sup>134</sup>

We evolved to be good to those around us because those around us were either our genetic kin, and so helping them would promote our genes, or if they were not they would at least have the opportunity to return any favour and so benefit our genes. But why today do we help those who are not our kin and why do we expend our resources to provide for the starving poor in another nation when we know they will never be able to do anything for us? Dawkins says the reason we still do good is that our behaviour is still governed by the genes that evolved in that earlier situation:

## *The Dawkins Proof*

In ancestral times, we had the opportunity to be altruistic only towards close kin and potential reciprocators. Nowadays that restriction is no longer there, but the rule of thumb persists. Why would it not?<sup>135</sup>

Notice how Dawkins is trying to force what he has previously said into a different mould. In the past we only had the opportunity to be altruistic to our close kin, as if we were yearning for the chance to be free of that restriction. But according to Dawkins the restricted social environment (when our distant ancestors lived with their close kin) was the very reason that we evolved to be altruistic in the first place. If we had earlier had greater social opportunity for altruism (through a varying social environment) then we would probably never have evolved that behaviour. Thus the social changes we now experience are not the liberation from a restriction; they are a new set of evolutionary pressures which will lead to new forms of human behaviour.

Dawkins says that the rule of thumb (i.e. altruistic behaviour) persists in the new social environment and asks “Why would it not?” This is a question that any evolutionist can easily answer: because it no longer provides a survival advantage to our genes. Maybe social changes have happened too rapidly for us yet to have evolved out of the altruistic behaviour pattern, but if evolution is true and the environmental changes are widespread and persistent then no doubt we eventually shall. As Dawkins points out, natural selection favours animals who devote their energy to survival and reproduction above those who expend it on useless activities.<sup>136</sup> The same principle applies to us wasting our resources on helping those who are not our close genetic relatives and who are unable to ever pay us back. So why does that altruistic rule of thumb persist? Dawkins says:

It is just like sexual desire. We can no more help ourselves feeling pity when we see a weeping unfortunate (who is unrelated and unable to reciprocate) than we can help ourselves feeling lust for a member of the opposite sex (who

*The Manifest Phenomenon of Zeitgeist Progression*

may be infertile or otherwise unable to reproduce). Both are misfirings, Darwinian mistakes: blessed, precious mistakes.<sup>137</sup>

“It is just like sexual desire” says Dawkins but his analogy is false for two very obvious reasons. Firstly, in terms of evolution, it is perfectly possible for our genes to survive without us being altruistic; indeed, when we live in a varying social environment it is more likely for our genes to survive if we do not waste our time, energy, and possessions on helping others. But it is not more likely for our genes to survive if we do not attempt to reproduce. Altruism therefore is susceptible to eradication by evolutionary change whereas the reproductive instinct is not. Secondly he is answering an issue raised by a change in general conditions (with respect to altruism) by an analogy with varying individual conditions (with respect to sexual desire). We are now in a social environment where most people we encounter are not our close relatives but we are not in an environment where most of the opposite sex are unable to reproduce. In evolutionary theory varying individual conditions have no effect but persistent changes in general conditions do.

But what is more interesting than the errors in Dawkins’ analogy is that while he admits that altruism is a mistake he claims that it is a “blessed, precious” mistake. The question is: where do the standards come from by which this mistaken behaviour can be judged to be blessed and precious? Yet again Dawkins is being inconsistent to his atheism. There can be no standards of anything, there is just matter in motion, interacting according to the laws of physics.

When we consider Dawkins’ story about the origin of morality it is important to note that although we can understand how his idea is supposed to work, that doesn’t in any way prove that it is true. Dawkins’ story of the origin of morality is entirely speculative – a piece of make-believe. Even if Darwinism were true he would still have no way of knowing how morality had arisen because it involves past events that are untestable and unverifiable. And what does his story boil down to? At some

point in the distant past a mutation of a particular gene (perhaps caused by ionising radiation or a genetic copying error) resulted in an organism behaving in a way that we term altruistic. This behaviour turned out to convey an advantage for the survival of that particular form of the gene. And so that form became increasingly prevalent and that is the reason that we are kind to each other – because of an ionised particle altering a gene in a cell millions of years ago. Isn't it good that that happened? No it is not! If only matter exists there can be no standards to judge that event by. Kindness has no real value, it just happens to work to the preservation and promotion of the particular segment of nucleic acid that causes that behaviour.

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Having set out a Darwinian model for the origin of morality Dawkins devotes most of his time on morals to these things:

- claiming that we generally share a common “enlightened consensus” morality
- claiming that this morality changes over time always progressing in a direction that most of us consider good
- criticising the Bible in the light of that morality

### **The Moral Consensus**

With Dawkins' evolutionary view of history comes the idea that religion is a recent phenomenon and that if morality had a Darwinian origin we would expect to find “some moral universals, crossing geographical and cultural barriers, and also, crucially, religious barriers”.<sup>138</sup> Dawkins goes on to describe, under the heading *A case study in the roots of morality*,<sup>139</sup> some rather contrived moral-dilemma thought experiments involving stories about runaway trucks on railway lines where a character in the story causes the death of one person to save the lives of many. The participant in the experiment is then asked whether the action is morally permissible. These scenarios are unreal because one can never know that an action to save many will

certainly save them nor that it will certainly result in the loss of someone else's life. Also the cross-cultural testing seems to have been limited – Dawkins mentions one Central American tribe it was tested on, with similar results to westerners.<sup>140</sup> These tests were also done on people identified as either atheists or theists and in the results there was “no statistically significant difference” between the two groups.<sup>141</sup> Dawkins concludes:

This seems compatible with the view, which I and many others hold, that we do not need God in order to be good – or evil.<sup>142</sup>

This is all very interesting but it is a complete waste of time on Dawkins' part. Firstly it offers no support for his view of an evolutionary origin for man and man's morality. It is just as compatible with us having a common moral nature that is the product of our created, yet fallen, origin. In fact these findings are compatible with any view that gives a common origin for man's morality. Secondly, it is entirely irrelevant to the real moral problem of atheism. The moral argument against atheism is not that “we need God in order to be good” in the sense that we need belief in God in order to formulate morals or to act morally. Man is made in the image of God and he has a moral nature. Therefore man thinks and acts in terms of morals whether he believes in God or not – he cannot help doing so. The moral argument against atheism is not that atheists have no morals and it is not that atheists cannot formulate moral systems. The moral argument against atheism is that atheists *do* have morals and they *do* formulate moral systems but atheism makes those moral systems meaningless.

We saw Dawkins' story about the origin of morality earlier, and what it comes down to is that moral behaviour only exists because it happened to give a survival advantage to a particular mutated gene that caused it. Thus morals don't really *mean* anything, there are no moral standards that one has to follow, all that exist are particles of matter interacting according to the laws of physics. While it is quite possible for Dawkins to

construct an atheistic story about why we have morals, that story does not make morals meaningful – it makes them meaningless.

In the theistic worldview morality is real. God has given moral laws that he requires us to keep and he has created us with a knowledge of those laws. Though we may corrupt and suppress that knowledge we still, at heart, know that there is such a thing as authoritative moral law. All of us live in the light of that knowledge. This is why we see Dawkins on the one hand asserting that only matter exists and on the other hand saying that he passionately opposes Darwinian morals in politics and human affairs. He knows that there are standards for human behaviour and yet by reducing reality to material interactions he renders the existence of such standards impossible. This self-contradiction indicates very clearly the falsity of his beliefs. The conflict is unavoidable because what he believes he is, the product of purposeless material interactions, is not compatible with what he really is, a man made in the image of God.

### **The Changing Moral Consensus**

Dawkins wants to use the idea of morality to criticise religion. Look, for instance, at his descriptions of the Christian God as “arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction”,<sup>143</sup> an “evil monster”,<sup>144</sup> and a “cruel ogre”.<sup>145</sup> These criticisms are meaningless if there are no moral standards, and atheism cannot provide such standards. What is Dawkins to do? He needs morality to at least seem to make sense on the basis of atheism. He cannot appeal to fixed standards of behaviour as that would immediately raise the question of where those standards came from and who or what gave them authority. So instead he constructs a system with a changing morality that he hopes can also provide absolutes for use in moral criticism. It is ingenious but futile because no form of morality can have meaning in a system where everything, including man’s moral behaviour, reduces to the laws of physics.



*The Manifest Phenomenon of Zeitgeist Progression*

Dawkins system is based on his idea that societies have a “somewhat mysterious consensus” about morality that changes over time and which he calls the “Zeitgeist”.<sup>146</sup> Although Dawkins asserts the existence of a moral consensus, it is very plain that in any society there is a wide range of moral opinion. For example in chapter eight of TGD Dawkins refers to the teachings of “American ‘rapture’ Christians” and then quotes from Sam Harris’ *Letter to a Christian Nation* which says “nearly half the American population apparently believes this”.<sup>147</sup> Yet immediately following this Dawkins goes on to say:

There are, then, people whose religious faith takes them right outside the enlightened consensus of my ‘moral *Zeitgeist*’.<sup>148</sup>

Given that a population contains a variety of opinions it is clear that if these rapturists make up a bloc of nearly fifty percent of the US population then in that country *their view is the zeitgeist*.<sup>†</sup> Clearly there is an issue here as to who gets included when Dawkins works out what the consensus is. And what happens if we look at global society? There are very different views of morality in different nations – see, for example, Dawkins’ comments on the treatment of women in Saudi Arabia.<sup>149</sup> But Dawkins says that although the zeitgeist changes “it moves in parallel, on a broad front, throughout the educated world”.<sup>150</sup> Presumably, in Dawkins’ eyes, nations that don’t follow his consensus are not properly educated. Dawkins’ zeitgeist is an incredibly chauvinistic concept. It is a consensus by definition. People who disagree with him are simply excluded as unenlightened or uneducated.

But let us pretend that Dawkins’ consensus exists and see where it leads us. He claims that this zeitgeist changes with time. Not

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<sup>†</sup> Dawkins always refers to this zeitgeist with a capital ‘Z’ and although I know it is a German noun I really cannot bring myself to keep on capitalising it, so I will save the capitalised form for when I am directly quoting him.

## *The Dawkins Proof*

only does it change with time it also (and this is important) changes in a fixed direction:

The shift is in a recognizably consistent direction, which most of us would judge as improvement.<sup>151</sup>

His evidence for this idea starts with a list of the dates that women were given the vote in different countries during the twentieth century. He then proceeds to list various practices of the past that are no longer considered acceptable:<sup>152</sup>

- In the seventeenth century sailors killed dodos for sport.
- In the eighteenth century George Washington and Thomas Jefferson kept slaves.
- In the nineteenth century people went big game hunting.
- In nineteenth and twentieth centuries Abraham Lincoln, T. H. Huxley, H. G. Wells and others held views that were clearly racist.

Dawkins has chosen this list carefully to include things that almost everyone agrees with him on. Presumably this is to give the impression that virtually everyone is part of his great consensus. If he had chosen other social indicators that have changed over time such as the liberalisation of divorce, abortion and euthanasia then it would have been much more obvious that while there are many people who agree with him there are also many who disagree. It would also have been harder for him to characterise these changes as “improvement”. An increasing number of broken families and dead babies is not a very positive image to most people.

Even if Dawkins were absolutely right about his zeitgeist how would that provide him with a basis for moral criticism? What if morality does change in a fixed direction? What if it does change in a way that most people consider good? If “there is nothing beyond the natural, physical world”<sup>153</sup> then moral *laws* do not exist. And if morality is the result of “exceedingly complex interconnections of physical entities within the brain”<sup>154</sup> then all

our moral ideals are just the outworking of the laws of physics. Morals don't mean anything, they don't stand for anything, they have no value. Yet Dawkins behaves very much as if his moral views do have value, because he uses them to make moral criticism. Although he says that morality is changing, his claim that it is always changing in a consistent direction of improvement gives him a place to pin his absolute values. Morality is changing, but the direction is fixed. And this morality is always getting better. Therefore the morality of today (or at least Dawkins' morality of today) must be the best morality ever, and so it can be used to make moral criticisms of anything in the past. Dawkins thus thinks that he has been able to construct a foundation for moral values. He says:

Whatever its cause, the manifest phenomenon of Zeitgeist progression is more than enough to undermine the claim that we need God in order to be good, or to decide what is good.<sup>155</sup>

As we saw earlier, this is not the issue – atheists can construct their own moral systems, as can anyone else. Atheists can decide what they want to call good. The problem is that atheism makes the idea of “good” meaningless.

### **Using the Changing Moral Consensus to Criticise the Bible**

In “Zeitgeist progression” Dawkins thinks he has a foundation from which he can launch a moral attack on the teaching of the Bible. A good part of this attack is based on the mistaken idea that the major characters of the Bible are meant to be good examples whom we are always supposed to emulate. But, when the Bible tells us that Lot offered his daughters to the men of Sodom in an attempt to protect his guests<sup>156</sup> it does not do so in order to give us an example to follow, nor is it to teach us that women are expendable. It is to show us the condition into which Lot had fallen. Similarly the account in Judges chapter nineteen where a Levite hands his concubine over to a mob in a city of Israel<sup>157</sup> is there to show us the moral condition to which the

## *The Dawkins Proof*

people of Israel had sunk at that time – on a level with that of Sodom. The Bible records the horrible reality of men’s sins. It is not a work of hagiography. The Bible records the sins even of its chief characters. Thus we read of Abraham claiming that his wife was his sister in order to protect himself.<sup>158</sup> (He thought that he might be killed by those who wanted his wife whereas if they thought she was his sister they would take her and leave him alone.<sup>159</sup>) He did this on two occasions and his son Isaac followed his example.<sup>160</sup> The Bible records this to show us Abraham’s and Isaac’s failings, not to give us an example to follow.<sup>161</sup>

A different class of event is where something was done at God’s command, for example when Abraham was told by God to sacrifice Isaac. Dawkins denounces this, yet anyone who reads the Bible will notice that Abraham had already been told that his descendants would come through Isaac.<sup>162</sup> So Abraham knew that somehow Isaac would survive. This is why he said to the men who had come with him, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you”<sup>163</sup> and when Isaac asked about the sacrifice Abraham replied, “God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering”,<sup>164</sup> as indeed happened.<sup>165</sup> Dawkins, however, comments that today Abraham would have been prosecuted for child abuse or, if he had sacrificed Isaac, for murder. And he adds:

Yet, according to the *mores* of his time, his conduct was entirely admirable, obeying God’s commandment.<sup>166</sup>

This is an excellent example of how Dawkins’ *zeitgeist* progression idea is supposed to work as a ground for moral criticism. Abraham’s actions were in tune with the *zeitgeist* of his time but not with the *zeitgeist* of our time (for which we can hardly blame him). But, you see, the *zeitgeist* of our time is so very much *better* than that of Abraham’s time, so that Abraham’s actions that were admirable then are evil now. As Dawkins says, “what kind of morals could one derive from this appalling story?”<sup>167</sup> But the obvious question is: by what standard is this story appalling? The answer is: by the standard of our new,

super-improved zeitgeist (or at least Dawkins' appropriation of it). But the zeitgeist is not a standard. If it is anything at all it is just an example of animal social behaviour. If Dawkins wants to criticise Abraham then he needs to have some real standards to criticise him by. And there is his problem. What standards does he have to offer? Where do they come from? Why do they have authority? And how can such a thing as a moral standard exist when only matter is real? There is nothing in existence apart from material particles obeying the laws of physics. Immaterial things like moral standards cannot exist. Nor does it make any sense to say that things ought to be other than they are. If atheism is true then there are no standards. People behave as if there are only because it brings (or at least used to bring) survival benefits to the gene that causes that behaviour.

Another area that meets with Dawkins' disapproval is that of God's acts of judgement, whether directly as in Noah's Flood or indirectly as in the destruction of Jericho by the Israelites under Joshua. On both occasions these acts of devastation are recorded as being for judgement on sin.<sup>168</sup> The Bible repeatedly refers to the fact that God judges sin, and that there will be an ultimate judgement on sin.<sup>169</sup> But Dawkins does not like these judgements:

...the moral of the story of Noah is appalling. God took a dim view of humans, so he (with the exception of one family) drowned the lot of them...<sup>170</sup>

Again we have to ask why Dawkins is labelling the account of the Flood "appalling". Where is the standard by which it is being judged? It is just that Dawkins doesn't like it and he hopes that other people won't like it either. But even if everyone were to agree with him what difference would that make? There still would be no moral standards. There can be no moral standards if materialism is true – there is just matter in motion. There is no right, no wrong, just the physics of material interactions. This is the crucial thing: Dawkins' atheism makes moral standards meaningless and yet he cannot help behaving as if moral

## *The Dawkins Proof*

standards are real. *He cannot help behaving as if atheism is false.* Every time he makes a moral complaint about the Bible, or anything else, he is just hammering another nail in atheism's coffin.

In chapter seven of TGD, *The 'Good' Book and the changing moral Zeitgeist*, Dawkins is supposed to be criticising the morals of the Bible so it is strange that he rarely mentions its moral teaching. Perhaps he thought that if people read what the Bible says about providing for the poor, about caring for widows and orphans; or the warnings to judges not to accept bribes, nor to be biased against the poor and the injunction to love even our enemies<sup>171</sup> then they might not be as opposed to the Bible as he wants them to be. Where he does report the Bible's moral teaching he often misrepresents it. For instance he claims that "thou shalt not kill"<sup>172</sup> only means you shall not kill Jews. How does he know this? Because, he says, it is what Moses Maimonides taught.<sup>173</sup> Well, Maimonides is not the Bible. He was a mediaeval Jewish teacher who lived about 2500 years after that commandment was written and what he says about it is of no more significance than what Dawkins says about it. The commandment stands on its own and its meaning is clear. Similarly Dawkins says "love thy neighbour"<sup>174</sup> just means "love another Jew".<sup>175</sup> But it is clear that this is not the Bible's meaning because the Jews were explicitly commanded to love the foreigners living among them:

Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.<sup>176</sup>

Dawkins claims that the Bible promotes what he calls "in-group" morality and "out-group" hostility<sup>177</sup> – that is caring for those who are members of the in-group and rejecting or opposing those in the out-group. He even goes so far as to say (referring to a work by an anthropologist called John Hartung) "Jesus limited his in-group of the saved strictly to Jews".<sup>178</sup> This is so manifestly false that it is surprising that Dawkins would be prepared to go into print with it.

*The Manifest Phenomenon of Zeitgeist Progression*

Jesus certainly said that his mission was to the Jews, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel".<sup>179</sup> Yet it is perfectly clear that he readily accepted faithful Gentiles. Jesus often commented on people's faith, rebuking his disciples for their lack of faith<sup>180</sup> and commending the faith of those he healed.<sup>181</sup> But there were only two people whom he commended for having great faith and both of them were Gentiles. One was a Roman centurion and the other was a woman from the region of Tyre and Sidon. It was to this Gentile woman that Jesus said that he was only sent to the lost sheep of Israel, yet when she persisted in her request for her daughter to be delivered from an evil spirit Jesus both granted her request and commended her faith:

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.<sup>182</sup>

The Roman centurion showed his faith when he recognised that Jesus had the power to heal his servant just by speaking the word:

The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed... When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.<sup>183</sup>

Jesus praised this Gentile as having greater faith than he had found in Israel. This hardly fits with Dawkins' claim. And Dawkins' error becomes even more apparent when we read what Jesus said next:

And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.<sup>184</sup>

## *The Dawkins Proof*

Jesus told the Jews of his day that they were going to be cast out of the heavenly kingdom into judgement while Gentiles were going to be brought in. Yet Dawkins tells us that Jesus “limited his in-group of the saved strictly to Jews”! There is so much more that could be said on this topic. For example Jesus’ opposition to in-group morality is the reason that we have the parable of the Good Samaritan rather than a parable of the Good Jew. The Jews of Jesus’ day certainly did practice an in-group morality in opposition to God’s commandment to love the stranger, and they were particularly prejudiced against the Samaritans.<sup>185</sup> In his parable of the Good Samaritan,<sup>186</sup> Jesus deliberately presented this member of an out-group as an example of obedience to God’s command to love one’s neighbour; while in the same parable he also presented members of the respected classes of Jewish religious society as uncaring and disobedient to God.

Another bizarre claim of Dawkins’ is that the apostle Paul “invented the idea of taking the Jewish God to the Gentiles”.<sup>187</sup> Again Dawkins ascribes this notion to John Hartung, but that does not excuse Dawkins for putting this nonsense in his book. The reality is that there were already many adherents to the Jewish God among the Gentiles before Paul ever set out on his missionary journeys. They would attend the synagogue<sup>188</sup> and Paul often encountered them on his travels. Some of them supported him<sup>189</sup> and some opposed him.<sup>190</sup> Paul did not even think up the idea of taking Jesus’ teaching to the Gentiles. Jesus himself told his disciples that they were to go to the Gentiles;<sup>191</sup> and it was Peter, not Paul, who was the first apostle to preach to a gathering of Gentiles.<sup>192</sup>

There are more errors like this but the above is enough to show that Dawkins is not a reliable guide to the teaching of the Bible.

### **The Zeitgeist Progression in Practice**

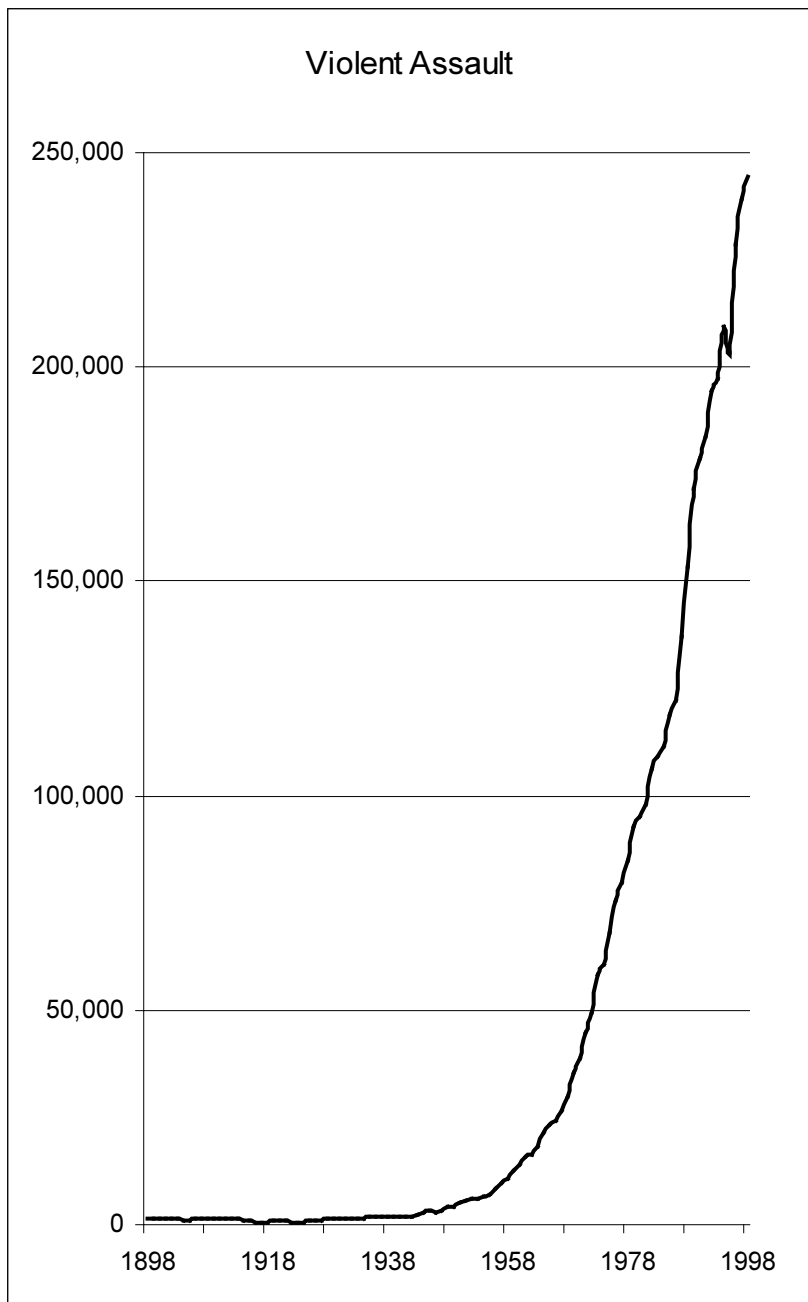
According to Dawkins his “moral Zeitgeist” is on a path of continual improvement.<sup>193</sup> It will be interesting then to see if we can measure the effects of its progression. What has happened to



*The Manifest Phenomenon of Zeitgeist Progression*

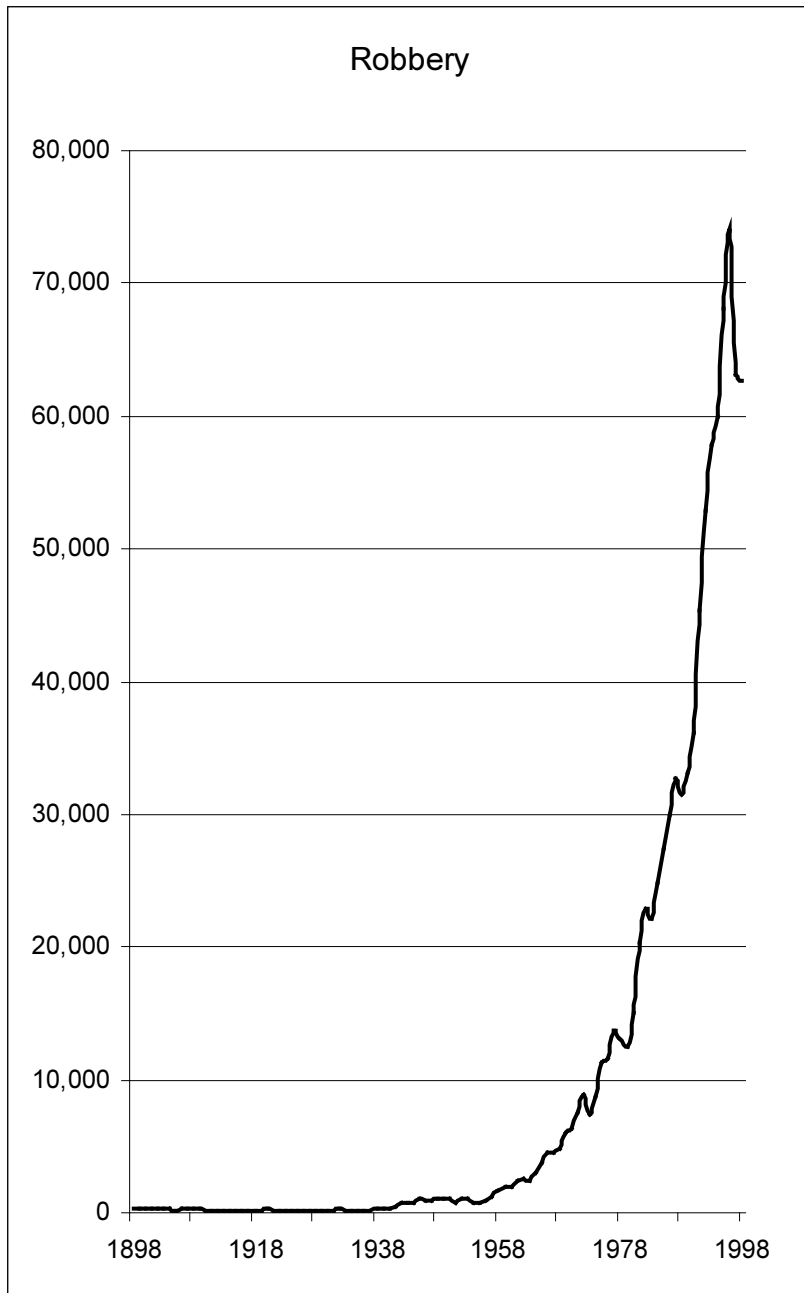
society as Dawkins' zeitgeist has advanced? Certainly, over the last century, society has benefited from a growth in wealth and the development of technology, but those aren't moral issues. What has happened to society morally? That all depends on what one thinks is moral good. And here we face the problem that there isn't a real moral consensus. For example, if one thinks that divorce and abortion are bad then their increase over the past century will be interpreted as moral decline whereas if one thinks that the freedom to have abortion and divorce is good then their increase will be heralded as a sign of moral progress. The divorce and abortion figures are good examples of the fact that there has been moral change but that there is dispute as to whether that change is good. To avoid that dispute I want to look at something that most of us can agree on as a moral indicator, namely the incidence of crime. How has this been affected by the advance of the zeitgeist?

A good source of information on this topic can be found in the figures for recorded crime in England and Wales which are available as an Excel spreadsheet from the Home Office web site.<sup>194</sup> It is a large spreadsheet and I cannot cover all of the data here, but I will concentrate on crimes that show something of the way that people treat one another and the respect, or lack of it, that they have for their fellow man. The graphs on the following pages show the historical trends in three categories of crime over the century from 1898, when the records began, to 1998.<sup>195</sup> Firstly, there is violent assault. This is composed of the figures for "More serious wounding or other acts endangering life" (which increased from 271 instances in 1898, to 12,833 in 1998) and "Other wounding etc" (1,086 in 1898, 231,360 in 1998). Secondly there is the graph for sexual assault which is composed of the figures for "Indecent assault on a male" (49 in 1898, 3,885 in 1998), "Indecent assault on a female" (798 in 1898, 18,979 in 1998) and rape (236 in 1898, 6,898 in 1998). Finally there is the graph for robbery, referring to stealing by force from a person (354 in 1898, 62,652 in 1998). The graphs show the trends more clearly than numbers can:





*The Dawkins Proof*



## *The Manifest Phenomenon of Zeitgeist Progression*

That is Dawkins' "Zeitgeist Progression". As his "enlightened consensus" has advanced over the last century the result has not been a society of peace and love but one of rapidly increasing violence. These figures are not a mistake, they are the official UK Government statistics which you can check for yourself. Dawkins' idea of social moral advance is completely untenable in the light of these data.

The categories of crime in the graphs are not the only ones that show a shocking increase. Other crimes have also increased phenomenally as you can verify from the spreadsheet. But these particular figures show how people treat each other. They are not about fraud against insurance companies or theft from empty buildings but the blood and hatred of direct violence against another person.

The graphs show very starkly what has happened over the last century as society has turned away from a Christian foundation and an increasing number of people have rejected the idea of God's absolute moral law. If there are no absolute moral standards then it is easy to ignore and argue away any moral inclinations that we may have in order to do something contrary to them; and so anger turns to violence, lust turns to rape and greed turns to robbery because there are no real moral *laws* that forbid these things.

In the light of Dawkins' opposition to the religious instruction of children it is interesting to note that this social moral decline has happened as the serious Christian education of children has declined. In the nineteenth century churches set up schools that taught the Christian faith along with the other lessons they gave, as did the early state schools.<sup>196</sup> In his book *The Uncertain Trumpet*, Norman Dennis describes the changes in the Christian content of school education. Referring to the Committee of the Privy Council for Education set up by the prime minister, Lord John Russell, in 1839, Dennis notes that:

## *The Dawkins Proof*

One of the Committee of Council's important assumptions was that instruction in Protestant Christianity was 'the main element of their work'.<sup>197</sup>

Contrast that with the situation 140 years later when, as Dennis records:

In his 1978 Reith lectures, Edward Norman, at that time Dean of Peterhouse, Cambridge, drew attention to what he saw as the 'marked similarity' between the typical school course on religion in the Soviet Union and the new courses in Britain. In the Soviet Union the courses were deliberately aimed at fostering 'scientific atheism' as an essential component of communism.<sup>198</sup>

Religious instruction of children, the very thing that Dawkins describes as "mental abuse",<sup>199</sup> had a profoundly beneficial effect on society. It taught children that life has real meaning and value, that it is not just the mechanistic outworking of the impersonal laws of physics. That in itself was very significant as it removed the frustration of a meaningless existence that drives many to personally and socially destructive behaviour. Secondly it taught that there are real moral laws given to us by our creator, not just an arbitrary, changing social consensus that is devoid of any authority. It also provided the respect for marriage that gave stability to family life and hence stability to society as a whole. As serious Christian education has declined and as serious Christian belief has declined so these foundations have been undermined with a resultant decline in personal self-government and thus of social order. This is not at all to say that atheists are criminals but that the absence of Christian education leaves a moral vacuum. Atheism is unable to fill this vacuum because there is nothing in atheism to provide for an idea of moral law that actually is *law* in any real sense.

## **In the Name of Atheism**

Before we leave the topic of morality it is worth referring to Dawkins' view that while religion is a force for evil, atheism is not. He says that there have frequently been wars fought in the name of religion but that he doesn't know of any fought in the name of atheism.<sup>200</sup> But this is not to compare like with like. There may not, strictly speaking, have been wars fought for the belief that God does not exist, but nor have there been wars fought for the belief that God does exist. There have been wars fought in the cause of theistic belief systems but there have also been wars fought in the cause of atheistic belief systems. In fact, far more destructive than any religious war has been the wholesale extermination of tens of millions of people by the leaders of their own nations (Mao, Stalin, Pol Pot) all done in the cause of promoting an atheistic belief system.

Not only is terrible evil done in the cause of atheistic ideologies but evil is also done in the name of atheism itself. While most atheists would be appalled by this, Dawkins simply denies that the problem exists. "Individual atheists may do evil things but they don't do evil things in the name of atheism",<sup>201</sup> he says. But there can be no doubt that this happens. Take, for example, the well-known case of Georgi Vins: In April 1979 Vins arrived in the USA as part of a Cold War prisoner exchange.<sup>202</sup> He and four political dissidents were being exchanged with the Americans for two convicted Soviet spies. But Georgi Vins was not a spy nor would he have considered himself a political dissident. He was a prisoner because he was involved in organising a group of churches that wanted to stay free from state control.

Vins' father was a missionary who had been arrested in the mid 1930s and never seen again – the family was later informed that he had died. In the late 1950s the church that Vins attended gave in to pressure from the government and prohibited children from accompanying their parents to church. (The Soviet authorities obviously shared Dawkins' concern to protect children from mind viruses.<sup>203</sup>) As a result of this and related

## *The Dawkins Proof*

changes Georgi Vins became involved with the underground church movement.

Vins' daughter Natasha has written a book, *Children of the Storm*, describing the family's experiences:

In October of 1962, a long article criticizing Christians appeared in the *Evening Kiev* newspaper. My parents' names were mentioned in it... As a result of the article in the *Evening Kiev*, Mama lost her job. Papa was demoted from his position as the department head to an ordinary engineer... At school I was summoned twice a week... for "atheistic instruction."<sup>204</sup>

Apparently the principal's assistant, after several sessions with me, had sent a report to the regional office stating, "Natasha Vins is not responding to re-education, and the school requests that city officials take appropriate action." As a result, a court case was opened to deprive my parents of their parental rights.<sup>205</sup>

Although the Vins children were not taken from their parents the threat was real enough for it had happened to other families. It was also used to try to induce Natasha to join the Young Pioneers (the Soviet atheist youth organisation):

"...if you become a Young Pioneer, you will remain at home with your parents and little brother and sister."<sup>206</sup>

In 1966 Georgi Vins was sentenced to three years imprisonment because of his work with the unregistered churches. After his release he returned to working for the churches and had to go into hiding to avoid arrest. In 1971 Natasha's grandmother was put on trial for her part in documenting persecution and petitioning the government over it. For complaining about persecution she was sentenced to three years imprisonment for slander of the Soviet State.<sup>207</sup>



*The Manifest Phenomenon of Zeitgeist Progression*

In 1974 Vins was captured and in 1975 sentenced to five years in a labour camp to be followed by five years internal exile in Siberia. As a result of international pressure he was, in 1979, stripped of his citizenship and expelled from the country as described above. In 1990 Mikhail Gorbachev restored Vins' citizenship and he was able to return to visit his homeland. In 1995 he finally gained access to his father's KGB file and found that he had been executed in 1936.

This is an example of the persecution suffered by one family. The same sort of thing happened over and over again to other innocent people whose only crime was that they were not atheists. This was not an isolated event and it was not the result of a lone persecutor abusing the system. Rather it was the purpose of the system to persecute religious believers in order to promote atheism. Though Dawkins denies that it can happen, this was deliberate, systematic evil committed in the name of atheism.

# Chapter Seven

## Completely Superseded by Science

Dawkins is very dismissive of the explanatory role of religion. He says that religion once aimed to explain man's existence and the nature of the universe but that, "In this role it is now completely superseded by science".<sup>208</sup>

According to Dawkins science is the great explainer. But that raises a question: how do we explain science and, more particularly, how does atheism explain science? For science to be possible two things are necessary. Firstly the universe needs to behave in an orderly and predictable way and secondly there need to be standards of reason that will enable us to think reliably about our observations.

How does Dawkins' view of the world account for these things? How can we predict the future behaviour of matter? How can there be laws that tell us how we ought to think? Dawkins doesn't tell us how atheism explains these foundations of science. He seems to naively believe in science without thinking about whether or not it is compatible with his underlying worldview. The closest he comes to explaining science is when he responds to cultural relativists who promote other views of truth as valid alternatives to the western scientific approach. When such people suggest that the scientist's use of evidence is a fundamentalist faith Dawkins points out that while these relativists may philosophically deny the validity of evidence, in practice we all rely upon it.<sup>209</sup> He deals with this issue of cultural relativism at greater length in the essay *What is True?* which appears in *A Devil's Chaplain*. He points out that science works:

Science boosts its claim to truth by its spectacular ability to make matter and energy jump through hoops on command, and to predict what will happen and when.<sup>210</sup>

And he says that if we were to consider scientific truth as just one view among many, “Trobriand truth, Kikuyu truth, Maori truth,... feminist truth, Islamic truth, Hindu truth...” then scientific truth is the only one that regularly wins converts from the others.<sup>211</sup>

That last point is debatable. People do convert to a western scientific view of the world but others convert from the western view to its competitors – for example to eastern mystical religions. The other points are true enough though: we do all use evidence and science does enable us to control and predict nature. But, even if we grant all Dawkins’ points it doesn’t explain anything. It merely tells us that there is this powerful phenomenon of science to account for. How does atheism account for it? Dawkins doesn’t say.

Here is the Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science who has written a book to promote atheism and yet in that book he doesn’t tell us how atheism accounts for the reality of science. This is disappointing to say the least, but it needn’t stop us from examining the matter and asking how those two foundational requirements for science – predictability and reason – fit with the atheist worldview.

## **The Predictability of Nature**

Firstly the predictability of nature. Science is possible because the universe behaves in an orderly way. Events happen as the result of prior causes and a given set of causes will always produce the same result, time after time after time. Science is built on this orderliness of nature. The laws of motion, and the law of gravity, for example, have been formulated as the result of careful investigation in the past and they now enable us to

## *The Dawkins Proof*

accurately predict the future movement of an apple falling or a spacecraft orbiting a planet.

As a result of these laws formulated in the past we can confidently predict the movement of objects in the future. But why are we so sure that these laws will apply in the future? Why should things in the future behave in the same way that they have in the past?

It may seem that the question is very easy to answer. We can know that things in the future will behave in the way they have in the past because our past experience has always proven this to be the case. Whenever we have predicted that the apple will fall if we release it it has always fallen and never hovered in space nor risen. Whenever we have drunk a glass of water we have never found that the properties of water have changed so that it has become deadly poison.<sup>†</sup> We see this consistency in all our daily experiences and in every scientific experiment. Over and over again we have seen that our predictions and expectations have proven true. Over and over again we have seen that things in the future behave in the same way that they have in the past. Therefore we can know that they will continue to do so in the future.

However, a little thought will show that this is not a valid answer. The fact that the future has been like the past *in the past* does not tell us that the future will be like the past *in the future*, unless we assume the principle that the future will be like the past. But this is to assume the very thing that needs to be proved. This answer therefore begs the question and proves nothing.

Another attempt to answer the question might be to say that we can know that the future behaviour of things will match their

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<sup>†</sup> I am not talking about harmful substances being added to water but the properties of water itself. We assume those properties are unchanging.

past behaviour because the properties of matter are unchanging. Again this sounds fine until we start to think about it. Then we soon find that it doesn't answer the question at all. All that we know about the properties of matter is that they have been unchanging in the past but that tells us nothing about the future unless we assume that the future will be like the past. This again means assuming the truth of the thing that we are trying to prove and so proves nothing.

There is, in fact, no way that the belief that the future will be like the past can be proved by experience of the past. Any attempt to do so will be found to be assuming the principle that it is trying to prove. But, on the basis of atheism, all that we can have access to is transient experience of the present and recollections of the past. From that experience we can never produce an explanation of why things in the future will behave in the way that they have in the past. In short atheism cannot account for the predictability of nature and thus it cannot account for science.

This doesn't mean that atheists can't do science. In the previous chapter we noted that atheists do have moral standards even though atheism cannot account for the reality of moral standards. Similarly atheists do expect the future to be like the past even though atheism cannot explain why it should be. Atheists can do science, the problem is that atheism cannot account for science.

The predictability of nature is something we automatically take for granted. It is essential not only for science but for every action of everyday life, and I am not at all denying its reality. Nature *is* predictable and it will continue to be predictable. Atheism cannot explain this, but Christian theism can. The predictability of nature follows naturally from Christian teaching. The facts that God created the world, that he sustains the existence of his creation and that his character is unchanging<sup>212</sup> mean that we do have a basis for expecting the future to be like the past.

When Dawkins talks about the power of science to predict the behaviour of matter he is emphasizing something that atheism cannot account for. When he expects the future to be like the past he is living as if God exists.

## **Reason**

Alongside the predictability of nature the other essential foundation of science is reason. We cannot make any use of scientific evidence unless we can reason about it. Dawkins certainly believes that his worldview is based on reason. In fact he views it as rationalism *per se*. In TGD he quotes a comment by geneticist Jerry Coyne:

To scientists like Dawkins... the *real* war is between rationalism and superstition. Science is but one form of rationalism, while religion is the most common form of superstition.<sup>213</sup>

Has it ever struck you how strange it is that atheists, who are materialists, often present themselves as the defenders of reason, which is immaterial? There is a manifest need for Dawkins to explain how there can even be such a thing as reason if all that exist are material particles interacting in space. Sadly, he attempts no such explanation though he does assure us that thought is a physical thing:

Human thoughts and emotions emerge from exceedingly complex interconnections of physical entities within the brain.<sup>214</sup>

Thought is a product of the interactions of physical entities in the brain. In other words thought is a result of the laws of physics. But this doesn't explain reason. The entities in the brain don't always react in a way that produces a rational result. Reason therefore requires the existence of standards of reason. There must be laws of logic that tell us what is valid reasoning and what is not. In other words there must be laws that tell us

what the physical entities in the brain *ought* to do, as opposed to what they actually do. For example in the previous section we looked at attempts to prove the predictability of nature based on an evaluation of past experience and we noted that such attempts always commit the fallacy of begging the question. It is not valid reasoning to include as a premise that which we are trying to prove. This is a law of reasoning. But do such laws really exist? Accounting for the existence of any sort of universal standard or value is always a problem for atheism because such things obviously cannot be made out of material particles. Dawkins insists that only matter exists, so how can the laws of logic exist?

One answer would be to say that the laws of logic are a man-made idea – an individual preference or a social convention. They are a set of rules that men choose to use when they discuss, research and reason about a subject. Of course, if the laws of logic are just a preference or a convention then different individuals and different societies will have different preferences and along with western scientific truth there will also be “Trobriand truth, Kikuyu truth, Maori truth,... feminist truth, Islamic truth, Hindu truth”. Such a view makes truth and proof meaningless because any individual or group can define their own laws of thought and thus make their own beliefs “true” by definition. As we’ve seen, Dawkins rightly rejects that possibility.

The alternative is to try to find a material foundation for the laws of logic. For example it could be claimed that the laws of reason exist as a pattern of behaviour in the human brain. But there is no such thing as “*the* human brain”. There is no singular, universal, standard human brain. Rather, there are nearly seven billion distinct human brains. And, as we have noted, people do not always think rationally. There are clearly different patterns of behaviour within a person’s brain at different times and different patterns in different brains. And so there is a need for standards of reason to say which patterns are right. But if only matter is real how can such universal standards exist?

## *The Dawkins Proof*

The materialist's answer would have to be that matter itself provides the standards that show which ways of thinking are right. The correct rules of thought are the ones that enable our reason to "tie in" with the behaviour of the material world so that we can understand it and thus predict and control it. But we do not have access to "the behaviour of the material world" in a general sense. All we have is our limited experience of matter here and now and recollections of past experiences. In order to base laws of thought on the behaviour of matter we have to be able to make general, law-like statements about the behaviour of matter. We can only do this if we know that nature is predictable. But we have already seen that atheism is unable to explain how we can know this. An atheistic explanation of logic that relies on the predictability of matter is therefore no explanation at all because it is dependant on something that atheism cannot explain.

There is another problem with this approach that becomes apparent as we look at it more carefully. In this view the laws of logic are rules of thinking that enable us to control the material world because they reflect its behaviour. But if the laws of logic are an abstraction of the behaviour of matter we still have to answer the question: how can abstract things exist? If only matter exists then how can something abstract exist? The answer would have to be that abstract things exist in thought, which is a material process in the brain, and in material records such as books. Now if this is the case then which of these things are the laws of logic themselves? Is it the state of the cells in this person's or that person's brain? Is it the paper and ink in one book or another? Or is it the sum of all of them? Clearly none of these can be the laws themselves. They are instances, records of the laws of logic, not the things themselves. If all these records and memories were destroyed the laws of logic would still exist. These thoughts and writings are only representations of the common concept behind them. But the concept itself does not have material existence, and so, if atheism is true, it cannot exist. Therefore this approach is unable to explain how the laws of logic can exist.



Material particles cannot provide us with universal laws of thought and so atheism is unable to explain how such laws can exist. As before, this doesn't mean that atheists can't reason. Atheists do reason, the problem is that atheism cannot account for the reality of the rational standards they are using. Yet the reality of rational standards follows naturally from the Christian view. In the Christian worldview there can be, indeed there must be, laws of thought because God is personal and he *thinks*. Moreover, God is perfect and his perfect thought represents the universal standard for thinking. As we are made in God's image it is possible for us to understand that there are laws of thought and to learn what those laws are. Also, because God has given man the role of subduing the earth,<sup>215</sup> it follows that predicting and controlling nature is one of the purposes of thought. Science is therefore a Christian objective.

It is Christian theism, not atheism, that makes sense of science. If Christianity is true it is possible to know that nature is predictable and it is possible for laws of logic to exist. If atheism is true then it is not possible to know that nature is predictable and it is not possible for laws of logic to exist. When Dawkins acts as if science is possible – when he believes that there are laws of logic and that nature is predictable – then he is living as if God exists.

How then can Dawkins seriously claim that atheism is true when it cannot account for the necessary fundamentals of human life and thought?

Atheism is true but it can't account for the reality of morals.  
Atheism is true but it can't account for the predictability of nature.

Atheism is true but it can't account for the laws of logic.

This is not an impressive record for a view that is supposed to be the true explanation about man and the universe. It is an explanation that is unable to explain anything important.

# Chapter Eight

## A Meaningful, Full and Wonderful Life

### **The Dawkins View of Life**

According to Dawkins we exist because a chance event somehow brought a self-replicating molecule into existence. He talks about “the origin of life, the spontaneous arising of something equivalent to DNA”.<sup>216</sup> We looked at all this back in chapter three. Now we come to consider one of the consequences of it: if this is our origin how can life have any meaning? If we derived from this self-replicating substance by materialistic processes then life cannot have any purpose – it just happened for no reason. Yet Dawkins claims that he can make life meaningful. He says that it is “infantile” to look for a God-given purpose and continues:

The truly adult view, by contrast, is that our life is as meaningful, as full and as wonderful as we choose to make it.<sup>217</sup>

But this is empty bluster. Life either has some meaning and value or it does not. If life is ultimately meaningless then man cannot give his life meaning – he can only pretend it has meaning. If atheism is true then life is just the outworking of the laws of physics. It has no purpose and it has no value. It is merely the interacting of material particles. Pretending it has meaning is a pathetic – in the true sense of the word – sham.

Let’s look at one of those adult ways in which Dawkins gives meaning to life. Under the heading *Inspiration* he writes that of

the huge number of people that DNA could potentially describe most of them will never exist, and therefore:

However brief our time in the sun, if we waste a second of it, or complain that it is dull or barren or (like a child) boring, couldn't this be seen as a callous insult to those unborn trillions who will never even be offered life in the first place?<sup>218</sup>

But those unborn trillions don't exist. They never have existed and they never will. How can the way that one lives be an insult to a non-existent person? And how can imagining that it is give meaning to life? But, more than this, how can Dawkins even talk about "wasting" life? Life has no meaning or value. To talk of waste is absurd. How can it be a waste for particles in the body to interact in a way that results in one type of behaviour but not a waste for them to interact in ways that result in other types of behaviour? Both are just material reactions that happen according to the laws of physics. That is all life is. There is no right, wrong, good or bad and there is no question of wasting even a second of one's life because it has no value to waste in the first place. Yet Dawkins continues:

...the knowledge that we have only one life should make it all the more precious. The atheist view is correspondingly life-affirming and life-enhancing...<sup>219</sup>

But the idea that we have only one life does not give life any value. It would only enhance appreciation of life if life had a value to appreciate in the first place. According to atheism life is only a very complex chemical reaction. It has no priority or superiority to any other interaction of material particles. It is no more significant than rocks rolling down a hill.

Dawkins talks about giving meaning to life, avoiding the waste of life and affirming the value of life. These are not things that a consistent atheist should say. Life just happened for no reason, it has no purpose and it has no value. To live as if it does is to live as if God exists. God created us with a purpose – to know him,

## *The Dawkins Proof*

our creator. Knowledge of that purpose is built into us and it is very hard to escape from it. Dawkins denies the God who made us but he still wants to find or make a substitute purpose for his life. But no purpose, value or meaning of any kind makes sense if atheism is true. Any attempt to tack meaning onto the deterministic materialism of atheism is a manifest pretence. Thus some atheists come to despair of life. But even those who despair despair because they believe life is not meaningful when they know that it should be. We all know that life does have a purpose, and we all need to find that purpose.

Atheism not only means that life has no value but, as we saw in the preceding chapters, there can be no standards of behaviour, nor even laws of thought. If there is no God then there are no immaterial, universal standards of anything. Now, even if you are the most determined atheist, you simply cannot live according to this. Richard Dawkins cannot live according to it. It is contrary to everything that makes us human. Yet Dawkins makes a bold declaration about his approach to life. Quoting from his book *A Devil's Chaplain* he says:

There is more than just grandeur in this view of life, bleak and cold though it can seem from under the security blanket of ignorance. There is deep refreshment to be had from standing up and facing straight into the strong keen wind of understanding: Yeats's 'Winds that blow through the starry ways'.<sup>220</sup>

But Dawkins is not standing up and facing straight into anything. He will not face up to the implications of atheism for morality. He does not even consider the implications of atheism for science. And he is in denial over the effect of atheist belief on the value of life. He is ducking, diving and squirming to avoid being consistent to his atheism. And who can blame him? *Consistent* atheism means a life that is not only futile, but one in which there are no laws of behaviour and no laws of thought either. There are very few who would want to build their lives on that foundation.

Dawkins' attempts to put some meaning into life conclude his book with a section intended to "convey the power of science to open the mind and satisfy the psyche".<sup>221</sup> His aim is to create in the reader a sort of mystical awe at the vast breadth of material phenomena – many of which are beyond the grasp of our senses and some of which are beyond our comprehension. For example, he mentions the following:<sup>222</sup>

- we can only perceive (as light) a tiny portion of the electromagnetic spectrum
- we can only understand middle-sized things moving at moderate speeds
- quantum theory makes very accurate predictions but is extremely hard to understand
- objects that we perceive as hard and solid are mainly composed of empty space
- the material content of our bodies changes, such that none of the atoms of which we were composed in childhood are in our bodies by adulthood

There are all these great mysteries out there, but science is the revealer of such hidden things. Through "calculation and reason" it expands our understanding.<sup>223</sup> And, concluding his book, Dawkins asks whether it is possible to go further, beyond that scientific knowledge:

Could we, by training and practice... achieve some sort of intuitive – as well as just mathematical – understanding of the very small, the very large, and the very fast? I genuinely don't know the answer, but I am thrilled to be alive at a time when humanity is pushing against the limits of understanding. Even better, we may eventually discover that there are no limits.<sup>224</sup>

This is all he has to offer – a hope of increasing our understanding of material phenomena. *But these phenomena have no meaning or value if atheism is true.*

## *The Dawkins Proof*

What is fascinating about Dawkins' statement is the parallel with mystical religion. The master knows the hidden secrets and he will initiate the novice into them via a process that usually involves some altered state of consciousness. Dawkins' conclusion is a hope that by training and practice man will be able to achieve that altered state and understand the things that are hidden. It may well be that the parallel with mysticism is a deliberate one on Dawkins' part, but the interesting question is why he feels the need to do it. Why does he want to create an air of awe, mystery and the hope of revelations to come? If atheism is true then all these feelings are meaningless. They are just the product of certain chemical changes in the body, they have no more significance or value than indigestion. None of the things that Dawkins describes can ever give any purpose, meaning or value to life – they may create certain emotions in the reader, but if atheism is true emotions are just a meaningless material phenomenon, a product of “exceedingly complex interconnections of physical entities within the brain”.<sup>225</sup>

If, on the other hand, atheism is false then awe does have a meaning. This is the irony of it all. The examples Dawkins gives are indeed awe-inspiring if what we are looking at in the world around us is the work of the creator God who made us to know and worship him. Then it does make sense to stand amazed at this vast, intricate and precisely crafted universe. But even then, when it does have value, we do not derive the meaning of our life from a sense of awe. The meaning of life comes from knowing God.

### **The Christian View of Life**

The Christian view of life is the very opposite of Dawkins' materialistic atheism because at the heart of existence there is not an assortment of sub-atomic particles but the living God. Spiritual life and not inanimate matter is therefore the essence of being. Dawkins likes to talk about “the human spirit”<sup>226</sup> but there can be no human spirit in his view of life. In the Christian

view of life the human spirit is real. Man has a spiritual nature because he is made in the image of God. We think, we desire, we plan, we create, we make moral judgements – all these things are real and meaningful because they reflect the nature of God – they are not just the outworkings of the laws of physics.

This Christian doctrine of the nature of man is not something that is discovered by deduction – it is known by revelation. This is an important distinction between Christianity and many other views of life and it needs to be mentioned here because it tells us something about the character of God and his relationship to man. Many worldviews start by assuming a central idea from which beliefs are then constructed by deduction. Dawkins' atheism, for example, starts with the idea of materialism. He then has to account for human life and thought on the basis of this foundational idea – though, as we have seen, he is unable to do so. Christianity is not constructed by a series of deductions from a central principle, rather it is the product of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and the written revelation of the Bible. And the point is this: in the Christian view man does not try to work out what God is like and how to know him, rather God takes the initiative and reveals himself to man. More than this, God takes the initiative in reconciling men to himself.

Man is estranged from God. The problem is not a lack of knowledge, nor man's finite nature, nor his physical body. It is not to do with man's being, it is a moral problem. We are separated from God because of moral guilt – because we have broken, and continue to break, his law.

Throughout the Bible God makes covenants with men to reconcile them to himself. They will be his people and he will be their God. These covenants build up to the ultimate covenant – the new covenant, or new testament, made through Jesus Christ. Jesus set out the heart of this covenant when he established the Lord's Supper, in which the bread and the wine are figures for his body and blood in his death on the cross:

## *The Dawkins Proof*

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.<sup>227</sup>

The forgiveness of sins through Jesus' death is essential for reconciliation to God. God is holy and we are not and it is our sin that separates us from him. Dawkins rejects the atonement made by Christ in his death as something evil<sup>228</sup> because he recognises that it is the heart of Christianity. And it is also the heart of the Christian view of life: man has turned away from God, man disobeys God but God takes the initiative to reconcile men to himself. As the apostle Paul says:

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.<sup>229</sup>

In the new covenant God accepts those who believe in Jesus Christ. He takes them to be his people, he accepts them *in Christ*. He accounts Christ's death as the punishment for their sins and Christ's holiness as theirs. He forgives their sins, he writes his law on their hearts and leads them in the way of life.<sup>230</sup>

Those who come to God through Jesus Christ then have a purpose in life: to know and love God, their creator and redeemer. As Jesus said when asked what was the greatest commandment:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.<sup>231</sup>

This is the sum of the Christian view of life and the way to live that life. This is a life that truly can be lived to the full.



At this point atheists, or indeed anyone who has a worldview constructed by deduction from a principle, may want to raise an objection: It is all very well making arguments for the existence of God but how do you get from that to all these details about Jesus? The answer is the point I made above: the Christian view is not built up by man trying to work out what God is like. It *starts from* God's revelation and on this foundation it is able to explain human life and thought, including the human condition and man's need for redemption through Christ.

Every system of belief has a starting point upon which it is built. Christianity starts with God and his revelation; atheism, as I mentioned earlier, starts with the principle of materialism. I know that some atheists will dispute this and say that atheism starts with reason, but the fact is that one cannot start from reason alone, one must also know what exists in order to know that reason can exist. As we saw in the preceding chapter, reason requires the existence of universal standards. But such standards cannot exist if materialism is true. Therefore it is not possible to start with reason and come to the conclusion of materialism because the two are mutually contradictory. Thus I think that it is more accurate to say that the atheist worldview starts with materialism and then tries to explain things on the basis of that assumption.

Both Christianity and atheism have their starting assumptions but such assumptions are not simply assertions that we have to accept or reject according to personal preference, they can be tested. Throughout this book I have been applying those tests. The Christian worldview can make sense of morality, predictability and reason, and it shows that life has a purpose worth living for. How does atheism fare when tested? It cannot explain how there can be real moral laws that we have a duty to obey, it cannot show why we should believe that nature is uniform and predictable, nor even how there can be rules of thought. And it cannot give any purpose or value to life. A purposeful life flows naturally from knowing God. It makes sense to live for your creator. No one can live for atheism because if

*The Dawkins Proof*

atheism is true there is nothing to live for. If we are merely matter in motion then there is no meaning, no purpose and no point to anything. There is nothing to motivate any course of action. Taken seriously this leads to despair. But the correct response to the corollaries of atheism is not to despair of life but to despair of atheism and reject it. Atheism cannot account for laws of morality, nor laws of thought; it cannot explain the predictability of nature nor the purpose of life. The reason that atheism cannot do any of these things is very simple: atheism is false.

# Chapter Nine

## The Dawkins Proof

Dawkins portrays atheism as the rational view of life. But atheism does not withstand rational scrutiny. Because atheism is built on the belief that only matter exists it cannot account for the existence of anything that is immaterial. Moral standards are not material; nor are the laws of logic, the principle of the uniformity of nature, nor the purpose and meaning of life. Every moment of our lives we depend on the reality of these things – it is not possible to reason or act without them – yet Dawkins either denies their reality or fails to account for them.

Dawkins says that morality is just a social consensus – in which case it is arbitrary and there are no real standards of behaviour. He says that the meaning of life is a personal assertion, in which case life has no real purpose. He makes no attempt to explain how there can be laws of thought. Nor does he explain how atheism can account for the predictability of nature. He just says that science works and leaves it at that. Yes, science does work, but atheism cannot account for that fact. To account for science Dawkins would have to explain how there can be immaterial laws of thought when only matter exists and show how atheism can give him any basis for believing that the properties of matter are unchanging.

Morality and purpose are rendered meaningless, logic and predictability are left unexplained. And Dawkins wants us to believe that atheism is the great rational truth about life! It cannot even account for rationality.

The fault does not really lie with Dawkins. It is not so much that he is not up to the job, it is that atheism is not up to the job. Atheism cannot cope with immaterial standards. It either has to

## *The Dawkins Proof*

reduce them to something that we just pretend is real (a social consensus or personal assertion) or ignore them and hope that nobody notices.

Yet as we have seen in the preceding chapters morality, purpose, predictability and reason are all naturally explained by the Christian worldview. We thus have two alternative models: the theistic and the atheistic. One model can explain the observed phenomena and the other cannot. Which model should we choose? Which model would a scientist choose when faced with two such alternatives? Strangely, Dawkins prefers the model that cannot account for the phenomena.

Why does Dawkins choose atheism? It cannot be as a result of evidence because the evidence is against it. Contrary evidence bombards him continually, every time he forms a moral view, every time he predicts an effect from its cause, every time he thinks rationally and every time he acts as if life had value. Yet he insists on remaining a materialist.

Dawkins says that he would abandon his belief in evolution if presented with evidence that disproved it,<sup>232</sup> but he does not change his views about materialism despite the contrary evidence.

In *The God Delusion* Dawkins has this to say about fundamentalists:

Fundamentalists know they are right because they have read the truth in a holy book and they know, in advance, that nothing will budge them from their belief. The truth of the holy book is an axiom, not the end product of a process of reasoning.<sup>233</sup>

I don't know if Dawkins learned his materialism from a book or if he made it up out of his own head, but I think it is fair to say that he knows in advance that nothing will budge him from his belief. His materialism is an axiom. It is not the result of

## *The Dawkins Proof*

reasoning. It is not the result of evaluating the evidence – it is the result of ignoring the evidence.

No matter how determinedly Dawkins holds to his beliefs he cannot change reality. He cannot reduce existence to material particles. He cannot eradicate the immaterial, universal standards that flow from God's existence – they are inescapable. He cannot even argue against God without using them.

With every moral judgement, with every use of cause and effect, with every rational thought and with every purposeful act Richard Dawkins is living as if God exists. This is the Dawkins proof.



# Notes

In the following references I have given a download date for web sites except for those that are unlikely to change such as archived news items. Dates are given in the format day/month/year. Please note that longer web addresses are split across two lines.

All works quoted are copyright of their respective authors and/or publishers with the exception of older works whose copyright has lapsed.

## 1. Nothing Beyond the Natural Physical World

<sup>1</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, Bantam Press, London, 2006, p14

<sup>2</sup> Protons and neutrons are made of “up” and “down” quarks so everyday matter is composed of these two quarks and the electron. However, other particles have also been discovered. In total there are six types of quark: up, down, charm, strange, top and bottom; and six leptons: electron, electron neutrino, muon, muon neutrino, tau and tau neutrino. For more details see:

<http://www.physics.ox.ac.uk/documents/pUS/dIS/fundam.htm> and <http://askanexpert.web.cern.ch/AskAnExpert/en/PPhysics/Blocks-en.html#1> (both downloaded 24/04/09)

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Fundamental Interaction, (2008). <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/222177/fundamental-interaction> (downloaded 29/07/08)

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.random-science-tools.com/chemistry/chemical\\_comp\\_of\\_body.htm](http://www.random-science-tools.com/chemistry/chemical_comp_of_body.htm) (downloaded 28/07/08)

<sup>6</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p251

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* p262

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* p31

<sup>9</sup> 1 Peter 1:15

<sup>10</sup> Psalms 147:5

<sup>11</sup> John 4:24

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 1:1

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 1:26

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 7:7

## *The Dawkins Proof*

<sup>15</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p109

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.atheistrev.com/2008/03/all-children-are-born-atheists.html> (downloaded 24/04/09)

### **2. Powerful Arguments**

<sup>17</sup> Transworld Publishers, London, Black Swan edition, 2007

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2006/sep/23/scienceandnature.richarddawkins>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/jan/07/raceandreligion.comment>

<sup>20</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p6

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/jan/07/raceandreligion.comment>

<sup>22</sup> <http://philosophy.lander.edu/logic/person.html> (downloaded 26/03/07)

<sup>23</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p229

<sup>24</sup> <http://philosophy.lander.edu/logic/misery.html> (downloaded 26/03/07)

<sup>25</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p4

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* p43

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* quoting from *Free Inquiry* 8: 4, Fall 1988

<sup>28</sup> This story was published in late 1988 when George Bush, who was then Vice President, was campaigning for the presidency that he subsequently won. However Dawkins does not tell us when the story was set and as my back issue collection of *Free Inquiry* (the atheist magazine from which the story is taken) is rather limited I have not been able to find out. But whenever it was Bush would have been holding high political office as he had done so for many years.

<sup>29</sup> <http://richarddawkins.net/article,643,Believing-Scripture-but-Playing-by-Sciences-Rules,Cornelia-Dean> (downloaded 22/03/07)

<sup>30</sup> Science is the study of the repeatable and empirically verifiable behaviour of matter. Because the explanations of science are given in terms of material interactions atheists can demand “scientific” explanations as a covert way of asserting that only materialistic explanations are acceptable. It is right to demand a scientific explanation for the operation of a jet engine, but is it right to demand a scientific explanation for Beethoven’s composition of his Fifth Symphony or for the origin of the human species? To demand a scientific explanation is to make a philosophical claim that the issue in question can only be rightly understood in terms of material particles interacting according to the laws of physics.



## Notes

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.souder.house.gov/\\_files/](http://www.souder.house.gov/_files/)

IntoleranceandthePoliticizationofScienceattheSmithsonian.pdf  
(downloaded 06/10/08)

<sup>32</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p19

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.templetonprize.org/purpose.html> (downloaded 03/01/08)

<sup>34</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p100

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/1995-6/weekly/121095/agen.htm>  
(downloaded 26/03/07)

Charles Simonyi is a software billionaire and former Chief Software Architect at Microsoft Corporation.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.simonyi.ox.ac.uk/aims/index.shtml> (downloaded 15/02/08)

<sup>37</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p313

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.* p311

<sup>39</sup> [http://www.netzwerk-bildungsfreiheit.de/html/pe\\_erlangen\\_en.html](http://www.netzwerk-bildungsfreiheit.de/html/pe_erlangen_en.html)  
(downloaded 28/07/08)

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/feb/24/schools.uk>

<sup>41</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p313

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbay-nPxxff>

<sup>43</sup> This section starts around 49 minutes into the discussion.

The legal case referred to took place in September-November 2005 and overturned a resolution by the Dover Area School District that ninth-grade biology students at Dover High School should be read a statement which said that evolution is a theory and not a fact, and which recommended the reference book *Of Pandas and People* as a source from which to learn about the alternative view of intelligent design.

(See [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kitzmiller\\_v.\\_Dover\\_Area\\_School\\_District&oldid=249567497](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kitzmiller_v._Dover_Area_School_District&oldid=249567497))

<sup>44</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p174

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.* p176

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.* p176

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.* p188

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> For example there is his story about George Bush saying that atheists are not citizens, the argument against Christianity based on American voting patterns and crime, and the “gullible child” theory of the evolution of religion. But my favourite has to be this one from page 84 of TGD:

I've forgotten the details, but I once piqued a gathering of theologians and philosophers by adapting the ontological argument

## *The Dawkins Proof*

to prove that pigs can fly. They felt the need to resort to Modal Logic to prove that I was wrong.

Here there is not even an argument for anyone to challenge – only a tale of how clever the now forgotten argument was. It rather nicely typifies Dawkins' propaganda and speculation in that it has no logical argument. Its only purpose is to impress (or, to use Dawkins' term, infect) vulnerable minds.

<sup>51</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p318

<sup>52</sup> <http://richarddawkins.net/article,118,Religions-Real-Child-Abuse,Richard-Dawkins> (downloaded 13/10/08)

<sup>53</sup> Richard Dawkins, *Unweaving the Rainbow*, Penguin Books, London, 2006, Preface, page xi.

<sup>54</sup> Romans 6:23

<sup>55</sup> [http://www.edge.org/3rd\\_culture/humphrey/amnesty.htm](http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/humphrey/amnesty.htm) (downloaded 14/10/08)

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> <http://richarddawkins.net/article,118,Religions-Real-Child-Abuse,Richard-Dawkins> (downloaded 13/10/08)

### **3. Apparent Design**

<sup>59</sup> *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, editorial consultant Antony Flew, Pan Books, London, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1984, p13.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Lucretius, *On The Nature of Things*, Book V, lines 420ff, translated by Rev John Selby Watson M.A. Published by Henry G. Bohn, London 1851. <http://books.google.com/books?id=intROeJdmdMC> (downloaded 19/03/08)

<sup>62</sup> *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), "Lucretius" by David Sedley <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/lucretius/> (downloaded 24/04/09)

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Lucretius, 2. Philosophy, e. Influence and Legacy, by David Simpson, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/lucretiu.htm> (downloaded 06/11/08)

<sup>65</sup> The extract is from Canto I of Darwin's poem *The Temple of Nature* which was posthumously published in 1802.

See: <http://www.english.upenn.edu/Projects/knarf/Darwin/templetp.html> (downloaded 05/05/08) Note that this web address is case-sensitive.

## Notes

- <sup>66</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle*,  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext97/vbgle11.txt> (downloaded 03/08/09)
- <sup>67</sup> Peter R. Grant, *Natural Selection and Darwin's Finches*, Scientific American, October 1991, p82-87
- <sup>68</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/158550.stm>  
For more detail see [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1134/is\\_1\\_110/ai\\_70770157](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1134/is_1_110/ai_70770157) (downloaded 09/03/07)
- <sup>69</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, Penguin Books, London, 2006, p50
- <sup>70</sup> *ibid.* p40
- <sup>71</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p122
- <sup>73</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/main.jhtml?xml=/earth/2007/06/19/scigenome119.xml&page=1>
- <sup>74</sup> *ibid.* p113
- <sup>75</sup> Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, p51
- <sup>76</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica, Mutation, (2009).  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/399695/mutation>  
(downloaded 01/07/09)
- <sup>77</sup> *From a Frog to a Prince*, Keziah Productions, 1997
- <sup>78</sup> In his answer Dawkins says that it is a misunderstanding of evolution to think that because fish turned into reptiles and reptiles turned into mammals that we ought to be able to see fish on the way to becoming reptiles today. And he concludes:  
Way back 300 million years ago there would have been an ancestor which was the ancestor of modern fish and the ancestor of modern humans. And that ancestor – if you could have been there then you could have seen the first steps towards a fish, say, coming out onto the land and becoming something like an amphibian. But that was a long time ago. You wouldn't expect to see that today.
- <sup>79</sup> Dawkins, *A Devil's Chaplain*, p107 (emphasis original)
- <sup>80</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zaKryi3605g>
- <sup>81</sup> Dawkins, *A Devil's Chaplain*, p107-122  
The article is also online at <http://www.skeptics.com.au/articles/dawkins.htm> (downloaded 12/02/08)
- <sup>82</sup> ref: <http://www.discovery.org/a/4278> (downloaded 12/02/08)
- <sup>83</sup> Dawkins, *A Devil's Chaplain*, p114
- <sup>84</sup> *ibid.* p115
- <sup>85</sup> These headings appear in the on-line version of the article.
- <sup>86</sup> Dawkins, *A Devil's Chaplain*, p120

## *The Dawkins Proof*

<sup>87</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p119

<sup>88</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/4410927/Poll-reveals-public-doubts-over-Charles-Darwins-theory-of-evolution.html>

<sup>89</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p121

<sup>90</sup> M.J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, The Free Press, New York, 1996 p24 quoting: J. Farley, *The Spontaneous Generation Controversy from Descartes to Oparin*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1979, p73.

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/main.jhtml?xml=/earth/2007/10/16/scilife116.xml&page=2>

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.* p137,138

<sup>93</sup> Tracey A. Lincoln and Gerald F. Joyce, *Self-Sustained Replication of an RNA Enzyme*, *Science*, vol 323, p1229, 2009

<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/323/5918/1229>

<sup>94</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p51

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.* p137,138

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.* p139

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.* p139

### **4. The Entirely Unwarranted Assumption**

<sup>98</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p55,56

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.* p56

<sup>100</sup> *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Aristotle -- d. Metaphysics, 10. Matter and Form in Aristotle, by Joe Sachs,

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/a/aris-met.htm> (downloaded 20/05/08)

<sup>101</sup> <http://philosophy.tamu.edu/~gary/intro/paper.aquinas.html> (downloaded 12/04/07)

<sup>102</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p77

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.* p77,78

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.* p141

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.* p145

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.* p146

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.* p52

### **5. An Unrebuttable Refutation**

<sup>109</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p157

<sup>110</sup> William Paley, *Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature*, W.S. Orr & Co., London, 1837, Chapter 1

<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=-EdIAAAAMAAJ>

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.* Chapter 23

<sup>112</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p121

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.* p109

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.* p157

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.* p114

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.* p113

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.* p114

<sup>119</sup> See for example the paragraph on p121,122 of TGD describing his book *Climbing Mount Improbable*, and his comment on p147 of TGD that God “must be a supremely complex and improbable entity”.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.* p125

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.* p154

<sup>122</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzYm8h2wQGo>

The talk is before an audience at Randolph-Macon Woman's College (now Randolph College) Lynchburg, Virginia, USA in October 2006.

## 6. The Manifest Phenomenon of Zeitgeist Progression

<sup>123</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p218

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.* p216

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.* p218

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.* p219

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.* p141

<sup>130</sup> Dawkins, *A Devil's Chaplain* p13

<sup>131</sup> Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden*, Phoenix (an imprint of Orion Books), London, 2004, p155.

<sup>132</sup> “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Mathew 22:39)

<sup>133</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p220

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.* p221

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.* p163

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.* p221

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.* p222

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.* p222-226

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.* p225

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.* p225,226

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.* p226

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.* p31

*The Dawkins Proof*

- 144 *ibid.* p248  
145 *ibid.* p250  
146 *ibid.* p265  
147 *ibid.* p302  
148 *ibid.* p303  
149 *ibid.* p302  
150 *ibid.* p270  
151 *ibid.* p268  
152 *ibid.* p265-270  
153 *ibid.* p14  
154 *ibid.* p14  
155 *ibid.* p272  
156 *ibid.* p239,240 cf Genesis 19:8  
157 *ibid.* p240,241 cf Judges 19:22-25  
158 *ibid.* p241,242 cf Genesis 12:11-13; 20:2  
159 Genesis 12:12  
160 Genesis 26:6,7  
161 The Bible forbids lying see Proverbs 6:16,17  
162 Genesis 17:19; 21:12  
163 Genesis 22:5  
164 Genesis 22:8  
165 Genesis 22:13  
166 Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p265  
167 *ibid.* p243  
168 Genesis 6:5-7 refers to the flood coming as a judgement on sin. In Genesis 15:16 Abraham is told that his descendants will inherit the land where he is living because of the sin of its inhabitants.  
169 Romans 2:1-11  
170 Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p237,238  
171 Proverbs 14:31; James 1:27; Deuteronomy 16:19; Exodus 23:6; Matthew 5:44  
172 Exodus 20:13  
173 Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p254  
174 Leviticus 19:18  
175 Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p253  
176 Deuteronomy 10:19  
177 Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p253  
178 *ibid.* p254  
179 Matthew 15:24  
180 e.g. Matthew 8:26  
181 e.g. Luke 17:19

<sup>182</sup> Matthew 15:28

<sup>183</sup> Matthew 8:8,10

<sup>184</sup> Matthew 8:11,12

<sup>185</sup> “Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans” (John 4:9)

<sup>186</sup> Luke 10:29-37

<sup>187</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p257

<sup>188</sup> Acts 13:14-16

<sup>189</sup> Acts 13:48; 17:4

<sup>190</sup> Acts 13:50

<sup>191</sup> Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8

<sup>192</sup> Acts 10:25-48

<sup>193</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p268

<sup>194</sup> <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/100years.xls> (downloaded 29/03/07)

<sup>195</sup> The spreadsheet data goes up to 2005/6 but note 59 on the spreadsheet states that data for the years after 1998 are not directly comparable with those before due to changes in the Home Office Counting Rules for recorded crime. I have therefore ended the graph at 1998.

<sup>196</sup> Lest it should be argued that I am promoting state enforced religious instruction I should point out firstly that I am only noting this as a fact of history and secondly that attendance at state schools is not enforced, there are other educational options. It is not an analogue of Nicholas Humphrey’s aim (see chapter two of this book) to have state enforced atheist philosophy in schools and to prohibit religious teaching in the home.

<sup>197</sup> Norman Dennis, *The Uncertain Trumpet*, Civitas, London, 2001, p28  
Downloadable from <http://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/cs13.pdf>.

<sup>198</sup> *ibid.* p54

<sup>199</sup> <http://richarddawkins.net/article,118,Religions-Real-Child-Abuse,Richard-Dawkins> (See discussion of Dawkins on religious instruction as mental abuse in chapter two of this book.)

<sup>200</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p278

<sup>201</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p278

<sup>202</sup> Details of Vins’ life are taken from Natasha Vins, *Children of the Storm*, Journey Forth, Greenville, 2002 and [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Georgy\\_Vins&oldid=281557064](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Georgy_Vins&oldid=281557064)

<sup>203</sup> cf Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p176 and see discussion of Dawkins on religion as a mind viruses in chapter two of this book.

<sup>204</sup> Vins, *Children of the Storm*, p7-9

<sup>205</sup> *ibid.* p11

<sup>206</sup> *ibid.* p12

<sup>207</sup> *ibid.* p80-82

## **7. Completely Superseded by Science**

<sup>208</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p347

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.* p282

<sup>210</sup> Dawkins, *A Devil's Chaplain*, p18

<sup>211</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 1:3; Malachi 3:6

<sup>213</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p67 (emphasis original)

<sup>214</sup> *ibid.* p14

<sup>215</sup> Genesis 1:28

## **8. A Meaningful, Full and Wonderful Life**

<sup>216</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p137,138

<sup>217</sup> *ibid.* p360

<sup>218</sup> *ibid.* p361

<sup>219</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.* p355

<sup>221</sup> *ibid.* p362

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.* p362-371

<sup>223</sup> *ibid.* p374

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.* p374

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.* p14

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.* p367,374

<sup>227</sup> Matthew 26:26-28

<sup>228</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p251

<sup>229</sup> Romans 5:8

<sup>230</sup> The themes I have mentioned run throughout the Bible. The following references are given as examples, but I would recommend reading the Bible as a unit in order to get a thorough grasp of Christian teaching. For a brief introduction the gospel of John is a good place to start. The historic confessions of faith such as the Westminster Confession can also be useful. Some Bible references relating to the themes mentioned in the text are:

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.



## Notes

2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Heb 10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

<sup>231</sup> Matthew 22:37-40

### 9. The Dawkins Proof

<sup>232</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p283 “We believe in evolution because the evidence supports it, and we would abandon it overnight if new evidence arose to disprove it.”

<sup>233</sup> *ibid.* p282

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