

The God Delusion?

ความหลงผิดที่เชื่อในพระเจ้าหรือ?

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บทคัดย่อ

หนึ่งในหัวข้อที่ได้รับความสนใจมากเวลานี้คือ ในระหว่างการแพร่โรคระบาด โควิด 19 และสังคมนี้ พระเป็นเจ้าอยู่ไหน เป็นคำถาม ในเชิงสังสัยการมืออยู่ของพระเป็นเจ้า หรือ ถ้ามีพระเป็นเจ้าอยู่จริง ทำไมพระเป็นเจ้าจึงไม่ช่วยเหลือบรรดาผู้ที่เชื่อในพระองค์ คนส่วนหนึ่ง สรุปว่า พระเป็นเจ้าไม่มืออยู่จริง หรือ พระเป็นเจ้าองค์นี้เปรียบเสมือน หุ่นไม้เล่าที่มีนุษย์ได้สร้างขึ้นเอง บทความนี้จะสนทนากับผู้อ่านว่า จริง หรือที่ Richard Dawkins กล่าวว่า พระเป็นเจ้าเป็นเพียงหุ่นไม้เล่าที่ มีนุษย์สร้างขึ้น ในบทความนี้จะแบ่งออกเป็น 9 ตอนซึ่งประกอบด้วย 1. บทนำ 2. ชีวิตของริชาร์ด ดอร์คิน 3. ข้อโต้แย้งต่อคำว่า พระเป็นเจ้าเป็นเสมือนหุ่นไม้เล่า 4. ข้อโต้แย้งจากการเป็นระบบที่เรียบร้อย ของจักรวาล 5. ข้อโต้แย้งเกี่ยวกับความจำเป็นที่ต้องมีสิ่งสูงสุด 6. ประสบการณ์ในศาสนา 7. พระคัมภีร์ 8. ข้อวิพากษ์จากอลิสเตอร์ เมร์คแก็ธ ราวี ชาคริอัส และดาวิด เบ็นลีย์ ยาต์ และ 9. สรุป

คำสำคัญ: หุ่นฟาง
ความเชื่อผิดๆ ทางจิต
พระเจ้า

Abstract

one topic in which is interesting for people would be “where is God during pandemic situation and wars?” this question is obviously presenting the doubt of the existence of God or if there is a God; why doesn’t God do anything for His believers? So many conclude that there is no God or this God as a straw man himself whom he created. This article will argue that is it true that God is straw man according to Richard Dawkins? It is divided into nine sessions; 1. Introduction, 2. Some background on Richard Dawkins, 3. Attacking on straw man, 4. Arguments from design, 5. Ontological arguments, 6. Religious experience, 7. The scripture, 8. Some final comments from Alister McGrath and David Bentley Hart’s critique of The Dawkins Delusion and 9. Conclusion.

Keywords: Straw man
Delusion
God

1. Introduction.

In this article I will attempt to answer three questions.

First, A particular understanding of ‘freedom’ as a foundation for atheism. From here I try to analyze some of the opinions of atheist scientists and why they consider belief in God to be a delusion. What do they mean when they say that God doesn’t exist? I will examine some of these views and try to show that they are unreasonable. Sometimes these scientists make harsh criticisms of religious beliefs but often they have a poor understanding of what they are criticizing.

Secondly, the article will criticize some philosophers and scientists who set out to show that God does not exist but use the kind of reasoning that in contemporary logic is called ‘straw-man arguments’. They frequently demolish what they consider to be widely held Christian beliefs. In fact, many of their ‘demolitions’ are of positions that are no longer held by the majority of Christians or may be held by small minority groups. Many of the critics have not taken the trouble to find out what the Church believes and teaches today.

Thirdly, I will look at the views of Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins, one of the most outspoken and widely published atheists today. My conclusion will be to say that Dawkins suffers from a few delusions himself. Nevertheless, there are positive things to be learned from Dawkins; some of his ideas challenge us to think more deeply. He tries hard to persuade us that what he is saying is true therefore we can admire his enthusiasm as a man who energetically promotes his ideas, even if we think he suffers from a ‘delusion’. In today’s world we are called to live in harmony with peoples of many religions and none.

A definition of faith that one occasionally hears is that of Mark Twain's apocryphal schoolboy "Faith is believing what you know ain't so."¹ Richard Dawkins' definition is "Faith is blind trust, in the absence of evidence,² even in the teeth of evidence" . For him, he thinks faith should be a thing that is demonstrable enough to be trusted, if evidence is lacking it is not worthy of any measure of belief.

In the preface to his book The God Delusion, Dawkins says:

"There are a lot of people out there who have been brought up in some religion or other, are unhappy in it, don't believe it, or are worried about the evils that are done in its name; people who feel vague yearnings to leave their parents' religion and wish they could, but just don't realize that leaving is an option"³

I try to see that where atheism comes from. Gradually I will mention that an important foundation of problem has to do with 'freedom'. Some people come to believe that if God does really exist this means that we cannot be free; our freedom is always limited by rules imposed from outside by God. So, they conclude that God is the delusion of human beings. The basic truth of reality is that there is no God who controls the lives of humans. They are free and if one supposes that there is a God or need be a God, this is a human creation.

His introduction The God Delusion, Dawkins invites the reader to look around and see how religion is causing so much violence. Another Oxford theologian and author, Alister McGrath, who responded with another book

¹ S. Clemens, Following the Equator (1897)

² Richard Dawkins, the Selfish Gene, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p.198.

³ Richard Dawkins, the God delusion, Transworld Publishers, Britain, 2006 p.23.

The Dawkins Delusion refers to this violence:

“McGrath finishes his book with a chapter on religious violence. As someone who has grown up in Northern Ireland, he knows all about this issue. He agrees with Dawkins that religious violence is repugnant. But Dawkins is just plain foolish, and wrong, to suggest that if we get rid of religion, we get rid of violence, and everything becomes sweetness and light”⁴

And we all know that.

“Violence comes from human nature, whether religious or secular. All people are capable of it, and atheists have been responsible for their fair share of it. Indeed, a good case can be made that atheism has been responsible for more than its fair share”.⁵

He agrees in his book that violence can come from religion but at the same time we see that it is irrational to conclude that it always comes religious beliefs; it originates from human nature which is capable of spreading its cruelty everywhere.

2. Some background on Richard Dawkins

Richard Dawkins, born in 1941, is an English ethologist, evolutionary biologist and author. Presently he is an emeritus fellow of New College, Oxford. He was the University of Oxford's Professor for Public Understanding of Science from 1995 until 2008.

Dawkins describes his childhood as "a normal Anglican upbringing". He embraced Christianity until halfway through his teenage years, at which point he says that he concluded that the theory of evolution was a better expla-

⁴ <https://billmuehlenberg.com/2007/03/20/a-review-of-the-dawkins-delusion-by-alister-mcgrath/>.

⁵ <https://billmuehlenberg.com/2007/03/20/a-review-of-the-dawkins-delusion-by-alister-mcgrath/>.

tion for life's complexity, and ceased believing in a God. Dawkins states:

"The main residual reason why I was religious was from being so impressed with the complexity of life and feeling that it had to have a designer, and I think it was when I realized that Darwinism was a far superior explanation that pulled the rug out from under the argument of design. And that left me with nothing."⁶

Dawkins first came to prominence with his 1976 book, *The Selfish Gene*, which popularized the gene-centered view of evolution and introduced the term meme. With his book, *The Extended Phenotype* (1982), he introduced into evolutionary biology the influential concept that the phenotypic effects of a gene are not necessarily limited to an organism's body, but can stretch far into the environment. In 2006, he founded the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science.

Dawkins is an atheist, and is well known for his criticism of creationism and intelligent design. In *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986), he argues against the watchmaker analogy, an argument for the existence of a supernatural creator based upon the complexity of living organisms. Instead, he describes evolutionary processes as analogous to a blind watchmaker in that reproduction, mutation, and selection is unguided by any designer. In *The God Delusion* (2006), Dawkins contends that a supernatural creator almost certainly does not exist and that religious faith is a delusion.

Dawkins has been awarded many prestigious academic and writing awards and he makes regular television, radio and Internet appearances, predominantly discussing his books, his atheism, and his ideas and opinions as a public intellectual.

3 Attacking on a straw man

Those who disagree with Dawkins say that the 'god' he demolishes by his arguments is often little more than what in logic is called a straw man. This involves setting up a god of his own imagination, which he claims is the god that all Christians believe in, and so for many years he has tried to convince his readers and listeners to give up belief in the god he describes.

A straw man is a common form of argument and is an informal based on giving the impression of refuting an opponent's argument, while actually refuting an argument that was not presented by that opponent. One who engages in this fallacy is said to be "attacking a straw man". The typical straw man argument creates the illusion of having completely refuted or defeated an opponent's proposition through the covert replacement of it with a different proposition (i.e., "stand up a straw man") and the subsequent refutation of that false argument ("knock down a straw man") instead of the opponent's proposition.

American scientist and Christian believer, Francis Collins, to Dawkins in his book, *The Language of God*

"Dawkins's first argument is thus irrelevant to the God that Saint Augustine worshiped, or that I worship. But Dawkins is a master of setting up a straw man, and then dismantling it with great relish. In fact, it is hard to escape the conclusion that such repeated mischaracterizations of faith betray a vitriolic personal agenda, rather than a reliance on the rational arguments that Dawkins so cherishes in the scientific realm".⁷

⁷ Francis Collins, *the language of God; A scientist presents evidence for Belief*, CPI Group (UK), Britain, 1988, p.164.

Dawkins sets out to show in his book that the arguments for God's existence from scripture, or from design, as well as a priori arguments or even arguments from religious experiences are totally products of the activity of the brain. The reviewer of McGrath's book has this today:

“Dawkins' theory of memes is also problematic. According to Dawkins, just as biological evolution involves genetic replicators, so culture has memic replicators. Thus, a God-meme has evolved and is passed along in culture; 'leaping from brain to brain' as Dawkins puts it. Yet as McGrath rightly asks, 'has anyone actually seen these things, whether leaping from brain to brain, or just hanging out?'”⁸

We see that he tries to convince us that belief itself is wrong, due to an uncritical acceptance of the past. He wants to demonstrate that all we believe, in reality, is something that is not true. Belief in God is something that is transferred physically from brain to brain. Religious people have seen belief and faith as having supernatural, not biological origins. The God in which most educated Christians (and not a few simple ones) believe, is not the straw man set up by Dawkins.

Another example of a Dawkins straw man argument is pointed out by then Francis Collins:

“The major and inescapable flaw of Dawkins's claim that science demands atheism is that it goes beyond the evidence. If God is outside of nature, then science can neither prove nor disprove his existence. Atheism itself must therefore be considered a form of blind faith; in that it adopts a belief system that cannot be defended on the basis of pure reason”⁹

⁸ <https://billmuehlenberg.com/2007/03/20/a-review-of-the-dawkins-delusion-by-alister-mcgrath/>.

⁹ Francis Collins, the language of God; A scientist presents evidence for Belief, CPI Group (UK), Britain, 1988, p.165.

As believers, we have confidence that the role of science is to accurately explain the reason for believing in the supernatural without reducing the essence of our faith. The meaning of faith expresses something that is beyond what nature can discover.

4. Arguments from Design

For many centuries Christian belief in the existence of God was influenced by the Five Ways of St. Thomas Aquinas. In that day after three hundred years these proofs are no more influential for today, 800 years later these proofs are not as influential as they used to be. The change was gradual through the period that is known as the European Enlightenment. It began roughly with Descartes and finished with Kant – or some say with Marx. This was a time of great scientific discoveries and social and political change. Science became totally independent of religious thought and followed its own rules. This was a necessary methodological step. The metaphysics and physics of Aristotle and transmitted by Aquinas were no longer adequate scientific instruments. With the passing of time the belief arose among some scientists that their subject had the answer to everything. ‘Meta-physics’ was no longer necessary. Dawkins refers to the First Cause and Final End type of arguments – the terminator; he calls God - found in Aquinas in the following way.

“There is absolutely no reason to endow that terminator with any of the properties normally ascribed to God: omnipotence, omniscience, goodness, creativity of design, to say nothing of such human attributes as listening to prayers, forgiving sins and reading innermost thoughts. Incidentally, it has not escaped the notice of logicians that omniscience and omnipotence are mutually incompatible. If God is

omniscient, he must already know how he is going to intervene to change the course of history using his omnipotence".¹⁰

The misunderstanding here is about the omnipotence of God. One argument is that if God is omnipotence this means he can do everything. That needs qualification. If a man rides a motorbike carelessly and has a bad accident, we cannot say that if God is omnipotence, he should have protected this man from harm or from the accident. Now we could understand that in this situation God might allow the event to happen without intervening. Lack of action on God's part does not mean lack of power. If we think carefully, we can see that this accident occurs logically when a man rides his motorbike at more than 120 km/hr. The accident should be considered as due to a lack of care and riding too fast. Even the 'natural law' says that one should ride maximally at only 100km/hr. We cannot say that omnipotence is functioning here and in the other world as omniscience God knows everything, but God allows things to happen according the natural law.

In The God Delusion, Dawkins goes on to reject the argument from design. For him there is no mystery, and no designer is needed. Biology and evolution explain everything.

"The argument from design is the only one still in regular use today, and it still sounds to many like the ultimate knockdown argument. The young Darwin was impressed by it when, as a Cambridge undergraduate, he read it in William Paley's *Natural Theology*. Unfortunately for Paley, the mature Darwin blew it out of the water. There has probably never been a more

¹⁰ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, Black Swan Publish, London, 2007, p.101.

devastating rout of popular belief by clever reasoning than was so unexpected. Thank to Darwin, it is no longer true to say that nothing that we know looks designed unless it is designed. Evolution by natural selection produces an excellent simulacrum of design, mounting prodigious heights of complexity and elegance. And among these eminences of pseudo-design are nervous systems which – among their more modest accomplishments – manifest goal-seeking behavior that, even in a tiny insect, resembles a sophisticated heat-seeking missile more than a simple arrow o target”¹¹

For atheist scientists like Dawkins there is no longer any mystery about the world or about the human being. There may be some unanswered questions, but time will provide the information that is lacking. But there are scientists who say that when humans reduce their origins to mere processes of matter origin of his marvelous physical body, he doesn't comprehend anything anymore something important is being missed. People like J.P. Moreland insist on the design of life that is visible in life.

- The eye was made for vision; the telescope for assisting it.
- Both utilize a sophisticated lens to achieve its function and purpose.
- Both reflect and manipulate light.¹²

Both are helping to bring an object into one focus. The organs around the lens of the eye aid to bring objects into focus, while a telescope utilizes dials to move the lens. For Moreland we are the handiwork of a wise designer. The evidence for God from design is the most popular argument for God. He further explains design like this: We cite the ability of a person to do something; his motives, intentions, and so forth; and the means he used to carry out his purpose. And he adds an interesting argument that:

¹¹ Richard Dawkins, the God delusion, Black Swan Publish, London, 2007, p.103

¹² James Porter Moreland, Love your God with all your mind, NavPress, USA, 2012, p.174.

“Certain facts about the world cannot be adequately explained by impersonal causes, conditions, and laws of nature. But they can be adequately explained by a personal explanation. There is no reason to treat these facts about the world as unexplained brute facts. It is better to use a form of explanation-personal explanation-to explain them. Moreover, some of these facts have characteristics that clearly indicate and only come from intelligent agents. So, the intelligent action of a Designing Person is the best explanation for these facts”.¹³

Faith is not an unexplained brute fact, but it illuminates each situation for the one who needs an explanation. Faith is often described as a leap of belief but when one is asked about this the answer should be offered with the explanation which is also reasonable and logical according to human wisdom.

5. Ontological argument

When Dawkins comes to explore the ontological argument of St. Anselm, he dismisses it as a piece of imagination; no matter how much you imagine that something exists you cannot by this activity make it exist. What is the difference between imagining that God exists and imagining that a Unicorn exists? Both can be conceived by us – there is nothing to stop us imagining this. Anselm said:

¹³ Ibid., p.175.

“It is possible to conceive of a being that which nothing greater can be thought. Even an atheist can conceive of such a superlative being, though he would deny its existence in the real world; by that very fact it is less than perfect. Anselm then shows that the being than which nothing greater can be thought (the way he defines God) must exist in reality; otherwise, there is a logical contradiction. Therefore, we have a contradiction and, hey presto, Go exists!”¹⁴

Dawkins quotes Bertrand Russell who claims that “it is easier to feel convinced that [the ontological argument] must be fallacious than it is to find out precisely where the fallacy lies”.¹⁵ He also quotes Immanuel Kant: “Kant identified the trick card up Anselm’s sleeves as his slippery assumption that ‘existence’ is more ‘perfect’ than ‘non-existence’. There is something wrong here and that is how can we say that one thing that we imagine is not as great as something else that may not, or may never, exist.

Both St. Anselm and the contemporary apologist for the ontological argument, Alvin Plantinga lays out the reasonableness of the ontological argument. Dawkins as well, lays out the format of his ontological argument.

- 1) The creation of the world is the most marvelous achievement imaginable.
- 2) The merit of an achievement is the product of (a) its intrinsic quality, and (b) the ability of its creator.
- 3) The greater the disability (or handicap) of the creator, the more impressive the achievement.

¹⁴ Richard Dawkins, the God delusion, Black Swan Publish, London, 2007. p.104.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.105.

- 4) The most formidable handicap for a creator would be non-existence.
- 5) Therefore, if we suppose that the universe is the product of an existent creator, we can conceive a greater being-namely, one who created everything while not existing.
- 6) An existing God therefore would not be a being greater than which a greater cannot be conceived because and even more formidable and incredible creator would be a God which did not exist.

Ergo:

- 7) God does not exist.¹⁶

It is ridiculous by saying that the disabled handicap does not exist because as we realize that he is, we cannot say that he does not exist in the real world. For him, the greater creator would not allow something that would show his weakness. If God allows these calamities in this world, He is not really greater than other thing. Richard Dawkins applies that how should

1. It is possible that a maximally great being exists.
2. If it is possible that a maximally great being exists, then a maximally great being exists in some possible world.
3. If a maximally great being exists in possible world, then it exists in every possible world.
4. If a maximally great being exists in every possible world, then it exists in the actual world.
5. If a maximally great being exists in actual world, then a maximally great being exists.
6. Therefore, a maximally great being exists.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., p.107-108.

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msiZDJwtZ6E>.

We can accept that this maximally great being is like a being at the summit but it is not exactly Plantinga's argument so we have to be careful about interpreting the Dawkins alludes to as God as a maximally great being, and the conclusions he draws from this; for example why we still have some kinds of illness in the world; he says, that is contrary to the perfection or maximally great being.

6. Religious experience

Atheists often reject the notion of religious experience by saying that it is merely a subjective phenomenon. A person may go on to invite other people to accept this personal subjective 'vision' as objectively true. Dawkins thinks that it is invalid, at the least, to convince others that 'my' vision is an experience of a God that really exists, and so, must be accepted. Dawkins affirms that.

"Many people believe in God because they believe they have seen a vision of him - or of an angel or a virgin in blue – with their own eyes. Or he speaks to them inside their heads. This argument from personal experience is the one that is most convincing to those who claim to have had one. But it is the least convincing to anyone else, and anyone knowledgeable about psychology"¹⁸

Richard Dawkins approvingly quotes another atheist colleague, Sam Harris, in *The End of Faith*:

¹⁸ Richard Dawkins, *the God delusion*, Black Swan Publish, London, 2007 p.112.

“We have names for people who have many beliefs for which there is no rational justification. When their beliefs are extremely common, we call them ‘religious’; otherwise, they are like to be called ‘mad’, ‘psychotic’ or ‘delusional’...clearly there is sanity in numbers. And yet, it is merely an accident of history that it is considered normal in our society to believe that the Creator of the universe can hear your thoughts, while it is demonstrative of mental illness to believe that he is communicating with you by having the rain tap in Morse code on your bedroom window. And so, while religious people are not generally mad, their core beliefs absolutely are”.¹⁹

Faith which is without justification it is not worthy of belief. The justification they think of, is experimental science. For them the person who has faith is simply mad but because this sort of people is so numerous it is taken as normal. What about religious experience on a massive scale? Dawkins again: “On the face of it mass visions, such as the report that seventy thousand pilgrims at Fatima in Portugal in 1917 saw the sun ‘tear itself from the heavens and come crashing down upon the multitude’”.²⁰ For him, this phenomenon is a personal experience, and it should be kept separate from other kinds of knowledge because few can accept it as meaningful; and it is most likely deceptive. Dawkins emphasizes again what he considers to be nonsense. He writes:

“That is really all that needs to be said about personal ‘experiences’ of gods or other religious phenomena. If you’ve had such an experience, you may well find yourself believing firmly that it was real. But don’t expect the rest of us to take your word for it, especially if we have the slightest familiarity with the brain and its powerful working”.²¹

¹⁹ Richard Dawkins, the God delusion, Black Swan Publish, London, 2007 p.113.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 116.

²¹ Ibid., p. 1167

Francis Collins sees things differently. Describing his journey from atheism to belief, he talks about experience. He recounts the spiritual experience that changed his life in *The Language of God*:

“On a beautiful fall day, as I was hiking in the Cascade Mountains, the majesty and beauty of God’s creation overwhelmed my resistance. As I rounded a corner and saw a beautiful and unexpected frozen waterfall, hundreds of feet high, I knew the search was over. The next morning, I knelt in the dewy grass as the sun rose and surrendered to Jesus Christ”²²

Deepak Chopra in ‘The Future of God’ explains: “there is nothing to be skeptical about in this description of a peak experience when the everyday world of appearances suddenly changes. For Collins, the meaning of his peak experience was religious.”²³ The only experience Dawkins allows is that which fits within the framework of science; but all experience cannot be fitted into just one kind of box. Joseph Campbell notes that “I don’t have to have faith, I have experience” and he adds that “God is a metaphor for that which transcends all levels of intellectual thought. It’s as simple as that” so experiences contain all what we are, and we are supposed to be for the future. Experience is not limited only to science and what is quantifiable; those who believe they have religious experience say they are in contact with other values, transcendent ones.

²² Deepak Chopra, *the future of God; a practical approach to spirituality for times*, Ebury Publishing, London, UK, 2014, p.66.

²³ Deepak Chopra, *the future of God; a practical approach to spirituality for times*, Ebury Publishing, London, UK, 2014, p.66.

7. The scripture

The Holy Scripture²⁴ we read today is the product of many writers. Bible experts point to three strands in its production. First there is ‘oral tradition’. People recounted stories orally of their experience of God and passed them on to their children and grandchildren, who passed them on to their children and grandchildren, and so on by word of mouth. The Bible is based on the oral traditions of people who have believed. The transmitted their experiences of faith. Scripture is primarily a record of experience, not one of historical research; that is one of the reasons why there are gaps in the history. Secondly, we have what we call ‘written tradition.’ This was composed by looking at some sources or manuscripts. Eventually, especially when crises erupted that threatened to destroy the faith heritage of the chosen people, trained scribes wrote down the stories of faith to preserve them for all time. Thirdly: Over time, scribes collected the various written traditions, grouped them together in different categories, called ‘edited tradition’ edited them to apply them to their own situation. Here Dawkins attacks another straw man. Many of his ‘new’ arguments ‘against Scripture’ are things scholars have known for a long time; things which have long been recognized by the Church.

²⁴ Ronald D. Witherup, the Bible companion; a handbook for Beginners, Claretian Publication, Bangalore, India, 1999, p.10 -11.

“The fact that something is written down is persuasive to people not used to asking questions like: ‘who wrote it, and when?’ ‘How did they know what to write?’ ‘Did they, in their time, really mean what we, in our time, understand them to be saying?’ ‘Were they unbiased observers, or did they have an agenda that colored their writing?’ Ever since the nineteenth century, scholarly theologians have made an overwhelming case that the gospels are not reliable accounts of what happened in the history of the real world. All were written long after the death of Jesus, and also after the epistles of Paul, which mention almost none of the alleged facts of Jesus’s life”.²⁵

Even the four Gospels are totally different because each has its own purpose. For example, the Gospel of Matthew was written by a Jew who wanted to give testimony that Jesus Christ is the Messiah promised to their fathers. He presents this with a structure of five main pictures like Pentateuch. Matthew touches on the fundamental belief of Jews. Dawkins has little knowledge about the nature of writing at that time and the current research in hermeneutics.

“Most of what the four canonical gospels share is derived from a common source, either Mark’s gospel or a lost work of which Mark is the earliest extant descendant. Nobody knows who the four evangelists were, but they almost certainly never met Jesus personally. Much of what they wrote was in no sense an honest attempt at history but was simply rehashed from the Old Testament, because the gospel-makers were devoutly convinced that the life of Jesus must fulfill Old Testament prophecies. It is even possible to mount a serious, though not widely supported, historical case that Jesus never lived at all”.²⁶

²⁵ Richard Dawkins, the God delusion, Black Swan Publish, London, 2007, p.118.

²⁶ Ibid., p.122.

Dawkin's statement that Jesus may never have lived at all is at least as unwarranted as many other things he criticizes. Few, if any, expert historians would agree with him. Much of what he says calls for a lot of 'faith' of a different sort.

8. Some final comments from Alister McGrath, Ravi Zacharias and David Hart's critique of The Dawkins Delusion?

McGrath notes that "Richard Dawkins has caused no small stir since "The God Delusion" released. It was a wild slugfest by the Oxford atheist and biologist, taking on most types of religion and belief in God. Many reviewers, even fellow secularists, found the book both embarrassing and sophomoric in its intolerant attack on religion and all who dared to disagree with him."²⁷ McGrath adds that "Because the God Delusion is such a disjointed, rambling affair, lacking a clear line of argument, or proper use of evidence, it is hard to properly review it ... to simply reply point by point to his many errors, misrepresentations and distortions would make for a long and dry read".²⁸ These comments indicated that Dawkins' arguments required evaluation from an academic perspective.

Thus, McGrath singles out a few key areas, and devotes his own brief (75 page) book to them. (The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine). For example, Dawkins' mistaken understanding of faith is discussed in the opening chapter. Contrary to Dawkins' caricature, biblical faith is informed faith, faith based on reason and an honest examination of the evidence.

²⁷ <https://billmuehlenberg.com/2007/03/20/a-review-of-the-dawkins-delusion-by-alister-mcgrath/>.

²⁸ <https://billmuehlenberg.com/2007/03/20/a-review-of-the-dawkins-delusion-by-alister-mcgrath/>.

McGrath also critiques Dawkins on his understanding of the origins of religion. Dawkins of course just recycles the old naturalistic projection theories as developed by Feuerbach, Marx, and Freud. Dawkins, following Dennett, also speaks of religion as an ‘accidental by-product’ or a ‘misfiring of something useful. McGrath also critiques Dawkins’ notions of belief in God as a “virus of the mind,” and the “meme”. These points are more fully explored in his earlier, and perhaps more important book, Dawkins’ God (2005). Here he reiterates his case”²⁹

I have come across a statement by Mr. Ravi Zacharias, an Indian-born Canadian American, on "The God Delusion." Zacharias has expressed that "The God Delusion" has caused him to feel a sense of shame in his identity as an atheist. Additionally, he has referred to another participant who spoke during the conference.

"I find it fascinating that among the brilliant scientists and philosophers at the conference, there was no convincing evidence presented that they know how to deal with the basic irrationality of human life other than to insist against all reason and evidence that things ought to be rational and evidence based. It makes me embarrassed to be a scientist and atheist."³⁰

It is evident that Ravi firmly believes that engaging in discussions beyond one's expertise can lead to an unfair outcome, as it may expose one's lack of sciences and knowledge. Furthermore, Ravi advocates that "Nothing cannot produce something," citing the atheistic standpoint of philosopher Bertrand Russell that the universe is "just there".³¹ Ravi affirms that a profound grasp of science is crucial for comprehending the interconnectedness of all phenomena.

²⁹ <https://billmuehlenberg.com/2007/03/20/a-review-of-the-dawkins-delusion-by-alister-mcgrath/>.

³⁰ Ravi Zacharias, The End of Reason, Michigan, USA, 2008, p.23..

³¹ Ibid., p.32.

David Bentley Hart's views on Richard Dawkins' book "The God Delusion" are still relevant today. Hart criticizes Dawkins' energetic attack on all religious beliefs, calling him a zoologist and tireless Tractarian who, despite his rhetorical recklessness,³² fails to understand the meaning of God for believers. Hart, like Ravi and other critics, argues that Dawkins' point of view is limited. According to Hart, Dawkins' explanation of religious culture is utterly inadequate and almost absurdly dependent on his inane concept of a meme. Hart wants to attack Dawkins by saying that the word "meme"³³ is bad to others, but he does not provide any further explanation to defend his stance.

9. My stance

I have been studying this topic for years. My journey began with Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, and Richard Dawkins, who were critical of Christianity. I have read numerous books that argue that God is merely a delusion. However, as a religious person, I feel compelled to defend the Christian position. In this regard, I have three main points to make.

9.1 Meme: According to Dawkins, the religious belief that transfers to generation in generation is nothing because there is nothing there. But for me, Human beings are composed of the date of birth, the place of living, and cultures with their content. Pope Benedict says this is an essence: "the expression of man's one essence, are characterized by human dynamic, which is to transcend all boundaries." This implies that a human being is more than the material world, a mysterious being, and he is searching for something beyond the material realm. Hence, a meme is simply uttering words without consciousness.

³² See. David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusion*, Sheridan Books, USA, 2009, p.3-4

³³ Ibid., 7

9.2 Faith and reason: Pope John Paul II deeply observed in his encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* No. 72 that “My thoughts turn immediately to the lands of the East, so rich in religious and philosophical traditions of great antiquity. Among these lands, India has a special place. A great spiritual impulse leads Indian thought to seek an experience that would liberate the spirit from the shackles of time and space and acquire absolute value. The dynamic of this quest for liberation provides the context for great metaphysical systems.” Asian people have lived for centuries with their religious reason and spiritual manner; how can Dawkins say that there had only been the transmission of something that is only a meme? Moreover, Pope Benedict gave a reflection on *Fides et Ratio* that “[A] false humility that does not recognize in the human person the capacity for the truth, and a false presumption by which one places oneself above things, above truth itself, while making the extension of one’s power, one’s domination over things, the objective of one’s thought.”³⁴ Here is the misunderstanding of atheists who are far from deepening reason.

9.3 God and metaphysic: I have found that Pope Benedict emphasizes three main ideas, which firstly is “man’s transcendent dignity,” which also “requires a deeper critical evaluation of the category of relation (CV³⁵ 53).” Secondly, “the revealed mystery of the Trinity” means “the three divine Persons are pure (CV 54). Lastly, “The Christian revelation of the unity of humanity presupposes a metaphysical interpretation of the ‘humanum’ in which relationality is an essential element” (CV 55)”. I am confident in insisting that these three fundamentals of believers are undeniably rational because human beings are composed of material, spiritual, social, psychological, and mysterious elements that enable us to relate to Otherness.

³⁴ Some Reflections on the Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*,” in *The Essential Pope Benedict XVI: His Central Writings and Speeches*, ed. John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne (New York: Harper One, 2007), 368.

³⁵ CV means Pope Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Caritas in Veritate* (2009).

10. Conclusion

Why does Dawkins, in this book, change from being a serious scientist to a secular holy warrior? We can only speculate, but as McGrath suggests, perhaps Dawkins, like other militant atheists, is feeling threatened, threatened that he might in fact be wrong, maybe even deluded.

As McGrath concludes, the fact that ‘Dawkins relies so excessively on rhetoric, rather than the evidence that would otherwise be his natural stock in trade, clearly indicates that something is wrong with his case... . Might atheism be a delusion about God?

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