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**ATHEISM, SCIENCE,
AND (NO)
EXISTENTIAL COMPETENCE**

A Critical Response to
Richard Dawkins' book
"The God Delusion"

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Version 04.1, not professionally proofread, May 2014

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Introduction

This book is written along *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins. The aim is not to counter Dawkins – there is indeed a widespread God delusion, its proponents deserve the challenge, and this book does cover it, too. But, for laying out an existential view on atheism and science, it is most comfortable to have the reference material collected in one document. Dawkins' book is such a document because, in presenting all that can be brought forward from an atheist and natural science perspective against the belief in God, one cannot avoid the side effect of broadly exhibiting a view – explicitly or implicitly – on the core of our existence. This view of Dawkins' seems quite representative of natural scientists and, hence, much too important and much too interesting to pass without re-view.

For example, there is an attitude, common among natural scientists and obviously shared by Dawkins:

that the methods of natural science could in principle cover everything and that, therefore, one need not look beyond science for truths and truth criteria.

This corresponds to the top misconception of atheists:

that one could argue against God's existence without knowing anything about God.

Such belief is understandable, because atheists do not take God as existing, and therefore tend to not care for knowing about God. Still this line of thought leads into a dilemma:

If God does not exist, how define him?

What to negate, if there is no, or even cannot be any, definition?

If you want to prove a certain set as empty, you first have to define the set. And if you want the proof to carry relevance, you better define a relevant set.

What are the options? To stop arguing, or to give up atheism, are no options. To borrow a definition does not constitute knowledge about God. The atheist may forget about the dilemma, and passionately point to the dilemmas of the opponents, the irrationally religious people. Of course, this does not lead out of the atheist's dilemma, and Dawkins' book proves that it isn't exactly a win strategy.

The only solution of the dilemma is not to take it as a dilemma: to try to *identify* God in spite of the facts that he cannot be *defined* and that nothing factual can be said of him. God can only be falsified if we first try hard to get a view of him – most likely not in the factual world, but rather in any possible domain of our existence that is beyond facts and words.

In this sense we will challenge and supplement atheist and scientist positions by bringing into play existential competence. We will provide below a corresponding introduction into our existential position, and extend it later in an "on-demand" manner.

Overall Review

For demonstrating with scientific authority, that God cannot be, one had better first, a good definition of that "God", and second, a reasonable confidence that the chosen approach is valid with regard to that defined God. As Dawkins is a scientist and uses his scientific credits for his arguments, these requirements should be appropriate.

1. The definition

Dawkins does not offer a definition, and we already know why: because he does not escape the atheist's dilemma. Initially, he abstractly discusses God, and human positions versus God, but then the body of the book consists predominantly of attacks against the teachings of monotheistic religious organisations. Actually, the implicit definition mostly used by Dawkins appears to be "God as presented by the monotheistic religious organisations". At first sight, one might believe that proving the non-existence of God in the sense of all representative definitions could deliver an even stronger result than proving the same against just one definition. However, in an approach of scientific ambition, that can not be taken for granted: it could theoretically be that the God presented by religious organisations is not God proper. This consideration will be continued a few paragraphs below. We note here that Dawkins does not give a definition of God.

2. The approach

The approach chosen by Dawkins is to raise predominantly scientific, or otherwise rational, arguments against the statements from religious organisations. This may be effective but the question should be answered first, whether such arguments can pertain to God. Again this cannot be taken for granted. As rather nobody claims that God is in this world, the challenge is to provide evidence that there can or cannot be a God *external* to the world. This is not at all easy since a case can be made that the limit of our understanding is the limit of our world. If there is anything external to this world, we can neither define nor understand it – which implies that we cannot make any assertions about it and no derivations from it either. In particular, the assertions: "the External exists" and "the External does not exist" are fundamentally impossible. – There are no indications that Dawkins recognizes that counter-assertions about the External cannot be made either, and we note that Dawkins has not ensured a valid approach.

Interestingly, the rule that "you cannot make assertions about God" is the true, existential meaning of the Second Commandment. "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain", as a rule from an absolute God, can only be an absolute, unavoidable and inescapable law of our existence. We may *identify* God with a name but we cannot use it in connection with our concepts and imaginations. We cannot structure God nor structurally relate God to anything else.

In order to understand the Second Commandment one need not believe in a God: If there is an extra-worldly component in our existence, then it is outside our

conceptually structured understanding of the world, we cannot grasp it by concepts or by thinking, and we cannot encounter it as an inner-worldly phenomenon.

Who knows this, and who cares about it? We have to point out from the beginning that the Second Commandment, in the above sense, is being only superficially respected: religious teachings are notoriously abundant of – fully intentional and intensely defended – assertions about God and about matters suggestedly related to God. All these assertions are void. Not that, over the millennia, individuals would not have loudly and repeatedly criticized the error of presenting God as an intellectual concept, most prominently Jesus. But they had no lasting impact on this practice. The error is indeed intentional, and there must be a strong universal force behind it. This force is the fear of facing death, in the widest sense. It is the force that makes us shy away from all dealings with existential questions and all considerations of our naked existence. It is a fundamental human trait that the bible pictures as Adam and Eve recognizing their nakedness and therefore hiding from God.

The most straight-forward way to avoid God proper is to take it as a concept. The comprehensive frameworks of assertions about God, and about inner-worldly matters around God, and the extensive dealings with these frameworks as put in place by major religious organisations systematically raise and maintain a *culture* of dwelling in these matters and thereby avoiding God. –

Back to Dawkins' book: The target: "God" remains undefined; the approach by "scientifically grounded argument" fails the true target; and both are intended by Dawkins: Chapter 1 cites Einstein with an excellent definition of God, and Dawkins expresses that it deserves his respect. Still he says, he "needed to get Einsteinian religion out of the way" because it could cause confusion with the "*supernatural* gods" that he wants to talk about in the rest of the book.

This leaves the definition authority about God with the religious organisations – who are obviously misusing it for God-avoidance – and thus Dawkins contributes to their false game. One cannot at the same time both confine oneself to their official religious teachings, and claim that one is talking about God proper.

Not only do Dawkins' arguments, in attacking whichever "Assertions-God", fail to reach God proper. He also takes the representative religious teachings at face value and thereby confirms a more extensive delusion than the one he claims to unmask: that assertions about God were possible at all. –

This cannot be the end of the overall critique of the book. We have to make clear, and fill in, what Dawkins has missed in his approach, that is: what would have been required to address God proper, and which insights could have been gained by putting science and "the External" into a reasonable perspective.

3. How to address God proper

There have at all times been people, who have reported an encounter with the External or, otherwise, gained an insight into the fundamentals of their existence. Corresponding expressions from, or ascribed to, these people have been available for long in the reference books of religious organisations, for example in the bible. As we have

established above, these expressions cannot be taken as assertions. These people have tried the only possible alternative: to approximately describe or point to something and thereby guide the view of the audience to that something – and we are supposed to see what they are trying to communicate. When mistaken as assertive, such texts can only appear as religious nonsense. Without a certain existential competence they can neither be identified nor understood as valid expressions about the External nor about the fundamentals of human existence.

Religious organisations own these texts but will, for the above reasons, certainly not officially help to identify and interpret these expressions correctly. Hence our personal religious autonomy and our personal existential competence are required. Privately, we are free to acquire or not acquire them. But, if one wants to publicly address God by bringing scientific arguments into play, one cannot hope to produce anything final without being able to see what these expressions mean and to judge whether they are authentic and healthy.

4. What is missing in Dawkins' book

Regarding the insights that may be gained by putting science and "the External" into a reasonable perspective, we see little value in less than reviewing Dawkins' book chapter by chapter with the help of sufficient existential competence.

The first steps to get acquainted with "approximately pointing text" may cause some difficulty which could easily block the understanding of this review. Therefore we better look at a small number of examples, and we should during this exercise consider how we could hope to really deal with the question of God before understanding these examples.

What does the author of the Genesis mean by "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him"? – It looks like a calmly and knowingly calculated expression about human existence, not at all like a delusion. It does neither oversell God, nor make concessions to the understanding of the audience. The first rule about approximately pointing text is: If the text does not do it already, precede it with the clause "It is as if <text>". Given the text: "It is as if God created man in his own image", the reader may ask: What of myself may be seen as if it were divine? What as the image?

What does Jesus mean by saying: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"? – Delusion or insight? Common Christian teachings claim that "the bible" is the word of God, more or less directly, if only by inspiration. Such claims are assertions about the External – in this case relating the External to the bible or texts therein, which obviously are inner-worldly objects. But, as laid out above, such assertions are void. Again the reader would better ask: What does my life consist of, not just bodily and mentally but more abstractly, in the widest conceivable, existential sense? What in this could be taken as if it were an uttering from "something" that would be external to everything in my life?

?

If somebody would, at this point, think of the "film in his or her head", this would help. Think of playing in a virtual reality, understanding the virtual world, steering your avatar, observing, deciding, acting, etc. This is obviously a – limited quality – analogy of the real world in which we are living, that is, understanding, acting, etc. "Limited quality": In the virtual reality there are screens, speakers, headphones etc. that let us perceive, and keyboards, joysticks, sensor gloves etc. that allow us to act. In the *real* reality nothing similar is required, there is just the "interactive film", and we sense and act in it with nothing intermediate.

Let us therefore say that our life is *like* a virtual reality, just with a far richer real world and such that our involvement in it is absolutely direct. This is modern approximately pointing language about our existence. If we continue this analogy one step further it will connect to the above two approximately pointing texts from the bible.

In the virtual reality, the player – other than his or her avatar – is playing from outside the virtual world. In the real reality then, it is as if the player, the authentic self of the person, is playing from outside the real world. Also, like in the virtual world, it is not the player who produces the interactive film and its contents. It is as if these originate from outside the world – produced by something other than the player's authentic self.

This means that we can view as external to our (real) world, and thus "divine": our authentic self, the creation of the real world film, and the creator. Because, as we have noted above, the External cannot have a structure, we must not differentiate these aspects but take them as three *views* of the same External. This certainly justifies the approximation of the authentic self as divine and as an "image" of God, or later by Jesus: the authentic self as the "son" of God.

The creation of the *real* world, its sceneries, views, events, reactions are continually "live". If our individual life is the dynamics of our individual world and thus "created live" by the External, this renders understandable that our life is a sequence of expressions, utterances, articulations, "words" of God. The same approximation is offered by the Genesis, which says that the world and its contents are being created by God through *speaking*.

Note that, again, these derivations could be made without using the word "God". We have just tried to abstract from the internals of the world and get a view of our – if you so wish: naked – existence, that is: of everything except the internals of the world. And we saw how our approximate view matched two citations from the bible, which indicates that the ancient authors had that same view.

This should, hopefully, be sufficient as a first impression of how to deal with approximations of the External. *Everything* that can be said about God and our existence has been said or written in this type of verbal allegory, mostly in ancient terms and contexts. It may have become apparent that the authors of old approximately pointing texts cannot easily be disqualified as irrational. *There is no use arguing for or against their texts*: the question is just whether one can see or not see what they want to point to.

What is usually blocking such sight is the rich external and internal world, in which we live, with all its objects, patterns and flows of events and thoughts. We have to get them

out of the way and to get rid of the way of dealing with them to which we are acquainted, if we want to achieve a (relatively) free view at ourselves and our being. This is possible and independent of our belief, as we have just illustrated. –

We have now available the special tools needed to carry out this review: the Second Commandment, and the capability to direct our view to our existence and to express it in approximately pointing language.

The Preface

In his Preface, Dawkins points – with a little bias – to the plenty of evil that has been and is being associated with religion. As a preferable alternative to remaining stuck in irritating religious conventions, he proposes to become a happy, balanced, moral, and intellectually fulfilled atheist. And he encourages agnostics and atheists not to hide their position but to be open about it.

All this is legitimate, and little can be said against it as long as adopting agnostic and atheist positions will not be sold as *the* universal means for improving the world.

From the beginning, Dawkins unfortunately uses the term *religion* in its conventional meaning, comprising all three of:

- religion proper – the linkage of humans to something –,
- religious teachings, and
- religious organisations.

This may not be a level of precision to build scientifically or even rationally credible arguments upon.

If Dawkins would better discriminate the meanings of the term religion, he might see that his proposal is not without equal alternative. The irritations of the teachings and behaviours of religious organisations may lead many people to become agnostics and atheists. They may lead as many people to start searching themselves – with equal autonomy – for the divine and for religion proper. Their success is as open as the success of the agnostics and atheists.

CHAPTER 1 – A deeply religious non-believer

Deserved Respect

Dawkins defines his position as an atheist, and contrasts it both, to the theist position that there is a supernatural creator who has created the universe and who continues to oversee and influence its fate, and to the pantheist position that there is God in nature or in the laws of nature.

While decidedly rejecting the theists' "interventionist, miracle-wreaking, thought-reading, sin-punishing, prayer-answering God", Dawkins respects, to some extent, the God behind nature.

There is a very remarkable proposition from Einstein:

"To sense that behind anything that can be experienced
there is a something that our mind cannot grasp
... this is religiousness".

Dawkins shares it with the reservation that "cannot grasp" does not mean "forever ungraspable": he does not accept the supernatural aspect.

This is the point where Dawkins, determined to attack the theists, leaves the chance of discussing and selecting a best available definition of God and instead takes what the theists are offering him. The result is that he can prove that the theists are indeed offering some God delusion but he cannot – and does not even note that he cannot – exclude that a better defined God, for example the "something" of Einstein, could be possible.

Positively, according to Dawkins, an atheist believes there is nothing beyond the natural, physical world – except natural phenomena that we don't yet understand but hope to understand later and to embrace with the natural. He cites Julian Baggini: "although there is only one kind of stuff in the universe and it is physical, out of this stuff come minds, beauty, emotions, moral values ...", and he cites Darwin that all was "produced by laws acting around us".

Too much goes unquestioned here: Who in the world can guarantee that any of the "laws" continues to remain valid tomorrow? Is there a corresponding proof from any scientist? Which phenomenon in the world has been or is being produced by which "law", given that we have nothing to experience other than phenomena and that we are inferring laws from these very phenomena and their perceived regularities? Who in the world is controlling the instantiation of the "laws", that is, who is putting the values into the variables governed by the "laws"? For example, we have "laws" governing the creation and movement of planets, but why do we have just these planets on these orbits? (Dawkins has this question himself in the NOMA section below.) Why do we suddenly understand something that we did not understand before, and where we did not even see that there was something to understand? Why then should there not be a

"law" saying that certain "somethings" can make an effect on us while we remain fundamentally unable to understand them?

With all respect to the magnificence of the physical universe, one might consider that it is just one world, and a rather limited one, among the many worlds that man has explored, that man is continuing to explore and to add to the scope of "anything that can possibly be experienced", that is to *the* world. Let us use this as a working definition of "the world".

Take an arbitrary example, say one of, the world of fashion, the world of finance, the world of photography, the world of mining, the world of law, etc. One may view the chosen example world as all atoms, and explain its presence by genetic evolution, but there is a long way to go until this could help any insider to better master life in that specific world. And one should not forget that most of the physical universe consists of mental objects: we encounter people, chairs, tables, houses, streets, water, the sun, stars, ad inf., but nobody ever met an electron or a quasar or a gene outside the mental world. Not that mental worlds were less real – we take our thoughts as absolutely real – but there is an obvious difference between flying and – how intensely ever – imagining to fly. The latter may be an illusion.

Taking into account the overwhelming plenty and richness of *the* world, that reaches far beyond the world of science, Dawkins' concept of the *supernatural* fails to really discriminate God from reality. Nothing weaker than "*outside the world*" would do.

Two side remarks may be appropriate as Dawkins mentions the corresponding topics in this section. The one is on hurting religious feelings of people. While it is wise to not unnecessarily hurt other people's feelings, people must be expected to tolerate, without any negative feelings, opinions which are different from, or contrary to, their views. It must be added that religion proper deals with the Absolute, and that worldly phenomena, for example: feelings, have nothing to do with that. "Religious feeling" is a contradiction in itself, and insisting in "religious feelings" is just false religion. People who adhere to void religious teachings – including those religious teachings that make assertions about God – do not have any more rights to have their feelings respected than everybody else.

Then there is the question of training in theology and expertise in religion. Dawkins cites a Roman Catholic bishop who classified Einstein as theologically untrained. That is the typical reaction of religious leaders and teachers who never had the least experience with God, against people who are autonomous in their religion and find God on their own. There are two kinds of expertise in religion. One covers the giant complexes of assertions about God and the divine, erected and polished by the religious elites over the millennia. It constitutes a great amount of expertise but has separated itself from God, and thus has nothing to do with God. The other kind of expertise is directly with God and is, in principle, available to everybody who may acquire it in the hard way – getting seriously struck by fate –, or – in a milder way – from people with a direct God experience who are able to approximately point where and how to look for God. Without the second kind of expertise, it is possible to expose religious nonsense but

impossible to identify and understand good religious texts – like for example Einstein's text above.

Note also, that it is quite irrelevant for the religious quality of a text whether the author confirms or denies the existence of God, as these are assertions that cannot be made anyway. The previous paragraph explains why being "a deeply religious non-believer" – a religious person who firmly does not believe in official religious assertions – is indeed a reasonable, and by no means paradoxical, position. –

In this section, we have found that Dawkins' unquestioned concepts of the world and its laws may be flawed. We are going to thoroughly investigate this later in this review.

Undeserved Respect

Here, Dawkins challenges the permanent public privileges of religion: being allowed to establish taboos, being credited for higher moral authority, being granted legal privileges including exemptions from the law, and the unfounded general respect of society for religious privileges. Gravely missing from this list is the privilege of unquestioned authority to define God.

Then Dawkins expands on the Danish cartoon affair of February 2006.

What does all this have to do with the claim that there be no "supernatural" God? While the religious organisations suggest and pretend the contrary, none of these privileges can be derived in any way from God. Whether the External may be or may not be, assertions that link it with authority, privileges, or respect *in* the world are void and violate the Second Commandment.

Dawkins is right: Religious organisations have to earn and maintain their positions, as all other organisations have to.

But also, they clearly do not deserve the authority to define God.

CHAPTER 2 – The God Hypothesis

Dawkins starts this chapter with a few remarks about the unpleasant character of the God of the Old Testament and the otherwise unpleasant character of "meek and mild" Jesus.

We have already said everything relevant about assertions and counter-assertions relating to God.

With regard to Jesus, it should be understood that he was a man with high existential competence – as we have already seen in one case – and very productive and skilful in pointing to the fundamentals of our existence. His use of parables shows that he still understood the original meaning of the Second Commandment and knew how to correctly speak about the Absolute. He has furiously fought the religious establishment of his time, exactly because they had installed and defended an "Assertions-God" infrastructure instead of leading people towards God. Christian churches have shortly after his death started to integrate him as "the first and only son of God" into their "Assertions-God" infrastructure. –

Dawkins then states his (first) version of the God Hypothesis and the alternative view he is advocating.

God Hypothesis: *There exists a superhuman, supernatural intelligence who deliberately designed and created the universe and everything in it, including us.*

Dawkins' position: *Any creative intelligence, of sufficient complexity to design anything, comes into existence only as the end product of an extended process of gradual evolution.*

The latter is intended to remain in the domain of facts in the world, and that is decisive for its truth: It is exposed to the normal truth criteria in the world including the truth criteria of science. One should note that the best that can be said today about intelligence is that a universal definition is likely to be impossible. There also may be problems with the precision of the terms *creative* and *design* here. Man may be able to *design*, say, a house-fly to some level of detail now, and to ever greater detail in the future, but it is difficult to see how man, or some evolutionary follower of his, could be able to *create* a house-fly, that is: from nothing, not even from "stuff" available in the universe.

The God hypothesis may be a correct summary of the best one could get from the theists but it is not at all clear: Why the repetition of "*super*"? Is it just explanatory, or is there a concept of something that is either *superhuman* but not *supernatural*, or vice versa? What is the underlying definition of *intelligence*? Why the past tense "*designed*", "*created*"? Does it mean: *superhuman* and *supernatural* but not *supertemporal*?

Dawkins' position does not reach out beyond the world. It can possibly contradict his stated God Hypothesis, if he locates *superhuman* and *supernatural* within the world. But providing evidence that there is no God within the world, is of little value.

Polytheism

Monotheism

In these two sections, Dawkins comments with ridicule on the absurdities and atrocities of polytheistic and monotheistic religious teachings and organisations.

We can come back to the Second Commandment according to which assertions about the External and, in particular, assertions about structures including or within the External are impossible. Hence, all those collectives and hierarchies of gods, angels, saints etc., as well as all worldly laws and rules based on them, are fundamentally void.

Dawkins does not have this argument, so his only weapon against the "characteristically obscurantist flavour of theology which has not ... moved on in eighteen centuries" and all its "unintelligible positions" is ridicule. And that, of course, is far from bringing about a final judgment.

The "eighteen centuries" should let us think twice. Not all people throughout the centuries have been stupid, including the religious thinkers and leaders. So, it must be supposed that there have always been people who understood what is wrong with these religious teachings. These teachings survived in spite. Obviously, fighting the lack of logic and consistence of these teachings is fighting the symptoms of something rooted deeper. So, science may not help in the end, and this is serious.

We have previously pointed to the universal fear of being confronted with existence as a possible root of distorted theology, and we have also mentioned the fact that true existential expressions look like nonsense too. Therefore, confrontation with the existential expressions can easily be avoided by hiding them deeply under a large heap of real nonsense. If this diagnosis is true, the only project that could help is to pull out the good religious teachings from the bottom of this heap and deciphering their message: that there is nothing to fear about existence.

Nothing – and none of Dawkins' challenges – will ever defeat nonsense religion without first eliminating this fear. But, in this review, we have already established above that there is nothing to fear about the External, because this is a void assertion. Fear is an inner-worldly phenomenon and cannot be related to the External.

Secularism, the founding fathers and the religion of America

This section deals with the history of atheism in the US and contains nothing that could be relevant in this discussion of the validity of certain science positions.

The poverty of agnosticism

After differentiating two types of agnosticism, Dawkins introduces the relevance of probability in deciding whether God exists or does not exist. Let us look at Dawkins' own words:

"Either he exists or he doesn't. It is a scientific question; one day we may know the answer, and meanwhile we can say something pretty strong about the probability."

"God's existence or non-existence is a scientific fact about the universe, discoverable in principle if not in practice. If he existed and chose to reveal it, God himself could clinch the argument, noisily and unequivocally, in his favour. And even if God's existence is never proved or disproved with certainty one way or the other, available evidence and reasoning may yield an estimate of probability far from 50 per cent."

"That you cannot prove God's non-existence is accepted and trivial, if only in the sense that we can never absolutely prove the non-existence of anything. What matters is not whether God is disprovable (he isn't) but whether his existence is *probable*. ... There is no reason to regard God as immune from consideration along the spectrum of probabilities ..." -

Let us review the situation here: Dawkins does not give a scientific definition of God but claims that it is a scientific question whether he exists or does not exist. He has earlier provided a God Hypothesis that speaks of a superhuman, supernatural intelligence and now he says its existence or non-existence is a scientific fact about the universe. *Supernatural* but not *superuniverse*?

So, we have to come back to the Second Commandment again: *Either* God is meant to be an object *in the world*, then we can make all the above considerations, including what God might clinch and what he is not immune to. Then the first task is to tell the relation between "supernatural" and "in the world". *Or* God is meant as something *outside the world*. Then all the above considerations of Dawkins' are void.

What can we derive from this section of Dawkins' book? That he is seriously missing the Second Commandment as a filtering tool for his propositions.

Interestingly, he lists seven levels of belief in the existence of God, from knowing that God exists to knowing that he does not exist. Dawkins suggests that the former level – knowing that God exists – is well populated, with people tending to be overly devoted and with their reason dominated by their faith, but he does not specifically exclude that there may be a few reasonable people in that level. Let us therefore discuss how people could possibly come to *know* of God. Obviously, by an unambiguous experience of their own:

If the External is really meant as something not graspable and outside the world then an experience of it cannot be a perception of a reality, it cannot be through phenomena in the world, and not through feelings or visions. All this would be graspable – and ambiguous. The only possibility is that something would strike us in a mode totally different from reality mode, which we would afterwards characterize as absolute, unambiguous, unrelated and unanswerable, and thus we would know what it was. This effect is reported to happen infrequently, but to people of all levels of belief. It is unavoidable that thereafter these people are impressed beyond imagination and lack words to describe the experience. People who give rich and precise reports and insist on details, like those promoting an "Assertions-God", definitely cannot have had such an experience.

From this perspective, the being of God proper is a matter of rare experiences – rare: possibly due to the widespread avoidance of God. But the probability of such experiences does not matter.

NOMA

NOMA stands for "non-overlapping magisteria". The theme of this section is the demarcation between science and religion. Dawkins exposes a scene that is all interventions on the others' turf and border fighting. Its political and tactical dynamics may be interesting. In terms of reason and logic it is fairly uninteresting.

The Second Commandment immediately clears the situation: assertions relating to God are void. Either one communicates about God proper or one states assertions. As soon as religious teachings go for assertions they get on the turf of reality, and there the truth criteria of reality apply. The well-known outcome of applying these criteria is that "religious" claims to explain reality are vastly ineffective and hence of minimal use.

Dawkins gives as examples the questions whether Jesus had a human father or whether his mother was a virgin at birth, whether Jesus did raise Lazarus from the dead, and whether Jesus came alive again, three days after being crucified. He confines himself to state that these questions have a scientific answer. Let us add that, long before the scientific answers, there have been the answers based on proven understanding of reality through millennia of mankind: few people would, in a non-tactical context, confirm that the answers were positive and relevant.

Let us immediately turn to the purpose of this book: to use Dawkins' materials to clarify the relation between atheism, science and religion proper and, in this sense, examine the greater issues of this section.

1. Can the God question and the issue of God's superintendence of nature be settled by science?

Before discussing an answer, we have to note that Dawkins provides in this section an implicit revision of the God Hypothesis: *"the reality we inhabit also contains a supernatural agent who designed the universe and – at least in many versions of the hypothesis – ... maintains it and even intervenes in it with miracles, which are temporary violations of his otherwise grandly immutable laws"*. Compare to the version given at the beginning of Chapter 2: *"There exists a superhuman, supernatural intelligence who deliberately designed and created the universe and everything in it, including us."*

Dawkins substitutes "intelligence" by "agent" and "universe" by "reality" on top of (as previously mentioned), leaving undefined the relation between "universe" and "nature". This may be a challenge to the reader. Doesn't the choice of terms matter here? – But, anyway, for the purposes of this book, it is sufficient, and appears safe, to say that Dawkins wants to see the God of the Hypothesis located within the turf of science.

We have already confirmed, that God-related assertions are void, and this holds independent of whether such assertions occur in religious teachings or in science based arguments. If assertions relate to God, this God cannot be God proper but must be a fictitious object in the world, that we have previously called an "Assertions-God". As far as an Assertions-God is concerned, religious teachings may give it attributes and relate it to whichever objects and effects in the world, but if science proves they are false then that is what counts.

If the communication is about God proper, all that can be said, is: "It is as if ...", for example: "It is as if the world is being created by something outside the world", and if a person does not see it that way, that is what counts.

2. How can art and beauty be explained?

Dawkins cites Stephen Jay Gould claiming that art and "the meaning of beauty" do neither belong to the scope of science nor to the scope of religion, but Dawkins does not respond to this side question.

Clearly, there is a world of art comprising all works of art, all artists, all markets and businesses around art, all institutions and departments of art, all exhibitions of art, all collectors, all critics, and more. Some of these sections of the world of art have a science, and in the others one could in principle open up sciences.

Speaking of religion, we now mean religion proper, that is: individual linking to the External, not religious teachings and not religious organisations. What is the scope of religion proper? In the first place, all text that approximately points to the External, more general: all communication that helps link to the External. Art can occasionally achieve that. A person may be struck by a painting or a music performance in a way beyond telling, and that experience may transcend inner-worldly beauty and appear as absolute.

We have already seen in the analogy with virtual reality that, while the External cannot be grasped and thus cannot have a structure, it may nevertheless be viewed as both an instance that produces the "film of life" and an instance that experiences that film. As if the External presented different views – different views like we are used to obtain along different dimensions. In this case, we have the dimensions of the creator and of the recipient, but there are more: the dimension of love, or intelligence, or quality, or beauty. Such dimensions, that somehow link to the External, are very difficult to define in reality, so difficult that we can justifiably classify them as not definable and, therefore, outside the domain of science. But they allow to easily accept, for example, a religious concept as irritating as Trinity: three independent views of the same, structureless Absolute along lines of sight that span different dimensions.

3. What is an ultimate question, and can science answer any? Are "why anything exists at all" and "what breathes life into the equations, and actualized them in a real cosmos" ultimate questions? Is quantum theory an ultimate question, and how could religion be in a position to answer it?

A question about facts within the world is just a plain question. There cannot be an ultimate question about facts, because the world is ever growing, and new worlds are being explored and becoming explained. A few decades ago we did not have the worlds of computers, of microbiology, pop music, air traffic, ecology, digital photography, of electronic money, of body parts transplantation. We did not have moving continents, DNA, Black Holes, lasers, semiconductors, Quarks, Synapses, and we did not have the questions that they carry with them. If it is about facts, an ultimate question at one time would be a routine question some time later – at least in principle, as there is no guarantee that science may ever catch up to the pace of human explorations of new worlds.

A really ultimate question would be one that reaches beyond the world, not the current world, but *the* world, that is, beyond everything that can in principle be grasped. And we know: the answer to such a really ultimate question cannot be an assertion. But an answer can still give an analogy of, or circumscribe, an ungraspable "something", or otherwise approximately point to it. And that is religion as explained a few paragraphs earlier.

With the help of this discrimination we can easily sort the above questions: "why anything exists at all" and "what breathes life into the equations" are ultimate questions with no assertions as answers and therefore no scientific answers possible. Quantum theory is not an ultimate question, even if it may appear so currently, and there is no religious answer possible.

4. Which, if any, is the "province" and expertise of theologians? What expertise can theologians bring to deep cosmological questions that scientists cannot? Why are scientists so cravenly respectful towards the ambitions of theologians, over questions that theologians are certainly no more qualified to answer than scientist themselves?

With our previous considerations, we have already given or prepared the answers to the first two questions. There is an expertise of theologians about all assertions that have been made about God. There is, on the other hand the authentic religious expertise of people who have faced the External or gained some competence in getting approximate sights of the External and in pointing how and where to look. If "deep questions" are meant as remaining in the scope of science, or of cosmology in particular, then no contribution can be expected from these two kinds of expertise.

It should however be noted that "deep" may not be the best term for questions at the leading edge of science. Actually, science builds new theories on top of the results of previous ones, producing growing structures of knowledge. So, the better analogy may be that of ever higher towers of theories. The purpose of this, seemingly minor, change

of view is to make visible the Tower-of-Babel character, not only of science but of all knowledge. God "punished" the constructors by messing up their communication: people are experts in their respective world towers, and do not understand the respective other world towers, including the respective expert languages used there. More important: deep is now at the bottom of the knowledge tower. It is that, on which all knowledge is based. Deep questions are existential questions – because, if, hypothetically, all knowledge broke down, we would still be.

Why are scientists so cravenly respectful when theologians come to answer scientific questions? This is a rhetorical question. The scientists should not be cravenly respectful. But still, why are they? Because the scientists have nothing to counter the claim of an overruling divine authority – a claim to overrule even science, on the grounds that God created the universe and science did not. What would break the uncomfortable claim is a proof that God could definitely not be – but this is a void assertion. As we have seen, the Second Commandment does effectively counter the claim.

The conclusion is that, instead of granting undeserved credit to the theologians, the scientists better acquire religious competence themselves. After all, they are no lesser humans and have no lesser existence than theologians. Theologians, who, notoriously avoid existential questions and rather dwell in assertions about God and His relations, cannot have the competence to refer to God, and every single of their respective assertions is incompetent about God.

5. Assuming that science's entitlement to advise us on moral values is problematic, can we cede to religion the decision on what is good and what is bad? By what criteria could we decide which of religion's moral values to accept?

The answers are simple: to religion proper: yes, to theology: no; criteria: expand life, multiply talents. But the explanations are getting quite complicated.

Let us start with theology. The Second Commandment implies that there is no divine moral authority. No rules regarding the way to see the world, or to act, or not to act, in the world can be derived from God. Theologians may adopt worthy positions with regard to, for example, abortion, cloning, stem cell technology, but these remain worldly positions and have to be measured and defended against worldly criteria.

True religion clearly provides moral orientation for the individual: With a view of the Absolute, the world is relatively nothing, and nothing in the world is really much more important than anything else in the world, except life with an absolute component, that is human life – and, potentially, other life as well. More precisely: What remains valuable with respect to the Absolute, are the beings of the type of Dasein, with an absolute Authentic Self. Therefore the moral stance of a person with existential competence is naturally to, above all, maximize this kind of life, the own life and the life of others, always using the best available expertise and considerations towards this goal.

There is an existential human trait to build worlds, that is, to explore new possibilities of life and to master them. We can learn to live something that we have not been able to

live before, we can contribute something to help others add new possibilities to their lives, we can raise children to become people who can both, master life in our proven worlds, and develop and live new ways of life and thereby build their own new worlds.

If we destroy, or fail to use, a possibility of life or of expanding life in this way, we fail life in a fundamental sense, and we know we are guilty (this is atheist Heidegger's concept of being guilty: being the cause of some not-being). Of course there are always many chances for expanding life, and if we take one, we fail the others at the same time. So we accumulate guilt and, in consequence, take a position between ignoring it, wallowing in it, and believing that we are forgiven if we only recognize it. But, as long as we live, we may never escape our destiny to go on expanding life.

All this is implied in the moral stance of an authentically religious person. It cannot easily be transformed into specific moral rules as there are no formulae for maximizing life, but we can try to take it into account for developing inner-worldly morals. For example:

We have previously tried to direct our view to the absolute, divine component of human beings, the Authentic Self. We do not know at which point of our physical and mental life we started to have it, but we feel certain that we had it in the first scene of our life that we remember. We also feel certain that we lose it the moment when our physical and mental life ends. But when does it leave a person lying in a Coma? We do not know whether, and under which conditions, humans that result from genetic experiments will have an Authentic Self.

If we adopt as a moral criterion, that we have to enhance, and must not prevent, life of beings with an Authentic Self, and then want to act morally when it comes to allow genetic research, turning off life support devices, killing handicapped fetuses, we still cannot expect help from attempts to answer void questions about the Authentic Self but have to develop our own inner-worldly rules instead. We have to decide in favor of maximizing life and, at the same time, we have to risk to become guilty. This requires that we use our best available knowledge of all relevant facts and that we therefore do not allow any irrational arguments, particularly none derived from assertions about God.

6. Can science make probability statements about God's existence?

The answer is: clearly no, because probability statements are assertions, and assertions about God are void.

7. Is God limited by the laws of nature or can he change or suspend them, if he so chooses, for example, to effect miracles?

The answer can now already be guessed without looking into the details of the question: All void assertions.

But let us take these questions as religious questions and look at the suggested answer: It is as if God were not limited by the laws of nature and could change or suspend them

and effect miracles. Does that make sense in that it may open a sight of the External? Rather not. The "laws of nature" are human mental constructs. We develop them from perceived regularities in the phenomena that we encounter. We learn to trust these laws but, actually, we do not have the least control over their perfection. If "a closed system cannot produce water from nothing" is a law, then "a closed system cannot produce water from nothing, except on March 23, 2004 in Washington Cathedral" is a law too, as is "a closed system cannot more frequently than in 1 of every 10^{20} cases produce water from nothing". We may or may not note the difference.

The implications are threefold:

- (1) To look for God around the laws of nature is bound to fail. In answering question 4. above, we have seen that we have to look "deeper". That humans are able to develop, have developed, and continue developing the worlds of science and, in particular, the laws of nature: that looks as if it were a gift of God, that is: a human existential.
- (2) If we encounter a phenomenon Y, and we do not have an intra-worldly cause X for it, for example a law "X causes Y", then it is not intelligent to substitute "God" for "X".
- (3) Miracles, if any, are facts, and the "laws" are human constructs derived from the observation of facts, and are valid as long as the facts support them. We cannot reject the world on grounds that it does not match some of the findings of science.

Within his arguments, Dawkins cites the following definition from "The Devil's Dictionary" by Ambrose Bierce: "*PRAY, v. To ask that the laws of the universe be annulled in behalf of a single petitioner confessedly unworthy.*" Bierce is right in so far as this is the template of the typical, void prayers to an Assertions-God. It does not need further discussion here.

We take, however, the opportunity to cite another definition from the same source: "*FAITH, n. Belief without evidence in what is told by one who speaks without knowledge, of things without parallel.*" Again Bierce appears to have in mind what we have diagnosed here as an irrational belief in an Assertions-God. But his definition turns out to even better match true religious faith. We are not twisting the sense of "things without parallel" if we interpret it as "entities without parallel", and this is an acceptable circumscription of the Absolute. "Without knowledge" is true in that we cannot have any factual knowledge of God. "Without evidence" is true as any evidence whatsoever of inner-worldly events or dynamics, including miracles, cannot be related to God. So, the definition actually says, that faith is belief in the Absolute, without the support of factual evidence and knowledge. – Atheists may inadvertently be religious.

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What is the lesson of the NOMA section review? Dawkins does not get far beyond asking questions, and certainly does not arrive at stable answers. The reason is that the questions are not rhetorical but existential, and that Dawkins misses to apply to them an existential view.

Not everybody may, for the first time, quickly and easily follow the existential derivations we have given above, but they demonstrate that, with a view to the

External, the seven greater issues of this section can be answered easily and consistently. –

We select two more paragraphs from this section for a short review.

Dawkins writes that "there are athletes who believe God helps them win". He suggests that it were absurd to believe in such type of exceptional intervention of God. – It need not be exceptional. First of all, there are no laws telling which athletes win. Secondly, we know of the recurring phenomenon, for example, that a notorious top goal getter in a soccer league, for no significant reasons and with no cure, fails for 6 or 8 weeks to get a single goal. Everybody with some knowledge about sports will accept that as a *given*. The soccer player recognizes that getting goals was given to him or her before, and not getting goals is given now. There is nothing absurd in the view, that *it is as if* God is the giver. Does not this view deserve more respect than the erroneous, alternative view that being the top goal getter were the merit of the athlete alone and fully under his or her control?

And then there is the proposition of Dawkins that "evolution really does provide an explanation for the existence of entities whose improbability would otherwise ... rule them out". – As we have several times in this book refuted the claim that God could be used as an explanation of whichever inner-worldly phenomena, including the complexity of life forms, we can criticize Dawkins' statement independent of the dispute with religious fundamentalists. Evolution cannot actually fulfil anything claimed in the statement. Other than Dawkins formulates, existence cannot be explained or ruled out. We encounter phenomena, and that is all that exists. We can act and next encounter, or not, what we expect as a result of the action, and nothing else can be effected regarding existence. All this includes, and is equally true for, mental phenomena.

Somewhere in this chain of reasoning, we come to acknowledge that we have theories, that is: structures of mental objects, that help us to synchronize with what we encounter, and to more successfully act through more reliable prediction. If a prediction fails, we have to check whether we have applied the theory properly and, if not, have to see whether we can improve or need to replace it.

Evolution is a theory. Theories depend on facts and not vice versa. It is the facts that decide the "existence" of a theory.

We do not encounter phenomena earlier than during our lifetime. So, for us, the preceding past is all theory. Which implies, for example, that it does not matter for us if the world was factually created in 1850. Let us hypothesize a theory which says, the world started in 1850, then appearing, and from then on proceeding, exactly like our current theories would tell. To illustrate this a little: the Fossils would have started to exist in 1850 but, for us, appear to have existed before 1850; the constellation and dynamics of the universe would have started to exist in 1850 but look like having started in a big bang 14 billion years ago, etc. The phenomena that we encounter do not enable us to decide between this hypothetical theory and our current theories regarding

the development of the world and of life forms. Of course, the 1850 story is a practically useless extension of a proven system of theories, and that is sufficient reason to discard it. But the theoretical reservation remains: evolution may provide an explanation of prehistorical phenomena only if the world has not indeed been created lately in a state that mimics the preceding past. It is the facts that decide the existence of a theory, but our facts are limited to the present and to the past that we remember ourselves.

We have to note once more that Dawkins does not correctly position science, its claim, and its value. This can be supplemented by looking more deeply at the existential fundamentals of science.

The Great Prayer Experiment

The Neville Chamberlain school of evolutionists

Dawkins reports a statistically valid experiment to establish whether prayer for other people has an effect. All that could be said here in commenting this report has already been said above.

He also discusses whether science should work towards a kind of border agreement with "sensible" religion – a tactic which he classifies as appeasement – or whether science should continue attacking on cost of increasing the public impact of the fundamentalists. – Anyway, for all participants, being occupied in this sustained conflict about conceived Gods is a relatively safe method to avoid God proper. It is like both, all claiming and all denying the godness of the golden calf, are dancing around it.

Little green men

Dawkins points out that we might – according to our current knowledge: with a small but growing probability – detect *superhuman* beings elsewhere in the universe. If we received an intelligent signal from them over a distance of millions of light years that would imply the senders were greatly superior to us. We would tend to view them as Gods, but they would still not be Gods. Dawkins' argument is: "[because] they didn't start that way" but must be the product of an evolutionary process. "The laws of probability forbid all notions of their spontaneously appearing without simpler antecedents". In that they would be *superhuman* but not *supernatural*. –

Dawkins sketches a complicated, and difficult to defend, approach that may prove what is plausible anyway: We can encounter whichever signals or beings in the objective world and conceive whichever senders in our theories. They cannot be the Extra-Worldly, Absolute. And we must repeat: The laws of probability cannot forbid anything.

Dawkins then claims that a similar probability calculation for the existence of God is possible, in which one might include the corresponding probability increase over time, which follows from the growth of our knowledge. –

We have already explained that the results must be void. Nobody will be in a position to objectively watch any events in which God exists or does not exist, and hence there will be no possibility to verify or falsify any corresponding hypothetical probability.

CHAPTER 3 – Arguments for God's existence

A terminology matter first: We have so far encountered entities of three different modes of being. Objects in the world are "existing", that is, in line with the original meaning of the word "exist", they are "standing out" from the nothing / the chaos / the *tohu-bohu*. Then there are we humans, being in the world in a mode that is analogous to the position of player in a virtual reality, and that we call "Dasein". And then there is the extra-worldly, of which we cannot know the mode of being. We can speak of our "human existence" in the sense that all contents of our world are existing for us. But we cannot correctly speak of "God's existence". – Throughout his book, Dawkins does not correspondingly differentiate this terminology. We will continue to ignore this problem, too, because the mode of being can always be unambiguously inferred from the subject.

Also, we are not going to repeat again and again in the review of this chapter that an absolute God cannot be grasped with inner-worldly terms, and that therefore all possible arguments for or against God's being cannot be but void. The aim of this review is to expose questionable or deficient considerations, and the plenty of atheistic and scientific positions described in this chapter will provide rich material for our purpose. Still, the way Dawkins counters the pro-God-arguments is rather by discrediting and even ridiculing them than by terminally "killing" them. So, occasionally, we may give in to the temptation and recall attention to the "overkill" power of the Second Commandment.

Thomas Aquinas' "Proofs"

Three of these "proofs" use God as the terminator of an infinite regress: he is suggested to be

- (1) the first of ever prior movers,
- (2) the first of prior causes, and
- (3) the first – non-physical – being that created the physical things.

Dawkins counters that (a) such a hypothetical terminator need not be immune to a similar infinite regress, (b) would rather likely not be God, and (c) known regresses typically end automatically.

This means that Dawkins confines himself to – righteously – attack the conclusions, but – remarkably – leaves unchallenged the initial assumption in all three cases:

- (1) "Nothing moves without a prior mover."
- (2) "Nothing is caused by itself."
- (3) "There must have been a time when no physical things existed."

All three are false metatheory:

- (1) We encounter motion and only later construct a theory of dynamics.
- (2) We encounter something new and only later construct a theory of its causation.
- (3) We encounter something repeatedly and only later construct a theory of time.

Everything happens first before, and thus can happen without, our theories. Our theories are our constructs and cannot create anything at all, no prior movers, no causes, no entities that create physical things from nothing. Theories do not have any power on the facts that we encounter. Thomas Aquinas tries to stress the power of the science of his time to prove the existence of God, while that same power is fundamentally not even sufficient to *prove* a single fact (but, of course sufficient to credibly *predict* facts – even facts remote in space or time, that we cannot encounter ourselves).

Thomas Aquinas' fourth "proof" says, humans can, in each dimension, be good and bad, and the reference point is the ultimate good, and that is God. Of course, this is not a proof, but is a highly valuable existential telling: It is, as if the inner-worldly *dimensions* of Dasein – not arbitrary *properties* (Dawkins chooses smell for his response) but existentially built-in and therefore indefinable features of Dasein – extend between a good and a bad end, with the good end connected to the Absolute in such a way that, towards that end, it can be approximately seen as the Absolute of this dimension. We will expand on this in the third section of this Chapter, "The argument from beauty".

The fifth "proof" says, "things in the world, especially living things" look like designed, therefore there must be a designer, and that is God. In response, Dawkins claims that "evolution by natural selection produces an excellent simulacrum of design, mounting to prodigious heights of complexity and elegance", whence "it is no longer true to say that nothing that we know looks designed unless it is designed".

Really, who designs what? God cannot be related to the particular contents of anybody's worlds. He didn't and doesn't design. The most promising approach to an answer is to investigate what we ourselves, the humans, are designing. We are used to accept that we can explore and understand structures but we are not used to see that understanding is designing.

We hear the neighbour's dog. *We do not*: hear acoustic waves, analyse the pattern of frequencies, match them with a repertoire of acoustic patterns in our mental database, estimate the location of the source from the loudness and from the differences of the sensory input of our two ears etc., and from all this conclude that it must be a dog and specifically the dog of the neighbour. All these are concepts that we may call up and encounter in our mental world, but we don't usually call them up: we zero in encountering the neighbour's dog. And thus is our practical life. The other concepts are just theories of background structures of the world.

We can think of them, express them in speaking, writing, graphs, animations, but before that, we have to acquire them, either by conceiving them ourselves or by copying them from other humans through reading, learning, training, often with the help of expert humans, who are familiar with a particular domain of concepts. All such concepts are man-made and, obviously, we better speak of designs instead of concepts.

Designs we cannot encounter outside our mental world. We can outside our mental world encounter the dog, the neighbour, our ears or an acoustic wave – at least from a bass speaker –, but we cannot outside our mental world encounter an acoustic frequency, the sound processor in our head, as well as, for example, an atom, dark matter, a living dinosaur, Julius Caesar, gravitation, a relation between people, hell. Inside our mental world, as objects therein, we can encounter designs, no less real or objective than a dog is real and objective in our non-mental world.

Our reality consists of mental and non-mental worlds, both equally real. Human designs constitute the articulated phenomena of the mental world(s). Predictions derived from designs may match, or not match, phenomena in the non-mental worlds. Designs meant to predict something outside all worlds are fiction.

Scientists usually hold that the contents of their theories are reality, and not "just mental". Actually, theories are mental throughout and do not match anything else. Only the physical facts that guide the development of a theory and the physical set-up used to verify or falsify its predictions are non-mental.

The ontological argument and other *a priori* arguments

Dawkins refers to Anselm of Canterbury's version of this argument: Conceive God as the greatest possible being; if it would not exist it would not be the greatest; hence it must exist.

What does Dawkins offer as his response?

- A translation of the argument into infantile language;
- his aesthetic aversion against the idea that grand conclusions could follow from logomachist trickery;
- a critique of Bertrand Russell, that he did not apply the same caution over St. Anselm that he did or would have exercised towards Zeno's Paradox;
- his own "automatic, deep suspicion of any line of reasoning that reached such a significant conclusion without feeding a single piece of data from the real world";
- a report that the most definite refutations of the ontological argument are usually attributed to Hume and Kant;
- a question of Norman Malcolm asking, in which sense a house could be said to be better if it exists than if it does not;
- an ironic "proof" by Douglas Gasking following Anselm's logic, with the result that God does not exist;
- a false mathematical proof of the existence of God, by messing with some division by zero;
- a claim by Leonhard Euler that God existed because $(a+b^n)/n=x$, to which Diderot did not have an answer;
- another example of an "argument by blinding with science";
- six further absurd *a priori* "proofs" from a corresponding web site.

And now, Dawkins appears to believe, Anselm's proof and Euler's claim are dead. Not before anybody tells, what is *irrefutably* wrong with them. The Second Commandment would do.

The argument from beauty

Dawkins does not explicitly spell out this argument. It appears to go like this: Because there is beauty (everybody giving his or her ultimate example) there must be God.

Dawkins' objection is that great art is great, irrespective of the existence of God. "If there is a logical argument linking the existence of great art to God, it is not spelled out by its proponents". He also mentions, that the church has, in the past, sponsored great art and that, on the other hand, some great art would not have been created had the artist been commissioned by the church. Finally, he suspects that some people may be jealous of genius and tend to shift the merits of great artists over to God. –

First, there cannot be a *logical argument* linking something to God. Second, art is not the same as beauty. Art is not even the primary source of beauty, nature is.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and, therefore, nobody uses arguments regarding beauty. Dawkins is searching for arguments that he could address. In the end, there is nothing to defeat here and thus no victory.

There are phenomena in the world that cannot be formalized and not even informally defined. Beauty is of this type. We experience beauty and, while unable to explain it, never doubt it. Occasionally, we experience something like ultimate beauty such that our mouth stands open, time stands still, and we feel this is beyond the worldly experience of beauty, a touch of the Absolute. There is a continuum between extreme beauty and extreme ugliness, but in perceiving extreme beauty we may happen to find ourselves in or near a line of sight of the Absolute. Nothing of this kind is connected with the perception of extreme ugliness.

As we have said above: Beauty is a dimension of our being in the world. It is, as if one end of the dimension of beauty is linked to the Absolute, and that we could, by looking along this axis, get a glimpse of the Absolute. –

This is not a logical argument. It is an attempt to approximately point. "Listen to Mozart" may equally well or better point to the same experience. Such attempts may be deficient, people expected to understand them may not recognize a corresponding experience of their own, or they may not have had such an experience. But by means of logic and factual stringency, by thinking, nobody will be able to understand what is meant.

To come back to Dawkins' counter-argument, it turns out that really great art is that art which occasionally lets one get a glimpse of the Absolute.

The argument from personal "experience"

Dawkins classifies all visions of God, or of anything related to God, as illusions, and illustrates, why he thinks that way. The following is a summary of his considerations:

For normal people, visions often turn out to have natural explanations, and they are therefore careful not to take visions at face value. Claims of visions without natural explanations are predominantly due to some possibly limited mental malfunction, and occasionally motivated by some criminal purpose.

Illusions are common. Everybody knows optical illusions. The brain is good at producing illusions and particularly capable of constructing visions of faces and voices.

Dawkins refers to a collective vision in Fatima in 1917, where 70000 people saw the sun "tear itself from the heavens and come crashing down upon the multitude" – which nobody of the rest of mankind witnessed.

His final paragraph in this section reads:

"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 workings."

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Dawkins does not appear to consider the obvious mirror response: Don't expect the rest of us to take the word of an atheist in matters about God. We have already in the introduction started to discuss the "top misconception of an atheist" and will come back to it at the end of the review.

Altogether, Dawkins reviews various claims of *visions* of the divine and suggests that they are *always* subject to a self-deception. From this, he apparently derives for himself that people reporting a *personal experience* with God need not be taken seriously. This is, however, not conclusive. Obviously, Dawkins' discussion does not cover personal experiences other than subjective visions, but his verdict covers all such experiences.

We cannot but take at face value what we encounter in the world. Only by a subsequent mental quality assurance process, by a re-view, can we classify something that we have encountered as a "vision" as not corresponding to the objective world. A person may not have the mental material available to exercise the proper review, and let the vision "pass". The most common example is selective perception, as it leads one to fit everything into one's world. What else could be done with an experience for which there is no comparison and for which there are no words! Thus, even an apparently "stupid" report of a vision may be a symptom of a true experience of the Absolute.

We know that we all may be subject to erroneous conceptions. A police investigator may believe that every truth should be found out by appropriate investigative methods; a fireman may view every building as depending on nothing more than on fire safety installations and deficits; a gamer may view every new day as the potential day of his inevitable big win; for a scientist, everything waits to be explained by a theory. In the

end, we don't have an alternative to trust in what we conceive, with our checks and controls routinely applied, and to proceed on this base. That holds for atheists, too. Atheists are required to walk on water as everybody else.

All the visions that Dawkins mentions have an inner-worldly content and such content cannot have anything to do with God. Does this really leave no room for true experiences with God?

Let us recall here, what the quality of an experience of the Absolute could be, if it were possible at all. Facing the Absolute, there cannot be relevance to anything relative, for example, contents, questions, answers, escapes, alternatives. We could expect that a view of the Absolute would scale down our world to comparably nothing. The experience must be striking beyond description.

That "the sun came down on me" is a relatively good expression for such an experience that blinds out the world. J.D. Salinger has it too, in his short story "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period". Compare that to meditation – an exercise available to everybody – in which one can make "the world (including all thoughts) disappear" to the extent that rather nothing articulate is encountered any more. But "something" still remains, the Absolute, or Self. In meditation, this stage is sometimes called "the great light".

What could be the lasting effect on the person after such an experience? First of all, the person would *absolutely know* that this was the Absolute. During the experience, the world was nothing, as if just gone. The person could now recognize how terribly much is gone, when the world is gone, in other words: how much, beyond measure, the world is richer than we usually conceive it. The person would almost burst from the inner pressure to communicate the extraordinary experience, but would – because there aren't any – lack appropriate ideas and words, stammer and talk nonsense, and nobody would understand it or even like to listen.

Based on this consideration, one can tell the difference between people erroneously reporting a religious vision from people with a true religious experience by their stance towards the world. The latter people may know from the experience how absolutely rich and good the world is. One can rather not tell the difference by the measure of stupidity of the visions.

The argument from scripture

Dawkins' argument is: The Bible cannot in general be regarded as a reliable record of what actually happened in history, and therefore the Bible cannot be considered as evidence for any kind of deity.

What an amazing argument! Would Dawkins consider the Bible as evidence for some kind of deity if it were historically true? How could the existence of God depend on history? Why not on geophysics? Or on child psychology? Or on whichever science for which the Bible cannot be relied upon? What kind of God would that be!

Could the knowledge of Latin language be sufficient to understand a medieval, scientific article on astronomy or medicine? We all know that translations from one language into another language cannot succeed word-by-word. One has to know the domain of interest and its specific formulations in the target language. For the medieval article, would not sufficient knowledge in astronomy or medicine be helpful or even required, and might it not enable the investigator to identify and correct errors in the medieval concepts?

If one does not know what can be said about God and what cannot, if one has no insight into one's own existential situation, how can one expect to understand the Bible? It must feel like trying to understand a foreign text by counting occurrences of letters and words.

Dawkins cites Jefferson "... when speaking of the New Testament, ... you should read all the histories of Christ, as well of those whom a council of ecclesiastics have decided for us, to be Pseudo-evangelists, as those they named Evangelists. Because the Pseudo-evangelists pretended to inspiration, as much as the others, and *you are to judge their pretensions by your own reason, and not by the reason of those ecclesiastics.*"

That is more universally true. At all times, the monotheist religious elites have established and maintained a monopolies of religious doctrine, and they all have erected systems of thinking, architecture, arts, commerce, power, that have nothing to do with, and even prevent any proper dealing with the question of, an absolute God. For those, who do not believe in these worldly structures, the challenge is *to judge on their own*. Jesus struggled with the rigidly formalized religious system of the Jews of his time, and confronted people with his insight, that everybody is like the son or daughter of God, that everybody can directly, without any religious system interfering, contact God and trust him like a father. Luther destroyed the ecclesiastics' monopoly of access to the Bible texts by translating them into the German language of average people.

Today, the systems of void religious teachings are firm as ever. We have to judge by our own reason, of course by science, but most important by *our Selves*. We are all humans and have an existence and know everything about it. We just do not look.

The argument from admired religious scientists

To continue the previous considerations, it is particularly the elites of organized religion and of science who do not look, because they believe they had all the competence required to judge. As they are not existentially challenged, they don't see a reason to look more intensely.

That there tend to be very few top scientists who are religious, is just a symptom of this situation.

Pascal's Wager

Blaise Pascal has argued that, as we do not know whether God exists or not, believing in God is the better tactic than not believing, given the possible outcomes of eternal bliss or eternal damnation. Dawkins points out that such tactical belief would be feigned belief, and asks why, in any case, believing should please God more than "kindness, or generosity, or humility? Or sincerity? What if God is a scientist who regards honest seeking after the truth the supreme virtue?"

All these attempts are on the level of assertions about God, and thus void. Still, one could imagine a scientist who would ask, whether science can indeed deliver the complete truth, and, as a result of his scientific scepticism, start honestly seeking for possible further truth.

Bayesian Arguments

This section deals with calculations of the probability of the existence of God, based on estimates of correlations with certain inner-worldly phenomena like "we have a sense of goodness".- We have in our review of Dawkins' section on NOMA above expressed that probability calculations of void assertions cannot render them less void.

Dawkins promises to do much better in the next Chapter using improbability calculations.

He also mentions the Theodicy argument here: God would not allow evil in the world; consequently, as there *is* evil in the world, he cannot exist. Dawkins points out that this is an argument only against a *good* God, and goodness is not part of the *definition* of the God hypothesis. –

There is a more fundamental question underlying Theodicy, that is: whether the world is good or evil, and by which criteria. That is an ultimate question. If the answer is "good", then why bother about evil. If the answer is "evil", then why do theologians like to live in it? If the answer is "neither good nor evil", then as in the other cases, the next question is: How do you know? Did you create one before?

CHAPTER 4 – Why there almost certainly is no God

Now, Dawkins makes the key point of the book.

The question is: What is the origin of the extremely improbable complexity that we find in today's life forms? To conceive God as the designer is not an answer, because that leads into an infinite regress: It raises the bigger question of the origin of such an even more extremely complex and improbable God, and in turn the question of the origin of this originator, etc. Evolution by natural selection, on the other hand explains with great ease that the extreme complexity results from an extremely high number of steps each of which has produced a small, not very improbable, gain in complexity, all starting from simple beginnings. Dawkins suggests that evolution by natural selection might be a useful model for new theories in other sciences, and there solve the problem of creation equally well. –

Dawkins undertakes a considerable effort to make this point clear, providing a number of examples and giving extended explanations that we need, however, not cover in our review. For our purpose, the best method to proceed is by first dealing with the key point above, and only then inspect the individual sections for remaining review items. Except the two sections on the anthropic principle, we skip all other individual sections as they broadly expand on what we have already covered in the preceding paragraphs and continue reporting of exchanges on the assertions level about the existence of God. –

Who designed the structures of life? The competing answers are, on the one hand: God, on the other hand: nobody, it just developed naturally in small steps.

Both answers are wrong in the factual sense, but jointly they are true in an existential sense. Looking at the foundations of our understanding and the philosophical fundamentals of science, we have to say, that *it is our Selves who designed and are designing the world, and hence the life forms.*

We are used to see ourselves residing in our bodies and there sense the objective *outside* world and act in it, while we see our thoughts and imaginations *inside*. This outside-inside structure is already a design of ours.

Most basically, we encounter phenomena and, from the beginning, understand them. Actually, if we did not understand them, there would not be any phenomena but just inarticulate noise. This kind of understanding is not by matching mental concepts with occurrences. Rather the phenomena are the concepts themselves. We shake hands with a person and this carries in it all the intertwined concepts of what shaking hands with whom and in which manner can mean and express in our environment.

We can spontaneously understand something new that we did not understand a moment before. Understanding is constructive, resulting in enhanced or new concepts.

Nobody else is involved in this process other than we ourselves, we are the designers of these concepts. The underlying fundamental capability is intelligence. Like beauty, it is indefinable and a dimension of our being in the world, rooted in the Absolute.

During our lifetime, the set of phenomena that we understand grows to an enormous number and complexity. We may have an inherited starting portfolio of phenomena that we understand, and we clearly have the ability and a drive to understand new phenomena ourselves, and to recognize and copy the understanding exposed by others. Looking back after a few decades, we are impressed by how big our repertoire of experience-based knowledge and capabilities, that is: our personal world, has grown over time from a small start.

An important acquired understanding is that of communication, as it enables us to take over much of the understanding from our parents and from other people around us. This provides us with access to the portfolios of understanding, that they have in turn taken over from their ancestors, and that altogether constitute the portfolio of understanding of our culture. And, finally, communication provides us with the commonality of understanding with others that constitutes objectivity.

All this is not limited to our outside world. Taken as phenomena, our thoughts and imaginations are no less real than our perceptions from the outside world. And we learn to understand and skilfully act upon them. We learn to associate outside world phenomena with inside world mental objects, we understand abstraction, and we learn to relate abstract mental objects. Here we are: understanding and designing theories and relating them to outside phenomena. When we analyze, we design a new substructure of a (previously designed) concept and try to match it or its implications with outside phenomena, that is, we add complexity.

In the outside world, we encounter a tree or a child, but not their subsystems, nor their highly complex life structures. These are designs, that is, mental objects, useful in theories. The question about an origin of the complexity of life is then just a routine question of how our theories have progressed and are currently progressing. In the case at hand, evolution by natural selection is a good approach towards such progress, as it matches the associated outside phenomena.

To put it differently: Both, creationists and scientists, have extremely complex theories of life structures, and those theories are *their* design and *their* responsibility. If, as a consequence, they run into unsolved questions then that is *their* "fault". Somebody might complain: "God, we have a giant complexity problem! Help!" But God, if any, might answer: "You have the fundamental ability to conceive complex worlds. Just go on."

To come back to the aspects of Dawkins' key point: It is well taken in that, for constructing theories about the outside world, infinite regress is no option, and evolution in small steps is a good option for explaining the origin of the high complexity of life forms.

The assumption that this complexity were not designed at all is false. It has been designed in small steps by generations of humans. The claim that God has designed it, is a void assertion.

The anthropic principle: planetary version

The anthropic principle: cosmological version

These two sections offer an argumentative trick to overcome the argument that too high an improbability of the *origin* of life from non-biological chemistry would again support the introduction of God as the originator of life.

The step from non-biological chemistry to the first forms of life is utterly improbable, much more than the occurrence of highly complex life thereafter. (The structure of the following argument is the same for a *universe* instead of a *planet*.) In order that life be possible on a planet, that planet must display many "life-friendly" properties as preconditions. It must offer liquid water and other required chemical substances, a specific, narrow band of temperatures over time, which is possible only on almost circular orbits within a certain range of distances from a single star, etc. The probability of planets with these properties is very low and life may actually be possible only on a few of them. On the other hand, the number of planets in our universe is quite high. In summary, the probability of life on some minority of planets need not be very low. Our planet is one of this minority, as we have life on it. This shows: life is indeed possible, and no God is required in this argument to explain the origin of life.

Dawkins writes that this is "a rational design-free explanation for the fact that we find ourselves in a situation propitious to our existence". But it does not solve the original problem to explain how life could start and remain on earth. The missing link is the final step to the first occurrence of life. The "situation propitious to our existence" may not be a sufficient condition to bring about life, something yet unknown may be required in addition. One cannot fill that gap by declaring: As we actually do have life, we can be sure there must be something to fill the gap anyway. We could equally well say: We do have life; therefore we can be sure that there must be a theory of its origin; no need to worry about the theory any further; no God required instead.

For an explanation of the origin of life, there is no alternative to spelling out a complete theory.

Dawkins' use of the trick celebrates the fine-tuned astro-physical parameters and the probability of their occurrence as if life on earth depended on them. The trick exposes the fallacy. We do have life on earth anyway. It does not depend on the quality of a theory or even on the existence of a theory. It is just the other way round: Astro-physical theories depend on life, because wouldn't they allow life on earth, they would obviously fail.

CHAPTER 5 – The roots of religion

The Darwinian imperative

Dawkins considers religion a "large phenomenon" that needs a "large theory" to explain it. So he undertakes to apply natural selection to it and to explain religion by its selective advantages, and – as he appears to imply – ends up with a good set of plausible explanations that would only have to be hardened to constitute a full and firm theory.

This he does still with his implicit, compound definition of "religion", comprising whichever religious teachings, forms, groupings, but not religion proper. Almost the first thing he does in this section is to confuse the unwritten definition by further including "tribe religion". This, as well as cults, may not qualify as religion but better be conceived as primitive psychological and sociological technology, quite far away from Dawkins' God hypothesis. If Dawkins, by rooting religion in "tribal religion" wants to suggest that, to a significant extent, religion is psychology, then we have here a case of putting some of the desired results into the definition.

Direct advantages of religion

Group selection

Religion as a by-product of something else

Psychologically primed for religion

Dawkins reviews various aspects that could contribute to a Darwinian explanation of religion. He has some findings in the latter two of these sections: The existence of religion could be a side effect of another human phenomenon that constitutes an advantage for natural selection, for example, childhood obedience. Or it could be a by-product of other normal, psychological dispositions, among others: body-spirit dualism, teleologism, the ability to fall in love. He concludes that the attributes of religion "are well fitted [to such established dispositions] to helping religion's own survival ... in the stew of human culture".

The question arises: If religion could probably be explained by natural selection such that its evolutionary benefits become clear, then: why fight it in a book like Dawkins'?

Dawkins adds that religious leaders are skilled in correspondingly shaping the attributes of their religion, and in this context cites Luther who said, that reason is the greatest enemy of faith. Of course, Dawkins takes the side of reason. – Whenever one reads a text that deals with religion one will find sentences or phrases therein that, inadvertently, open a certain view of the Absolute – like we have seen in Bierce's definition of "faith". Be it some pro-religious nonsense or an anti-religious expression,

there are always two opposite options: to emphasize its rational characteristic, or to push the opposite and try to lay open a hidden existential meaning.

Dawkins regularly does the former. At the end of the "by-product" section, he offers eight statements from a hypothetical mainstream Christian theologian for an anthropological study with a view to explain how people can believe such nonsense. In order to expose their irrationality, Dawkins further reshapes the original contents that have already been distorted previously in the evolution of formal religion. –Luther is right: pushing for rationalization closes all doors to an understanding of such contents. In case, the anthropologists were not the right people to explain, the following table gives an impression of the size of the semantic fault that has been produced here. It juxtaposes the eight statements and the existential topics that are insufficiently hidden therein – no preaching, just for judging yourself.

Dawkins' version

In the time of the ancestors, a man was born to a virgin mother with no biological father being involved.

The same fatherless man called out to a friend called Lazarus, who had been dead long enough to stink, and Lazarus promptly came back to life.

The fatherless man himself came alive after being dead and buried three days.

Forty days later, the fatherless man went up to the top of a hill and then disappeared bodily into the sky.

If you murmur privately in your head, the fatherless man and his 'father' (who is also himself) will hear your thoughts and may act upon them. He is simultaneously able to hear the thoughts of everybody else in the world.

Existential version

That man is ascribed to have spent his lifetime to tell us, that our – and his own – being-in-the-world is inherently such that *we all can take the stance of sons and daughters of a divine father* who coaches us to master our being in the world and grow our talents.

In case we fail in this, and everything is broken, and we feel that all life was gone from us, our being in the world is inherently such that we can get up, and go on, and grow from where we are.

"Sky" and "heaven" (below) signify the old concept of "external to the world". Our absolute component, that is our Authentic Self, cannot be affected by the end of our personal world.

The world is attractive, we dwell in it and may lose ourselves in it, that is, forget about our existential situation. It requires an extra effort to focus on the Absolute again and return control to our Authentic Self. That is the same for all people.

If you do something bad, or something good, the same fatherless man sees all, even if nobody else does. You may be rewarded or punished accordingly, including after your death.

The fatherless man's virgin mother never died but 'ascended' bodily into heaven.

Bread and wine, if blessed by a priest (who must have testicles), 'become' the body and blood of the fatherless man.

We know that the "law" of our existence is to expand life and multiply talents, ours and those of other people. In missing opportunities for this, or depriving, or even preventing life we are guilty. We are supposed to recognize that guilt (in order that it cannot secretly control us), but nevertheless to go on progressing life.

Every mother has an absolute Authentic Self as everybody else, and, beyond that, can herself take the stance of a mother of children of a divine father in the sense of the interpretation of the first statement above.

That man asked everybody to follow him, that is, to copy his stance towards existence. When I do this, I think that the body and blood are mine, I am going to be crucified, there are those soldiers who torture me, my group is gone, the few remaining with me cannot help me and are suffering, I am lost. – Next I think, that something still carries me in this situation.

What to judge on our own here? For example, whether that man was reasonable, or what the religious elites have over two millennia made of his insights. Or whether it is reasonable to fight all religion, which means to fight existential religion on grounds that are lying in formalized religion. Or whether these are scientific questions.

Tread softly, because you tread on my memes

Before proceeding into the details of this section, let us just look at the starting sentence: "This chapter began with the observation that, because Darwinian natural selection abhors waste, any ubiquitous feature of a species – such as religion – must have conferred some advantage or it wouldn't have survived." –

At the beginning of the chapter, we took phrases like "the Darwinian imperative" as routine short-cut language of something reasonable: that it may be worthwhile to investigate whether and where religion lends itself to Darwinian explanations. But such language has the property to, simply by repetition and copying, become autonomous and self-normalizing, and to lose the background information that it was originally

alluding to. As Dawkins likes to interpret nonsense in a word-by-word manner he might like the following interpretation of his sentence: Darwinian theory has a strong emotion against waste and, because of that emotion, forces religion to have an advantage.

Theory is so powerful that reality has to obey to it!

Back to other than scientific memes: Dawkins suggests that memes, rather than genes, could be the replicators that are the key subjects of the selection processes for religion. He therefore describes the concept of memes, and discusses copying as their reproduction mechanism, self-normalization as their stabilizing feature, the ability to occupy human communication and mental storage as their survival criteria, and memplexes as cartels of mutually compatible memes that support the copying of the members.

Dawkins proposes that, in the early, not yet organized, stages of the memetic evolution of religion, simple memes survive by virtue of their universal appeal to human psychology, which would indicate an overlap of the meme theory and the psychological by-product-theory of religion. The later evolution of organized religion might be explained as the evolution of memplexes, with more or less intelligent interference by the members of the organizations. –

This is a metatheory. But it is not because religion exists and spreads by meme- and memplex- evolution that we have a problem with it. The problem is in the contents of the memes and the fact that they are being copied in spite of not being understood.

Cargo cults

Such cults started to exist on some Pacific islands as late as the nineteenth century, and some even after the Second World War. So their origin and evolution were well observed and well documented. The islanders watched the occupiers never producing any goods, but receiving all goods by cargo. Thereof they derived the fundamental meme of their cults that the cargo goods are of supernatural origin, etc.

Dawkins claims that these cults can be understood as being at the roots of religion, and proposes four lessons about the origin of religions generally, to be derived from the phenomena observed: the amazing speed of the upspringing of a cult, the speed with which the origination process covers its tracks, the independence of the emergence of similar cults on different islands which suggests a common psychological background, the similarity of the cults to older religions. Many older religions may then have been started in the same way by some charismatic leaders, and a few have survived. Even today, following the deaths of some charismatic figures, we can observe the rapid rise of cults and their memetic evolution.

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Where are we at the end of this section, what have we achieved? Dawkins has added psychology and cults to his concept of religion and suggests that religion evolved from them in a way that could be described by natural selection of memes.

He does not explicitly say whether he believes that religion today is all or mostly psychology and cult or whether religion has separated from them in the past and is independent now. In the first case it would not make much sense to challenge contemporary religion on the base of the irrationality of its texts. In the second case, investigating the roots could not contribute at all to challenging contemporary religion.

Let us assume that contemporary religion is to a great extent psychology and cult. Dawkins appears to be confident that psychology and anthropology could in principle prove this, following the traces of memes and memplexes. Only then could he say that at least in this part of religion there is no God, because everything there is human mental mechanisms.

Dawkins does not pose the question, as to whether there is any further component of contemporary religion, other than the ones based on psychology and cult. Most likely there is.

Monotheistic religion has originally distanced itself from cults and thereby psychology, and replaced it by a fundamental philosophy of "being". That happened twice, at the origin of the Old Testament and at the origin of the New Testament. One may possibly show with a memetheoretic approach that, in both cases the "being"-memes were outperformed and overgrown towards invisibility by older religious memes that, later in this process, grew in scope and sophistication. Only a few "being"-memes survived unchanged but poorly copying – like, for example, in Genesis, in the book Job and in some apparently authentic concepts from Jesus. The rest survived in the changes they have effected in the competing memes – for example, "every human is a son or daughter of God" > "Jesus was the only son of God" > "with his divine power, Jesus defeated death and brought salvation to mankind ". One may even say, the "being"-memes survived under the camouflage provided by the competing memes.

This "philosophy of being" component of religion has clearly escaped Dawkins, rather obviously because there is no science of "being" (and cannot be), and because the last thing that organized monotheistic religion would concede is that they had disfigured the teachings of Moses and Jesus. Dawkins may defeat the Assertionists but, in order to exclude the existence of a God, he must defeat this pervasive component of religion.

CHAPTER 6 – The roots of morality: why are we good?

Dawkins offers in this chapter a number of reasons, why "goodness" could be advantageous in evolution, and that indeed many animal species display good behaviour. He deals with moral dilemmas and shows that humans worldwide have common opinions of what is moral in example situations. Finally he discusses, and shows the failure of, various approaches to justify or merely define morality. This includes philosophical ethics, and religious and patriotic absolutism.

This chapter is not conclusive. Basically, it pulls apart to some extent the claim that morale has any significant correlation with God. "Even if it were true that we need God to be moral, it would ... not make God's existence more likely, merely more desirable ...". –

We have previously said that no inner-worldly behaviour can be put in relation to the Absolute. Absolute morality is impossible. Morality must be developed inner-worldly. Since our worlds are ever growing, there will always be new ethical questions. This requires that we use our best competence and understanding to answer them. This is difficult enough because the questions usually arise from incomplete knowledge and take the form of dilemmas. There is usually no way to simply derive the answers from facts.

Contributions of pretended "absolute" morality from religion must be kept out of this sensitive process, because they cannot help but inevitably load the process with unrelated extra problems.

Anyway, the enormous variability of situations prevents general codification of morality. We know this from codified law. No finite set of statements will ever do justice to all situations intended to cover. Let us resume the example of the handshake: How much text would be required to describe under which conditions it is moral to shake hands with whom in which way? Note, such description would have to span a plenty of situations, from not shaking hands with my mother to, in an official visit of statesmen, coolly shaking hands with a murderer; from shaking or not shaking a friend's hand full of wet paint to shaking or not shaking the deformed little hand of a person whose mother had taken thalidomide during pregnancy.

Attempts to do good by improving the world on the base of a codification of diagnostics and rules notoriously fail, be they communism, free market, or religious ethics. Fortunately, by the same reason, the implementation of evil intents may not always result in evil.

What does morality have to do with God? The resistance of morality to codification indicates that it has an extra-worldly root. We have mentioned this before: Our existence comprises the knowledge of what is good and what is bad. Good is to grow life, ours and that of other people – bad is failing to grow life, to prevent growth, or to

cut back or destroy life. Being good in the world is no less difficult than understanding it.

CHAPTER 7 – The 'Good' book and the changing moral Zeitgeist

The Old Testament

Dawkins says, there are two ways in which scripture might be a source of morals: by direct instruction like, for example, through the Ten Commandments, or by God or some other biblical character serving as role models. He then presents a number of legends from the Old Testament so cruel that, taken factually or not, they prove that God as well as all the famous forefathers in the Old Testament are highly immoral and totally disqualified to serve as role models, and that the Old Testament is an ethical disaster.

This review then has to deal with three topics here: the positioning of the Ten Commandments as a set of moral rules, the application of moral criteria to God, the morality of the Old Testament and its central figures.

Dawkins classifies the Ten Commandments as moral rules. But taken as such, they are ambiguous and incomplete, and reveal God as the author of a low quality law, who has installed a threat of incalculable punishment because he can't apparently ensure that his law be obeyed. That cannot have been the intention of the real, human author of the Ten Commandments. Even the "literal" meaning of a text like the Ten Commandments cannot be gained by adding up some semantics of the words and then to stop thinking. A reasonable expectation is that a set of laws from an absolute God would be absolute, with its absolute effects pre-installed, and inescapable for us humans. We would not have a choice, in particular, no room for any moral choice. The criterion of absoluteness exposes the moral interpretation of the Ten Commandments as just false.

But how can we come to see the absolute, existential meaning the Ten Commandments? Not surprisingly, with the help of Jesus' recipe for "eternal" life: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." This is usually being understood as overriding the Ten Commandments with a new and better rule.

It is easy to note that Jesus' sentence has the same structure as the Ten Commandments: The first part is about the relation of humans to God, the second part about the relation of humans to other humans. "Eternal" clearly points to the Absolute. Eternity is not a human concept as time is, not even "infinite" time. To the contrary, it is "outside" time, detached from time, absolute. "Love God" cannot but mean: positively link to the Extra-worldly. This is an existential link, and the same is meant in the second part "love your neighbour": positively link to the extra-worldly self of your fellow humans.

The first three of the Ten Commandments deal – in more detail than the first part of Jesus' word – with linking to God: (1) There is just one absolute God, (2) to link properly to something absolute cannot work if one just tries to grasp it in human, inner-worldly terms, (3) while being occupied in the world do not forget to regularly refresh the link, because it tends to fade away.

The second part of the Ten Commandments forbids a number of actions, that are evil for oneself and for the fellow humans. In short, it says: do not delete or impair life of humans. Jesus' word is more general and more comprehensive here: we are to love, that is, existentially link to, our fellow humans. He expands on the consequences elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount, saying that not impairing or deleting life – for example, just tolerating and leaving the fellow humans alone – is not enough: we are in the world to progress life.

This ends our short excursion into the existential contents of the Ten Commandments and of Jesus' revision. It shows that both, Jesus and the author of the Ten Commandments knew much more about our existence than we use to know today. We do not even recognize biblical descriptions of the fundamentals of our existence. And even with contemporary humanism and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we are still behind what mankind had found out millennia ago about the disposition of our being.

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In pursuit of the second option, God as a role model, Dawkins tries to prove that God as presented by the Old Testament is demonstrably immoral on grounds of

- drowning many people and animals in *the deluge*,
- turning Lot's wife into a pillar of salt for the minor offence of looking back,
- ordering Abraham to kill his son and, at least, thereby inflicting a traumatic experience on the child,
- on other occasions, ordering a number of ethnic cleansings, ordering to hang all people who had sacrificed to Baal, or ordering that a man be stoned for collecting sticks on the forbidden day.

By the same reasoning, any harm that occurs in the world could be used to prove God as immoral. What if that is beside the point, because people of Old Testament times had considered God as *always right* and, other than we, never would have thought of discussing God's immorality – like we do not discuss the immorality of fate, nor expect that fate be a role model? Clearly, an absolute, extra-worldly God cannot be measured in human, inner-worldly dimensions.

It is not clear, on which base Dawkins is discussing, or test-discussing, God as a role model and God as subject to moral criteria. Neither the claim, that the bible is factually true, nor the hypothetical definition that God would be superhuman and supernatural, imply that God can or must be discussed in such a way.

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As the third option to extract moral lessons from the Old Testament Dawkins investigates a few famous figures therein: Lot offered his daughters for raping, later his daughters raped him after making him drunken; Abraham gave his wife twice into royal harems; determined to sacrifice his son, he was only stopped in the last minute, still having inflicted a traumatic experience on the child; military leader Jephthah burnt his daughter; in the golden calf legend, Moses has had 3000 people killed; Joshua rooted out all of Jericho, buildings, people, and animals.

The list is impressive, and some of the facts looking immoral on first sight may remain immoral after scrutinizing all relevant details. Dawkins – like his opponents who want to take the biblical texts factually – does not consider it necessary to take into account as facts the political, social, and knowledge context of the Old Testament and the personal situations of the people involved. This is comparable to a European judging an American a fool – or superior – because of his wishing a good morning in the afternoon.

The key persons acted immoral? – Yes, by the standards that we have today in a minority of the societies on earth, enjoying the results of two and a half millennia of moral developments, in a situation of wealth that shields us from being existentially challenged, and without looking closer.

How big was the pressure of the mob on Lot? What can later in life be expected from girls that have been traumatized early in their life because they were raped, and offered by their father for rape? What can be expected from the mother other than being fixated to immobility by looking back on the traumatic experience? What is the relatively best individual moral position if all choices at hand are determined by a ruthless dictator, or by war?

An even more severe mistake is to judge the morality of a text by judging the morality of selected persons therein. Is a report about bloody times immoral because it reports immoral actions? May it not be highly moral if it reports the consequences both, for the offenders and the victims? Isn't it an important moral lesson that proven role models may fail, because the world has always corruptive forces on stock that are stronger than the morale of a person considered perfect? Isn't it morally enlightening to watch what happens to a people which considers itself selected, or which sets forth to settle in a new homeland?

Irrespective of whether one views the texts as factual or as constructed, such questions are relevant. Moral judgment is never easier than understanding the pertaining facts. That is a challenge given the age and the sketchy and summary style of the Old Testament. Taking this into account, one can, even from the limited evidence presented by Dawkins, still conclude that the Old Testament must be an abundant source of precious moral lessons.

Is the New Testament any better?

After a few remarks on the relative moral progress showing up in the teachings of Jesus, Dawkins concentrates on two important features of Christology as developed after Jesus' death in order to connect to the faith of the Jews: inherited sin and vicarious atonement through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Accordingly, the original sin has been committed by Adam and Eve in eating the forbidden fruit, and from thereon it has been inherited to all mankind. Then God came down to earth in person of his own son, Jesus, and his sacrifice achieved atonement for the inherited and all other sins of all men of all times, if they only believed in him.

Dawkins classifies the teaching of inherited sin as "vicious, sado-masochistic and repellent", and he brings to the point the absurdity of the idea of atonement: "in order to impress [God, that is,] himself, Jesus had himself tortured and executed, in vicarious punishment for a symbolic sin by a non-existent individual?"

Dawkins is right, but neither of the two concepts – inherited sin and vicarious atonement – tells which actions and inactions are moral or immoral in the world. Of course, it is immoral to implant into children and mentally weak people the idea that they are unworthy from the beginning because they are inherited sinners.

But again, as with the previous section, Dawkins is satisfied with having disqualified the text using the least circumspective interpretation available. Better than to show that an interpretation is stupid is to show how a reasonable interpretation may look like.

Inherited sin: After eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve know good from bad. Growing life is good, and failing to grow or diminishing or destroying life is bad. And Adam and Eve are thrown out of paradise. That is just our existential situation. We are "thrown" into a world far from paradise and from God. The theological definition of "sin" is "distance from God". "Inherited sin" then is being separate from the External, and that is just a fundamental property of being in the world. Of course, there cannot be a punishment for it. It is just that, if one never manages to get into a line of sight on the Absolute, then access to beatitude remains blocked, because beatitude requires that one sees that Dasein is absolutely good.

Redemption: There may be bad deeds or inactions in the world, but their consequences materialize in the world. By the Second Commandment, there can neither be an extra-worldly bookkeeping system for inner-worldly, human behaviour nor a however graceful mechanism to convert an inner-worldly sacrifice into the deletions of entries in such a system. So, there is no atonement. Guilt (this term preferable to "sin" here) is just simply forgiven. The existential goal is to grow life, and not to wallow in guilt. If we do not over-compensate the consequences of our bad deeds in the world, then we fail that goal again. If we do not review our guilt in order to learn to better enhance life, then we will fail that goal in the same manner next time. If we are subject to the guilt of others and cannot forgive, then that will, for a long period, govern us and derive our time and energy from the said goal.

Jesus brought redemption by, among others, bringing this view to people.

One may not follow these considerations. One may not see what they want to point to. They are not intellectually challenging, the challenge is rather to get rid of all we encounter, know, and think in our world and then look what remains; to get a view of our fundamental, existential situation. But it should have become clear that this is pure philosophy and matches and explains, like nothing else, some irritatingly distorted tellings from the bible.

We note: Dawkins demonstrates, that there are inadequate interpretations of the bible. But that cannot provide sufficient reason to disqualify and discard it.

To close the review of this section: Soon after Jesus' death, both, the valid existential idea of original sin, and the equally valid existential idea of redemption have been replaced by thought-constructs in order to match the concepts of then contemporary Jewish religion and thus enable the Jews to convert. "Sin" was replaced by the then contemporary concept of immorality, and "redemption" became a complicated atonement structure of extra-worldly and inner-worldly elements, hence void. All religious value of the original ideas was spoiled. The moral lesson of this is to recognize what happens to true religion when people try to spread it in the world using inner-worldly power tactics.

Love thy neighbour

The world is full of out-group hostility extending from local rivalry up to war and genocide. In-group morality is the key supporting concept, and it is mostly provided by religion. Obviously, the bible is full of all this, including extreme cruelties allegedly mandated by God. If there has been any progress since, be it in form of larger in-groups or lower aggression, it has been achieved against religion.

Dawkins concludes that the divisiveness of religion "would be enough to make it a significant force for evil in the world". He even cites Rushdie: "The problem's name is God."

No, the problem's name is Assertions-Gods.

Religiously motivated or labelled out-group-hostility is a high price that mankind pays for avoiding the direct, individual view of God. Otherwise people would see that God is absolute and therefore cannot be put in relation to anything, particularly not to morals or hostility. And they would see that the in-group includes all beings rooted in the Absolute, certainly all mankind.

Morals cannot be "religious" or "God-given". They are man-made and to be judged by their effects, not their intentions. Pushing morals in well-meant efforts, like any other attempt to "improve" the world, is bound to produce evil in excess.

The moral *Zeitgeist*

Dawkins illustrates how the *Zeitgeist* moves, including the common understanding of what is morally acceptable. As examples, he touches female suffrage and expands on racist discrimination. His point is that the progress of *Zeitgeist* – conceding local and temporal setbacks – is an observable fact, as "it moves in parallel, in a broad front, throughout the educated world", and that this progress is not driven by religion – and certainly not by scripture".

He stresses the last point further by writing that "the *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." Remembering that, in this book, Dawkins effectively fights the Assertions-Gods, we have to check this with respect to God proper.

Dawkins substantiates his extensive proposition by citing a set of "New Ten Commandments" and proposing a few personal extensions of his own. It is a fair and agreeable "sort of list that every ordinary, decent person today would come up with."

But, we have already at the beginning of Chapter 6 mentioned the problem to do justice, with finite texts, to the enormous variation of situations in life. This holds for any set of moral rules, including old Ten Commandments and "New Ten Commandments". They are never helpful in dilemmas, and dilemmas happen.

The only thing that really helps is stance. Stance provides guidance in incalculable and unpredictable situations. If you want to impress a meeting, take the right stance beforehand; they will recognize it, and you will know what to say throughout. Where can we get the right stance for our life? Partially through the lessons that life is teaching us – and this is true for everybody, and altogether can progress the *Zeitgeist*. I cannot wait decades and centuries? The only other chance is to try to get a view of the Absolute. In proportion to the intensity of the view, the personal stance towards the world gets optimally ad-justed.

What about Hitler and Stalin? Weren't they atheists?

Dawkins points out that there is not the smallest evidence that atheism systematically influences people to do bad things. Hitler and Stalin have more or less been atheists but, irrespective of that, did not do evil in the name of atheism. No war in history has been fought in the name of atheism.

Note that in Dawkins' understanding, "God" is the one presented in the official teachings of the monotheistic religious organizations, that is, an Assertions-God. All evils committed, and wars fought, in the name of these teachings are on account of an Assertions-God, and therefore truly God-less or anti-God.

CHAPTER 8 – What's wrong with religion? Why be so hostile?

Dawkins precedes this chapter with a text from George Carlin which is worth copying here:

Religion has actually convinced people that there's an invisible man – living in the sky – who watches everything you do, every minute of every day. And the invisible man has a special list of ten things he does not want you to do. And if you do any of these ten things, he has a special place, full of fire and smoke and burning and torture and anguish, where he will send you to live and suffer and burn and choke and scream and cry forever and ever 'til the end of time . . . But he loves you!

This is a fair summary of a current religious teaching, and Dawkins wants, among others, to expose that it is totally unreasonable. Still, it remains amazing that he does not do the minor step ahead to mention, and apparently does not recognize, that it cannot really be God, who is taught in such an unreasonable way, that somebody teaching like this might be incompetent about God, and that therefore to prove such teaching wrong may not achieve anything important.

In the individual sections of this chapter, Dawkins reports some of the most serious contemporary atrocities produced by religion (Dawkins' term). He notices that, in all cases, and contrary to most expectations, people who commit crimes in the name of religion do actually believe what they say they believe. He proposes that this is not only a matter of extremism, because mainstream religion and religious leaders provide the contents and the educational preparation. To cut this flow of unquestioned, question-discouraging, harmful religiosity, society must stop automatic respect for religious faith, and teach children to question and think through their beliefs, that is, teach them a rational attitude towards religion.

For a start, let us put some model questions! What is Religion? What is religious? What is faith? How do they relate to the wide spectrum of religious teachings, theologies, and confessional organizations? Are they all the same, as Dawkins implies by discussing them without differentiated definitions?

What is the mental equipment needed for not letting faith go unquestioned and to "think through" beliefs? What are the suggested responses to which religious claims? There is no God? There is no true faith? Everything about religion is factual and hence false? Everything about religion is symbolic and hence does not matter? Reason, common sense, objectivity, and science constitute the common standard?

How to ensure that people get convinced? How to convince the many who, from "inside" themselves, believe in an extra-worldly God like Einstein's? What precisely to teach children, given that religion is in the world and encounters with it are inevitable?

How to answer all these questions with no more than critical knowledge about the symptoms of religion and without any positive knowledge to discriminate religious and pseudo-religious phenomena? Dawkins states: "... faith, lacking objective justification, doesn't have any demonstrable standard to pervert". How to know without having it dug out fully?

At this point, Dawkins' approach of defining religion by criticizing it, arrives at its limits. He does not have a positive alternative to fill the space that religion is occupying now. Science, in particular, cannot be this alternative, as it can't even prove that there is nothing outside its reach. The dinosaurs of irrational religion may be doomed to extinction but the big meteor is not in sight.

Dawkins cites the example of an old scientist whose long-held theory was proven false by a colleague and who publicly thanked this colleague: "My dear fellow, I wish to thank you. I have been wrong these fifteen years". Dawkins remarks: "No fundamentalist would ever say that."

How does this map to religion? Religion proper does not only have the Second Commandment to expose religious nonsense, but does have positive substance to replace Assertions-God-religion. Its approximately pointing speech would automatically be superseded by the use of – evolving – better pointing speech. Truly religious people would be more than grateful, if the errors of two thousand years were corrected at long last.

CHAPTER 9 – Childhood, abuse and the escape from religion

This chapter continues reporting religiously "justified" immorality, now concentrating on mistreatment and abuse of children. Especially, mental mistreatment in the form of premature, rigid religious imprinting may lock considerable potential for the later development of the child. He notes that common to mental and physical abuse of children is that both deny the true self of the child.

He is right and we can only emphasize, that an offence against the true Self of the child is an offence against the fundamental disposition of existence.

Dawkins does not mean to withhold from children all dealings with religious texts. He proposes to use the bible and other "holy books" as *text books*, because much valuable literature builds on them. This would render the scholars literate in religious texts while at the same time not indoctrinating them but teaching a healthy distance, from which they could start developing their own position versus religion. –

Still the gap exposed in the review of the previous chapter remains open and even gets wider: One could not leave the children alone with the biblical and other texts, without a concept for their understanding. What is the competence that the children should be given for making sense of the basic religious texts, and – now beyond that – of the display of faith in high literature? The competence to reject everything irrational would certainly not suffice.

What else would do?

Children understand existence better than adults, and they do not fear it. They know that their task is to grow together with the others, and they absolutely trust they can. The task of educators is to take serious the children's task to grow and expand life, and therefore to preserve the children's stance through all the attacks and failures of youth and to coach youth towards an equally confident, expansive, and cooperative adult stance, independent of the status which the adult may reach in life and society.

A God to fear is a great impediment on this way. Maintaining confidence over prolonged failure, and even over blows of fate, is impossible without an inexhaustible, that is, absolute source of motivation.

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Throughout the three previous chapters on the immorality of religion and its proponents, Dawkins does not explicitly spell out any effective countermeasures but confines himself to implicitly suggesting that people, who believe that one should not behave that badly, should therefore not follow religion, or better speak out against it.

This, actually, does not answer his question as to what is wrong with religion. Dawkins shows a selection of most severe symptoms and concludes that the patient better were dead. This won't happen for reasons given above.

It also does not progress Dawkins' claim that there be no God. If all religious organizations were gone, that would not touch the existence of an absolute, extra-worldly God.

When it comes to religion and children, Dawkins takes a stronger, more explicit position, and proposes to educate children to take an autonomous position versus religion. Unfortunately the implementation part of the proposal is very sketchy and does not look promising.

CHAPTER 10 – A much needed gap?

Here again a citation precedes the chapter, this time by Michael Shermer:

What can be more soul shaking than peering through a 100-inch telescope at a distant galaxy, holding a 100-million-year-old fossil or a 500,000-year-old stone tool in one's hand, standing before the immense chasm of space and time that is the Grand Canyon, or listening to a scientist who gazed upon the face of the universe's creation and did not blink? That is deep and sacred science.

The answer is: anything can. – We will come back on this.

Dawkins explains the title of the chapter as follows: "... could it be that God clutters up a gap that we'd better off filling with something else? Science, perhaps? Art? Human friendship? Humanism?". He claims that he has in earlier chapters dashed two of four aspirations of religion, namely "to explain our own existence and the nature of the universe in which we find ourselves" and "moral instruction"; and he announces to deal in this chapter with the remaining two aspirations: consolation and inspiration.

Binker

Some children have an imaginary friend, as a subject for company and to trust. Dawkins suggests that, due to the same psychological predisposition, God plays the role of the imaginary friend for adults. If God were to go, this would leave a corresponding gap.

After more than 90% of his book, Dawkins deviates from his implicit definition of God *as presented by religious organizations*. All of a sudden, he produces a definition of his own, that amounts to a psychological strawman God. No evidence is provided that this were a representative definition. If this God were to go, nobody might notice. Neither the God of the religious organizations nor God proper would be affected.

Consolation

Religion may console people. Dawkins first expands on the arguments that a psychological effect like consolation does not make religion true, and that a psychological need for God does not prove that God exists.

Using the dictionary definition of "consolation", that is, "the alleviation of sorrow or mental distress", Dawkins goes to further detail. He briefly mentions "direct physical [!] consolation" but concentrates on "consolation by discovery of a previously unappreciated fact, or a previously undiscovered way of looking at existing facts. A woman whose husband has been killed in war may be consoled by the discovery that she is pregnant by him, or that he died a hero." Dawkins immediately turns to more extensively cover the fear of death and views that may alleviate it. This culminates in

abandoning – in Bertrand Russells' words – "the cosy indoor warmth of traditional humanizing myths" and getting vigour from the fresh air of science.

Subsequently he compares the consoling powers of religion and science. For direct physical consolation, the comparison goes as follows: "... it is entirely plausible that the strong arms of God, even if they are purely imaginary, could console in just the same kind of way as the real arms of a friend, or a St Bernard dog with a brandy cask around its neck [could console a man stuck for the night on a bare mountain]. But of course, scientific medicine can also offer comfort – usually more effectively than brandy."

When comparing consolation by new views, Dawkins concedes that people caught up in terrible disasters, or fearing death, may derive consolation from religion, but he also notes that false beliefs may have the same effect. Again, the text quickly turns to questions around the fear of death, and

- notes that it is inconsistent with religious expectations of life after death,
- discusses dying in pain and regrets that he, other than an animal, would in this case not be allowed to have his life taken out under a general anaesthetic,
- cites a senior nurse in a home for old people, that it is the religious individuals who are most afraid of death,
- and spends two pages on purgatory and the concepts of abbreviating the time in it through money and prayers.

The implied conclusion is that God and religion do, at least, not help to overcome the fear of death. No gap here to be filled with something else.

This is all that Dawkins has to say about consolation: a few examples covered superficially, a discussion of the fear of death deflected into the discussion of the fear of dying. Of course this is to his discretion and may be the best he can do for his purposes, but it does not do justice to the significance of the matter.

As examples of matters that may be subject to consolation Dawkins offers: the discomfort of a man stuck for the night on a bare mountain, something that makes a child weep, the feeling of a woman whose husband died, the facing of losses in an earthquake, and fear of death. His examples of remedies other than religion are: "scientific medicine", and rationalization of the type: after death is like before birth.

Let us be very clear: All this means that, if somebody is in a situation which requires consolation, then there is a psychological problem to be treated. Your husband died? You lost your home in an earthquake? Get some psychological help and otherwise bear it. – Your favorite teddy bear fell into the river? A strong embrace and reassuring words will do. – You fear death? Just consider it rationally. –

Dawkins' analysis of consolation ends with this position.

Actually, humans need more effective consolation in case they do not know how to continue life. If a "world" of yours is broken down, if a significant part of your life is

suddenly rendered impossible – "dead" –, then existence is put into question, and the problem is nothing less than resurrection.

The question "live or not?" does not have a scientific answer, not even an inner-worldly answer, because the world, and science included, are part of the life that is in question.

There is, however, a religious answer (in the following, mind the implicit prefix "it is as if"):

Being is being-able-to-be. As long as we are alive we are able to make a next step. There remains "known world" in which we can live and starting from which we can still explore new world. Life may be severely restricted, but we *can* always start from where we are and grow until the end of our life, even grow "exponentially" in some directions.

Interestingly, when Dawkins accepts the dictionary definition of "consolation", that is, consolation as something purely psychological, he also accepts that non-mental, factual problems don't require anything but factual reactions, if only to be borne in case there is no solution. How much does it matter where we "start" from, why break down when the challenge is just a new start? We don't have a choice anyway. Let's put our heads in the fresh air of change and breathe its new vigour!

Can we, in the previous sentence, replace "change" by "science" as Dawkins has it? Yes, but science isn't the source of, but rather depends on, the very same well-motivated, open-minded, confidently curious stance that existentially constitutes ultimate consolation and resurrection.

Is there a scientific foundation of this stance? No, nothing *within* the world can define our stance *versus* the world.

If we let go our controls, then the internal "laws" of the world will take over, and we will be governed by causality and chance, driving us towards increased entropy. If, on the other hand, we believe we can take the fresh air attitude and can be sure that it is not merely an illusion routinely produced by our brains, then this requires that some instance of us must have a say in it and therefore be independent of the inner-worldly compulsions. It requires the free will of an extra-worldly Self.

If anything, then our Authentic Self is the instance that takes our stance towards the world. It can take a stance in which consolation is widely unneeded, and it can even take the stance that the world is good whatever we encounter in it. In the world, medical assisted suicide may look rational in certain situations. The Authentic Self would never do it, but set for the next step in life.

Dawkins may correctly propose to get vigour from the fresh air of science. But he does not see the primordial enabler behind it. Science isn't the originator of that fresh air. Actually science, like everything else we undertake, depends on the fundamental disposition of our Dasein to expand its world by designing refinements and extensions.

Inspiration

Dawkins does not say what he means by inspiration, and particularly not what he means by the spirit to be received and whereof. Given that his book is positioned against religion, and given his attention to possible illusions, this looks like a serious omission. As we now have seen on several occasions, Dawkins is just looking for followers of his thoughts, and does not intend a break-proof fundamental critique of religion. He demonstrates that he can win points against religion and thus tries to suggest he can win the match.

Apparently, he considers inspiring the thoughts he offers in this section.

One thought is that we people, who are alive for an extremely short time on a cosmic scale, are the lucky few winnings drawn among the vast number of blanks in the "combinatorial lottery of DNA". Our life is therefore most precious, and wasting a second of it could be seen "as a callous insult to those unborn trillions who will never even be offered life".

Dawkins conclusion is: "The atheist view is correspondingly life-affirming and life-enhancing, while at the same time never being tainted with self-delusion, wishful thinking, or the whingeing self-pity of those who feel that life owes them something."

Two preliminary considerations are needed to cover this.

(1) We are lucky because we might most likely not have been born? The natural scientists have themselves put the blanks into this lottery – it is *their* theory. A fertilized human egg may lead to a development beyond birth or the embryo may die before, probabilities can be calculated or estimated for both alternatives, and for a given egg the future chance can be predicted that it will lead to a successful birth. This may look like an inspiring theoretical result worthwhile to consider more than we use to. But it does not exactly match the existential situation in which every person finds herself. There is no alternative regarding my existence, I am alive and not dead. I can plan suicide, but *now I am*, inevitably. The probability is 1 in 1, absolute certainty. And we know we have the same certainty in every next moment until our life ends. It is absolute and unemotional.

(2) The certainty that there is a next moment for us, is the base of our ability to conceive that next moment, that is, to act. We know, we can influence the next moment, and we can more or less predict it, knowing the outcome of previous actions. Note by the way, that being in a situation, having a next moment, and having the capability to draft the next moment using experience by recalling actions, is the most fundamental, existential structure of *time*. We know that, by acting we add to our experience, and by practicing we explore situations to such an extent that we can safely live them and turn to explore new situations. This is inevitable, too. We cannot avoid the next moment and the experience of the then past action or inaction. In other words, we cannot avoid growing our experience and thereby enhancing life. –

In the last two paragraphs, we have done nothing but intensely inspecting our being-in-the-world while abstracting from all inner-worldly detail – and thus we have arrived at

Dawkins' atheist stance: life-affirming, life-enhancing, no ambiguity, no psychology, we owe growth to life.

Dawkins' rationale raises a number of logical and factual irritations: Luck is the occurrence of something improbable *and positive* – that life is improbable does not imply that life is positive. What is "wasting" life, given that everybody will get his or her lesson anyway, for being ambitious, or lazy, or good, or bad? What is the problem of insulting nobody? How could people have been lucky, life-affirming, and life-enhancing before science invented cosmic scales and DNA lotteries?

This is however not to be criticized. It just adds to the general characteristic of how Dawkins' presents inspirations: as approximately pointing text – using metaphors constructed from scientific terminology. As we have just demonstrated, his result is fundamentally religious. This is not surprising for somebody who wants (towards the end of a book) write something of culminating quality. –

Dawkins continues by confessing that he himself is filling the gap that is left by the demise of God, with "a good dose of science". He describes science as "the honest and systematic endeavour to find out the truth about the real world. ... Each of us builds, inside our head, a model of the world in which we find ourselves. The minimal model of the world is the model our ancestors needed in order to survive in it. ... As an unexpected bonus [of evolution], our brains turn out to be powerful enough to accommodate a much richer world model ... Art and science are runaway manifestations of this bonus."

Apparently, Dawkins believes that his propositions are commonly understood. If we understand them in the way we usually understand natural scientists in this matter, then the "real world" is the same as the "world in which we find ourselves". It can, in principle, be fully covered by natural science, and one could easily use the term "universe" instead. In this sense, our head, and the brain in it, are part of the real world, and therein we build a model of the real world. The psyche is just a name for the physiological proceedings inside the brain.

Who builds a model and where? Dawkins says "each of us" does it, for example, I do it. But where is this "I" to be found in Dawkins' meta-science? Inside the real world? Inside the head? Inside the brain? Inside the psyche? Or separate from all of them? Can it be modelled at all?

The models are inside my head and there inside my brain? They model the real world and thus, possibly, my brain – including the models therein? So, I can have in my brain models, and models of models, and in turn models of models of models, ad inf.? And my brain may contain a true and full model of itself? –

That our understanding and intelligent action in the world were provided by mental models of the world has been the basic assumption of artificial intelligence projects. They tried it and did not deliver. The hypothesis has been dead for a few decades.

Actually, we don't build models of the world in which we find ourselves.

When, for example, we see a plane flying, we see a plane flying, and that's it. We may explain the perception by applying a lot of concepts, for example, theories of flight, aerodynamics, flight corridors, eye optics, visual brain circuitry, and many more. But we do not need, and therefore do not apply, any explanations in order to see the plane flying.

When driving a car, we steer the car through a sequence of traffic situations in such a way that we reach our target. We zero in the traffic situations, we control the car without delay, we know the way, or we know our options if we do not know the way. Of course, we have learnt and practiced this, but now our understanding of driving, traffic situations, and finding our way, is effortless and immediate. We encounter inner-worldly phenomena and understand and act upon them directly. We can, if required, explain most of what we are doing in this and why – to our children or to our learners if we are a driving instructor. But even then, we do not communicate in-depth models. After we have seen a picture of a traffic sign a few times, we are able to recognize it throughout our life, whether we encounter it on a metal sheet, on an electronic display, in a book, in miniature, in false colours, with its shape distorted, in unanticipated variations.

When talking with somebody, we don't have a model of his or her thinking and feeling, nor do we have a model of his or her grammar, articulation, body language. What we have instead is the capability to call up without delay what we have learnt in previous talking situations, from advice of parents, teachers, and friends, by watching others, possibly in some communication training, and all this enables us to get and stay in resonance with the situation and thus directly understand people with whom we are talking, and express ourselves to them.

For everyday examples like these, any full, concrete models remain still to be found and demonstrated. The expectation is that any attempt towards a formal description must turn out as overly complicated, impossible to be processed by the brain in real time, and therefore inadequate to explain our everyday perception and action in the world.

According to Dawkins, we have a "much richer world model" compared to the needs of the world models of our ancestors. Apparently that includes scientific world modelling at the high end.

Let us look closer. What are the objects of science modelling? For example, the evolution of the universe or the evolution of species? We have analyzed this already in the review of the section on Thomas Aquinas' "Proofs". The result was that all scientific theories and "models" are purely mental designs and do not model anything.

Does this mean, that there is not anything like an objective world? No, it means that the objective worlds basically remain, but the objects lose their unjustified autonomy. There are two meanings of "objective world". The first is a "world of objects": We encounter phenomena and understand them by immediately conceiving them, among others, as objects. The whole world is "objective" in this sense. But these objects are not existing independently and separate from us. They are, in a sense, what we are "throwing" back "against" the phenomena. – The second meaning is a "world shareable

by everybody": people have widely identical "concepts" of this partial world, and they are achieving this by associating concepts to symbols, for example to words or graphics, and communicating the symbols. Note, that this is not modelling. Symbols do not in any dependable way map their associated concepts. The word "car" does not carry any of the attributes of a car. – In both meanings, the objective world concept is not affected by the findings that human everyday intelligence does not use any mental models, or that "scientific modelling" fails to have anything modelled.

Summing up, we have to state that the idea of human and, specifically, scientific modelling of an independent, objective world is a delusion about an essential of human being. There is no such "outside" reality. Nevertheless, our method to grow our understanding is constructive: conceptually structuring the phenomena that we usually encounter, and designing "background structures" that help predict future phenomena, and help construct devices to produce desired phenomena. We are all the time designing.

And it happens by inspiration: at one moment, the construct is there, while it has not been in the preceding moment; it comes like out of nothing.

What remains of the scientific or artistic inspirations that Dawkins is praising as preferable to religion? Practically everything. What we are doing, the capabilities behind our doing, and the automatism by which our capabilities are permanently growing, are driven by inspiration anyway, independent of whether we describe them with verified or delusionary theories, and independent of the (sub-) worlds in which we are interested. Inspiration is universal. There is no exclusivity per se, of scientific or artistic inspiration. The potential exclusivity lies in great results.

Dawkins, using a seriously deficient rationale, tries to sell the fundamental human trait of inspiration as exclusively scientific (and artistic).

The mother of all burkas

Dawkins compares the small window of the electromagnetic spectrum that is open to our senses with the viewing slit in a burka: in proportion, the visible part of the electromagnetic spectrum would be a one-inch window in a giant burka of "miles and miles of black cloth". He claims that science widens the window to an extent that the "garment drops away almost completely, exposing our senses to airy and exhilarating freedom".

Later in this section, Dawkins mentions that the narrow slit in the range of our perceptions applies also to magnitudes and to improbabilities. We can calculate extremely low probabilities, and that "power to quantify the near impossible rather than just throw up our hands in despair – is another example of the liberating benefactions of science to the human spirit. ... Science flings open the narrow window through which we are accustomed to viewing the spectrum of possibilities." –

As we have seen in the review of the previous section, science is all about designs, with the condition that their factual predictions are verified. Scientific quantifications as

above are designed, and if science uses them to impress, then it is trying to impress with something that it has been free to design. It is just a question of which geometry and measure one is using. Where is the truth in measuring our overly rich visible world against linear scales and thus assigning almost all of their lengths to the mostly empty worlds of space, of molecules, or of the near impossible!

Based on just these few sketchy sizings, Dawkins freely claims that our perception is overly restricted. And his explanation is evolution, instead of arbitrary scales: "Our mental burka window is narrow because it didn't need to be any wider in order to assist our ancestors to survive."

And today? Why should a wider window be required for survival today? Because we do not understand the world anymore if science does not help? – The answer is: partially. Science is exploring new scientific worlds, and that adds to the complexity of the total world. But all of mankind is doing the same in all directions. For example, globalization of all human interactions, be it trade, travel, information exchange, environment pollution or religious dispute, carry an overwhelming many of unknowns to be mastered. And mankind is obviously, by the time, mastering them in spite of the view that its window of perception might be severely restricted.

Science is amidst of this, respected, but not in any way elevated. Scientists in general do not have an evolutionary advantage over other humans, based on genes that would equip them with a wider window of perception. Exploring new scientific worlds is designing, in this case: of mental object structures, and it uses the same fundamental human capabilities of understanding and action, as everybody else does in designing his or her favourite new worlds. The leading heads in any discipline could, with equal justification as Dawkins for science, say that their progress "flings open the narrow window through which we are accustomed to viewing" the world. Everybody, if not depressed, is doing the same on a personal scale.

At the end of his book, Dawkins asks whether we humans are bound in our understanding by the limitations of our brains. He takes the closing position that "... we may eventually discover that there are no limits." – Our brain is our mental construct, and the limitations of the brain are the limitations of that construct. The correct answer to his question is trivial: Our mode of being is understanding, understanding is designing, and there is no limit to designing.

This is a religious answer. Science cannot be explained by scientific means. Dawkins recognizes this by stepping outside science in this final section. But there he does not stand firmly. To present science as modelling is just a popular false belief, and admiring certain scientific results as such is no different from admiring visions, as both are mere consequences of freely designed theories. However, we only need to exercise some more thorough, still basic philosophy of human existence, and we see that science is well founded in our existential mandate to multiply our talents and to be fruitful, and multiply.

We could end here and turn to a summary of the review findings. But we have promised to come back to our proposition at the beginning of the Chapter 10 review,

that "anything" can be more soul-shaking than "deep, sacred science". And, after spoiling the excellence of the scientific window of perception we are almost obliged to show, what a *truly large* window of perception is like.

The following exercise really works with "anything". We could choose a piece of paper, an atomic power plant, a marriage, any of the examples that Dawkins is referring to. One single example will do, and we choose, as a low-profile example, a little piece of gravel on a promenade in a park. The exercise is just to get a view of what is behind the piece of gravel, and not to stop looking on and on.

The piece of gravel has been shovelled by a gardener upon the promenade, in order to repair the top layer. This gardener is an employee of a firm, and earns money for his work. The firm has bought the gravel from another firm, which has machines to grind stones, machines to load trucks with stones and gravel. The trucks use public roads, maintained by various local, district and federal governments.

Do not stop looking. What is behind the gardener? He has a family living in a flat in a large building that accommodates many other families. He loves his wife. Their daughter goes to school. On the weekend they are making excursions by car or by public transport to some recreation area, or they go to the movies. The shovel has been produced from wood and steel by another firm. The wood comes from a state forest, and the steel from a steel factory on a different continent. That factory processes ore and trash steel that is, among others, being transported by ships from overseas.

Actually we should not stop. But sooner or later, we must hold for a moment in order to see what is going on. With a few unspectacular moves we have reached out to three dozen complex concepts that are behind the presence of a piece of gravel on a promenade, and thus touched the worlds of employment and work, production, commerce, public infrastructure, government, buildings, family, education, traffic, worldwide logistics.

In that, we did not even look behind all the concepts mentioned in the first sentence, for example, garden, promenading, repair, layer. The same is true for all subsequent sentences, and there is no end to be seen of looking behind sentence after sentence and opening up further concepts. How much do we know and understand of each of these concepts! How much does an average person know about school or love, how much would that be in writing! Tens and hundreds of pages. And how many pages would it take to write down all that is currently known in the world just of these two concepts! How many pages would it take us to write down everything we know about the set of concepts we would reach if we continued our exercise for an hour!

Could we continue for a week? The gardener will eat and drink. He will occasionally be ill. His daughter is learning to play the piano. She is starting to look at the boys, and her mother starts to interfere. All this would be impossible without water and energy. Both are of strategic value politically ... – We have quickly added food, water, health, medicine, music, acoustics, puberty, mother-daughter-relations, energy, global politics. Would that now do for a week? Should we add media, crime, science? Is this enough evidence for a really large window of perception? Should we add sports, stamps,

architecture, history ...? – Let us definitely break off the exercise. It is by far too much for a human lifetime.

Here are some observations:

- (1) We do not only know more or less about these concepts but we are able to *live* them: we encounter them, we understand them in various contexts, we know what to expect from them in various circumstances, we know what do about them depending on our various purposes and depending on our judgement of the level of our related experiences and skills.
- (2) These concepts constitute our individual world. It did not start that large, it started from nothing. We acquired all the concepts, in a quite binary manner: Take any concept. Initially we did not know it could exist, but at some point of time, from one moment to the next, we directly understood it. We did not have to explore everything for the first time in mankind, but we copied from, and built on top of, worlds of ancestors and contemporaries, learnt from own experience and from books.
- (3) We did nothing for the availability of these worlds to us. We did not make other people, parks with promenades, monetary systems, firms, trucks, roads, governments, families, buildings, flats, love, schools, cinemas, continents, ships, pianos, hospitals, agriculture, telescopes, galaxies, fossils, the Grand Canyon, the sun, the ground beneath our feet. The world is occurring to us for free. It is rich beyond imagination, the mother of all presents. It is attractive and challenging us to widen the scope of what we can understand and live.

Science has its place in this. That which makes this world scenery in the real reality of our being possible, the rooting of our existence is also the rooting of science. Trying to get a view of this rooting is religion proper. In fighting religion, science would be fighting its own root.

REVIEW CONCLUSIONS

Clarity was not the goal

Dawkins does not provide his readers with the comfort of definitions of what he is writing about, be it religion, God, creation, theory, scientific law, inspiration. He spends some effort in formulating the God hypothesis, but later modifies it a few times and mentions (other) "versions" of it. Repeatedly, his use of the terms shows that his concepts are inconsistent or erroneous. He may believe, the readers enjoy the comfort of understanding the terms as *they* like. But, when supposed to follow a thought and adopt an opinion, it would be better to have no problem of finding out what is meant and how it fits with other existing views.

On the one hand it may be disappointing to find precision and thoroughness withheld by a prominent scientist. On the other hand, Dawkins' primary goal is not the promotion of a scientific result but the demonstration that one can and should speak out against religion, and he wants to win followers in that. Broad, rather than sharply discriminating, terms may better serve that purpose, as more people may feel Dawkins were representing their thoughts.

Still, by his disregard for terminology, Dawkins contributes to the cloudy concept soup cooked by both the pro-religious and the counter-religious. One might expect that a scientist would contribute clarity. If not, other people have to do it.

Religious systems hide religion proper

Dawkins, like most of us, does not know what religion is in the literal sense: linking – directly – to the extra-worldly root of our personal existence.

We do not see the obvious, that official religion fails to lead people into that linkage and instead is dwelling in its religious systems. Dawkins, as a scientist, recognizes that official religion is offering unconfirmed – and easily refuted – assertions about a system-god. But, like most of us, he does not see that this is not God proper.

Usually, we do not see the dynamics and the driving force of the religious system. Dawkins at least poses the question. But he does not advance beyond a hypothetical evolutionary origin and an inconclusive discussion of evolutionary benefits of religion. Even in the section on consolation, when dealing directly with the fear of death, he does not see that his personal position is essentially the position of religion proper, while the common – religious *and* atheist – demand and supply is not consolation but evasion and avoidance.

Dawkins wrongly believes that one can argumentatively, and even scientifically, hit religion as a whole, for example, discredit religious teachings with the expectation that the whole world of religion will break down. He completely fails to consider that the most essential feature of religion is the absolute component of human being and that it cannot belong to, nor be treated – and refuted – like, any inner-worldly system.

Dawkins does not share the common misconception that ethics were divine, but correctly attacks the corresponding inner-worldly part of the inner-worldly religious system. On the other hand, he accepts the Ten Commandments as moral rules, which they cannot be if they are meant as divine.

Misconceptions about God and existence

Avoiding the view of our existence puts us in the situation that rather nobody knows anything about it, nobody mentions it and, if anybody would know, then nobody would listen. Dealing critically with religion leads into domains where questions about existence regularly show up. In such case, one could be curious and tenaciously probe the matter until one has an answer. But Dawkins, as a scientist, is not that curious. He trivializes existential questions by taking them as matters of future science, and thus avoids the need to now answer these questions.

For example, Dawkins refers to the idea of "something [behind reality] that our mind cannot grasp". If people say "something", they mean *something*; if they say "grasp", they mean *grasp*; and if they say "cannot", they mean *cannot*. Not for Dawkins. He takes "cannot" as *cannot now*. He believes, nothing is forever ungraspable for science, from which follows that there is no need to probe the possibility of a view of *something that cannot – in principle – be grasped*.

But God, as the idea makes sense and people mean it, is not of this world, that is, God is extra-worldly and not graspable in the way we grasp the world. And the truly serious problem is to confront *this* idea. "Ungraspable": that means, one cannot make rational sentences about it. One cannot say it exists or does not exist, in the sense that inner-worldly phenomena "exist". One cannot exclude that it could be experienced in a different manner. – Note that the derivation in this paragraph is completely rational. The result constitutes the entry point to the investigation about the extra-worldly.

Questions come up immediately and inevitably: What does that mean: I exist? What are the fundamental features of my existence? Is there anything absolute in it? Do I find in my life an absolute or near-absolute experience? What was it like? How does it happen? What have other people reported in this regard? How can I discriminate a serious report from an illusionary one?

This entry point of the extra-worldly is not commonly known and used. Dawkins, like almost everybody else, misses it, misses all these questions and all possibly serious answers behind it. So he cannot judge, whether these questions do not possibly show the way towards material about God that is substantial and not based on delusions.

Dawkins claims to judge all belief in God and all religion. Actually, after pushing it aside on grounds of its "proven capacity to confuse", Dawkins does not cover the most important aspect of the belief in God.

The God, that Dawkins refuses to accept, is his design of an inner-worldly straw-man God that is possibly graspable, subject to science and moral judgment, and whose improbable creations exist only because they are ruled in by the laws of evolution. From a scientific point of view, this God does not probably exist, and visions of it most likely are fantasies. This design does not even properly target official religion which, in its teachings, treats God as partially graspable, but beyond its teachings considers it as ungraspable. –

By not tackling the questions above, Dawkins does not come to see and revise misconceptions of the dynamics of our existence. For centuries, everybody has been used to believe that mentally, in our psyche, we are modelling outside objects and structures. Dawkins stresses it to the extreme: reality, the totality of this outside, is the physical universe. This view does not stand the test. One key evidence, that should have raised Dawkins' doubts, is the failure of all modelling approaches in artificial intelligence, which has destroyed all greater expectations. –

A final, existential misconception – not explicitly found in Dawkins' book but possibly behind it and worth mentioning here – is the general view that atheists are not religious. Actually they are not forever. After all, they have an existence like everybody and thus, knowingly or not, are subject to the rules of their existence. We may learn these rules the hard way, when our existence becomes heavily challenged. We may learn them the soft way by trying to find them out beforehand. We may be surprised that the lesson is absolutely positive beyond imagination. This may also happen to Atheists.

Misconceptions about science

In his arguments, Dawkins formulates assumptions and propositions, which clearly indicate misconceptions about science, closely related to the view that the human mind was modelling reality. Dawkins believes and suggests

- that the predictive structures found by natural science, commonly referred to as laws of nature, were indeed *laws* in an objective outside reality;
- that these laws were producing the world, for example, that the laws of evolution have produced the living beings in our world;
- that these laws could be reduced to elementary physical laws, so that everything, including our psyche, is basically physical and part of the physical universe;
- that, by means of these laws, the world could be explained without referring to God;
- that, according to these laws, our life depended on life-friendly conditions, for example, on our planet and in our universe;

- that these structures are more soul-shaking than everything else and that therefore scientific inspiration is superior.

The key oversight in this is, that theoretical structures cannot be encountered other than mentally (you cannot encounter an electron on a tea spoon), and that therefore the idea of a space of real objects that could be mapped by theoretical structures and be governed by corresponding laws is nothing but a mental tool that helps make sense of formulae. A space like that simply does not exist.

In the review above, we have shown

- that the inside-outside view of reality is already a design of ours;
- that we encounter phenomena directly, be they physical or mental;
- that we understand by designing, and that there is no difference between our designs and reality;
- that the laws are our mental designs, the intended substance of which we never encounter;
- that these laws do not govern anything but rather depend on their predictive value regarding the phenomena we encounter.

Why isn't this common knowledge among scientists? – Possibly, because they consider the matter as settled. For centuries, they had their view passed on from generation to generation, trusting that it were well-founded. And science flourished on top of it.

But, then we have an interesting parallel: We have believers who confidently repeat the religious teachings of their ecclesiastics, not recognizing that these have lost the connection to the origin and don't understand the teachings themselves anymore. And we have scientists who, without double-checking, continue to adhere to the subject-object-model of understanding the world, that has been developed at a time when there were no verifiable theories with objects that no-one could see. What, actually, is the difference?

Being professionally blinkered is compatible even with superior inspiration.

Misconceptions about the approach

Dawkins wants to dash aspirations of religion and to this end attacks its credibility, in particular, the credibility of the belief in God. All this has been done before, and religion has easily survived it without formally changing its teachings. Dawkins tries harder, adding scientific authority, arguments from evolution theory, views that humanity in the world grew against religion and that the inspiration of science is greater than that of religion. And he brings into play his reach to a large audience.

But, primarily, this is dealing with the religious system that consists of doctrine, architecture, arts, commerce, power, etc. And this system is in place exactly for being dealt with, positively or negatively, in order to buffer us against the encounter with our

naked existence in front of the Absolute. Dawkins remains perfectly in this buffer zone, and never approaches the core of the system.

This is a consequence of the atheist's dilemma stated initially and repeated below. One cannot make an effect on the system of religion without being competent about God proper and religion proper. Only with that competence, the value proposition of the religious system becomes visible.

Religious leaders need not be impressed by new competitors who, like the atheists, claim that there was nothing to buffer against. What really impresses leaders of large religious systems is: competitive religious systems. In a world where rationality is rapidly spreading through globalization of economy, knowledge, and science, a win religion would be one that can present God in such a way that you would never fear him and never need to switch off your knowledge and reason in order to be able to trust him.

The Atheist's dilemma

In the introduction, we have claimed that the top misconception of atheists is that one could argue against God's existence without knowing anything about God. Atheists may be caught in the dilemma between defining something that they deny to exist, and negating the existence of something that they cannot define.

At the end of this review this should now have become obvious. We have seen that, when discussing God, religion or science, failing to address their existential character is a crucial omission.

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