The God Delusion: A Worldview Analysis
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Cornerstone Church of Lakewood Ranch - August 6, 2008

Richard Dawkins, Charles Simonyi Professor of the
Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University

“The God Delusion really marked the point where Dawkins
transformed from the professor holding the Charles Simonyi Chair for
the Public Understanding of Science to the celebrity fundamentalist atheist.”
- Carl Packman, “An Evangelical Atheist” in New Statesman, 8.5.08

The Selfish Gene, Oxford University Press, 1976
The Extended Phenotype, Oxford University Press, 1982
The Blind Watchmaker, W. W. Norton & Company, 1986
River out of Eden, Basic Books, 1995
Climbing Mount Improbable, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996
A Devil's Chaplain, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003
The Ancestor's Tale, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004

Ad hominem - attacking an opponent's character rather than answering his argument

Outline of Bill’s Talking Points
1. General Summary
2. Two Worldview Presuppositions
3. Personal Reflections and Lessons

Resources: Books and Journals
Ganssle, Gregory E. “Dawkins’s Best Argument: The Case against God in The God Delusion,” Philosophia Christi ,
2008,Volume 10, Number 1, pp. 39-56.

The Duomo Pieta (Florence, Italy)

Reviews of The God Delusion

“dogmatic, rambling and self-contradictory” - Andrew Brown in Prospect

“he risks destroying a larger target”- Jim Holt in The New York Times

“I’m forced, after reading his new book, to conclude he’s actually more an amateur.” - H. Alan Orr (Professor of Biology, University of Rochester)
4 Lines of Argumentation

1) Dawkins’s critique of traditional reasons for belief and arguments for the existence of God;
2) explicit arguments against the existence of God;
3) a Darwinian account of the rise and nature of religious belief, and
4) that the effect of religion in the world has been mostly negative.

2 Distinct Sections in *The God Delusion*

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*Chapter 2, Section 3 – “Secularism, the Founding Fathers and the religion of America”*

It is conventional to assume that the Founding Fathers of the American Republic were deists. No doubt many of them were, although it has been argued that the greatest of them might have been atheists. Certainly their writings on religion in their own time leave me in no doubt that most of them would have been atheists in ours. But whatever their individual religious views in their own time, the one thing they collectively were is *secularists*... (God Delusion, 60)

*Zeitgeist* - the spirit of the time; general trend of thought or feeling characteristic of a particular period

*Dawkins’s Rhetorical Strategy (McGrath)*

1) present the pathological as the normal;
2) suppress the fact that atheism is subject to all the same charges he makes against religion;
3) overlook the hard questions like, “if religion were removed, would violence really cease?”

**MAIN ARGUMENT:** Chapter 4 – “Why There is Almost Certainly No God”

A designer God cannot be used to explain organized complexity because any God capable of designing anything would have to be complex enough to demand the same kind of explanation in his own right. God presents and infinite regress from which he cannot hope to escape. This argument, as I shall show in the next chapter, demonstrates that God, though technically not disprovable, is very very improbable indeed (*The God Delusion*, 136).
Logical Structure (from GodandScience.org):

- Premise #1. Every existing entity that shows evidence of design requires a designer superior to itself.
- Premise #2. God shows evidence of design in himself.
- Conclusion. Hence God requires a designer (another God) superior to himself.

Adjusted, with the missing premise added:

- Premise #1. Every existing entity that shows evidence of design requires a designer superior to itself, and
- Premise 1.1 Every existing entity exists in the natural world, and
- Premise 1.2. God, if he exists, exists in the natural world.
- Premise #2. God shows evidence of design in himself
- Conclusion. Hence God requires a designer (another being evolved by Natural Selection) superior to himself.

Worldview Presupposition – Naturalism (Atheism) – “somebody who believes there is nothing beyond the natural physical world” (The God Delusion, 35)

“Dawkins’s Best Argument” – Greg Ganssle

- Premise 1 – A universe made by God would be different than one made by natural occurrences.
- Premise 2 – Our universe fits better with a naturalistic universe than with a theistic universe.
- Therefore, our universe is more likely to be a naturalistic universe than it is to be a theistic universe (Ganssle in PC, 10:1, 44)

4 Defeaters of Premise 2:

1) the fact that the universe is ordered and susceptible to rational investigation;
2) that it is a world in with consciousness (first-person experience for example);
3) that it is a world with significant free agency, and
4) a world with objective moral obligations (wanton torture is wrong!).

New Premise 2: Our universe fits better with a theistic universe than with a naturalistic universe
New Conclusion: Therefore, our universe is more likely to be a theistic universe than it is to be a naturalistic universe.

2 Bogus Definitions
Faith = non-thinking; irrationality
God = God is a meme; The God Hypothesis: “there exists a superhuman, supernatural intelligence who deliberately designed and created the universe and everything in it, including us”

“Who designed the designer?” is a problem only if God is not outside the system!

Ganssle’s Conclusion
“The reader of Dawkins’s work, therefore, is left with the conclusion that the case against God, as presented, is not sufficient to worry a believer. Nor ought it challenge one who considers belief in God for the first time” (56).