

Straw men travelling a circular track: – a review of Richard Dawkins book ‘The God Delusion’

Part 1:

Dawkins is an atheistic evangelist with a great zeal to ridicule religion and especially Christianity. He writes eloquently, very emotively and passionately and his style appeals to many. It seems all who wish to deny any prior call over their lives by the Creator of the universe are quick to clutch at the guide ropes which Dawkins offers. Unfortunately for all trying to hide from God, Dawkins guide ropes are really just straws. His words really just a great mix of hyperbole without sustenance and his logic so flawed, so circular that his editorial proof readers must have got so dizzy that they missed some absolute shockers.

Sadly, Christianity has to accept some of the blame for the appeal of Dawkins and his cadre of atheistic sympathizers. Christianity has after-all, foisted a great many non-sensical and non-biblical doctrines on society over the last 1700+ years. There is a great deal of error that Christianity tries too hard to defend and therefore opens ‘itself’ up to the ridicule of people like Dawkins. If Christians were to return to the solid truth of their biblical origins and to reject, as the Jews did in the great Maccabean revolt[1], the Hellenisation of Biblical Theology, we would not expose ourselves as sitting ducks anywhere near as readily to the arrows of angry ‘God-deniers’ like Dawkins.

‘Not happy Jan’! Dawkins is most upset with the God he denies, especially the God of the OT, YHWH. In fact, on reading his vitriolic quote (p31) you could easily assume that he has had a bad experience in his past that has made him bitter. Alternatively, it could be that he is just by nature a nasty, small-minded man trying to show off his language acumen. Certainly, this phrase will find amusing support from some and clearly upset many sincere Christians – perhaps this was his intention.

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully. (‘The God Delusion’ p31)

Dawkins alternative view: “any creative intelligence, of sufficient complexity to design anything, comes into existence only as the end product of an extended process of gradual evolution. Creative intelligences, being evolved, necessarily arrive late in the universe, and therefore cannot be responsible for designing it. God, in the sense defined, is a delusion; and, as later chapters will show, a pernicious delusion.”

Dawkins is convinced that the patriarch Abraham is a mythological figure (p36). Of course, this is a favourite trick of Dawkins – anyone or thing that doesn’t fit his preferred world view is labelled a myth – a very convenient and easy way to dismiss your opponents. It is somewhat ironic that Dawkins is so quick to mythologize historical figures and yet accepts a totally historically and scientifically unsupported myth that is Darwinian evolution.

The 20th century has seen the discovery of much archaeological evidence to support the historical existence of Abraham, such as:

- 1) The City of Ur in Southern Sumeria excavated and found to have been an advanced and flourishing city around 2000 BC.
- 2) The name Abram found on tablets from 1550 BC

- 3) Excavations in Shechem and Bethel show that they were inhabited in Abraham's time
- 4) Over 70 sites of human habitation found in Jordan Valley from as old as 3000 BC (Gen 13:12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom.)
- 5) Mari and Nuzi Tablets etc confirm customs etc, of pre-Egypt sojourn. "Their accurate reflection of social conditions in the patriarchal age and in some of Mesopotamia from which the patriarchs are said to have come, many centuries before the present documents were composed, is striking" ('Old Testament Introduction' Gleason p 179).
- 6) Hittite Legal Code (discovered in 1906 and dated around 1300 BC) explains why Abraham only wanted the cave and not the whole parcel of land – he would have needed to perform some pagan ceremonies otherwise. This transaction clearly pre-dated 1300 BC
- 7) Camels were disputed – now much evidence for use of domesticated camels are far back as 3000 BC.
- 8) The historical accuracy of the entire OT is continually re-enforced by archaeological discoveries (I recommend Josh McDowell's 'Evidence that Demands a Verdict' and 'More Evidence that Demands a Verdict')

Dawkins simplistically and falsely summarises Judaism and the three Abrahamic faiths which he considers as essentially indistinguishable (p 37). He shows no real comprehension of the true foundations of Judaism and to state that Islam and Trinitarian Christianity are somehow the same as Judaism or Unitarian Christianity is to confuse sunrise with sunset!,

Continuing in the same vein he argues that foundation of Christianity was founded by the Apostle (Paul). Again Dawkins displays a very superficial grasp of Christianity. Perhaps this is partly due to the liberal theologians he reads and associates with.

Dawkins calls HaShem (YHWH) a monster (p 46). Considering his superficial grasp of whole unique message of the Bible this may be a fair misunderstanding.

Dawkins quotes an analogy penned by Bertrand Russell (p 52) about a teapot orbiting the sun which can't be proven or disproven. He argues that the 'burden of proof' is on those who believe in it, not those who doubt it.

While there may be some truth in this accusation, the analogy is very poor. The proof's for the existence of God are of far, far greater strength and diversity that Dawkins realises.

Dawkins admits to his own prejudices re the Flying Spaghetti Monster[2] – he 'knows' it's true.

Dawkins has no respect for theology as an area of scholarly study. Because he does not believe that God is a believable hypothesis he, consistently at least, sees the study of God (theology) as unworthy of any merit. In contrast, those who spend a great deal of time and intellectual effort in studying the Bible and other scholars writings on it, find it to be a field of seemingly infinite depth and challenge and a field which like science has a practical side in addressing how to live and relate to the world around us. Science and theology do overlap in their practical application although it would appear from much anecdotal and psychological studies, that theological considerations impact more significantly on living well (in terms of our mental state) than science. Science leads to improved tools; improved conditions and environments but theology leads to improved emotional and relational well-being and some research even suggests that believing in God may benefit a persons'

longevity more than any scientifically designed lifestyle changes
(http://longevity.about.com/od/longevityboosters/a/religion_life.htm)

Dawkins argues that the Abrahamic God is violent and clumsy (p 61). This is in contrast to a NOMA (Stephen Gould's Non-overlapping magesteria) God who in a bare minimum – sets it up and then in non-interventionalist. Where does he get his idea of clumsy from? Dawkins appears to know better than God in terms of how God should/has been involved with humanity – to Dawkins, God has done a pathetic job. He also may be referring to the misconception that some designs, such as the design of the human eye, are poor! (see latest research and camera designs which are more and more copying the eye's design to get the best results – check out www.IdtheFuture.com for a Podcast on this).

Dawkins argues that there are really only 2 explanations for the universe – the Intelligent Designer and Darwinian evolution (though he doesn't entirely rule out alternatives). Given the eventual demise of support for Darwinian evolution it will be interesting to see Dawkins reaction.

Dawkins is often guilty of circular logic (p73). Because he can't imagine or conceive of a world without evolution he states that if there were/are god-like extra-terrestrial beings they would 'be products of evolution'. Thus his argument in refuting God is to argue for evolution and here to argue circularly that intelligence can only result from evolution. He uses this argument several times (p73 for example) – by assuming Darwinian evolution to be proven, he declares that the 'Argument by Design' is disproven.

Perhaps the clearest example of his stunted thinking in using circular logic is when he is discussing his fanciful meme's proposition. He states: "Some religious ideas, like some genes, might survive because of absolute merit" (page 199). Further on in the same paragraph Dawkins defines 'merit' as meaning only the 'ability to survive'. Thus Dawkins has just stated: "Some religious ideas, like some genes, might survive because of absolute ability to survive."

Clearly the Psalmist was correct "The fool says in his heart, there is no God" – Dawkins sure fits the bill! Like most of this book – circular reasoning which goes nowhere but to convince those who reject God and whom God has sent a deluding influence so that they believe a lie. Like the whole 'memes' idea, Dawkin's world of the memeplex is the world of a complex delusion!

Dawkins argues that primitives would see our products of technology as miracles in the same way that the parting of the Red Sea and Jesus' walking on water were miracles. Again a poor analogy as we still today can't explain or copy in any convincing way these miracles.

Dawkins is quick to condemn all who disagree with him. For example he ridicules Anthony Flew (p 82). "On the other hand, Russel was a great philosopher". Yet, Flew is probably as imminent as both Russell and Dawkins. Flew was once the 'poster boy' for atheism, but he has now accepted that their must be a Creator, thanks to the scientific evidence of Intelligent Design.

Flew replied re Dawkins book and his use of straw man tactics:

"The fault of Dawkins as an academic was his scandalous and apparently deliberate refusal to present the doctrine which he appears to think he has refuted in its strongest form. Thus we find in his index five references to Einstein. They are to the mask of Einstein; Einstein on morality; on a personal God; on the purpose of life, and finally on Einstein's religious views. But he makes no mention of Einstein's most relevant report: namely, that the integrated complexity of the world of physics has led him to believe that there must be a Divine Intelligence behind it.

"An academic attacking some ideological position which s/he believes to be mistaken must of course attack that position in its strongest form. This Dawkins does not do in the case of Einstein and his failure is the crucial index of his insincerity of academic purpose and therefore warrants me in

charging him with having become, what he has probably believed to be an impossibility, a secularist bigot.

- <http://tim.2wgroup.com/blog/archives/001903.html>

Flew also takes Dawkins to task over his 'alleged' conversion (p 82). Dawkins says:

'we might be seeing something similar today in the over-publicised tergiversation of the philosopher Antony Flew, who announced in his old age that he had been converted to belief in some sort of deity (triggering a frenzy of eager repetition all around the Internet).'

Flew says: "What is important about this passage is not what Dawkins is saying about Flew, but what he is showing here about Dawkins. For if he had had any interest in the truth of the matter of which he was making so much, he would surely have brought himself to write me a letter of enquiry." Flew's review is reprinted here - <http://www.bethinking.org/science-christianity/intermediate/flew-speaks-out-professor-antony-flew-reviews-the-god-delusion.htm>

Dawkins discusses the design argument regarding Beauty. But again Dawkins creates a straw-man argument here as he really doesn't address the argument (p 86)– see for example, Josh McDowell's book 'In Search of Certainty' for a very good and clear argument regarding how beauty is a very powerful argument for God.

On page 92 Dawkins discussed CS Lewis' 'Lunatic, Liar or Lord' argument (see Mere Christianity). His answer has some validity to a degree. For example, he argues correctly that Jesus never claimed to be divine and also for another alternative – Jesus was honestly mistaken. (Dawkins also mistakes the term Lord as meaning God rather than Master or in this context Messiah – this unfortunate error was also evident in Josh McDowell's great book on the same argument 'More Than a Carpenter').

Speaking about Dawkins and his atheist cronies Harris, Dennett and Hitchens, David Aikman in 'The Delusion of Disbelief' states:

“ ... none of the Four Horsemen succeeds in knocking religion out of the ring either, though cumulatively they do make some strong, and sometimes valid points against it. Their failure lies in at least one of the following: Their assertions are too wild to be taken seriously (does Hitchens really think that religion has done nothing good at all in the entire history of humanity?); when they stray into the terrain of biblical studies, they show an amazing unfamiliarity with it; and their view that the discoveries of science have invalidated religious truth is entirely rejected by an impressive group of reputable scientists.”

I recommend a viewing of the Dr John Lennox debate with Prof. Richard Dawkins that took place in Oct 2007 and is viewable at <http://dawkinslennoxdebate.com/>

Some quick comments regarding this debate:

Dawkins stated that “... we now know how life began” – this is so far from the reality – science has learned a lot but can not yet explain how life could have spontaneously begin from non-living matter.

He also argues that religion teaches us to be satisfied with a lack of understanding – this may be in Dawkins myopic and narrow view of the 'straw man' of religion that he constructs. This is a very common accusation used by Dawkins and his cronies and it is aimed at all who reject Neo-Darwinism, especially the proponents of Intelligent Design and at religious scholars. Again, this emotive argument is really a sad failure to address the true issues as few scientists or religious scholars demonstrate any desire to remain ignorant. Both theology and science are fundamentally a search for understanding and truth. Unfortunately, many are too easily satisfied with incomplete and limited answers.

In contrast Lennox was very eloquent in explaining that science was really founded by theists who expected to see uniformity and regularity – they expected order because of their expectation and understanding that an intelligent force of some sort was behind nature. This view was very evident in the works of Isaac Newton such as his *Principia Mathematica*. Scientists believe in the rational intelligibility of the universe, whereas atheists try to derive rationality from irrationality – that is they try to derive scientific truth from the random, blind and undirected process of Darwinian evolution. This is logically incoherent and not even an intelligible delusion.

Dawkins thinks it is miracles (which of course he does not believe are at all real or possible) that persuade people to turn to religion. However, research indicates that this is not a significant factor in people accepting a particular religious persuasion.

Dawkins asks the classic question ‘Who designed the Designer’. This question assumes the Designer is a created being. Most religions, and especially the Judeo-Christian foundation is that the Creator is an eternal God who existed before time and therefore exists outside of our time and space, outside of our universe.

Dawkins argues that one of the greatest gifts we can give a child is skepticism. In the sense that we should all be critical thinkers this is a good point. No-one should accept anything blindly. We should all be good Bereans (Acts 17) and instill this approach in our children.

Lennox made a very valid point that Dawkins ‘airbrushes’ the horrors of the communist and atheist regimes. Dawkins knows so little about religion that he doesn’t differentiate between them. Dawkins also can’t see the logical path from atheism to evil, a path that there is plenty of historical evidence for in the history of atheistic despots.

Dawkins also has a blind spot in his refusal to acknowledge that atheism is a ‘faith’. To have faith in something is to trust it and therefore live by it. Dawkins trusts his atheistic worldview very strongly and thus demonstrates his own ‘fundamentalistic faith’.

While it is true that there is a definition of the word ‘faith’ that more closely matches Dawkins understanding this definition, “Belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence” is certainly not the norm as most definitions are seen to derive from the idea or concept of trusting in something or someone and of therefore having a loyalty or obedience to that person or thing. Trust is developed over time and is the result of confirming evidence.

Dawkins also seems to fail to acknowledge that science says nothing about evil and good. That is, the concept of good and evil is not something that science can examine. As an illustration, if a rock falls from a cliff and kills someone, the action is purely a materialistic one and can not be assigned a degree of evil. As the philosopher Hume stated ‘you can’t get an ought from an is’.

On page 108 Dawkins states: “I can’t get excited about personal beliefs, whether Unwin’s or mine”. His passion for his own worldview, his faith, his belief in atheism shows this to be most delusional. Who is he kidding?! His whole book is a personal opinion – mostly a rant from a clearly disturbed background with a very obvious chip on his shoulder!

Dawkins states that “Natural selection explains the whole of life” (p 116), that is, Dawkins extends Darwinism to more than even Darwin attributed it to. Darwinism is an attempt (regardless of its merit) to explain the development of complex life from simple organisms but it doesn’t in anyway attempt to explain the origin of the first life forms. This statement therefore really demonstrates how deluded Dawkins is and how his faith in atheism has blinded him to the clear reality of origins science.

Dawkins claims Natural Selection is not chance (p 120). While this is strictly true, as which variety of a particular species survives in a novel environment is determined by its fit for that environment and not by some random choice like nature tossing a coin, Darwinism adds chance genetic mutations to the process of Natural Selection to argue for its method of evolution. Thus when Dawkins uses the term Natural Selection as a synonym for Darwinism then he is misrepresenting Darwinism. The very nature of an 'undirected process' is one of randomness and therefore chance. Fundamental to the Darwinistic theory of evolution is the concept of an 'undirected process'.

He argues that it is a better alternative to Intelligent Design (ID) in terms of the improbability of complex design – he argues for the infinite regress of the designer, but this argument/analogy fails in terms of human designers for example. When we see a human designer create something extraordinary and improbable we don't ask, 'who designed this designer', we instead may wish to interview the designer to better understand how he/she came up with such a unique concept and ultimate product from that design. The question of his parentage and his genesis is secondary to the search to better understand his/her unique product.

At least here he admits that an ID'er is a possible explanation for (apparent) design. (I highly recommend 'Planet Earth and the Design Hypothesis' by David Seargent - also see an article by Seargent at <http://www.idnet.com.au/files/pdf/Anomalies%20-%20Design.pdf>)

Dawkins uses an analogy in his book Climbing Mt Improbable (p 121). A number of good responses have been written to this by authors like Michael Behe and William Dembski.

Simply though the idea of a gradual slope up which any minor change can slowly accumulate makes a very significant and unsupported assumption that there are no breaks or chasms in the gentle slope. So far, fossil evidence only displays great chasms, both in time (eg Cambrian explosion) and across species barriers.

On page 122 Dawkins argues for real life seeking 'the gentle slope'; following the 'getting warmer' clues (which indicates a goal, in this case 'warmer' and therefore a goal directed approach)[3], yet he does not see the need for an intelligence behind this and a need to be somewhat goal driven. His argument re ½ a wing being potentially close to a whole wing again misses the point – if the ½ has no functional value AT ALL as a wing because the half is only the frame for example, it cannot help to maintain the creature and allow it to ascend towards a wing-based creature.

He also uses 'gliders' as examples of ½ way or transitional creatures but this fails to acknowledge much including their current existence; their design being fully functional and there being no evidence of their still being in a process of evolving to full wings, etc.

Dawkins also argues repeatedly that religious advocates push the concept of a "God of the Gaps" (page 125). His claim is that whenever understanding is incomplete, those who believe in God use God to cover this gap in their knowledge and thus no seeking knowledge and understanding. Given that a great many of the world's leading scientists have been Christian or at least agnostics, and their very belief in a Creator or Intelligent Designer has been the foundation that led them to seek deeper and fuller understanding, this argument clearly lacks validity.

Incredibly Dawkins also argues that molecular genetics supports Darwinism (Page 127). The further scientists travel down the path of unravelling the Genetic mechanisms the clearer the picture of an information bank or extremely well designed database emerges. The only known mechanism for the creation of such complex information banks or databases is an intelligent designer[4].

Dawkins also appears to misconstrue the geographical distribution of fossils in layers from simple at the bottom to increasing more complex at the top levels (known as 'successionism') as a fact of evolution. Successionism doesn't prove evolution – evolution is just one possible explanation for this

observed fact of fossils (see Alan Hayward's *'Creation and Evolution – Facts and Fallacies'* for an excellent explanation of this).

He also argues that just one fossil in wrong stratum would 'blow (evolutionary) theory out of water' – this is in fact what we already have with some living 'transitional' species! Dawkins must therefore be in denial, or his statement was pure hyperbole without any integrity.

Dawkins argues that the archaeopteryx is a transitional fossil. But Archaeopteryx is generally regarded as a true bird, and its alleged dinosaurian ancestors are only known from one locality--the Yixian formation in China--which is "at least 20 Myr younger than Archaeopteryx." - <http://www.judgingpbs.com/dfp-slide13.html>

On Page 129 Dawkins discusses Irreducible Complexity (IRC) and it's main proponent Michael Behe. He uses A G Cairns-Smith argument relating to an arch as a refutation of IRC. Cairns-Smith argues that an arch is irreducibly complex and yet could be built with biological 'scaffolding' which is then removed in biological systems. The arch though has no functionality until it is completed, that is there are no transitional forms.

He calls Behe a 'creationist' which is an incorrect title. This is sadly typical of his method of attempting to belittle all his opponents and their ideas. He calls the bacterial flagellum motor a 'spectacularly inefficient one'. Given that a great deal of scientific research has lead to the conclusion that the bacterial flagellum motor is the most efficient and technologically advanced motor (with its own clutch system), yet discovered or designed, it would appear Dawkins is ignorant of significant and relevant recent research in his own supposed area of expertise.

He then goes on in page 131 to mislabel ID as 'ID creationism'[5] and blithely demises the significant collection of scientific literature which details the brilliantly designed engineering of the bacterial flagellum. He also quotes Judge Jones re the immune disease misunderstanding of Behe, as if a judge was a good authority on a complex scientific issue.

Dawkins tries to argue that ID does not lead to fruitful research whereas many eminent scientists argue the opposite, that is, that evolutionary theory offers no support whatsoever in today's biological research. See the very illuminating article "Why Do We Invoke Darwin? Evolutionary theory contributes little to experimental biology" by Philip S Skell, published in *The Scientist* (2005)[6]

Dawkins argues that supposed errors in design refutes Intelligent Design! Again this is not only faulty logic, but sloppy thinking not worthy of any university trained scientist. For example, he mentions the apparent design of prey and those preyed on and asks 'Whose side is God on?'. Dawkins here falls for the very failure he accuses the ID camp of – because he can't understand why a God would make the world of nature and the fight for survival the way they are, he therefore dismisses that possibility that God did it – his is the 'ignorance answer' (I can't see how it could be so I will give up and reject the God hypothesis).

On page 138 Dawkins argues that the anthropic principle does not support ID and that it is an alternative to God as a solution!

Dawkins misunderstands the anthropic principle. Instead his argument for the origin of life is a statistical one (p 137,138), which is falsely stated as a use of the anthropic principle. This is amazing as it is so lame! Just because something has a finite probability (if it does) of occurring does not imply it can occur – again he uses circular reasoning. As part of his argument he refers to the "the spontaneous arising of something equivalent to DNA ...".

Can a book or a computer database arise spontaneously or by chance! No-one believes this, yet DNA is full of information/coding and is thus the equivalent to a book, in fact given its complexity,

perhaps more analogous to a Library! Actually, the density of information in the DNA is so great that it is still some 40 Trillion times more compact than the best memory storage devices computer scientists have so far managed to manufacture.

All our scientific understanding to date indicates that information storage requires an intelligence to collate and store it. Dawkins seems totally blind to this clear and simple understanding which he nowhere addresses or attempts to address in any coherent fashion.

On page 140 he states, “Natural selection works because it is a cumulative one-way street to improvement.” This is so typical of Dawkins wishful thinking – he offers no scientific research to support this contention – in fact there have many research efforts to establish this but little success has been documented.

Dawkins uses the phrase “illusion of apparent design”. This is actually a double negative. Wherever he sees design, Dawkins assumes it is an illusion – not from any evidence that it is actually an illusion but from a very strong predisposition that it must be an illusion because he can’t entertain any alternatives.

He also states that “design is ultimately not cumulative”. This is such self-evidently false. Any good designer reuses his best designs or parts of them in different products; he/she adds to good designs to make better ones, etc. This is clearly cumulative and is seen in so many of our civilisations products such as modes of transport.

There is much evidence in the fossil evidence from the animal kingdom that illustrates a re-use of design and even an improvement in design over time[7].

In his discussion of fine-tuning Dawkins argues that as the existence of a God or Creator of the Universe is more improbable than the incredible improbability of fine-tuning, this to Dawkins is a valid argument against there being a God. Given that the fine-tuning is very strong evidence for the very existence of a fine-tuner, it would seem a rather weak and confused argument!

Dawkins believes that Biologists have raised consciousness thanks to Darwin! Doesn’t this sound like a religious zealot. Perhaps he should join Benny Hinn on his crusades! He is arguing here that biologists have a greater and more complete perspective on the world because of their grasp and acceptance of Darwinism. Yet, there is virtually no evidence of this superior perspective from the biologist Dawkins, at least not in this book of contradictions, circular reasoning and blinkered perspectives.

Dawkins “consciousness (was) raised by Darwin” Clearly Darwin is his God! Unfortunately, his God is dead.

Dawkins seems to think that theologians believe God to be simple (p 156). Singular, and absolutely unique yes, but far, far from simple. What Dawkins seems to fail to comprehend is that the human intellect has limits – regardless of our efforts there are clearly complexities beyond our mental grasp. The multitude of examples such as the sheer brilliance of the bacterial flagellum motor demonstrate a level of sophistication which we are far from attaining.

This is not to say that we are incapable of designing a motor of the sophistication and efficiency of the bacterial flagellum, but that this motor is currently beyond our capabilities and therefore indicates a motor designer of a superior intellect and knowledge base to our current standards.

Of-course, to acknowledge that God’s mind and being are beyond our comprehension and grasp is not to limit in any way our desire to seek to know all we can about Him. In fact, understanding that the Creator of it all is also our Father implies a relational aspect that any loving child would desire to explore and embrace as deeply as possible.

Dawkins seems to consider the Higher Criticism school of theological endeavour to have been successful, but this only shows his ignorance. Their attempt at the refutation of the historical accuracy of the Bible has been well rebutted.

Dawkins seems to think that Christians are afraid of simple and straightforward questions such as “Do you believe Jesus was born of a virgin” (p 154). Perhaps, this only indicates the rarefied group of theologians and ‘Christians’ that he associates with. Any serious Christian and/or Christian theologian revels in such questions as they offer an opening to so much truth and ultimately lead to the issue that was central to the Messiah Jesus, that is, preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43).

Dawkins admits that the natural tendency is to attribute the appearance of design to actual design itself (p 157). He does not offer any support for this argument or suggest any reasons for this human trait. If it is true, perhaps it is largely from personal experience of seeing human design in human artefacts and learning how and by whom these artefacts were created. Dawkins then balks at applying this tendency from practical experience (a microcosm of science), to the eye, wing, creature etc.

His reason may be because he sees this as introducing a larger problem of who designed the designer (Note – even if true, this does not invalidate this solution, except in the mind of Dawkins).

Is this a valid and significant question? If it is, why do we not apply it to human designers, and what happens if we do? When we look at a marvel of human design we may wish to know who (i.e. the identity of the designer) and more significantly how he/she came up with the design and perhaps how it works. We don’t normally look beyond the designers identity to ask who designed him/her, etc. Thus it appears Dawkins question, while valid, is not really that relevant to the (scientific) quest to learn more about the design.

If we do ask the question regarding our human designer what is the answer? For a start, we can perhaps acknowledge that his/her creation is not the same as his/her design. That is, the parents created the person and to some degree contribute, though almost totally unintentionally, to the design (through their unique DNA). However, we know that they did not ‘design’ their child. This question then takes us back to the original question regarding the origin of life. Interestingly, if the answer to this question is in fact Darwinism, we can see that this answer tells us nothing of significant relevance to our original desire to better understand and learn about the human designed artefact (Humans do not use natural selection as their main design methodology).

So it would once again appear that the question as to ‘who designed the (human) designer’ is not that relevant. Intriguingly though, if the answer is God rather than Darwinism, and the God is the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it does perhaps help us with the original question.

How? Any great human talent is taught; an artist has a teacher, a designer also. The better the teacher, the greater potentially the student. A great many of the best designers have got their inspiration from the design they witness in abundance around them in nature. But also, many have sought to find order in their world and in ‘apparently designed’ artefacts. If this design is illusory, as Dawkins believes, it is then another of those improbable and counter-intuitive events that illusion can lead to actual design.

The reality though is that the more we study this universe the more we see the works of a Creator, a Designer, whose designs are all brilliant and at least the equal to any we have made. In fact, it appears we have never really created any original design at all, but only ‘discovered’ a design that the Creator of the Universe has already used somewhere.

Dawkins lists some incredulous 'Christian' beliefs/doctrines and clearly sees them as beyond belief (p 178). The problem here, regardless of whether they are correct or not, is that there is much in this world that beggars belief from the breath-catching beauty of some woman (from a man's perspective) to the awesome complexity of the 'factory' contained in just one cell[8]. All beliefs whether scientific or theological are open to study and reason, regardless of how incredible they may seem. As in any area of study, closer inspection may lead to a need to discard some beliefs and may also further strengthen others or introduce new beliefs.

In discussing the concept that the spirit/mind and body are separate entities (P180), Dawkins argues for 'monism' over 'dualism'.

There is now good scientific and medical evidence that supports a degree of separation; at least that indicates that the mind is more than just a product of the materialistic processes of the brain (see ID Podcast at www.idthefuture.com especially podcast on Obsessive Compulsive Disorder research).

The Old Testament teaches us though that a man is really monist, in that his mind, spirit, soul, body are all really one complete package that can't be completely separated.

Incredibly, Dawkins acknowledges the value in scientific endeavour of the belief that the material world is designed (p182)! He cites understanding the heart based on the view that it was designed to pump blood). Once again, he sees an 'illusion' as beneficial in a way and above the benefit of a 'Natural Selection' perspective for scientific investigation! When we observe an illusionist at work, for example, pulling a rabbit out of an empty hat, we don't usually think that this illusion will benefit us. We don't go home and look for empty hats in order to find some rabbits. We quite naturally understand that such an illusionary example is of no practical example in our future actions. If the heart has not been designed to pump blood because it is only an illusion then we could not expect to apply the design of the heart to any practical pump we may wish to build. This is clearly erroneous.

A good counter example is the research of brain surgeon Michael Egnor. In trying to understand what mechanisms and design was in place so that the brain was not destroyed by the comparatively very high pressure of the blood entering it from the heart, Dr Egnor looked at pumps designed by human engineers. He looked for techniques that had been used to reduce or dissipate the pressure flow. On finding some examples of good design, he then studied the brain and discovered one of these very designs in use. Thus he used a real design, created by a intelligent (human) designer, in contrast with what Dawkins would argue was only an illusion of design in the human brain. What Dr Egnor found was that it was no illusion as it actually worked, the design fitted its purpose.

In speaking on 'intentionality' Dawkins comments about an example "...telling us something about the way our minds have been naturally selected to work in the real world" (p 183).

Replace the term 'naturally selected' with the world designed and you may see that Dawkins actually believes that Darwinian evolution has a purpose! This is not surprising, as Dawkins sees Darwinism as his God. The problem is that Natural Selection can not by definition have a purpose; there is no guiding hand in Darwinism. Consider the classic Philosophy 101 example. You are travelling in a train to a foreign land you have never been to before and know nothing about. You look out the window and see a pile of rocks laid out on the hillside which spell out the words 'Welcome to Marlborough'. You think to yourself, either we are about to enter Marlborough and these rocks were deliberately placed there to inform passengers on the train of this, or alternatively, someone has placed the rocks there to delude us for some reason. We point the rocks out to a biologist and regular on this train journey sitting next to us who informs that he has observed the rocks falling down the hill over the years until they formed this sentence. He tells us the rock formation was totally be chance and not caused in anyway by some intelligence.

If he is correct, then immediately we know that we can't use the sentence the rocks have made as information of any sort, that is, we can't rightly or wrongly infer that we may be entering Marlborough. We can study the amazing rock formation in itself, but it can't be used to learn about where the train is headed.

We then see that the biologist was reading Dawkins and clearly was deluded. We see a Rabbi who is also a frequent traveller on the train. He informs us that he has seen some people making the sentence out of rocks. They were intending to create some information for us. Thus the rock sentence was designed and as a result can be used as a source of information about where the train is taking us, the rocks can provide information about something external and totally separate to them. This is only possible because the sentence they formed was designed.

In a similar way, any object that only has the illusion of design can not be used to provide information about secondary and external objects.

Dawkins argues that Martin Luther (p190) believed reason was the enemy of the Christian. This may be so but it is really just an indictment of the anti-semitic Luther. Luther's reformation was significant but clearly did not go far enough, which can be seen from his retention of many false Catholic doctrines; from his involvement in the murder of Unitarian Christians and ana-baptists and also from his stringent anti-semitism.

Dawkins talks of "The invisible hand of natural selection" (p 197). Perhaps he doesn't realise it, but he appears to be suggesting here that there is some guiding principle or power behind natural selection. That is, he is arguing here for a 'God of the gaps' (from the use of the term invisible) or a designer behind evolution? The hand is a metaphor for directing and guiding towards a goal.

On pages 211 – 214 Dawkins details some very disappointing 'hate mail' that appears to have originated from 'Christians'. While this material is somewhat damning to the Christian witness, Dawkins does not recognize the same behaviour and use of vitriolic language in his own book.

Dawkins argues that the parable of the Good Samaritan is a story that indicates a biological 'misfiring' or a 'mistake'. He argues that we should not be altruistic, and generous – yet according to Dawkins this is not demeaning or reductionist?

He even speaks of its nobility!! How's that? Nobility of action follows from good intentions and acting upon them – it requires purpose, planning and design.

Dawkins argues for an 'intuitive' or 'in-built' moral sense (yet of Darwinian origins – as if that were possible). The word 'in-built' also implies design and is also expected from the Biblical truth that all are born with a conscience. Therefore the reality of any inbuilt moral sense or conscience is not supportive of Dawkins contention.

Dawkins also speaks of research by Prof. Peter Singer (p 226) which argues that there is no difference between atheists and religious with respect to moral dilemmas. Apart from the questionable nature of the research in terms of the appropriate sample selection criteria, etc., what Dawkins misses here is that there was limited difference in their opinions, but significant difference in their actions. Christians are much more likely to act on their opinions – to be altruistic. Research into 'giving', indicates this quite emphatically[9].

Dawkins argues (p 233) that morality is 'highly delusional'. He questions the origins of all Holy Books and argues that the practice of morality defies the origins of the Holy Scriptures. Again I recommend books like Josh McDowell's 'Evidence That Demands a Verdict' which document the overwhelming archaeological evidence for the accuracy of the Biblical history narratives.

In a second debate with Dr John Lennox, Dawkins stated “*A serious case could be made for a deistic God.*” This would appear to be in direct conflict with his assertion in ‘The God Delusion’ that “*...all life, all intelligence, all creativity and all ‘design’ anywhere in the universe is the direct or indirect product of Darwinian natural selection...Design cannot precede evolution and therefore cannot underlie the universe.*” (see <http://www.spectator.co.uk/melaniephillips/2543431/is-richard-dawkins-still-evolving.thtml> for a good critique of this debate).

To conclude Part 1 of this review, it really is a sad indictment on mankind that a book of such poorly reasoned arguments; a book full of ‘straw men’; full of circular logic and rife with logic fallacies such as the genetic fallacy, can be so popular because humanity seeks to hide from God so as to follow our own selfish and self-absorbed fancies.

Any serious seeker of truth has nothing to fear from this man and this book. Those who choose to follow the religious doctrines of Dawkins and Darwinism do so for rebellious reasons. The words they really need to hear are not the eloquence of Dawkins but the simple and succinct message of Yeshua, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near’.

In the second part of this review I will look at Dawkins direct discussion of morality and theology - Part 2: ‘The Good Book – an expose by Dawkins or the raving of a religious hypocrite?’

Paul Herring Dec 2009

[1] Without the events celebrated at this time in Hanukkah, an Israel into which the Messiah could be born would not have existed.

[9] See ‘Money, Possessions & Eternity’ by Randy Alcorn