نبذة مختصرة عن الكتاب:

أهم كتاب لـ «أليستر مكجراث» على الإطلاق، مُخصَّص للرد على أشهر أفكار «ريتشارد دوكينز» المعاذبة للذين.

يبدأ «مكجراث» بسرد سيرته الشخصية بشكل تاريخي، والتي تبين أنه كان مخلوداً، ثم أصبح مسيحياً، وقد كان يعتقد أن الإلحاد أمر بدهي، وسيكون قرار كل من يتم مواجهته بـ "الحقائق"، ولكن مع التعمق في دراسة، خصوصاً في مجال فلسفة العلوم، اكتشف «مكجراث» أن الأمور ليست بالبساطة التي كان يعتقدها من قبل، ومن ثم بدأ التشكيك في الإلحاد، وتعتمد أكثر في المسيحية - بزعمه - واعتنق المسيحية في النهاية! أثناء سرده لسيرته، قام «مكجراث» ببيان طبيعة مختابعته المُستمرة لكتابات «ريتشارد دوكينز»، بداية من كتابه «الجيّ الأنا»، وصولا إلى كتابه «كاهن الشيطان»، وقد رصد «مكجراث» طبيعة التغيّرات في كتابات «دوكينز»، والتي لم تعد علمية، وإنّما ممرّسة للهجوم على الدين!

يُعالج «مكجراث» النقاط الأساسية التي يطرحها «دوكينز» في كل كتابه بشكل عام، ألا وهي أن العلم يؤدي حقيقة الإلحاد، وأن الدارونية ليست مجرد نظرية بيولوجية، وإنّا وجهة نظر عالمية لها تطبيقات في كلّ مجالات الحياة، وأن هذا يؤدي في النهاية حتى إلى الإلحاد! بالإضافة إلى الرد على اعتراضاته المتكررة على الدين، وأنّه مجرد وهم، وإياب أعمى، ومصدر كل الشرور، وسبب فساد الجنس البشري!

يتعرّض «مكجراث» لنقد فكرة «شجرة الحياة» التي طرحها «داروين» في كتابه، وقام بعرض كلّ الأفكار الإخادمية السَّيِّئة المشمولة ضمن وجهة نظر داروينية عالمية، مثل انتفاء وجود الغاية والهدف والتصميم في الكون، وأن الإنسان ليس إلا مجرد حيوان آخر، ضمن المملكة الحيوانية، وأنه ليس محور الكون، ولا جاء أصلاً إلى الوجود عن قصد وتديره.

وقد ناقش «مكجراث» الأفكار التي أوردها «دوكينز» في كتاب «صانع الساعات الأعمى»، وكتاب «تسلِّق جبل غير المخحتمل»، وقَدَّم تحليلات وتأصيلات في غاية الروعة فيما يخصّ فلسفة العقلوم، وتُقدَّر العلم على إثبات أو نفي وجود الإله!

ناقش «مكجراث» أيضاً آراء «داروين» نفسه الدّينية بعد وضع نظرية التطور، وبيّن المشاكل النفسية الرئيسية التي أثرت على «داروين»، وهي تتلخص في: مُشكلة الألم (مرضه الشخصي وموت ابنته وهي في العاشرة من عمرها)، بالإضافة إلى فكرة العذاب الأبدي في جهنم لغير المؤمنين! ثمّ ناقش «مكجراث» تعريف الإيمان عند «دوكينز»، وهو تصديق ما لا دليل عليه، وأثبت خطأ «دوكينز» بشكل عقلياني ومنطقي، ورد على ادعاءه أن وجود إله أمر غير مُحتمل جداً، ثمّ ناقش «مكجراث» فكرة أن الإخاد، بل والعالم، يقومان في أحيان كثيرة على أُسس لا يُمكن إثباتها بالعلم التجريبي! وهكذا يُبيّن أن الإخاد في حد ذاته عبارة عن موقف إبايني بالتعريف الذي وضعه «دوكينز»، أي أنه لا دليل عليه!

تناول «مكجراث» العلاقة بين العلم والدين، وكذلك كلام «دوكينز» عن علاقة الداروينية بالثقافة الإنسانية، وقام بنقد نظرية الـ«ميم» (meme) التي يُقدّمها «دوكينز» كوسيلة لانتقال الأفكار المختلفة بين الثقافات الإنسانية!
Encountering Dawkins: A Personal Account

• The natural sciences suggested that God was not required for the explanation of any aspect of the world. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p3.]

• I came across an Arab proverb that seemed to sum things up perfectly: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p3.]

• Atheism was the only option for anyone confronted with the facts. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p3.]

• Yet Dawkins did more than just make evolutionary theory intelligible. He was willing to set out its implications for every aspect of life, in effect presenting Darwinism as a universal philosophy of life, rather than a mere scientific theory. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p7.]

• As philosopher Michael Ruse pointed out in a review of The Devil's Chaplain, Dawkins' "attention has swung from writing about science for a popular audience to waging an all-out attack on Christianity." [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p8.]

• I find fundamentalism of all kinds equally repugnant, religious or anti-religious, and was deeply distressed at this development in someone I had admired. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p8.]

1 The Selfish Gene: A Darwinian View of the World

• Why are things the way they are? And what does this tell us about the meaning of life? These two questions, naive yet profound, have played a decisive role in shaping Western thinking about the world. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins'
To reflect on the nature of the universe was to gain insights into the nature of the "good life" - the best and most authentic way of living. Reflecting on the clues provided in the structuring of the world thus leads to an understanding of our identity and destiny. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p15, 16.]

Such naive beliefs, he argues, might have been understandable before Darwin came along. But not now. Darwin has changed everything. Newton would be an atheist if he had been born after Darwin. Before Darwin, atheism was just one among many religious possibilities; now, it is the only serious option for a thinking, honest, and scientifically-informed person. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p16.]

Intellectual history is thus divided into two epochs: before Darwin, and after Darwin. As James Watson, the Nobel Prize winner and co-discoverer of the structure of DNA put it, "Charles Darwin will eventually be seen as a far more influential figure in the history of human thought than either Jesus Christ or Mohammed." [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p16.]

Throughout his writings, Dawkins has developed the rhetoric of a gene's eye view of things - not simply of the individual, but of the entire living world. Organisms can be reduced to genes, and genes to digital (not analogue) information. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p19.]

Life is just bytes and bytes of bytes of digital information. Genes are pure information - information that can be encoded, recoded and decoded, without any degradation or change of meaning ... We - and that means all living things - are survival machines programmed to propagate the digital database that did the programming. Darwinism is now seen to be the survival of the survivors at the level of pure, digital, code. [River out of Eden, 19.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p19.]
• One popular account of the origin of species, widely supported by the religious and academic establishment of the early nineteenth century, held that God had somehow created everything more or less as we now see it. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' *God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p21.]

• Although Darwin appears to have hit on the basic idea of evolution through natural selection by 1842, he was not ready to publish. Such a radical theory would require massive observational evidence to be marshaled in its support. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' *God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p21.]

• The key point is that natural selection is proposed as nature's analogue to the process of "artificial selection" in stockbreeding. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' *God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p23.]

• Morgan modified Mendel's theory in an important respect: he argued that not all genetic traits are passed on independently, as Mendel had supposed. Instead, some genetic traits seemed to be linked, and are thus inherited together, rather than individually. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' *God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p30.]

• What is known as the "neo-Darwinism" synthesis was now possible - Mendelian genetics as the basic explanation of evolutionary change, linked with the process of Darwinian natural selection as determining its outcome. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' *God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p31.]

• The neo-Darwinian synthesis is grounded in the assumption that small random genetic changes (mutations) over long periods of time occasionally have positive survival value. Organisms possessing these favorable mutations should have relative advantage in survival and reproduction, and they will tend to pass their characteristics on to their descendants. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' *God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p34.]

• Evolution can thus be seen as the outcome of the non-random survival of randomly varying replicators. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' *God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p37.]

• Dawkins' phrase "the selfish gene" was criticized by philosopher Mary Midgley, partly because of what she regarded as definitional vagueness, but more fundamentally on account of philosophical laziness. "Genes cannot be selfish or unselfish, any more than atoms can be jealous, elephants abstract or biscuits teleological." [Mary Midgley, "Gene-Juggling." Philosophy 54 (1979): 439- 58.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p41.]

• Jacques Monod's book Chance and Necessity (1972) caused something of a stir on its publication, chiefly on account of his total rejection of any purpose within the cosmos. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p43.]

• Dawkins is particularly critical of those who argue that, "since science is unable to answer 'Why' questions, there must be some other discipline that is qualified to answer them." No answer is possible, other than the Darwinian answer of natural selection. [River out of Eden, 96- 9.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p44.]

• We are here on account of no higher principle than natural selection, in that our distant forebears were able to increase the representation of their genes at the expense of others. There is no higher, no deeper, explanation of things than this. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p44.]

• We should rejoice in the amazing privilege we enjoy. We have been born, and we are going to die. But before we die we have time to understand why we
were ever born in the first place. Time to understand the universe into which we have been born. And with that understanding, we finally grow up and realize that there is no help for us outside our own efforts. [Richard Dawkins, "A.Itemative Thought for the Day," :BBC Radio 4, August 14, 2003.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p44, 45.]

- Why were we ever born? The Darwinian answer is "natural selection." In fact, that's the Darwinian answer to just about everything. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p45.]

- human beings … cannot in any sense be said to be either the "goal" or the "apex" of evolution. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p45.]

- But we are not here concerned with hopes or fears, only with the truth as far as our reason permits us to discover it; and I have given the evidence to the best of my ability. We must, however, acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man with all his noble qualities ... still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin. [Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 2nd ed. London: John Murray, 1882, 619.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p45.]

- Yet Dawkins draws an important - indeed, a remarkable - distinction between humanity and every other living product of genetic mutation and natural selection. We alone are able to resist our genes. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p46.]

- As an academic scientist I am a passionate Darwinian, believing that natural selection is, if not the only driving force in evolution, certainly the only known force capable of producing the illusion of purpose which so strikes all who contemplate nature. But at the same time as I support Darwinism as a scientist, I am a passionate anti-Darwinian when it comes to politics and how we should conduct our human affairs. [A Devil's Chaplain, 10-11.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p46.]
We are built as gene machines and cultured as meme machines, but we have the power to turn against our creators. We, alone on earth, can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators. [The Selfish Gene, 200-1. The first edition (1976) ended at this point; the second edition (1989) added two additional chapters.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p47.]

So there is something different about humanity, after all. We alone appear to have evolved to the point at which we are able to rebel against precisely the process that brought us here in the first place. Only we have evolved brains which are capable of, in the first place, understanding how we came to be here, and in the second, subverting the process that may at some very distant point lead to our being displaced, perhaps by some superior primate. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p47.]

The evolution of the human brain is, as Dawkins points out, as remarkable as it is controversial. What pressures led to the enlargement of the human brain? And why should this process yield any significant evolutionary advantage? This new development requires that roughly one quarter of human metabolism is devoted to ensuring brain function. This represents a substantial investment of energy, and a correspondingly high risk for the survival of the species. Nevertheless, whatever its explanation, it happened. [For Dawkins' comments, see Unweaving the Rainbow, 286-90; A Devil's Chaplain, 74-7.] [For some reflections, not dissimilar to Dawkins, see Geoffrey Miller, The Mating Mind: How Sexual Choice Shaped the Evolution of Human Nature. London: Vintage, 2001.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p47.]

2 The Blind Watchmaker: Evolution and the Elimination of God?

Living things are too improbable and too beautifully "designed" to have come into existence by chance. How, then, did they come into existence? The answer, Darwin's answer, is by gradual, step-by-step transformations from simple beginnings, from primordial entities sufficiently simple to have come into existence by chance. Each successful change in the gradual evolutionary process was simple enough, relative to its predecessor, to have arisen by
chance. But the whole sequence of cumulative steps constitutes anything but a chance process. [The Blind Watchmaker, 43.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p50.]

- Agnosticism is of the essence of science, whether ancient or modern. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p53.]

- Now Dawkins knows perfectly well that "science has no way to disprove the existence of a supreme being." [A Devil's Chaplain, 149.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p55.]

- If the scientific method can neither prove nor disprove the existence or nature of God, then either we abandon the question as unanswerable (something Dawkins certainly does not choose to do) or we answer it on other grounds. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p55.]

- If an answer is to be given, it is not a matter of "pure individual inclination," but of reasoned and principled argument on the basis of whatever criteria of judgment apply to this debate. This is not an arbitrary or whimsical matter, but a matter of intellectual integrity, in which all sides to the debate - whether atheist, theist, or Christian - seek to offer the "best explanation" of the available evidence. [For the issues, which apply equally well to natural and social sciences, see the classic study of Gilbert Harman, "The Inference to the Best Explanation." Philosophical Review 74 (1965); 88-95. A more recent and extended discussion worth noting is Ernan McMullin, The Inference That Makes Science-. Milwaukee, WT: Marquette University Press, 1992.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p55, 56.]

- An excellent example is provided by two rival schools of quantum mechanics: the "Copenhagen school," based on the approach of Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, and that of David Bohm. The two are empirically equivalent, and arguably equally elegant and simple. [See James T. Cushing, Quantum Mechanics: Historical Contingency and the Copenhagen Hegemony. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins'
Paley argues that only someone who is mad would suggest that complex mechanical technology came into being by purposeless chance. Mechanism presupposes contrivance - that is to say, both a sense of purpose and an ability to design and fabricate. Both the human body in particular, and the world in general, could be seen as mechanisms which had been designed and constructed, perfectly adapted to their needs and specific situations. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p63.]

The religious implications of a Darwinian view of life are contested. It can be interpreted in a Christian, agnostic, and atheist manner. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p72.]


There are indeed several important passages in Darwin's writings that can be interpreted to mean that Darwin ceased to believe in an orthodox Christian conception of God on account of his views on evolution. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p73.]

This has been beautifully documented by Randal Keynes, Annie's Box: Charles Darwin, His Daughter and Human Evolution. London: Fourth Estate, 2001.

Fleming held that Darwin came to believe that "modem man would rather have senseless suffering than suffering warranted to be intelligible because willed from on high." [Donald Fleming, "Charles Darwin, the Anaesthetic Mao." Victorian Studies 4 (1961): 219-36.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins’ God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p74.]

Pain and suffering were to be accepted as the meaningless outcome of the evolutionary process; this, however disagreeable, seemed preferable to the alternative - namely, that God either inflicted suffering himself, or permitted
it to be inflicted by others. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p74.]

- But it seemed to Darwin to be less troubling than the alternative - that "a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars." [Letter to Asa Gray (1860): The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, 3 vols. London: John Murray, 1887, vol. 2, 310-12.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p74.]


- As he wrote in his Autobiography: I can indeed hardly see bow anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother and almost all of my friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p75.]

- Darwin commented on his personal religious confusion: "My judgment often fluctuates ... In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an Atheist in the sense of denying God. I think that generally (and more and more as I grow older), but not always, that an Agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind." [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p76.]

- As Gould concludes: Either half my colleagues are enormously stupid, or else the science of Darwinism is fully compatible with conventional religious beliefs - and equally compatible with atheism. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p80.]

- The debate itself is fascinating, and opens up many important questions about the limits of the scientific method, the interpretation of the Bible, the evidential basis of faith, the transition from scientific theories to worldviews, and the history of biology. It is impossible to study, or become involved in,
such debates without being challenged and stimulated to think through some of life's great issues. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p80.]

### 3 Proof and Faith: The Place of Evidence in Science and Religion

- One of the central themes of the human quest for knowledge is the need to be able to distinguish mere "opinion" from "knowledge." How can we distinguish a belief that is warranted and rigorously reasoned from mere unsubstantiated opinion? [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p82.]

- The key question - whether in the natural sciences, philosophy, or theology - is this: what conditions must be fulfilled before we can conclude that a given belief is justified? [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p82.]


- Both religious and anti-religious belief systems are often resistant to anything that threatens to undermine, challenge, qualify, or disconfirm them. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p83.]


- In 1989 he hardened his views: faith now qualified " as a kind of mental illness." [The Selfish Gene, 330 (this passage was added to the second edition).] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p84.]

- In his "Prayer for my Daughter" Dawkins makes an important point, which is clearly relevant here: Next time somebody tells you that something is true,
why not say to them: "What kind of evidence is there for that?" And if they can't give you a good answer, I hope you'll think very carefully before you believe a word they say. [Devil's Chaplain, 248.] [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p85.]

- It is Dawkins' own definition, constructed with his own agenda in mind, being represented as if it were characteristic of those he wishes to criticize. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p85.]

- Let me provide a definition of faith offered by W. H. Griffith-Thomas (1861-1924), a noted Anglican theologian who was one of my predecessors as Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. The definition of faith that he offers is typical of any Christian writer: [Faith] affects the whole of man's nature. It commences with the conviction of the mind based on adequate evidence; it continues in the confidence of the heart or emotions based on conviction, and it is crowned in the consent of the will, by means of which the conviction and confidence are expressed in conduct. [W. H. Griffith-Thomas, The Principles of Theology. London: Longmans, Green, 1930, xviii. Faith thus includes "the certainty of evidence" and the "certainty of adherence"; it is "not blind, but intelligent" (xviii- xix).] [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p86.]

- The fact that religion may console you doesn't of course make it true. It's a moot point whether one wishes to be consoled by a falsehood. [?] [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p88.]

- But what, after all, is faith? It is a state of mind that leads people to believe something - it doesn't matter what - in the total absence of supporting evidence. If there were good supporting evidence, then faith would be superfluous, for the evidence would compel us to believe it anyway. [?] [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p89.]

- The issue is about probability, not certainty. The point at issue is that observational evidence can never render a prediction or generalization
certain; it can, however, render either or both probable. The question is: how probable? [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p89.]

- Dawkins is obliged to make a "leap of faith" from agnosticism to atheism, corresponding to those who make a similar leap in the opposite direction. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p96.]

- Nobody is going to be able to settle the question of the existence of God with complete certainty. It's simply not in the same category as whether the earth is flat, or whether DNA takes the form of a double helix. It's more like the question of whether democracy is better than totalitarianism. This cannot be settled by scientific means - but this does not prevent people from reaching their own conclusions on this matter. Nor does it entail that their decisions on such matters are irrational. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p96.]

- Now perhaps Dawkins is too busy writing books against religion to allow him time to read works of religion. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p99.]

- Unless we know the future, it is impossible to take an absolute position on the question of whether any given theory is "right." What can be said - and, indeed, must be said - is that this is believed to be the best explanation currently available. History simply makes fools of those who argue that every aspect of the current theoretical situation is true for all time. The problem is that we don't know which of today's theories will be discarded as interesting failures by future generations. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p105.]

- In the case of Darwinism, there is an additional difficulty. While Charles Darwin wanted to offer an explanation of how the present forms of animal and plant life emerged, he found that some of the pieces of evidence in that argument were historical. Any attempt to verify the Darwinian theory of evolution requires knowledge of the past. Yet can the scientific method actually be applied to the study of the past? The point is that such a method must use presently accessible evidence to reconstruct what happened in the past - but with what degree of plausibility? [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God*]

There remains a significant degree of uncertainty and provisionality to any conclusions that are based on an analysis of the past, precisely because we cannot directly access the earth's past history. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p105.]

Dawkins is aware of this problem, and is quite explicit about its consequences: Darwin may be triumphant at the end of the twentieth century, but we must acknowledge the possibility that new facts may come to light which will force our successors of the twenty-first century to abandon Darwinism or modify it beyond recognition. [A Devil's Chaplain, 81. Dawkins suggests that it may be possible to isolate a "core Darwinism" which is relatively resistant to this kind of historical erosion.] [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p106.]

There is therefore no contradiction in stating "it is believed that Darwinism is currently the best explanation of the development of biological life." This statement affirms that the evidence and theoretical models currently available are accepted as being the most robust and coherent, while allowing for future evidential and theoretical developments which may cause revision or eventual rejection of today's approaches. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p106.]

[10]
• A 2001 survey of 100 evidence-based studies to systematically examine the relationship between religion and human well-being disclosed the following:
  • 79 reported at least one positive correlation between religious involvement and well-being.
  • 13 found no meaningful association between religion and well-being.
  • 7 found mixed or complex associations between religion and well-being.
  • 1 found a negative association between religion and well-being. [Koenig and Cohen, The Link between Religion and Health, 101.] [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p110.]

• For Dawkins, the issue is simple: the question is "whether you value health or truth." As religion is false - one of the unassailable core beliefs which recurs throughout his writings - it would be immoral to believe, whatever benefits it might bring. [Cited in Kim A. McDonald, "Oxford U. Professor Preaches Darwinian Evolution to Skeptics." Chronicle of Higher Education, November 29, 1996.] [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p111.]

• Some religious people do dreadful things; others do wonderful things: We all know that religion has been historically, and still is today, a cause of great evil as well as great good in human affairs. We have seen terrible wars and terrible persecutions conducted in the name of religion. We have also seen large numbers of people inspired by religion to lives of heroic virtue, bringing education and medical care to the poor, helping to abolish slavery and spread peace among nations. [Acceptance speech on being awarded the 2000 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion; reprinted in The Tablet (May 20, 2000), 234.] [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p112.]

• But the introduction of that little word "some" to Dawkins' argument immediately dilutes its impact For it forces a series of critical questions. How many? Under what circumstances? How often? It also forces a comparative question: how many people with anti-religious views also do some very disturbing things? [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p112.]
Atheism is not "proved" in any sense by any science, evolutionary biology included. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p113.]

But when atheism ceased to be a private matter and became a state ideology, things suddenly became rather different. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p113.]


One of the greatest ironies of the twentieth century is that many of the most deplorable acts of murder, intolerance, and repression were carried out by those who thought that religion was murderous, intolerant, and repressive - and thus sought to remove it from the face of the planet as a humanitarian act. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p113, 114.]

### 4 Cultural Darwinism? The Curious "science" of Memetics

Dawkins recalls how he wanted a word for a "cultural replicator" that sounded like "gene" - thus stressing the analogy between cultural and genetic transmission - and came up with "meme". [The Selfish Gene, 192. Similarly, the word "memetic" was coined, paralleling "genetic"; once more, the intention was to stress that both biological and cultural evolution could be accounted for by "units of replication" or "units of transmission." ] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p122.]

As Simon Conway Morris pointed out, memes seem to have no place in serious scientific reflection: Memes are trivial, to be banished by simple mental exercises. In any wider context, they are hopelessly, if not hilariously, simplistic. To conjure up memes not only reveals a strange imprecision of thought, but, as Anthony O'Hear has remarked, if memes really existed they would ultimately deny the reality of reflective thought. [Simon Conway Morris, *Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 324.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p125.]
In his preface to Susan Blackmore's Meme Machine (1999), Dawkins points out the problems that the "meme" faces if it is to be taken seriously within the scientific community: Another objection is that we don't know what memes are made of, or where they reside. Memes have not yet found their Watson and Crick; they even lack their Mendel. Whereas genes are to be found in precise locations on chromosomes, memes presumably exist in brains, and we have even less chance of seeing one than of seeing a gene (though the neurobiologist Juan Delius has pictured his conjecture of what a meme might look like). [A Devil's Chaplain, 124.] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p128.]

Dawkins talking about memes is like believers talking about God - an invisible, unverifiable postulate, which helps explain some things about experience, but ultimately lies beyond empirical investigation. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p128.]


So where is the evidential support for memes? The quantitative analysis? The formulation of criteria by which the meme may be confirmed or eliminated as a useful construct? We await clarification here. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p129.]

Remember the ether? Sound and light seemed analogous to many physicists in the nineteenth century. They seemed to behave so similarly. Both were known to be forms of waves, whose speed and wavelength could be determined with a high degree of accuracy. And since the propagation of sound required a medium - such as air or water - then the same had to be true of light as well. The term "ether" was used to designate this mysterious medium, through which light and other electromagnetic radiation traveled.
The Michelson-Motley experiment of 1887 set out to explore the properties of the "luminiferous ether" - that is, the medium through which light was believed to travel. As a result of their experiment, Michelson and Morley came to the remarkable conclusion that "the ether is at rest with regard to the earth's surface." This puzzling result had a number of possible implications. One of these was that there was no "luminiferous ether" in the first place. The analogy with sound had just been pressed too far. [A. A. Michelson and E. W. Morley. "On the Relative Motion of the Earth and Luminiferous Ether." American Journal of Science 34 (1887): 333-45.] [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p132.]

5 Science and Religion: Dialogue or Intellectual Appeasement?


- The relation of science and religion is historically conditioned, bound to the social and intellectual conditions of the age. [For a sustained critique of this position, richly illustrated with historical case studies, see John Brooke and Geoffrey Cantor, Reconstructing Nature: The Engagement of Science and Religion. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, 1998.] [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p143.]

- Dawkins argues that the sciences lead to a model of the universe which is "not a superstitious, small-minded, parochial model filled with spirits and hobgoblins, astrology and magic, glittering with fake crocks of gold at where the rainbow ends." [Unweaving the Rainbow] [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p145.]

[111]
• Medieval conceptions of the universe were largely based on a Ptolemaic model of the planetary system, which located the earth at the center of a vast, ordered cosmic mechanism. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p147.]

• The theoretical physicist John Polkinghorne explores the implications of this point as follows: We are so familiar with the fact that we can understand the world that most of the time we take it for granted. It is what makes science possible. Yet it could have been otherwise. The universe might have been a disorderly chaos rather than an orderly cosmos. Or it might have had a rationality which was inaccessible to us ... There is a congruence between our minds and the universe, between the rationality experienced within. and the rationality observed without. [?] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p152.]

• Polkinghorne is quite clear as to how Christianity might offer an explanation of this observation: If the deep-seated congruence of the rationality present in our minds with the rationality present in the world is to find a true explanation, it must surely lie in some more profound reason which is the ground of both. Such a reason would be provided by the Rationality of the Creator. [?] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p152.]

• Dawkins himself knows this, as is clear from his derisive comment on postmodern critics of the sciences: Modern physics teaches us that there is more to truth than meets the eye; or than meets the all too limited human mind, evolved as it was to cope with medium-sized objects moving at medium speeds through medium distances in Africa. In the face of these profound and sublime mysteries, the low-grade intellectual poodling of pseudo-philosophical poseurs seems unworthy of adult attention. [?] [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life)*, Blackwell Publishing 2005, p155.]

• Quantum mechanics is an excellent example of an area of science where the category of "mystery" seems entirely appropriate. It is something that we believe to be true, and to possess a deep rationality of its own - but which it often seems impossible to get our minds around. [Alister McGrath: *Dawkins'
God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p155.]

• The Princeton philosopher of science Bas van Fraassen is intensely skeptical of those who suggest that science is justifiably simple whereas religion is unjustifiably complex; once more, quantum theory is cited as an example: Do the concepts of the Trinity, the soul, haecceity, universals, prime matter, and potentiality baffle you? They pale beside the unimaginable otherness of closed space-times, event-horizons, EPR correlations, and bootstrap models. [Bas van Fraassen, "Empiricism in the Philosophy of Science." In images of Science: Essays on Realism and Empiricism, edited by P. Churchland and C. Hooker, 245-308. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. Quote at 258.] [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p155, 156.]

• I'm sure that we all have much to learn by debating with each other, graciously and accurately. [Alister McGrath: Dawkins' God (Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life), Blackwell Publishing 2005, p158.]

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