

The Irrationality of Richard Dawkins

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We are now in France, but in order not to lose our English connections we have managed to obtain by satellite the five main channels of U.K. television—and this without my wife's having to stand on the roof of our house with the TV antenna in her upraised hand.

Is this additional programming necessarily an advantage? We are not sure after seeing evolutionary biologist and atheist Richard Dawkins' two programmes (early January, Channel 4), titled, "The Root of All Evil?" That root, needless to say, is for Dawkins not the love of money, but religion in general, and more particularly orthodox Christianity.

To be sure, Dawkins has received lengthy critiques of his dogmatic unbelief, e.g., Alister McGrath's *Dawkins' God* (2004). But such criticism really takes Dawkins too seriously. What we wish to do here is to provide, in a few paragraphs, reasons to regard Dawkins' dismissal of historic Christianity as on the same embarrassing plane as Bertrand Russell's simpleminded essay, "Why I Am Not a Christian."

Dawkins' central point is that religion involves faith, and faith by nature is opposed to evidence. In a letter he wrote to his ten-year-old daughter ("Good and Bad Reasons for Believing"), Dawkins writes: "Belief that there is a god or gods, belief in Heaven, . . . belief that Jesus never had a human father, . . . —not one of these beliefs is backed up by any good evidence. . . .Next time somebody tells you something that sounds important, think to yourself: 'Is this the kind of thing that people probably know because of evidence? Or is it the kind of thing that people only believe because of tradition, authority, or revelation?'"

Clearly, Dawkins has never encountered the classic theological formulation that *fides* ("public profession of faith") and *fiducia* ("personal, saving commitment") must always be grounded in *notitia* ("factual knowledge/evidence"). Has he never heard of, much less read, the classical apologists (e.g., Pascal, Grotius, J. H. Newman) or contemporary defenders of the faith (C. S. Lewis, et al.)?

The first point, then, in evaluating Dawkins' abysmal failure to criticise biblical Christianity rationally is his out-of-hand dismissal of the evidence for the facticity of the historical claims presented in the Christian Scriptures. One cannot rationally dismiss a given revelation-claim as non-evidential when one has a priori and by fiat refused to investigate the evidence offered for it! Here we are presented with invincible ignorance—nothing more, nothing less.

Secondly, we meet Dawkins' claim, as expressed in the title of his article in the *London Times* (21 May 2005), "Creationism: God's Gift to the Ignorant"—subtitled, "Richard Dawkins speaks up for scientific logic." This of course reflects Dawkins' repeated

asseverations that only classical Darwinianism offers a rational explanation of biological origins and that such a viewpoint eliminates the need to believe in a Creator.

Dawkins' most famous book, *The Blind Watchmaker* (subtitle: "Why the evidence of evolution reveals a universe without design"), sets forth this allegedly scientific, rational position. According to Dawkins, biological variations from one generation to the next result from genetic mutations; given enough time, these will produce—indeed, have produced—the remarkable complexity of present-day biological life—and all this without the need for any cosmic intelligence.

To illustrate and demonstrate this thesis, Dawkins developed a "Biomorph" computer program. Nine "genes" are employed (numbers 1 through 9); mutation consists of adding or subtracting 1 from a single gene. The procedure is run a number of times, producing "litters" of mutant offspring. After just a few dozen generations, an amazing variety of shapes emerge—looking like objects in the real world which one might incorrectly attribute to intelligent design or engineering (flowers, insects, birds, animals, lamps, aircraft, etc.). If each of the nine "genes" is allowed to "mutate" from – 9 to +9 (19 possible values), each Biomorph has 199 possible developments—over 300 billion.

Dawkins' Biomorph program is discussed in detail in Ellen Thro's *Artificial Life Explorer's Kit* (Sams Publishing, 1993). Does the program prove Dawkins' point that intelligent design is irrelevant to biological development? Quite the opposite—for a high degree of intelligence is required to create and employ the program itself! Here are a series of quotations from Thro's description of the process (note our italics):

"The system is designed to require outside intervention (originally his) in the two main characteristics of natural systems—evolution and self-reproduction."

"Selection here isn't 'natural' but occurs when a person chooses an attractive, interesting, or surprising shape—a process that Dawkins likens to the way people select roses of a specific, pleasing color or dogs with specific characteristics to reproduce."

"The user selects the single Biomorph that will survive and reproduce."

"It takes several tries to get the shape right. In fact, Dawkins thinks that this is how evolution has always worked."

Dawkins "decided to take his computer out into the back yard and let insects 'select' screen images by bumping into them. Dawkins then carried out the insects' selections himself."

It is painfully obvious that, apart from Dawkins' own rational, creative activity, the program in question would never have come about—much less have illustrated anything about biological development.

Moreover, the assumption by Dawkins and other doctrinaire evolutionists that, given enough time, natural selection will produce existing biological complexity is entirely gratuitous. Given infinite time, anything can theoretically occur—including proof of the falsity of the Blind Watchmaker scenario! “Huxley’s notion that monkeys typing at random long enough will eventually produce literature (‘the works of Shakespeare’) has been tested at Plymouth University, England: over time, the monkeys (1) attacked the computer, (2) urinated on it, and (3) failed to produce a single word (AP dispatch, 9 May 2003),” Montgomery, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus*, 3d ed., para. 3.86111 (to obtain your copy, go to www.ciltpp.com).

In sum, we must regretfully conclude that it is not Creationism which—but Richard Dawkins himself who—constitutes “God’s Gift to the Ignorant.”

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Your editor is a barrister member of the Honourable Society of Lincoln’s Inn. What could this possibly mean? In England, the legal profession is divided into two: the “lower branch”—the solicitors—and the “upper branch”—the barristers. Solicitors are general practitioners (like GPs), whereas the barristers are specialists, particularly in the area of high court advocacy. The barristers wear the wigs and argue the difficult cases in the high courts. Since the late Middle Ages, barristers have been grouped into gilds (“Inns of Court”), of which there are four, one of which is Lincoln’s Inn. To become a barrister, one must not only complete academic training and an apprenticeship (“pupillage”), but also eat a specified number of dinners at one’s Inn of Court, in personal contact with practicing barristers and judges. To receive dining credit, one must be present for the Trinitarian “Grace Before Meat” and the “Grace After Meat.” If you are an unbeliever, tough on you: the requirement is the same for all in a country which, at least officially, is committed to a national Christian church. Each Inn has its own chapel or church building, with a master or chaplain who conducts services every Sunday during the legal year. At Lincoln’s we have been privileged for a decade to benefit from the ministry of The Revd Canon William (“Bill”) Norman, who, having been called to the bar himself, has been particularly cognisant of the needs of a primarily legal congregation. Bill is retiring soon (against the advice of all who know him, including myself), and in this issue of the *Global Journal* we want to give readers just a taste of the fine, thoroughly biblical and evangelical sermonising the Inn has received during Bill’s tenure.

And since we are on a legal note, the present issue also features an essay on U. S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Scalia and the Bible. Can the American federal courts still reflect scriptural truth? Find out here! The author of that article is my colleague, Craig Parton, Esq., the American director of our International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism and Human Rights, held in July each year in Strasbourg, France. In the meantime, why not check out the Academy’s website (www.apologeticsacademy.eu)—and consider seriously attending this coming summer? You will receive not only academic credit but also a remarkable cultural and theological experience.

A lot of law, you say? But always connected theologically! Alan S. Bandy puts the two nicely together with a strong dash of exegesis in his detailed article, “Word and Witness: An Analysis of the Lawsuit Motif in Revelation Based on ‘Witness’ Terminology.”

All this free legal (and theological) advice—with no need to pay your lawyer!

— Dr. John Warwick Montgomery