

How new is „New Atheism“?

Prof. DDr. Winfried Löffler, Department of Christian Philosophy, University of Innsbruck

1. Ever heard before? – Authors, groups and backgrounds
2. Definitions: Kinds of Agnosticism and Atheism
3. Five fundamental strategies of Criticism of Religion
4. Looking back on „Old“ Atheism (Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Marx, Freud etc.)
5. Some annoying points in the debate with New Atheism
6. The arguments of „New Atheism“
7. Discussion of the “religion is damaging” argument
8. Discussion of the evolutionary argument
9. Discussion of the Boeing 747 argument

1. Ever heard before?

- Authors?
- Croatian translations?
- Groups / organisations?
- Branches in HR?

1. Ever heard before? »New Atheism« – the Anglo-Saxon Protagonists:



Richard Dawkins
(*1941, Biologist)



Christopher Hitchens
(1949-2011)
Journalist



Sam Harris
(*1967)
Neurophilosopher



Daniel Dennett
(*1942)
Philosopher



“N.A.” as media phenomenon



- Label “New Atheists” probably created by Gary Wolf, *Wired* 14 (November 2006), originally only for Dawkins, Dennett, Harris.
- Yet: differences in content: for Harris, evolution is not important; Harris & Hitchens emphasize dangers of religion, Dawkins asks for truth/falsity; Harris sympathizes with Buddhist spirituality, others reject all religious attitudes; of all 4, Dennett most emphasizes scientific explanation of religion, etc.
- ⇒ New Atheism is not a homogeneous entity. (see later)
- This lecture: concentration on Dawkins / Dennett

„New Atheism“ – some prominent authors from the European Continent

Michel Onfray (F)

Michael Schmidt-Salomon (D)

Piergiorgio Odifreddi (I)



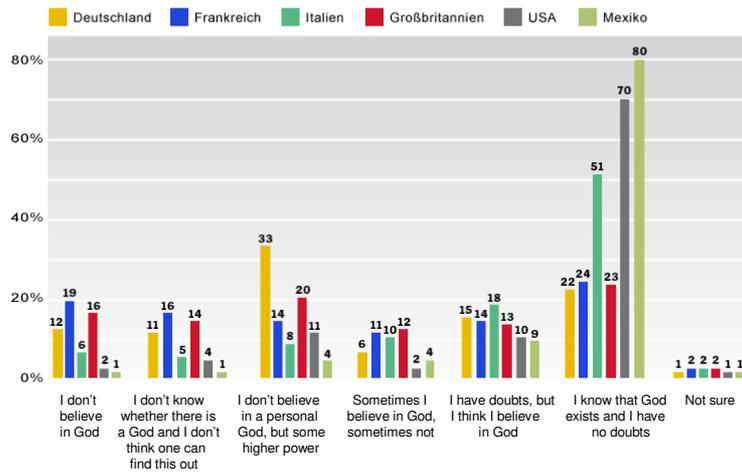
“New Atheism” – some groups and organisations

- “Brights”
- American Humanist Association (AHA)
- *Giordano-Bruno-Stiftung* [Foundation] (Germany)
- *Humanistische Verbände* [≅ Humanist Leagues]
- Various older “freethinkers”, “humanist”, “godless” etc. groups, going back to the 19./20. century; partly frictions
- Recently: “League of the Confession-free” tries to get acknowledged as religious group in Austria and Germany
- Protagora (HR) etc.
- Politically: no special orientation; connections to very left-wing (ex-GDR!) to very right-wing groups and ideas (euthanasia, anticlericalism, anti-islamism)
- **Contents:** partly “negative identity” (fight against religions and their privileges; against traditional religious positions in ethics)
- Partly attempts to a “positive identity” (“secular humanism”, account of the human being; youth-work, social work, rituals (“youth dedication” etc.) – Schmidt-Salomon: “New Atheism is boring and dead”!

Sociological backgrounds of „New Atheism“:

- political „Christian Right“ in USA (Bush jun., Santorum, Romney, ...)
- Error of „secularization thesis“ and „decay of religion“
- ... religion is a highly political issue in some countries!

A recent survey: Which statement fits your position best?



Quelle: AP-ipsos, ZUMA

Sociological backgrounds of „New Atheism“ (cont. d)

- political discussions about biology teaching at US schools, since 1920s
- robust resistance against Evolution biology: Varieties of “creationism” (YEC / OEC) and “Intelligent design”
- well-financed anti-Evolutionist think tanks, www.discovery.org etc.
- hence: also science is a highly political issue in some countries

⇒ esp. Dawkins / Dennett write against these tendencies

⇒ Reduced relevance for countries like Austria, Germany, Croatia (?), ...



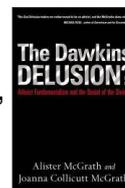
Sociological backgrounds of „New Atheism“ (cont.´d)

- 9/11 and the raise of political islamism
- US-lead wars in Afghanistan, Iraq etc.
- partly self-perception of war against terror and islam(ism), “crusade”
- discussions about sharia in GB, migrant neighbourhoods in big cities
- Religious terrorism

- Harris: discusses also questions of war ethics (torture against terrorists, collateral damage to civilians when fighting terrorists)
- Christian religion sometimes subsumed under generally dangerous “religion”; see movie “Root of all Evil”
- “Religion has become so dangerous that noble tolerance is over”

Croatian Literature on New Atheism

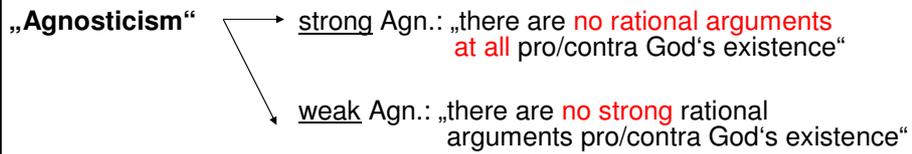
- R. Dawkins, *Iluzija o Bogu*, ZG: Izvori 2007
- D.C. Dennett, *Kraj Čarolije. Religija kao prirodna pojava*, ZG: Jesenski i Turk 2009
- **(Recommended!)** A. McGrath & J. Collicut McGrath, *Dawkinsova iluzija?*, ZG: Teovizija 2012
- **(Recommended!)** [Članak] A. McGrath, Bestseller ateizmi: Novi scijentizam, in: *Concilium* 46 (2010), nr.4, 12-23
- K. Ward, *Zašto gotovo sigurno ima Boga. Sumnja u Dawkinsa*, ZG: Kršćanska Sadašnjost 2010



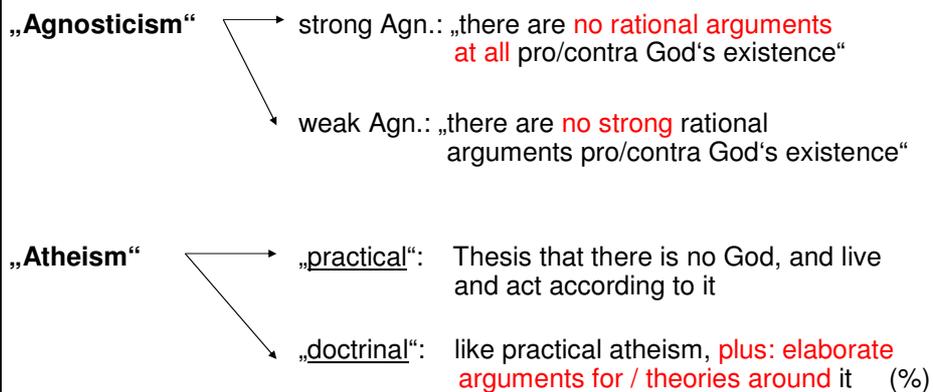
Keith Ward
Why There
Almost
Certainly
Is a God



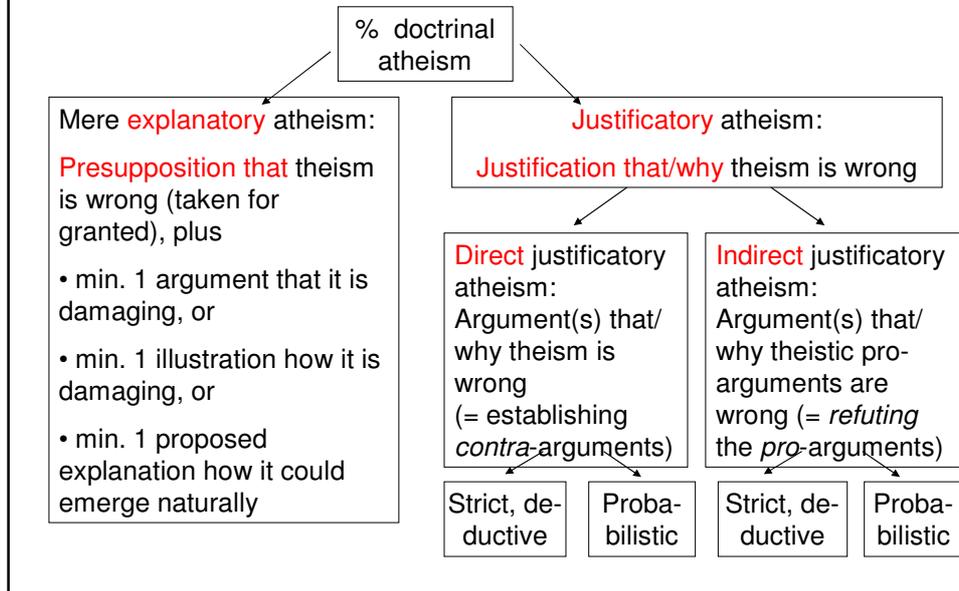
2. Definitions: Kinds of “Agnosticism” and “Atheism”



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2. Definitions: Kinds of “Agnosticism” and “Atheism” (cont.’d)



New Atheists:

- mostly **explanatory** atheism (Harris, Hitchens, Dennett): Falsehood of theism is taken for granted, presupposition.
- Dawkins: **explanatory**, & (partly) also **justificatory** atheism: mostly indirect & probabilistic (see bus campaign! “There is *probably* no God...”)

An example of an indirect probabilistic argument: the “Boeing-747-argument” as refutation (!) of traditional design arguments:

- W.Paley (*Natural Theology*, 1802): the clock-on-the-beach argument: Unexplainable structures (watch) cry out for a designer; likewise, the delicate structures in nature cry for a designer. God!
- Dawkins: How probable is it that a tornado by chance assembles a Boeing 747 from the parts on a scrap-heap? Extremely improbable. But: a designer would have to be *as complex* as the Boeing.
- Applied to God and nature: a purported designer would have to be *as complex* as nature itself, hence his existence is highly improbable.
- (See in more detail my ch.9)

- **Side-remark on the philosophical relevance of the direct/indirect distinction:**
- If you believe that (1) rational theism needs arguments for God's existence, and (2) Dawkins & Co. could really refute them all, theism would indeed be irrational.
- If, however, you believe that rational theism does *not* need arguments for God's existence (e.g., Alvin Plantinga! William P. Alston!), Dawkins' indirect arguments need not touch you.

3. Five fundamental strategies of Criticism of Religion

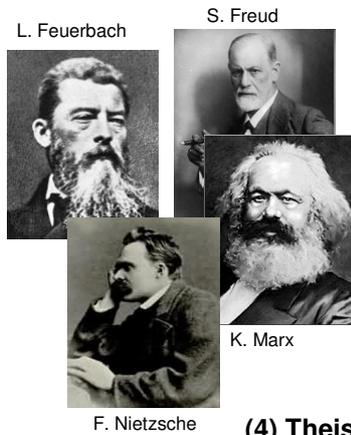
Religious beliefs are....

- (1) Cognitively meaningless; "pseudo-statements" (Vienna Circle, Carnap 1931)
- (2) False, since ...
 - self-contradictory
 - contradictory with other facts (the problem of evil)
 - their existence can better be naturally explained
- (3) Defective in their justification, since...
 - "un-scientific"
 - argument from religious pluralism
- (4) Dangerous / noxious
 - on a personal, individual level
 - on a social level
- (5) Emerging from defectively working cognitive mechanisms

"New Atheists" ...

- connect and mix up various (almost all) lines of argumentation;
- **strong emphasis on explanatory atheism** (dangers of religion, natural explanation),
- (partly) indirect justificatory atheism, probabilistic (see bus campaign!)

4. Looking back on "old" atheism (19th / early 20th century)



(1) Mostly explanatory atheism, partly indirect justificatory atheism

(2) Theism is un-scientific: no sound arguments; explains nothing, like an unnecessary hypothesis (Nietzsche)

(3) Theism has a natural explanation: fear of natural powers, fear of death, early-child development (Freud; psychological projection); projection of human ideals into heavenly world (Feuerbach, the false and the true essence of religion; Marx)

(4) Theism is damaging: Intolerance (Hume); theism creates fearful, scrupulous people (Nietzsche, Freud, Sartre); religion consumes valuable intellectual & psychic energies which should be invested otherwise (Feuerbach); religion makes people accept unjust political situations (Marx, „opium of the people“)

5. Some annoying points in the debate with New Atheists

- ⇒ Writings overloaded with funny stories, side-remarks; tendency: ridiculous appearance of religious believers
- ⇒ N.A.s have astonishingly **little knowledge** about religion & philosophy of religion; serious mistakes (e.g. Dawkins on theistic arguments);
- ⇒ Opponent easily slides in fruitless side-debates (e.g. did Jesus exist?)
- ⇒ N.A.s constantly attack **caricatures** of religion (Old Testament regulations are still literally valid, N.T. is historically adequate, miracles, killing of non-believers is legitimate, the Pope talks infallibly all the time, etc.etc.).

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5. Some annoying points in the debate with New Atheists

- ⇒ N.A.s erect **double binds** (“heads I win, tail you lose”):
 - Christians are **either** stupid (if they believe all that nonsense) **or** not real, “softie”, “wishy-washy” Christians (if they don’t believe that). - Moderate, enlightened Christians/Muslims/... ?
 - “When the Pope acknowledges evolution, he just pretends.”

- ⇒ N.A.s (deliberately?) repeat some **simple argumentation-mistakes**:
 - Generalisation: Religion is the root of *all* evils, e.g. wars
 - Over-extension of the concept of “religion”: “But Hitler and Stalin were surely not religious??” - “*They were!* Religion = uncritical belief in ideas!”
 - Confusion of genesis and justification: A belief that has an evolutionary explanation need not necessarily be false.

- ⇒ A primarily missionary self-understanding: Polemics and ridiculous accounts of the opponents?

6. The arguments of the New Atheists: Dawkins as example

6.1 Analysis of contents of “The God delusion”

ch.1 – A deeply religious non-believer

- „Einsteinian Religion“ (admiration of the cosmos) versus „supernatural religion“.
- Religions don’t deserve more respect than political programs, freely discussable

ch. 2 – The God hypothesis

- General tendency: God’s existence is a **scientific** question %

ch. 2 – The God hypothesis

- **General tendency: God's existence is a scientific question**
- [Side-remarks: theological claims are dubious, bizarre superstitions (Saints, miracles, choirs of angels, St.Mary's of XY, ...); the three Abrahamite religions are inhuman; in the USA, atheists sometimes face suppression & violence.]
- Agnosticism can only be provisional, God is a **scientific** problem
- God's existence is not refutable (never!), but extremely small probability
- Against NOMA (Gould): why should there be „genuinely theological“ problems, many theses of religion admit of a scientific evaluation: did Jesus have a biological father, did he awake Lazarus, did he rise from the dead?
Note that Catholicism does not believe in NOMA, see necessary miracles before sanctifications.
- But even a NOMA God would be a scientific hypothesis
- [[?] The Great prayer experiment (Templeton Foundation) and the strange reaction of some theologians]
- Against „appeasement“ with moderate believers (Ruse etc.), NOMA is nonsense.
- E.g. extra-terrestrial intelligence becomes more and more a *scientific* question. Likewise the question of God.

ch.3 – Arguments for God's existence

- **Thomas Aquinas' arguments**
 - 1st-3rd Way (cosmological argument): Dawkins: Who explains God as the stopping-point of regressive explanation? (J.L. Mackie!) And even if, would such a necessary being be „God“? (I. Kant!)
 - 4. Way: ridiculous (but Dawkins snipples away its 2nd part)
 - 5.Way (design argument): refuted by Darwin
- **Ontological argument** (Anselm): Dawkins does not mention that almost nobody accepts it! List of proof-parodies. Dawkins probably shares Kant's objection: existence is not a great-making property
- **Argument from beauty** (art etc.): has no clear logic
- **Argument from personal experiences**: are products of the simulation software of our brain. Mass-hallucinations (Fatima etc.) are improbable, yet still a more probable explanation than a real sun-move
- **Argument from Holy Scriptures**: Scripture is historically unreliable, e.g. birth of Jesus (historico-critical exegesis). Dawkins earnestly doubts whether Jesus ever existed (!).
- **Argument of religious scientists**: they are getting rare; education and atheism are statistically correlated
- **Pascal's Wager argument**: Dawkins mis-describes it (PW does *not* work with hell-fears!; it does *not* only lead only to “do-as-if-you-believed”, and it was not a mere joke). Dawkins: one could reverse PW in favor of atheism
- **Bayesian probabilistic arguments** (Dawkins mentions Steven Unwin only; not Swinburne): False starting-point of probability 50:50; unclear criticism

ch. 4 – Why there is most probably no God

- „Design argument is the most important“, but it relies on a false alternative: pure chance or design? **The correct alternative is „chance or natural selection?“**
- **Natural selection creates complexity** without a designer („cranes, not skyhooks“, Dennett): selection is an additive process, improbable complexity is divided in smaller, step-by-step problems. There were useful intermediate forms in evolution. (see Dawkins, “Climbing Mount Improbable”)
- **A designer, however, would be complex and improbable.** (Boeing 747!)
- **Against Intelligent Design:** ID-adherents adore gaps in evolution; real, serious science takes them as challenging puzzles.
Request for „complete chain of fossil evidence“ for evolution is inappropriate.
Example: M. Behe’s bacteria flagellum (the only freely rotating axis in nature!) is not „irreducibly complex, not a case of ID, it had useful predecessors (Kenneth Miller (Christian!)) – research is required!
- The last fortress of creationism: doesn’t the **origin of life** point to God? Dawkins: Life is to be expected statistically, 100 billions of galaxies, 30 billions planets in each. A designer is statistically more improbable.
- **Cosmic fine tuning** as evidence of design? Dawkins sees „Multiverse theories“ as much more plausible and probable than a designer.
- [Unclear discussion around Divine simplicity, K. Ward etc.]
- [Personal experiences in a Cambridge conference 2006]
- [Summary of the book so far (in HR edition: pp.149f)]

ch. 5 – The roots of religion [central, but partly unclear and speculative!]

- Natural selection creates nothing superfluous – so **why is there religion?**
- General: Darwinian selective utility may benefit to:
 - the group
 - other species (parasites!)
 - replicators of a non-biological kind (e.g. ideas like religion)
- Direct benefit via group selection (solidarity etc.) is implausible: „freeriders“ would be more successful and make religious behavior disappear
- **Religion is a by-product of some evolutionary useful mechanism** (Example: butterfly’s “suicide” into a candle as by-product of orientation)
- **What could that useful mechanism be?** Tendency to believe in parents/eldest – was useful in small stable groups. But makes people credulous for „mental viruses“. Christian theology is as nonsensical as tribal religions.
- Naturally, we display a (useful) **teleologism and dualism:**
 - Teleologism, taking the „intentional stance“ towards objects speeds up decision-processes in dangerous situations.
 - But why dualism? Useful „intentional states of higher order“! (I believe that he knows that I have seen him...“); ⇨ “minds”; ⇨ HADD, animism!

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ch. 5 – The roots of religion [ct'd]

- Dennett: Religion also possibly a by-product of the (useful) ability to fall in love
- Wolpert: Useful ability of determinedness, sticking to a subject etc.
- **Dawkins: Which by-product in detail, is open to discussion...**
- Religion spreads by: a. chance (genetic drift), b. selection, and c. deliberate change
- **Religious ideas as “memes”:** Memes = Units of cultural evolution. Dawkins admits dissimilarities to genes (substrate? Copying security?), but “problems are not so big here”. Example Origami: self-normalizing, digital process. Religions (via words) are also self-normalizing.
- Religions as „Meme(com)plexes“, some memes survive due to their own efficiency, some survive as auxiliary memes (e.g. „Faith without evidence is a virtue“)
- Memetic selection is quicker than genetic one
- “Cargo religions” in Vanuatu etc. as example for quick evolution (suggestion: Christian religion emerged similarly)

ch. 6 – The roots of morals: Why are we good?

- [Examples of hostile letters to atheists]
- **Biological explanations for altruism:**
 - (1) Kin selection
 - (2) Symbiosis (good for good, bad for bad)
 - (3) demonstrative generosity to secure reputation and status in the group.
- All that was useful in small, stable tribal groups. These groups don't exist, but the altruist urge is still in us. Empirical experiments (with moral dilemmas) show high moral parallels between cultures, theists and atheists.
- **Hence: Religion is not the driving force for morals.** Partly, religious cultures display even more violence.



ch. 7 – The “good” Book and the flexible moral *Zeitgeist*

- The brutalities of the Old Testament
- New Testament ethics is not much better: Original sin, Punishment theory of Christ’s death (sodomasochism!), N.T. religion as splitting force, dividing the people
- Proposal of revised 10 (+4) Commandments
- Morally backward systems have religious roots, e.g. late introduction of women’s right to vote
- Moral *Zeitgeist* changes, but not due to religion
- [Hitler and Stalin were „religious“ thinkers: blind faith in higher ideas]

ch. 8 – What is to bad about religion? Why this hostility?

- Undermining of science, beginnings of theocracy in the islamic world and USA (2006!).
- „American Taliban“: Political absolutism, e.g. discrimination of homosexuals; fight against abortion, but defence of death penalty;
- Religious terrorism
- Religious persons are beyond moral *Zeitgeist*
- Moderate religious people prepare the ground for extremists



ch. 9 – Childhood, child abuse and how to escape religion

- Children’s baptism and religious education is form of child abuse; indoctrination with false beliefs
- Feelings of guilt, fear of hell, pedophilia
- Nevertheless: religions belong to cultural heritage; preserve ideas

ch. 10 – A necessary gap? [unclear chapter]

- Religion does *not* console, religious people have more fear to die
- Religions prevent painless, human dying (euthanasia)
- “Gods” could be like phantasy-friends of children; by-product of evolut.
- [Our world-model grasps just a part of reality; science may widen up]

6.2. A summary of Dawkins' arguments ("to see the forest again, beyond all the trees")



- The Existence of God is a *scientific* question.
- The old theistic arguments all [?] fail. **IND.-JUSTIFIC.**
- The most important current argument (the design argument) fails as well: Natural selection, the high number of planets and multiverse theories explain complexity much better than a designer. A designer would have to be equally complex as nature, hence he is much less probable. **IND.-JUSTIFIC., PROBAB.**
- Religion is a by-product of some biologically useful mechanism(s). Which exactly, is open to discussion. **EXPLANAT.**
- Altruism is biologically explainable. Religion is not its driving- force. Altruism is here to stay even if religion dies.
- Religious ethics, OT and NT, is inhuman and beyond *Zeitgeist*, in general:
- Religion is dangerous. **EXPLANAT.**

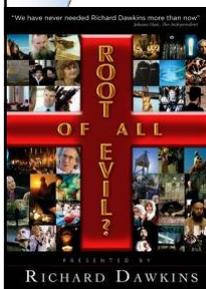
7. Discussion of the "Religion is damaging" argument

Imagine

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too

You may say I am a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one



„The time has come for people of reason to say: enough is enough. Religious faith [...] discourages independent thought, it's divisive, and it's dangerous.“ (R. Dawkins)

7. Discussion of the “Religion is damaging” argument

BUT:

1. What *exactly* is damaging? A religious belief or its cultural, historical etc. surroundings?

Examples: Is female genital mutilation a consequence of Islam or some (absurd) cultural habits? Or blood-revenge?

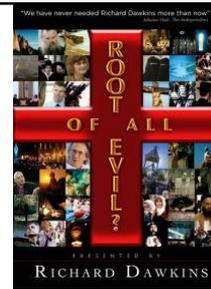
Is the Northern Ireland conflict a religious or economic-political conflict?

Is pedophilia a consequence of religion or of a general authoritarian culture of education?

2. If religion is the plausible culprit: What *exactly* is damaging, its “high”, “pure”, “clean” form or some (contingent) historical distortion / perversion / misunderstanding / caricature of it?

Examples: The conquest of Latin America, the Crusades, J.P.II.’s excuse for earlier Christian anti-semitism, ...

Similarly: Religions may *change*. Damage in the past ≠ danger today!



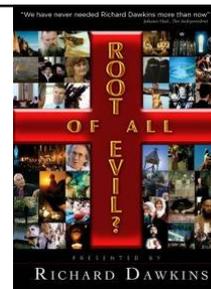
7. Discussion of the “Religion is damaging” argument

BUT:

3. Sometimes, religious beliefs cause damage & benefit in the same context. Hard to disentangle.

Examples: Religious beliefs fostered maltreatment of indigenous Latin Americans (by Spanish conquerors) as well as contrary development: e.g. Bartolomè de las Casas; Similarly: early modern persecution of witches as well as opposition by Friedrich von Spee S.J.

4. A 1st general methodological problem: “imagine there’s no religion” is not so easy. It is impossible to just “cut out” a few beliefs from our belief system and let the others be untouched. Our world would have taken a *very different* course if there had been no religion. Unimaginable.
5. A 2nd general methodological problem: it is impossible to calculate an “overall benefit/damage sum” of a belief; incommensurable terms: How to weigh religious art against the crimes of the inquisition? How to weigh A’s joyful religious life against B’s religious scrupulosity?

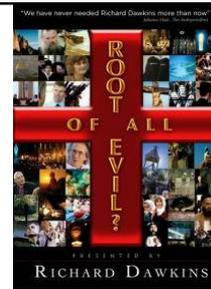


7. Discussion of the “Religion is damaging” argument

BUT:

6. **A fundamental problem:** Utility/damage arguments rest on a *category mistake!*
Utility/damage has nothing to do with truth!
7. Side-remark: these objections also undermine frequent defenses of Christianity: “Look how useful religion is”, “Look how many victims atheism as caused”, etc.

(Utility arguments are in general problematic.)



8. Discussion of the evolutionary argument

- Dawkins’ account is highly speculative; “just-so stories”, “that’s how it could have been”. (Despite all the “scientific” appearance!)
- Summary **Dawkins/Dennett**: Religion is the **by-product** of some useful mechanism, but a form of infantile, primitive thinking
- **Others** (e.g. **Eckart Voland**, Gießen University, D): Most aspects of religion are **not just by-products, but adaptive features** (= features with an evolutionary success-story). Religion stabilizes group-structures, helps to exclude “freeriders”, supports long-time cooperation.
Such features are, e.g.: rituals, mysticism (consolates!), myths (in-group/out-group!), efforts & sacrifices (prevents free-riders), religious morals (spares control-efforts).
The only puzzle are the *theoretical* sides of religion. Voland: “No biological function”, by-product.
- (Voland/Schiefenhövel (eds.), The Biological Evolution of Religious Mind and Behavior, Berlin 2008)

8. Discussion of the evolutionary argument (cont'd)

BUT (AGAINST the simple DAWKINS version)

1. If a by-product is so damaging, why did its main-product survive in evolution?
2. Massive dissimilarities between genes and memes: Memes are inherited in Lamarckian style, can be mixed (syncretism!), are deliberately designed; Whole concept of "cultural evolution" is a pseudo-biological metaphor
3. Internal contradiction: "religions appear / change quickly (Cargo religions)" – "religions are self-normalizing forms of behavior"
4. Why does religion not appear in all human beings?
5. Even if Dawkins' "genetic" story were true, this does not imply falsehood ("genetic fallacy", compare with mathematics)

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8. Discussion of the evolutionary argument (cont'd)

BUT (AGAINST the sophisticated VOLAND version)

- counter-arguments 2., 4., 5. from above, plus:
6. Why should theoretical aspects of religion be separable from ritual, behavioral and other aspects? E.g. consoling effects, in-group/out-group distinctions, rituals hardly possible *without theoretical beliefs*; religion is a complex phenomenon. All facets of religion hang together.
 7. Hence: Why should only the theoretical aspects of religion be the dangerous ones?

9. Discussion of the (“central”) Boeing 747 argument

- (1) The only relevant possible argument for God is from complexity.
- (2) There are only two possibilities to explain complexity: natural selection or a designer.
- (3) A designer would be equally complex as the complexities, whereas natural selection is a smooth explanation.
- (4) Hence a designer is extremely improbable.



- BUT: Premise (1) is false. What about, e.g., the *kalam* argument from Big Bang Cosmology (Craig)?
- AND: Premise (2) is false. There is a third possibility: A *primary cause plus* natural selection working in secondary causes!
⇒ Dawkins sticks to a naïve, anthropomorphic concept of an easily imaginable God, something like a human constructor with extended abilities. But this is not God, this is rather an additional, obscure natural factor. God as primary cause is not easily imaginable.

Final literature suggestion, freely on the [www](http://www.thinkingfaith.org):

Gerard J. Hughes S.J.: Dawkins: What he, and we, need to learn, in *Thinking Faith* 2008.

(www.thinkingfaith.org, or google Hughes+Dawkins+learn)

Repetition questions (I)

1. Sketch the history of the label “New Atheism”. How appropriate is it?
2. Why do some new atheists nowadays prefer to speak about “secular humanism” and the like?
3. Explain the main difference between all forms of “creationism” and “theistic evolution”.
4. What is “strong agnosticism”?
5. What is the difference between explanatory and justificatory atheism?
6. When is a justificatory atheism direct, when is it indirect?
7. What are the three main arguments of Dawkins? Are they explanatory / direct justificatory / indirect justificatory?
8. What is the general structure of an argumentative double-bind?
9. Dawkins says that “When pope John Paul II. acknowledged evolution, he did not mean it earnestly and just pretended.” – Analyze the argumentative double-bind behind that statement.
10. What is “Einsteinian religion” according to Dawkins. How would you connect that with what you learned in other philosophy classes?
11. What is Gould’s NOMA proposal and why does Dawkins reject it?
12. Dawkins criticizes 8 types of theistic arguments he knows of. Some of them are indeed bad arguments. Which and why?
13. Sketch the “Boeing 747 argument”. What is its conclusion?
14. What do Dennett/Dawkins mean by “cranes, not skyhooks”? What should this slogan explain?
15. Explain the difference between an adaptive feature and a by-product.

Repetition questions (II)

16. According to Dawkins' speculation, what adaptive features could perhaps bring forth religion as a by-product?
17. What does Dawkins mean by "religions as memplexes", and what is an auxiliary meme?
18. Discuss some dissimilarities of genes and memes.
19. Why does Dawkins tell us a story about the evolutionary origin of morals?
20. In what ways is religion damaging according to Dawkins?
21. Summarize at least two *general* problems connected with utility / damage arguments.
22. Summarize at least two possible *special* objections to Dawkins' argument that religion is damaging.
23. What could be objected to Dawkins' argument that religious beliefs are false, since naturally explainable?
24. Why is Voland's separation of the theoretical beliefs in religion from all other aspects of religion problematic?
25. What could be objected to the B 747 argument?