

The God Delusion

Author Richard Dawkins

Jon Casimir, reviewer SMH November 4, 2006 (abridged)

The simple argument of *The God Delusion* is this: if you believe in a supernatural, intelligent Creator, you're stupid. And not just a little stupid. Not off-the-rack, casual stupid. No. You're wilfully, perversely ignorant. A danger to yourself and others and probably to inanimate objects.

After 150 years of evidence in favour of the theories of Charles Darwin, Dawkins is satisfied that science has buried the God idea. Natural selection has proved such an effective engine for understanding life that the Bible must be dismissed: "If this book works as I intend, religious readers who open it will be atheists when they put it down."

The God Delusion systematically tackles centuries of arguments for a Creator, from Thomas Aquinas's proofs to Intelligent Design, pulling each apart to show what makes it unworkable.

Believers say faith can't be examined empirically. They say you can't find God by reading science books and weighing facts. Maybe not, Dawkins would counter, but you can find against him.

Dawkins also bemoans the polite wall erected between science and theology in recent decades. He blasts fellow scientists as appeasers disengaging from the battle for rationality to make their own lives (and funding) easier. He insists there is no divide. If you say God created the universe, you have made a scientific claim that must be tested.

Dawkins rejects all belief in the supernatural, even at its mildest.

For some, this will read as arrogance. And it's true that the author's passion gets the better of his prose in places. But though Dawkins may be short on doubt, and even possibly on tolerance, he cannot be accused of fundamentalism. He says he would change his mind in an instant if the evidence warranted.

The God Delusion is unevenly weighted, often repetitive and less eloquent than Dawkins's previous works.

The author declares religion is a form of child abuse, calling for denominational schools to be abandoned. He argues that belief in God warps the developing mind. If a child is encouraged to accept something without evidence or reason, and worse, to accept that leap of faith as a virtue, hasn't that child's ability to think been dangerously malformed?

Yet for all the championing of rational thought, it seems odd that there is not much attempt to understand why reason is so undervalued by humans, why atheism remains so unpopular in spite of the evidence. Clearly, many of us would rather relax into a beautiful lie than wrestle with a complex truth. Or maybe we're just not up to it.

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/book-reviews/the-god-delusion/2006/11/03/1162340038238.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap1>