

The God Dilution

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Unfortunately, the God delusion possesses adults, and not just a minority of unfortunates in an asylum.

--Richard Dawkins, responding to a question about his [then upcoming] book *The God Delusion*, in The Atheist, Salon.com, April 30, 2005

It's not surprising that a fanatically fervent atheist like Richard Dawkins boldly proclaims God a delusion. He really believes it, and his frankness is refreshing, even if he is somewhat crass in his delivery. Referring to creationists as "redneck creationists" and scientists who deny the truth of evolution as scientific "backwoodsmen" who "pretend" to scientific credentials exhibits a certain pitiful flair that only the most secure in a minority position can pull off. But Dawkins' ruthless consistency in taking his worldview beliefs to their logical conclusion is admirable. He deserves recognition for a lifetime of relentlessly pressing his science into the service of his theology, and, indeed, for his effort Dawkins has forged a place for himself as a first-rate flaming atheist in this world, if not in the next.

But why would someone who identifies himself as a *theist* willingly pitch his tent with the likes of Dawkins? What is it about impersonal, purposeless Darwinism that compels self-proclaimed believers in a personal, purposeful God to dedicate their lives to its defense? And why would a theist choose to side with the "no-design" hypothesis of Darwinism in a world that by all accounts displays undeniable design? Nature's material evidence makes intelligent agency the logical inference, so why does anyone, much less a theist, choose to believe unintelligent Darwinism over intelligent design? Are the two ideas, creation without intelligent agency and creation by intelligent agency, really compatible? No; it's like saying you believe intelligent beings carved the statues on Easter Island, while simultaneously adamantly defending a theory that holds they were certainly formed by natural forces alone. Dawkins rightly rejects such thinking; who wouldn't?

For one, consider Kenneth R. Miller, a respected biology professor at Brown University, and author of the book *Finding Darwin's God*. Miller is as likeable as Dawkins is unlikable, and as much a humbly accommodating theist as Dawkins is a proudly militant atheist. But on the critical question of "who (or what) created us?" the two march in lockstep, sure about one thing: no intelligent being, including God, had any detectable, apparent part in our creation. The two differ only in that Dawkins considers God non-existent in fact, while Miller considers God non-existent in effect. In the end, their positions differ not at all on the question of our origins--for both find absolutely no scientific evidence of intelligent agency in all of creation.

Dawkins dispenses with God altogether. Miller, however, offers this unscientific and arbitrary "resolution" to the obvious conflict of causes: "God fashioned a material world in which truly free, truly independent beings could evolve." How does he know this? What evidence can he marshal? If "evolve" means "come to be by unguided, unintelligent processes" (which it does), then his statement is self-defeating: if God's creative acts can't be known through nature, how does Miller know God "fashioned" anything, much less a material world? His resolution amounts to a capitulation to naturalism based on an unscientific presumption. Although identified as a Roman Catholic, Miller sees no problem with dedicating his life's work to denying that the one who he believes dedicated his life for all the world had any apparent part in creating all the world in the first place. Presumably Miller believes that Jesus Christ was merely a product (and victim) of natural

selection. Strange ideas force stranger implications.

Playing both sides of Pascal's Wager is a fool's folly, usually discernible in those for whom one thing is said with the mouth and another said in the heart. Believing in God while glorying in his unknowable "ability to work in unguided, purposeless nature" is rather trendy among men, but such an idea must come as quite a surprise to God. A standard refrain repeated by a recent Vatican astronomer that "Intelligent Design reduces and belittles God's power and might," is pure intellectual nonsense, fustian claptrap that can only be passed off as reasonable to mental midgets willingly duped. (And that this astronomer would declare what the heavens don't is particularly intriguing.)

To say that attributing nature's design to *intelligence* belittles God's power and might, but that crediting it wholly to *unintelligent* physics and chemistry alone does not, says more about the speaker's god than the speaker's science. This is why we must be constantly reminded by Darwinists, atheists and scientists (usually the same group of people) that there is "no conflict" between "evolution" and a belief in "God". Because upon closer inspection it appears that there is, in fact, a clear conflict if by "evolution" one means "no one created us" and by "God" one means "someone who created us". The conflict disappears only when one uses the term "God" as Dawkins does to mean "a harmful delusion" or as Miller apparently does, to mean "a harmless delusion".

Dawkins' greatest contribution to furthering truth is his insistence that there is, most certainly, a conflict between a creator God and Darwinism. And Miller's greatest contribution to destroying truth by suppression is his insistence that Darwinism is true, and nature is not intelligently designed--God is not a creator because (supposedly) his design cannot be detected in this world. Both Dawkins and Miller are convinced that Darwinism alone accounts for life on planet earth. But Dawkins has the intellectual integrity and courage to stake his lot with Darwin, deeming God unnecessary, useless, and non-existent. Miller, not quite able to embrace the full import of "Darwin's dangerous idea" instead embraces a very strange god that may exist, but is also unnecessary and useless for any purpose, practical or otherwise.

Miller's god is the god of all who believe a god exists but deny Godly powers that go along with Godhood. It would be one thing if scientists did not observe evidence of design. It would be one thing if the material evidence in nature unequivocally and unambiguously pointed to unguided, purposeless descent of all living beings from a common ancestor, as Darwinism requires. It would be one thing if there were natural processes that could produce beneficial novel features of living beings on a large scale (or a small scale, for that matter). It would be one thing if Miller could point to one instance of a natural process producing new specified complexity. It would be one thing if the god Miller says he believes in had left a message saying that his acts are undetectable, so don't insult him by trying. It would be one thing if the material evidence in nature demanded a belief in Miller's god.

But it's not one thing, it's another on all accounts so that Miller's god is not God. Miller's god is a diluted version of something that once was God. Miller's is a God of once-glorious supernaturalism polluted with vain-glorious naturalism, so that in his diluted form he is indistinguishable from private illusion, or Dawkins' delusion. Miller's god is the god of Our Times, the god of the private sphere where god-thoughts are safely sequestered, not to interfere with the real world, regardless of reality's material evidence. It is the god of post-modern "two-story" thinking that borders on "wallowing in mysticism", as explained by Nancy Pearcey in her book *Total Truth*. Modern "two-story" intellectuals place the "real" world of scientific naturalism in the lower, "public" story, while holding private ideals that have no basis in truth, as defined by naturalism, in the upper story. As Pearcey explains: "[E]ither you can try to be consistent with evolutionary naturalism in the lower

story--in which case you have to deny the existence of consciousness and free will. Or else you can affirm their existence even though they have no basis within your intellectual system--which is sheer mysticism. An irrational leap."

An irrational leap indeed. Miller's god is pure conjecture, for there cannot be any material evidence for him in science, and there is no description of him in a holy book like the Bible. As such, Miller with his imagined god does more damage to truth than a hundred Dawkins and a thousand demons. At least Dawkins denies there is a God, and the demons tremble because they know there is. Miller can neither deny nor tremble, a dangerously confusing middle ground that serves no purpose but to proliferate half-truths that neither honor the creator God nor edify a created man.

Dawkins is not a long-term threat to the world. One day he will be gone and another will take his place, both he and his replacement simply spouting what a long line of dead atheists have been spouting ever since men realized God would let them do so. Such truth denial is dealt with easily. Real damage is done by those who, purporting to believe in God, nevertheless mis-use science to deny his power and his nature, suppressing truth by relegating him to the realm of the privately respectable but publicly undetectable. At least Dawkins knows that if a creator God exists, he matters. Miller's diluted god is dangerous because he is said to exist and he doesn't matter. Let's hope few find Miller's god.

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