

Book Review *The God Delusion*

Book Review of

The God Delusion, by Richard Dawkins (2006) Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., pp. 406.

Masquerading as erudition, this book does not even rise to common sense. It is academically unsound, psychologically freezing, dishonest, solipsistic, and itself sociologically delusional—the iconoclastic fury of a fundamentalist for atheism. I am being as charitable as possible. For a so-called “scientist”, the author’s imprecision is unforgivable. He ignores the technical meaning of the most important word in his entire book:

“Delusion—a false belief firmly held despite incontrovertible and obvious proof or evidence to the contrary. Further, the belief is not one ordinarily accepted by other members of the person’s culture or subculture.” (*The American Associations’ Psychiatric Glossary*, 1984, 1988) It may be noted, first, that atheists’ not being convinced by the claims of religion does not constitute “incontrovertible and obvious proof or evidence”, and, second, that if a belief in God is an intrinsic part of the culture or subculture, by definition that belief cannot be a “delusion”.

Hinsey LF and Shatzky’s *J Psychiatric Dictionary* (1956) has more to say about the phenomenon of delusion:

Delusion--a false belief, born of morbidity. A belief engendered without appropriate external stimulation and maintained by one in spite of what to normal beings constitutes incontrovertible and “plain-as-day” proof or evidence to the contrary... A delusion is almost invariably a product of forces in the sphere of the unconscious. When an impulse, arising in the unconscious, is rejected by any of the forces of the unconscious or conscious spheres, the individual fails to recognize the genuineness of the impulse. He may develop one or more beliefs about the impulse, beliefs which distort the facts. . . Not all delusions, however, are known to stem from the unconscious. Some individuals develop conscious antipathies to the customs and habits of their environment. They come to believe with absolute certainty that they are justified in appropriating or destroying (illegally) the person and property of others. In many instances, the delusional attitude toward society is traceable to the unconscious.

So, if a belief is not proved to be false and is not born of morbidity, it is not a “delusion”. Also, a genuine impulse toward God can itself be rejected by “beliefs which distort the facts”. And finally, when an individual such as Mr. Dawkins develops and promotes conscious antipathies to the customs and habits of his environment, with the certainty of the psychological destruction of others (believers), then he himself becomes delusional.

The *Encyclopedia of Medicine* (2006) contains this definition: “*Delusion*: a false belief as symptom of mental illness. Delusions are distinct from cultural, religious-based beliefs that may be seen as untrue by outsiders.” Mr. Dawkins blatantly disregards all these technical definitions of “delusion”, and, by means of propagandist “spin” techniques, insults his readers with a wastebasket definition of “delusion” as anything that has not been proved to his own satisfaction. He admits, in the preface to his book (p. 5), to ignoring severe objections and criticisms from three psychiatrists

Perspective

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about his use of the word “delusion”. This is not merely anti-intellectual, but downright fraudulent. Are we supposed to believe anything that follows after the book’s ill-chosen title? How accurate will the author be when he describes, say, the precise formulations of St. Thomas Aquinas? Obviously, Mr. Dawkins entertains his own uncorrectable and unprovable false beliefs.

Clearly, the word “delusion” applies more accurately to atheists such as Mr. Dawkins than to believers. What reputable philosopher, scientist, or even polemicist would use a word without finding, knowing and respecting its technical meaning? I did not have to go much further than reading the book’s title before recognizing it for the intellectual flim-flam that it is.

Mr. Dawkins’s views were featured last November in a *Time* article, “God vs. Science”, in which he exchanged ideas with Mr. Francis Collins, a Christian. The article was accompanied, appropriately enough, by a picture of Mr. Dawkins looking at his reflection in a mirror. How fitting for any atheist! I had to laugh. His closing words in the *Time* article were these:

I don’t see the Olympian Gods, or Jesus coming down and dying on the Cross, as worthy of the grandeur. They strike me as parochial. If there is a God, it is going to be a whole lot bigger and a whole lot more incomprehensible than anything that any theologian of any religion has ever proposed.

Not incomprehensible enough, not spectacular enough to suit Mr. Dawkins are the undeniable, increasing anti-entropic spiritualization of the universe by mankind (including “evolution”, if you believe in it), combined with the Big Bang, the Statimuum, the Incarnation, the Passion, the Resurrection (the latter being the ultimate *personal* end of evolution--again, if you believe in it)

Mr. Dawkins wants something more incomprehensible? More enlightening? More astounding, fulfilling, and to his liking? How, just how would he do it? In his theophobia, he rejects the very incomprehensibility that he demands. He hasn’t the insight to recognize that his theophobia is itself merely his deluded (accurately defined) antipathy to his cultural *milieu*. This book is useless. Its grandiosity, embodied in the title, cannot stand academic scrutiny. Aimlessness is not a part of nature, and cannot be part of man. By any legitimate definition, atheism is the delusion.