*The God Delusion,*by Richard Dawkins. London: Bantam Press. 2006. (406 pp., US $16.95, softcover, ISBN-10: 0618918248; ISBN-13: 978061891824)

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Clinton Richard Dawkins is an evolutionary biologist; Dawkins’ affinity for logic and reason makes this book a work, which follows reasoned argumentation, and builds on scientific analyses from beginning to end. As a retired professor from the University of Oxford, and a self-proclaimed outspoken atheist, Dawkins travels the world doing speaking tours for those interested in learning more about the evolutionary science, which Dawkins has studied for his entire adult life. As a graduate of Balliol College in Oxford, he holds a Master of Arts degree and a Doctorate of Philosophy degree.

As an advocate for atheism, Dawkins believes that education is a way to ‘dispel the myths of religion’, and believes ‘religion perpetuates evil in the world’. Around the time he published the book, “The God delusion”, Dawkins also started the *Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science*, a non-profit, which seeks to financially support other non-profits who align themselves secularly. Dawkins also takes issue with fields that he considers being pseudoscience  (homeopathy, alternative medicines, astrology, dowsing, faith healing).

As an unapologetic atheist, Dawkins tells the reader, “(being an atheist) is something to be proud of, standing tall to face the far horizon, for atheism nearly always indicates a healthy independence of mind and, indeed, a healthy mind” (p. 3). The thesis of Dawkins’ “The God Delusion” is that there is no scientific evidence for a god, or other supernatural entity. Dawkins makes his case through a twofold approach where he discusses the horrors of theology and shows how evolution (science) works independent of a creator.

Dawkins starts his exposé in writing "Imagine, with John Lennon, a world with no religion. Imagine no suicide bombers, no 9/11, no 7/7, no Crusades, no witch-hunts, no Gunpowder Plot, no Indian participation, no Israeli/ Palestinian wars, no Serb/ Croat/ Muslim massacres, no persecution of Jew as ‘Christ-killers’, no Northern Ireland ‘troubles’, no ‘honor killings’, no shiny-suited bouffant-haired televangelists fleecing gullible people of their money (‘God wants you to give till it hurts’). Imagine no Taliban to blow up ancient statues, no public beheadings of blasphemers, no flogging of female skin for the crime of showing an inch of it” (1), in light of the acts mentioned, and the recent Paris attacks, Dawkins’ argumentation makes logical sense.

Dawkins goes on to show that “the status of atheists in America today is on par with that of homosexuals fifty years ago” (4). Citing data from a 1999 Gallup pole, Dawkins shows that atheists are the least trusted to hold public office relative to races, creeds, and sexuality— atheists are least trusted among the American public (4).

* Dawkins, in Chapter I titled, “A Deeply Religious Non-Believer” argues that scientists like Carl Sagan, Stephen Hawking, and Albert Einstein (although they have said “God”), they were referring to a “metaphorical” or “pantheistic” god, opposed to a religious deity, according to Dawkins (13). Dawkins (showing a dualistic perspective) then continues in showing that religious speech is often protected so that religious persons can say what they want without recourse (20-26).
* In Chapter II, titled, “The God Hypothesis”, Dawkins argues that state sponsored religious programs, such as non-profit status, should not be allowed (32); Dawkins argues that the system is biased already because it does not accept polytheistic religions having non-profit status, but only monotheistic religions (32-35). Dawkins also argues in this chapter that the founding fathers of America were secularists, he defines agnosticism as “fence-sitting”, rejects NOMA (non-overlapping magisteria) which alleges science should not interfere with religion, discusses the Great Prayer Experiment (and the lack of miracles for those receiving prayers), and explains more of Carl Sagan’s views relative to the improbability of a god existing (38-40).
* In Chapter III, “Arguments for God’s Existence”, Dawkins debunks points made by theologians such as Aquinas, Saint Anselm, and other anecdotal evidence (by George Bush specifically) (77-79). Dawkins also uses this chapter to begin to show how theocracy perpetuates evil in the world, implying that the dualistic god of the bible (both good and evil) leaves followers to sometimes do egregious acts in the name of religion (91-92).
* In Chapter IV “Why There Almost Certainly Is No God” Dawkins argues that evolution is really the only thing that makes sense. Dawkins does this by showing (what he refers to as) ‘Worship of Gaps’. The ‘Worship of Gaps’ allows religious types to fill in the holes of science with the theory of “God” (113-114). He also uses this chapter to debunk “other ways of knowing” (i.e. homeopathy, astrology, etc.), arguing that there is no scientific basis for pseudoscience (154-155). Dawkins end this chapter by posing to the reader a question of whether or not religions provide a decent public service (by the way of human rights, caring, compassion, etc.) (159).
* In Chapter V, “The Roots of Religion” Dawkins begins in showing that Aboriginal people are some of the best warriors that history has ever seen, but even they too hold beliefs about witches and magic (165-166). Dawkins then concurs that some religious practices can reduce stress, but articulates that the placebo effect is what is really reducing stress (167-168). Dawkins argues that religion survives as a by-product of parents’ interventions with children and also psychological want for a creator; through the wanting of a creator, one establishes a group, which in turn validates one’s beliefs in a higher power (172-174). Dawkins likens this belief in god to irrationality, meaning it is an emotional connection rather than one based in evidence/ rationality (184). Another example of the inconsistency of religion, according to Dawkins, is how Christianity has adopted Pagan holidays (and others), which takes away from the overall holy inspired doctrine that many believe (168).
* In Chapter VI, “The Roots of Morality: Why Are We Good?” Dawkins opens asking why he receives such letters of damnation or death, considering why such a powerful god would need such vitriolic defenders to protect his image (211). Dawkins then moves to talk about altruism as a by-product of evolution (216-217). He argues that altruism supports evolution by helping to propagate the species through reproduction (217). Even if cases where reproduction is not solely the result of the altruistic benefit, the altruism still serves to make life better for those around the one being altruistic, which furthers the species (217). Citing work of Marc Hauser, Dawkins shows a case study wherein the result showed no statistical difference in moral standards of those who believe in a higher power compared to those who do not believe (222-224). On whether goodness is a function of a higher power, Dawkins asks the reader ‘do you not rape or steal because you afraid of the higher power?’ Presuming the answer to be, “no”, Dawkins goes on to say that there is a sense of irony in that most crime takes place in cities where the states are Red (Republican) (227).
* In Chapter VII, “The ‘Good’ Book and the Changing Moral Zeitgeist” Dawkins opens up the chapter in saying that no one should base their beliefs on a 2,000 year old book (237). Citing certain books and stories of the Old Testament of the Bible, Dawkins shows that these stories are reprehensible in nature (237-252). In the New Testament, Dawkins argues that many of Christ’s teachings are similar to cult teachings and that Jesus, the son of god, having to die on a cross for everyone’s sins is also reprehensible (250-253). Dawkins even takes the famous “love thy neighbor” and “thou shalt not kill” doctrines and shows places in the Bible where these concepts were not put into practice; mockingly he says “thou shalt not kill other Jews”, as opposed to “thou shalt not kill” in general terms (258-262). Showing examples of how morality changes over time, Dawkins argues that Lincoln’s views of African-Americans would be considered racist of today, but were thought of progressive in his lifetime (268).
* In Chapter VIII, “What’s Wrong With Religion? Why be so hostile?” Dawkins opens in stating that he will no longer debate with creationists, as it gives credibility to their arguments (281). Dawkins argues that religion in general co-opts otherwise brilliant minds, and for that reason is providing a disservice to all. Discussing some of the mainstream religious figures like Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and others, Dawkins argues that those individuals and others like them promote an anti-gay narrative seeking to undermine the credibility of those people who are born gay (290-291). Dawkins also shows that those who are opposed to stem cell research and abortion, think that is OK to kill an abortion doctor and do not see hypocrisy in their actions (291- 301). Arguing that indoctrination has led many to become suicide bombers or terrorists, Dawkins argues that these people could’ve lived normal lives if it weren’t for the familial and social pressure to become religious (301).
* In Chapter IX, “Childhood, Abuse, and Escape from Religion”, Dawkins contends that raising a child in a certain religion is akin to child abuse (318). Dawkins cites Catholic Schools, Hell Houses, the Catholic Church (child molestation) scandal, for examples of the physical and mental abuses sustained by children (319-320). Dawkins articulates his point by showing some of the letters he’s received from people escaping from cultism/ indoctrination of these types of groups (327). In a sort of public service message, Dawkins discusses a picture where three and four year old children were the three wise men for a holiday celebration; these children were defined in the picture as being affiliated with different religions (338). One wouldn’t refer to a three or four year old as a Democrat or Republican argues Dawkins, so then why is it OK to align a child with religion (339-340)? Despite these concerns, Dawkins believes that one should be familiar with the Bible and other religious books as to become literate; Dawkins shows that many ‘old sayings’, proverbs, and other idioms have been derived from the Bible (340-344).
* In Chapter X, “A Much Needed Gap”, Dawkins argues that religion (a deity) fills a gap for some (347). He begins his analysis in showing that believing in a deity may be the end result of some children who have imaginary friends; Dawkins argues that imaginary friends are good for the psychological development of children, but this practice should not continue into adulthood (347-352). Dawkins argues that science, particularly medicine, will offer more comfort to an ill person as compared to a deity (369). Dawkins then asks the reader, ‘if one believes in a happy and joyous afterlife, why cry at funerals?’ ‘Why are individuals so willing to get to heaven trying to put it off as long as possible’, Dawkins posits. Dawkins concludes with the notion that a deity is limiting in that some believing (in religion) feel that some things cannot be known; Dawkins argues that by removing the deity all things become knowable or possible and not subjected to the limitations of understanding (in individuals of faith) (374).

Dawkins, throughout the book, makes compelling individual arguments on religion. As far as Dawkins thesis, “there is no scientific evidence for a god, or other supernatural entity… he discusses the horrors of theology and shows how evolution (science) works independent of a creator”, ironically, he failed. Dawkins made several individual arguments, which were substantiated (i.e. why Dawkins felt Einstein and the founding fathers were not believers, how Dawkins felt on non-profit organizations, Dawkins discussed why he believed Aquinas and others were wrong, Dawkins’ thoughts on pseudoscience, Dawkins’ ideas about how religion was established, Dawkins’s views on morality, and how Dawkins believes that religion fills a gap in the human psyche), nonetheless his overall mission with the book – to show that there is no scientific evidence for a creator – did not come to fruition. Dawkins’ biases come through (as an evolutionary biologist) that merely criticize others’ views for not aligning with Dawkins’ view of reality. Dawkins’ briefly mentions others’ views (aligning themselves with religion) this is evidenced by his unwillingness to debate creationists in Chapter IV. Debating with creationists may have given Dawkins a greater understanding of why people choose theology/ religion; this may have provided Dawkins with greater insight and understanding relative to people’s views of religion. In that sense, Dawkins does suppress available information to strengthen his argument, while making the arguments of others seem flawed – even inarticulate.

Dawkins’ book intends to scientifically prove that there is no god or other supernatural deity. The book is divided into two major parts. In the first part of Dawkins book he argues why there is no evidence of a creator. In the second major section, Dawkins attempts to show that atheists too, have morality that doesn’t come from the function of fearing a higher power. As an unapologetic atheist, Dawkins argues (multiple times) that children should not be subjected to religious indoctrination. Dawkins book is unique because it is written in plain language; it is written for the average person to be able to pick up, read, and understand; this is different from other academic and/ or philosophical texts that are sometimes written in a more affluent dialect. The strengths of this book are the reasoned arguments that Dawkins consistently makes on religion. This book may be useful for one who is interested in understanding the paradigms of philosophy/ theology. This book is limiting because it does not give considerable voice to the other side of the debate (on the existence of god), but does offer some social science and evolutionary science analyses for the reader. I would recommend this book for a person who is interested in learning more about religion, as a construct, and who wishes to understand the many systems that are affected by religion.