

The Improbability Of Atheism

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According to atheists, there is no supernatural Power or Being separate from the universe and responsible for its creation. There is therefore no Creator to whom human beings are accountable. Furthermore, they argue, life has no ultimate meaning or purpose, since not only do all individual lives end in death, but the universe itself is doomed to run down until all life is extinct. To quote the eloquent words of Bertrand Russell, Britain's most famous twentieth century philosopher:

That Man is the product of causes which had no pre-vision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his love and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins - all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built. Mysticism and Logic.

And what constitutes this "firm foundation of unyielding despair"? Essentially this: that since life has no inherent meaning, our attitude to existence and the way we live is a purely subjective matter of personal belief and personal choice. We are on our own in an accidental and mechanistic universe which was never designed to produce life. It is therefore entirely up to us what we make of it all and what goals we pursue.

Although atheism seems a rather bleak philosophy whose roots go back at least as far as Ancient Greece, it has many attractions for modern Western intellectuals, most of whom - judging by recent surveys and personal experience - disbelieve in God without any apparent signs of personal trauma or disorientation. Even within the general population of Britain, the proportion disbelieving in God has risen from 2% to 27% since the 1950s, and one third of those who do profess to believe in God, do not believe in 'a personal God'. This suggests that the popular notion that belief in God springs from a desire for personal security and is therefore a form of wishful thinking from which atheists have emancipated themselves, is far from being true.

In what, then, lies the appeal of atheism? Why, in particular, does it attract so many writers, artists, and 'creative' intellectuals?

The first and most important reason is that for many individuals the Judaeo-Christian concept of God is in itself unwelcome and objectionable. Their pride and sense of personal autonomy is wounded by the idea that they are in any sense dependent upon or indebted to some Divine Creator. They do not wish to acknowledge the possibility that they owe some allegiance to a Superior Being who made them, since to do so threatens their sense of worth, their independence, and their desire for unrestricted freedom in the use they make of life. For such people, therefore, religious faith and commitment is to be avoided because it appears to involve an unacceptable degree of personal humiliation and an unwelcome interference with the pursuit of pleasure and happiness. If, in addition, they are writers and artists, their desire for creative freedom increases their resistance to the idea that there may be some Eternal Power outside themselves to whom they are accountable for the use of their gifts and talents. Another reason so many intellectuals are atheists is because atheism seems more compatible with the scientific spirit of open-minded and open-ended discovery, whereas belief in God seems to require 'blind faith'. For intelligent people who value their intellectual integrity and enjoy using their minds, that is an important consideration. Moreover, the idea that life is full of mysteries to be explored and vanquished by the human intellect, is more exciting and appealing than the intellectual dead-end religious faith apparently represents. Consequently, by keeping God out of the picture, atheism seems to offer a bigger universe and a greater challenge to bold and adventurous spirits. Is it therefore any wonder that atheism is so widespread amongst our intellectual elites? Perhaps not, but whatever may be its attractions, the question still remains: is atheism true? Is there really no God?

You may think, given all the problems in the world, that there are more pressing matters to consider than the possible existence of God, but is this not the most important of all questions? If astronomers and doctors think it worthwhile to search for life in other galaxies or study the human body, is it not even more interesting to find out whether there is a Creative Intelligence behind all the phenomena investigated by these and other scientists? Can anyone who cares about truth ignore this subject and pass by on the other side? Even if tempted to do so, is it sensible given the possible implications and consequences if God does exist? If it is possible that we owe our lives to a Creator who is the source of our very being and the fountain of all beauty, goodness, love and truth, should we turn our backs on Him? Would that not be like a plant refusing to grow towards the sunlight? That, surely, is the moral and intellectual challenge inviting us to examine the question of God's existence. Should it be ducked?

While atheist philosophers vary in their approach and their arguments, the standard case against the existence of God commonly embodies three propositions.

The first and most emotionally compelling is that the existence of evil and suffering cannot be reconciled with the assertion that the world has a good and omnipotent Creator. If there really were a God, Creation would not be marred by pain, disease, hatred, or death, therefore He obviously doesn't exist. Secondly, modern science - in particular, the theory of evolution - explains the origin and

development of the universe, and all its life-forms and structures, without any reference to God, so why do we need Him? He is plainly redundant. Finally, since enlightened self-interest and the good of society provide a perfectly adequate moral framework for human life, there is no need to invoke the existence of God in order to account for our moral faculties or provide a foundation for ethics.

As a former atheist, I used to accept these reasons for doubting God's existence, but I now believe that further reflection reveals them to be shallow and unconvincing.

There is, to begin with, a glaring contradiction in the argument that the presence of evil and suffering in our world indicates that there is no God. In the first place, our very awareness of evil and suffering underlines the fact that we seem to possess some internal standard of right and wrong, good and evil, by which we are able to judge existence and the universe, and find them wanting. But this raises an obvious question. Is this internal moral standard subjective or objective, true or false? If it is subjective - that is, merely an expression of our emotions and tastes - the case for atheism collapses, since we cannot condemn the universe, and by extension, God, just because reality doesn't suit our private fancies. That would be like complaining about the law of gravity because it doesn't allow us to jump off cliffs without getting hurt or killed. But if, on the contrary, our moral perceptions are true and objective, they clearly reveal the existence of something good in Creation, namely, an eternal Moral Law, written on our hearts, but reflecting some greater Reality outside ourselves and beyond Nature.

Paradoxically, therefore, our consciousness of evil confirms rather than refutes the existence of God, just as a crooked line implies the existence of the straight line from which it deviates.

To quote one of C.S. Lewis's summaries of this argument:

...unless we allow ultimate reality to be moral, we cannot morally condemn it...The defiance of the good atheist hurled at an apparently ruthless and idiotic cosmos is really an unconscious homage to something in or behind that cosmos which he recognises as infinitely valuable and authoritative: for if mercy and justice were really only private whims of his own with no objective and impersonal roots...he could not go on being indignant. The fact that he arraigns heaven itself for disregarding them means that at some level of his mind he knows they are enthroned in a higher heaven still. " A wartime address to the students of Magdalen College , Oxford , reprinted in Christian Reflections.

The realisation that atheism is a superficial response to the problem of evil was one of the reasons for C.S. Lewis's eventual conversion to Christianity as a young Oxford don in 1929. It also influenced the conversion of St. Augustine centuries earlier. But there is another equally compelling reason for rejecting the notion that the existence of evil and suffering discredits belief in God. It ignores the problem of free will.

As C.S. Lewis himself argued, in his books, *Mere Christianity* and *The Problem of Pain*, free will is undoubtedly a gift from God since without it we would be

robots incapable of real love and therefore unable to experience the joy of being voluntarily united in love with both our Creator and one another. Free will is also God's gift to us because it is essential to human creativity and achievement. Without it, we couldn't search for truth, probe the universe, or compose a symphony. But there is a catch, since it is in the very nature of free will that we can choose to reject God and embrace evil. If we do so, however, we not only cut ourselves off from the true source of our being and imperil our eternal happiness; we inevitably inflict suffering on others. Hence the impossibility of shielding the innocent from the malice of the guilty in a world of free agents. The very fact that God has made us in His image limits, by an act of voluntary abdication, His ability to prevent the progress of evil in this life.

Is this, then, all there is to say about the problem of evil? By no means. It is precisely the contention of the Bible and Christian theology that God has not abandoned the human race to its fate. He not only offers forgiveness and eternal life to those who turn to Him and reconnect with their Creator; He also promises eventually to judge the wicked and redeem Creation. But this is a great and controversial subject well beyond the scope of this essay. What is simply being stressed here is the inadequacy and implausibility of atheism as a contribution to this discussion.

The superficiality of atheism in relation to the problem of evil is mirrored in its equally shallow explanation of the religious impulse in human beings. To dismiss belief in God as a form of wishful thinking rooted in a desire for significance and security, as atheists typically do, begs more questions than it answers. In particular, it fails to give proper consideration to what, on atheist premises, is a remarkable puzzle. If the material universe is all that exists and there is no God, why are we, its accidental products, so unreconciled to our place in it and our fate? Fish don't complain of the sea for being wet, so why do we seek some non-material Reality outside the world we can see and hear and touch? If it is absurd to imagine falling in love in a sexless world, is it not possible that our desire for God is actually a pointer to His existence rather than an illusion? Furthermore, what are we to make of the fact that religious belief has been common to millions of human beings down the centuries, of all types, races and social conditions? Why, if there is no God, have kings and philosophers, artists and scientists, poets and peasants, thought otherwise? Have most of the human race, from Hebrew prophets to modern physicists, simply been mistaken in their religious convictions? And what, finally, are we to make of the experience of God claimed by mystics or encountered by ordinary people in their prayer lives? Even allowing for the fact that majorities can be mistaken, should this weight of testimony across the ages be lightly set aside? Should it not give pause for thought to even the most hardboiled atheist? Atheism's failure to do justice to the religious impulse is but part of its more general inability to account for or make sense of human consciousness in general. To be specific, it cannot offer a convincing explanation of our experience of free will, our ability to reason and obtain knowledge, or our awareness of moral values.

Take the issue of free will first. Although scientific determinists, like the late B.F. Skinner, deny its reality, the evidence that we do in fact possess it is overwhelming. Our freedom to choose is not only confirmed by our own internal experience of weighing alternatives and deciding between options, whether this involves selecting food from a restaurant menu or changing jobs; it is also presupposed by the very nature of all argument and debate, since there is no point in engaging in philosophical discussions if we are not free to examine, accept or reject a particular chain of reasoning. Indeed, it is precisely here that determinism undermines its own intellectual credentials most thoroughly, for if it applies to human thought as well as action, it means that the reasonings of determinists are, like everyone else's, inevitable. But if their belief that we have no free will is inevitable, how do we know that it is true? It has, on their own assumptions, no more validity than the conclusions of their philosophical opponents. Why, in any case, should the burden of proof rest upon the upholders of free will rather than upon their determinist critics? Does not our experience of being able to change our minds or resist temptation confirm our common sense conviction that we are not robots?

But if our belief that we have free will is well founded, how can that be reconciled with the physical determinism implicit in atheism? How can we be free to think and choose, decide and act, if we are nothing more than complicated biochemical machines put together by chance within an accidental universe? On atheistic premises, all our thoughts and choices - including our belief in the rules of logic and our ability to use them - are simply the end result of a long chain of non-rational causes. How then can we trust any of our reasonings, including the arguments supporting atheism? Surely our minds and our capacity to be free agents are at least partially dependent upon or fed by some creative self-existent Reason and Intelligence outside the physical order of our brains and the material universe? How else can we escape the self-contradictory logic of atheistic materialism? To quote C.S. Lewis's most succinct statement of this problem (discussed at full length in his book, *Miracles*:

If minds are wholly dependent on brains, and brains on bio-chemistry, and bio-chemistry (in the long run) on the meaningless flux of atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees. ("Is Theology Poetry?" Oxford Socratic Club, 1944).

It may be objected, at this point, that minds must be wholly dependent on brains, since death or injury can terminate or damage human consciousness, either by ending life or impairing our mental faculties. But this is not a convincing defence of the truth of atheism. Not only does it fail to provide an adequate answer to the problem raised above by critics like C.S. Lewis; but it also overlooks the fact that physical death and decay can never be cited as proof of the non-existence of the human soul and its link with God. It is obvious that if human beings are a composite of body and soul, death or disease will dissolve or distort this union of matter and spirit, but this does not imply that materialism is true. Otherwise one

would be justified in denying the existence of newsreaders and the human voice because our ability to receive televised news bulletins will inevitably be disrupted if some hooligan destroys our television set.

What about the argument that the human mind is only a wonderfully complicated machine, because sophisticated modern computers perform apparently 'mental' functions like processing information, analysing data, and mathematical calculations? Does this not provide compelling evidence of the truth of atheism? Not by a long chalk. In the first place, this argument still fails to explain how, on atheistic premises, we can be sure that we know anything through the use of reason. Secondly, it is invalid because it is based on a subtle confusion and misuse of language. As Dr Raymond Tallis, Professor of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Manchester, has pointed out, in his book, *Psycho-Electronics* (Ferrington, 1994), a rigorous and detailed analysis of this subject, it is simply inaccurate to say that computers 'analyse', 'calculate', 'process information' or generally perform mental operations analogous to the workings of the human mind. It is the human beings who use the computers who are the ones really analysing, calculating, and processing information. To believe the opposite is like saying that scissors 'cut' paper or electric kettles 'boil' water. The plain truth, of course, is that without the initiative and intervention of willing, acting, and interpreting human agents, computers, scissors, kettles, and all other artefacts, are just inert and purposeless pieces of machinery. Only our loose conversational shorthand makes us temporarily forget this.

Another reason for rejecting the belief that computers are in principle similar to the human mind, is that this notion fails to take into account the true nature and complexity of human consciousness and mental activity. When, for instance, we do mathematical calculations, analyse data, or solve problems, we not only perform these functions but are conscious of doing so. We have a self-awareness which not only enables us to know what we are doing, but that it is we who are doing it. This self-awareness, moreover, is crucial to our whole sense of identity. It is what makes us persons, since without it, we would not be the subjects of our own experience, with wills of our own and therefore the capacity for forming intentions and taking purposeful action. Do computers have this autonomy and self-awareness? Does their operating software somehow 'know' that they are analysing astronomical data or chemical formulae? Is there any sense at all in which computers can be described as 'conscious'? Obviously not. Even the most impressive computer is merely a programmed and artificial extension of human intelligence with no inner life of its own, since its operations have no inherent meaning or purpose except to the human minds interpreting its data and determining their use.

Does this demonstrate that there is an unbridgeable gulf between mind and machine? Yes, unless someone manages to construct a computer which has motives, is self-critical, can fall in love, change its mind, compose music, write a novel, develop a new idea or product, and worship God. But even if that should prove possible, the discovery that minds are machines would still offer no evidence in support of atheism, since computers are not random creations but

the product of conscious design. Without their human creators, they would not exist.

If atheism cannot account for the nature and operations of the human mind, is it any more successful in explaining the existence of conscience? I hardly think so. All its varied attempts to do so misrepresent and explain away our moral experience because they ignore the peculiar nature of moral obligation and moral values.

For example, are our moral perceptions instincts aiding our survival, and therefore a form of learned behaviour preserved and extended throughout the human race by a social process analogous to natural selection?

Surely not. First of all, because our 'instincts' are frequently in conflict, and therefore cannot be equated with the moral faculty which enables us to choose between them, and follow one rather than the other. Our decision to rescue a drowning friend in a stormy sea at the risk of our own life, for instance, obviously entails the deliberate suppression of our instinct of self-preservation in favour of our 'instinct' to help others. But why do we make this choice? Because of our moral perception that the life of another human being is as precious as our own, and we have a duty to save it if we can. There is another reason for dismissing the idea that our moral faculty has evolved because it helps us in the struggle for existence. It is contradicted by both history and our own experience. A ruthless disregard for the rights and interests of others can often win greater rewards in the 'jungle' of human society, than the disinterested pursuit of kindness, truth and justice. Why else are there so many dictators and criminals?

What about the other commonly held view, that it is the long-term interests of society which determine and explain our moral values, rather than our own immediate interests? The problem with that, is that it fails to explain why we should care about society as a whole if we can have a better or happier life by ignoring, as many do, its wider interests. In the end, unless we are nihilists who deny the existence of all values, we are forced to admit that our moral convictions about the preciousness of life, truth, justice, mercy, and so on, are self-evident axioms. We either 'see' that it is wrong to tell lies, break promises, and hurt others, or we are, as it were, morally 'colour blind'. But if this is the case, and therefore there is a Moral Law which is objectively 'true' and to which our consciences bear witness, how can this be reconciled with atheism? How can we attach any importance or authority to our moral perceptions if they are only, as we are, the accidental product of a random and purposeless universe? The fact that we recognise an objective standard of Right and Wrong which exists whether we live or die, obey or disobey it, can surely only mean one thing: it is the manifestation within our being of an Eternal Self-existent Goodness outside ourselves and the natural order but in communication with us. In short, it is the moral argument for the existence of God.

The failure of atheism to make sense of human consciousness is symptomatic of its overall inability to provide a credible explanation of the origin and development of life. The first important question it fails to answer is why does anything at all exist? Is the universe self-explanatory? The fact that scientists can study life and the universe without having to even ask, let alone answer, this question, does not

make it any less interesting or relevant. To anyone searching for truth, it is a meaningful inquiry to ask whether Nature has an Author or is self-sufficient, for one very compelling reason. Something cannot come from nothing - a common sense observation rooted in both logic and experience. To underline the obvious, it is not only self-evident that the absence of something cannot at the same time account for its presence, but this is a truth confirmed by everything we observe and know. Babies do not materialise from nowhere and works of art do not create themselves. But if it is the case that nothing cannot produce something, what are the wider implications? Simply this. For anything to exist, it must either be self-existent from all eternity, or else the creation or effect of something else that is. Does our knowledge of the universe, then, suggest that it is self-existent? Surely not, since all organic life has a beginning and an end (animals and humans are born, live, and die), and inorganic structures and processes are subject to constant alteration and change. Even if the universe had no beginning but instead is the product of the continuous creation or 'appearance' of matter, it still lacks that attribute of self-sufficiency which is the essence of self-existence, since the question that still arises is 'what accounts for the creation or appearance of matter?' Where, so to speak, does the 'stuff' of the universe continually come from? Why does change occur at all? Who or what brings it about? If, on the other hand, the majority of scientists are correct in their belief that the universe came into being through some 'Big Bang' explosion, its lack of self-sufficiency and its inability to account for itself is even more apparent. The answer to the riddle of existence, therefore, stares us in the face if we are open-minded enough to see it. There is a self-existent Creator. God is real.

Unfortunately, despite the clarity and coherence of the cosmological argument for God's existence, its truthfulness is not recognised by most modern philosophers and scientists. One reason for this arises from the belief that since the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle in modern physics suggests that sub-atomic events have no apparent cause, the universe does not need one either. The problem with this argument, however, is that no physical investigation can prove the absence of causation, since the concept of causality is a metaphysical one, whose truthfulness can only be challenged philosophically, not scientifically. If, therefore, we are correct in thinking that something cannot come from nothing, the most that any scientific experiment can establish is that in some particular instance it was not possible to identify the causal agent involved in a certain process or chain of events. To believe more than that, would be equivalent to saying that Bach's cantatas came into existence of their own accord because no-one saw Bach, or anyone else, composing them. There is another equally powerful objection to all scientific attempts to question the reality of the causal principle: it is intellectually counterproductive because it undermines the very basis of science itself. Unless they already believed in the causal principle, scientists could not draw general conclusions from particular experiments and observations, and consequently could not formulate or discover any scientific laws. Although the principle of causality underlies the whole scientific enterprise and obviously 'works', since all human activity and achievement is based upon it and confirms it, atheist philosophers still find it possible to deny the objectivity of

causality on philosophical grounds. Following in the 18th century footsteps of Hume and Kant, they either attribute our belief in causality to habit - we only believe the sun rises in the east because we see this every morning - or else they deny the implication that just because we see causality at work within Nature, therefore we are justified in believing that it operates between the universe as a whole and something outside it. On the contrary, they argue, we can never rule out the possibility that the sun will rise in the west tomorrow or that water will flow uphill in defiance of the 'law' of gravity. Nor can we be sure that even if causation is objectively present within Nature, the universe as a whole has a cause. We must simply accept that it is 'there' and that it requires no explanation.

However dominant this atheistic scepticism may be in the philosophical departments of modern Western universities, its intellectual foundations are extraordinarily weak. To start with, the argument that we only believe that 'A' causes 'B' because we always see 'B' following 'A', assumes the very causal principle whose objectivity it is denying! It does this because it establishes a causal connection between our observations and our belief in causality. But how can the causal principle be used to explain away causality? It involves an absurd contradiction. Secondly, it is not true that our belief in causality is only supported by habitual observation of external events. It is also rooted in our own internal mental experience. We are, for instance, immediately and intimately aware of the fact that our acts of will determine and control our subsequent behaviour. We know that our decision to go to Paris for a holiday results in our booking a flight to the French capital and our presence on the appropriate aircraft. We similarly perceive that there is a causal connection between our invention of a fictional character and our presentation of him to the outside world in our first novel. It is therefore extraordinarily perverse to claim that we cannot prove the reality of causality. Its objective presence in our experience is manifestly self-evident. Furthermore, the significant fact that we have direct and intimate knowledge of the causal principle in our own creative experience, offers the strongest possible support for the cosmological case for the existence of God. If writers like Tolkien can create imaginary worlds which would not otherwise exist, why is it unreasonable to argue that the real world has a Creator? Why should we think it plausible that the creative and causal principles operate within Nature and throughout human experience, but not between Nature and God? The onus of proof in justifying his position surely rests on the sceptical atheist rather than the philosophical theist.

If our grounds for believing in God's existence and dismissing atheism are sound, what are we to make of the classic Darwinian argument that the theory of evolution explains the emergence and development of life from simple beginnings to ever more complicated forms and structures, without any need to invoke God?

The first point to make is that Darwinism not only fails to explain the existence of the universe in the first place; it also cannot account for the existence of any scientific laws. Why is the universe a cosmos and not a chaos? Is it not extremely improbable that a few simple laws of physics would underlie all

phenomena in a random and accidental universe? What are we to make of the strange but interesting fact that the structure and order of the universe can be understood and described so perfectly in terms of mathematics? Does all this not suggest the existence of some Supreme Mind or Intelligence behind the 'architecture' of Nature?

When we turn our attention to living things, the evidence of purposeful intelligence, and the questions it prompts, only multiplies. Why, for example, is the human body equipped with an immune system to combat disease? Why do birds have an instinct to build nests for the accommodation of their young, or to escape the coming of winter through migration? Why are bees able to make honey and what explains the fantastic organisational activity of ants? Does not this evidence of purposive design suggest the existence of a Designer, as William Paley, using the analogy of a watch, famously argued in the 18th century? Has not this evidence, moreover, been vastly reinforced by the progress of science since his time? Whether we think of the 'chemical factory' of the human liver, or the 'blueprint' of the human genetic code, everything seems to point to the fact that some great and subtle Mind has been at work creating and designing the conditions, structures, and processes of life. Is it really credible, instead, to attribute all this fantastic complexity to chance? Darwinian scientists like Dr Richard Dawkins, answer triumphantly in the affirmative. As he attempts to argue in his best-selling book, *The Blind Watchmaker*, the theory of evolution - properly understood - offers a perfectly satisfactory explanation of how complex life forms and biological structures have developed by chance from simple beginnings. All that is required is the action of natural selection working on admittedly random mutations. Mutations that increase the survivability of organisms and creatures, simply accumulate and spread throughout the relevant populations, thus allowing ever more complex and well adapted forms of life to emerge without any conscious design or Designer. Darwinism's key insight, in other words, is that while natural selection is not a conscious process, it is not a random one either. It is truly a 'Blind Watchmaker', and therefore able to account for the apparent order and purpose we seem to see around us.

Despite the skill and confidence with which Dawkins and other Darwinists state their case, it does not stand up to closer examination for a number of reasons. The first problem is that many Darwinian scientists already disbelieve in God before even beginning their scientific investigations. As a result, they have a strong predisposition towards accepting the theory of evolution, since it is hard to imagine how else life could have developed in the absence of a Creator and Designer. Richard Dawkins, for instance, describes the idea of God as "a very naive, childish concept," and has explicitly expressed his relief that Darwinism enables him to be "an intellectually fulfilled atheist." Earlier Darwinists made similar comments. In 1943, for example, Professor D.M.S. Watson wrote: "Evolution itself is accepted by zoologists not because it has been observed to occur or...can be proved by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible." (Quoted in "Science and the BBC", *Nineteenth Century*, April 1943). But if Darwinism is being embraced because of an unexamined philosophical (or emotional) prejudice

against God and the idea of creation, why should it be accorded any respect as a scientific theory? Is it not self-evident that this atheistic bias will ensure that even the strongest evidence against evolution will be ignored or explained away by Darwinian scientists?

A bias towards atheism, probably unconscious in most cases, undoubtedly helps to explain why most scientific textbooks and most school and university science courses rarely mention the scientific arguments and evidence against evolution, yet it has been challenged by many scientists, and if anything, the volume of criticism has been increasing in recent years. Why, for instance, is the fossil record so unfavourable to the theory of evolution, if Darwinism is true? To quote Stephen J. Gould, Professor of Paleontology, Biology and Geology at Harvard, and himself an evolutionist: "The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference, however reasonable, not the evidence of fossils." (Natural History, Vol.86, 1977). In a similar vein, Steve Jones, Professor of Genetics at the University of London, and, like Stephen Gould, an evolutionist and also an atheist, confesses: "The evidence for human evolution is, in fact, still extraordinarily weak...There are no more fossils than would cover a decent-sized table and we know almost nothing about what propelled a hairy and rather stupid ape into a bald and mildly intellectual human being." (Daily Telegraph, 13th September 1995). And on an earlier occasion, he admitted: "It is hard to know which we understand less, human evolution or animal evolution - we scarcely understand either of them..." (BBC Radio 4 discussion of his 1992 Reith Lectures).

But if the evidence for evolution is as weak as these scientists say it is, why do they nevertheless insist that it has occurred? Surely, as in Richard Dawkins's case, because of their non-theistic philosophical presuppositions. Why else do they fail to consider the obvious question? If Darwinism and creationism are alternative explanations of the origin and development of life, which model best fits the available facts? Which school of thought makes most sense of the data uncovered by science? An intelligent Creator or chance? A Designer or a series of accidents? By failing to conduct an open-minded examination of the evidence with these alternative hypotheses in mind, Darwinian scientists are inevitably committed to a one-sided evolutionist interpretation of every new piece of data. Hence, for example, their assertion that similarities of body structure or biochemistry between different animal species, or between animals and humans, proves common descent from a single ancestor. Could this not instead be evidence of a common Creator?

To the great scientists of the past, the evidence of a designing Intelligence behind all phenomena was plentiful. "Was the eye contrived without skill in optics, and the ear without knowledge of sounds?" wrote Sir Isaac Newton (Opticks). If not, how did these complex organs evolve given the need for all their components to co-exist and co-operate at one and the same time in order to result in sight and hearing? Darwin couldn't answer this question, but Richard Dawkins thinks he can, arguing that since a mutation producing 10% vision is

better than no vision at all, it can still confer an advantage which enhances survivability. A partial eye, in short, is better than none at all. The problem with his argument, however, is that it assumes that 10% of an eye equals 10% vision, which is precisely what is disputed by many biologists. But even if we ignore such difficulties in particular cases, giving people like Dawkins the benefit of the doubt, the idea that natural selection operating on random mutations accounts for the gradual development of the wonderfully complex creatures and structures we find in Nature, is preposterous. Why, in an accidental universe, should favourable mutations accumulate in a particular species, and accumulate in such a way and in such an order, as to produce ever more complicated and successful life forms and structures? Why, if mutations are random, shouldn't one favourable mutation within a particular animal or species be cancelled out by another unfavourable one? Even if favourable mutations did accumulate within one species, why shouldn't these be eventually counterbalanced and nullified by favourable mutations within some species of predator? Alternatively, why shouldn't some favourable mutation prove to be of only temporary benefit, being eventually counterbalanced by some harmful change in climate and physical environment? Since nearly all mutations are harmful, why should it be likely that enough favourable mutations would accumulate in such a way as to produce a progressive upward trend in organic evolution? The chances of this happening by accident rather than by the conscious design of some intelligent Creator is surely remote. After all, if the most sophisticated modern computers have only come into existence as a result of the deliberate and prolonged application of human intelligence over half a century, is it likely that the infinitely more wonderful and complicated structure of the human brains which created them, emerged by a fluke?

The inherent implausibility of Darwinism is only reinforced when one turns from the development of species to the world of micro-biology and the origins and building blocks of life. As that eminent non-Christian scientist, Professor Sir Fred Hoyle has written: "Imagine a blindfolded person trying to solve the Rubik Cube. The chances against achieving perfect colour matching is about 50,000,000,000,000,000,000 to 1. These odds are roughly the same as those against just one of our body's 200,000 proteins having evolved randomly, by chance." (The Intelligent Universe). In another of his books, Evolution From Space, co-authored with Professor C. Wickramasinghe, Fred Hoyle adds: "From the beginning of this book we have emphasised the enormous information content of even the simplest living systems. The information cannot in our view be generated by what are often called 'natural processes'...As well as a suitable physical and chemical environment, a large initial store of information was also needed. We have argued that the requisite information came from an 'intelligence'...The scientific facts throw Darwin out...but leave William Paley still in the tournament."

The Nobel Prize-winning scientist, Francis Crick, one of the joint discoverers of DNA, has also expressed similar sentiments: "An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions

which had to have been satisfied to get it going.” (Life Itself, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1981).

The likelihood, then, that life began by accident and developed into its present forms by a random and purposeless process, is almost infinitely improbable, but that is not the only difficulty faced by Darwinists like Richard Dawkins. The real challenge they face is to show how and why it is more probable that life in all its forms evolved by chance, than the alternative explanation, that it is the product of conscious design by a Divine Creator. Once the issue is seen in this light, the absurdity and implausibility of denying God’s existence is fully revealed. To quote one great British scientist from the past, Lord Kelvin, who made important discoveries in the field of thermodynamics and died in 1907: “Overwhelmingly strong proofs of intelligent ...design lie around us...The atheistic idea is so nonsensical that I cannot put it into words. “ His verdict is eloquently echoed by at least two modern scientists working in the fields of biochemistry and microbiology.

To quote Michael J. Behe, Professor of Biochemistry at Lehigh University, Pennsylvania, and the author of Darwin’s Black Box: the biochemical challenge to evolution (Simon & Schuster, 1996): “...the main argument of the discredited Paley has actually never been refuted. Neither Darwin nor Dawkins, neither science nor philosophy, has explained how an irreducibly complex system such as a watch might be produced without a designer. “ Micro-biologist, Michael Denton, agrees with him. As he concludes in his own book, Evolution: A Theory In Crisis (Adler & Adler, 1986): “Ultimately the Darwinian theory is no more nor less than the great cosmogenic myth of the twentieth century. “

God, then, is not dead, despite the best efforts of 18th, 19th and 20th century intellectuals to kill Him off. How will you respond to Him?