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A critique of Richard Dawkins and the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI)

Clinton Richard Dawkins is an English ethologist, evolutionary biologist and author. He is an emeritus fellow of New College, Oxford, and was the University of Oxford's Professor for Public Understanding of Science from 1995 until 2008.

Dawkins first came to prominence with his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*, which popularised the gene-centred view of evolution and introduced the term meme. With his book *The Extended Phenotype* (1982), he introduced into evolutionary biology the influential concept that the phenotypic effects of a gene are not necessarily limited to an organism's body, but can stretch far into the environment. In 2006, he founded the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science.

Dawkins is an atheist, and is well known for his criticism of creationism and intelligent design. In *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986), he argues against the watchmaker analogy, an argument for the existence of a supernatural creator based upon the complexity of living organisms. Instead, he describes evolutionary processes as analogous to a blind watchmaker in that reproduction, mutation, and selection are unguided by any designer. In *The God Delusion* (2006), Dawkins contends that a supernatural creator almost certainly does not exist and that religious faith is a delusion. He opposes the teaching of creationism in schools.

Richard Dawkins is one of the main gurus, if not the main, in *The Committee for Skeptical Inquiry* (CSI), formerly known as the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP).

CSI is a program within the transnational American non-profit educational organization Center for Inquiry (CFI), which seeks to "promote scientific inquiry, critical investigation, and the use of reason in examining controversial and extraordinary claims." It was founded by Paul Kurtz in 1976 as an independent non-profit organization (before merging with CFI as one of its programs in 2015, to counter what he regarded as an uncritical acceptance of, and support for, paranormal
claims by both the media and society in general. Its philosophical position is one of scientific skepticism, or, so it claims. We shall see that this is not completely true, because it is permeated with pseudoskepticism.

My inquiry (yes let´s use that word with emphasis) in this article is: why is it that Dawkins is so praised in the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry - (Center for Inquiry (CFI) and Richard Dawkins Foundation are now formally merged) - where the main virtues only can be described as the precise opposite of, what I in this article will show, is Dawkins”? I will show that it is because the underlying goal is ideology and neither science nor philosophy. Religious pseudoscience and atheistic pseudoscience are two sides of the same Matrix coin in The Matrix Conspiracy valuta (see my article The Matrix Conspiracy). My conclusion is that CSI in short is a right-wing conservative, so-called “skeptic” atheist movement. In the following I will illustrate this by investigate both sides of the coin, since New Age is part of the widely spread popular culture, which actually adopts a lot of atheistic pseudoscience.

Ok, let´s go down the rabbit hole.

Dawkins is a reductionist, and a curious oblivion (?) within CSI is precisely the complete lack of critique of reductionism.

The sciences ask limited questions about Man, or questions about specific sides of the human life. Such questions are then solved by experimenting, collecting systematical observations and from them draw up theories. The sciences collect systematical experiences and throw out theories, that can be tested through new experiences, or serve as the best explanations.

So, one crucial principle in science is, that a certain theory has to be testable. Another crucial principle is the use of abductive reasoning (inference to the best explanation).

Is it testable whether God exists or not? No! Is it testable, that the human consciousness only consists in some physical-chemical reactions in the brain, or that it only is a social construction? No!

Or if we take the often used targets in CSI: Is the best explanation for crop circles, that they have been made by extraterrestrials? Although it is undoubtedly true, that strange patterns are sometimes found in cornfields (crop circles) - it doesn’t follow that they must have been made by extraterrestrials. There is a wide range of far more plausible alternative explanations of the phenomenon, such as that they have been made by pranksters.
Pseudoscience is philosophical, political, religious/occult theories, that seek legitimacy by claiming, that they are scientifical theories, while the fact is, that they either not are testable, or that they abuse the use of abductive reasoning.

Pseudoscience is for example seen in the New Age environment, where they demand that science has to be integrated with so-called “alternative sciences”, such as Intelligent Design, Cryptozoology, Dianetics, Eugenics, Graphology, Homeopathy, Morphic Resonance, Perpetual Motion, Astrology, Personology, Phrenology, Theosophy, Physiognomy, Pyramidology, Quantum Mysticism, Quantum biology, Radionics, Time Cube, Ufology, Vitalism, and many more.

New Age pseudoscience is always based on some kind of religious or occult viewpoint (read more in my articles The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism, and Quantum mysticism and its web of lies).

But more accepted pseudosciences are seen in the intellectual environment in form of reductionisms, where they for example claim, that Man fully can be described and explained with the methods of natural science. This happens in various forms of Naturalism, Positivism and Behaviourism. Or they claim, that psychology, sociology or history can give the total and superior understanding of, what a human being is. These viewpoints are described respectively as Psychologism, Sociologism and Historism.

But all this is not testable. Often the reductionisms then claim, that their theories are the best explanations. The reductionisms observe Man from fragmented viewpoints, for example as organism, as physical-chemical system, as society being, as psyche, as producer and user of language and meaning. But what becomes of the wholeness? What unites all this knowledge to a total image of Man? The reductionisms’ explanations of this always end up as philosophical shipwrecks. Reductionisms are philosophical viewpoints, which under cover of being science seek to answer the question of Man, or reality as such. But no single branch of science gives anything else than a limited perspective on Man or reality. If the reductionisms should be taken seriously, then they shall contain a unifying perspective on all knowledge about Man.

It is unfortunate that the reductionisms are so accepted, because it is them that have created distinctions such as “Jewish” and “Aryan” physics; “bourgeois” and “socialist” biology; IQ tests; eugenics; personality typing - and a lot of other political inferences from science that have had catastrophic consequences (see for example my article Personality typing is a refined system of prejudice).

Where New Age pseudoscience typically is based on the claim that science has to integrated with occult and religious viewpoints, then the pseudoscience of
reductionism typically is based on that science has to be integrated with (or is the same as) atheistic and/or political viewpoints.

What can be a serious problem in the future, is that a new kind of pseudoscience is trying to unite New Age pseudosciences with some of the pseudosciences of reductionism (again: see my article *The Matrix Conspiracy*). Because the main target, as we shall see, of Richard Dawkins, is not New Age, it is Christianity.

Both New Age pseudoscience and the pseudoscience of reductionism are common in sharing some kind of scientism; that is: they overestimate the importance of science, for example by claiming:

1) that philosophy and religion need to be founded in science

2) that certain single branches of science can give an explanation of everything

3) that certain single branches of science are self-sufficient and that philosophy and religion are superfluous.

In New Age it happens in the demand of “alternative sciences.” In reductionism it happens in the form of pseudoskepticism.

Pseudoskepticism is an important concept in my work as a paranormal investigator, because pseudoskepticism usually is used in opposition to an assortment of questionable claims (from UFOs and paranormal phenomena to alternative medical practices to religious ideas). Pseudoskepticism refers to arguments which use scientific sounding language to disparage or refute given beliefs, theories, or claims, but which in fact fail to follow the precepts of conventional scientific skepticism (see my article *My Work as a Paranormal Investigator*).

The term “pseudoskepticism” has gradually been expanded to include any unsubstantiated invalidation of a theory.

The term was coined by professor in sociology, Marcello Truzzi. Truzzi attributed the following characteristics to pseudosceptics:

1) The tendency to deny, rather than doubt.

2) Double standards in the application of criticism

3) Tendency to discredit, rather than investigate

4) Presenting insufficient evidence or proof
5) Assuming criticism requires no burden of proof

6) Making unsubstantiated counter-claims

7) Counter-claims based on plausibility rather than empirical evidence

8) Suggesting that unconvincing evidence is grounds for completely dismissing a claim

Truzzi characterized true skepticism as:

1) Doubt rather than denial; nonbelief rather than belief

2) An agnostic position, one that says the claim is not proved rather than disproved

3) Maintains that science need not incorporate every extraordinary claim as a new “fact.”

4) As a result, has no burden to prove anything

5) Discovering an opportunity for error should make such experiments less evidential and usually unconvincing. It usually disproves the claim that the experiment was “air tight” against error, but it does not disprove the anomaly claim.

An example of pseudoskepticism within reductionism is Richard Dawkins. He is well known for his criticism of religious pseudoscience such as creationism and intelligent design, but is himself, in his atheistic faith, ending in the pseudoscience of reductionism (biologism), for example in his book *The God Delusion*.

Other examples of the pseudoscience of reductionism is the American philosopher Daniel C. Dennett (another central figure the movement of New Atheism), who in his book - with the ambitious title *Consciousness Explained* - seeks to explain consciousness, partially through computer analogies, partially through neurology and psychology.

Personally I am supporting true skepticism within science, but my method is in itself not building on science, but on philosophy. I am using critical thinking, but I am not a scientific investigator, who has to follow the precepts of conventional scientific skepticism. This is due to, that I have experienced spiritual crises and paranormal phenomena (therefore I can’t be an agnostic), but I am at the same time critical towards how to describe and behave in relation to such phenomena.

**Reductionism and philosophy**
Along with the development of the sciences the so-called reductionisms have got status of whole research programmes. After Darwin many thought, that everything could be explained biological. In Logical Empiricism materialism lived onwards in the form of Physicalism, which was about, that all sciences eventually can be reduced to classical physics – or eventually to ”the intersubjective controllable language of things”. Psychologism was one of the other ravaging reductionisms in the twentieth century. Freud and Jung thought separately, that they had the key to the understanding of diverse cultural phenomena because of the storeroom of the unconsciousness. Moreover there was Historism, which followers thought that they could generalize hermeneutics also to include the exact sciences. The latest craze in reductionism is Social Constructivism (see my article Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry). But another raising craze is the materialism of New Atheism.

Surely – many are the people, who become seduced by the reductionisms. Maybe not so strange after all: all reductionisms imply a simplification, a manageable solution to all problems, a key, which saves the supporters for having to think fundamentally over the philosophical questions – which after all only a few are capable to.

What is reductionism? Science can´t give answers to the problems of life-views and view of values. Single branches of sciences can´t out of hand answer questions about values or moral standards.

However, this they nevertheless often do, but then it ends in reductionism. And there has not been a lack of trying to understand Man from one or the other single branch of science. As already mentioned: They have for example claimed, that Man fully could be described and explained with the methods of natural science. This happens in various forms of Naturalism, Positivism and Behaviourism. Or they have thought, that psychology, sociology or history can give the total and superior understanding of, what a human being is. These viewpoints are described respectively as Psychologism, Sociologism and Historism.

These viewpoints are forms of reductionism; that is to say: they reduce or devaluate Man to a phenomenon of a single type. The problem is then to lead all other sides of Man back to this single type, for example to explain ethics, politics and mathematics as pure historical or psychological phenomena. Here the reductionisms always end in various forms of explaining away, which often is direct absurd.

The reductionisms observe Man from fragmented viewpoints, for example as organism, as physical-chemical system, as society being, as psyche, as producer and user of language and meaning. But what becomes of the wholeness? What unites all this knowledge to a total image of Man?
The reductionisms view themselves as scientific approaches, but they are not. It is here the fundamental invalidity in the reductionistic viewpoints arises, since their basis not is building on argumentation, but on the claim, that they are founded in science. But science is as mentioned not able to answer problems of life-views and values. Reductionisms are *philosophical* viewpoints, which under cover of being science seek to answer questions of values or moral standards. This is in a nutshell what Richard Dawkins books consist of. No single branch of science gives anything else than a limited perspective on Man or reality. If the reductionisms should be taken seriously, then they shall contain a unifying perspective on all knowledge about Man.

Dawkins is using philosophy and not science. Therefore he has to respond to the demands of philosophy. And here it goes all wrong for him. Our wonder over Man becomes philosophy, when it reaches the question of Man as such. Philosophy throws out answers to the question, argues for the answers and investigates their consequences. This happens first of all by reflecting and meditating over the things, not in a experience-scientific way.

Philosophy is in that way a deepening of our everyday understanding. It is a reflection over well-known subjects. Its answers lie in continuation of our immediate knowledge and understanding. Similar you can say, that philosophy is a deepening of the forms of understanding, which lie in for example science, art and religion.

Philosophy seeks for *oneness* and *coherence*. This means, that it both ask for the fundamental trait of the essence of Man, and for how all other traits of Man is connected therewith. The answer to, what the essence of Man is, has to throw a light of transfiguration over everything we know about man.

Philosophy asks the most universal question about Man, the *common* or *universal* which all of us have part in, in spite of the fact that we can behave so different and be studied in so many various ways. Here it is about what, we can call the essence of Man, and the question is solved, not by experimenting, collecting systematical observations and from them draw up theories. It is only solved by reflecting and meditating over everything we already know about Man, and by searching for oneness and coherence in it.

The sciences ask limited questions about Man, or questions about specific sides of the human life. Philosophy asks the most universal question about Man. The sciences collect systematical experiences and throw out theories, that can be determined by new experiences. Philosophy uses alone the tool of reflection and meditation.
Reductionisms are philosophical viewpoints, because they seek to answer the question about Man as such, but as philosophical viewpoints they are cognitional and ethical shipwrecks.

Let us first try to look at the cognitional shipwreck. The truth, which philosophy seeks to achieve, is a truth that raises over human views, yes over the whole of the human existence. That something is true means in philosophical sense, that it is true independently of, who claims it, and when it is claimed. And independently of, whether anybody at all has claimed it, thought it, believed it or knows it. Truths are therefore, in philosophical context, both time-independent and idea- and consciousness-independent.

Since all philosophical views qua views claim to be true in precisely this sense (also relativism and subjectivism!!), then it should be clear, that views, which try to reduce or cause explain all views, are self-refuting views.

A self-refuting view can’t be saved by saying, that it shall apply to all views except itself. For in that case you have to accept, that there exists at least one scientific and/or philosophical doctrine, which are independent of what you seek to reduce everything to, and this is precisely what the understanding itself claims, that there isn’t.

So, it seems to be a common trait of the self-refuting philosophical views, that they pull the carpet away under themselves, because they seek to reduce fundamental concepts such as ”meaning”, ”truth”, and ”validity” to something factual, for example physical, biological, psychological, social or historical. Herewith they at the same time claim, that if these conditions had been different (because they are changeable), then all our concepts about meaning, truth and validity also had to be different. But therewith they deprive themselves the possibility for being regarded as meaningful, true or valid.

Let us now try to look at the ethical shipwreck, which the reductionisms lead us out in.

My concept of Illuminati is based on the rise of pseudoscience. As suggested, there are especially two kinds of pseudoscience: 1) the pseudoscience of New Age, which demands “alternative” sciences with spiritual content. 2) The pseudoscience of reductionism, which connect their “sciences” with certain atheistic and/or political views.
Both are a part of The Matrix Conspiracy because they both support subjectivism and relativism, which are a fundamental philosophy of this ideology. In the following I will concentrate about reductionism.

The heredity and environment ideology and the problem of mind

When you today ask: what is a human being? Then most people answer, that Man ”is a product of heredity and environment”. This has become a whole ideology in the Western world, and a fundamental part of the Illuminati aspect of The Matrix Conspiracy. It is actually a kind of sociobiology, or social Darwinism.

Both Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett advocate some kind of sociobiology. Social biology became notorious in 1975, when the American biologist Edward O. Wilson published a major treatise on the subject: *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*. Accusations of sexism and racism were leveled because Wilson suggested that Western social systems are biologically innate, and that in some respects males are stronger, more aggressive, more naturally promiscuous than females. Critics argued that all social biology is in fact a manifestation of Social Darwinism, a nineteenth-century philosophy owing more to the English philosopher Herbert Spencer, than to Charles Darwin, supposedly legitimating extreme laissez-faire economics and an unbridled societal struggle for existence.

But the search for a synthesis of the heredity and environment split, a holism, is common in the pseudoscience of reductionism.

Within the pseudoscience of New Age the American physicist Fritjof Capra, has in his book, *The Turning Point*, outlined an ideology, where he combines quantum mysticism with reductionism, especially reductionisms such as historism and sociologism (read more in my article *Quantum mysticism and its web of lies*).

And, since the first publication of his ideas at the age of 23, the American New Age guru, Ken Wilber, has also sought to bring together the world´s far-ranging spiritual teachings, philosophies, and scientific truths into one coherent and all-embracing vision. This integral map of the *Kosmos* (the universe that includes the physical cosmos as well as the realms of consciousness and spirit) should then offer an unprecedented guide to discovering your highest potentials.

Wilber introduces his vision by saying, that during the last 30 years we have witnessed a historical first: all of the world´s cultures are now available to us. In the past, if you were born, say, a Chinese, you likely spent your entire life in one culture,
often in one province, sometimes in one house, living and loving and dying on one small plot of land. But today, not only are people geographical mobile, we can study, and have studied, virtually every known culture on the planet. In the global village, all cultures are exposed to each other.

Knowledge itself is now global, Wilber claims. This means that, also for the first time, the sum total of human knowledge is available to us – the knowledge, experience, wisdom and reflection of all major human civilizations – premodern, modern, and postmodern – are open to study by anyone.

Wilber asks: What if we took literally everything that all the various cultures have to tell us about human potential – about spiritual growth, psychological growth, social growth – and put it all on the table? What if we attempted to find the critically essential keys to human growth, based on the sum total of human knowledge now open to us? What if we attempted, based on extensive cross-cultural study, to use all of the world´s great traditions to create a composite map, a comprehensive map, an all-inclusive or integral map that included the best elements from all of them?

Wilber asks: Sound complicated, complex, daunting? In a sense, it is, he answers. But in another sense, he continues, the results turn out to be surprisingly simple and elegant. Over the last several decades, there has indeed been an extensive search for a comprehensive map of human potentials. This map uses all the known systems and models of human growth – from the ancient shamans and sages to today´s breakthrough in cognitive science – and distills their major components into 5 simple factors, factors that are the essential elements or keys to unlocking and facilitating human evolution.

Ken Wilber calls these 5 elements quadrants, levels, lines, states and types; that is: quadrants of development, levels or stages of development, states of consciousness, and a human personality typing system, a typology. All of these elements are, right now available in your own awareness, he claims. These 5 elements are not merely theoretical concepts; they are aspects of your own experience, contours of your own consciousness.

What is the point of using this integral map or model, Wilber asks. First, whether you are working in business, medicine, psychotherapy, law, ecology, or simply everyday living and learning, the integral map helps make sure that you are “touching all the bases.” If you are flying over the Rocky Mountains, the more accurate a map you have, the less likely you will crash. An integral approach insures that you are utilizing the full range of resources for any situation, with the greater likelihood of success.
Second, if you learn to spot these 5 elements in your own awareness – and because they are there in any event – then you can more easily appreciate them, exercise them, use them...and thereby vastly accelerate your own growth and development to higher, wider, deeper ways of being. A simple familiarity with the 5 elements in the integral model will help you orient yourself more easily and fully in this exiting journey of discovery and awakening (read more in my article A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method).

In is very popular (if not directly a doctrine) in New Age, inspired by Theosophy, and writers such as Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber, to term their positions as “Holism”. But both Theosophy, Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber’s systems, can be seen as substantive philosophies of history; that is: searches for overall meaning in human history; searches for models of everything (read my articles Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr and The fascism of Theosophy).

In the West, substantive philosophy of history is thought to begin only in the Christian era. In the City of God, Augustine wonders why Rome flourished while pagan, yet fell into disgrace after its conversion to Christianity. Divine reward and punishment should apply to whole peoples, not just to individuals. The unfolding of events in history should exhibit a plan that is intelligible rationally, morally, and (for Augustine) theologically. As a believer Augustine is convinced that there is such a plan, though it may not always be evident.

In the modern period, philosophers such as Vico and Herder also sought such intelligibility in history. They also believed in a long-term direction or purpose of history that is often opposed to and makes use of the purposes of individuals. The most elaborate and best-known example of this approach is found in Hegel, who thought that the gradual realization of human freedom could be discerned in history even if much slavery, tyranny, and suffering are necessary in the process.

Marx, too, claimed to know the laws – in his case economic – according to which history unfolds. Similar searches for overall “meaning” in human history have been undertaken in the twentieth century, notably by Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) author of the twelve-volume Study of History, and Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), author of Decline of the West.

The main problem with all the above theories, are that they, in different ways, reduce consciousness to heredity and environment. They also commit the thought distortion Nondual bias (see my book A Dictionary of Thought Distortions).

If Man only is a product of heredity and environment, then he has no longer any responsibility for his actions. Even the murderer, who is standing accused in court, is
able to defend himself with, that he basically can´t help, that he has committed a
murder. Firstly he was born with some unfortunate genes, which made, that he wasn´t
all too clever. Therefore he was bullied in the school, and thereby he was developed
to become aggressive and hot tempered. All this caused, that he in a certain situation
committed a murder, but this he could not help. Heredity and environment led him
precisely to this situation. Guilty? No, many people would say today, he is no more
guilty, than a person is to blame, that he came to cough in a place filled with smoke.
No, on the whole it is society and environment, which are to blame for the murder.

When you are advocating a reductionism and are claiming, that Man is nothing else
than for example a product of heredity and environment, then concepts such as
responsibility, guilt and duty loose all meaning. And it becomes meaningless to talk
about human ideals. Why admire people, who have achieved something great? They
have only good genes and a beneficially environment. Why condemn people, who
spoil and break down society? They can´t help it.

The self-help industry, and its belonging therapeutic techniques, thereby exposes the
paradox, that the more resource-filled a human being is conceived to be, the more it
has to be supported therapeutic. The more self-actualizing a human being becomes,
the more it is in need of help to actualize itself. And the more responsibility a human
being is said to have for its own life, the more this same human being, as a basic
starting point, is considered as a victim, as non-authentic, and therefore as powerless.

The one face of this paradoxical Janus head is the empowerment culture, the other
face is the victimization culture (and the connected recovery movement). Read more
about this paradox in my articles The Four Philosophical Hindrances and Openings,
The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why
I am an Apostle of Loafing, and Self-help and the Mythology of Authenticity).

Typical enough (foolish enough), then heredity and environment also are being used
as a political tool. Often with followers on the respective sides of the extremities. In
the dispute between heredity and environment it is for example considered political
progressively ("left wing") to think, that the environment is more or less the sole
decisive factor. The environment (upbringing, social conditions) is people themselves
in the principle able to control and change through political actions. This is also
background for, that Lamarckism in the form of Lysenkoism – which almost
completely refuses the biological genetic meaning – got monopoly on engaging
themselves with heredity in Soviet.

Similar it is regarded as political reactionary ("right wing"), if you believe, that the
hereditament (genes) of the individual is the most important factor, which determines
its actual development. Ideological this is connected with, that in that case a social
reformatory policy is not for a lot of benefit: the biological inheritance has so far been a destiny, which you have to tolerate. Right wing politicians have for example claimed, that aggression or competition is inborn in the biological nature of man. Therewith the assertion can be used to justify, that specific social conditions, for example warfare or the capitalistic, economical system, is ”natural”. Evolutionism ”proves” that the unlimited competition is as natural, as the survival of the best fitted. Moreover we know Nazism´s use of biological theories.

As mentioned, the combination of the two extremeties – the heredity and environment ideology – looks like a kind of social Darwinism. Before we go further it is important to mention, that evolutionism – also in its most modern Neodarwinistic version – is a natural historical report, and not a natural scientific theory. Neodarwinism can – as all other historical sciences – only retrospective explain the development up to now in a rational way. This appears clearly from the fact, that it can´t give any scientific well-founded prediction of the future development. It is not possible with any reasonable precision to predict the future biological development on the background of the theoretical foundation of evolutionism.

Until today Man has not been able to do anything in order to change his genes. This has been changed with the modern genetic engineering, which already in principle has made it possible to change the genes of our gametes. In the future the problem about conscious changing peoples´ genes in order to improve certain characteristics is not any technical difficulty. It is in turn a serious ethical and political problem about setting limits and about, where these limits have to be set.

As mentioned in my article The fascism of Theosophy, then the reductionism of Theosophy is due to the attempt of synthesizing spirituality and science. Theosophy is especially inspired by Darwinism, and its theories about human evolution. And the idea continues today in New Age and Ufology, where spirituality, apart from Darwinism, furthermore is sought synthesized with new developments within psychology, psychotherapy, natural science, especially biology and quantum mechanics. The whole thing is presented as an ideology with a lot of attempts to predict the future evolution of Man, often connected with eugenics: the applied “science” or the bio-social movement (social Darwinism) which advocates the use of practises aimed at improving the genetic composition of people, usually referring to human populations (see for example my articles A critique of The Human Design System, Time travel and the Fascism of The WingMakers Project and The New Feminsim and the Philosophy of Women´s Magazines).

But it could also be, that it is wrong to say, that Man only is a product of heredity and environment. Has science really proven this assertion? No, it hasn´t. Firstly science till today has not been able to give any explanation of, that we have a consciousness,
that we are conscious about ourselves and are able to reflect and meditate over our own wishes, actions and doings. In natural science all explanations are quantitative; that is to say: they are given within the frames of, what can be measured, scaled and counted. It speaks from an outside-and-in perspective on Man. But when we speak about everything, that the word consciousness covers – thoughts, feelings, considerations, pains etc. – then it seems quite clear, that it is not something that is quantitative. When we are using an inside-and-out perspective and describe our states of consciousness and our experiences of, what we think is beautiful, ugly, attractive, repelling etc., - then we use a completely other language than the quantitative language of natural science. So how should one be able to reduce everything to natural science?

The interesting is however, that the more science develops, the more you have to give up backgrounds, which once occured evident to everyone. In nuclear physics and the quantum mechanics we have learned, that there exist processes, which is not cause determined, and which do not follow the old rule about, that everything has to be continuous. Brain functions are in a wide extent quantum mechanical, and since the quantum mechanics breaks with the principle of causation and determinism, then the human brain is not fully a cause determined system. And then you can’t up from the ground explain brain processes from genetical and environmental factors.

(Read more in my article Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr, where I also present, not an ontological dualism, but an epistemological, a so-called gnoseological dualism. Unambiguous description has the distinction between subject and object as a necessary precondition. And the fact itself, that we have to discriminate between subject and object in order to communicate unambiguous, actually indicates, that both materialism and idealism (subjectivism/relativism) are mistaken points of views).

Just as inexplicable is it, what an "I" or a "Self" is. I wake up in the morning, and I know, that I am the same as yesterday or ten years ago, in spite of the fact that my body since then has changed look and that the content of my thoughts in many ways has become something else. What is this ”Me”?

It is not my body, because then I should each morning go out in the bathroom and look in the mirror, in order to find out who I am. Nor is it the content of my consciousness, my thoughts and my memories, because then I first had to evoke a line of memories each morning, before I knew who I am. The whole of the total science has no explanation of, what a ”Self” is, or what personal identity is.
In this there also lies another factor, namely the question about the free will, the possibility of Man consciously to decide on his own present condition and within some limits to make a free choice.

Meanwhile I mean, that the concept of free will and free choice is unfortunate concepts. In my understanding the will is the will to power, and belongs to the Ego, which makes it choices on background of the past, and which therefore is determined by both its personal and collective history. Therefore the Ego always strives towards being something else than what it is, it imitates others, are a slave of others ideas and ideals, and its actions are characterized by irresoluteness and doubt. A more fortunate concept would in my understanding be the freedom that lies in the existential concept of being yourself; that is: where you live in accordance with your own essence and thereby achieve authenticity, autonomy, decisiveness and power of action. I will therefore use the concepts of freedom of action and freedom of decisiveness.

The assertion that Man is nothing else than a product of heredity and environment, has become an ideology, a part of the planlessness of our welfare society, where no one is responsible, where no one can help anything, where everything is to blame the genes or the society. However facing this reductionism you can place a more true understanding, which has science on its side: Man is a product of heredity and environment, yes, but also of your own consciousness about yourself.

I am born with some specific genes, which to a high degree put limits for, what I am able to and not able to. In some ways I have had good growing up conditions, in others bad. But I have since my childhood been conscious about myself and my surroundings, and have more or less freely been able to decide on something, rather than something else, within some limits. So therefore I am not only a product of heredity and environment, but also a person, which has become what I am, due to a line of decisions, which I have made through life.

It is a viewpoint between two extremes. On the one hand we have the assertion, that no one can help, that he is as he is. No one is able to change himself. My answer is: yes, you can. You can within some given limits work with yourself, and conscious decide to reflect and meditate over your background, your past, your environment, the whole of your character. You can decide to start a spiritual practice, which you know in longer term will change your outlook and way of being. In a spiritual practice you can change yourself quite considerably.

On the other hand we have Sartre’s assertion about, that a person’s life is determined alone by all the choices, he makes; that is to say: by the evaluations, which the inner thinker makes by saying yes and no, justifying and condemning, accepting and denying. But this is an overstatement, which sounds a bit too much of ”everyone is
the architect of his own fortunes”. Moreover there is the problem with the Ego and its thought distortions (see my book *A Dictionary of Thought Distortions*).

It is therefore not true, that freedom lies in choosing to become what you want to. You can for example without guilt become beaten down by an assailant, so that you have to spend the rest of your life in a wheelchair. Here it is so so with being the architect of your own fortunes.

Truth lies in the middle of these extremes. Heredity and environment put some limits for, what we can do and not can do. But our self and our consciousness, which scientifically seen can’t be explained alone from heredity and environment, makes us capable running to decide on, how we want to react in a lot of the situations, life puts us in. Therefore you can in some situations talk about a personal responsibility.

**Alister McGrath on Dawkins**

It would be fair to put Dawkins’ allegations towards Christianity up against a Christian answer. Alister Edgar McGrath is a Northern Irish theologian, priest, intellectual historian, scientist, and Christian apologist. He currently holds the Andreas Idreos Professorship in Science and Religion in the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford, and is Professor of Divinity at Gresham College. He was previously Professor of Theology, Ministry, and Education at King’s College London and Head of the Centre for Theology, Religion and Culture, Professor of Historical Theology at the University of Oxford, and was principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, until 2005. He is an Anglican priest.

McGrath is noted for his work in historical theology, systematic theology, and the relationship between science and religion, as well as his writings on apologetics. He is also known for his opposition to New Atheism and antireligionism and his advocacy of theological critical realism. Among his best-known books are *The Twilight of Atheism*, *The Dawkins Delusion*, *Dawkins' God: Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life*.

McGrath criticizes Richard Dawkins for what he perceives to be "a dogmatic conviction" to "a religious fundamentalism which refuses to allow its ideas to be examined or challenged." I’m not a Christian, but I deeply agree with McGrath, and will therefore let him speak of his own. People can hereafter study his works for themselves.

He objects to Dawkins' assertion that faith is a juvenile delusion, arguing that numerous reasonable persons chose to convert as adults. He cites himself and Antony Flew as two specific examples. Like Dawkins, McGrath rejects William
Paley's Watchmaker analogy as specious. To express his true feelings on the subject of Irreducible complexity, McGrath instead cites the work of Richard Swinburne, remarking that the capacity of science to explain itself requires its own explanation – and that the most economical and reliable account of this explanatory capacity lies in the notion of the monotheistic God of Christianity. When considering the subject of Aquinas' Quinque viae, to which Dawkins devotes considerable attention, McGrath interprets the theologian's arguments as an affirmation of a set of internally consistent beliefs rather than as an attempt to formulate a set of irrefutable proofs.

McGrath proceeds to address whether religion specifically conflicts with science. He points to Gould's supposition of Non-overlapping magisteria, or NOMA, as evidence that Darwinism is as compatible with theism as it is with atheism. With additional reference to the works of Sir Martin Rees, Denis Noble, and others, McGrath advocates a modified version of NOMA which he terms "partially-overlapping magisteria". He posits that Science and Religion co-exist as equally valid explanations for two partially overlapping spheres of existence, where the former concerns itself primarily with the temporal, and the latter concerns itself primarily with the spiritual, but where both can occasionally intertwine. McGrath confirms his position by suggesting that some scientists are also theists, pointing specifically to Owen Gingerich, Francis Collins and Paul Davies as examples.

McGrath criticizes Dawkins' portrayal of religion as both an evolutionary by-product and as a memetic virus. McGrath examines Dawkins' use of Russell's teapot analogy as well as the basics of Dawkins' theory of Memetics. McGrath criticizes Dawkins for referencing Frazer's The Golden Bough as an authority on anthropology, as he considers the work to be more of "a highly impressionistic early work" than a serious text. McGrath also points to Dawkins' lack of training in psychology as indicative of an inability to address the most important questions of faith.

Quoting Dawkins' description of the Old Testament God as "a petty, unjust ... capriciously malevolent bully", McGrath counters that he does not believe in such a god and knows no one personally who does. Setting aside Dawkins' remarks, McGrath instead points to Jesus and the New Testament as superior examples of the true nature of Christianity. "Jesus", McGrath argues, "...was the object, not the agent, of violence". McGrath suggests that "far from endorsing 'out-group hostility', Jesus commanded an ethic of 'out-group affirmation' and Christians may certainly be accused of failing to live up to this command. But it is there, right at the heart of the Christian ethic". He believes that Dawkins is right when he argues that it is necessary to critique religion, and right to demand that there be an external criterion for interpreting texts; but argues that Dawkins appears unaware that religions and their texts possess internal means of reform and renewal, and that
Dawkins seems unaware of the symbolism of several of the Bible passages which he quotes. McGrath cites the works of numerous authors, including Kenneth I. Pargament, Harold G. Koenig, and Terry Eagleton, to demonstrate how closely he feels religious faith to be tied to well-being.

The Dawkins Delusion? concludes with the suggestions that belief in God has "rebounded", that Dawkins' work is more theatre than scholarship, and that The God Delusion denotes little more than "panic" on the part of non-believers.

In his book *Dawkins’ God – from the Selfish Gene to The God Delusion*, McGrath begins with an overview of evolutionary biology and Darwinist theory. He then presents Dawkins’ view that the current state of scientific knowledge should lead a rational person to conclude that there is no God. McGrath argues that Dawkins fails to declare or defend several crucial assumptions or premises. McGrath also defends other conclusions in the book, including:

1) the scientific method cannot conclusively prove that God does or does not exist;

2) the theory of evolution does not necessarily entail any particular atheistic, agnostic, or Christian understanding of the world;

3) Dawkins' refutation of William Paley's watchmaker analogy does not equate to a refutation of God’s existence;

4) Dawkins' proposal that memes explain the evolutionary development of human culture is more illogical and unscientific than a clearly articulated defence of Christianity;

5) Dawkins is ignorant of Christian theology and mischaracterizes religious people generally.

McGrath argues that Dawkins' rejection of faith is a straw man argument. According to McGrath, Dawkins’ definition that faith “means blind trust, in the absence of evidence” is not a Christian position. In contrast, argues McGrath, accepting Dawkins’ definition would require blind trust since he offers no evidence to support it. Rather, it is based upon what McGrath calls “an unstated and largely unexamined cluster of hidden non-scientific values and beliefs” (p. 92). McGrath then argues that Dawkins frequently violates the very tenets of evidence-based reasoning that Dawkins himself claims to uphold and use to dismiss all religious belief.
Also on page 92, McGrath states "... Darwinism neither proves nor disproves the existence of God (unless, of course God is defined by his critics in precisely such a way...)."

**Conclusive comments on Richard Dawkins and the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI)**

The best criticism of Dawkins's writings about religion is that they're not based on empirical studies of religious phenomena; that he doesn't seem aware of the assumptions he makes; and that he makes assertions without backing them up with evidence.

For example, Dawkins criticizes (mocks, perhaps?) describing children as Christian, Muslim, etc.. He claims that to describe a child as Christian is to attribute to them an intellectual understanding and acceptance of Christian doctrine that they do not have.

But, is this what Christians mean when they describe a child as Christian? That's easy enough to investigate - you could ask them.

In Catholicism a child becomes a member of the Catholic church through the sacrament of baptism. During the sacrament the child's God parents make vows on their behalf (e.g. Do you reject Satan and all of his empty promises?), which the priest explains by pointing out that the child isn't capable of taking the vows on their own behalf. The priest also makes clear that the parents and God parents are responsible for ensuring the child is educated in Catholic teachings until they can make the vows on their own behalf.

So, clearly, within Catholicism describing a child as Catholic doesn't attribute an intellectual understanding and acceptance of Catholic doctrine to them. It indicates their membership in a Catholic community.

With this in mind, Dawkins' critique is based on attributing a meaning to someone else's statement that exists in his head, not theirs and the absurdity he finds in the phenomena stems from his own lack of comprehension. That's a minor point, but it illustrates a greater trend in Dawkins' (and other skepticists) approach to religion - he relies on his unexamined assumptions more than an actual investigation into what he's discussing. Pseudoskepticism in a nutshell.

So, here are five key problems with Dawkin's attack on faith:

1) Dawkins attacks on religion are a strawperson attack on faith.
2) Dawkins uses over-generalization/guilt by association to attack faith. Using Islam to inspire stereotype, bias, and hate against people who are Christians. That's pretty absurd. He is using thought distortions up the throat (he is a sophist, not a philosopher – see my book *A Dictionary of Thought Distortions*).

3) Dawkins doesn't take an honest look at Christianity. Either from the perspective of anthropology, theology, or history.

4) Dawkins doing philosophy, not science (he is a reductionist and reductionism is, as shown, philosophy not science – and Dawkins “philosophy” is a philosophical shipwreck – as mentioned: he is a sophist, not a philosopher).

5) Dawkins criticisms of God and cultural relativism offset each other. (Moreover: reductionism is itself relativism (in biologism it’s subjectivism, and therefore self-refuting).

Dawkins, when he cites a religious figure, cites only the worst ones. He never says, but does imply, that all religious persons are either as bad as the Taliban or would become so bad if given the chance. Reduction ad Absurdum since it with the same weight could be used against Atheism, for example Stalin, etc., etc.

The result of Dawkins' stance is that I sometimes hear this, when I criticize someone's rhetoric, I am told, in effect: "What gives you the right to complain when atheists criticize? After all, religious people [commit these atrocities]..." I don’t know who it is they are referring to, since I’m not a Christian, but have my own teaching, Meditation as an Art of Life. But, I´m met with all their prejudices about Christians. Because a such I must be. The implied assumption that Christian are idiots permeates them in every sentence.

What is more: when I ask what it means that Christians such as Desmond Tutu are the opposite of the fanatical barbarians that my opponent implies are "true Christians," I hear that their Christianity is irrelevant to their virtues. This argument is blatantly unfair. You could continue with another Reductio ad Absurdum argument. Dawkins would obvious be excited to erase the world from all the Christians (the implied idiots) who have created the great Christian art, literature and music (Back, Mozart, etc.,etc.), which must (with his own words) be hijacked by an infectious malignant god-virus, because god is delusion a “psychotic delinquent” invented by mad deluded people. Something Dawkins, and his “skeptic” followers are raised above.
This of course raises the question: should we then live in Dawkins’ incredible grey and boring Brave New World, because it is “rational”? Who is deluded here?

While Dawkins does admit to deist views, he continues to insist that these do not count ... similar to the unfair arguments I have heard regarding Christians. I am not a Christian; I am also not a Jew, and that does not mean I would support anyone who cries "Death to Jews."

The worst thing Dawkins did in his book was to misquote Robert M. Pirsig out of context. "When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion, it is called religion." (p. 28)

This is not what Pirsig said. Dawkins apparently does not know what Pirsig believes; or perhaps he finds it convenient to ignore it. He is citing Pirsig's second book, Lila, but proceeds to ignore much else that Pirsig believes.

Pirsig stated clearly that "sanity" for him represents conformity to cultural values. Being "sane" then is not necessarily to be in touch with reality; and to be "insane" is not necessarily to be out of touch with reality. (p 381-85).

Pirsig also stated that his goal in comparing religion to insanity is "not to undercut religion but to illuminate insanity." (p. 433) He also states that "an insane delusion can't be held by a group at all. A person isn't considered insane if there are a number of people who believe the same way. Insanity isn't supposed to be a communicable disease..." (p 432)

His approach to insanity is opposite that of Dawkins.

Pirsig's view of insanity is more nuanced than Dawkins' view, and to misquote Pirsig is perhaps the lowest blow Dawkins has resorted to in this book.

Philosophy is the opposite of pre-emptive mockery, because it seems like pointless cruelty. And few people indeed would appreciate receiving it.

Not all Christians are deluded. Not all Christians insist that the Earth is ±6000 years old or that evolution is some sort of "godless doctrine." In my personal experience, Christians who did believe these things were in the minority, and most other Christians were embarrassed by their antics.

To begin with mockery, then, is to be unfair to the Christians who are not as deluded; and for those who are, it is pointless cruelty. It is like throwing sand in a bull's face.
When Christians (or other religious people) pick a fight, we should fight back. The problem is when Dawkins (or one of his disciples) begins with an attack, he is making his opponents look better than they are. He is sinking down to their level, though he seems unable to realize this.

As McGrath points out: Dawkins should have read Pirsig more closely: Pirsig described people's reactions to insanity as analogous to how orthodox believers treat heretics.

Dawkins disdains, through mockery, the idea that he comes off as fanatically as some of the most offensive believers do. Nonetheless, that is the message he gives.

And there it is.

Dawkins is unfair to religion, has a limited definition of God, has misquoted Pirsig, and often appears to be as fanatical as some of his opponents.

When he speaks about philosophy (and theology) despite having no background whatsoever in either subject, he ends up making a fool of himself in the eyes of people who know better. For example, his explanation of how our sense of morality evolved is utterly nonsense. He's a popular figure (with tons of sycophants), not an academic one, he may be respected as an evolutionist, but when it comes to philosophy and theology, most people with a background in either know that Dawkins is competent in neither.

_The God Delusion_ trumpets the fact that its author was recently voted one of the world’s three leading intellectuals (which only says something about the Zeitgeist of the Matrix). This survey took place among the readers of _Prospect_ magazine in November 2005. So what did this same _Prospect_ magazine make of the book? Its reviewer was shocked at this “incurious, dogmatic, rambling, and self-contradictory” book. The title of the review? “Dawkins the dogmatist”.

Now, let´s end with the beginning: Richard Dawkins is one of the main gurus, if not the main, in The Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI), formerly known as the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP). CSI is a program within the transnational American non-profit educational organization Center for Inquiry (CFI), which seeks to "promote scientific inquiry, critical investigation, and the use of reason in examining controversial and extraordinary claims."
Center for Inquiry (CFI) and Richard Dawkins Foundation are, as we mentioned, now formally merged.

If you dare to go into a forum of these dogmatists, trying to have a sober and rational discussion about something which is not shared by the members, you will be bullied out by people parroting Dawkins in every sentence. Indeed, New Agers are skilled internet trolls, they have tried their tricks on me several times. But I have never experienced a more sinister way of internet trolling than the one that comes from atheists (on the nature of internet trolling, see my article The Curse of the Internet Troll). That leads to the final point:

**The lack of Skepticism among Skeptics**

Confirming the above: The Conceptual Penis as a Social Construct: A Sokal-Style Hoax on Gender Studies is a new article in the Skeptic Magazine which are going the rounds among prominent members of the skeptic community. It is an attempt to take down the field of gender studies by getting a “Sokal-style” hoax article published (read my article The Sokal Hoax).

But, but: have you ever witnessed a prank gone wrong? If not, here you go: This is precisely what happened when the philosopher and mathematician, Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay, respectively, had the article published in a journal called Cogent Social Sciences. The article was simultaneously published in the magazine Skeptic.

The project was loudly advertised as a “hoax on gender studies.” It primarily aimed to expose what the authors presume to be the nonsensical absurdity of gender studies, an interdisciplinary field that attempts to understand gender identity and how these identities play out in society.

Yet Boghossian and Lindsay’s prank article unambiguously failed to do this and ultimately have exposed and harmed the skeptic community itself. First, the open-access journal that published their article requests that authors pay to publish. In the case of Cogent Social Sciences, the recommended fee is a whopping $1,350. Boghossian and Lindsay were, for unknown reasons, asked to pay less than half of this, namely $625, but the journal apparently never got around to actually requesting the money. Boghossian has repeatedly declared on social media that he and his colleague paid “nada” for the article’s publication, which taken out of context is patently misleading.

Furthermore, their article was initially rejected by a serious journal, “NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies”. But they were referred to the smaller
outlet, ‘Cogent Social Sciences’, that offers publication where you ‘pay what you like’ (and, apparently, they didn’t pay anything).

Which raises a very important question: why are the titans of the skeptic/rationalist community being pointedly irrational, when it comes to the reason this hoax was published?

The article in Skeptic Magazine highlights how regularly people will vastly lower their standards of skepticism and rationality if a piece of information is seen as confirmation of a pre-existing belief – in this instance, the belief that gender studies is fatally compromised by seething man-hate seen in connection with Capitalism and climate change (as I have said many times: an ideology always have an anti-ideology, which they projects onto everyone that doesn’t agree with them – see my article The Difference between Philosophical Education and Ideological Education). All these things was what Sokal avoided.

The standard machinery of rationality would have triggered a moment of doubt – ‘perhaps we’ve not put in enough work to separate the signal from the noise’, or ‘perhaps we need to tease apart the factors more carefully’.

That slow, deliberative mechanism of self-assessment is non-existent in the authorship and sharing of this piece. It seems quite likely that this is due largely to a pre-existing hostility towards gender studies, ‘identity politics’ and the general focus of contemporary progressive America.

It seems the conclusions drawn from Boghossian’s hoax go beyond post-hoc rationalisation and into a more recent trend in conservativism, where an irrational idea is accepted not because it conforms to that person’s beliefs, but because it contravenes the beliefs of ideological opponents.

Perhaps, on some level, authors like Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Steven Pinker and Michael Shermer recognized that significantly more effort and analytical rigour was needed to come anywhere near a comprehensive conclusion about an entire field, but that niggling feeling was buried deep beneath the visceral thrill of seeing their ideological opponents dealt a mighty blow.

This reveals just how problematic the pay-to-publish model can be, even tainting the peer-review process — which in the best of circumstances can be flawed. But the fact that Bohannon got the phony paper published is not an indictment of science itself. Why would it be? To show that the intellectual values of a field are fundamentally flawed, one would need to publish in the best journals of that field and trick genuine
experts into believing the hoax is a non-hoax. That was what mathematician and physicist Alan Sokal did in the notorious “Sokal affair,” which attempted to unveil the obscurantist vacuity of some postmodern theory.

In connection with the Sokal Hoax I raised the question: How, given the recent and sorry story of ideologically motivated conceptions of knowledge – Lysenkoism in Stalin’s Soviet Union, for example, or Nazi critiques of “Jewish science” – could it again have become acceptable to behave in this way?

At that time the question was aimed at the left-wing postmodernism, which Sokal exposed. Sadly enough, now this article in the Skeptic magazine has shown the precise same thing going on in the right-wing conservative, so-called “skeptic” atheist movement. But, as I have shown above in the case of Richard Dawkins: all real scientific skeptics knew it.

The Postmodern-generator, the random nonsense computer used to generate much of the content of the hoax paper, is available here.

All articles and books referred to are available in free PDF Versions. Links can be found on my blog: www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com

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