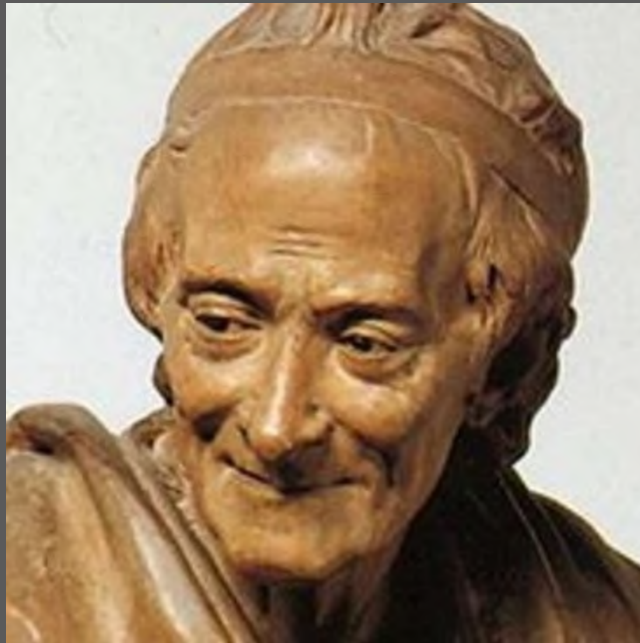


# THE POMPOUS ATHEIST



Michael Baker

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Essays on Atheism and Atheists

# THE POMPOUS ATHEIST

**Michael Baker**

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The author, Michael Baker, is a retired lawyer who spent some 35 years, first as a barrister and then as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. His authority to offer the commentary and criticism on the philosophical and theological issues embraced in the text lies in his having studied at the feet of Fr Austin M Woodbury S.M., Ph.D., S.T.D., foremost philosopher and theologian of the Catholic Church in Australia in the twentieth century, and his assistant teachers at Sydney's Aquinas Academy, John Ziegler, Geoffrey Deegan B.A., Ph.D. and Donald Boland LL.B, Ph.D., between 1964 and 1971.

This work is the fruit of cooperation between the author and Dr Mark Smith who has managed the website [superflumina.org](http://superflumina.org) for the best part of twenty years.

Cover — *The atheist François-Marie Aroet (Voltaire) 1694-1778 by sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon*

*Ad Majoriam Dei Gloriam*



Our Lady of Perpetual Succour

Ave Regina Caelorum, Ave Domina Angelorum.  
Salve Radix, Salve Porta, ex qua mundo Lux est orta ;  
Gaude Virgo Gloriosa, super omnes speciosa :  
Vale, O valde decora, et pro nobis Christum exora.

V. Ora pro nobis sancta Dei Genetrix.  
R. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.

# THE POMPOUS ATHEIST

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## INTRODUCTION

In his celebrated television series of the 1960s, *Civilisation*, Sir Colin Clark described the face of Voltaire by Houdon as ‘the smile of reason’ and the Enlightenment as the age of reason. But the reason of the Enlightenment was a disordered reason, more mad than rational, a reason removed from its proper setting in reality, the whole of reality not just that part the ‘enlightened’ thinker thought important. The disorder was to show itself in the revolution in France that followed. There is a parallel in the influence the appalling Sartre exercised over Cambodia’s murderous Pol Pot. The mindset of the Enlightenment recalls Chesterton’s remark that the madman is not the one who has lost his reason but the one who has lost everything except his reason.

Purists will deny Voltaire was an atheist; insist he was a deist, one who accepted God’s existence but rejected all Divine revelation: a ‘freethinker’. But Deism was a device that sought to avoid the charge of atheism by insisting the only God Deists would accept was one arrived at by reason. But their ‘reason’ was selective. They rejected the rational conclusions that follow inevitably on the acknowledgement of God’s existence, namely,

- that he is possessed of a far greater intellect than the intellects he had created;
- that he must be a person;
- that he must be living;
- that it is reasonable to conclude that he has communicated with man, the highest of his creatures; that this communication—this revelation of himself—must be susceptible of testing through miracles, consistent with St Thomas Aquinas’s comment that “a visible action that can only be divine reveals an invisibly inspired teacher of truth”. (*Summa Contra Gentes* Bk. I, 6 [4])

Deism was atheism by another name, a charge demonstrated by Voltaire’s rejection of all religion and particularly Catholicism.

There has been no epoch in the history of mankind to compare with that of the last fifty years for abandonment of belief in God. This book addresses that phenomenon and its chief precipitating cause, the abandonment by the bishops of the Catholic Church under the influence of two popes of the Church’s claim to be the one true religion on earth founded by God for man’s salvation. It consists of a series of essays published over the years 2007 to 2019 on the website [superflumina.org](http://superflumina.org). It mocks those who promote the atheistic claim for abandonment of reason based in reality in favour of one grounded in popular opinion and the limitations of the philosophy of materialism. It relates the effects of the abandonment of belief in God on men’s thinking and acting.

The essays are presented in an order which departs from the chronology of their original publication. There is, perforce, some dated-ness in the reference to events but the reader should have little trouble in adjusting to the temporal discrepancies. There is some repetition in expression which I trust the reader will forgive. I have made some amendments to the texts of several of them.

Michael Baker  
February 2020

## PITY THE POOR ATHEIST

Fifteen centuries ago, as he awaited his execution, the Roman Consul, Boethius, remarked the ubiquity and the majesty of order in the world, the concord governing it in every element—

When Spring brings in her heat to warm the cold  
The new year's flowers' sweet breath succeeds the old:  
Summer's torrid days will dry and brown  
But Autumn brings her fruit with trees bowed down.  
Then Winter will produce the falling rain  
That brings to birth and nourishes again  
All things on earth that breathe the breath of life...<sup>1</sup>

His work, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, serves as a reminder of the fundamental rift between the modern world and its patrimony. For more than a thousand years it was not just the works of theology, but this philosophical work of the Christian Socrates that inspired western society. Scholars translated it from the Latin into numerous of the languages of Europe—King Alfred the Great into Anglo-Saxon, Chaucer into Middle English and Protestant Queen Elizabeth I into the ancestor of our own modern English. In the year 1500 the intellectual atmosphere in which the peoples of the world lived was theistic: all the world believed in God. The few who denied his existence were regarded as mad, were ostracised by society or executed as heretics. By the year 2000, in contrast, the atmosphere in which the world's peoples lived had turned atheistic: vast numbers today deny God's existence.

We take the *theism* of the end of mediaeval times as much for granted as the *atheism* of our own. It never occurs to us to try to understand why there should have occurred such a paradigm shift. The belief in God inspired by the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages was not then—as it is not now—something only of faith: it was an intellectual thing. Today's potted experts treat the shift as an inevitable effect of growth in natural knowledge. We know infinitely more than our forbears, the argument goes, so we have progressed beyond the superstitions that characterised their lives and times, such as belief in God. This judgement, grounded on the arrogant assumption of the superiority of one's own age over that of every other, is historical parochialism. It reflects, in the temporal order, the gnostic pride which in the theological order, is characteristic of every heresy. It can be summed up in the short phrase: "We know better!" But the issue, theism/atheism, turns not on knowledge; it turns on reason, and reason is accessible to every age.

In October 1517 the Catholic theologian, Martin Luther, forwarded his celebrated 'Ninety five Theses' on the power and efficacy of indulgences to the Archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg. A scholarly disputation within the Church between Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (AD c.480-524), *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Book IV, vi. This transliteration of the author's verse from the Latin text is mine. Boethius was remarkable for the breadth of his education in a civilisation, like our own, facing the collapse of social order at the end of an empire. The emperor Theodoric, an Arian heretic, arrested his *Magister Officiorum*, an orthodox Catholic, on a charge of treason and incarcerated him at Pavia. He had him executed the following year. Boethius' case resembles that of Sir Thomas More under Henry VIII. More followed the example of the great Roman, writing his *Dialogue of Comfort* as he awaited his execution.

and Catholic turned quickly to revolt when Luther declined to wait upon a ruling but appealed instead, via the newly invented printing press, to the popular will. His theses were translated into the vernacular, reproduced and speedily broadcast throughout Germany and Europe. Their publication brought Luther a following of others who shared his attitude. He appealed to 'Christian freedom' as he preached a doctrine of rebellion against the Church's rule. In 1520 the Pope warned him (in the papal bull, *Exsurge Domine*) that he risked excommunication if he did not retract various of his assertions. His response was to burn the bull publicly and he was excommunicated on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1521. One of those who defended the Church's position joined the Pope in condemning Luther was Henry Tudor, King of England.

Luther's lapse into heresy flowed from personal moral problems. He was provided with an intellectual base for his rebellion, however, in the nominalist philosophy of the English Franciscan friar, William of Ockham (c.1288-1347).<sup>2</sup>

Because of the debility of thought which passes for philosophy today, we hardly understand the issue which preoccupied the philosophers of the middle ages, the problem of universals. The issue is as old as Plato. How can a thing be at the same time both one and many? How can this dog *Rover* be one unique individual and exemplify, at the same time, a single nature found universally? Plato thought each individual dog was a shadow as it were of a universal reality which existed (somewhere) *in the concrete*; the prototype dog. St Thomas Aquinas, building on the philosophy of Aristotle, admitted the reality of the universal, the concept and the name, but allowed that the universal existed *in the concrete* only in the singular individual, while as universal, it existed in thought, the name signifying the concept. The universal essence, or nature, emanated from, and abode in, the mind of God.

In contrast to this realistic solution to the problem (by which I mean a solution corresponding to reality), Ockham asserted that the universal was nothing but a convention, a common name (hence *nominalism*) whereby men gathered together the many singular instances of apparently similar creatures. He admitted the existence of a common concept (of which the common name was a sign) but reduced the universal to a mere figment of the mind, denying there was any reality that corresponded to it. In doing so he effectively denied the natures of things, denied the natural order and, incipiently, advocated atheism. Here was his attraction for Luther. Here, too, is the key to understanding the movement Luther precipitated, Protestantism.<sup>3</sup> Ockham is the real father of the modern age.

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<sup>2</sup> Ockham is much lauded today for the principle of economy known as *Ockham's Razor* which runs: *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*: 'entities are not to be multiplied except where necessary'. The statement of the principle in this form is, interestingly, not to be found in his works. The nearest seem to be *numquam ponenda est pluralitas sine necessitate* ('plurality is not to be posited without need') found in his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter the Lombard, and *frustra fit per plura quod potest fieri per pauciora* ('many are not required where few will suffice') found in his *Summa Totius Logicae*. Cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ockham%27s\\_Razor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ockham%27s_Razor)

<sup>3</sup> Here, too, is the reason his thinking is so attractive to modern thinkers. Strictly Ockham was not a nominalist but a conceptualist. A nominalist denies any reality but the collective name: he denies that there is any universal thing, or any universal concept. A conceptualist admits not only the name but the universal concept of which it is the sign but only as a figment of the mind, while denying that this concept corresponds to any universal thing.

Henry VIII ruled from 1509 to 1547. After about 1529 he began to complement in England the devastation of religious and social order begun in Germany by Luther. Like Luther he was driven by personal moral problems. He initiated through tyranny what Luther had essayed through doctrinal error, the destruction of the influence in men's lives of that institution founded by Almighty God for their salvation, the Catholic Church. While he and Luther never agreed on doctrine, the two were at one in the attack on reason and reality — *les extrêmes se touchent*.

The revolution accomplished by the Protestant rebellion against God's Church is not understood. Protestantism is not, as people think, a religion but rather *irreligion* masquerading as religion. The truth is to be seen not so much in its obvious watering down of Christ's teachings, as in its effects. From its inception, Protestantism left its followers in a state of anxiety over their salvation. In this it followed its founder. "Why," Maritain asks, "does the doctrine of salvation absorb all Lutheran theology, if it be not because the human self has become... the chief preoccupation of that theology?"<sup>4</sup> Protestantism replaces something of God with something of man: it replaces Divine faith, a gift of God to man no less than the gift of his very life and existence, with something contrived by men, mere human belief. The effect in the life of the individual Protestant, unless something intervenes to prevent it, is collapse into complete unbelief. Read the life of any prominent Protestant: in eight cases out of ten, you will follow the collapse of such faith as he has. Protestantism is inchoate atheism.

It is the flourishing of Protestantism in western civilisation since the first half of the sixteenth century that has brought about the shift from theism to atheism. If that shift has occurred more rapidly in the last forty years it is because those in positions of power within the chief bulwark in the world against the influence of Protestantism, the Catholic Church, have abrogated their responsibilities.<sup>5</sup>

Reality is the only measure of philosophy. It operates as a standard: it is uncompromising. Reality is a surrogate, standing in this world in the place of its Creator—

Hard reality to measure us, to test us and to prove...

Truth is the identity between what is asserted and reality—between what is asserted, and what is. True philosophy reflects what our common sense tells us—that we did not make ourselves; that we did not choose the nature with which we are endowed; that we do not keep ourselves in existence; that our end, or reason for existence, is determined for us not by ourselves but by another, the one who made us. This philosophy demands, as a matter of reason, the concession that we are but an effect—if the highest—of intrinsic and extrinsic causes; that we are not our own; that we have this body and this soul for a time only; that we have duties just as we have rights and that we forsake those duties at our peril; and that the time will come when we will

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<sup>4</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Three Reformers*, Charles Scribner's Sons, London, 1950: my copy Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1970, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Exemplified by the Opening Speech of Pope John XXIII to the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council. The cause of this is the refflorescence within the members of the Church of a heresy derived from the influence of Protestant error on philosophy, Modernism.



have to give an accounting of the use of these gifts. True philosophy demonstrates that belief in God is a *rational* thing and that its denial is utter folly.

It took about 100 years before Luther's rejection of the authority of God in favour of the authority of the individual manifested itself formally in the philosophical sphere. René Descartes' celebrated dream marked the crossing of the threshold. With his *cogito ergo sum* the die for all modern philosophy was cast. What man first knows is not reality, said Descartes, but himself. No longer would men look to objective authority to find the answers to the ultimate questions, but cast about in their own psyches.

Two consequences flow from the denial that man can know objective reality. First, the observer is thrown in upon himself and becomes preoccupied with his own perceptions. It is a corollary that however much he may appeal to objectivity, he can never know it as a certain standard, never be certain of the truth. Here is the source of the ubiquitous agnosticism (and cynicism) that characterises our world in almost every field of intellectual endeavour. The second effect is that he comes, sooner or later, to deny the existence of anything but what his senses can show. He becomes nominalist, empiricist, positivist and, ultimately, materialist.<sup>6</sup> In denying the very ground on which reason is based, he attacks reason itself. He sets himself adrift on a sea of opinion and wastes his life in conjecture.

It is Protestantism that has brought modern thinkers to reject their heritage, the hard common sense of Aristotle refined by the mediaeval schoolmen, as Esau rejected *his* heritage for a mess of pottage.

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In his July 2007 *Quadrant* editorial, the late Padraic McGuinness mocked Blaise Pascal for his celebrated wager, his suggestion that the unbeliever should bet in favour of faith in God rather than against it since in doing so he had all to gain and nothing to lose; rather than bet against it, where he had all to lose and nothing to gain.<sup>7</sup> Given Pascal's involvement in probability theory, it was perhaps inevitable that he would apply the theory to matters of belief.

In mocking Pascal, however, atheist McGuinness mocked himself. For, like all atheists, he had already made a wager along the lines Pascal proposed—but on the *opposite* result. For every atheist wagers an idea against a principle.<sup>8</sup> The principle is this: *Nothing is without a reason of be.*<sup>9</sup> A child of two understands it and its universality: he makes his parents' lives a misery with his constantly repeated 'Why?' The idea the atheist wagers against this principle is this: *To explain the universe and one's own being,*

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<sup>6</sup> *Nominalist*, i.e., he denies the existence of natures; *empiricist*, he denies what his senses cannot detect; *positivist*, he says that law is nothing but what is asserted; i.e., law flows from the popular will not from the demands of nature; *materialist*, he asserts that it is impossible that anything exists which is not material.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*; my English edition, Everyman, J M Dent & Sons, London, at pp. 92 et seq.

<sup>8</sup> Atheists who deny they have ever committed themselves to such a course should understand the force of the aphorism *not to will is to will not*. If I fail to acknowledge God's existence I have in that very failure exercised my will.

<sup>9</sup> Expressed more felicitously, perhaps, by Oscar Hammerstein II's popularisation of the pre-Socratic notion *ex nihilo nihil fit*—"nothing comes from nothing".

*there no need to have recourse to a creator.*<sup>10</sup> The form guide upon which the atheist relies in laying his bet (to continue the metaphor) is a philosophy which denies the existence of anything other than the material. This philosophy, materialism, is the source of all his errors.<sup>11</sup> It is the reason he confuses the brain with the intellect; sensed knowledge with intellectual knowledge; the collective with the universal; the image with the concept; and—critically—death with annihilation. Materialism is the philosophy of the gutter; of the ditch. Its proponents are blind men, and they fall into the ditch. Worse still, they lead others to fall into the ditch with them.

The atheist did not bring himself into existence. How, then, can he take himself out of it? If he considered the issue logically, dispassionately, he would realise that he cannot: annihilating himself is beyond his power. His answer to (what is for him) the dilemma of his existence is either to deny he was caused, or (which amounts to the same thing) to equate his being with his body. Materialism provides (or pretends to provide) both answers. There is no influence in the world but the material, it asserts. Hence a man is nothing but the end result of matter ‘evolving’, a series of accidents occurring over aeons of time in which matter has worked itself out to the sophistication of the living human body. Once his body fails, a man ceases to exist.

The principle of indeterminacy stands in the way: *that which can be many, from itself is not one of the many*. If water can be hot or cold, from itself it is neither. If matter can be a living body or a dead body, from itself it is neither. So it is not the *matter* of a man which makes him be what he is but something else. When his matter fails—in death—this ‘something else’ abides. And it is the fate of this *something else*, this influence which has made him a living human being, which is the issue.

To this influence metaphysicians give the generic name *substantial form* or *substance*. The form of a thing is *that which determines* matter to be that thing—to be man, or horse, or mosquito, or tree, or water, or carbohydrate molecule, or oxygen atom, or any other of the almost infinite variety of material things found in nature. *Matter* is like plasticine: it can take any form. It is eternally slippery; always inclined to be something else; the reason of corruptibility; no more than the substrate of the effect. Matter is *what is determined*.

*Form*, on the other hand, is immutable.<sup>12</sup> It is the reason why, in living things, offspring follow the nature of their parents; the reason why kookaburras always produce kookaburras and not some other kind of kingfisher, not something half kookaburra, half something else. It is the reason the alleged ‘transitional forms’ of Darwinian evolutionary theory have never been found; the reason why they never will be found.

Finally, among living things, a distinction is to be made between man and all the rest. Alone among them man is possessed of subjective immateriality. He is a material

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<sup>10</sup> This idea is a prejudice, that is, a pre-judgement, a judgement made without consultation of the facts.

<sup>11</sup> I am using ‘materialism’ here to include its corollaries, *positivism*, the system that holds that to attain truth the mind must not go beyond experience, generally that of the senses, and assumes a determinism in nature’s laws; and *empiricism*, the doctrine which gives value only to experience.

<sup>12</sup> I am speaking here of *natural* forms. Artificial forms, those invented by man, change as man changes their design. Insofar as they are comprised of natural materials, the *artificial* follow the natural.

creature who is also immaterial: proved by the fact that he does immaterial acts, knowing not just that things are but *what* they are: proved by the fact that he is free of compulsion, not determined blindly by his nature, but choosing freely his own ends. When his body dies his soul does not, for it is not something material.

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Atheism's chief complaint—it is hardly an argument—is this: *How could a good God exist who allows the evil that is to be found in the world?* It is the sort of question an unruly child will bawl as he rages over misfortune. The presence of evil in the world is a difficulty: it is to be addressed, and solved. But it can never provide a ground for doubting the necessity of a creator of the one who asks the question, and of the world in which he finds himself. There is another question, infinitely more important, that the atheist, adopting the wisdom of the child, should ask himself: *How could the good that is to be found throughout the world exist without an adequate cause?*

Evil is not something, but a lack of something: it is not a positive, but a negative. Every evil is a lack of something due. Blindness is not evil in a tree: but it is in a dog or in a man, for sight is not due to a tree, but it is to a dog, and to a man. Moral rectitude in action is not an evil in a dog but it is in a man, for moral rectitude is not something due to a dog, but it is to a man. Moreover, careful consideration shows that no matter how great an evil may be, it is impossible it will ever outweigh the good. For there must first be a good of which evil is the defect, the lack.

This world is almost ineffably good, intricate in its goodness and good in its intricacy. And embedded in the intricacy is the chief part of its good—order: superior and inferior working in harmony, a subordination which may reach in some instances to the 100<sup>th</sup> power. Each creature blends with the other; inanimate cooperating with animate; animal and plant interdependent, each contributing to the welfare of the other; each dependent on the working in due and precise order of the elements of which it is constituted. And there is something more—peace, for peace is *the tranquillity of order*.<sup>13</sup> And again there is something beyond this—*splendor formae*—beauty, the due proportion in things shining through their being.<sup>14</sup>

Whence comes the good? Whence the order? Whence the peace? Whence the beauty? It is utterly inadequate—it is *mindless!*—to say these things happened by chance as the atheist, as the evolutionist, does.

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The last great mass conversion of atheists occurred at about midday on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1917 in the fields near a village in Portugal north of Lisbon called Fatima. Some 40,000 or more people had gathered there because three shepherd children, the eldest only 10, said they had seen the Mother of Christ, the Virgin Mary, in a series of visions once each month since the 13<sup>th</sup> May previous. None but the three children were able to see

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<sup>13</sup> St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 29

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 1

their heavenly visitor and there was debate among those who attended them after the first vision on 13<sup>th</sup> May as to whether in fact the Blessed Virgin was appearing or whether the children were hallucinating.

Who knows how many atheists attended that day. We know from their later testimony there were a great number. If there were a thousand who had come to scoff, not one of the thousand returned to his bed that night an atheist. And when he did lie down, it must be doubted whether he slept. For he had witnessed something utterly impossible: he had seen the sun dancing around the sky!

It was said later, of course, that the phenomenon was the result of mass hysteria. The defect in that thesis was that people up to 40 miles away, people having no contact with those who had gathered around the three children, experienced it too. It was also said, and rightly, that beyond this 40 mile compass there was no evidence of unusual solar or astronomic activity to confirm this impossible movement of the sun. No scientific instruments placed elsewhere else in the world recorded anything to confirm these observations. Yet the evidence of so many witnesses requires it to be accepted that within this geographical compass the sun appeared to defy all the laws of nature. Whatever the scientific evidence, none of those who attended were in any doubt that what they had seen had demonstrated the existence of God.

But there is more: the event happened as the three children had predicted it. Indeed, it had happened at the request of one of them, Lucia de Jesus Rosa dos Santos, who in conversation with their heavenly visitor complained at the suffering she and her companions had endured over the visions at the hands of the authorities, and asked that she “work a miracle so that everybody will believe that you are appearing to us”.

It is reasonable to believe in God. It is unreasonable, that is *irrational*, to deny God’s existence. More cannot come from less.<sup>15</sup> If I, possessed as I am of intellect and will and the ability to control my own destiny, exist then something greater than I, something at least as greatly endowed as I, must have brought me to this. Call this IT what you like; it cannot simply be an IT—an impersonal force, as the Muslim teachers seem to assert—IT must be SOMEONE, a person. And if this SOMEONE is a person, it is reasonable to expect that he has communicated with mankind. This that Almighty God has communicated with mankind is what the Church that claims God as its founder, the Catholic Church, maintains. So it is that in all the history of the world there is only one question that matters: *Did God become man in Jesus Christ?*

That Christ was God is demonstrable: that is, the arguments in favour of the proposition that he was, that *he is* God, are capable of a certain conclusion in the affirmative. Whatever Christ was he was not simply, as many like to assert, a great and good man. There are only two possibilities: either he was God, or he was a liar—

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<sup>15</sup> The more rational of scientists see this clearly. It is the principle at the heart of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the law of increasing entropy in the universe. The universe is running down: how then could it have had such an energy filled beginning unless some influence outside it brought this about?

*because he claimed to be God!*<sup>16</sup> This, that he claimed to be God, was the very reason the Jews bullied Pilate into executing him. If God became man in Jesus Christ, then he who created us has communicated with us and, since we are utterly dependent upon him, it is a monumental exercise in folly to ignore that communication.

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Pascal mocked the reasoning of the atheists of his day in the following fashion.<sup>17</sup>

"I know not who sent me into the world, nor what the world is, nor what I myself am. I am terribly ignorant of everything. I know not what my body is, nor my senses, nor my soul and that part of me which thinks what I say, which reflects upon itself as well as upon all external things, and has no more knowledge of itself than of them.

"I see the terrifying immensity of the universe which surrounds me, and find myself limited to one corner of this vast expanse, without knowing why I am set down here rather than elsewhere, nor why the brief period appointed for my life is assigned to me at this moment rather than another in all the eternity that has gone before and will come after me. On all sides I behold nothing but infinity, in which I am a mere atom, a mere passing shadow that returns no more. All I know is that I must soon die. But what I understand least of all is this very death which I cannot escape.

"As I know not whence I come, so I know not whither I go. I only know that on leaving this world I fall forever into nothingness, or into the hands of a wrathful God, without knowing to which of these two states I shall be everlastingly consigned. Such is my condition, full of weakness and uncertainty. From all this I conclude that I ought to spend every day of my life without seeking to know my fate. I might perhaps be able to find a solution to my doubts; but I cannot be bothered to do so; I will not take one step towards its discovery. And then, despising those who concern themselves with this task (whatever certitude they may attain, it is a subject of despair rather than of pride), I will go without fear or foresight to try the great event, and allow myself unprotesting, to be led to my death, uncertain of my future state."

He might have been speaking to the atheists of this century. One need not change a word!

Consider the prospect that faces the atheist: consider his dilemma. For him there is no ultimate catharsis; no repose for that desire for the infinite that gnaws at the heart of every human being. No wonder so many atheists commit suicide! And there, in suicide, in his unilateral assertion of the subjectivist absurdity—*reality is what I say it is*—the atheist confronts the ultimate irony.

It is matter that impedes knowledge. In the instant of death, when the impediment of the body is removed from the soul, a man knows the truth about himself and his dependence on God inescapably. No scope for evasion, or doublespeak, then. He knows the gifts he has been given—as he has always known, but has never been

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<sup>16</sup> There is a further possibility which can be excluded almost as soon as it is advanced, namely, that he was mad. Madmen do not perform miracles; they do not rise from the dead. They do provide sound teaching. No madman was responsible for the greatest civilisation the world has ever known.

<sup>17</sup> *Pensées*, Louis Lafuma Edition, translated by John Warrington, J M Dent & Sons (Everyman), London, 1960, § 11; my edition, 1973 Reprint; quoted material at page 6.

prepared to acknowledge—that he is a creature of God; that he is made in God’s image and likeness; and that (no matter how he may have tried to close his mind to it) he is responsible for his own actions. He knows himself at last and the achievement, or failure, of the life he has lived.

The reports of the reactions of those who experienced the miracle of the sun at Fatima on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1917 are replete with this spirit of realisation, of compunction and acknowledgement of utter dependence on their maker. This, the conversion of heart of so many, was the real miracle of Fatima.

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I did not make myself: something—someone—else made me, and keeps me in existence. Why was I made?—*why*? The question of the child in its innocence assumes profound significance.<sup>18</sup> St Augustine provides answer:

“Thou hast made us for Thyself O God, and our hearts are not at rest until they rest in Thee.”<sup>19</sup>

The man who understands, and accepts, that he was made by God for Himself, that he was made for eternal beatitude, has within his grasp something which exceeds every other probable or possible good. He understands the force of Christ’s parable about the pearl of great price: he sees the vacuousness of all human endeavour which has not God as its ultimate end. He realises what Christ meant when he spoke of the poor in spirit—why he called them “blessed” and why he promised them the reward that he did. And with that realisation, and conversion of heart, comes peace.

Where does the love come from that a mother has for her child, that moves man and woman to marry and, despite the cynicism of the world, remains a formidable influence in the life of every man? We do not give ourselves this order and inclination of our souls. We can no more deny it than we can deny the desire to be happy. So where does it come from, if not from him who created us? Where, if not from him who reveals himself as having made us, and redeemed us—in love.

Why, then, do we behave like petulant children? Why do we persist in turning away from him? Why strive so vehemently to deny his existence?

Here is the prophet Malachi, speaking in the fifth century BC:

“The Lord God says this: ‘Behold, I am going to send my messenger to prepare a way before me. And the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter his temple; and the angel of the covenant for whom you are longing, yes, he is coming,’ says the Lord of hosts. Who will be able to resist the day of his coming? Who will stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and the fuller’s alkali. He will take his seat as refiner and purifier; he will purify the sons of Levi, refining them like gold and like silver...”<sup>20</sup>

And here is St Paul in the first century AD:

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<sup>18</sup> *Out of the mouths of infants and sucklings you have found praise to foil your enemy*, (Psalm 8: 3)

<sup>19</sup> St Augustine, *Confessions*, I, i

<sup>20</sup> *Malachi* 3: 1-3

“It was not the angels that [Christ] took to himself; he took to himself descent from Abraham. It was essential that he should in this way become completely like his brothers so that he could be a compassionate and trustworthy high priest of God’s religion, able to atone for people’s sins. That is, because he has himself been through temptation, he is able to help others who are similarly tempted.”<sup>21</sup>

You would think the immensity, the internal consistency and the concordance with human reason of what Christianity asserts to be the revelation of God would give the atheist pause; but it does not. The atheist knows better! Better to be obdurate, and blind, than to accept that documents whose historical provenance and accuracy are eminently verifiable might contain material vital to his eternal welfare.

Jesus Christ is at once the Judge and the loving Redeemer of every man. As Judge he will be ruthless. As Redeemer he is merciful, but only if we will first accept him. He suffered as much as, and more than, any man who will appear before him. He has made himself the means of our salvation—*if only we will accept him*.

“Come to me all you who labour and are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Hebrews* 2: 16-18

<sup>22</sup> *Matthew* 11: 28-30

## THE POMPOUS ATHEIST

Atheist, P. P. McGuinness, opened his November 2007 *Quadrant* Editorial with these remarks:

“Just as religious faith is, while perfectly defensible in itself, useless as a guide to the physical make-up of the universe or the biological descent of man, so too its pretensions to be useful as a guide to social policy must be questioned. While few mainstream religious figures these days claim that the relationship between the earth and the sun, or the geological history of the earth have any standing as explanations, rather than as poetical stories in which God plays a leading role, it is all too common to find the religious making judgments on social and economic policy which purport to be based on reality but in fact are purely an expression of emotion and sentiment without any direct relationship to the actual workings of the world....”

Belief in God is as varied as the religions to which believers adhere. What, then, are we to understand by McGuinness’s use of the expression “religious faith”? It does not assist thought to lump together adherents of the various religions as if they were but species of the same genus; as if the self sacrifice of the nuns of Mother Teresa was only a more acceptable expression of what drives the Muslim suicide bomber. The term “faith” is not necessarily univocal: in one case at least it is analogous. That is, the word signifies a character in its subjects where the *dissimilarities* are greater than the similarities. What the Protestant means by “faith”, what the Mormon means, the Jehovah’s Witness, the Muslim, the Hindu, differs in each case. But whatever these meanings they differ fundamentally from what the Catholic Church means by the word. For the tenets of every religion save Catholicism are contrived by men, and the faith educed in their believers is a human thing. But the tenets of Catholicism were laid down by Almighty God, and the faith educed in Catholic believers is not something of man at all. It is something of God.<sup>23</sup>

It will be said that this assertion is arrogant. But if the reader studies the Catholic Church’s teachings he will see it is consistent with the Church’s position; for the Catholic Church claims to have been founded by God—Jesus Christ, the God-man. It claims that its enlivening spirit is God—the Holy Spirit. It claims that its end is God—union with him in heaven. It says it is infallible (that it cannot err in faith or morals), consistent with the claim to a Divine, rather than human, provenance. The Church manifests, moreover, the signs of something above the human, notably, its temporal endurance far beyond that of any human institution, and this despite suffering from time to time the burden of evil men in its positions of power. Kingdoms come and go: the Catholic Church endures. Tyrants lay it waste, but, like its Founder, the Church rises again.

For argument’s sake, however, let us accept McGuinness’s lumping together of the various beliefs which have God for their object in the amorphous package “religious faith”.

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<sup>23</sup> I have elaborated on this topic in the article *Catholic Faith* which may be found on the web at [http://www.superflumina.org/catholic\\_faith.html](http://www.superflumina.org/catholic_faith.html)



He asserts that religious faith is “perfectly defensible in itself”, yet “useless as a guide to the make up of the universe or of the biological descent of man”. This is so much nonsense. If religious faith is useless as a guide in natural questions, it is certainly not perfectly defensible in itself. His judgement reflects the silly assertion that something false in itself may be “true for you”: it is subjectivism. McGuinness is a lapsed Catholic and this indulgence in contradiction smacks of the irrationality of Modernism, the heresy which has done so much to destroy the faith of Catholics.<sup>24</sup> Modernism asserts that different “truths” can contradict each other. The Modernist buzzword “stories” appears in his text, as does that heresy’s assertion that religion is nothing but “emotion and sentiment”.

His next error is the claim that religious faith is useless as a guide to the make-up of the universe. On the contrary, any faith in God, whether based on sacred scripture or not, has a clear explanation for the make-up of the universe. It was created by God according to forms established by him; the mechanics of the thing are secondary. What McGuinness means is that religious faith does not reflect the *atheistic* world view of its make-up, the view favoured by him and by the vast majority of scientists.

His fourth error is the assertion that religious faith is useless as a guide to the biological ascent of man. On the contrary, religious faith, whatever its colour, provides a very useful guide towards the alleged “biological ascent of man”—one of intellectual reservation. And with reason. For the assertion that there has been such an “ascent” is rooted in an hypothesis which has more of myth and fable to it than any that atheists claim is contained in sacred scripture.

McGuinness has done us a service in aiming the popgun of his ire at “religious faith”. For there is another faith, irreligious and pernicious, widespread in the world with millions of adherents. Its high priest is the natural scientist.

As he sits in front of his computer, the scientist will tacitly concede the machine’s fourfold causality: the matter from which it is made—its *material* cause; the intricate formality according to which the matter is designed and constructed—its *formal* cause; the inevitability of a maker, or makers—its *efficient* cause; and, the reason it was brought into existence, an instrument to aid men in their considerations and works—its *final* cause. Yet when he turns to his proper subject, the elements of the natural world, he will deny the existence of any but the *material* cause and pretend that factors which are not causes at all, time and chance, are sufficient to make up for any lacunae in logic. If he has doubts about the rationality of this position, he finds consolation in the huge numbers of its supporters; for how could such a body of opinion be wrong? The doctrine to which he adheres, Darwinian evolutionary theory, is grounded not in reason but in an idea, the idea that matter alone can explain everything. What drives him, and the huge numbers that support him, is not reason but faith in this idea.

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<sup>24</sup> The end of Modernism, as Pope Pius X made plain in his encyclical condemning it, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, 8.9.1907, is atheism (cf. n. 39).

The theory's most comprehensive scientific critic, New Zealand molecular biologist, Dr Michael Denton, concluded a long analysis of its defects twenty years ago in this way:

"Neither of the two fundamental axioms of Darwin's macroevolutionary theory—the concept of the continuity of nature, that is the idea of a functional continuum of all life forms linking all species together and ultimately leading back to a primeval cell, and the belief that all the adaptive design of life has resulted from a blind random process—have been validated by one single empirical discovery or scientific advance since 1859. Despite more than a century of intensive effort on the part of evolutionary biologists, the major objections raised by Darwin's critics such as Agassiz, Pictet, Bronn and Richard Owen have not been met..."<sup>25</sup>

Dr Denton rejected the evolutionists' claims to objectivity, insisting that it has always been the anti-evolutionists in the scientific community who have stuck to the facts and a strictly empirical approach<sup>26</sup>. He drew this telling conclusion:

"Ultimately, the Darwinian theory of evolution is no more nor less than the great cosmogenic myth of the twentieth century..."<sup>27</sup>

The atheist lives in a world of his own contriving, his mind closed to the crucial issues of reality. He did not bring himself into existence: he does not keep himself in existence: he knows not how long he will live. He did not specify the nature that he enjoys so freely: he cannot say why it is that he has come into existence as man rather than as monkey, donkey, cockroach or worm. All the natural benefits he enjoys have been given him, as indeed, is the very air he breathes. Yet he conducts himself with the self assurance of God himself!

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When that fine man, Fr John Casey SJ, Rector from 1949 to 1955 of St Ignatius College, Riverview,<sup>28</sup> offered to remit all tuition and boarding fees that Padraic McGuinness might complete his secondary education there, he was alive to the boy's great talents. He knew they could be used for good or for ill and he wanted, so far as in him lay, to ensure they were used for good. This issue, *the good* and its use or misuse, is at the heart of McGuinness's problems about God.

In an editorial he penned for the July 2007 issue of *Quadrant*, McGuinness responded tongue-in-cheek to a letter in the April 2007 edition in similar vein penned by former editor, Peter Coleman, in which "God" addressed the atheist. Given the violence of the response, Coleman may have regretted his initiative. *Inter alia*, McGuinness had this to say (to "God"):

"Either you or evolution has... endowed us with a profound capacity for evil as well as good, and we are all prone to both... Whence came this [Original] Sin? It is simply absurd to accuse Adam and... Eve of having sinned so grievously at the beginning of time that all humanity was somehow damned forever until... a bloody and obscene sacrifice... gave a let out for a few of them... If you... created Hell... then you are by

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<sup>25</sup> *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, London, 1985, p. 345. Dr Denton's conclusion is not diminished by his view that in this Darwinism corresponds to what he regards as the religious myths of previous ages.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 353-4

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *The Australian Dictionary of Jesuit Biography, 1848-1998*, David Strong SJ, Halstead Press (Sydney), 1999, pp. 49-50.

any merely human standard of judgement as evil as the Hell you created, as the people you create who end up in that Hell, and you are responsible for the extremes of evil that are manifest in our world..."

This is not so much an expression of atheism as a mocking rant against God and his revelation. The merest tradesman blaspheming over his work, or the Mason taking his tragi-comic oaths, does as much, if not so comprehensively—but with the same futility. If God created man, all the denials in the world will not undo that creation. If the first man, Adam, sinned against God and was penalised, and the effects of that penalty are to be visited upon his offspring until the end of time, McGuinness's railing against the reality will not undo it. (It is a mis-statement of God's revelation, incidentally, to aver that all humanity was "damned forever". From the very moment of Adam's disobedience God promised a solution, a Redeemer who would restore mankind to friendship with him.) Again, if the price of man's redemption was that God's Son, become man, should suffer "a bloody and obscene sacrifice", McGuinness's complaints about this achieve nothing. And so on. The most grievous (and mindless) element of it is his accusation that God is somehow responsible for the evil men do, and for the hell they create for themselves. This is childish. If I give a man a gift, am I responsible for his abuse of it? That violent and criminal talent, Marlowe, put the issue well in the mouth of his Mephistopheles:

"Hell hath no limits nor is circumscrib'd  
In one self place; for where we are is Hell,  
And where Hell is, there must we ever be..."<sup>29</sup>

No room in McGuinness's diatribe for the beneficence of God towards his creation! No room for his love for the creature he made in his own image and likeness, man. No room for the self sacrifice of the martyr dying for his friends, manifested pre-eminently in the Divine paradigm, Jesus Christ. All the sacrifices for the Catholic faith by great martyrs like Sir Thomas More and John Cardinal Fisher (at the hands of the tyrant Henry Tudor) or Maximilian Kolbe and Edith Stein (in Hitler's gas chambers) were in vain. No scope here for the majesty of the teachings of the Man who changed the world as no one else has ever done. No acknowledgement of the debt its author owes to generations of faithful followers of Christ in constructing the greatest civilisation the world has ever known. No shadow of the respect due by a man for his forbears and their beliefs.

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Atheism is the rejection of the existence of God as a conclusion of the mind reflecting on reality perceived by the senses. It is fundamentally a philosophical rather than a theological issue; an unwillingness to face reality.

*Nothing comes from nothing.* I am not the source of the gifts I possess; they are given me. I may not know by what or by whom they were given but one thing is certain: I did not give them to myself. Now, the atheist admits the gift—not as gift but as *thing*; as *reality*—but denies the source; denies the giver.

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<sup>29</sup> *Doctor Faustus* (1604) act 2, sc. 1

*More does not come from less.* If I find myself possessed of the highest of the gifts given to the creatures of the world—intellect, will and all that goes with them: not just a beast determined by brute nature, but a person with the facility to work out my own destiny—why am I not justified in concluding that the giver, IT, must be a being which has, too, at least virtually, the same attributes as I have received? that this IT, too, must have intellect and will? *Nemo dat quod non habet*: if I am a person, surely the IT must be a person too. In other words, this IT cannot be an ‘it’ at all. IT must be SOMEONE!<sup>30</sup>

Now atheists the world over reject these arguments because they have managed, so they say, to discredit their major premises. Something *can* come from nothing. More *can* come from less. It has been proved—by Charles Darwin!

The issue is a philosophical one. It was not natural scientist, Charles Darwin, but the philosopher, Herbert Spencer, who first propounded the theory. But Spencer’s theory, because it was rooted in subjectivism, was unsound.<sup>31</sup> The theory denies any but a material causality, which is impossible. Every thing that exists has not just one, but four causes.<sup>32</sup> The failure in logic of the Spencerian/Darwinian position is the reason for the appearance in recent time of so many works addressing the evidence for order and design in nature, that is, evidence of *final* and *formal* causality.<sup>33</sup>

With all due respect to him, the secular scientist is dishonest. As E.F. Schumacher related many years ago, the scientist *says* he is interested only in phenomena, in facts, but should some fact come along which falls outside the *a priori* setting of his atheism, he turns his back on it.<sup>34</sup> Schumacher cited, inter alia, the instance of Therese Neumann of Konnersreuth. For 35 years she lived, observed by all, on no other food or drink than the daily reception of the Blessed Eucharist. Yet scientists ignored the phenomenon. “If the documentary evidence and eye-witness accounts relating to [her] cannot be accepted as reliable evidence,” Schumacher wrote with justice, “then all evidence is unreliable, nobody can ever be believed, and human knowledge is impossible.”<sup>35</sup> The atheist cannot explain such things. He cannot explain the incorrupt body of St Marie-Bernard Soubirous in the church of the Visitation nuns at Nevers in France. He must label such things as the products of hysteria, or fraud. Moreover, he *dare not* investigate them closely for fear his faith may be destroyed.

The atheist contrasts himself with the religious believer: his position, he asserts, is founded on facts, not on stories or myths. But facts are not at all the atheist’s starting

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<sup>30</sup> This is precisely how the French poet, Paul Claudel, was affected when the reality of God came to him in an inspiration in Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, on Christmas Day, 1886: “Et voici que vous êtes Quelqu’un tout à coup!”

<sup>31</sup> Spencer is said, on his deathbed, to have rejected everything he had written.

<sup>32</sup> St Thomas Aquinas sets out the proofs for this in his commentary on the second book of Aristotle’s *Physics*. The section is reproduced in an appendix to the chapter below entitled *Decoding David Attenborough*.

<sup>33</sup> Among them, Dr Denton’s later work, *Nature’s Destiny*, The Free Press, New York, 1998

<sup>34</sup> *A Guide for the Perplexed*, London, 1977; my copy, Abacus, 1986, pp. 106 et seq.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 109-110

point. He begins, like Karl Marx, with a thesis—an idea—then tries to accommodate the facts to suit his idea.<sup>36</sup> In this he follows the *modus operandi* of all subjectivists.

McGuinness says he respects the philosophers and theologians. “[T]he best of them,” he says in his July 2007 editorial, “have manifested intellects which only a fool would sneer at... but that does not make them right. It makes them noble and worthy of respect, but not of belief.” But the philosophers and theologians do not demand *belief* for their arguments; they ask the exercise of reason. It is clear from his glib dismissal of St Thomas Aquinas that McGuinness has never read his works, or if he has, that he has never understood them. Had he done so he could never claim that St Thomas argues from faith. He does not, save where faith is a necessary premise. St Thomas is the most ruthless of realists. He is also, *pace* McGuinness, the most rigorous of logicians. Had McGuinness understood him he would know that St Thomas teaches that while all creation is contingent, God is the one necessary being; that while all creation is dependent, God its creator is self sufficient. He would know that St Thomas teaches that every act a man commits is utterly dependent on God’s cooperation, *that Padraic Pearse McGuinness cannot put a pen to paper unless God does it with him*. He would have realised the fatuousness of Mikhail Bakunin’s throw away line about abolishing God.

Atheist Thomas Merton related how, in February 1937 he stumbled upon this central truth of Catholic philosophy in a book he had purchased under a misapprehension at Scribner’s in New York, Etienne Gilson’s *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*. Too late, he realised it had a Catholic *Imprimatur*.

“They should have warned me that it was a Catholic book! Then I would never have bought it. As it was, I was tempted to throw the thing out of the window... to get rid of it as something dangerous and unclean...

But he kept it, and he read it.

“The one big concept I got out of its pages was to revolutionize my whole life. It is contained in one of those dry compounds that the scholastic philosophers were so prone to use: the word *aseitas*...

“*Aseitas* simply means the power of a being to exist absolutely in virtue of itself, requiring no cause, no other justification for its existence except that its very nature is to exist. There can only be one such Being; that is, God. And to say that God exists *a se*, of and by reason of Himself, is merely to say that God is Being Itself. *Ego sum qui sum*.”<sup>37</sup>

The quote here is from *Exodus* where God speaks to Moses. In this passage, the Catholic Church teaches, God defines himself.

“Moses said: ‘I shall go to the children of Israel and say to them: The God of your fathers has sent me to you. If they should ask me: What is his name? What shall I tell them?’

“God said to Moses: ‘I am who am. This is what you shall say to [them]: HE WHO IS has sent me to you.’”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Paul Johnson’s study on Karl Marx in his *Intellectuals* (London, 2000). The subjectivist’s preoccupation with his idea provides the name for what follows: “ideology”.

<sup>37</sup> *The Seven Storey Mountain*, New York, 1948; my copy a 1961 reprint of the edited version, *Elected Silence*, (London, 1949), p. 115

<sup>38</sup> *Exodus* 3: 13-14, my emphasis.

This man, Padraic McGuinness, exists now. Seventy five years ago he did not. In forty years time he shall have ceased to do so (at least as far as his body goes). He is *contingent*: he *has* existence, and he can lose it. He is *dependent*: he does not keep himself in existence; another does that for him. In these two characteristics he shares the lot of every creature in the universe, for each of them is a compound *entis et essentiae*, of essence and existence, of *what* it is, and *that* it is.

But why may there not exist—as a possibility—a being which is not compound, but simple? whose essence *is* existence? a being that is not contingent, but *necessary*? not dependent, but *self-sufficient*? a being that encompasses within itself *actually* all the potentiality of every contingent and dependent thing in the universe?

Why exclude the possibility of such a being just because no one has ever observed it? Why should we allow our intellects to be fettered by the materialist imperative? We are surrounded by realities that are not observable, but no less real for that. We may see a *just* action performed, but no one has ever seen *justice*. A judge may exercise *mercy* in passing sentence on an offender, but the thing, *mercy*, does not fall under the senses: it is known only through its effects. We may observe a loving mother, but the thing, *love*, has never been seen. The reason is that *justice*, *mercy* and *love* are not material things. Yet who will deny that these *immaterial* things are not real? We can see that a man is alive, we observe in him the effects of life: but no one has ever seen the reality that keeps him alive, his soul. It is not material, yet it is real. Indeed, the soul of a man is the greater part of his reality. Remove it and what is left but a material shell which quickly resolves into its elements. Why is it impossible, then, that there exists such a BEING just because it does not fall under our senses?

However imprecisely he may understand, or express, it the religious believer has a logical answer to the conundrum of his existence. He accepts with humility what reality teaches him, that he is an effect of intrinsic and extrinsic causes. In contrast, the believer in the secular faith of atheism has no logical answer to that question. He denies he is an effect of any cause and, in doing so, he denies reality<sup>39</sup>.

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Fr John Casey SJ was Rector of St Aloysius College, Milsons Point, when I completed my final year of secondary schooling there in 1961. He brought many young men into the *Jesuits* and other religious orders. His short closing address to the members of our Leaving Certificate class was memorable. “Most men, when they come to their death beds,” he told us, “mourn the lives they have led.”

From 1967 John Casey was Rector of the Jesuit Scholasticate at Campion College in Melbourne. There he first encountered that attitude of lawlessness, “the spirit of Vatican II”, inspired by the Modernist heresy which has done such damage to the *Society of Jesus* ever since. There is justice in McGuinness’s criticism in his July editorial of the current state of the *Society* as degenerate. The great Australian Jesuits of our

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<sup>39</sup> He concedes he is comprised of matter: he could hardly do otherwise! But the *material* is the least of all the causes for it does no more than provide the substrate of the effect.

youth, men like Tom Costelloe, Patrick Tracey, Desmond Durnin, Tom Barden, Frank Wallace, Gerald Jones, Gerry Drumm and John Casey, men of faith, have all died and few with their character remain. But McGuinness is oblivious of the fact that the *Society* is degenerate for precisely the same reason that he is atheist.

For the inclination to atheism is the core of the heresy of Modernism. If great numbers of the current members of the *Society of Jesus* have lost the vigour of the priests who went before them, it is because they do not believe, as the great Jesuits of the past believed, that Jesus Christ is God—King of kings and Lord of lords—for whom a man would willingly give his whole life and not count the cost; fight and not heed the wounds; toil and not seek for rest; labour and seek no other reward than that of knowing that he did His holy will.

The modern Jesuit is infected with the poison of Karl Rahner, or that of Teilhard de Chardin, or of any other of the raft of semi-heretics whose teachings are permitted to flourish in the Church. He has lost the sense of awe of God which the Church expresses in that Gift of the Holy Spirit called *Fear* which is like the respect and reverence a boy owes his father. He consecrates bread into Christ's body, wine into His blood and, having distributed these to the faithful, thinks it appropriate to encourage them to laugh and joke about trivialities *when Almighty God Himself has attended on them*.

The conversion of the atheist to God is, in the end, not so much a matter of reasoning, something of the intellect, as of the will, the *domina voluntas*, mistress of the soul. On this subject, Thomas Merton, again, has something valuable to say:

“[A]lthough the will cannot force the intellect to see an object other than it is, it can turn it away from the object altogether, and prevent it from considering that thing at all.”<sup>40</sup>

This problem of the will is the chief obstacle in any argument. It looms whenever one tries to persuade his hearer of profound issues such as the inevitability of the existence of God. The hearer appears to take in what you are saying but nothing penetrates, for he has already passed judgement; he has set his will against permitting his intellect to consider what is put. In such a case, argument is useless for the will can be moved only by love. This is why people like Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Padre Pio (St Pio of Pietrelcina) achieved so much. It is why atheists like Padraic McGuinness, if they are to be converted from their folly, will be so in the end only by the prayers of the humble nuns in their enclosures, or of those who cared for them in the past and now, through their meritorious lives on earth, have earned the right to intercede for them after death, like Fr John Casey SJ.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Elected Silence*, op. cit., pp. 150-1.

<sup>41</sup> John Casey died on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1985. A week or so later I spoke to the Dominican, Fr Gregory Butler, at the Marist Chapel in Sydney after Mass. He had mentioned him in his sermon. “We can ill afford,” he said, “to lose men of such calibre.”

## ATHEISM & THE ABUSE OF WOMEN

Former Australian senator, Natasha Stott Despoja, chairwoman of the *Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children*, records that the abuse of women in Australia has become epidemic : “Stopping the violence—because of its prevalence and its consequences—should be a national concern and priority.”<sup>42</sup> Self centred individuals, those dominated by pride and self regard, exist in any society but they flourish in a society where atheism rules, as study of the French and Russian revolutions makes plain.

Modern atheism is grounded in a denial of nature as anything but a material reality, the result of nothing but a series of happy accidents.<sup>43</sup> It refuses to accept that the things of nature are created by an intellectual being, refuses the evidence of the senses that they exist in immutable formal categories which owe nothing to matter.

If a man regards himself as responsible to no superior—no being who created him, who conserves him in existence, on whom he is utterly dependent; no one to whom ultimately he will have to give an account of his actions—the moral imperative is reduced to a species of feeling, its authority nothing but the laws posited by the parliament and enforced through listed penalties. He has no standard apart from himself and his fellows to restrain him from violence. This mindset derives from Rousseau and Voltaire and, ultimately, from Martin Luther’s decision to reject the authority of God in favour of his own. It underlies the constitutions of countries such as France and America whose peoples are indoctrinated to think that parliament, government, get their authority from ‘the people’—as if society could somehow be responsible (even before its members come into existence) for its force.

“The sovereignty of the people... without any reference to God... lacks all reasonable proof and all power of ensuring public safety and preserving order... [T]he opinion prevails that princes are nothing more than delegates chosen to carry out the will of the people; whence it necessarily follows that all things are as changeable as the will of the people, so that risk of public disturbance is ever with us.”<sup>44</sup>

If there is no superior to whom a man is responsible for his actions, he is a law unto himself, his abiding by the posited laws of the society in which he lives limited, not by the bonds of the moral law impressed upon his being by nature, only by his consent. The obligation is reduced from a natural one to a voluntary one. There is no absolute authority.

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned...<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *The Australian*, 26 11. 2013; cf. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/opinion/towards-an-end-to-violence/story-e6frgd0x-1226768187585>

<sup>43</sup> The imperative of the Darwinian theory of macro evolution. Why those accidents should have been fortunate rather than unfortunate ones the atheist never stops to consider.

<sup>44</sup> Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum*, 20. 6. 1888, n. 31.

<sup>45</sup> W B Yeats, *The Second Coming*



To address the obvious objections to this summary of reality in respect of religions whose attitude to women is demeaning, let it be understood that belief in God is not represented by Mohammedanism which is an ideology masquerading as religion. Its tenets—grounded in alleged private revelation—as its proselytising, are based not on the love of God but on fear. The violence that characterises Muslim societies betrays the frequent claims of that ‘religion’ to be one of peace. Nor is belief in God represented by sects such as Seventh Day Adventism, Jehovah’s Witness-ism or Mormonism whose tenets, also grounded in alleged private revelations, are either faintly connected to, or disconnected from, Christ’s teachings. Protestantism is closer to the truth but is limited by its alteration of God’s revelation, in particular the strange view that the Old and New Testaments somehow selected themselves as Divinely inspired with the belated editorial assistance of Martin Luther and his acolytes.

Belief in God is only truly manifest in that religion which God Himself established on earth, Catholicism, whose character—

“men can easily recognize by certain exterior notes, whereby Divine Providence has willed that it should be distinguished...”<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, it is precisely because Australians have largely abandoned belief in God that the evils of which Stott Despoja rightly complains are flourishing.

“[C]ivil society must acknowledge God as its Founder and Parent, and must obey and reverence His power and authority. Justice therefore forbids, as reason itself forbids, the State to be godless; or to adopt a line of action which would end in godlessness... For public authority exists for the welfare of those whom it governs; and, although its proximate end is to lead men to the prosperity found in this life, yet, in so doing, it ought not to diminish, but rather to increase, man’s capability of attaining to the supreme good in which his everlasting happiness consists: which never can be attained if religion be disregarded.”<sup>47</sup>

In countries where true belief in God is still practised by the majority there occur the lowest levels of abuse of women, as the statistics cited by Stott Despoja demonstrate.<sup>48</sup>

This truth in respect of religion is not diminished by the intellectual vices, driven by the same philosophies as have given rise to the atheistic tendency, that have afflicted the hierarchy of the Catholic Church for some 50 years. The deference to the secular which marked the Second Vatican Council brought with it unforeseen consequences, among them the abandonment of the candour and assertiveness that had ever characterised Church teaching in favour of a negativity and defensiveness. One case illustrates the problem well. Faithful and unfaithful alike have been in need of sound teaching exposing the folly of atheism from a pope for more than 40 years. Nothing has appeared. Indeed, popes and bishops alike have demonstrated a rooted inability

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<sup>46</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *ibid*, n. 20.

<sup>47</sup> Leo XIII, *ibid*, n. 21.

<sup>48</sup> Poland and the Philippines. Mozambique, whose appalling record she also cites, still suffers the effects of the Marxist atheism that marked its journey to independence from Catholic Portugal.

to address the philosophical issues at stake throughout the period.<sup>49</sup>

Another of the consequences of the deference to the secular endorsed by the bishops of Vatican II is the lamentable departure by many clergy and religious from the Church's moral standards, particularly in respect of the virtue of chastity. It is not their religion which has led them in this scandalous path but dalliance with the worldly, with the secular and incipiently atheistic. As George Weigel has noted —  
“What the Council [bishops] did not anticipate was that the priesthood would become somewhat ‘laicised’... Clerical lifestyles, seminary discipline, and the interaction of priests and lay Catholics all changed dramatically... [I]n dress, lifestyle, and habits of association and recreation, it became difficult to ‘see’ the uniqueness of the priestly vocation in the Church.”<sup>50</sup>

The failure of priests and religious in matters of chastity was not unknown before Vatican II but it was always exceptional, an aberration. With the flourishing of the ethos promoted in the Council's documents, however, priests and religious sought to justify their behaviour through analogy with the secular. The Council bishops' rejection of the Church's infallible teaching against religious freedom had the scandalous effect of encouraging the uncommitted to embrace atheism for, if it means anything, ‘religious freedom’ means that one is as free to believe in *no*-God as to believe in God!

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The moral law is, whether he likes it or not, imprinted on the atheist's psyche by God through his human nature, but he is free (absolutely, not morally free) to ignore its demands precisely because the facility of free will is a part of his nature.

Natasha Stott Despoja is an avowed feminist and promoter of ‘gender equality’, ideologies rooted in atheism because they deny the reality of human nature as something created by an intellectual being unto some end. Contrary to assertion, these ideologies do not free men and women; they bind and degrade them. Consistent with the thinking behind them, it is licit for young men and women to indulge in random sexual activity; to use contraception, and, if it be necessary, to kill any child conceived in the process through abortion. These activities are *eo ipso* violent; in breach of human nature. That is, they tend to the destruction of society, as of those who participate in them. They lead society's members to violence, and expose women and children, even those innocent of such evils, to violence.

It is a great irony that Stott Despoja should head an organization dedicated to the prevention of violence against women and children when she, and her ideas, are major contributors to the problem!

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<sup>49</sup> A function of their own appalling philosophical formation, itself a consequence of the disobedient actions of *their* bishops and seminary teachers in abandoning the Church's philosophical heritage. See, for a summary of the problems involved, Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 12.8.1950.

<sup>50</sup> George Weigel, *The Courage to be Catholic*, New York, 2002, pp. 24-5.

## AN ATHEIST APPROACHES HIS END

In his novel, *The Remorseful Day*, English Crime writer Colin Dexter, creator of the celebrated *Inspector Morse*, does something unusual in the genre, he kills off his hero. Dexter paints Morse as an atheist and he has him prepare for his end in a fashion which reflects the emptiness of that ideology, an issue also reflected (perhaps unconsciously by the author) in the title of the book. Contrary to the modern habit which tends to use the two interchangeably, remorse is not contrition. The one is as opposed to the other as is pride to humility. The concept expressed by the word 'remorse' derives from the Latin verb meaning *to vex*, or *to disturb oneself*; that expressed by contrition derives from the verb *to sadden*. The contrite man disposes himself for heaven; the remorseful for hell.

Dexter's crime writings represent for the later, what those of Dorothy L Sayers had done for the earlier, twentieth century—Morse's atheism countering Lord Peter Wimsey's High Church Anglicanism. The creator of each detective was a Classics scholar, each using anagrams in chapter headings to demonstrate the saw of Qoholeth that there is nothing new under the sun.<sup>51</sup> But of the two, this habit operated more logically in Sayers.

This may be seen from Dexter's citing as a comment on the actions of one of his minor characters,<sup>52</sup> Aristotle's assessment (said to be found in the *Nichomachean Ethics*) that suicide is a species of cowardice—

"Whilst it is true that the suicide braves death, he does it not for some noble object but to escape some ill."

It hardly lies in the mouth of one who sympathises with atheism to offer criticism of the suicide or, for that matter, to quote Aristotle.<sup>53</sup>

It may be that of the two Dexter is the better crime writer, but the superiority comes at a price. His hero is afflicted with various of the evils attendant upon materialism and atheism. While sharing the moral defects of his contemporaries,—characters like Michael Connelly's *Harry Bosch* and Ian Rankin's *John Rebus*—(a penchant for fornication and alcoholic indulgence) he is more degraded yet, a voyeur and indulger in pornography. Though Morse may be invested with a talent for crime detection, it is a bit rich that his author should invite his readers to forgive him these perversions.

In anticipation of his death, Morse drafts a will after the fashion of Michael Henshard, the miserable hero of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* whose author Chesterton incisively, if somewhat unkindly, mocked as "a sort of village atheist brooding and blaspheming

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<sup>51</sup> *Ecclesiastes* 1: 9

<sup>52</sup> Something he does more than once.

<sup>53</sup> For suicide is the logical end of the atheist. If he has not been created by a being who exceeds him infinitely; if there is no *One* to whom he must give an account of the use he has made of the talents given him; if his essence and his existence are nothing but the inevitable results of blind evolutionary forces - there is nowhere he can look for a reason for his existence. Dumb matter cannot provide it. When that existence becomes unbearable, then, why should he not (as he thinks) terminate it to escape that ill?

over the village idiot”.<sup>54</sup> Thomas Hardy has Henshard inscribe a self-pitying litany which rejects God and all human friendship—

“... & that I not be buried on consecrated ground.

& that no sexton be asked to toll the bell.

& that nobody is wished to see my dead body.

& that no mourners walk behind me at my funeral.

& that no flours be planted on my grave.

& that no man remember me...”

—the burden of which is like a yearning for the darkest of the depths of hell.

No man, regardless of his beliefs, can do away with reality or do away with the moral law. They are inscribed in his being by the *One* who made him, the *One* on whom he has always been dependent. The folly of the subjectivist—“*reality is what I say it is*”—comes to flower at the moment of his death. It is *matter* that impedes knowledge and when that part of him which is material is removed, the atheist comes face to face with that which he has striven throughout his life to avoid—reality. He knows the truth, that he is, and will ever be, a fool—

& knows that he has allowed himself to be deluded;

& knows the extent of his folly;

& knows that he has wasted his talents;

& knows himself for the vain and selfish creature that he is;

& knows that he has never truly loved anyone but himself.

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The wise man is he who can stand outside the preconceptions of his age, whatever they are, and judge it *sub specie aeternitatis*. The student of the Classics has before him the best of materials for the task, for the wealth of the great writers takes arms against fatalism and folly. But wisdom requires more than matter, it requires form, the proper formality of judgement in the light of the highest causes. He who thinks that causation resolves into nothing but matter has no prospect of attaining wisdom.

Materialism, with its accompanying atheist belief system, kills the human spirit. It murders true poetry which has ever acknowledged, at least implicitly, the aspiration of the human heart for the eternal *because the human heart is itself eternal!*

Materialism and atheism are the reasons why our culture, our music and our art are almost uniformly execrable.

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<sup>54</sup> G K Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature*, London, 1912, ch. II

# SUICIDE

“Not only is suicide a sin, it is *the* sin. It is the ultimate and absolute evil, the refusal to take the oath of loyalty to life.”

G K Chesterton<sup>55</sup>

There can hardly be anyone, at least in the western world, who has not known someone who has committed suicide. My first experience of the evil occurred some fifty years ago: the most recent occurred just the other day. Each man killed himself in the same fashion.

One Sunday in 1956 or 1957 Peter, a Greek gardener and handyman, came looking for work at our Norwood, South Australia, home. Every weekend for years thereafter he would cycle ponderously the ten or so miles from his home on the western side of Adelaide to our home. He assisted with the renovation work on the old blue stone house. During one period of school holidays which coincided with his annual leave, I worked with him on the first floor balcony. Then his visits ceased.

A few months passed and he paid us a courtesy call with his bride, a girl he had brought to Australia from Greece with his hard won earnings. Our mother insisted on the proprieties so the children were brought in to meet the young couple in the lounge room. Peter seemed happy enough, but his new wife, constrained by a lack of English, seemed bereft of enthusiasm.

A month or two later two Greek men, his brothers, came to the house to collect Peter's belongings. My father told me in a subdued voice that Peter had ridden his heavy bicycle under a train.

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Suicide has two aspects, objective and subjective. St Thomas teaches that the higher the species of God's creatures the greater is the variety to be found among the instances of that species. There is, thus, more variety between one horse and another than between one oak tree and another; and there is much greater variety between one man and another than there is between horses. When it comes to the angels, the variety is so great that each angel fills its species, so that the angels differ from each other specifically. The immense variety among men manifests itself uniquely in each. No man is the duplicate of another.

Where one man can cope with the greatest adversity, another will be brought to his knees. Where one man is invested with sensitivity; another has little, or none. Where one man is strong; another is weak. Yet every man has his strengths, even a man his fellows may regard as contemptible. Every man, according to the judgement of St Thomas, is superior and inferior to every other man under some respect. The richness of society lies precisely in this diversity of the strengths and weaknesses of its members.

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<sup>55</sup> *Orthodoxy*, London, 1908, Ch. v, 'The Flag of the World'; my copy Fontana Books, 1963, p. 71.

What, objectively taken, is more irrational for a man than to commit suicide? “What can a man give in exchange for his soul?”<sup>56</sup> I have known six people who have killed themselves. Three of the six, at least, were subject to fits of black depression. Four were Catholics. Each of these four was, at least nominally, aware that while he might destroy his body, he could never destroy his soul. Each was, at least nominally, aware that the inevitable result of his act was that he would be confronted by his Judge, Jesus Christ, God become man, who suffered and died for him; and that at stake was his eternal destiny. Why would he commit such an act? Aristotle’s judgement hardly answers the question.

“Whilst it is true that the suicide braves death, he does it not for some noble object but to escape some ill.”<sup>57</sup>

We cannot weigh the subjective dispositions of each human heart. That is for God alone. We can only regard the objective reality of the evil the suicide commits.

Human freedom is grounded in the absolute power to choose one course or another. Yet this, *natural* liberty, is not the liberty proper to man. It is but *matter* to the *form* of that liberty by which a man chooses ends which befit his dignity. In order that his liberty be true liberty, then, it must be conformed to law, i.e., to the ordination of reason, whether natural or positive law. As Leo XIII said —

“Nothing more foolish can be uttered or conceived than the notion that, because man is free by nature, he is therefore exempt from law.” [*Libertas praestantissimum*, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1888, n. 7]

According to his absolute power, a man can kill himself, as he can kill another. But, such an act is not in conformity with his moral liberty because it is against reason.

One hundred years ago no suicide could be buried in consecrated ground. The world was still a (relatively) rational place: the vast majority of men believed in God and rejected the sneering *philosophes*. Even those not invested with the inestimable gift of the Catholic faith yet retained a respect for the truth — *I did not bring myself into existence; I do not keep myself in existence; ergo I am dependent upon some greater being than myself*. The full implications of the rejection of God implicit in the virus sown by Martin Luther and Henry Tudor had not yet manifested themselves. Suicide was seen by Protestant and Catholic alike for what it is, the betrayal God’s bounty. Few would have disagreed with Chesterton’s stringent analysis —

“The man who kills a man, kills a man. The man who kills himself, kills all men; as far as he is concerned, he wipes out the world. His act is worse (symbolically considered) than any rape or dynamite outrage. For it destroys all buildings: it insults all women. The thief is satisfied with diamonds; but the suicide is not: that is *his* crime. He cannot be bribed, even by the blazing stones of the Celestial City. The thief compliments the thing he steals, if not the owner of them. But the suicide insults everything on earth by not stealing it. He defiles every flower by refusing to live for its sake. There is not a tiny creature in the cosmos at whom his death is not a sneer. When a man hangs himself on a tree, the leaves might fall off in anger and the birds fly away in fury: for each

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<sup>56</sup> *Matthew* 16: 26

<sup>57</sup> Said to be found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is cited as such by Colin Dexter as anagraph to chapters of books about his fictional hero, Inspector Morse. I have been able to locate it

has received a personal affront... There is a meaning in burying the suicide apart. The man's crime is different from other crimes—for it makes even crimes impossible..."<sup>58</sup>

No one chooses life: it is given him. No one brings himself into existence: this, too, is given him. No one keeps himself in existence. The materialist takes each of these realities, and the goodness that attends them, for granted. Like a petulant child, he asks *How could there be a God when there is so much evil in the world?* This is precisely the wrong question. It is not the evil that needs explanation; it is the good. Whence come the great goods that are given us?<sup>59</sup>

Today the public attitude to suicide in the dissolute West is, at best, ambivalent and, at worst, indulgent. Anecdotal evidence indicates that more than half the populace are in favour of euthanasia. For all practical purposes they are atheists; hardly surprising considering how subjectivism and materialism dominate the public psyche—the one ensuring the individual is driven by opinion not reality; the other, that the only part of reality he will acknowledge is the material. *Quem Jupiter vult perdere, dementat prius*. "He whom Jupiter wishes to destroy, he first makes mad."<sup>60</sup> There is an essential link between the modern thinker and the suicide. Each behaves irrationally for each denies reality.

Yet the root of the problem of each lies not in the intellect but the will, a will fixed in denying any conclusion but that which suits him.

"[A]lthough the will cannot force the intellect to see an object other than it is, it can turn it away from the object altogether, and prevent it from considering that thing at all."<sup>61</sup>

As fresh air can never penetrate a sealed room, neither can reason penetrate the heart of one who has closed his mind to it; and he may close his mind in any number of ways. One who lives in systematic denial of the duties he owes God and his fellow man will not escape the consequences.

Suicide is just as much murder as murder properly so called: each kills an innocent human being. The thin end of the euthanasia wedge is, of course, personal euthanasia, or suicide. And just as the clamour for the *fiat* of self destruction grows among decadent western Christians, it is answered by a cry which has long characterised the Muslim—a man is justified in committing suicide if in doing so he kills others he deems guilty of some wrongdoing. So is the folly of the materialist answered by a folly which is even greater. The mind that advocates or defends murder, whether of another or of oneself, is formed in the influence of mankind's ancient enemy, the Devil: "He was a murderer from the start... never grounded in the truth... a liar and the father of

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<sup>58</sup> *Orthodoxy*, op. cit., pp. 71-2.

<sup>59</sup> And there is much more than existence. For not only is it given to a man *that* he is, but also *what* he is. And *the what* is itself to be distinguished into the *matter* of which he is comprised, and the *form* that makes him be a man and not a donkey, a monkey or a fish.

<sup>60</sup> Attributed to Homer; cf. James Duport (1606-79) *Homeri Gnomologia*, 1660, p. 282.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Merton, *Elected Silence*, op. cit., pp. 150-1.

lies.”<sup>62</sup> The inevitable destination of the suicide, of the murderer, is Hell—unless he repents.<sup>63</sup>

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Modernist priests, their faith grown feeble through disobedience and systematic abuse of the Church’s liturgy, are wont to console those mourning the death of a suicide by telling them not to worry unduly; that God is gentle and welcoming in all circumstances. Nothing better demonstrates their stupidity.

Yet there is hope for those confronted with the suicide of a family member or friend as the following, taken from the life of St John Vianney, demonstrates.

“One day [in 1855 or 1856] the Abbé Guillaumet, for many years Superior of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Dizier, was on his way to Ars... The only subject of conversation in the [train] compartment was the marvels that were taking place [there]. Seated beside the priest was a lady [in mourning for her late husband who had committed suicide] who was listening with rapt attention. On reaching the station of Villefranche, M. Guillaumet was about to alight when [she asked]: ‘Monsieur L’Abbé, will you allow me to accompany you to Ars? I may as well go there as elsewhere...’

“The priest consented to act as guide to the stranger when once they had reached the village. The carriage which they took at Villefranche set them down right in front of the church. The eleven o’clock catechism was drawing to a close, so M. Guillaumet led the lady to a place between the church and the presbytery. They had not long to wait. Suddenly the Curé d’Ars appeared, still wearing his surplice. He stopped in front of the lady in black who, following the example of the crowd had gone down on her knees. He bent over her and whispered into her ear: ‘He is saved!’ A gesture of incredulity was the only reply of the stranger. Whereupon the saint, stressing each word, repeated: ‘I tell you he is saved. He is in Purgatory and you must pray for him. Between the parapet of the bridge and the water he had time to make an act of contrition. Our Blessed Lady obtained that grace for him. Remember the shrine that you put up in your room during the month of May. Though your husband professed to have no religion, he sometimes joined in your prayers; this merited for him the grace of repentance and pardon at the last moment.’”<sup>64</sup>

Yes, there is hope—for those who put their trust in God, and not in human opinion.

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<sup>62</sup> *John* 8: 44

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *Revelation* 21: 8; 22: 15; 1 *John* 3: 15

<sup>64</sup> Abbé Francis Trochu, *The Curé d’Ars, St Jean Marie Baptiste Vianney*, London, 1927; my copy, Tan Books reprint, Rockford Illinois, 1977, at pp. 539, 540.



## THE TWO RABBITS

### or *The Metaphysical Conundrum of Substance*

*Abstract from an address of Prof. A P S Solomon at a recent symposium<sup>65</sup>*

“I have here, as you can see, two rabbits [holding them up]. Well, one live rabbit and one recently deceased. They are—or rather *were*—siblings: same colour, same thick fur, same weight, same provenance, same odour! Only now one has something the other has not. One is still a rabbit; the other is, well, little more than a bag of meat, bones and gristle. Yet there is no *material* difference between them. The reality which still gives life to this one [raising his right hand] and has been removed from this one [raising the other] does not admit of measurement. The scientist will discover nothing in the one that is not present in the other. The reality that gives life to the rabbit has no weight, no colour, no measurable dimensions. No scientific instrument is capable of identifying or isolating it. We know it, and science knows it, only through its effects: it causes this rabbit, as you can see [indicating], to wriggle and to resent my holding it up for observation or limiting its activities. The other couldn’t care less.

“What is the difference between them, the one still a rabbit, the other no longer so? What does the one have that the other does not? Before we answer that question we should note some history.

“Some 450 or so years ago the world lost the sense of meaning of a number of words, meanings that had been in use for centuries. The thinkers of the time re-invented the words, gave them new meanings. They didn’t do it straight away; in fact, they hardly realised they were doing it. The influence behind the shift was, curiously, not literary, or poetic, or philosophical, or pragmatic, but theological. Men’s minds underwent what we might call a sea-change about God and the deference they owed Him. Instead of adhering rigorously to what God had revealed, the truth of which he had established by performing acts unprecedented in the history of mankind (miracles; bringing the dead back to life), the men of the time decided that they would rather make up their own minds about what they would, or would not, believe.

“Now God was the one who had made them, who kept them in existence and who (as he made clear in his revelation over the centuries) had also redeemed them from the perdition which had become as it were part of their nature as a result of the fall of Adam. If you were utterly dependent on someone you would think it appropriate to follow his directions, especially when so much of what he had said had to do with his own inner life. But these men preferred their own view and, like Adam in the garden, they decided they knew best. This revolt against authority was plain silly, a revolt against reason, and it was this secondary effect, the irrationality of it, that led men to alter the meanings of various words then in common use.

“We can demonstrate this shift by identifying in one word the reality that this one rabbit retains and the other has lost. What is it? *Substance*. This one, still wriggling (!) has the *substance* of a rabbit; the other does not. The one, in virtue of its possession

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<sup>65</sup> An alter ego of the author

of—or rather *its possession by*—this immaterial reality, is a rabbit. The other is a rabbit no longer.

“That the meaning of the word ‘substance’ as used formerly has been lost is easily shown. Anyone who has a little Latin can see it. The word *substance* comes from the Latin verb *substo substare* which means ‘to stand under’. *Substance* correctly understood signifies something that *stands under* certain appearances. It is not the appearances; it is what underlies them. The dead rabbit *Billy* here and the live one *Bertie* there both have the same appearances but those that *Billy* used to enjoy will quickly disappear as his body resolves into its elements. If not skinned and put into a pot within the next 24 hours he will soon be on the nose.

“A *substance* is not, as the modern world thinks, a body taken without regard to kind or type. It is the underlying reality that makes the body be this or that thing. It is not its matter it is the *immaterial* reality that keeps the matter together in an identifiable entity. What makes a rabbit a rabbit is not fur, bones, ears and a twitchy nose but the *substance* rabbit. In fact it is the *substance* that gives it the fur, the bones, the ears and the twitchy nose!

“Now give the business just a few moments thought and you will see that of the two—the matter and this immaterial reality—the immaterial reality is far and away the more important. For it is the immaterial reality that makes a rabbit be a rabbit. The *matter* is useless except as something to be determined. It’s the same when we consider the things we make. If I want to build a house I follow a house plan; the *matter*, the wood, bricks, tiles and roofing iron are merely the elements used to bring about the reality represented in the plan. The influence that determines matter to be this thing or that has a technical name, *form*. Hence, substance’s full title is *substantial form*.

“But identifying the *substance* of a thing leaves a lot to be explained. ‘Okay,’ I hear you say, ‘*substance* goes to its subsistence, but what about the fur, the bones, the ears and the twitchy nose?’ And even before we get to these ‘bunny’ characteristics, we might add to that question, ‘Where, if its *substance* is immaterial, does it get its very material body?’

“Well, first of all, a rabbit’s *substantial form* is not any substance at all: it is not, for instance, the substantial form of a dog; it is not that of a man or that of an angel; it is the substantial form of a rabbit. Next, the substance comes with a number of *accidental* forms, the first two of which, *quantity* and *quality*, set the rabbit up for life. *Quantity* gives it a body, which the philosophers refer to technically as *extension*, and parts, and *quality* in a number of guises gives it the various attributes proper to a rabbit (properties) among which are the fur, the bones, the ears and the twitchy nose! *Quantity* does something else too; it determines that a rabbit is *this* rabbit. So *Bertie*’s quantity determines that he is *Bertie* and not the late lamented *Billy*.

“Let’s summarise. What determines a living creature to be *what it is*—its essence or quiddity—is its *substance* (substantial form) not the matter out of which it happens to be made. It is the accompanying accidental form, *quantity* that provides it with a body, and second accident, *quality* that gives it the various characteristics our senses

recognise when we spot a rabbit. Even at these secondary levels—of *accidental* rather than *substantial* form—let us note that matter *contributes nothing* but that which is determined.

“The principles exposed by this consideration of our two rabbits help us to understand further truths. Let us take three of them at, respectively, the biological level, the philosophical level and the theological.

“First, the biological: Aristotle was one of those thinkers who could, with a line, set you thinking for hours. Here is one such line: *For living things to live is the same as to be*. Take from a rabbit its life, i.e., its substantial form, and you take from it its very existence. None of us would have any trouble with that. But consider the corollary: *The source of its life is also the source of its existence*. The influence that causes it to live, that gives it its *substance*, also causes it to be. Now only a creator can give a thing existence, make something to be. All man’s productions, his ‘creations’, come about through his working with natural, i.e., pre-existing, things which are a sort of *matter* for the artificial *forms* he imposes on them. Man cannot create anything. What follows? All the assertions one hears in the scientific community that one day man will produce life are exposed as nonsense.

“Second, the philosophical: what determines a thing to be the thing that it is, whether a rabbit, or a tree, or a lump of granite—animal, vegetable or mineral—clearly is not *the matter* out of which it is made but the *substantial form*, that of rabbit, or tree, or granite. In other words, what makes a thing to be *what it is*, its essence or quiddity, *is not material but immaterial*. While its matter might determine whether the specimen under consideration is healthy or unhealthy, strong or weak, resilient or friable, it can have no effect on *what* the thing is. What follows? Any assertion that the *essence* of a thing results from mere material development is nonsense. Therefore the Darwinian theory of evolution is nonsense.

“Third, the theological: how many Catholics have a proper grasp of the mystery of the Church’s doctrine of transubstantiation? It will be responded, and rightly, that the acceptance of this doctrine concerning the Blessed Eucharist is not a matter of reason but of faith. Yet a mystery, as the late Frank Sheed once remarked, is not something we know nothing about but something we know a little about, but not everything. Now if Catholics understood that the *substance* of bread and the *substance* of wine are, neither of them, material they would see that their replacement after the words of consecration—instantaneously through the force of the words of the priest—by the *substance* of Christ involves no contradiction of what their senses perceive. For the accidents (the appearances) of bread and wine are retained, miraculously.

“A signal mark of the descent in the sixteenth century of the Catholic faith into Protestantism was the public rejection by Queen Elizabeth (illegitimate daughter of Henry VIII) at Mass after the death of her half sister, Mary, of the deference owed to the Blessed Sacrament. Thereafter Protestantism’s devotees would mock the priest’s consecration at the altar as ‘hocus-pocus’. The *formal*, that is, the *immaterial*, reality achieved in the sacrament was lost to them in the very imposition of their own will on what God had chosen to reveal. What was left? *Only the material*.

“Here, in the Protestant revolt, is the source of the corruption of the meaning of certain critical words in our language. Here is the reason our modern thinkers cannot lift their minds above the *material* to the infinitely more important *immaterial*...”

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## DEAR READER OF *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

"I can't believe that," said Alice.  
"Can't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone. "Try again, draw a long breath and shut your eyes."  
Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said. "One can't believe impossible things."  
"I dare say you haven't had much practice," said the Queen...  
Lewis Carroll<sup>66</sup>

In September, 2009, the Editor of *The Wall Street Journal* asked evolutionist and atheist, Richard Dawkins, and religious writer, Karen Armstrong, to respond to the question *Where does evolution leave God?* The topic for their debate was loaded with materialist preconceptions. What the question really amounted to was this: *Where does **the reality** of evolution leave **the idea** of God?* For who could doubt that Darwinian evolution is a reality. Overwhelming numbers accept it and, even if it be conceded that it is only a theory, it has surely been demonstrated in any number of ways. Does it not, for example, ground the whole of biological science? On the other hand, since one cannot prove the existence of something that does not fall under the senses, and God does not fall under the senses, it is inevitable that God can only be an idea.

The alleged debate between the two was what in Australia we call 'a furphy'. There was no debate, for both contributors are materialists. Karen Armstrong did not challenge Richard Dawkins' atheistic views; she confirmed them. The WSJ question might, then, be reduced to this assertion: *How on earth could our materialist perspective of the world possibly be disturbed.*

Dawkins' materialism, with its attendant atheism, is well known. On the other hand, Armstrong was born a Catholic and became a nun in a religious order in England in 1962 which she left in 1969. She published subsequently a thoughtful and dispassionate account of the problems she had encountered there in *Through the Narrow Gate* (1982). The Catholic faith that she seemed to retain on leaving the order became submerged in Modernism and is now manifested in a religious syncretism which, as the reader will see from her contribution, glosses over any distinction between one 'faith' and another. The 'faith' about which she writes so fulsomely was delineated and condemned by Pius X 100 years ago in the encyclical *Pascendi* as inchoate atheism. In the final paragraph of *his* contribution, Dawkins roundly, and rightly, condemns it as such.

Let us get one thing clear: the materialist is no less a believer than the one with religious faith. Indeed, he is *even more* a believer. For whereas the religious believer, no matter how poorly he may be able to state it, founds his belief on reality—I did not bring myself into existence; I do not keep myself in existence; ergo I am dependent upon some greater being than myself—the materialist believes in nothing more than an idea. He will tell you that he is a man of facts, not beliefs. But it is not so: he is not at all interested in facts, except where they support this idea. What is the idea? That all the effects in the universe can be explained without recourse to any cause but matter. What drives the

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<sup>66</sup> *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*, 1871, ch. 5.

materialist scientist, and the huge numbers that support him, is not reason *but faith in this idea*.

Which of these two has more justification for his system of belief?

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Life is simple for the materialist. He does not bother his head with distinctions between the real and the conceptual. If he can *imagine* some thing to be true, that is enough for him to judge that *it is* true. He can, with the White Queen, believe as many as six impossible things before breakfast.

A quick dip into Dawkins' contribution demonstrates some of the impossible things in which he believes. As Aristotle remarked, *for living things to live is the same as to be*. If you kill a hen you not only take away its life but also its existence. The opposite is just as true—whatever it is that gives the hen *life* also gives it *existence*. Every conception of a living being, its first moment of life, involves a new creation. Now Dawkins says this:

"Evolution is the universe's greatest work... the creator of life."

Hence, he believes, (one) that mere dumb matter has not only the power of intellect (for works are the effect of intellect) but also, (two) it has the infinite power of bringing living things into existence. Ancillary to these, he must also believe (three) that mere matter can produce something out of nothing, and (four) that the non-living can produce the living.

A little later he says:

"The laws of physics... can make rocks and sand, gas clouds and stars, whirlpools and waves..."

No, they can't. Laws are not causes but the means intellect uses to order reality. Doubtless, Dawkins made rules for the governance of his children. The rules did not regulate their conduct: it was Dawkins who did that; the rules were the means he used to impose his order upon them. How are the laws of physics to which he pays such fealty any different? If there is a law, there has to be a law maker. What does his claim amount to then? He believes (five) that it is the law, not the lawmaker—i.e., the instrument, not the principal—which made the universe in all its intricacy. Which is bit like saying it is the saw rather than the carpenter that builds the house. Whatever the price to be paid, Dawkins cannot allow that there is a God; which leads him to assert:

"Making the universe is the one thing no intelligence, however superhuman, could do..."

Intelligence can make a table, a computer and what he calls "the miracle of a 747 jet". It can certainly make a working model of the solar system. Why, then, as a matter of principle, could it not make the solar system—provided it was sufficiently 'super-human'? Here Dawkins believes (six) in the impossibility of the possible.

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Dawkins and his ilk think they have discovered the secret of the universe. They have not. Darwinian evolutionary theory is simply applied materialism. Look at its provenance. Darwin borrowed his theory from Spencer. And Spencer got *his* delusions from the philosophers who had preceded him, notably Hegel, Kant and, ultimately, Descartes, the first to reject reality in favour of his own perceptions. Descartes' rejection of the authority of reality parroted Luther's rejection of the authority of God—which was incipient atheism. With Darwin's theory, Luther's rejection of God has achieved its apotheosis. No one can be an atheist who is not first a materialist.

Consider Richard Dawkins sitting at his computer. If pressed, he will concede the machine's fourfold causality: the matter from which it is made—its *material* cause; the intricate formality according to which the matter is designed and constructed—its *formal* cause; the inevitability of a maker, or makers—its *efficient* cause; and, the reason it was brought into existence, as instrument to aid men in their considerations and works—its *final* cause. Yet when he turns to his proper subject, the elements of the natural world, he denies the existence of any but the *material* cause, and pretends that factors which are not causes at all, time and chance, are sufficient to make up for any *lacunae* in logic. He is not compelled to this strange view by science, but by the philosophy to which science has given its allegiance. Dawkins acknowledges this accident of history explicitly:

“Before 1859 it would have seemed natural to agree with the Reverend William Paley... that the creation of life was God's greatest work...”

Then materialism began to gain ascendancy in men's minds.

A work of human art such as a computer is nothing but the application by man of his intellect to the works of nature in imitation of those works. Hence, by art man does nothing but reproduce in the things he makes the fourfold causality that obtains in all natural things.

Just as there are four causes of the computer at which Richard Dawkins sits, there are four causes of Richard Dawkins. His *material* cause is patent; it is the matter out of which he is made. The *formal* cause, that which makes him be a man (and not a mineral, or a tree, or a monkey, a donkey or some other beast) is his human, and immaterial, soul. The *efficient* cause is his Creator. The *final* cause is the reason why his Creator made him, the end consistent with his human nature He intends for him.

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Dear Reader of *The Wall Street Journal*, one hundred years ago you did not exist. In another hundred you shall have ceased to do so (at least as far as your body goes). You are *contingent*: you *have* existence—and are only too conscious of the fact that you can lose it. You are *dependent*: you do not keep yourself in existence; another does that for you. In these two characteristics you share the lot of every creature in the universe, for each is a compound *entis et essentiae*, of *what* it is, and *that* it is.

Now why may there not exist—as a possibility—a being which is not compound, but simple? Whose essence *is* existence? A being that is not contingent, but *necessary*? Not

dependent, but *self-sufficient*? A being that encompasses within itself *actually* all the potentiality of every contingent and dependent thing in the universe?

Why exclude the possibility of such a being just because no one has ever observed it? Why allow your intellect to be fettered by the materialist imperative? We are surrounded by realities that are not observable, but no less real for that. We may see a *just* action performed, but no one has ever seen *justice*. A judge may exercise *mercy* in passing sentence on an offender, but the thing, *mercy*, does not fall under the senses: it is known only through its effects. We may observe a loving mother, but the thing, *love*, has never been seen. The reason is that *justice*, *mercy* and *love* are not material things. Yet who will deny that these *immaterial* things are real? We can see that a man is alive, we observe in him the effects of life; but no one has ever seen the reality that keeps him alive, his soul. It is not material, yet it is real. Indeed, the soul of a man is the greater part of his reality. Remove it and what is left but a material shell which quickly resolves into its elements. Why is it impossible, then, that there exists such a BEING just because it does not fall under our senses?

However imprecisely he may understand or express it, the religious believer *has* a logical solution to the conundrum of existence. He accepts with humility that he is an effect of intrinsic and extrinsic causes: he faces reality. In contrast, the believer in the secular faith of atheism has no logical solution to the issue: he refuses to face reality: he is a fool. St Paul spells out the measure of his folly:

“Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity—however invisible—have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made. That is why such people are without excuse: they knew God and yet refused to honour him as God or to thank him...” [Romans 1: 20-21]

Take the advice Boëthius gave mankind some 1,500 years ago. Abandon for a moment the corybantic in which you live—the blaring of automobile horns, the flashing of neon signs, the burden of material possessions—and take yourself off into the wilds. Go out into the dark in the middle of a moonless night and look up at the myriad of the stars above you. Understand that *He Who Is* made them all an aeon of time ago, just as He made you. He did not give to them, dumb material things that they are, despite their majesty, what He has given you; for He chose to make you in His own image and likeness with intellect and will. *They* will endure but *you* are quickly coming to your end. He will not require of them what he will require of you, an account of your stewardship. Throw off now, while you still have time, the nonsense of Darwin and of Dawkins, and realise your utter dependence upon God.

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## APPENDIX

From *The Weekend Australian*, September 19-20, 2009 (reproduced from *The Wall Street Journal*).

### NOTHING BEYOND BELIEF

*Karen Armstrong, a British writer on comparative religion and a former nun, says we need God to grasp the wonder of our existence*

Richard Dawkins has been right all along, of course—at least in one important respect. Evolution has indeed dealt a blow to the idea of a benign creator, literally conceived. It tells us that there is no Intelligence controlling the cosmos, and that life itself is the result of a blind process of natural selection, in which innumerable species failed to survive. The fossil record reveals a natural history of pain, death and racial extinction, so if there was a divine plan, it was cruel, callously prodigal and wasteful. Human beings were not the pinnacle of a purposeful creation; like everything else, they evolved by trial and error and God had no direct hand in their making. No wonder so many fundamentalist Christians find their faith shaken to the core.

But Darwin may have done religion—and God—a favor by revealing a flaw in modern Western faith. Despite our scientific and technological brilliance, our understanding of God is often remarkably undeveloped—even primitive. In the past, many of the most influential Jewish, Christian and Muslim thinkers understood that what we call "God" is merely a symbol that points beyond itself to an indescribable transcendence, whose existence cannot be proved but is only intuited by means of spiritual exercises and a compassionate lifestyle that enable us to cultivate new capacities of mind and heart.

But by the end of the 17th century, instead of looking through the symbol to "the God beyond God," Christians were transforming it into hard fact. Sir Isaac Newton had claimed that his cosmic system proved beyond doubt the existence of an intelligent, omniscient and omnipotent creator, who was obviously "very well skilled in Mechanics and Geometry." Enthralled by the prospect of such cast-iron certainty, churchmen started to develop a scientifically-based theology that eventually made Newton's Mechanick and, later, William Paley's Intelligent Designer essential to Western Christianity.

But the Great Mechanick was little more than an idol, the kind of human projection that theology, at its best, was supposed to avoid. God had been essential to Newtonian physics but it was not long before other scientists were able to dispense with the God-hypothesis and, finally, Darwin showed that there could be no proof for God's existence. This would not have been a disaster had not Christians become so dependent upon their scientific religion that they had lost the older habits of thought and were left without other resource.

Symbolism was essential to premodern religion, because it was only possible to speak about the ultimate reality—God, Tao, Brahman or Nirvana—analogically, since it lay beyond the reach of words. Jews and Christians both developed audaciously innovative and figurative methods of reading the Bible, and every statement of the Quran is called an ayah ("parable"). St Augustine (354-430), a major authority for both Catholics and Protestants, insisted that if a biblical text contradicted reputable science, it must be interpreted allegorically. This remained standard practice in the West until the 17th century, when in an effort to emulate the exact scientific method, Christians began to read scripture with a literalness that is without parallel in religious history.

Most cultures believed that there were two recognized ways of arriving at truth. The Greeks called them *mythos* and *logos*. Both were essential and neither was superior to the other; they were not in conflict but complementary, each with its own sphere of competence. *Logos* ("reason") was the pragmatic mode of thought that enabled us to function effectively in the world and had, therefore, to correspond accurately to external reality. But it could not assuage human grief or find ultimate meaning in life's struggle. For that people turned to *mythos*, stories that made no pretensions to historical accuracy but should rather be seen as an early form of psychology; if translated into ritual or ethical action, a good myth showed you how to cope with mortality, discover an inner source of strength, and endure pain and sorrow with serenity.

In the ancient world, a cosmology was not regarded as factual but was primarily therapeutic; it was recited when people needed an infusion of that mysterious power that had—somehow—brought something out of primal nothingness: at a sickbed, a coronation or during a political crisis. Some cosmologies taught people how to unlock their own creativity, others made them aware of the struggle required to maintain social and political order. The Genesis creation hymn, written during the Israelites' exile in Babylonia in the 6th century BC, was a gentle polemic against Babylonian religion. Its vision of an ordered universe where everything had its place was probably consoling to a displaced people, though—as we can see in the Bible—some of the exiles preferred a more aggressive cosmology.

There can never be a definitive version of a myth, because it refers to the more imponderable aspects of life. To remain effective, it must respond to contemporary circumstance. In the 16th century, when Jews were being expelled from one region of Europe after another, the mystic Isaac Luria constructed an entirely new creation myth that bore no resemblance to the Genesis story. But instead of being reviled for contradicting the Bible, it inspired a mass-movement among Jews, because it was such a telling description of the arbitrary world they now lived in; backed up with special rituals, it also helped them face up to their pain and discover a source of strength.

Religion was not supposed to provide explanations that lay within the competence of reason but to help us live creatively with realities for which there are no easy solutions and find an interior haven of peace; today, however, many have opted for unsustainable certainty instead. But can we respond religiously to evolutionary theory? Can we use it to recover a more authentic notion of God?

Darwin made it clear once again that—as Maimonides, Avicenna, Aquinas and Eckhart had already pointed out—we cannot regard God simply as a divine personality, who single-handedly created the world. This could direct our attention away from the idols of certainty and back to the "God beyond God." The best theology is a spiritual exercise, akin to poetry. Religion is not an exact science but a kind of art form that, like music or painting, introduces us to a mode of knowledge that is different from the purely rational and which cannot easily be put into words. At its best, it holds us in an attitude of wonder, which is, perhaps, not unlike the awe that Mr. Dawkins experiences—and has helped me to appreciate —when he contemplates the marvels of natural selection.

But what of the pain and waste that Darwin unveiled? All the major traditions insist that the faithful meditate on the ubiquitous suffering that is an inescapable part of life; because, if we do not acknowledge this uncomfortable fact, the compassion that lies at the heart of faith is impossible. The almost unbearable spectacle of the myriad species passing painfully into oblivion is not unlike some classic Buddhist meditations on the First Noble Truth ("Existence is suffering"), the indispensable prerequisite for the transcendent enlightenment that some call Nirvana—and others call God."

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*Richard Dawkins, a British evolutionary biologist and atheist, argues that evolution leaves God with nothing to do*

Before 1859 it would have seemed natural to agree with the Reverend William Paley, in "Natural Theology," that the creation of life was God's greatest work. Especially (vanity might add) human life. Today we'd amend the statement: Evolution is the universe's greatest work. Evolution is the creator of life, and life is arguably the most surprising and most beautiful production that the laws of physics have ever generated. Evolution, to quote a T-shirt sent me by an anonymous well-wisher, is the greatest show on earth, the only game in town.

Indeed, evolution is probably the greatest show in the entire universe. Most scientists' hunch is that there are independently evolved life forms dotted around planetary islands throughout the universe—though sadly too thinly scattered to encounter one another. And if there is life elsewhere, it is something stronger than a hunch to say that it will turn out to be Darwinian life. The argument in favor of alien life's existing at all is weaker than the argument that—if it exists at all—it will be Darwinian life. But it is also possible that we really are alone in the universe, in which case Earth, with its greatest show, is the most remarkable planet in the universe.

What is so special about life? It never violates the laws of physics. Nothing does (if anything did, physicists would just have to formulate new laws—it's happened often enough in the history of science). But although life never violates the laws of physics, it pushes them into unexpected avenues that stagger the imagination. If we didn't know about life we wouldn't believe it was possible—except, of course, that there'd then be nobody around to do the disbelieving!

The laws of physics, before Darwinian evolution bursts out from their midst, can make rocks and sand, gas clouds and stars, whirlpools and waves, whirlpool-shaped galaxies and light that travels as waves while behaving like particles. It is an interesting, fascinating and, in many ways, deeply mysterious universe. But now, enter life. Look, through the eyes of a physicist, at a bounding kangaroo, a swooping bat, a leaping dolphin, a soaring Coast Redwood. There never was a rock that bounded like a kangaroo, never a pebble that crawled like a beetle seeking a mate, never a sand grain that swam like a water flea. Not once do any of these creatures disobey one jot or tittle of the laws of physics. Far from violating the laws of thermodynamics (as is often ignorantly alleged) they are relentlessly driven by them. Far from violating the laws of motion, animals exploit them to their advantage as they walk, run, dodge and jink, leap and fly, pounce on prey or spring to safety.

Never once are the laws of physics violated, yet life emerges into uncharted territory. And how is the trick done? The answer is a process that, although variable in its wondrous detail, is sufficiently uniform to deserve one single name: Darwinian evolution, the nonrandom survival of randomly varying coded information. We know, as certainly as we know anything in science, that this is the process that has generated life on our own planet. And my bet, as I said, is that the same process is in operation wherever life may be found, anywhere in the universe.

What if the greatest show on earth is not the greatest show in the universe? What if there are life forms on other planets that have evolved so far beyond our level of intelligence and creativity that we should regard them as gods, were we ever so fortunate (or unfortunate?) as to meet them? Would they indeed be gods? Wouldn't we be tempted to fall on our knees and worship them, as a medieval peasant might if suddenly confronted with such miracles as a Boeing 747, a mobile telephone or Google Earth? But, however god-like the aliens might seem, they would not be gods, and for

one very important reason. They did not create the universe; it created them, just as it created us. Making the universe is the one thing no intelligence, however superhuman, could do, because an intelligence is complex—statistically improbable—and therefore had to emerge, by gradual degrees, from simpler beginnings: from a lifeless universe—the miracle-free zone that is physics.

To midwife such emergence is the singular achievement of Darwinian evolution. It starts with primeval simplicity and fosters, by slow, explicable degrees, the emergence of complexity: seemingly limitless complexity—certainly up to our human level of complexity and very probably way beyond. There may be worlds on which superhuman life thrives, superhuman to a level that our imaginations cannot grasp. But superhuman does not mean supernatural. Darwinian evolution is the only process we know that is ultimately capable of generating anything as complicated as creative intelligences. Once it has done so, of course, those intelligences can create other complex things: works of art and music, advanced technology, computers, the Internet and who knows what in the future? Darwinian evolution may not be the only such generative process in the universe. There may be other "cranes" (Daniel Dennett's term, which he opposes to "skyhooks") that we have not yet discovered or imagined. But, however wonderful and however different from Darwinian evolution those putative cranes may be, they cannot be magic. They will share with Darwinian evolution the facility to raise up complexity, as an emergent property, out of simplicity, while never violating natural law.

Where does that leave God? The kindest thing to say is that it leaves him with nothing to do, and no achievements that might attract our praise, our worship or our fear. Evolution is God's redundancy notice, his pink slip. But we have to go further. A complex creative intelligence with nothing to do is not just redundant. A divine designer is all but ruled out by the consideration that he must at least as complex as the entities he was wheeled out to explain. God is not dead. He was never alive in the first place.

Now, there is a certain class of sophisticated modern theologian who will say something like this: "Good heavens, of course we are not so naive or simplistic as to care whether God exists. Existence is such a 19th-century preoccupation! It doesn't matter whether God exists in a scientific sense. What matters is whether he exists for you or for me. If God is real for you, who cares whether science has made him redundant? Such arrogance! Such elitism."

Well, if that's what floats your canoe, you'll be paddling it up a very lonely creek. The mainstream belief of the world's peoples is very clear. They believe in God, and that means they believe he exists in objective reality, just as surely as the Rock of Gibraltar exists. If sophisticated theologians or postmodern relativists think they are rescuing God from the redundancy scrap-heap by downplaying the importance of existence, they should think again. Tell the congregation of a church or mosque that existence is too vulgar an attribute to fasten onto their God, and they will brand you an atheist. They'll be right.

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## SCRUTINY OF *GUNNING FOR GOD*

Atheism has no answer to death, no ultimate hope to give. It is an empty and sterile worldview, which leaves us in a closed universe that will ultimately incinerate any last trace that we ever existed. It is, quite literally, a hope-less philosophy. Its story ends in the grave. But the resurrection of Jesus opens the door on a bigger story. It is for each one of us to decide whether it is the true one or not.<sup>67</sup>

These, the last words in Dr John C Lennox's book, *Gunning For God*, would with but few modifications be fittingly found in an encyclical addressing the folly of atheism.

On any day one may hear some modern Catholic claiming that his faith is not based on reason; that it is not necessary to prove God's existence; and that, in any event, it cannot be done. That this view is in breach of Catholic teaching and that it was condemned at the (first) Vatican Council<sup>68</sup> does not trouble him, for he thinks the Church did not really begin until Vatican II. The bookshops are full of books condemning belief in God as if harmful to society. Public figures in great numbers advocate atheism, and the world suffers as popes, bishops and priests neglect their teaching responsibilities by remaining silent on the essentiality of a rational defence of belief in God, yet another mark of the flight from reason that has characterised Catholic thought in the last fifty years.

The silence has been filled episodically by others among whom the Protestant academic John C Lennox is a notable contributor. In his recent book *Gunning for God* he insists on truths atheists refuse to acknowledge, such as that —

- atheism is just as much a belief system as any religion;<sup>69</sup>
- atheists owe the very instruments that enable them to criticise it to the immense influence for cultural and moral good of one religion, Christianity;<sup>70</sup>
- their attitude to rational objections to their assertions manifests signs of a wilful blindness;<sup>71</sup>
- the 'hard-wiring' of morality in human nature is consistent with the view that human beings are created in the image of God as moral beings;<sup>72</sup>
- the thinking of atheism is incapable of providing any intellectual foundation for morality;
- the 20<sup>th</sup> century embrace of atheistic secularism coincided with a burgeoning of human depravity in an unprecedented degree;<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> John C Lennox, *Gunning for God*, London, 2011, p. 232.

<sup>68</sup> *If anyone will have said that the one true God, our creator and Lord, cannot be known with certainty in the light of human reason by the things that have been made, let him be anathema.* Session III, April 1870.

<sup>69</sup> *Gunning for God*, op. cit., p. 86: 'Not believing in God does not leave [atheists] in a... vacuum. Their books are replete with all the... beliefs that flow from their anti-theism. These beliefs form their credo, their faith - much as they like to deny that they have one.'

<sup>70</sup> At p. 74: '[It] gave the world... the universities that educated [them]... [It] provided the hospitals and hospices that care for them, and that undergirds [their] freedoms and human rights...'

<sup>71</sup> At p. 82: '[It] is hard to avoid the impression that we are not actually dealing with intellectuals at all, but with people so obsessed with their own agenda that they have lost touch with reality.'

<sup>72</sup> At pp. 98-9.

<sup>73</sup> At page 89 Dr Lennox quotes the following from David Berlinski: "Somewhere in Eastern Europe, an SS officer watched languidly, his machine gun cradled, as an elderly and bearded Hasidic Jew laboriously dug what he knew to be his grave. Standing up straight, he addressed his executioner. 'God is watching what you are doing,' he said [and]... was shot dead. What Hitler did not believe... what Stalin did not

- scientific evidence tends *against* the evolutionist (i.e., atheist) view as to how man came to appear on the earth.<sup>74</sup>

But Dr Lennox is not able to do the job that a Vicar of Christ could do, if only we could find one with the intellect and the starch, and for all that is admirable in his arguments, much more could be said about why atheism is systematic nonsense. Dr Lennox does not know much about Aristotle and his ignorance of metaphysics leaves his arguments bereft of a proper philosophical underpinning. It is admirable that he should contend (against, indeed, views expressed by certain Catholics) that of all the religions only Christianity can be said to be founded by God. He is, however, hampered by his Protestantism which blinds him to the need to adhere to *all* Christ's teachings. Here are some of the shortcomings.

I. Dr Lennox has been likened to another Chesterton or a C S Lewis, but Chesterton, for one, would never have written this—

"The Bible teaches that creation is contingent; that is, God as Creator is free to make the world as and how he likes." (p. 28)

Contingency has nothing to do with the will, whether God's or anybody else's, but with what is ontologically prior to will and to intellect, namely, existence.<sup>75</sup> The contingent is that which has no guarantee of existence, that which can be-not. If the Bible teaches that creation is contingent it is precisely because—as it also teaches—God, its Creator, is *not* contingent: *He cannot be not*. Man is contingent: God is necessary. When He replied to Moses' question who it was that was sending him, God said, *Tell the people of Israel that He Who Is has sent me to you*,<sup>76</sup> a point reflected in the *Dialogue* of St Catherine of Siena. *I am*, God the Father says to her, *He who is; you are she who is not*.

Nor could God have made creation 'as and how he likes' as Dr Lennox asserts. Pius XII expressed the truth involved in his address *Ci Riesce* (December 1953)—

"[N]o human authority, no state, no community of states, whatever be their religious character, can give a positive command or positive authorization to teach or to do that which would be contrary to religious truth or moral good... Not even God could give such a positive command or positive authorization, because it would be in contradiction to His absolute truth and sanctity."

There are some things that not even God can do.<sup>77</sup>

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believe... what Mao did not believe... what the SS did not believe... what the Gestapo did not believe... what the NKVD did not believe... what the commissars, functionaries, swaggering executioners, Nazi doctors, Communist Party theoreticians, intellectuals, Brown Shirts, Blackshirts, Gauleiters, and a thousand party hacks did not believe, was that God was watching... That is... the meaning of a secular society." (David Berlinski, *The Devil's Delusion*, pp.26-7)

<sup>74</sup> *Gunning for God*, op. cit., p. 150: "[T]he New Atheists mock such ideas of *original sin*... dismissing the *Genesis* account as a primitive symbolic aetiological myth. However... most scientists assert that *Homo sapiens* sprang from a common ancestor..."

<sup>75</sup> I am using hyperbole here: strictly speaking God is identical with His will as He is identical with His intellect. Both essence and existence—*what* something is and *that* something is—are dependent on the Creator as products not, as it were, of the Divine whimsy, but by force of the Divine intellect reflecting the majesty of the Divine Being. God is not free to contradict His own nature. He could not, for example, create something which was not good or that was not ordered with (and subordinated to) the rest of creation, or that was not ontologically true.

<sup>76</sup> *Exodus* 3: 13 et seq.

<sup>77</sup> Because they would be opposed to the truth. God cannot exercise His creative power to contradict His very nature. He could not create another God like to Himself, or create a square circle. The first involves

II. Nor would Chesterton have volunteered this offering —

“We cannot, as Aristotle thought, determine the nature of the universe by starting with abstract philosophical principles. He held that there were certain *a priori* principles to which the universe had to conform...” (p. 28)

Aristotle did no such thing. He viewed reality the way the geometrician views a plane figure bounded by three straight lines. He did not start with *a priori* principles, as the moderns conceive that phrase—concepts originating no where but in mind. He began, as the geometrician begins, with reality, with things, deduced their natures, and exposed the principles underlying them and the corollaries.

III. One error feeds another. He writes—

“One of [Aristotle’s] principles was that perfect motion must be circular. Since [he] thought that everything beyond the moon was perfect, it followed that the planets must move in circles. It was only when Kepler, a Christian, decided to break free of this Aristotelian metaphysical constraint, and allow the astronomical data on the movement of Mars (already collected by Tycho Brahe) to speak, that he discovered that the planets actually moved in equally ‘perfect’ ellipses.” (pp. 28-9)

Perfect motion *is* circular for the reasons Aristotle gives in his *Physica* and *De Caelo*, reasons endorsed by St Thomas Aquinas in his commentary on the texts [*In VIII Physics*, Ll. 14-19 ; *In I De Caelo* L iii]. If Aristotle (and, with him, St Thomas) thought the movements of the heavens were perfect he was addressing what reality showed, albeit constrained by the astronomy of his age. But, such was the force of his intellectual analysis, that even with the benefit of a profoundly better knowledge of the motions of the heavenly bodies his conclusions remain valid today. Indeed, modern scientists have yet to grasp the fulness of their subtleties and the implications they contain.

That the planets (and indeed all heavenly bodies) move in perfect ellipses does not detract from the perfection of circular motion; it confirms it. For such compound motions are simply variations of the perfection of circular motion taking account of what was hidden from Aristotle, the influence of other massive bodies. Were he alive today, Aristotle would point out to the modern scientist that while such masses serve to measure circular motion, whether simple or compounded in ellipses, they do not explain *why* they so move. And in this he would be supported by Newton and by Einstein. Gravity is one of the great unknowns of modern science (as both these scientists acknowledged) and it is unknown because science is besotted with materialism. Science may explain how gravity operates; it cannot explain why. But, with his grasp of metaphysical principle, Aristotle could have!

Dr Lennox’s speaking of ‘metaphysical restraint’ as if metaphysics was opposed to reason, says much for the limitations of his knowledge and understanding.

IV. At pages 50 and 51 he says this:

“In my own field of pure mathematics, “proof” has a rigorous meaning, so that when one mathematician says to another “Prove it”, they expect to be presented with a watertight argument proceeding from accepted axioms via accepted rules of logic to a conclusion that [he] can expect also to be accepted by all mathematicians... What is

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contradiction, i.e., impossibility (there can be only one supreme being); the second contrariety, the two forms cannot exist in the one subject, the one drives out the other.

important for us here is that such mathematically rigorous proof is not available in any other discipline or area of experience..."<sup>78</sup>

This last assertion is false. Mathematics proceeds *a priori*, from principle to corollaries, from cause to effect: this is the reason for the certitude of its conclusions, albeit that they concern what is essentially mental being. In contrast, while they concern real being, it is true that science, forensic activity, and the general action of the investigator of history or of present facts, proceed *a posteriori*, from effects searching for a cause. It is true also that this mode of procedure suffers the limitations of the need for sufficient instances of effects for the investigator to reach any level of certainty about causes. But the philosophy of being which began with Aristotle does not proceed in this fashion. And its conclusions are as certain as those of mathematics precisely because they are not induced from facts but deduced from principle. That Dr Lennox is not familiar with the rigour of Aristotelian Logic is clear, too, from the way he endorses, at the conclusion of his chapter 4, what Dr David Berlinski asserts to be a syllogism.

V. At pages 64 and 65 Dr Lennox contends that one of Christ's commands was the explicit prohibition of the use of force to defend Christ or his message.

"To take the sword, gun, or bomb in Christ's name is to repudiate both Christ and his message."

This is simplistic: in the absence of distinction, it reduces Christianity to Quakerism. No Christian is entitled—as the Muslim thinks *he* is entitled—to impose his religion by violence, for to do so is to contradict the principle that man, made in God's image, is free and his freedom is to be respected as the gift of God. But the Christian *is entitled to defend* his religion, his Christian family, his fellow Christians and indeed his non-Christian fellowmen, against aggression. He is entitled to defend civilisation against the depredations of the mindless ideology of Mohammedanism which is at root a heresy mocking the one religion founded by God. He is entitled to advance the Cross of Christ against the Muslim folly.

However, Dr Lennox is on firmer ground when he says (at p. 65)—

"Jesus taught his followers not to hate their enemies but to love them; and he acted accordingly when the armed crowd came with Judas to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest him."

Even when the Christian is defending against an unjust aggressor he is bound to love him as a creature made in God's image and as worthy of respect. The immorality of killing the innocent troubled the members of many aircrews during World War II detailed to bomb German cities and, according to anecdotal evidence, moved them to dump their bombs in the countryside. Christian may fight Christian, each defending the right, or what he perceives to be the right, to the death and still do so in accordance with Christian principle. And Dr Lennox is right to quote Christ's words, *He who lives by the sword will die by the sword*.

VI. Again he writes with limited vision when he says (at pp. 70-1)—

"one does not become a Christian either by birth or by any ceremony or ritual performed on you as an infant... one has to become a child of God by a personal act of trust in Christ as Lord. That act of trust is a free and unforced commitment based on evidence. That step cannot be made by an infant... Christ's ordinance of baptism was

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<sup>78</sup> He repeats the claim in chapter 8: "[P]roof in the rigorous mathematical sense is not available in any other discipline or area of experience, not even in the so-called 'hard' sciences." (p. 190)



given as a public symbol to express the Christian life on the part of those who had already received it: baptism was given not to generate that life in the first place.”

It is Christ, the Risen Christ, the Christ *over Whom death has no more dominion*,<sup>79</sup> who determines how one becomes a Christian, and He established a Church to deal with the issue. She mandates the baptism of the children of believers precisely because *it is baptism that generates the life of the child of God in the first place*. Dr Lennox reduces the real to the symbolic as he ignores, or relegates to insignificance, the doctrine of Original Sin. St Paul lays the groundwork here—

“If by one man’s offence death reigned through one, (namely Adam), how much more they who receive abundance of grace of the gift and of justice, shall reign in life through one, Jesus Christ.” (*Romans* 5: 17)

What is at issue is not something physical (material) but metaphysical. Baptism produces the *habitus* of faith as it produces the *habitus* of charity, the love of God and of one’s fellow man. These virtues are dispositions of the will given by God to fulfil the obligations of faith and charity, dispositions that exist *prior to* any act that fulfils these obligations.

Baptism confers a new nature on the child. Just as human nature involves dispositions of the will—to seek life, nourishment, social interaction, and so forth—dispositions that exist prior to, and which are presupposed to, any action, so the new nature conferred by baptism includes dispositions in the child to act in pursuit of the supernatural good that exists prior to, and presupposed by, any meritorious action.<sup>80</sup> St Thomas Aquinas puts it eloquently—

“The spiritual regeneration effected by baptism is somewhat like carnal birth in this respect, that as the child while in the mother’s womb receives nourishment not independently but through the nourishment of its mother, so also children before the use of reason, being as it were in the womb of their mother the Church, receive salvation not by their own act but by the act of the Church.”<sup>81</sup>

The child is quite unaware of the gift it is given via conception by God (the parents are merely instruments). We would not allow that the child must abide the attainment of the use of reason before he accepts the reality of his existence. (Whether he later chooses some silly ideology as grounds for denying it is a matter about which he may exercise his free will.) As life is freely given by God to all, so in baptism is the Life of Grace, a much higher gift, given to those fortunate to have had Christian parents.<sup>82</sup> Whether the child having reached manhood continues to accept the gift is another matter.

Dr Lennox proceeds, inevitably, to make further errors, finding himself in agreement with Christopher Dawkins (as if *Dawkins* would know) on what it is that constitutes a

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<sup>79</sup> *Romans* 6 : 9

<sup>80</sup> This is taken from the exposition of the Catholic position in Dr John A Lamont’s paper on religion and the state at [https://www.academia.edu/877072/Catholic\\_teaching\\_on\\_religion\\_and\\_the\\_state](https://www.academia.edu/877072/Catholic_teaching_on_religion_and_the_state)

<sup>81</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 68, a. 9, ad 1.

<sup>82</sup> Protestant, and most secular commentators on ‘religious belief’ for that matter, reduce God to a construct of the mind rather than a reality. They do not understand that God is real, that true faith in God has God, not man, as its author. True faith in God is consistent with man’s nature but it is not from man: *it is from God*.

Christian; misunderstanding the place of the state qua the family, and so on (see pp. 71-2).

VII. With the following he heads in the right direction but does not quite *arrive* (as the French might say):

“Whatever [Hitler and Stalin] were by label or background, they were atheists in practice. What they had in common was a utopian vision for the remaking of humanity in their own image; and in so doing they effectively created a substitute religion...” (p. 84).

If you abandon belief in God you are not thereby relieved of the need for belief. This is an inevitable consequence of the debility of the human intellect. As Chesterton said, a man who will not believe in God will believe in anything. What substitutes for religion is ideology, that is, someone’s idea elevated to serve as a surrogate for reality. Many defective religions, such as Mohammedanism and Mormonism and the pseudo-religion, Freemasonry, bear the hallmarks of ideology quite as harmful as the follies inspired by people like Karl Marx. And one need not embark on a study of these false religions to realise how since the 1970s ideologies have come to dominate peoples’ lives, notably the ideologies of secular humanism and of feminism. The frequent invocation in public life of the need to conform to ‘political correctness’ is eloquent of the universality of the phenomenon.<sup>83</sup>

VIII. While he mocks the atheists for their materialism Dr Lennox seems blind to his own commitment to the materialist paradigm. This is evident in the claim —

“[T]here is widespread acknowledgment on all sides that it is very difficult to get a base for morality in nature.” (p. 99)

For those who provide this ‘widespread acknowledgement’ are, all of them, caught in the materialist net. Yet his approach serves a purpose for it enables us to see the arguments of atheists, and those of the philosophers responsible for placing them in this bind, addressed from their own base. A little of the history of recent thought will assist.

The error of René Descartes (1596-1650) in suppressing the objective, the real, in favour of his own personal perceptions left the thinkers of his day with the material objects of sensed perception detached from their foundations and, what was worse, left them with their own ideas detached, likewise, from reality.<sup>84</sup> There were two effects on philosophic thinking, *subjectivism* (all thought starts with the thinker) and *materialism* (nothing beyond the material exists or can exist). Each of these aberrations, the reader should note, begins with a pre-conception on the part of the thinker. Reality is no longer to be permitted to dictate how he shall think. The precursor, or prophet, of this mindset was the Franciscan heretic William of Ockham (Occam) (c.1287-1347) whose defective philosophy was to be a catalyst for Luther’s rebellion. The philosophers that

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<sup>83</sup> Even such mundane obsessions as ‘global warming’ and ‘carbon capture’ betray the need for some sort of belief system even as they deny the influence of an overarching intellect ordering the planet and man’s destiny on it.

<sup>84</sup> With his *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) Descartes reversed the dictate of reality which is *sum ergo possum cogitare* (I am, therefore I can think).

followed Descartes like David Hume (1711-1776), John Locke (1632-1704), and Bishop George Berkeley (1685-1753), simply teased out the implications of Descartes' folly.<sup>85</sup>

Because he is confined in his materialist cell it is impossible for a materialist to grasp the reasoning deriving morality from the demands of nature. One hundred years ago Chesterton compared the mindset to madness.

"If you argue with a madman, it is extremely probable that you will get the worst of it; for in many ways his mind moves all the quicker for not being delayed by the things that go with good judgment. He is not hampered by a sense of humour or by charity, or by the dumb certainties of experience. He is the more logical for losing certain sane affections. Indeed, the common phrase for insanity is in this respect a misleading one. The madman is not the man who has lost his reason. The madman is the man who has lost everything except his reason."<sup>86</sup>

As the madman is detached from reality, so is the materialist thinker, something that is clear in the opinions of those Dr Lennox quotes with a view to debunking; this, for instance, from Jacques Monod —

"One of the great problems of philosophy is the relationship between the realm of knowledge and the realm of values. Knowledge is what "is" and values are what "ought" to be. I would say that all traditional philosophies up to and including communism have tried to derive the "ought" from the "is". This is impossible. If it is true that there is no purpose in the universe, that man is a pure accident, you cannot derive any ought from it."<sup>87</sup>

And the assurance by the scientific correspondent of London's *Sunday Telegraph* —

"It is not just the religious explanation of the world that is contradicted by the scientific explanations of our origins. So, too, are most of our ethical values, since most of them have been shaped by our religious heritage. A scientific account of mankind has no more place for free-will or the equal capacity of each individual to be good and act justly than it has for the soul."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> The errors of these philosophers turn on the epistemological question *What is it that we know when we know?* In Ockham the error is *Nominalism* which asserts that the names we give things are nothing but names, collectives of singular perceptions. This is incipient materialism. In Locke the error is *Empiricism* whose assertion it is that the materials of knowledge and reason derive from experience *and nothing else*. The mind is purely passive. Berkeley extends this empiricism by denying the existence of a material world, for once one denies the substrate of phenomena (the physical appearances), these cannot be explained other than as ideas of the perceiver. Hume carries the principle to its logical conclusion by rejecting the objective value of the principle of causality; a corporeal substance is nothing but the sum of impressions. Each of these thinkers reduces the intellect to a sort of sense, denies its immaterial power to know universal realities and identify them in the singulars of observation. There are three effects: 1. all knowledge is reduced to sensation; 2. the concept of substance (the underlying reality which makes a thing be what it is) is lost; and, 3. the true concept of causality is denied.

<sup>86</sup> G K Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>87</sup> Jacques Monod and A. Wainhouse, *Chance and Necessity*, London, Collins, 1971, pp.110, 167 ; quoted in John C Lennox, *Gunning for God*, op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>88</sup> Alasdair Palmer, "Must Knowledge Gained Mean Paradise Lost", *Sunday Telegraph*, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1977, quoted in *Gunning for God*, op. cit., p. 107. These thinkers share a common misconception about science (experimental science). They assume it is impossible for science to be interpreted other than through *materialist* eyes. But science is quite indifferent to a scientist's philosophical predilections. Were he alive today, Aristotle, whose take on reality differs radically from that of modern philosophers, would see in science's discoveries infinitely more profound realities than those currently posited. He would, moreover, insist that human morality is consistent with a right understanding of nature. On this score, let the reader do what Jacques Monod neglected to do, study the thinking in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

The objective reality of moral obligation, as plain as the nose on one's face, disappears behind the cloud of these materialists' pre-conceptions. They are like men in a room with but one window, its pane flawed and yellowed, arguing over what the distorted light reveals. Dr Lennox uses a similar metaphor—

"They openly confess that they are not prepared even to listen to arguments that go outside the bounds of their naturalism. Of course it is honest of them to say that they have decided to imprison themselves inside the small world of their naturalistic castle. But whether that attitude is reasonable, or whether there is a world outside that they have put beyond their own reach, is of course quite a different matter."<sup>89</sup>

It is Chesterton (again) who puts his finger on the issue.

"[The] peril is that the human intellect is free to destroy itself. Just as one generation could prevent the very existence of the next generation by all entering a monastery or jumping into the sea, so one set of thinkers can in some degree prevent further thinking by teaching the next generation that there is no validity in any human thought... There is a thought that stops thought. That is the only thought that ought to be stopped."<sup>90</sup>

In any sane society atheism, and philosophy which leads to it, would be suppressed for the welfare of its citizenry.<sup>91</sup>

Contrary to Monod—and indeed contrary to Dr Lennox's own view—it is precisely in nature that morality has its ground. Nature is an intricate and ordered reality standing between two intellects, the Divine and the created,<sup>92</sup> in which each elemental creature exercises, at its proper level, a particular gift. The materialist does not see the formal, indelible, and immutable essences of the things of nature as realities produced and kept in being by an intellect like his own but infinitely more powerful.

Any sane man will insist that stealing is evil for a man but not for a dog. He acknowledges, as part of common sense, that there is in a man a reality a dog lacks. What is it? Whatever that distinguishing reality is, the stupendous truth is that *it is not material!* Here, in the insistence on the critical function that the formal plays in every material thing, is the clue to the confusion which makes the materialist conduct himself so stupidly.<sup>93</sup> The principle at stake, the *Principle of Indeterminacy*, is simple common sense—

That which can be many is not one of the many.

If water can be hot and can be cold, it gets its heat, or lack of it, from something other than itself. (If water was hot from itself, wherever you had water there would be hot water.) If matter can be a man, can be a dog, can be a tree, it has not from the fact that it is matter the reason why it is a man, a dog or a tree. The reason, in each case, is

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<sup>89</sup> *Gunning for God*, op. cit., p. 229.

<sup>90</sup> G K Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, op. cit., Chapter III. 'The Suicide of Thought', p. 33.

<sup>91</sup> Which is one of the reasons we should study the values of the Middle Ages. For in mediaeval times atheists *were* suppressed!

<sup>92</sup> *Rem (naturalis) inter duos intellectos constituta...* St Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate* 1, 2. The first is the Divine intellect, its constitutor; the other is the created intellect its receptor, who, marvelling at the thing made, is led rationally to give thanks and hyperdulia to its Creator.

<sup>93</sup> The brute animal lacks the two powers found in man, intellect and (its condign appetite) will. The consequences are that a man is an end in himself, whereas a brute has the character of a means to an end. Man has what the brute does not, absolute rights and proportionate responsibilities. These demand a fitting response, acknowledgement that he must conform his conduct to a rule, *do good; avoid evil*. The influence that gives a brute its nature is really, i.e., formally distinct from the influence which gives to a man *his* nature, yet both are part of that larger reality, *Nature*.

something else. In the case of water the heat is an *accidental* form; in the case of matter, the 'man-ness', the 'brute animal-ness', and the 'vegetative-ness', is (in each case) a *substantial* form.

Matter has an infinitely variable character, as experience shows: of itself it is no one of the things it can be. Matter is merely *the substrate of reality*. The materialist (the fool!) wants to make it the whole of reality.

Which brings us back to the ontological, and temporal, source of the materialists' problems; they deny the greater part of reality when they deny the existence of the immaterial. But why did they in the beginning feel so constrained to deny its existence? Why do they feel so constrained about it today? The reason is that once you admit a *formal* (immaterial) cause which determines a thing to be what it is you implicitly admit an intellectual factor or *efficient* cause (a maker), and a *final* cause, the end for the sake of which the efficient cause has produced these myriad forms. That is, implicitly you admit the existence of a Creator and Conserver of reality.

IX. Dr Lennox's *reductiones ad absurdum* of the materialists' endeavours are perhaps best illustrated by this criticism of Richard Dawkins' attempt to provide a basis for morality and man's instinctive inclination to act in consideration for others:

"[He says] that, even though man is nothing but his genes, he can somehow rebel against [them] when they would lead him to do wrong... [Yet]... at the beginning... Dawkins says: 'We are survival machines—robot vehicles blindly-programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes.' But then he appears to retreat from this position in the final chapter... 'For an understanding of modern man, we must begin by throwing out the gene as the sole basis of our ideas on evolution'; and gives us as his grand conclusion the encouragement to rebel against a genetic tyranny. But how can we rebel, if we are nothing but our genes? If there is no non-material, non-genetic, element or force within us, what is there in us that could possibly have the capacity to rebel against our genes and behave morally? Nowhere does Dawkins tell us about the origin of such a capacity or when it appeared. And where would we ever get any objective moral principles to guide us in that rebellion?"<sup>94</sup>

Every materialist, every evolutionist, has recourse, via a back door, to the threefold causality he denies. What else is natural selection but an invoking of *final* and *formal* causality while excluding (by attributing the effects to blind accident) an overarching mind drawing its intricate designs and directing its beneficent ends? What else is the reliance on chance but an invoking of *efficient* causality while denying a factor intellect (i.e., maker)? Chance is a cause *per accidens*, the concatenation of *per se* causes producing either a happy or tragic result. No materialist has yet explained why its operations in producing their hypothetical 'macro-evolution' should have been happy rather than tragic ones. Dawkin's appeal to a blind influence programming men as 'survival machines' is a further instance of the syndrome. No computer has a fraction of the complexity of a living man and no computer is 'blindly-programmed'. Why should Dawkins be blindly programmed when Dawkins' computer is not?

X. Then there is the problem of evil. Every atheist and not a few Protestants are caught up with the evil in the world. But what is evil? Is it something, or is it nothing?

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<sup>94</sup> *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford (OUP), 1976, quoted in *Gunning for God*, op. cit., p. 111.

If it is something, is it a positive or a negative something? Dr Lennox rightly mocks the atheists for their ‘solution’ —

“[E]vil for them is just part of the way the world is. Indeed, what they might... be hard put to explain is why there is any good at all, let alone so much of it. Why are they protesting against evil, since they don’t actually believe that it exists?”<sup>95</sup>

But he does not quite address the reality at stake which is that evil is something negative. It is the lack, not of any good at all, but of *a due* good<sup>96</sup> which leads inevitably to the most critical question in the debate. It is not—*Why is there evil in the world?* It is—*Where does the good in the world, of which evil is the lack, come from?*

It is not until his final chapter that Dr Lennox deals with the evidence for God which comes through what he calls ‘direct perception’, quoting the telling passage of St Paul in *Romans* chapter 1:

“[W]hat can be known about God is plain because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For though they knew God they did not honour him as God or give him thanks...”

There is admirable counterpoint in his berating of atheists for spending their lives—

“hiding behind the idea that, because they have found what they think is the only mechanism involved in life’s origin and variation, they have somehow explained life. They seem unaware of their elementary category mistake, in thinking that the existence of a mechanism somehow obviates the need for an agent who designed the mechanism.” (p. 228)

He goes on to quote Wittgenstein to the point—

“The great delusion of modernity is that the laws of nature explain the universe for us. The laws of nature describe the universe, they describe the regularities. But they explain nothing.”

XI. His Protestantism moves Dr Lennox to present Christ’s teaching with a Calvinist slant:

“[A]ll can be ‘justified’ [i.e. be put right with God] by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus... we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law... to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness”. (at p. 153, citing St Paul in *Romans* 3: 24, 28, and 4: 5)

This assessment addresses the word ‘grace’ superficially (materially) as denoting something freely given but it does not comprehend *what* is given. St Paul said much more on the topic than may be extracted from the above quotes and to ignore what he said elsewhere, and what the other Apostles said, falsifies their teaching. In his epistle to Titus St Paul is clear: “They profess their faith in God but their actions give the lie”. (*Titus* 1: 16) And St James, whose epistle Luther was careful to excise from his version of the Bible, was typically forthright: “Faith without good works is dead”. (*James* 2: 17) Justification is much more than the Protestant’s conceived ‘covering-over’ of man’s sinfulness; it involves a conversion of mind and heart. Justification consists in —

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<sup>95</sup> *Gunning for God*, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>96</sup> Why is blindness an evil in a horse but not in a tree? Because sight is *due to* a horse; *not due to* a tree.

‘the translation from that condition in which man is born as the son of the first Adam, into the state of grace and adoption among the children of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ...’<sup>97</sup>

How could it be compatible with the veracity and the sanctity of God to declare the sinner justified if he remained in his sinful state?

The same influence affects his assessment of Christ’s words on the Eucharist:

“At the Last Supper in Jerusalem, when he instituted the ceremony by which his first disciples and all subsequent believers should remember him, he chose bread and wine as eloquent symbols of his death: ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me... This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’” (p. 159)

This is curious considering Dr Lennox’s defence of the fundamental claim that Christ rose from the dead. If Christ was God and could rise from the dead, why could he not turn bread into His body and wine into blood for the nourishment of his faithful followers? Moreover, Christ addressed the objection implicit in Dr Lennox’s interpretation in His words to the Jews—

“Amen, Amen, I say to you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink...”<sup>98</sup>

This approach is of a piece with Dr Lennox’s flawed views about baptism.

### Conclusion

It has been suggested that we should not cavil unduly with what Dr Lennox has written; that we should commend him for putting heart into many believers in God for his systematic exposure of the debility of the arguments atheists advance. But there is a critical matter at stake here.

Those who reject God’s authority are, like the builders of the Tower of Babel, brought to confusion. When they impose their own will on what God has revealed they construct a false, a man-made, religion. Soon disagreement sets in and, *quot homines tot sententiae*, this false religion begins to assume differing guises. It degrades into quasi-religions like Unitarianism (which has much in common with Mohammedanism), Deism and Freemasonry which lead inevitably to atheism.

Which is precisely where we are today, almost 500 years after the revolt inspired by Martin Luther and prosecuted so indulgently, and diligently, by Henry Tudor. The process is logical:

- atheism denies God’s existence, the ground of which is—
- a denial of God’s authority, the ground of which is—
- a rejection of what God has revealed which is implicit in the election of the Protestant ‘believer’ to pick and choose among the truths God has revealed to suit himself, rather than to embrace them all.

The missteps in the *theological* order have their parallel in the *philosophical* order. Realism (moderate realism, not the exaggerated realism of Plato)—the intellectual

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<sup>97</sup> Council of Trent, Session VI (January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1547), ch. 4; Denzinger 796.

<sup>98</sup> *John* 6: 53 et seq.

acceptance that we are determined by things outside ourselves (by reality, by nature); that *what we know* is *what is*, and that truth (logical truth) is the identity between *what is asserted* and *what is*—gives way to the view that the thinker's own position determines the truth. Instead of reality as the measure, he thinks himself and his ideas are the measure.

*What matters is what I think.* Subjectivism denies what underlies the objective world and concentrates on what appears, on the superficial. It denies the immaterial (the formal) in favour of the material, what falls under the senses, and proceeds to assert that this is the whole of reality. It takes a further step: it reduces the intellect to a sense, a high-level sense but no more than a sense. It rejects the universal, the concept, and the reality of indelible, enduring, natures exemplified in innumerable individuals, in favour of a latter-day Heracliteanism that maintains (against all the objective evidence) that every thing is in a state of flux, busily 'evolving' into something else. These two aberrations, *subjectivism* and *materialism* provide a sort of ersatz substitute for *realism* and, after development, return to confirm and give vigour to the atheistic tendency which, as Dr Lennox rightly remarks, "has no answer... no ultimate hope to give".

It is here in his own backyard, so to speak, that the provenance of the evil Dr Lennox attacks began its life. Unless we throw off the false interpretations of what the Son of God revealed to mankind and embrace, again, the teachings of the Institution Christ established on earth, and of which He remains the Head—the Catholic Church—disorder and atheism will continue to flourish.

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## DECODING DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.

Charles Darwin<sup>99</sup>

Has anyone done more in cinematography to reveal the majesty of creation to man than Sir David Attenborough? For more than fifty years his films have exposed in better and better quality, and in greater and greater detail, the intricate order and particularity in creation and, most significant of all, its great beauty. In his more recent productions, accelerated time (time lapse) photography exposing the mysteries in the lives of plants has revealed still greater wonders in creation.

His enthusiasm for his subject is matched by rare panache in commentary and in presentation.<sup>100</sup> We owe him an immense debt.

Yet the brilliance of his films and his ability as a prophet of nature has not been matched by insight or profundity of thought. Sir David has always been at his best when he demonstrates the majesty of nature; and at his worst in his attempts to give it rational explanation. In truth his subject has betrayed his intentions. For while he has worked tirelessly to show the world that these plants and animals are but the happy accidents of blind chance, the creatures themselves have demonstrated ever more convincingly their provenance at the hands of an overarching intellect fashioning them in intricate order, forming them with the greatest loving care and endowing them with a majestic beauty.

### *Evolutionspeak*

Time and time again does Sir David highlight the intellectual effects in the objects of his study and proceed to ascribe the causality involved somehow to the object itself. He will say something like this—

So a few species of grass by utilising the aid of animals and, in particular, ourselves, the human animal, have succeeded in interrupting the ecological cycles that have operated for millions of years in so many parts of the earth. They've managed to claim for their own exclusive use, not only wide open plains but fertile well-watered lands that once supported rich communities of animals and plants.<sup>101</sup>

Or this—

Many plants have found that it pays to have an exclusive courier service so that a messenger doesn't deliver its package [of pollen] to the wrong address—a different kind of flower—where it will be useless.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, 1859, p. 158

<sup>100</sup> Of course, the real masters of his epics are the cameramen, as he has always insisted.

<sup>101</sup> *The Private Life of Plants*, Episode 4: *The Social Struggle*, BBC TV DVD, 2003

<sup>102</sup> *The Private Life of Plants*, Episode 3, *Flowering*, BBC TV DVD, 2003

Or this—

Boobies don't actively swim underwater, but members of the auk family such as... guillemots and puffins do... They propel themselves not with their feet like ducks, but with their wings. And they've paid a considerable price to be able to do so. The wings of a boobie or a gull are far too long and insufficiently robust to be beaten underwater. So auks have had to evolve shorter, stubbier wings. That gives them a rather clumsy, whirring, flight in the air but it does enable them to fly underwater so well that they can outpace small fish.<sup>103</sup>

Or this—

Chicks can't fly but they, too, must have water, and the [Sand Grouse] males will take it to them. They can't carry it in their crops—they need all that water to sustain themselves—but they have extra tanks. Their breast feathers have a special adaptation. They are covered on their inner sides with a mat of filaments so fine that they absorb water like blotting paper... The female makes way for him. [The chicks] cluster around and suck from his breast, for all the world like puppies or kittens. So one comparatively small adaptation of its feathers has enabled the Sand Grouse to colonise a corner of the world closed to others.<sup>104</sup>

This ascription of intellectual activity ('utilising the aid of animals and... the human animal...'; 'pay[ing] to use an exclusive courier service...'; 'pay[ing] a considerable price... evol[ing] shorter, stubbier wings...'; '[effecting] one comparatively small adaptation of its feathers...') in each of these cases to a being devoid of intellect is a literary device. It is called 'personification' and is used, in poetry more than in prose, to enlist the sympathy of the reader to the emotional commitment of the writer. But Sir David does not use it as a figure of speech; he means it literally. It is part of *evolutionspeak*, the language which removes the unutterable from thought and replaces it with the tolerable. What is the unutterable? Any word which would serve to recognise the existence of a designer, of a maker, or of an end in all these effects demanding the existence of an intellect. What is the tolerable? Anything which a mind can pretend is extractible from nothing but material causality, even if this means indulging in the nonsense of attributing intellect to things manifestly devoid of it.

Quite apart from any other criticism one may have of this device, it is intellectually dishonest. Rather than analysing reality, extracting its principles rationally and drawing objective conclusions, its practitioners force reality to fit their *a priori*, i.e., subjective, views. This intellectual disease, subjectivism, as we have remarked elsewhere, is the evil of the age. Its manifestation in this particular instance is, of course, Darwinian evolutionary theory.

An error subsidiary to this first, and growing out of the same simplistic world view, appears in the way Sir David treats of life whether manifest in plants in animals or in man as simply different stages in a continuum, only quantitatively different, not qualitatively distinct from each other. In his seminal analysis of evolutionary theory, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*,<sup>105</sup> molecular biologist, Dr Michael Denton, lists this

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<sup>103</sup> *The Life of Birds*, Episode 5, *Fishing For A Living*, BBC TV DVD, 2001

<sup>104</sup> *The Life of Birds*, op. cit., Episode 10, *The Limits Of Endurance*

<sup>105</sup> Burnett Books, London, 1985, p. 345

treatment of life as one of the two axioms on which the theory is founded. The other axiom is that all adaptive design in nature is the result of random processes.

A corollary of these two axioms is that it is licit for modern scientists to assert, as if they were facts, their hypotheses as to how the adaptive design in nature developed. Here is an example taken from the Attenborough series *The Living Planet*.

Some ten million years ago warm blooded creatures from the land invaded the sea—mammals—and they became [as] equally streamlined [as fish]... Dolphins and killer whales are descended from four footed land living, air breathing, mammals that were flesh eaters. In the sea they lost their limbs but not their taste for meat nor their teeth.<sup>106</sup>

This is pure fantasy for which there is not the slightest evidence. It demonstrates the evolutionist practice of substituting the workings of imagination for those of intellect.

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### *Specific Distinctions in Living Things*

Life is not a continuum graduating from the merest amoeba to the majesty of intellectual activity in minds like those of an Aristotle or an Einstein, a Shakespeare or a Beethoven. The very concept 'life' is analogous. When said of a plant and when said of a brute animal, the word signifies a reality which is somewhat the same but somewhat unsame. It doesn't take much effort to see that the un-sameness is greater than the sameness.

A living thing moves itself; it is *automotive*. In the plant, 'life' signifies automotion but only at the level of *execution*. Thus the nutrition of the organism operates according to its specific needs; its *growth* occurs not at random, but to due size and shape; the power of generation is aimed to the conservation of its species. But the *form* of the plant's operations is determined not by itself but by its nature, and the *end* of its operations is, likewise, determined not by itself but by its nature.

Contrast with this sensitive, i.e., animal, life. Here 'life' signifies automotion not only at the level of *execution*, but also at the level of *form*. When the fox chases the rabbit, it runs hither and thither, in one direction then in another, because it sees the rabbit, which is potentially food for it, running in those respective directions. Not only does the fox move itself to *execution* of the action, but it moves itself according to a *form*, knowledge of the rabbit (and of its flight) through the powers of sight, smell and hearing with which it is endowed. In the same way the rabbit flees the fox, the *execution* of the action, according to a similar form of knowledge as the fox (and of its pursuit), perceiving the fox through the same senses of sight, smell and hearing, as a danger to its life and as something to be avoided.

But neither animal determines the *end* of its action, whether of pursuit or of flight. The fox chases the rabbit that it may eat, and so live. It does not choose this end. The rabbit flees the fox that it may save its life: no more than the fox does it choose this end. In each case the *end* is determined for the animal. Each acts simply in accordance with

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<sup>106</sup> *The Living Planet*, Episode 11, *The Open Ocean*, BBC DVD, 2004

its nature. In pursuit, as in flight, each animal is acting for its own preservation. It is the same with that act which is done for the preservation of its species, generation. Here too, the animal operates at the level both of execution and of form but it does not determine the end of its action, the maintenance of its species.

Accordingly, while plants are singly automotive, brute animals are doubly automotive.

In contrast with plants and animals, man moves himself not only as regards the *execution* and the *form* of his acts, but also as regards their *end*. He needs food to sustain his life. His internal organs emulate those of the plant in transforming it into living tissue in nutrition. Like the plant, growth in his body occurs to a determinate size, shape and proportion. He pursues appropriate food, like the brute animal, according to the form of sense knowledge. But, distinctively from the brute, he chooses the end of this action—to eat this, rather than that; to eat less, rather than more; or, to refrain for rational motive from eating at all. He is not determined by his nature to an end but chooses that end for himself. The same goes for generation. He is not determined like the brute animal, but free to choose the partner with whom he will bring into the world new members of his species.

‘Life’ when said of a human being then, signifies something radically different from that word when said of a brute animal. The difference in meaning is even more fundamental than the difference in meaning of that word when said of a plant, and when said of an animal. For only those creatures endowed with intellect can choose the ends of their acts and only man is so endowed. So great is the difference between man and the brutes that Aristotle says somewhere in his works: ‘The least degree of intellect in one being is greater than the whole of the rest of creation’. No matter how refined sensitive (i.e., animal) life may be, it can never lift itself out of its nature to the level of the rational, the intellective, for the intellective operates at a level infinitely higher than the sensitive.

The theory of evolution is based on an alleged material, that is, quantitative, shift. The difference between plant and animal is not one of quantity, but of quality; not one of degree, but of kind. It is a difference *in specification*. A being limited to act only at the level of *execution* can never raise itself to act at the level of *form*. It is prevented from doing so by its design. One might as well say that a line could change itself, without the assistance of the draftsman, into a plane figure. Even if the theory of evolution was true within the category of plant life—and one plant could somehow be transmuted into another by some quantitative shift—it could never lift itself out of its category of the singly automotive into that of the doubly automotive, the category of animal life.

*A fortiori*, even if the theory of evolution was true within the category of animal life—and one animal could somehow be transmuted into another by some quantitative shift—it could never lift itself to the level of the trebly automotive, the category of human life. Again, specification prevents it. One might as well say that a plane figure, a plan, could change itself without the assistance of a builder, into a three dimensional figure. Moreover, man, free to choose the *end* of his operations, does so in virtue of a principle which is not only qualitatively different from that according to which the brute animal operates, *but is not even material*. Not even the wildest exponents of

evolutionism would allow that matter could somehow transmute itself into the immaterial. They would not admit even the existence of the immaterial.

This analysis of life into its three categories taken from the writings of St Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae* [I, q. 18, a. 3], is derived from the works of the finest of the ancient Greek philosophers, Aristotle. Its subtleties are hidden from modern thinkers who, since they refuse to accept the existence of any cause other than the material cause, are impeded from understanding the majesty of creation. Their grasp of reality is, accordingly, defective.

#### *Time and Chance as Causes*

A cause is a positive principle which exercises influence unto the 'be' (*esse; existence*) of a thing dependent in regard to be.<sup>107</sup> A cause may operate in one of four, and only four, ways—as end, as maker, as form or as matter. The four causes are analysed in the Appendix to this paper and the reader is invited to study that analysis before proceeding.

Time is the measure of motion.<sup>108</sup> It is not a cause. Rather, it measures the movement these four causes produce in bringing things from potency to act. Whether the universe is 6,000 years old (as the followers of 'creation science' naively assert) or 13 billion years old as science seems to show, doesn't matter in the least. Time adds nothing to and subtracts nothing from the movement produced by the four causes.

Chance is an accidental event which occurs through concurrence of *per se* causes whose influence is overlooked or ignored in the preoccupation with their accidental effect. It is something negative expressed as something positive, the attribution of real causation to something which is not a cause at all. What happens by chance is an effect which is not explicable from some determinate cause because no cause is ordered to it *per se*. Rather the effect of the interaction is produced *per accidens*. Thus the finding of a buried treasure by a grave digger (the chance) arises from the concurrence of two causalities, the action of digging and the earlier action by the secretor of hiding in the very place where the digging occurs. The chance meeting of friends occurs from the concurrence of two causalities, the walking by the first in one direction at a particular time past a particular place with the walking by the second in the opposition direction at the same time past the same place. In neither instance is the accidental effect intended.

Chance both exists and does not exist, under different respects.<sup>109</sup> It exists really as happenstance; but as a cause does not exist. Every cause which is particular and inferior depends upon a cause which is universal and superior, and effects arising from the concurrence with each other of particular causes—though beside the intentions of

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. St Thomas, *In Metaphys.*, V, L.1, 751

<sup>108</sup> Time is the measure of movement according to before and after. (Aristotle, *Physics*, IV, 12; St Thomas, *In Physics*, IV, L. 17; *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 10, a. 1). Movement is the act of that which is in potency insofar as it is in potency (*In Physics*, III, 285). Only that which is imperfect under some respect can undergo movement.

<sup>109</sup> For St Thomas's commentary on Aristotle's analysis of chance, see *In II Physics*, 7-10

the agents, or fortuitous—are foreseen at the level of the universal and superior.<sup>110</sup> It is not licit, then, to draw conclusions against the finality in things (i.e., their orderedness to an end) from chance. For while every particular cause intends its own particular effect, the universal cause intends not only such particular effects but also effects arising from the intersecting of particular causes. In other words, there is a finality in the order of the world which embraces the chance effects of the intersection of particular causes. Shakespeare expressed it with a line in the play, *Hamlet*: *There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will*. The Portuguese embodied it in a maxim: *God writes straight with crooked lines*.

#### *The Imaginings of Evolutionists*

Just because mammals are found in the sea it does not follow they originated on land. Nor does it follow that somehow they developed for themselves the paraphernalia to cope with an entirely sea-born life. That they flourish in the sea is proof that they were designed for life in the sea. There is not the slightest objective evidence for the assertion that this or that sea-going mammal 'lost its limbs'.

Similarity of skeletal layout or bone structure does not entitle scientists to conclude that one animal is 'descended' from another. The one certain fact about species is that they do *not* change. It cannot be concluded, then, that the species of now extinct animals ever changed either. How many times does it have to be repeated that there is a total absence of evidence in fossil remains of any of the alleged transitory forms? If the author of the designs manifest in diverse species elected to use different means to achieve similar ends—as is the case, for instance, with the killer whale, the seal, the penguin, the shark and the saltwater crocodile, all of them sea-going creatures—that is his affair. Each of these animals falls into a different taxonomic category. That bare fact does not entitle anyone to fantasise on the provenance of each, to create an imaginary family tree of the 'descending' forms, or assert these fantasies as if they were facts.

#### *The Cause of the Intellectual Malaise*

Wisdom, or insight, is the fruit of right reason. Ultimately it can only flourish where there is sound philosophy. The western world began to lose its grip on sound philosophy with the advent of René Descartes<sup>111</sup> and had well and truly lost its way intellectually by the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, founded at the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup> century by men schooled in the long tradition of Greek and Roman thought, buttressed by contributions from Arab and Jewish thought and rendered increasingly precise by a flourishing Christian analysis, were, by the mid nineteenth century languishing under the great debility of modern philosophy with its confusions of causes and effects and its inability to make the simplest of distinctions. Where the scholars of the past had insisted on metaphysics, the modern were content with physics; where the former allowed the contributions of the past masters scope in their deliberations, the latter derided these as dated and of historical interest only. The result has been intellectual blindness and confusion.

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<sup>110</sup> St Thomas, *In II Physics*, 10, 1-13 [nn. 226-238]

<sup>111</sup> Who reduced its subtlety to banality with his mechanistic and materialist explanations, immersed its objectivity in his obsession with subjectivity and reduced metaphysics to mere physics.

In parallel with the loss of understanding of the metaphysical there occurred, paradoxically, a flourishing of science and discovery and a great burgeoning of knowledge and information. In their pride at such achievements, modern thinkers were content with their ignorance of the wisdom of the men had who preceded them. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, John of Salisbury had remarked with great justice: *Bernard of Chartres used to say that we are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more... because they raise us up...* Such an attitude cut no ice with the thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They knew better.

The debility of the philosophy underlying modern scientific thought means that modern philosophers and scientists regard the world confusedly—literally so, for the root meaning of *confuse* is ‘to pour together’—treating thing and object as if they were identical when really distinct. Blind to essential distinctions, they were receptive to any sort of *a priori* hypothesis such as Darwinian evolutionism. It is this intellectual malaise of which Sir David Attenborough is the heir and, with the greatest of respect to him, the honest artisan.

#### *Computers & Animals*

The advent of the computer has put additional strain on the evolutionary hypothesis. Modern biologists are able to show that the brute animal behaves very much like a programmed computer. An animal disturbed in an activity proper to its species, such as nest building, will not resume the activity at the point where it was disturbed but, replicating the operation of a computer, will return to the beginning of the nest building process and recommence the task.

There is no intellect in a computer or in a computer program. But there are traces of intellectual activity in both which demonstrate the truth that each is a work of intellect. There are traces of intellect in brute animals too. No less than in the case of the computer does this mean that creatures are possessed of intellect. What it means is *that each is a work of intellect*.

No one would argue that the computer program, *Windows XP*, is simply the result of a chance concurrence of causes. The program was produced by intellect. Why are we not entitled to reach the same conclusion in respect of brute animals? No one would argue that *Windows 2000* modified itself to produce *Windows XP*. Why then is it acceptable to argue that one species of brute animal somehow refined itself to produce another? Why are we precluded from saying that it is certain that an intellectual being fashioned them both?

The structure of the DNA molecule was discovered in 1953 since when knowledge of the topic has grown enormously. Molecular scientists now know that DNA acts as a kind of molecular language, operating in much the same way as the soft-wear that runs a computer. How can this be if there never was—if there is not now in the very moment that the DNA molecule operates—a programmer?

*Specific Contradictions of Evolutionism in the Attenborough Oeuvre*

The weakness of Sir David's intellectual analysis leads him into contradictions. Two of his programs illustrate this well, *The Song of the Earth*<sup>112</sup> and *The Amber Time Machine*.<sup>113</sup> The two are collected in the series *Attenborough in Paradise* and are found on the same DVD so they may be viewed in proximity.

*The Song of the Earth* is one of the silliest of Sir David's efforts. He sets out to try and demonstrate through material similarity of the sounds made by various species of brute animal and the different tribes of men the 'evolutionary connection' between them. 'Life' embraces three different categories of being as exposed above. There is no material continuum joining these categories save in this that each is, in its own distinctive way, automotive. In any event, *material* differences between things are the least of differences. A merely material similarity, or a similarity of appearance, signifies nothing. The fronds of a palm tree in a high wind may look like nothing so much as a herd of agitated horses but the nature of the one is far removed from that of the other. What matters is the *immaterial* attributes, the distinctive, the formal, aspects, which place each in its respective category—whether the living thing moves itself only as to execution; or whether it does so as to form as well as execution; or whether it does so as to each of execution, form and end.

A sound emitted by an animal may be nothing but a voice; or it may convey a limited message to hearers programmed to respond to that limited message—other members of its species or even members of other species; or it may signify intellectual content, *concepts*, that is, things utterly immaterial, which can be recognised only by beings which are themselves objectively immaterial—men—and then the sound is speech!

*The Song of the Earth* is a clumsy melange of facts and fictions which proves nothing but the naivety of Sir David and of his interviewees and demonstrates the poverty of their intellectual inheritance.

In *The Amber Time Machine* Sir David reveals his fascination with a piece of amber, a transparent stone constituted by resin exuded by a pine tree some forty million years ago found on the shores of the Baltic Sea. His investigations in company with biologist, Elzbieta Sontag of the University of Gdansk, reveal the identity of the insects trapped in the resin—a long legged fly; a fungus gnat, an aphid, an ant and a mite, all of which, it is reasonable to conclude, lived together near the bottom of a tree that almost inconceivable period of time ago. These insects are revealed as almost exactly the counterparts of insects found today.

Sir David pursues the history revealed in other pieces of resin from the Dominican Republic allegedly twenty million years old. In the course of his investigations he is able to replicate today the conduct of sting-less bees and assassin bugs that feed upon them; of the tadpoles of poison dart frogs and the sterile eggs the female lays to feed her offspring; of marsh beetles, diving beetles and amber damselflies; of fig wasps and

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<sup>112</sup> BBC DVD by BBC with Thirteen/WNET New York, in the collection *Attenborough In Paradise*, first transmitted in the UK, 23.12.2000.

<sup>113</sup> BBC DVD by Otter Films in the collection *Attenborough In Paradise*, BBC, first transmitted in the UK, 15.2.2004.



the nematode worms that live in synchronicity with them; and of the relationship between scale insects and ants in milking them for tree sap—all of which the investigators found trapped in this resin all those millions of years ago. Sir David demonstrates at a level that should satisfy the most critical of scientists that these species have remained unchanged over all those immense periods of time. In other words *there has been no 'evolution'!*

All unconsciously towards the end of this production he says this: “Amber, again and again, demonstrates this constancy!” Indeed it is this constancy, this immutability, of animal species has been the catch-cry of those who opposed Darwin’s gratuitous thesis from the very first. It is the point insisted upon by the very earliest of natural historians and by philosophers from before the time of Aristotle. Sir David’s study demonstrates graphically the fatuousness of the whole evolutionary hypothesis.

But perhaps the most telling evidence against the hypothesis exposed in the whole of Sir David’s cinematography is the work done by him and by his cameramen on the Emperor Penguin.

As the horrendous Antarctic winter looms in May each year, this majestic creature, far from fleeing what is to come in accordance with the founding tenets of evolutionary theory, marches south directly into the heart of it.<sup>114</sup> There, on the Ross Ice Shelf, in a darkness which soon becomes permanent and remains so, the male settles itself to brood and to raise the egg laid by its mate, with no food or shelter, succour or respite whatsoever, enduring temperatures of minus 70 degrees and winds often in excess of 100 miles per hour, for a period of almost four months. The members of the breeding colony cooperate with each other to ensure that each gets his share of the protection offered by their great numbers, and takes his turn at the windward end of the colony to assist in sheltering his fellows. The females, meanwhile, have been feeding in the seas to the north of the frozen continent. The sea ice is so extensive by the time they return that they may have to walk 100 miles to reach their colony. Each female times her return to synchronise with the hatching of her chick. She has a margin of only ten days after its hatching within which to arrive at the rookery if she is to secure the life of her offspring. The transfer of the chick to the female having been achieved, the male must then march the 100 miles or so back to the open sea in order to feed.

This whole breeding undertaking beggars the mind with the intricacy of its order in the face of insuperable hardship. The whole undertaking manifests, moreover, the loving hand of an intellectual being which has so programmed these marvelous creatures that their species will continue to be reproduced against what anyone would think to be utterly overwhelming odds.

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#### *A Final Word—Evolutionism, a Sort of Religion*

What is not appreciated about evolutionary theory is that it is a quasi-religion the object of whose belief is the same as that of atheism—‘no-God’. Like every religion,

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<sup>114</sup> *Life in the Freezer*, Episode 5, *The Big Freeze*, BBC DVD; originally transmitted, November 1993.

evolutionism demands faith and like the more 'way out' religions, it demands a faith without objective reason. Despite more than 100 years of research and discovery in which advances in science and exploratory technique have occurred at an exponential rate, the gaps in the fossil record—gaps which would, so it was asserted, reveal the alleged transitional species—remain unfilled, and the evidence for the stability of species and for the impossibility of their developing outside their specific framework has been reinforced a thousand-fold. We have reported Dr Michael Denton's assertion above that evolutionary theory rests on two axioms. He goes on to say—"Neither of [these] two fundamental axioms... has been validated by one single empirical discovery or scientific advance since 1859."

In the anagraph at the head of this paper we reported Charles Darwin as confessing that if any complex organ could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, his theory would break down. Any number of such organs has been discovered and the intricacies of molecular biology have demonstrated conclusively the theory to be scientifically impossible. Yet its adherents refuse to draw the concession Darwin himself was prepared to make. *They know better than the evidence; they know better than Darwin!* And preoccupation with the evolutionary folly continues unabated.

This quasi-religion has an associated moral theory. If there is no intellectual being which has designed and produced the natural world; if its almost infinite intricacy, its inter-cooperation of species, its majestic beauty, is nothing more than the manifestation of billions of accidents resulting from blind chance with the faintest of mechanical assistance from natural selection, then there is no one to whom a man need answer for his conduct. Such a man is immunised against the demands of moral responsibility. Is it any wonder, then, that society under the influence of Darwinian evolutionary theory since late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century has reached the stage where it not only accepts the 'morality' of contraception—the interference with the natural reproduction of children—and abortion, the killing of these innocent human beings by the million, but actively promotes the manufacture of human embryos for the purposes of experimentation.

Who can observe the many films which Sir David has brought us and not be moved by the loving care with which their subjects tend their offspring? Who will not pause to compare with this the ruthlessness with which so many members of the human race deal with their own offspring, treating them as if they were nothing but consumer items to be accepted or discarded at will?

Evolutionism, the religion of 'no-God', has done enormous harm in human society and so long as it continues to flourish so will that harm continue. This is the great conservation issue. We cannot undo the harm which is past. But we can be sorry for it in the present. We can wake up to ourselves and see the stupidity of the whole evolutionary thesis—the religion of 'no-God'—and embrace true religion which acknowledges God's existence and his over-arching presence in every moment of our lives.

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## APPENDIX

### A. NATURE OF CAUSE

A cause is a positive principle which exercises influence unto the 'be' (*esse*; *existence*) of a thing dependent in regard to be.

#### A principle

Principle is defined by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* as 'The first influence from which a thing either is, comes to be, or is known.' [*Metaphysics*, V, ch. 1] But not every principle is a cause, for principle is twofold, namely—

- a. *in the order of knowledge*, as e.g., the principles of a syllogism, which lead to the knowledge of the conclusion; and,
- b. *in the order of reality* (ontological), from which something proceeds really.

A cause is a principle in the order of reality. It is an ontological principle.

#### —positive

Not every ontological principle is a cause, for ontological principle is twofold, namely—

- a. *negative*, which is privation, as, e.g., water is produced from that which is not water (from hydrogen and oxygen) which has not the form of water but which is apt to be water—for water cannot be produced save from those elements which are apt for its form; and,
- b. *positive*, as, e.g., the form whereby the elements become water and not some other compound.

#### —exercising influence unto 'be' (*esse*)

Not every positive ontological principle is a cause, for it may be either—

- a mere beginning, as a point is the beginning of a line and does not exercise influence unto the 'be' of the line; or,
- an influence unto 'be', as the draftsman who draws the line brings the line into being.

#### —of a thing dependent in regard to 'be' or existence (*esse*)

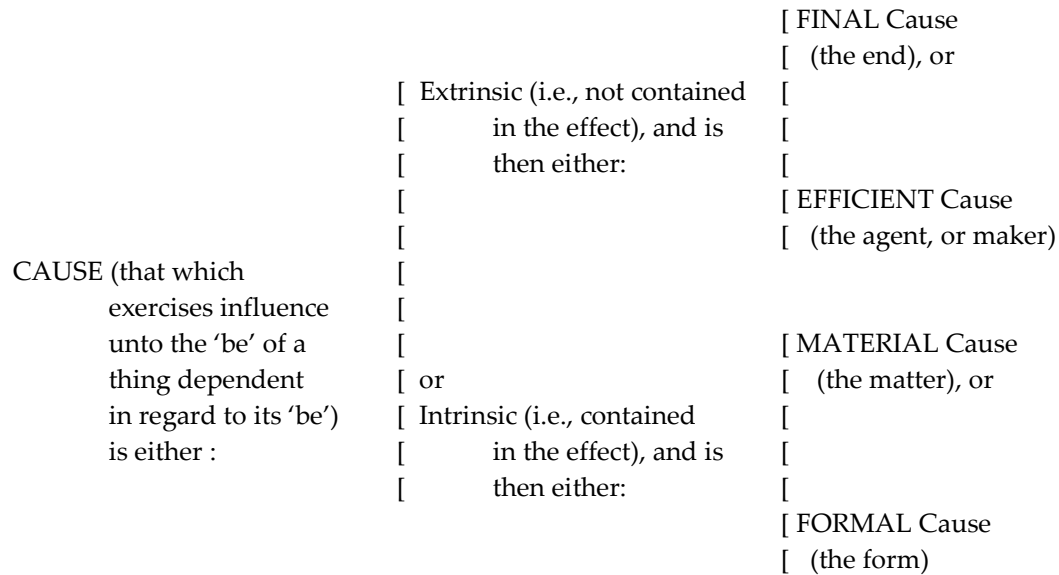
Anything which is not dependent in regard to 'be' could not be caused since to be caused means to be brought from potency to act. All created things are, however, dependent in regard to 'be'. In such a thing there is real distinction between *what* it is (its nature) and *that* it is ('be', *esse*).

### B. THERE ARE FOUR CAUSES—AND ONLY FOUR

A cause is that upon which the 'be' (*esse*) of another follows. Now the 'be' of that which has a cause can be considered in two manners. In one manner absolutely, and thus the cause of 'be' (*causa essendi*) is the **form** by which something is in act. In the other according as, from being in potency, it comes to be in act. And since whatever is in potency is reduced to act by that which is itself in act, it is necessary that there be two other causes, namely the **matter** and the **agent** which reduces the matter from potency to

act. But, the action of the agent tends towards something determinate, and so it proceeds from some determinate principle, for every agent acts according to what is fitting to it. But that towards which the action of the agent tends is called the **final** cause. Therefore, there must be four causes. [emphasis added] Source: St Thomas Aquinas, *In II Physics*, 10, 240 [n. 15]

This analysis of St Thomas may be illustrated with the following schema.



## SHAKING THE DARWINIAN FOUNDATIONS

“[W]hatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence, as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end...”

St Thomas Aquinas<sup>115</sup>

New Zealand molecular biologist, Dr Michael Denton, was the first secular scientist to provide a comprehensive attack on the scientific community’s faith in Darwin’s theory of evolution with his book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* published in 1985.<sup>116</sup> This was his conclusion:

“Neither of the two fundamental axioms of Darwin’s macroevolutionary theory—the concept of the continuity of nature, that is, the idea of a functional continuum of all life forms linking all species together and ultimately leading back to a primaeval cell, and the belief that all the adaptive design of life has resulted from a blind random process—have been validated by one single empirical discovery or scientific advance since 1859. Despite more than a century of intensive effort on the part of evolutionary biologists, the major objections raised by Darwin’s critics such as Agassiz, Pictet, Bronn and Richard Owen have not been met.”<sup>117</sup>

For reasons connected with his commitment to materialism, however, Dr Denton continued to hold to the Darwinian theory. He remarked: “Reject Darwinism and there is, in effect, no scientific theory of evolution”.<sup>118</sup>

Yet his pursuit of the truth would not let him rest, and thirteen years later he produced another book, *Nature’s Destiny: How the Laws of Biology reveal Purpose in the Universe*,<sup>119</sup> in which he exposes the evidence for design and finality in the natural world. He says in the prologue:

“I believe the evidence [produced here] strongly suggests that the cosmos is uniquely fit for only one type of biology—that which exists on earth—and that the phenomenon of life cannot be instantiated (sic) in any other exotic chemistry or class of material forms. Even, more radically, I believe that there is a considerable amount of evidence for believing that the cosmos is uniquely fit for only one type of advanced intelligent life—beings of design and biology very similar to our own species...”<sup>120</sup>

He goes further—

“[T]his ‘unique fitness’ of the laws of nature for life is entirely consistent with the older teleological religious concept of the cosmos as a specially designed whole and mankind as its primary goal and purpose.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, 1, q. 2, a. 3

<sup>116</sup> *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, London, 1985

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, p. 345

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, p.355.

<sup>119</sup> The Free Press, New York, 1998.

<sup>120</sup> *Nature’s Destiny: How the Laws of Biology reveal Purpose in the Universe*, The Free Press, New York, 1998, Note to the Reader, p. xiii

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*. p. xi. Teleology is the study of design or purpose in nature.

In his review of *Nature's Destiny*, Monsignor John F. McCarthy of the Roman Theological Forum, remarks that the book is "a pathfinder for the sincere Darwinian who is striving to find his way out of the purposeless world of 'evolution by chance alone'". A student of the issues could not do better than to read Monsignor McCarthy's reviews of this book and its predecessor.<sup>122</sup> Both books can be obtained via booksellers on the internet.

#### *Dr Denton's Materialism*

There is a long passage in the prologue to *Nature's Destiny* in which Dr Denton defends his position against suggestions that he has, perhaps unwittingly, provided grist for the theological mill.

"Because this book presents a teleological interpretation of the cosmos which has obvious theological implications, it is important to emphasize at the outset that the argument presented here is entirely consistent with the basic naturalistic assumption of modern science—that the cosmos is a *seamless unity which can be comprehended ultimately in its entirety by human reason and in which all phenomena, including life and evolution and the origin of man, are ultimately explicable in terms of natural processes*. This is an assumption which is entirely opposed to that of the so-called 'special creationist school'. According to special creationism, living organisms are not natural forms, whose origin and design were built into the laws of nature from the beginning, but rather contingent forms analogous in essence to human artifices, the result of a series of supernatural acts, involving God's direct intervention in the course of nature, each of which involved the suspension of natural law. Contrary to the creationist position, the whole argument presented here is critically dependent on the presumption of the unbroken continuity of the organic world—that is, on the reality of organic evolution and on the presumption that all living organisms on earth are natural forms in the profoundest sense of the word, no less natural than salt crystals, atoms, waterfalls, or galaxies.

"In large measure, therefore, the teleological argument presented here and the special creationist worldview are mutually exclusive accounts of the world. In the last analysis, evidence for one is evidence against the other..."<sup>123</sup>

Dr Denton shares, with the overwhelming majority of scientists, adherence to the philosophy of materialism. When he says that his argument "is entirely consistent with the basic naturalistic assumption of modern science", he is referring to an assumption driven by the philosophy of materialism.

His materialism inclines him to regard the evidence of experience as determinative of what must be. Science observes in the world a process—*favourable conditions; inanimate being; living being*. According to the presuppositions of materialism there is no other influence in the world but matter, matter evolving in accordance with the process

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<sup>122</sup> "The Failure of Darwinism and its fuller implications" at <http://www.rtforum.org/lt/lt26.html> and "Dr Michael Denton's *Nature's Destiny*" at <http://www.rtforum.org/lt/lt117.html>

<sup>123</sup> *Nature's Destiny*, op. cit., Note to the Reader, pp. xvii-xviii; emphasis in original.

science claims to observe. This process, then, is an inevitable part of the laws of nature. So “[the] origin and design [of natural forms] were built into the laws of nature from the beginning...” and “the unbroken continuity of the organic world [grounds] the presumption that all living organisms on earth are natural forms... no less natural than salt crystals, atoms, waterfalls, or galaxies”.

By ‘natural forms’ Dr Denton does not mean what is implicit in Aristotle and explicit in the teaching of St Thomas—the exemplary forms in the mind of the author of nature realised (i.e., made real) in the material instances which fall under our senses. He means the categories of things observed by science, inanimate and animate, into which matter is (allegedly) observed to evolve in an inevitable continuum. In the same way, when he uses the word ‘law’ in the expression ‘the laws of nature’ he does not mean what the metaphysician means by it—an ordinance of intellect imposed on nature by its author and manifested in the behaviour of its elements.<sup>124</sup> He uses the term analogously: the scientist observes the rigour with which behaviour of a certain sort occurs in nature and, so constant is this behaviour, he regards himself as entitled to call it a law.

Nor, when he uses the term ‘contingent’ does he use it in the way the metaphysician uses it. He says that creationists regard “living organisms [not as] natural forms, whose origin and design were built into the laws of nature from the beginning but rather contingent forms” charging them with a gratuitous interruption of the alleged inevitable progression observed by science. For the metaphysician the material instances of natural forms are contingent; they can both be and be-not, though the forms themselves are fixed. The materialist (following Dr Denton) does not distinguish the forms from the matter in which they are observed. He regards the natural forms as *necessary* manifestations of matter in the evolutionary process.

He is right when he says that creationists regard these forms as “analogous in essence to human artifices”, though creationists would put it more appropriately (and elegantly) that the works of man (‘the artificial’) are analogous to the forms that the creator has first placed in nature (‘the natural’). He is right, too, when he says that these forms are the result of ‘supernatural acts’.<sup>125</sup> But it is questionable whether he means what the creationists mean by that term. For the materialist the creation of natural things is supernatural because beyond the scope of *his* idea of the natural order, the inevitable appearance of species in the asserted evolutionary march. This is what he is referring to when he says “God’s direct intervention in the course of nature [involves] the suspension of natural law”. It is a suspension of what *he thinks* is a law. One gets the impression that Dr Denton regards the creationists’ God as an interloper instead of the one on whom, for good reason, they hold the world is utterly dependent; he who not only gives the world its nature (and the natural law) but its very existence.

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 91, a. 1: “[A] law is nothing else but a dictate of practical reason emanating from the ruler who governs a perfect community. It being accepted that the world is ruled by Divine providence, it is evident... that the whole community of the universe is governed by the Divine reason. Hence, the very idea of the government of things in God, the ruler of the universe, has the nature of a law...”

<sup>125</sup> More precisely *miraculous* acts; cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 113, a. 10

But according to Dr Denton's lights, 'God' is an interloper, something unnecessary, since evolutionary theory explains all.

In *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* he mentions in passing the view of Plato, from which the metaphysical view is derived, that—

“all individual entities were physical expressions of a finite number of ideal unchanging forms. Applied to the biological sphere, it followed that there were fixed bounds determined by the form of the underlying type beyond which biological variation could not go: nature was, therefore, fundamentally discontinuous.”<sup>126</sup>

In the eyes of the materialist continuity is everything. Once break the material chain and you allow the need for an explanation for phenomena other than a material one.

Dr Denton asserts the superiority of the modern scientific view over the creationist view because science holds that the cosmos can be comprehended in its entirety by human reason. What he means by this is that the whole of reality is adequately explained by an unfolding flow in a material continuum. Given the effort he has put into *Nature's Destiny*, he can hardly be satisfied with this assertion. It is unconvincing, in any event, given his concession that scientists have not the slightest understanding of the constitutive of living things, nor of how they came to exist in the first place.<sup>127</sup>

He asserts the existence of the laws of nature as he must, something accidental, something established by blind chance. His materialism prevents him making the obvious induction that laws (even those imposed on blind natural things) presuppose a law giver or maker. The remark of St Thomas quoted at the head of this article is to the point: no being can aim towards some end unless directed by intelligence. The presence of living creatures on earth is not the result of the laws of nature. Rather, the laws of nature are necessary corollaries of the presence of living creatures—manifestations of the order placed in their being by an intelligent creator.

Dr Denton has progressed in *Nature's Destiny* from the position he held in *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. He has passed from the negative position of showing the defects in evolutionary theory to the positive one of demonstrating the manifold evidences of design and finality in nature. However, in another sense he has regressed, retreated further into materialism. In his first book, in a chapter entitled *The Enigma of Life's Origin*, he reported on the effects in the scientific community of the failure of the 1976 Viking probe to find evidence of life on Mars:

“Science can only deal with repeatable or recurrent events... If life is unique to Earth then this means that it has only arisen once in all cosmic history, which would essentially exclude any sort of scientific approach to the problem of its origin... If Viking had found evidence of life on Mars it would have put paid once and for all to the possibility of life being unique to Earth... A very serious philosophical shadow clouding the whole issue of the origin of life would have been removed.”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, op. cit., p. 19

<sup>127</sup> Cf. *Nature's Destiny*, op. cit., pp. 292-3.

<sup>128</sup> *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, op. cit., p. 255



He concluded:

“At present, if we are to exclude UFOs and the claims of Von Däniken and his fellow travellers, there is not one shred of evidence for extraterrestrial life, and there is no way of excluding the possibility of life being unique to Earth with all the philosophical consequences this entails.”<sup>129</sup>

In *Nature's Destiny*, however, he seems to have forgotten these conclusions in his enthusiasm over “the growing consensus that the origin of life is built into the laws of nature and... [is] therefore inevitable on any planetary surface where conditions permit it.”<sup>130</sup> In the first book he demonstrated the utter lack of logic in the evolutionists' position. In the second he has demonstrated his own lack of logic by ignoring his own arguments against their position.

#### *Reluctance among Catholics to abandon the Evolutionary Thesis*

In the course of setting out the history of the alteration in scientific attitude towards nature in *Nature's Destiny*, Dr Denton quotes the following passage from Robert Chambers, author of the 1840 publication, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, in support of the quasi-religious view that “evolution had been written into the cosmic script from the beginning”.

“How can we suppose an immediate exertion of [the] creative power at one time to produce zoophytes, another to add a few marine molluscs, another to bring in one or two conchifers again to produce crustaceous fishes... This would surely be to take a very mean view of the creative power... Some other idea must then be come to with regard to the mode in which the Divine Author proceeded in the organic creation... We have seen powerful evidence that the construction of this globe and its associates, and inferentially of all the other globes of space, was the result not of any immediate or personal exertion on the part of the Deity, but of natural laws which are expressions of his will... [T]he fact of the cosmical arrangements being an effect of natural law is a powerful argument for the organic arrangements being so likewise, for how can we suppose that the august Being who brought all these countless worlds into form by the simple establishment of a natural principle flowing from his mind, was to interfere personally and specially on every occasion when a new shell-fish or reptile was to be ushered into existence on *one* of these worlds? Surely the idea is too ridiculous to be for a moment entertained.”<sup>131</sup>

This ‘religious’ view shows the influence on Chambers of the subjectivist mood, and an incipient materialism. To Almighty God’s revelation of how he went about the work of creation, Chambers preferred his own idiosyncratic analysis which, be it noted, relied on nothing more than a perception that the development of natural forms must follow what the scientists of his time had induced (not *deduced*) to be the result “of natural laws which are the expressions of [God’s] will.” His conclusion was gratuitous.

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 260

<sup>130</sup> *Nature's Destiny*, op. cit., p. 265 et seq.

<sup>131</sup> *Nature's Destiny*, op. cit., pp. 269-70

Formed in the one religion on earth which is rooted in realism, Catholics ought to be free of the influence of materialism and resistant to the clamour for some sort of evolutionist explanation for creation; but they are not. Like Robert Chambers, modern Catholic philosophers and theologians are prepared to ignore sacred scripture in their insistence that the forms of natural things must somehow bear within them the seeds of change—a sort of God-directed evolution. This attitude panders to the spirit of the age; it is fashionable, driven by the fear of ridicule from the secular arm. It is unnecessary. The categories of metaphysics militate against any form of evolutionism.

Each living creature is comprised of prime matter and substantial form. Its substantial form (its soul) is an instance of an essence, fixed and determinate, which makes it both to live and to be what it is. The alleged seeds of change could not be in the prime matter from which the natural thing is formed for prime matter is of itself utterly formless. They could only be in the natural thing as a second (or third, or fourth...) substantial form—for the assertion of evolutionists is that evolution effects a *substantial* change in the thing. But St Thomas teaches that it is impossible for more than one substantial form to be in one body. Among his reasons is the following:

“[A]n animal would not be absolutely one in which there were several souls. For nothing is absolutely one except by the one form by which a thing has existence: because a thing has from the same source both its existence and its unity... If, therefore, man were living by one form—the vegetative soul, and animal by another form—the sensitive soul, and man by another form—the intellectual soul, it would follow that man is not absolutely one. Thus Aristotle... against those who hold that there are several souls in the body... asks, *what contains them?*—that is, what makes them be one? It cannot be said that they are united by the one body; because it is the soul that contains the body, rather than the reverse.”<sup>132</sup>

It follows that there is no possible repository for the alleged evolutionary principle in the living thing.

#### *Sacred Scripture and the Church's Consideration*

There is nothing in sacred scripture to support a concession to any sort of evolutionism. The Book of *Genesis* offers two descriptions of creation, on their face contradictory. Almighty God is said to create everything at once (*simul*), and yet to do so over six days. St Thomas solves the dilemma.

“God created all things together so far as regards their substance in some measure formless. But He did not create all things together, so far as regards that formation of things which lies in distinction and adornment.” (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 74, a. 2, ad 2).<sup>133</sup>

In his answer to the previous objection in the same article of the *Summa Theologiae* he explains what he means—

“On the day God created heaven and earth he created also every plant of the field, not indeed in act but before it sprung up in the earth, that is, in potency.” (I, q. 74, a. 2, ad 1).

And in answer to the fourth objection he says—

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<sup>132</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 76, a. 3

<sup>133</sup> *St Augustine & St Thomas on Creation* at [http://www.superflumina.org/creation\\_sts\\_augustine\\_&\\_thomas.html](http://www.superflumina.org/creation_sts_augustine_&_thomas.html)

“All things were not distinguished and adorned together not from a want of power on God’s part, as requiring time in which to work, but that due order might be observed in the instituting of the world. Hence it was fitting that different days should be assigned to the different states of the world, as each succeeding work added to the world a fresh state of perfection.” (I, q. 74, a. 2, ad 4).

Almighty God brought the various elements in his creation from potency to act as and when he willed. Catholics are not bound by a strict literalism to say that he did this in six calendar days.<sup>134</sup> Scientific studies do not harm, they assist our faith by showing when he appears to have done so in respect of a great number of the immense variety of the species of living things. The Church allows an interpretation of sacred scripture that agrees generally with what natural history shows. Even using their best endeavours there is much the natural historians cannot tell us. Of one thing however we can be certain: the form of every creature that has ever existed on the face of the earth emanates from, *and endures in*, the mind of God who gave (who gives) them both existence and (in living things) life.

In his 1950 encyclical *Humani Generis*<sup>135</sup> Pope Pius XII insisted on the soundness of the Church’s philosophy grounded in the metaphysics of St Thomas. He condemned those who assert that any kind of philosophy or theory with a few additions or corrections could be reconciled with Catholic dogma. He condemned also (amongst other philosophies) what he described as “the fictitious theories” of materialism [ibid., n. 32]. He urged caution in dealing with hypotheses with some sort of scientific foundation that impinge upon the Church’s doctrine:

“If such conjectural opinions are directly or indirectly opposed to the doctrine revealed by God then the demand that they be recognised can in no way be admitted.” [n. 35]

Earlier in the encyclical, while noting that the hypothesis of evolution had not been fully proven even in the domain of the natural sciences [n. 5], he allowed that it was appropriate to study it. However, he remarked how —

“[s]ome imprudently and indiscreetly hold that evolution... explains the origin of all things and audaciously support the monistic and pantheistic opinion that the world is in continual flux.” [n.5]

He referred to these tenets as “fictitious” and observed that they “repudiate all that is absolute, firm and immutable” [n.6].

*Humani Generis* was issued 57 years ago at a time when the investigations of science into the evolutionary claims were, so to speak, in their infancy. An immense amount of work has been done since then with what absence of effect to secure the credibility of evolutionary theory Dr Denton’s two books have demonstrated.

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<sup>134</sup> Cf. *Creation Rediscovered* at [http://www.superflumina.org/creation\\_rediscovered.html](http://www.superflumina.org/creation_rediscovered.html); *The Schismatic Tendency in Creation Science* at [http://www.superflumina.org/creation\\_schismatic\\_tendency.html](http://www.superflumina.org/creation_schismatic_tendency.html)

<sup>135</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> August 1950

Dr Denton's conclusion quoted above that there is no evidence whatsoever to justify Darwin's macro-evolutionary theory confirms at the scientific level what theology and sound philosophy have ever maintained. There is no need to make any concession to a philosophy which pays not the slightest respect to common sense or the sound doctrine of a fourfold causality.

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## THE GOD PARTICLE?

"[D]o you have... er, that is..."

"An answer for you?" interrupted Deep Thought majestically. "Yes I have."

"There really is one... to the great Question of *Life, the Universe and Everything?*"

"Yes... Though I don't think... you're going to like it."

*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*<sup>136</sup>

It is hard to know whether to laugh or cry at the latest fatuity from the scientific community. So, they've found 'the God particle', have they? the latest and 'minutest' of the material elements, the answer to the question how it is that things have mass and—wait for it—how things were created. God bless 'em in their naivety! With his preoccupation with the material to the exclusion of every other cause, the modern scientist resembles nothing so much as a man walking in a field who, narrowly overtaken by a bouncing ball, declines to investigate its trajectory to discover the responsible agent and the agent's intent in favour of dissecting the ball.<sup>137</sup>

This elaboration on the discovery appeared in *The Australian*.

### HOW THE HIGGS BOSON CREATED MATTER

1. *The cosmic explosion 13.7 billion years ago results in the universe expanding in a matter of microseconds.*
2. *Particles are created and the Higgs field is switched on. The field manifests as Higgs bosons.*
3. *The Higgs field acts as a drag on the particles slowing them down like a swimmer in water.*
4. *This interaction gives mass to particles which slows them from whizzing around the universe at light speed.*
5. *These particles then form into protons and neutrons which bind together to form the nuclei of atoms, the basis of all matter.*<sup>138</sup>

1. This argument, if it could be dignified with the title, demonstrates the penchant of the modern scientist to submerge intellect in the sea of his imagination. It demonstrates a rooted inability to conform thought to reality. Hypothesis is built on hypothesis built on hypothesis. That each hypothesis is problematic does not seem to trouble him. The presumptions relied on are facile, the contradictions demonstrable. Let us examine a few of them.

<sup>136</sup> *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Douglas Adams, London, 1979, chapter 27.

<sup>137</sup> In this parable the trajectory stands for the *formal* cause of the ball's flight, the agent the *efficient* cause, and the agent's intent, the *final* cause.

<sup>138</sup> *The Australian*, Thursday, July 5, 2012, page 11

2. A man and his shadow exist together in time. In reality, i.e., in the ontological order, however, the man is prior. The man can exist without a shadow: his shadow cannot exist without the man. An explosion involves two realities, a material substance (or substances) and the act of exploding. They exist together in time but in the ontological order the material substance is prior. You can have a material substance without an explosion, but not an explosion without a material substance. Therefore? Therefore, there could have been no 'big bang' (if it did occur) without a pre-existing material substance, or substances.

But even more fundamentally, you cannot have an explosion unless first there is a place in which the explosion is to occur: and there can be no place without the surrounding presence of a material body or bodies. This surrounding body (or bodies) must, accordingly, pre-exist the material substance or substances that suffer the explosion. The 'big bang' (if it did occur) was therefore not responsible for the creation of material being and, *a fortiori*, neither was the 'boson'!

Science's facile analyses have an even more fundamental problem.

3. The reader will note that the theorist cited above assumes that matter is the first element in creation. Let us look at what happens in the order of human making in the real world.

A builder proposes to build a house. What is the first thing he does? It is not to obtain the materials. He drafts a plan or he gets an architect to do it for him. Only after he has the plan in his hands does he apply his mind to the materials. He does this because it is a universal principle of nature and of human art that *form* is prior to *matter*. The form of something can exist without matter—e.g., in the mind of an architect or in his detailed drawings—but matter cannot exist without form.<sup>139</sup> And art, the work of man, imitates nature and nature's author.

Our scientific theorist makes a further assumption contradicting reality. He treats matter as if, somehow, it is capable of existing independently of the formality of one or other of the 118 elements in the periodic table or of that of one of the almost infinite variety of their compounds. Matter, *prime matter*, can be any body, any element or compound, but it cannot exist without a determining form.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, *prime matter* does not exist in the real world in its own right; it can only be conceptualised as the 'stuff' out of which things are made.

The critical issue in material creation, then, is not matter but *the formality or formalities* under which matter is manifested. Now formality, as we show hereafter, can be substantial or accidental.

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<sup>139</sup> In the order of human making, the artificial order, the builder starts with the advantage that his materials already have a fixed formality whether as wood, glue, nails, concrete, bricks, steel etc.

<sup>140</sup> The *Principle of Indeterminacy* applies. *That which can be many, from itself is not one of the many.* Water can be hot or cold; of itself it is neither. Therefore there has to be another cause, a cause other than water which makes it to be hot or cold.

4. It will pay the reader unfamiliar with the abstruseness of the scientific arguments about the 'boson' to study the article on the *Wikipedia* website.<sup>141</sup> He will see that an understanding of the discovery is confined to a specialist group possessed of the necessary qualifications in physics and mathematics, a sort of priesthood whose members convey the truths revealed to the rest of mankind, 'the faithful'.

Science's theorising is primarily mathematical, only derivatively based in the real. A machine produces a result, the reality it represents is conceptualised as rooted (if it were possible) in matter *simpliciter* and the scientific imagination grows wings!

5. What, pray tell, is mass? It has something to do with force, something to do with inertia, something to do with velocity and something to do with gravitational effect, but the inter-relationship is obscure. Each category seems to be defined by one or more of the others in a bemusing circularity.

Science's preoccupation with matter leads its exponents to try to discover the secret of mass by looking for a lowest common material denominator. So they divide and subdivide material particles. Their theory assumes that the simplest particles are without mass and acquire mass by interaction with some undetectable entity. In furtherance of this thesis they propose 'the Higgs field', a hypothetical reality perilously close (for materialists!) to the immaterial, arrived at by a process of induction from conclusions grounded in the standard model of particle physics.

That the source of mass might be found *outside* the limitations of matter never occurs to them. Indeed, given their prejudice against anything that cannot be measured or scientifically detected, they would think the assertion ridiculous. But it could not be more ridiculous than the contention, which inverts logic that mass is "something particles acquire by passing through a field". Mass is not a consequence of drag; drag is a consequence of mass!

A similar fatuousness is to be found in the reasoning that life arises out of matter. Here again scientists reverse the ontological order. The living thing is not an effect of matter; rather matter (a body) is an effect of the living thing. *Form is prior to matter*. The form of a living thing, its soul (the influence that gives it life), from the very first moment of its existence subsumes matter to serve its sustenance, development and maturing.

Even sillier is the scientific contention that the day will come when man will create life. As Aristotle said "[f]or living things to live is the same as to be". Whatever it is that gives life to a living thing in that very act gives it existence (*esse*; 'be') also. However extensive man's talents may be they do not include the ability to create something out of nothing.

Our knowledge of what it is that constitutes life is, and will ever be, limited: we can only know it via its abstruse definition as 'the automotive', conforming our concepts to reality that this auto-motion occurs in three categories: 1. as to execution only

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<sup>141</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boson>

(plants); 2. as to execution and form (animal, or sensitive, life); and, 3. as to execution, form and end (the rational animal, man).

6. Some material realities, such as light, have no mass. Science tells us that light is constituted of particles, or waves, or (for heaven's sake!) both. We know it is something vital. Without it little of life could exist, but what sort of 'something' is it?

Some 450 years ago the scientific world embraced Descartes' mechanicism and in doing so abandoned Aristotle's profound analyses of reality. We have suffered from materialism's banal and simplistic explanations ever since.

Let us try a little Aristotelian realism.

7. The Philosopher divides material reality into two basic categories—categories that a little thought will demonstrate accord with common sense—*substance* and *accident*. What Aristotle means by *substance* is *not* what the scientist means by that term. Aristotle means the *formal*, the constitutive, element which makes the material thing to be what it is; its substantial form. Though the two, form and matter, exist together in time in any material thing *form is ontologically prior* for form determines matter; matter's contribution is no more than that which is determined. Precisely because it is immaterial, substance (*substantial form*) is immutable.<sup>142</sup>

A substance is something that exists in itself (*be-in-self*), not in something else.<sup>143</sup> An *accident*, in contrast, is something that exists only in some substance (*be-in-other*), literally it is something that *befalls* a substance. Aristotle lists nine species of accident the first two of which, *quantity* and *quality*, are intimately involved in a substance's exercise of existence.<sup>144</sup> *Quantity* extends substance, gives it a body and individualises it; it gives a dog a body and makes it be this dog. *Quality* determines it in innumerable ways, giving it colour, density, texture, temperature, and so on. The remaining seven accidents, *relation*, *when*, *where*, *action* *passion*, *habitus* and *situs* comprehend everything else that can possibly befall it.

To illustrate: The sea is a *substance* (or a vast collection of substances) its colour blue is an *accident*. Granite is a *substance*; its density is an *accident*, as is its hardness. A horse is a *substance*; the heat of its body is an *accident*. A tree is a *substance*; its location on a hillside is an *accident*. A boy is a *substance*; that he is hanging upside down from a cross bar is an *accident*. The man speaking to me now in this room is affected by two accidents, *when* and *where*.

You will never find any of these—colour, density, hardness, heat, location, 'upside-down-ness', 'when-ness' or 'where-ness'—existing by itself. Each exists only in, or in association with, a *substance*.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> The sciences are fixed and certain because their objects are fixed and certain.

<sup>143</sup> Aristotle's usage of the term reflects better than that of modern science the word's derivation in the Latin as anyone can discover by checking a dictionary.

<sup>144</sup> Again, let the reader check the Latin derivations.

<sup>145</sup> Or, to be more precise, *primarily* in or with a substance. The light in the sky exists here and now (the accidents *when* and *where*). But it does so not from itself, but as a quality of its proper substance, the



With Aristotle's help let us look at that mysterious reality, light.

8. He teaches that light, like colour, is a *quality*. In other words, light does not exist in itself, *only in something else*. This teaching accords with experience. Though we may think we do, in fact we never see light itself; we only ever see something lit, whether in its source, or the atmosphere, or some object on which it falls.<sup>146</sup>

Why does light have no mass? Not because it is composed of what science is pleased to call 'photons' but because it is an accident, a *quality*, and accidents do not have mass, only substances. Indeed, mass is itself an accident. This raises the question of the identity of the substance of which light is the proper *quality*. It raises another, and critical, issue. How can light, a *quality*, be said to have a 'speed'? A *quality* does not move; it inheres in—it *qualifies*—its proper substance. Accordingly, *c*, the 'speed of light', is a property not of light but of this proper substance; it is *the speed at which this substance determines light's propagation*. That is why *c* is not infinite, but limited to 299,792,458 mps *in vacuo*.

9. Aristotle teaches in his *De Caelo* and elsewhere that it is impossible for void, i.e., *a place where there is nothing*, to exist. Again, this is simply common sense for void implies that *nothing* somehow exists which is impossible. He concludes that the heavens are constituted by some substance which he calls 'the heavenly body', or *aether*. Consistent with this, what we call 'space' or 'void' wherever it occurs, must be replete with some material body<sup>147</sup> provided that 'replete with' here is not to be taken as 'filled with', but as indicating that the default setting (as it were) of reality is not a vacuum, or space, or void, but *aether*. *Aether* is the first material being in the ontological order on which every other material thing depends, somewhat as every sea creature depends on the sea.

10. In 1887 scientists decided, after the Michelson-Morley experiment, that Aristotle could not possibly be right about *aether* because they could detect no typical material characteristics in the asserted substance. Implicit in this conclusion was the pre-supposition that if something cannot be detected experimentally it does not exist. If these scientists had only bothered to give credence to Aristotle's reasonings they would have discovered that their experiment had not contradicted *but confirmed* what he maintained: *aether* is superior to ordinary matter; it has no mass, no mensurability; it is perfectly pervious to all impression: you cannot detect it experimentally. Chesterton's remark is to the point: "If the cosmos of the materialist is the real cosmos it is not much of a cosmos. The thing has shrunk."<sup>148</sup>

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transparent, activated by the sun and falling upon a combination of substances above the earth's surface, nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide, water vapour and local impurities.

<sup>146</sup> A good argument could be mounted that, like every other instance of electro-magnetic energy, light is *per se* invisible.

<sup>147</sup> Radio operators today still speak of 'the ether' as the vehicle through which they send their transmissions, giving linguistic recognition to the reality that serves their operations.

<sup>148</sup> *Orthodoxy*, op. cit., ch. II.

11. What, then, in Aristotelian terms, is mass? It is a *quality* attaching to a material *substance* (its subject) via its *quantity*, the accident according to which it is extended, has parts, and is individualised.<sup>149</sup>

Now each of these three, *substance*, *quantity* and *quality*, names a formality, that is, something *per se* immaterial. Just as *prime matter* is obscure in itself—it is impossible for it to exist except under some formality—so we may never know precisely what it is that constitutes the nature of mass. But this at least is clear; matter's involvement in the reality is secondary and subsidiary. What follows? Scientists are wasting their time trying to discover the source of mass in some element of matter.

12 How fortunate for the world if science would, once again, open its mind to the metaphysical. We might discover why, when light is quite incapable of exercising substantial activity, the relation between mass and energy is a function of 'the speed of light'. We might discover the nature of the substance of which light is the proper accident. We might begin to understand how critical *this substance* is to the structure of material being and how it is involved in the relationship between matter and energy. We might discover things that Einstein's theories have only hinted at.

As for the discovery of 'the Higgs Boson'—so what!

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<sup>149</sup> "The action of a generant does not stop at the bare substance but produces it equipped with the accidents upon which the substance depends that it may exist and operate." John of St Thomas; *Curs. Phil. II*, ed. Reiser, p. 268b, quoted in A M Woodbury Ph.D, S.T.D., *General Natural Philosophy and Cosmology*, (Centre for Thomistic Studies, Sydney), nn. 127 and 344.

## THE CLUMSINESS OF LAWRENCE M KRAUSS: REVIEW OF *A UNIVERSE FROM NOTHING*

*Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations? Tell me, since you are so well-informed! Who decided its dimensions... stretched the measuring line across it?... Who laid its cornerstone when the stars of the morning were singing with joy, and the Sons of God were chanting praise in chorus? Who pent up the sea behind closed doors when it leapt tumultuous from the womb, when I wrapped it in a robe of mist, made black clouds its swaddling bands... and marked the limits it might not cross...*

Job 38: 4-9

Modern physicists usually confine their attempts to provide an explanation for the world—their ‘theory of everything’—to the essences of things and ignore, or take for granted, the infinitely more significant issue of their existence. And with good reason: for with the *essence* of a thing realised in matter one at least has something of which one can take hold. But how, or why, a thing should exist, should *be in the real* and not just in mind, is imponderable. An exception to this convention occurs in the recent work of Lawrence Maxwell Krauss, Professor at Arizona State University, entitled *A Universe From Nothing*.<sup>150</sup>

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I. It used be the case that one who undertook scientific studies would, before specialising, immerse himself in the liberal arts (philosophy, ethics, logic, history, language etc.) to ensure a sense of balance in deliberation. The modern approach is to refuse any deference to the history of thought or the world beyond the senses. Since Descartes’ day, and with a momentum that has grown with time, university studies have turned away from the transcendent and philosophy has been degraded from a consideration of the immaterial and objective to the material and subjective. The title *Doctor of Philosophy* has lost all meaning, the Queen of the sciences reduced to a drab. The modern scientist conducts himself like a theologian but his doctrine is more obscure. Dr Don Boland explains:

“[T]he general public, and indeed philosophers of considerable standing, do not have the necessary experience in regard to the experiments conducted, or sufficient mathematical expertise in regard to the esoteric concepts dealt with, to know what exactly is intended by the theories and formulas discussed. So it is very much a matter of (human) faith for all but a select few of us.”<sup>151</sup>

The human mind operates through concepts. From a single object it abstracts different formalities, different understandings to aid it as, for instance, abstracting from *this dog* the concepts *a being; an animal; a living thing; a barker; a biter*; and so on; and again, in more accidental fashion, *colour; proximity; size; symmetry; number* (e.g., as one of three);

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<sup>150</sup> London (*Simon & Schuster*), 2012.

<sup>151</sup> D. G. Boland LL. B., Ph. D., *God and the Theory of Everything*, 2012 available on the web at [http://www.superflumina.org/PDF\\_files/d-boland-god-the-theory-of-everything.pdf](http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/d-boland-god-the-theory-of-everything.pdf)

and so on. The forms fall into three categories, and to these categories correspond the fields of abstract human knowledge.<sup>152</sup>

The first category is constituted by forms abstracted from *singular matter*. Of a sample of metal uncovered by a miner, for instance, the investigating mind observes properties which it recognises as peculiar to gold. It can consider the reality 'gold' abstracted from this instance. The knowledge that results is limited to the signs, or empirical properties, of gold and the laws these properties reveal. But because its considerations are confined to these external signs the knowledge provided cannot get at the underlying reality to understand the *essence* of gold.<sup>153</sup> The knowledge it provides is *perinoetic*, that is, it is knowledge *around or about* its subject. True, it addresses the essences of things but only at the surface; only in the appearances they manifest. This is the field of *experimental science*

The second category is constituted by accidental forms or essences abstracted not just from singular but from *sensible matter*. The mind looks at the circularity, the squareness, the dimensions, the number; of gold, wood, or any other material thing. It does not need a sensible subject: it can consider *circularity, squareness, number, dimension* and so on, quite independently of their existence in the real. It can satisfy the need for a subject through the workings of imagination. This is *mathematics*.

In the third category the mind considers concepts such as *substance, quality, relation, act, true, beauty, good, cause, effect*; abstracting not only from *singular* and from *sensible matter* but even from *understandable matter* as it considers being in its most profound aspects. This knowledge is *dianoetic*; that is, knowledge of its subject *through* the causes.<sup>154</sup> This, the field of philosophy or *metaphysics*,<sup>155</sup> provides the deepest understanding of reality. The least knowledge at this, the highest, level of abstraction tells us more than the most profound knowledge at a lower level.

Now the question 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' involves very much more than the appearances, the empirical properties, of things; very much more than their mathematical or geometrical properties. It requires a study of *being*. The question might be solved, insofar as it can be solved, by a *metaphysical* consideration of reality: it can never be solved by *empirical* considerations, or by *mathematical* ones.

II. Lawrence M Krauss is quite candid about his prejudices: he is an atheist and rejects the possibility of an intelligent creator. His atheism ties him to a pair of philosophies, one of which, *materialism*, denies any reality or value in what does not fall under the senses or is not physically measurable. Materialism has the effect of

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<sup>152</sup> Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 85, art. 1, resp. to objs. 1 & 2. Cf. Dorothy L Sayers', *The Lost Tools of Learning* available at [http://www.superflumina.org/PDF\\_files/lost\\_tools\\_of\\_learning.pdf](http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/lost_tools_of_learning.pdf) where the reader will find an answer to the tired assertion repeated by Krauss that mediaeval philosophers spent their time arguing about the number of angels that could dance on the head of a pin.

<sup>153</sup> That is, *what it is* that makes gold be gold. This analysis is taken from the text of A.M. Woodbury Ph. D., S.T.D., *Logic*, produced for students of Sydney's *Aquinas Academy*; Ch. 35, Art. 2, nn. 388 et seq.

<sup>154</sup> The Greek prefix *dia-* is found in English words such as diagonal, dialectic, diagnosis, dialogue.

<sup>155</sup> We have here enlarged the title *metaphysics* beyond its strict limits to embrace not only the philosophy of being but also the philosophical studies of nature, of ethics, etc. which accompany it.

degrading the *philosophical*, the third level of abstraction, to that of the empirical, so its adherents are constrained to deny that a metaphysical interpretation of science's discoveries is acceptable, or even possible. Yet, as he looks for ultimate explanations, the modern scientist cannot escape an inclination for the transcendent.

"The modern view is not a crudely empiricist position. For it allows for the contribution of mathematics towards our understanding of empirical reality. Indeed, if anything, the objects of mathematics dominate the picture of reality as conceived in modern science so that it is not simply what is sensibly observable which is determinative for the scientific method but what is also conceivable according to the creative ability of the human imagination.

"This introduces a complication and indeed a kind of opposition into the modern concept of (material) reality. We might put it that in the modern concept of science mathematics plays the role of a meta-physics, not in the Aristotelian sense, but as relating to a strange order or 'dimension' of reality, as we can know it, that transcends the purely empirical."<sup>156</sup>

There is a peril in this engagement. Even as the scientist uses mathematics to make precise—to *precisify*—his findings he runs the risk of allowing a preoccupation with the imaginary to dominate him. The peril is compounded, moreover, by another influence, the second of the philosophical poles by which he is affected, *subjectivism*, whose burden it is that truth is determined not by reality but by the opinion of the individual or, in a common discipline, by the opinion of the majority.

To these two yet a further peril is added, one that follows on the limitations of modern education. A poor grounding in logic renders the scientist (the group), already prone to confuse the intentional (or *hypothetical*) with the real, to argue from one to the other oblivious of the rule of Logic that conclusions based on such mixed premises are valueless at any level but the hypothetical. The scientist may think he is concluding to some element of reality when he is only dealing with the imaginary.

III. Consider the influence of Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum*.<sup>157</sup> From the acceptance that reality is primary and knowledge rooted in the real, *the objective*, (the Aristotelian position) Descartes asserted the thinker's perceptions to be primary. No longer, thereafter, was *the real* the measure of truth but the thinker's *perception* of the real or the *perception generally accepted*. There was a second effect of Descartes' position, the rejection of what is *formal* in things. Reality is rooted in substantial form; matter's contribution is subsidiary.<sup>158</sup>

The relevant principle is the *Principle of Indeterminacy*. The syllogism it grounds is straightforward.

That which can be many, from itself is not one of the many.

But matter can be any one of an infinite number of things.

Therefore matter is not from itself any of these infinite number of things.

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<sup>156</sup> *God and the Theory of Everything*, op. cit.

<sup>157</sup> René Descartes, 1596-1650.

<sup>158</sup> Its nature as substrate is delineated by the philosophers by the name *prime matter*. In itself it is unidentifiable, unknowable. Prime matter can be anything. We only ever know it under some formality such as a book, a tree, a computer, or Lawrence M Krauss!

Whatever it is that makes matter be this thing or that, then, *it cannot be* matter. This influence metaphysics has, for centuries, labelled *substantial form*.

Descartes influence in abandoning substantial form's roots in the immaterial worked to see it replaced with the first of the accidents, *quantity*, the influence which gives a material substance extension or parts. Now it is mathematics that is concerned with this *accidental* reality, *quantity*. What followed? Dr Boland again:

"Mathematics, from being only the formal part of modern science, and that focused on an accident (of quantity), took on also the role of being the substantial part, thus usurping the role of physics considered (in classical natural philosophy) as an empirical science, i.e., as the science of physical substances or bodies.

"In the history of modern philosophy this is highlighted by a curious consequence. As Locke [John Locke, 1632-1704] noted, physical properties other than those stemming from quantity, such as the qualities of hardness, heat, colour, etc., thereby lost their 'objective' status, epiphenomena of our faculties of knowledge. Only quantitative properties of bodies such as size, shape, etc., were 'primary qualities', by which [it] was understood that they [alone] enjoyed the substantial reality of quantity, independent of mind.

"The effect of this disconnection of 'secondary qualities' from the objective order grounded in substance, however, as Hume [David Hume, 1711-1776] quickly noted, was to undermine the real basis of all human knowledge, ironically of science itself. Descartes' attempt to save our certainties from within the mind had ended in a scepticism more radical than any."<sup>159</sup>

Locke's empiricism, Hume's scepticism, Comte's positivism,<sup>160</sup> the logical positivism of Moritz Schlick [1882-1936], Ernst Mach [1838-1916] and others, and the aberrations that followed, are all in one way or another redactions of the philosophy of *materialism* aided by *subjectivism* instituted by Descartes. There is no modern scientist unaffected by these errors. Thus Albert Einstein—

"Hume saw clearly that certain concepts, for example that of causality, cannot be deduced from our perceptions of experience by logical methods."<sup>161</sup>

And again—

"The theory of relativity suggests itself in Positivism... This line of thought had great influence on my efforts, most specifically Mach and even more so Hume, whose *Treatise of Human Nature* I studied avidly and with much admiration shortly before discovering the theory of relativity."<sup>162</sup>

Einstein's biographer, Walter Isaacson, summarises these influences on his subject.

"Hume applied his sceptical rigor to the concept of time. It made no sense, he said, to speak of time as having an absolute existence that was independent of observable objects whose movements permitted us to define time. 'From the succession of ideas and impressions we form the idea of time,' Hume wrote. 'It is not possible for time alone ever to make its appearance.' This idea that there is no such thing as absolute time would later echo in Einstein's theory of relativity. Hume's specific thoughts about

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<sup>159</sup> *God and the Theory of Everything*, op. cit.

<sup>160</sup> Auguste Comte 1798-1857.

<sup>161</sup> Quoted in Walter Isaacson, *Einstein, His Life and Universe*, New York, 2007, p. 82.

<sup>162</sup> Einstein to Moritz Schlick, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1915; quoted in Isaacson, *Einstein His Life and Universe*, op. cit., p. 82.

time, however, had less influence on Einstein than his more general insight that it is dangerous to talk about concepts that are not definable by perceptions and observations...

...

"The essence of Mach's philosophy was this, in Einstein's words: 'Concepts have meaning only if we can point to objects to which they refer and to the rules by which they are assigned to these objects.' In other words, for a concept to make sense you need an operational definition of it, one that describes how you would observe the concept in operation. This would bear fruit for Einstein when, a few years later, he and Besso [Michele Angelo Besso, 1873-1955] would talk about what observation would give meaning to the apparently simple concept that two events happened 'simultaneously'.

"The most influential thing that Mach did for Einstein was to apply this approach to Newton's concepts of 'absolute time' and 'absolute space.' It was impossible to define these concepts, Mach asserted, in terms of observations you could make. Therefore they were meaningless. Mach ridiculed Newton's 'conceptual monstrosity of absolute space'; he called it 'purely a thought-thing which cannot be pointed to in experience.'"<sup>163</sup>

The reader will note the preoccupation in this material with *perceptions of* reality rather than with reality itself. Even as he condemns Newton's alleged subjectivism, Mach is quite unconscious of his own. These philosophers misunderstood the effect and tool of the intellect, *the concept*, and its function: they did not realise that—

"[t]he mode whereby one understands [a thing]... is not the same as the mode the thing exercises in existing..."<sup>164</sup>

When the mind considers some existing thing the concept it produces reflects its reality but *in a fashion proper to the intellect*. A concept need not reflect reality accurately. Indeed, most human concepts, especially ones about abstract matters, are confused. They only become clearer with study and reflection. Moreover, concepts do not 'have to make sense'; their precision or lack of it is a function of how well or ill they reflect reality. One does not, incidentally, 'define a concept': a concept is itself a definition *in signified act*<sup>165</sup> delimiting for the mind (i.e., *setting the boundaries to*) a *universal* nature abstracted from reality (*real* being), or else a contrivance which exists only in the mind (*mental* being).<sup>166</sup>

These philosophical aberrations are exemplified in the misunderstandings of time and space they reveal. *Time* is not an idea of the mind. It is not something caused by our perceptions. It is the measure of change, of movement, in material things from potency to act.<sup>167</sup> Time does not (in contradiction of Hume's view) 'ever make an appearance'; it is not 'something existing'. What exists, what 'appears', is the

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<sup>163</sup> Isaacson, *Einstein His Life and Universe*, op. cit., pp. 82, 83-4.

<sup>164</sup> St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 85, art. 1, resp. to obj. 1

<sup>165</sup> A *word* is a sign of a *concept* (understanding) which is a sign of a *thing* whether real or imagined.

<sup>166</sup> Mach's strictures about the need for an operational definition of a concept, *one that describes how you would observe the concept in operation*, do not seem to have troubled Einstein in acknowledging space as non-being somehow existing.

<sup>167</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* IV, 10-14 (221b); '[It is] the number of motion in respect of before and after.' (219b2) *Now* is the division and link between past and future. (222a 10-11) There is not a series of *nows* but one only which is associated with different events that produce the experience of before and after. It is not as if *now* was a constant that takes on different properties as it is associated with the process of motion.

movement, the change, in material being; time is its inexorable measure. The *matter* (the subject matter) of time is thus only quasi-material; its *form* is the mind's operation in numbering, in measuring.

Space is related to place which, as Aristotle makes plain, is *first immoveable surface of circumambient body*.<sup>168</sup> *Space*, while constituted materially by the dimensions of surrounding body (or bodies), has an added character, namely, the *relation* of distance to that (or those) surrounding bodies applied by the mind. While *materially* identical, place and space differ *formally*. Nor is it necessary 'to experience' space for the mind to acknowledge it; the mind's use of analogy is sufficient. Mach's errors are a consequence of his reduction of the mind to the level of a sense.

IV. A popular summary of positivism's philosophical claim is as follows:

"Positivism is a philosophy of science based on the view that information derived from logical and mathematical treatments and reports of sensory experience is the exclusive source of all authoritative knowledge and that there is valid knowledge (truth) only in scientific knowledge."<sup>169</sup>

The claim is reflected in Krauss's Preface:

"For more than two thousand years the question 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' has been presented as a challenge to the proposition that our universe... might have arisen without design, intent, or purpose. While this is usually framed as a philosophical or religious question, it is first and foremost a question about the natural world, and so the appropriate place to try and resolve it, first and foremost, is with science."

Of course existence has to do with the natural world but that does not mean that science is 'the appropriate place to try and resolve the question' why there is something rather than nothing. Not only is it beyond science's brief to consider the issue, it has not the competence. Science deals with things existing: it takes their existence for granted. Its submission to materialism, a submission some 350 years old now, has served to make scientists think themselves philosophers (*materialist* philosophers, of course). Yet science has not emerged from its *perinoetic* roots to embrace a *metaphysical* gaze upon reality. The very opposite has occurred: positivism has degraded philosophy by denying validity to what is above matter, thus denying the intellect's proper power to abstract what is formal in things.

The modern scientist searches, like the Atomists of ancient Greece, among the empirical properties of things to try and discover their provenance. He thinks that if he uncovers their smallest element, the lowest common denominator as it were, he will know the answer. His efforts remind one of the child who sets about taking apart a clock to discover what makes it tick. The more he concentrates on the parts, the less he comprehends that it is not the parts, but *the way they are ordered*, that produces the 'tick'. Or again, he is like a fool walking in a field who, narrowly overtaken by a

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<sup>168</sup> 'The innermost motionless boundary of what contains.' (*Physics* 4.4; 212a 20-21). Place is the limit in which a body is; it is both separable from and contains the body. The boundary of a thing immediately surrounds the thing and is motionless.

<sup>169</sup> John J. Macionis, Linda M. Gerber, *Sociology*, Seventh Edition, Pearson, Canada; and Jorge Larraín *The Concept of Ideology*, (1979) p. 197; cited in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positivism#Auguste\\_Comte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positivism#Auguste_Comte)



bouncing ball, declines to investigate its trajectory to discover the agent responsible for its flight, and the agent's intent, in favour of dissecting the ball.

V. What the scientist puts forward for acceptance often has little to do with reality and more with *an imagined representation of reality*. He is frequently in difficulties distinguishing the two.<sup>170</sup> Einstein fed the inclination with his remark, "Imagination is more important than knowledge."<sup>171</sup> Newton expressed the view that gravity was a force of repulsion not one of attraction *but that it sufficed that gravity's effects could be calculated as if they entailed* a force of attraction between the relevant bodies. He recognised that *calculation* is not the same as *causation*. Neither is *explanation* identical with *causation*. Explanation may save appearances which a further thesis may better explain.<sup>172</sup> In other words, it does not follow that the imaginative representations of the scientist accurately portray reality.

The scientist's confusion of imagination and intellect is well illustrated in Krauss's eighth chapter entitled *A Grand Accident?* —

"It is now traditional to think of 'our' universe as comprising simply the totality of all that we can now see and all that we could ever see. Physically, therefore, our universe comprises everything that either once could have had an impact upon us or that ever will.

"The minute one choses this definition for a universe, the possibility of other 'universes' — regions that have always been and always will be causally disconnected from ours, like islands separated from any communication with one another by an ocean of space — becomes possible, at least in principle.

"Our universe is so vast that... something that is not impossible is virtually guaranteed to occur somewhere within it. Rare events happen all the time. You might wonder whether the same principle applies to the possibility of many universes, or a *multiverse*, as the idea is now known. It turns out that the theoretical situation is actually stronger than simply a possibility. A number of central ideas that drive much of the current activity in particle theory today appear to require a multiverse..."

This passage contains a number of logical errors. The definition *universe* is not comprehended by 'the totality of all that we can now see and all that we could ever see', nor by 'everything that either once could have had an impact upon us or that ever will'.<sup>173</sup> Nor does it follow [*non sequitur*] from these definitions (however well or ill elaborated) that 'other universes become[.]... possible'. One may posit other universes *hypothetically* but these are no more than products of the mind. Nor is the claim assisted by the gratuitous assertion, *Rare events happen all the time*.

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<sup>170</sup> This is particularly noticeable among promoters of Darwinian macro-evolutionary theory. Because some characteristic found vestigially in one animal is found elaborated in another, they will proceed, in the face of evidence to the contrary, to assert the one has 'evolved' from the other. That they can *imagine* the elaboration is sufficient to persuade them it must be so.

<sup>171</sup> In George Sylvester Viereck, *Glimpses of the Great*, New York, 1930, p. 377; quoted in Isaacson, *Einstein, His Life and Universe*, op. cit, p. 7. See also, Thomas Friedman, 'Learning to Keep Learning', New York Times, Dec. 13, 2006, quoted *ibidem*.

<sup>172</sup> On which see St Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 32, art. 1, ad 2.

<sup>173</sup> The reader will note that these 'definitions' are cast in the subjective rather than in the real (objective).

Since the materialist scientist is constrained *ex hypothesi* to exclude the influence of any *formal* or *final* cause in the real world (universe), he must look to the only possible contributor to the order he finds there, namely *chance*. The invocation of chance as we have noted elsewhere is a device to invoke *final* causality surreptitiously.<sup>174</sup> One can only assume from the suppositions Krauss and his fellow physicists advance that the levels of chance upon which they rely are so close to the infinite they think it necessary to go beyond the possibilities offered even by the immensity of 'our [own] universe'. Let the reader note the chapter's title.

VI. While the intellect has its own way of representing a thing, the concept it produces does not fail to express what really exists. It is otherwise, however, with *mental* being, that is, being which exists only in mind. There are two species: 1. mental being *based* in the real; 2. mental being *un-based* in the real.

*Based* mental being has some connection with reality. It manifests itself in two categories, one of them grounded in *privation*, the other in *relation*. 'Night' is an instance of the first type. Night is not something positive but something negative, *privative*, a lack of light conceived as if it was something positive (the negative signified, by the common sense of our ancestors, in substituting the letter 'n' for 'l'). 'Space', which we have discussed above, is an instance of the latter category. It is not real but mental being—something the mind arrives at through *relation*.<sup>175</sup> For space is formally constituted by the mind's addition to place (which is a reality) of the *relation* of distance from the ambient body, or bodies.

*Un-based* mental being, in contrast, exists (and can exist) only in mind. A *square circle* is a conception of the mind impossible of realisation because it involves the putative blending of contraries, figures each of whose definitions formally opposes the other. Another instance is to conceive of God, the being of infinite power, as capable of creating another being of infinite power, another 'God'. Here there is juxtaposition not of contraries but of contradictories, for there can be only one such being if that being is to possess all possible power.

In an earlier chapter entitled *Much Ado About Nothing*, Krauss says this:

"A key tenet of quantum physics... is the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle which... states that it is impossible to determine, for certain pairs of quantities, such as position and velocity, exact values for a given system at the same time. Alternatively, if you measure a given system for only a fixed finite time interval, you cannot determine its total energy exactly.

"What all this implies is that, for very short times, so short that you cannot measure their speed with high precision, quantum mechanics allows for the possibility that these particles act as if they are moving faster than light! But, if they are moving faster than light, Einstein tells us they must be behaving as if they are moving backward in time.

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<sup>174</sup> Cf. *Evolution is Impossible* at [http://www.superflumina.org/PDF\\_files/evolution\\_is\\_impossible.pdf](http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/evolution_is_impossible.pdf)

<sup>175</sup> For the relation of measurement is *mental* in the measure though *real* in the measured.

“Feynman [Richard Feynman, 1918-1988, American theoretical physicist] was brave enough to take this apparently crazy possibility seriously and explore its implications...”<sup>176</sup>

He does not condemn the theory for embracing the impossible, does not assert that what it entails could not be true in reality. Instead, he accepts that the impossible is possible, and builds on this to posit something just as impossible—“at least for a little while, something has spawned out of nothing!”<sup>177</sup>

Consider the assertion on which the claim is based. *Pace* Hume, Mach & co., time is the measure of change of material being whose substrate, *primary matter*, is in potency to be anything. The mutability of matter is inexorable. It is progressive; something cannot ‘un-change’. Even if it reverts to a former reality—as water devolving into hydrogen and oxygen should subsequently be reformed as water—the movement is progressive, *potency* (can-be-ness) followed by its corresponding *act* (does-be-ness). Since every potency is for the sake of its corresponding act, it is impossible that act could be followed by its predisposing potency. But this is what would be entailed for time to move backward. Hence, Feynman’s conception is impossible of real existence: it is *un-based* mental being.

What does Krauss mean by ‘nothing’? Like ‘night’, nothing is a *negative* conceived after the likeness of a *positive*, an instance of *based* mental being. The mind first conceives being and then, by *privation*, negates it. As ‘night’ signifies in the positive ‘absence of light’, ‘nothing’ (no thing) signifies in the positive ‘absence of being’. But let it be understood that to *conceive of* ‘nothing’ is not to *affirm* nothing (as if it could exist in the real): for this negation is negation *as signified*, not negation *as exercised*.<sup>178</sup> Here, again, we observe the modern scientist’s logical debility. From an impossible premise nothing possible in the real order can be concluded. Feynman’s conclusion that “at least for a little while, something has spawned out of nothing”, is exposed as a figment of his (and Krauss’s) imagination.

VII. There are other instances in Krauss’s text of this confusion of *un-based* mental being with real being *videlicet* the contention that the world (the universe) exists in four rather than three dimensions. This, a consequence of Einstein’s theorising, is false, no matter how vehemently the theoretical physicist may insist upon it, no matter how treating it so may assist his calculations, or assist in solving the problems of motion in the universe. Time is not a dimension but the measure of change. How much more fatuous, though, is the following—

“In the simplest version of the [string] theory, such infinite predictions can be obviated only if the strings that make up elementary particles are vibrating, not merely in the three dimensions of space and one of time... but rather in twenty-six dimensions! ... [I]n the mid-1980s some beautiful mathematical work... demonstrated that the theory could in principle do far more than just provide a quantum theory of gravity. By

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<sup>176</sup> *A Universe from Nothing*, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.* p. 64.

<sup>178</sup> ‘Blind’ when said of a horse affirms a *negation as exercised* for it is due to a horse that it should see, and to say that it is blind is to affirm a negative reality, a real absence (or privation).

introducing new mathematical symmetries... it became possible to reduce the number of dimensions required for consistency of the theory from twenty-six to merely ten."<sup>179</sup> The interpretative clue here is the adjective 'mathematical'. One can *imagine* a universe with any number of dimensions, but no such universe exists in reality. Nor is this *imaginary* world less imaginary because it is shared among theoreticians.

A triangle is a plain figure bounded by three straight lines. When geometry defines it so, it reflects reality. One can *imagine* a triangle scribed on the surface of a globe, but the figure so scribed is, *pace* Krauss, no longer a triangle. There may, indeed, be practical applications for triangles *imagined* to have internal angles totalling *more than* 180°, or totalling *less than* 180° for that matter, but these do not reflect reality. In similar fashion, one can *imagine* 'curved space'. But no such thing exists. For here science's theorising runs into a threshold problem. It is this. By 'space' the scientist means 'non-being somehow existing', a void; this is impossible. The truth is simple, as simple as that water flows downhill: *nothing does not exist*.<sup>180</sup>

Now if there is no such thing as 'space' so conceived, *a fortiori* there can be no such thing as 'curved space' *even if experiment seems to indicate there is; even if treating it so solves scientific problems*. Explanation is not the same as causation; nor is it the same as realisation.

It will be objected (*materialism* calling *subjectivism* in aid) that there is no member of the scientific community who would deny that space is 'non-being somehow existing'. If the *materialism* to which the modern scientist is addicted is anti-intellectual (for its systematic denial of *formal* and *final* causality), his adherence to the subjective is plain silly. If a majority believes wrong to be right, does that make it right? It does not. If a majority of scientists believe space to be 'non-being somehow existing', does that mean space is non-being somehow existing? It does not. What matters is reality, not *majority opinion about* reality. Krauss demonstrates how mindless is scientific theorising in a passage redolent of a Douglas Adams novel—

"Special relativity says nothing can travel *through* space faster than the speed of light. But *space itself* can do whatever the heck it wants, at least in general relativity. And as space expands it can carry distant objects, which are at rest in the space where they are sitting, apart from one another at superluminal speeds..."<sup>181</sup>

First, note his use (albeit semi-humorously) of the macro-evolutionist's gambit of ascribing intellectual activity to what lacks it. In the evolutionist's case it is a plant, an insect or a brute animal.<sup>182</sup> In Krauss's case it is *mere matter*. No: worse than this; he ascribes intellectual activity to what, on his own assessment, does not even exist! If you observe intellectual effects (such as order and subordination) in a thing and you refuse to acknowledge intellect in the thing's author (because you refuse to

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<sup>179</sup> *A Universe from Nothing*, op. cit., pp. 131-2.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* IV 6.213 a 11—9.217b 28; *De Caelo* 1.2.268a 1-10; 279a 11; 2.4. 287 a7-12; 2.8.290 a7. St Thomas Aquinas *In IV Physics* Ll. 9-14. It is ironic that those who subscribe to a philosophy focussed on the material which demands a material continuum should deny the need for a material continuum throughout the universe.

<sup>181</sup> *A Universe from Nothing*, op. cit., pp. 96-7.

<sup>182</sup> See above in *Decoding David Attenborough*.

acknowledge the author's *existence*), you have no option: you must ascribe intellectual activity to the dumb creature. In the same way Krauss suggests that it is the non-intellectual chaos of matter that (*God knows how!*) produces the vast number of natural laws he treats with such reverence.

*Through what*, one is entitled to ask, is Krauss's hypothetical 'space' expanding? Through a hypothetical infinite 'nothing'? If so, how does this hypothetical infinite 'nothing' differ from that 'non-being somehow existing' which constitutes his understanding of 'space'? How can nothing expand through nothing? These are but *Kraussian* imaginings: they have not the slightest relation to reality. In contrast, Aristotle's assessment (with only a fraction of Krauss's knowledge) that 'place' is the limit in which a body is; that it is both separable from, and contains, the body; that this boundary immediately surrounds the thing and is motionless, is simply common sense, as is Aristotle's analysis of what the scientist calls 'space' :

"[A]ll things are in the heaven; for the heaven, we may say, is the All. Yet their place is not the same as the heaven. It is part of it, the innermost part which is at rest and in contact with movable body; so the earth is surrounded by water, water by air, and the air by *aether*, and the *aether* by the heaven, but we cannot go on and say that the heaven is in anything else."<sup>183</sup>

Aristotle insists that for the eye, *a sense organ*, to see light there must be a material and diaphanous medium between its source and the eye. St Thomas Aquinas agrees.<sup>184</sup> Whatever it is that fills the vast interstices between the stars, the planets, their satellites, the asteroids and comets, *it must be something material*. What it is, its *essence*, does not seem to have troubled the scientific community (save perhaps for Poincaré, Lorentz and their followers) since the *Michelson-Morley* experiment in 1887. But that is their fault. If, as a consequence of subservience to materialism they choose to think this element cannot exist they have a problem which affects their science fundamentally.

As we have remarked elsewhere<sup>185</sup> there are two objections to materialist theory. They present a sort of 'paw fork' for the modern scientist. Since a void is impossible, if the heavenly regions were comprised of nothing this would present an absolute barrier to the transmission of light. Therefore it is impossible they are not constituted by a material medium of some sort. If the scientist refuses to accept this objection—insists that 'nothing' can somehow exist—he must address another problem. If there is nothing to impede the transmission of light, why is *c*, the speed of light, limited to 299,792,458 metres per second: why is it not infinite?

It matters not that experiment may indicate 'space' is curved. The dilemma is, like most dilemmas, apparent only. When scientists make the effort to discover the nature of the material element that constitutes the universe—what Aristotle calls *aether* or 'the

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<sup>183</sup> *Physics* IV 4. 212b 17-24

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima* II.7; St Thomas *In II De Anima*, L. XIV, 6

<sup>185</sup> *Science and Aristotle's Aether* at [http://www.superflumina.org/PDF\\_files/aether\\_science.pdf](http://www.superflumina.org/PDF_files/aether_science.pdf)

heavenly body’ —they may learn how it is that it gives the appearance of curvature.<sup>186</sup> They will learn, too, why  $c$ , the speed of light, is limited.

VIII. Along with almost every other physicist on the planet, Krauss accepts ‘the Big Bang’ as the primordial ‘creation event’.<sup>187</sup> The idea is philosophically impossible. We are not speaking here of the obvious problem, that before a ‘big bang’ could occur there had first to be something material to explode (something to go ‘bang’), but the more fundamental issue that before it could occur, there had first to be *a place* for it to occur. ‘Place’, as Aristotle reminds those thinkers who live in the real world rather than the world of imagination, requires the presence of circumambient matter. In the order of reality *this* matter must pre-exist the matter that exploded.<sup>188</sup> Hence, even if it did occur, the ‘big bang’ was not the primordial ‘creation event’.

In his seventh chapter, *Our Miserable Future*, Krauss says—

“What about the other major pillar of the Big Bang, the cosmic microwave background radiation, which provides a direct baby picture of the universe? First, as the universe expands ever faster in the future, the temperature of the CMBR will fall. When the presently observable universe is about 100 times larger than it is now, the temperature of the CMBR will have fallen by a factor of 100, and its intensity, or the energy density stored within it, will have fallen by a factor of 100 million, making it about 100 million times harder to detect than it currently is...”

Why the preoccupation with the infinitely distant past, or the (perhaps) infinitely distant future? Neither are within our ken save through hypotheses whose truth is conjectural and the uncertainty of which is, in all likelihood, directly proportional to the distance in time of the events addressed. Even if the imaginings encapsulated in this passage could be borne out by reality, what on earth do they matter here and now? Why not try and understand the phenomenon of cosmic microwave background radiation *as a present reality*? Even the most obdurate of scientists admits that nature seems to do nothing in vain: for what purpose, then, does the phenomenon exist?

IX. *Something From Nothing*—Krauss’s Thesis

In his ninth chapter, *Nothing Is Something*, Krauss says:

“Why is there something rather than nothing? We are now presumably in a better position to address this, having reviewed the modern scientific picture of the universe, its history, and its possible future, as well as operational descriptions of what ‘nothing’ might actually comprise. As I also alluded to at the beginning of this book, this question too has been informed by science, like essentially all philosophical questions. Far from providing a framework that forces upon us the requirement of a creator, the very meaning of the words involved have so changed that the sentence has lost much

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<sup>186</sup> We have suggested the nature of this element, the true *quintessence* (Aristotle’s *aether*), in a series of articles on the website [superflumina.org](http://superflumina.org) collected in the ebook available there *How the Universe operates*. Its presence may, perhaps, be reflected by the phenomenon of cosmic microwave background radiation whose presence throughout the universe was discovered in 1964.

<sup>187</sup> This obsession with going backwards rather than concentrating on the present is one physicists share with evolutionists. It seems to haunt the entire materialist/subjectivist world view whose adherents are constantly looking for evidence to justify their flights from reality and formal causality.

<sup>188</sup> Aristotle’s *aether* would satisfy this demand.

of its original meaning—something that again is not uncommon, as empirical knowledge shines a new light on otherwise dark corners of imagination.

“At the same time, in science, we have to be particularly cautious about ‘why’ questions. When we ask ‘Why?’ we usually means ‘How?’ If we can answer the latter, that generally suffices for our purposes...”<sup>189</sup>

He misunderstands the place of science in the scheme of human knowledge. Science does not *inform* in fundamental questions: its vision, circumscribed by its *modus operandi*, is limited to properties, the external signs of things. It provides the *matter* upon which the higher disciplines can *do the forming*, provide the solutions. His unwillingness to contemplate the possibility of an intellectual cause of the universe moves him to find excuses for avoiding the question. ‘Why?’ looks for a cause: ‘How?’ looks merely for means. The device is as old as David Hume who pretended to answer difficult questions by turning his back on them. The passage shows, too, that Krauss simply does not understand that ‘nothing’ is a product of the mind, a positive concept standing for a negative; *mental* being. Natural knowledge may be infinitely more profound today than in the past, but its students have lost the wisdom to apply it rightly.

Krauss goes on to say —

“Newton’s work dramatically reduced the possible domain of God’s actions, whether or not you attribute any inherent rationality to the universe. Not only did Newton’s laws severely constrain the freedom of action of a deity, they dispensed with various requirements for supernatural intervention. Newton discovered that the motion of planets around the Sun does not require them to be continually pushed along their paths, but rather, and highly non-intuitively, requires them to be pulled by a force acting toward the Sun, thus dispensing of the need for the angels who were often previously invoked as guiding the planets on their way. While dispensing with this particular use of angels has had little impact on people’s willingness to believe in them (polls suggest far more people believe in angels in the United States than believe in evolution), it is fair to say that progress in science since Newton has even more severely constrained the available opportunities for the hand of God to be manifest in his implied handiwork.”<sup>190</sup>

Scientists do not create laws: they find them; they uncover what exists.<sup>191</sup> Nature is surrounded by—immersed in—laws: indeed, each of the sub-disciplines of the science Krauss values so profoundly is grounded in the rigour of their immutability. So who, or what, laid them down? Scientists are happy to take the law of gravity and its force for granted: they have yet to expose gravity’s cause. Reading Krauss, we can see why: there is no need to worry about ‘Why?’; ‘How?’ is all that matters: explanation is sufficient. But explanation is not the same as causation, or realisation. Far from Newton’s discovery of such laws ‘constrain[ing] the... action of the deity’, the

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<sup>189</sup> *A Universe from Nothing*, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.* p. 145. It should be said in passing, a) that it is pleasing that the majority of Americans seem to be able to see through the Darwinian nonsense, and b) equally pleasing to see Krauss admitting that evolutionism is a species of belief. A corollary of atheism, it shares atheism’s belief in ‘no-God’. Krauss misquotes Newton’s opinion about gravity.

<sup>191</sup> The Latin root of the word ‘discover’ is revealing—*invenire*, ‘to come in upon’. It means that what the discoverer finds *is already there!* ‘Who,’ might one reasonably ask, ‘put it *there* in the first place?’

exposure of their intricacy reveals an ever more immense regime of ordination and subordination giving testimony of the majesty of the intellectual power of their cause to anyone prepared to allow intelligence, rather than prejudice fed by a vivid imagination to rule him.

In his tenth chapter, *Nothing Is Unstable*, we read this:

“[T]he recent decade has seen incredible progress in molecular biology. We learned of natural organic pathways, for example, that could produce, under plausible conditions, ribonucleic acids, long thought to be the precursors to our modern DNA-based world. Until recently it was felt that no such direct pathway was possible and that some other intermediate forms must have played a key role.

“Now few biochemists and molecular biologists doubt that life can rise naturally from nonlife, even though the specifics are yet to be discovered...”<sup>192</sup>

Subjectivism yet again! That a majority may be of opinion that life can arise from ‘nonlife’ does not make it true.

Non-living things, i.e., minerals, exist in their own right as non-living things. With living things, however, life is coextensive with their existence, as Aristotle explained 2,400 years ago. ‘For living things to live is the same as to be’.<sup>193</sup> Take from an animal its life and you take from it existence; the body of the animal quickly degrades into its component elements. The corollary is clear: *whatever it is that gives life to the animal also gives it existence* (‘be’; *esse*).

This also is clear: it is not from the *matter* of which it is constituted that a thing gets its life but from another influence, its substantial form.<sup>194</sup> Here the sea of materialism’s expectations washes up against the rock wall of reality. The materialist can analyse the *material* structure of the living thing, but his philosophy blinds him to the *formal cause* which alone makes it *to live*—even as it makes it *to be*.

In his eleventh chapter, *Brave New Worlds*, Krauss pontificates:

“The Metaphysical ‘rule’ which is held as an ironclad conviction by those with whom I have debated the issue of creation, namely, that *out of nothing nothing comes*, has no foundation in science...”

Any scientist who accepts this premise has abandoned common sense. The issue between *nothing* and *something* parallels that between the *non-living* and the *living*. Life is nothing in the non-living; and the living and the non-living are distinguished precisely in the possession in the one of what is *nothing* in the other.

#### X. *The Fatuousness of the Thesis*

Krauss’s thesis is grounded in a premise which has little to do with theoretical physics and everything to do with materialism and atheistic prejudice. The ‘nothing’ of which he speaks so eloquently, and tries (if it were possible) to colour with the characteristics

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid. p. 160

<sup>193</sup> *De Anima* II.4.415b12-15

<sup>194</sup> Whatever a man may ‘create’ always involves the iteration, in some form or other, of what already exists; man is a creator only *secundum quid*. He can impose artificial forms on matter but he cannot educe from matter any natural form; cannot create something living. And he cannot create something living because creation *simpliciter* is beyond his power.



of something existing, exists only in the collective imagination of physicists. Intellect demands that what we call 'space' is a medium which while material is not detectable by any scientific instrument.<sup>195</sup> Much as the sea is the medium and essential condition in which all sea-creatures live, *this medium* is the essential condition of the existence and coming into existence (the 'be' and 'become') of all material things. Imagination may incline us to view a void as reality's 'default setting', but intellect insists this is impossible. Science's problem over the last 100 years is that it has allowed imagination free rein at intellect's expense.

The instinctive reaction of any reasonable man to Krauss's thesis must be dismay at its unreality. We live in a universe not only of intricate *goodness* and *order* but of immense beauty in the smallest of its elements. There is no mention of any of these realities or of their cause in *A Universe From Nothing*. Instead, we get this—

"The universe is far stranger and far richer—more wondrously strange—than our meager human imaginations can anticipate. Modern cosmology has driven us to consider ideas that could not have been formulated a century ago. The great discoveries of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have not only changed the world in which we operate, they have revolutionized our understanding of the world—or worlds—that exist, or may exist, just under our noses: the reality that lies hidden until we are brave enough to search for it.

"This is why philosophy and theology are ultimately incapable of addressing by themselves the truly fundamental questions that perplex us about our existence. Until we open our eyes and let nature call the shots, we are bound to wallow in myopia."

It is because Krauss & co. have allowed their *meager human imaginations* to range uncontrolled over the information provided by nature that they think it appropriate to posit other worlds and universes. These are no more real than the 'nothing' they conceive of as something. It is not so much *the great discoveries that have revolutionized our understanding of the world* but the judgements on them by a science blind to its own defective vision, a science 'wallow[ing] in myopia'. In condemning philosophy *inter alia* as *incapable of addressing... the truly fundamental questions... about existence* Krauss has only condemned his own views for they, too, are rooted in philosophy, a false philosophy.

If he thinks his book has proved the universe can come from nothing, that he has addressed 'the truly fundamental questions that perplex us', he is dreaming. Readers might think the answer posited by Douglas Adams' super computer 'Deep Thought' to *The Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything* makes more sense than this science fantasy. They will certainly find *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* more readable.

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<sup>195</sup> If scientists had not been infected with materialism they would have realised that the Michelson-Morley experiment was a success, not a failure. For it proved what Aristotle had taught some 2,300 years earlier, that the heavenly substance was unique among material substances *in being not detectable*, in manifesting no attributes comparable with common material being.

## ETERNITY



*Everything comes to an end... Seeing how the things of this world pass away ought to console us for the nearer we are approaching that end towards which all our being should tend.*

St Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart (1747-70)

There was a chap named Arthur Stace who performed a singular service for the people of Sydney before he died in 1967. For 35 years, from 1932, he wrote on the footpaths and pavements of the city and its suburbs every week in copperplate the single word *Eternity*. His inspiration came from the preaching of the evangelist, John G. Ridley, on the following text in *Isaiah* —

“Thus says the High and Holy One who inhabits eternity whose name is Holy and who dwells in the high and holy place. I am with the humble and contrite of heart to revive in them the spirit of humility and of contrition...” (57: 15)

Ridley had remarked in the course of his preaching: “Eternity, eternity: I wish I could sound or shout that word to everyone in the streets of Sydney. You’ve got to meet it. Where will you spend eternity?” Arthur Stace took up the challenge. Bureaucracy couldn’t cope, of course, with this breach of its petty regulations and Arthur was frequently challenged by the authorities for defacing the city’s footpaths. His response was unanswerable: “I had permission from a higher source”.

In the season of Advent we await Christ’s promised return, He Who will judge the living and the dead. It is the season when the Catholic Church reminds the faithful of the critical importance of the question—*Where will you spend eternity?*

The great scandals that have befallen the Church as a consequence, in large measure, of the willed embrace by her bishops of secular and Protestant values at the Second Vatican Council have hardened those who adopt the belief in *No God* in their resolve not to turn back from their headlong rush to perdition. “At the end of life,” they tell themselves, “there is only oblivion”.

No man brings himself into existence: existence is given him. No man chooses to come into existence: existence is chosen for him. No man chooses, moreover, to be a man

rather than a monkey, a donkey or a fish. His essence is chosen for him. Both *what* he is and *that* he is are beyond the power of his will. The refusal to acknowledge these issues, the refusal to acknowledge reality, is the chief characteristic of atheistic folly, an inevitable result of its immersion in materialism which refuses to acknowledge the critical importance of the formal in things. Its ultimate stupidity is suicide whose proponents never stop to ponder the question—*If I did not bring myself into existence, how can I expect to take myself out of it?*

Atheism has been cemented in place by abandonment of moral principle, especially in respect of the sexual powers. First, there was the move to legitimize the disorder of contraception, precipitated by the permission given it in 1930 by the Anglicans. Next, people found excuses for abortion in the hard case of conception after rape. The watershed case for abandonment of principle was *Regina v. Bourne* in 1933 in England. Wholesale abortion was made 'law' in the English *Abortion Act 1968*. The next step down the primrose path was the legitimizing of perverted sexual conduct, achieved at the public level by removal from statute books of criminal provisions against it. Atheists are now trying to force members of society to reject the natural order in respect of gender—as if this, too, was within human power.

At the philosophical level the error involved is the confusion of *the voluntary* (what is within the power of human will) with *the natural* (what is outside that power). Underlying the delusion is the subjectivist principle which reduces to "reality is what I say it is" advanced by William of Ockham, adopted by Martin Luther and put into homicidal practice by the younger Henry Tudor (Henry VIII). Since, the atheist refuses to acknowledge nature's Author, instead of seeing the natural world as something given him to aid him in achieving his end, he is constrained to look upon it as nothing but matter for the form of his own choices.<sup>196</sup>

We never have more than a moment together of this earthly life at any one time. Human life is a continuum, a perpetual flux as the Greek philosopher Heraclitus noted. The realization moved Boëthius (St Severinus) to define eternity as "perfect possession altogether of endless life".<sup>197</sup> The underlying theme, the bass continuo as it were, in each of the four great issues that every man must face (whether he likes it or not)—death, judgement, heaven and hell—is *eternity*.

*Where will you spend eternity?* Only a fool closes his mind to the importance of the question.

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<sup>196</sup> The belief in 'climate change' is part of the business. If the natural world is no more than the chance collection of material things—if it has no Author Who has foreseen from all eternity the disorder man can work in His creation, and has ensured that the damage man will do is limited by his own limitations—then the atheist must worry over apparent meteorological changes. As Chesterton said, the one who refuses to believe in God will believe in anything.

<sup>197</sup> *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. vi