

# Between Realities: Dawkins vs. Voegelin

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Life in the twenty-first century is easier said than done. One of the main postmodern tribulations to be dealt with is the unrest of the “God confusion.” The variety of personal experiences, understandings, and symbolizations of divine reality in the contemporary world—or the lack of them—has created worldwide religious tension. The intellectually disordered language symbols, as pointed out by Eric Voegelin, have bewildered our modern world over the last epoch with confused images of “God” and religious terrorism. Till now, the various human weaknesses that we have encountered in the crisis have not battered our need for divine reality, but they have afflicted many of us with disappointment and anger about religion and fierce doubts about God’s existence. “God” is said. “God” is argued. “God” is lost. According to the philosopher Martin Buber, the crisis of deformed existence has entangled the human heart in an estrangement from God and human

beings.<sup>1</sup> Voegelin formulated this kind of breakdown as follows:

[T]he deculturation of the West is an historical phenomenon extending over centuries; the grotesque rubble into which the image of God is broken today is not somebody’s wrong opinion about the nature of man but the result of a secular process of destruction.<sup>2</sup>

Voegelin is calling for a radical conversion to transcendent order<sup>3</sup> by turning to what he terms “the flow of presence.”<sup>4</sup> The deepest reason for attuning to the Presence does not lie in the weakness of our irrationality but in the possibility of recovering a spiritual understanding of what gives meaning to our lives. Our personal reorientation to the divine is the first step in bringing an elementary recognition of transcendent reality to our whole civilization. In a culture of an ever-growing information overload, amidst a global economic crisis, it is not easy to maintain our integrity, faith, and morals. In the midst of this climate of confusion, someone like Voegelin can encourage us to find an orientation towards the divine which is a little more palatable and hopeful. The divine inspi-

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ration present in his life and works might seep through as we search for meaning and clarity in a very complex time.

### The God Delusion

The current war on religion is marked by a surprisingly intolerant book, full of scorn for religion and those who believe. Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion* (2006) contends that a supernatural creator almost certainly does not exist. Belief in a god qualifies as a delusion, and faith in "God" is a persistent false belief held in the face of strong contradictory evidence. Dawkins is hostile to all religions, in particular to "fundamentalist" Christianity and Islam.<sup>5</sup> He maintains that religion closes people's minds to scientific truth, oppresses women, and psychologically abuses children with ideas such as "eternal damnation." His rhetoric is fierce: the biblical Yahweh is "psychotic,"<sup>6</sup> "an evil monster";<sup>7</sup> Aquinas's proofs of God's existence are "exposed as vacuous,"<sup>8</sup> and religion generally is "nonsense." He affirms: "I am not attacking any particular version of God or gods. I am attacking God, all gods, anything and everything supernatural, wherever and whenever they have been or will be invented."<sup>9</sup>

Although he rarely calms down in tone, Dawkins constructs a scientific scaffolding for atheism. He draws on evolution to refute the concept of intelligent design and to prove that morality does not rely on belief in God. Religion is a divisive and oppressive force, Dawkins maintains: "When one person suffers from a delusion it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion it is called religion."<sup>10</sup> *The God Delusion* marks a significant moment in modern history, not so much because of its scientific contribution, wit, or argument, but for its representation of an intellectual breakdown in which modern man consciously cuts himself off from the divine presence, from "God."

Dawkins is persistently derisive: "I have found it an amusing strategy, when asked whether I am an atheist, to point out that the questioner is also an atheist when considering Zeus, Apollo, Amon Ra, Mithras, Baal, Thor, Wotan, the Golden Calf and the Flying Spaghetti Monster. I just go one god further."<sup>11</sup>

By an act of imagination, to "just go one god further," man can shrink himself to a delusional self that is "condemned to be free." To this shrunken or contracted self, God is dead or non-existent; the past is dead; the present is the flight from the self toward being what it is not. The future is the field of possibilities among which the self must choose its project. Moreover, freedom is the necessity of making a choice in a universe without God that will determine the self's own being.<sup>12</sup> Dawkins's choice against God is a self-sufficiency project called "atheist pride." The freedom of the contracted self, in Voegelin's terms, is the self's damnation not to be able not to be free. *The God Delusion* represents sustained and often hostile attacks on religious institutions and religious belief by a man who seems to have lost awareness of the divine ground.

Voegelin has explained how with modern man, a specific balanced network of ideas and symbols has arisen. Since reason produces ideas, within the differentiated experience, we have a new situation. This new factor that appears when consciousness becomes differentiated is, on the one hand, the possibility of constructing and, on the other hand, the possibility, as in Dawkins's case, of misconstruing. It is this misconstruction of "scientific anti-God-ideas" in the modern period exemplified by Dawkins's second chapter that we can put under the title "The Revolt of Man":

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant charac-

ter in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, blood-thirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.<sup>13</sup>

Dawkins obviously intends to shock the reader, and his assault seems productive. By attacking the God of Sacred Scripture, he is trying to weaken traditional values and authority, which are based on God's commands—commands whose interpretation, in Dawkins's mind, has only led humanity to a shameful history of inquisitions, crusades, and jihads. The danger of *The God Delusion* is that reflections such as these, not kept in proper balance, can cause serious problems. Imbalanced and often hostile constructions, characteristic of the revolt, can cause the breakdown of religious, political, and intellectual institutions. Atheistic constructions can create a general problem of "spiritual illiteracy" and precipitate a disharmony within society. Voegelin believes that in order to keep society in balance, we have to keep that intellectual structure in order. So, if a whole body of ideas like philosophy, theology and religion should be rejected or distorted, then inevitably the misconstructions creep in. Nevertheless, one has to bear in mind that the search for gods or God and the construction of symbolism, which includes the divine and insists on God, are to be found long before classical philosophy.

### **Atheist Pride**

Dawkins reveals that although he was raised as an Anglican, he discovered Darwinian evolution at the age of fifteen and escaped from traditional religion to atheism. The underlying premise of his mes-

sage is that the existence of a supernatural God who designed and created everything including human beings is indefensible. From his perspective, atheists are independent thinkers, and believers in a supernatural God are simply victims of childhood indoctrination. His kindest thought for the "deluded" is that ignorance is not a crime. In rejecting "God" or the intelligence that created the universe, he calls for a twenty-first century "atheist pride."<sup>14</sup> His primary purpose is to assist others in their rejection of "the God Hypothesis": "If this book works as I intend, religious readers who open it will be atheists when they put it down."<sup>15</sup> The marketing "to get rid of God" is well done.<sup>16</sup> Dawkins puts his imagination to work and surrounds his imaginary "atheistic self" with an imaginary reality (expressed in various forms: books, film, DVD, tee-shirts, stickers, lapel pins, and so forth) apt to confirm himself in his "scientific" pretense of reality.

When one rocks the boat as hard as Dawkins, things are set in motion and start to sway. In *The God Delusion* Dawkins creates a Second Reality, an atheistic worldview, in order to screen the First Reality (Voegelin: God, man, society, and the world) of common experience from a so-called "scientific viewpoint." Consequently, the frictions, far from being removed, have grown into a general conflict between the world of his imagination ("atheistic pride") in a universe without God and the real world in which God's presence is acknowledged. In "The Eclipse of Reality," Voegelin writes:

This conflict can be traced from the discrepancy of contents between realities imagined and experienced, through the act of projecting an imaginary reality, to the man who indulges in the act. First, on the level of contents, a reality projected by

imagination may deform or omit certain areas of reality experienced; reality projected, we may say, obscures or eclipses First Reality. Ascending from contents to the act, then, one can discern a man's intention to eclipse reality. This intention can become manifest in a large variety of forms, ranging from the straight lie concerning a fact to the subtler lie of arranging a context in such a manner that the omission of the fact will not be noticed; or from the construction of a system that, by its form, suggests its partial view as the whole of reality to its author's refusal to discuss the premises of the system in terms of reality experienced. Beyond the act, finally, we reach the actor, that is the man who has committed the act of deforming his humanity to a self and now lets the shrunken self eclipse his own full reality.<sup>17</sup>

Under a veil of skepticism and wit, Dawkins tends to deny his humanity and insist he is nothing but his shrunken atheist self—to deny ever having experienced common reality. He denies that anybody could have a fuller scientific perception of reality than he allows himself. In brief, in *The God Delusion*, Dawkins sets the contracted atheist self as a model for himself as well as for everybody else. Moreover, his insistence on atheist conformity in rejecting God is carried on by intellectual aggression—and this aggressiveness betrays in itself the anxiety and alienation of the man who has lost contact with reality.

*The God Delusion* has grown into a social force of such strength that its conflict with reality forms a substantial part of global atheism in our time. The man with a radically contracted atheist self is as much of a power in society and history as an ordinary

man, and as in Dawkins's case, sometimes a stronger one. The conflict of *The God Delusion* with reality turns out to be a disturbance *within* reality. When the human heart is steered by emotive arguments and media sensation, be it politically, religiously, or ideologically, conflicts arise causing waves of misunderstanding. A careful discernment of human experience, reality, and "God" is called for. Voegelin explains:

The multiple meanings of reality are not caused by loose usage of the term, but reflect the structure of reality itself. To be conscious of something is an experiential process polarized by the cognitive tension between the knower and the known . . . . The consciousness of reality becomes a process within reality.<sup>18</sup>

What Voegelin means is that there is a possibility of eclipse, a risk of distortion in the process. The pole of the known, in our experience and reflection, is "God." The pole of the knower is the human carrier of cognition, you and I, who also create the symbols that refer to the known, "God." When we turn toward the experiential process and the cognitive tension as a whole, the process will become the something we acknowledge as real. This process, however, between the knower and the known, as in Dawkins's case, can be twisted. Is Dawkins out of touch? Is God a delusion? No, God is real! You and I are real! These are the facts, the two realities in one overall experiential process in reality. How can it happen then that one of those two poles is denied? By refusing to mention either the "human pole" or to accept the "God pole" of the experiential tension, one refuses or eclipses reality and creates a disturbance in the process, which in itself can lead to a revolt against reality.

### Evolution as Revolt

Dawkins had argued against creationist explanations of life in his previous works on evolution. *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986)<sup>19</sup> develops the theme that evolution can explain the apparent design in nature. In *The God Delusion* he expands his argument against the existence of God, yet he is less convincing in arguing that the world would be better and more peaceful without religion. The “evolution card” played by Dawkins is the “scientific justification” by which he believes he can wipe God from the map of global consciousness. We could formulate the predicament of *The God Delusion* as follows: if one posits the world (or science) as an absolute, then man necessarily becomes a function of the world, and consequently, God becomes a function of man. In other words, with the world as an absolute, everything comes from the world and God is created (explained, denied, banned, or even killed) by man.

It is not that science really can disprove God’s existence, but it is rather Dawkins’s misconstruction of reality that degrades God to the level of delusion. Instead of the original reality, in *The God Delusion* we have one part of that reality (the world, science) made by Dawkins into an absolute and so all other parts of reality must be constructed as a function of that one absolute so-called “scientific reality” or “atheist pride,” which is in fact only a small part of reality. According to Voegelin, reality, which includes God’s presence, continues to exist as before. If one insists that one part of that reality is “*the scientific*” or “*the atheistic*” reality (the absolute), then one must do something about the rest of reality—that is, kill or claim God as non-existent—which one no longer credits with being reality; one then has to construct it as “dependent.” For this construction as a dependent, Voegelin uses the term “func-

tion.” *The God Delusion* represents certain favorite constructions for expressing such a functional characteristic.

The first chapter of *The God Delusion* introduces the aim of Dawkins’s project: to disarm (naïve) theistic belief in a personal God. The main thrust of Dawkins’s work in general is that science deserves respect (which it does not get), whereas religion deserves little or no respect (which it receives). In his new construction of reality, he advocates an alternative view:

I am not attacking the particular qualities of Yahweh, or Jesus, or Allah, or any other specific god such as Baal, Zeus or Wotan. Instead I shall define the God Hypothesis more defensibly: *there exists a superhuman, supernatural intelligence who deliberately designed and created the universe and everything in it, including us.* This book will advocate an alternative view: *any creative intelligence, of sufficient complexity to design anything, comes into existence only as the end product of an extended process of gradual evolution.* Creative intelligences, being evolved, necessarily arrive late in the universe, and therefore cannot be responsible for designing it. God, in the sense defined, is a delusion; and, as later chapters will show, a pernicious delusion.<sup>20</sup>

Following Dawkins, it is acceptable to believe that there might well be other beings of superior intelligence out there in the cosmos—as long as they are not God. For him, it is acceptable to use terms like *spirituality* (which are vague enough to be useful in proclaiming “atheist pride”) to describe the awe-inspiring feeling that overcomes man when he considers the beauty of the universe, as long as he doesn’t symbolize it as “God.” In Dawkins’s theory, it is tolerable

to have *faith* in physicists to solve the questions of how everything came into existence—as they just need more time—but to say that God gives them the intelligence and life to do so is unacceptable.

In response to Dawkins and other evolutionists, Voegelin would point to the role that the theory of evolution has assumed in this erection of man into a function of the world. The theory of evolution, not as a scientific theory but in its broader ideological sense, reduces man to the outgrowth of natural evolution. In Voegelin's perspective, one cannot reduce man to a process of natural evolution, beginning from inorganic processes and culminating, after a chain of organic development, in man. Man, for Voegelin, is more than a function of nature; man is not a "last product" so to speak.

Voegelin explains that almost a century before the theory of evolution was formulated in the Darwinian form, people were already talking about the problem of evolution. It was much discussed shortly before 1750. For Voegelin, Kant gave in his *Critical of Judgment* the reason why a theory of evolution cannot serve the purposes for which it was already being used: to make man a function of nature and of this world. For if one puts man as the last item in a chain of evolution, one can then trace him back through life in its simplest forms to inorganic matter, even to subatomic particles. That is, one does not have a beginning of man: one cannot explain man by arbitrarily putting a beginning somewhere within that chain.

According to Voegelin, if one takes evolution seriously, one has to go back further into the vegetative and into the inorganic part, and then one arrives at the question of the matrix of a matter that contains all this evolution as potentiality. Voegelin insists on continuing the questioning: Where does that matter come from? Who devised

it and who endowed it with that evolutionary force that let it culminate, in the end, in man? How can one explain all this? So, no tracing back to an imaginary beginning gets us around the question that there is no beginning in time, but the beginning in Voegelin's line of thought is always a mythical or metaphysical problem. He refers to the famous question of Leibniz: "Why is there something; why not nothing?" and "Why is that something as it is?" And that is then at the beginning. Although Voegelin does not have any prejudice against the empirical content of scientific observation concerning evolution, he thinks that a theory of evolution does not fully furnish an explanation of man; it only shoves it back to an imaginary beginning.

Explanations that see man as a function of nature on the basis of a theory of evolution always rest, Voegelin argues, on the assumption that there is nobody present in the audience who will ask questions such as Kant's. Finally, Voegelin would say that only when the premises go unquestioned can the argument of evolution work. He refers to the problem of illiteracy and mentions that many theories can be developed, like a theory of evolution, because many people do not feel the need to ask such questions in the first place.<sup>21</sup> It is the task of the philosopher to do so.

### God vs. Superman

The ideological misconstructions of reality whereby God becomes a function of man are not only found in *The God Delusion*, but also in Feuerbach's "Psychology of Projection."<sup>22</sup> All religious ideas, as well as the idea of God, were interpreted by Feuerbach as projections of the contents of the human mind. This psychology of projection is a widely accepted part of the science of psychology today, especially in its psychoanalytic form, with its development into a psychology of religion as an

illusion. Equally, Dawkins's *The God Delusion* suggests, with an increasing number of biologists, that religion is a *byproduct* of something else.<sup>23</sup> He comments that an evolutionary explanation of religious belief need not postulate an evolutionary benefit for religion itself. "I am one of an increasing number of biologists who see religion as a *byproduct* of something else," he writes. "More generally, I believe that we who speculate about Darwinian survival value need to 'think byproduct.' When we ask about the survival value of anything, we may be asking the wrong question."<sup>24</sup> The reductionist psychological misinterpretation by which Dawkins disparages religious ideas is the vehicle by which God is transformed into a function of the human psyche. The center of all language symbols used in the experience of (psychological/"scientific") revolt is the transformation of human power over nature into human power of salvation. When the transcendent God is made into an immanent function of Man, cutting off the divine pole of the tension, one could simply speak of "murder." The murder of God is committed speculatively by explaining divine being as the work of man.<sup>25</sup> For Voegelin, turning away from the mystery of the ground (*arche*) towards what Nietzsche calls "the human conceivable" is a disturbance in the balance of human consciousness.<sup>26</sup>

Where Feuerbach still left the matter at the level of the psychology of projections, Marx and Nietzsche more consistently said: "Why should we project? Let us pull these projections back into ourselves from where they started." In Voegelin's reflection that means: let us pull the divinity back into our humanity, and thereby we will become gods or, if not gods, at least supermen. For Voegelin the substance of history, however, is not something that human beings are able to know, possess, or control. It is rather encountered participa-

tively on the level of experience and on its adequate symbolization, not on the level of ideas. The Marxian transfiguration of man into Superman is a further radicalization of an earlier medieval derailment which drew the spirit of God into man, while leaving God himself in his transcendence. In other words, man draws his projection within himself when he imagines that he himself is God, when as a consequence man is transfigured into Superman. Thus the word "Superman"<sup>27</sup> was used by Marx to designate the man who has pulled the projection of God back into himself. Nietzsche<sup>28</sup> used the same term Superman for practically the same purpose. For Voegelin this vividly illustrates the revolt of man as a revolt against God. When God is pulled back into man, and the self-divinized man becomes the center of all problems, something has gone wrong.<sup>29</sup>

Man cannot and does not live without accounting for himself in terms of a ground. When the ground, which is the transcendent ground, has been imaginatively eclipsed, it must be replaced by a substitute, world-immanent pseudo-ground of being. For Voegelin, man is in revolt, and there is no real direction towards the transcendent because he cuts himself off, he expresses himself through the invention of substitute grounds (e.g. "science," "atheist pride"), instead of the ground of being. Voegelin is radical in this regard: for him all of the ideologies (as substitute grounds) are theoretically, that is to say, as "science," wrong. Voegelin believes it to be the task of the philosopher to unveil such substitute grounds and to inspire the search for and the attunement to the Ground of all being: God.<sup>30</sup>

### Deformed Language

To broaden the understanding of the eclipse of God, the revolt of man, and Superman's control over the "God-reality," we have to

confront the deformed language symbols that are part of the unrest we experience at present. Voegelin describes how questions and answers pertaining to the “God crisis” are held together, and related to one another, by the event of the search. He explains that by nature we are truly questioners. The calamity we face, however, occurs when we deform our humanity by refusing to ask the questions or by loading them with premises devised to make the search impossible. Truth, to be heard, requires ears that can hear; philosophy is not the life of reason if the questioner’s reason is depraved. The answer will not help the man who has lost the question, and the predicament of the present age is characterized by the loss of the question rather than of the answer. With a Socratic nature we might be able to recover the question lost to consciousness. We must confront the contemporary challenge by recovering the question to which, in Hellenistic-Roman culture, the philosopher could understand divine reality—God—as the answer.<sup>31</sup>

In chapter eight, Dawkins writes: “As a scientist, I am hostile to fundamentalist religion because it actively debauches the scientific enterprise. It teaches us not to change our minds, and not to want to know exciting things that are available to be known. It subverts science and saps the intellect.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, the greatest crime of “fundamentalist” religion is to think without asking scientific questions.

To become angry in our situation is understandable, but too easy. What is difficult is to be angry with the right person or group—should we be angry with all religious fundamentalists?—and to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way. Yet, one could argue if becoming angry at all would make any sense, as we are fighting here over a deformed language symbol that has lost its contact with reality. In the

end it is not the word “God” that makes us angry, but the helplessness and alienation of the situation we are in.

In Voegelin’s essay, “Immortality: Experience and Symbol,” he writes that the symbols in the sense of a spoken or written word are left as traces in the world of sense perception. Their meaning, according to Voegelin, can be understood only if they evoke, and through evocation reconstitute, the engendering reality in the listener or reader. What people tend to forget nowadays, is that the symbol “God,” for instance, exists in the world, but its truth belongs to the transcendent (or “nonexistent”) divine-human experience which by this means articulates itself. This intangibility of the experience of the divine renders the symbol “God” and its truth vulnerable to the ups and downs of history. Because the originating experience of divine reality, as in the present crisis, can fade away, even the most adequate interpretation of an experience of “God” can achieve no more than words that are the external shell of an original complete reality containing both the experience and its articulation. As soon, however, as the symbol “God” has separated from this fullness and acquired the status of a literary account or religious dogma, the tension between an engendering experience of divine reality, and the symbol “God” engendered, is liable to separate into a piece of cold information and its dogmatic subject-matter. There is no guarantee that the reader of this account in the present God confusion will be moved to a meditative reconstitution of the engendering experienced God-reality; one may even say the chances today are slim, since “God” is seen as “Delusion,” and honest meditation requires more energy and discipline than most people are able to invest.

Still, the tension we experience, as revealed in the emotional responses to *The*

*God Delusion*, shows that we cannot do without the truth conveyed by “God” as one of the key symbols. So the pressure on us is great to restate the original account of “God,” interpreting the key experiences as a set of simple propositions, rendering what each person or translator considers its essential meaning. If submitted to such proceedings, the truth of “God,” the account of the experience of divine presence, will take the form of doctrine, as do the propositions, “man is immortal” or “the soul is immortal,” or else, in Dawkins’s case, “man is a product of an extended process of evolution.”<sup>33</sup> In themselves, such statements are fine, but Voegelin saw that doctrinal propositions of this kind are liable to give rise to various kinds of experience, such as uncritical acceptance of “Science,” “God,” or even more deficient (scientific) modes of understanding who or what “God” is. What Voegelin tries to explain is that no matter what doctrine you hold—be it philosophical, religious, or a “Dawkinsian doctrine” of scientific atheism—each may be in danger of the same thing, namely, that it can lose the connection to what it represents.

The transformation of “God” into religious doctrine or the alteration of Darwin’s evolution theory into (Dawkins’s) atheistic doctrine is not the last hammering that truth can suffer. When “Science” or “God” assumes social prevalence as doctrinal truth, even the facts of the process by which religious or scientific doctrine derives from the original account, and the original account from the engendering experience, may get lost. Seeing that the symbol “God,” as in our contemporary world, may altogether cease to be transparent for divine reality, equally the term “Science” can be deformed into nothing more than delusional consumerism. “God,” as in Dawkins’s case, will be misunderstood as a figment of the imagina-

tion, a proposition referring to “a thing” in the manner of a proposition concerning an object of sense-perception; and so the delusional “It,” which for Dawkins has neither relationality nor supernatural reality, will provoke the reaction of skepticism and ridicule. The scale of “God-mockery” devolves from a suspension of judgment, to vulgar agnosticism and atheism, and further on to the smart idiot questions of “How do you know there is a God?” and “How can you prove God exists?” that every college religious teacher knows from his classroom.

### Intellectual Cul-de-sac

Voegelin has anticipated the way in which a writer like Dawkins falls into an intellectual cul-de-sac. The point that he tries to make is that the sequence of originating experience of divine reality and expression in the symbol “God” is followed by summarizing accounts in the form of religious doctrine, which in turn can lead, as in the modern crisis, to the degradation of “God.” In bland restatement at verbal level, “God” provokes ferocious skeptical reactions. The experience of God in terms of Biblical *I AM*-meetings and in expressions of attunement to life has disappeared. What we often fail to acknowledge is that no matter how often explanations of and doctrinal claims about God are defended, attacked, or revised by both theists and atheists, the real world refuses to be confined within the limits of such systems. The attempt of the monotheistic religions to act on such a doctrinal basis has repeatedly led to the most bitterly disappointing results. Dawkins does have a point in *The God Delusion* concerning the disastrous effects of religion but seems unaware that he is fighting his battle for atheism over deformed “God symbols,” which do not say anything about the actual “God-reality itself.” Dawkins has, to put it mildly, a

strong, uncompromising view on *who* or *what* “God” is. Voegelin would reply that the phenomena of an original account of God’s reality, its development into a doctrinal exposition—leading to what Romanian anthropologist Mircea Eliade called “the degradation of symbols”—and a skeptical argument, such as Dawkins’s repudiation of God, constitute a not unfamiliar sequence. This series can attach itself to every experience of nonexistent (that is, transcendent) reality when it becomes articulate and, through its symbols, enters society as an ordering force. Skeptical reactions to “God” and to deformed symbols, in other words, are not new or particular to our time. What a Dawkins forgets is

that in some instances, when the sequence attaches itself to the great ordering experiences of philosophy and Christian faith, it is discernible as a structure in historical processes of infinite complexity. A recollection of divine experience, rather than a blunt reaction, even if it can be no more than the barest hint of these wide-arched courses, will be of help in determining not only our own position in them but the very sense we can make of an inquiry concerning “God” today.<sup>34</sup> Or in Buber’s striking statement: “We cannot cleanse the word ‘God’ and we cannot make it whole; but, defiled and mutilated as it is, we can raise it from the ground and set it over an hour of great care.”<sup>35</sup>

1 Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958). See also Martin Buber, *Gottesfinsternis: Betrachtungen zur Beziehung zwischen Religion und Philosophie* (Zürich: Manesse Verlag, 1953). 2 Eric Voegelin, “The Gospel and Culture,” in *Jesus and Man’s Hope*, Vol. 2, ed. Donald G. Miller & Dikran Y. Hadidian (Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary Press, 1971), 59–101. See also *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Vol. 12: Published Essays 1966–1985*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 178. 3 Eric Voegelin, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Vol. 31: Hitler and the Germans*, trans. & ed. Brendan Purcell & Detlev Clemens (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 51–69. Voegelin points toward the restoration of order. For him, it is precisely the revolution of the Spirit, what he will refer to as the Platonic periagogé, the turning round or conversion of the soul, that he upholds as an answer to the aversion from truth and justice which characterised the totalitarian ideology. 4 Meins G. S. Coetsier, *Etty Hillesum and the Flow of Presence: A Voegelinian Analysis* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2008). 5 Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam Press, 2006), 37. 6 Ibid., 38. 7 Ibid., 248. 8 Ibid., 77. 9 Ibid., 36. 10 Ibid., 5. Dawkins refers here to Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (London: Bodley Head, 1974). 11 Ibid., 53. 12 Eric

Voegelin, “The Eclipse of Reality,” in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Vol. 28: What Is History? And Other Late Unpublished Writings*, trans. & ed. Thomas A. Hollweck & Paul Caringella (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 111. 13 Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 31. 14 Ibid., 3. 15 Ibid., 5. 16 The Official Richard Dawkins Website: <http://richarddawkins.net/godDelusion> and <http://richarddawkins.net/store> 17 Voegelin, “The Eclipse of Reality,” in *What Is History?*, 112. 18 Ibid., 113. 19 Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., [1986] 1996). 20 *The God Delusion*, 31. 21 Eric Voegelin, *The Drama of Humanity and other Miscellaneous Papers 1939–1985, The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Vol. 33: The Drama of Humanity and Other Miscellaneous Papers, 1939–1985*, ed. William Petropulos & Gilbert Weiss (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 222–23. See also Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (esp. Kant’s first introduction), trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, IN & Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 1987). For further reading, see also *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis W. Beck (New York: Liberal Arts, 1956) and *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 1996). 22 Voegelin, *Published Essays 1966–1985*, 69. See Feuerbach’s psychology in *The Essence of Christianity*, where he states that dogmatic propositions are projections of the world-immanent consciousness of man. Voegelin

believes that Feuerbach's psychology of projection has remained one of the pillars of the ideologist's creed ever since. **23** *The God Delusion*, 172. Voegelin suggests this kind of thinking started with the breakdown of the German Idealist systems after Hegel, when the question had to be asked very energetically: Where do all these ideas come from, if one cannot explain them in the specific Gnostic form of, for instance, an Hegelian system that has been rejected? The psychology of religious ideas as projections has its critical beginning here. Of course, Voegelin is aware it has its pre-history going back into the seventeenth century, but he doesn't want to go further into that. **24** *The God Delusion*, 172. **25** Eric Voegelin, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Vol. 5: Modernity without Restraint, Political Religions; The New Science of Politics; and Science, Politics, and Gnosticism*, ed. Manfred Henningsen (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 279. **26** *Ibid.* **27** On the Superman of Feuerbach and Marx, see Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l'humanisme athée* (3rd ed., Paris: 1945); for an English translation, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, trans. Edith M. Riley, (New York: New American Library, 1950). See also, Eric Voegelin, "The Formation of the Marxian Revolutionary Idea," *Review of Politics* 12, No. 3 (1950): 275–302 and *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Vol. 10: Published Essays 1940–1952*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000). **28** Nietzsche, No. 230, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, in *Werke VII* (Leipzig:

1903), 197–88; English translation: *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Marianne Cowan (Chicago: 1955), 158–59. See also David J. Walsh, *The Growth of the Liberal Soul* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997). **29** *Modernity without Restraint*, 279. **30** Possible substitute grounds of being: (1) the balance of economic forces, (2) the balance of power, (3) striving for profit collectively (a Marxist revolution), (4) the survival of the fittest or evolution, (5) attempt to order history according to the races and the struggle of races, (6) satisfaction of one's passions. For more detail see Eric Voegelin, *The Drama of Humanity*, 224–34. **31** Eric Voegelin, *Published Essays 1966–1985*, 175–76. **32** *The God Delusion*, 284. **33** *Ibid.*, 31. **34** Thomas Crean, O.P., *A Catholic Replies to Richard Dawkins* (Oxford: Family Publications, 2007); Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam Press, 2006); Anthony Flew, with Roy Abraham Varghese, *There Is A God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (New York: Harper One, 2007); Alister McGrath, *Dawkins's God: Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); Alister McGrath, with Joanna Collicutt McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion: Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine* (London: SPCK, 2007); David Robertson, *The Dawkins Letters: Challenging Atheist Myths* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2007). **35** Buber, *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation Between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Humanity Books, 1988), 8–9.