

Chapter 1 – A Very Religious Non-Believer

Outline of Argument

1. Deserved Respect

a. **Hard-wired wonder.** We are all built in such a way as to feel transcendent wonder

b. **Naturalism.** There is a purely naturalistic explanation for everything

‘...there is only one kind of stuff in the universe and it is physical, out of this stuff come minds, beauty, emotions, moral values...’¹

c. **Anti-supernaturalism.** Removing the supernatural doesn’t lessen the wonder

‘...when we unweave the rainbow, it will not become less wonderful.’²

d. **Using God.** Many scientists use poetic imagery to describe the wonder of the universe with the term, ‘God,’ but do *not* mean supernatural God³

e. **Where is the wonder?** Those who accept transcendence deserve respect, but only so long as that transcendence is attributed to nature and not supernature.

2. Undeserved Respect

a. **Unnecessary protection.** Religion is cosseted from argument by something termed ‘respect’

‘A widespread assumption ... is that religious faith is especially vulnerable to offence and should be protected by an abnormally thick wall of respect, in a different class from the respect that any human being should pay to any other.’⁴

¹ Dawkins, p12

² Ibid., p14

³ At this point, he makes the distinction between terminologies: ‘*Pantheism is sexed-up atheism. Deism is watered down theism.*’ Ibid., p18

⁴ Ibid., p20

- b. **Respect.** 'Respect' is equated with not arguing
- c. **Undercover hatred.** Thus, all sorts of ideas and beliefs which are degrading, discriminating or dangerous can become unchallengeable, if dressed as 'religion'

*'...hate only has to prove it is religious and it no longer counts as hate.'*⁵

- d. **Postmodernism.** This is allowed for due to the dismissal of all metanarratives – no-one has the right to be right, so no-one is right.
- e. **Naturalism again.** Respect is non-permissible when people are only ideologically offended – respect (that is, the cosseted protection) is only applicable when people are physically offended.

Pros and Cons

- Pros
 - Allows for 'hard-wired wonder'
 - Science can contribute to our wonder of the universe
 - Transcendence and wonder are good things!
 - 'Special respect' → diminished confidence in God's sovereignty
 - 'Special respect' → no challenge to crazy ideas ∴ all flavours of religion are assumed to be part of the one whole.
- Cons
 - Presupposition: Naturalism is correct
 - Tolerance = not arguing ∴ tolerance → homogeneity.
 - Presupposition: Underlying postmodern lack of meta-narratives
 - His logic only allows us to protect humans insofar as they are physical beings – people should by all means be protected from physical harm, but verbal, conceptual, ideological harm is permissible. It reduces human beings to creatures vulnerable only in a physical sense, but who can and should be exposed to all challenges verbal and spiritual.

⁵ Ibid., p23