

# Prof. Richard Dawkins: the Darwinian Great Ape of British academe

by Mark Burdman

In 1995, Richard Dawkins was appointed the first “Professor of Public Understanding of Science” at Oxford University, a chair endowed by Bill Gates’s Microsoft Corp. of America. The title is certainly a curious one, because Dawkins has absolutely no “understanding of science,” as science is properly understood. Besides, he abhors that human species which comprises “the public.” Matters being what they are these days in the British Isles, however, his misanthropic eruptions, parading as “science,” have gained him a substantial following.

Trained as a research zoologist, Dawkins describes himself as an “evolutionist,” or “evolutionary biologist.” Which ever term is used, Dawkins is best described as a “Darwinian fundamentalist,” a description that he might find somewhat irksome, given his repeated, sanctimonious attacks on religion and theology.

Dawkins’s work is avidly gobbled up by that growing contingent of individuals, who have become involved in the more bizarre of what today passes for an “academic field.” Prominent among these fields, and the focus of a feverish craze in Britain these days, is “evolutionary psychology.”<sup>1</sup> The latter is more or less interchangeable with “sociobiology,” as developed by Harvard zoologist E.O. Wilson, who likens human behavior to that of ants. In recent years, “sociobiology” has been easily co-opted by a clique of outrightly racist ideologues, such as the late Shockley-Jensen team, who argued that African-Americans are mentally inferior to Caucasians.

Dawkins’s influence has also been growing among a new generation of neuroscientists, who have developed a theory known as “neurogenetic determinism,” which holds that more or less every important function of the brain is genetically determined from the time of birth. From this premise, some of this breed have set out to complete a favorite project of the Venice-spawned Enlightenment, and to “scientifically prove” that the human soul does not exist.<sup>2</sup>

Dawkins likes to boast about having made pioneering studies of “evolving systems,” using computers. He spends a

good deal of his time simulating “Darwinian evolution” on a computer, and coming up with oddball proofs about the existence of the human race being ultimately a consequence of “chance” and “randomness.”

## ‘Nothing but blind pitiless indifference’

In a July 29, 1995 feature reporting his promotion to the Microsoft chair, the London *Guardian* wrote of Dawkins: “The discovery of DNA, he says, means that Darwinism can be retold digitally; there is no need for any other explanation of the universe beyond that of the selfishness of the gene. . . . Dawkins attended church as a child but rejected it in his teens, when he discovered Darwinism.” The paper quoted him, that there is “no design, no purpose, no evil and good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference. . . . DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music.”

For Dawkins, God is our “genetic code.” He presumes, in effect, to be the modern-day incarnation of the nineteenth century’s Thomas Henry Huxley, grandfather of the unfortunate brothers Aldous and Julian Huxley. T.H. Huxley raved against religion and theology, coining the phrase “agnostic.” He built up an alternative, absolute faith in Charles Darwin’s theories, and was alternatively known as “Darwin’s bulldog,” or the “Agnostic Pope.” For his efforts, Huxley was, in the 1890s, made a member of the Queen’s Privy Council. Dawkins, today, is, similarly, a favorite of the circles of Prince Philip, the Royal Consort, and his misbegotten son, Prince Charles.

Dawkins’s eagerness to mimic his forebear Huxley, led him, in a speech before a British scientific congress in 1992, to affirm that belief in God is nothing more than a virus, passed on from generation to generation, in a mode similar to the virus that affects computers. In response to this, Lyndon LaRouche wrote his paper, “On the Subject of God,” lacerating Dawkins as a fraud and incompetent.

It is no exaggeration to say, that Dawkins, like Huxley, has made Darwinism into an irrational religious faith. In his book *The Selfish Gene*, he wrote: “We no longer have to resort to superstition when faced with deep problems. Is there a meaning to life? What are we for? What is man? When you are actually challenged to think of pre-Darwinian answers to the questions, can you, as a matter of fact, think of any that are not now worthless, except for their (consider-

1. Christian Tyler, “Darwin Still Gets Under the Skin,” London *Financial Times*, “Weekend” section, Feb. 15-16, 1997.

2. Tom Wolfe, “Sorry, But Your Soul Just Died,” *Independent on Sunday*, Feb. 2, 1997.

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able) historical interest? There is such a thing as being just plain wrong, and that is what, before 1859, all answers to these questions were.”

The year 1859 is when publication of Darwin's *On Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*, better known to the public by its more sanitized title, *On the Origin of Species*.

So committed is he to the idea that Darwinism “answers everything,” that this “Professor of Public Understanding of Science” has lent his support to a new fad called “limitology,” which holds that science has effectively ended, because it allegedly has discovered all that is to be discovered.

The June 11, 1997 London *Guardian* referred to Dawkins as chief among “the great prophets of Charles Darwin today.”

### In the Royal Consort's service

Lawfully, Dawkins's Darwinian fundamentalism leads him to pathetic ignorance about what it is that makes man truly human, as well as hatred for everything that is human. In a rare moment of self-reflective honesty, he told the London *Guardian*, in an interview on July 29, 1995: “I have deep, deep questions about the origins of consciousness. It is very difficult to even think what it means, let alone how natural selection favored it.”

In 1994, Dawkins was an active supporter of the United

Nations' Malthusian Global Conference on Population, in Cairo, Egypt. To the present day, he is one among several vice presidents of Population Concern, Britain's leading advocacy organization for what its members euphemistically call “population limitation.” The patron of Population Concern is Prince Philip. Other vice presidents include such enemies of the human species as Conor Cruise O'Brien and Sir Crispin Cervantes Tickell. Tickell was one of the gurus of the global “ecology-green” movement, and was Britain's ambassador to the United Nations when the Bush-Thatcher Gulf War crisis was unleashed in the summer-autumn of 1990. The war against Iraq was exemplary of what the British mean by “population limitation.”

### Human extinction would not be a loss

In line with his Malthusian views, one of Dawkins's pet obsessions, confided to friends during 1994, was to take Pope John Paul II to court, for the latter's opposition to population control. Later, the July 30, 1995 London *Sunday Times* quoted him denouncing the pontiff as a “dangerous, world-damaging dictator.”

Faithful to his Darwinian views, Dawkins fanatically denies that there is a difference between man and beast, and attacks what he calls “the discontinuous mind,” which believes in such a qualitative difference.

In the early 1990s, he associated himself with something called “The Great Ape Project,” the which, under the cover of shedding tears about the mistreatment of apes in various parts of the world, agitated against the idea that there is any difference between man and ape, and became a pretext for a horrific outpouring of anti-human filth.<sup>3</sup> The project's co-founder, Australia's Peter Singer, is notorious for advocating radical variants of euthanasia and infanticide, and has been widely likened, in Germany and elsewhere, to those theoreticians of the Nazi euthanasia program for mass extermination.

The bizarre ideas of Singer and company were featured in a 1993 book, *The Great Ape Project*. One of the contributions, by Dawkins, was republished in the June 5, 1993 *New Scientist*, under the title, “Meet My Cousin, the Chimpanzee.”

In that essay, Dawkins attacked what he called the “unthinking nature of the speciesist double standard.” He whined: “To many people, it is simply self-evident, *without any discussion*, that humans are entitled to special treatment. . . . The speciesist assumption . . . [is that] humans are humans and gorillas are animals. There is an unquestioned yawning gulf between them. . . . This way of thinking characterizes what I want to call the discontinuous mind. . . . The discontinuous mind is ubiquitous” (emphasis in original).

Dawkins later continued: “The word ‘apes’ usually means chimpanzees, gorillas, orang-utans, gibbons and siamangs. We admit that we like apes, but we seldom realize we *are* apes.

3. Mark Burdman, “‘Jury’ Votes Equal Rights for Apes,” *EIR*, Jan. 26, 1996.

... There is no natural category that includes chimpanzees, gorillas, and orang-utans but excludes humans." He sermonized: "We are great apes. . . . Molecular evidence suggests that our common ancestor with chimpanzees lived, in Africa, between five and seven million years ago, say half a million generations ago. This is not long by evolutionary standards."

His article revealed an obsession with documenting the former existence of "intermediate types," between man and ape, and the possibility of "breeding" a hybrid man-ape species, as such existences could shatter the entire fabric of distinctly *human* culture.

What would be the implication for "morality," Dawkins asked, "if a clutch of intermediate types had survived, enough to link us to modern chimpanzees by a chain? . . . We can't (quite) interbreed with modern chimpanzees, but we'd need only a handful of intermediate types to be able to sing, 'I've bred with a man, who's bred with a girl, who's bred with a chimpanzee.' It's sheer luck that this handful of intermediaries no longer exists. ('Luck' from some points of view: for myself, I should love to meet them.) But for this chance, our laws and our morals would be very different. We need only discover a single survivor, say a relict *Australopithecus* in the Budongo Forest, and our precious system of norms and ethics would come crashing about our ears. The boundaries with which we segregate our world would be all shot to pieces. Racism would blur with speciesism in obdurate and vicious

confusion. Apartheid, for those that believe in it, would assume a new and perhaps a more urgent import. . . . But the melancholy fact is that, at present, society's moral attitudes are almost entirely on the discontinuous, speciesist imperative."

Dawkins's contribution concluded with a photograph of a hominid-like man, with the caption: "Hypothetical computer-generated image of what an intermediate between a human and a chimpanzee face might look like." He wrote: "This arresting picture is hypothetical. But I can assert, without fear of contradiction, that if somebody succeeded in breeding a chimpanzee/human hybrid, the news would be earth-shattering. . . . Politics would never be the same again, nor would theology, sociology, psychology or most branches of philosophy. The world that would be so shaken, by such an incidental event as a hybridization, is a speciesist world indeed, dominated by the discontinuous mind."

Not surprisingly, "The Great Ape Project" contained companion pieces, by collaborators of Dawkins, taking his argument to its logical conclusion. As one wrote, as long as "humans are seen as one species among many, rather than one species over many," we may become accustomed to the probability that "in the long run, humans are destined to go the way of other extinct species, and there is nothing that directly supports the idea that this would be a loss."

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**KINGPIN:** Former President George Bush, who is a board member of Barrick Gold, which led the 1996 mining companies' invasion of Zaire. Here, Bush visits Barrick's Goldstrike facility in Elko, Nevada, along with former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.



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