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The New Crusade Against God

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REASONS TO BE CONCERNED

The first decade of the twenty-first century has seen the launch of a new crusade against God. From both sides of the Atlantic the campaign has been carried forward by a plethora of books with titles that read like battle cries—‘God is Not Great!’, ‘The End of Faith!’, and ‘God, the Failed Hypothesis!’¹ In this article I will focus on just two books that have been especially influential—the American philosopher Daniel Dennett’s *Breaking the Spell*,² and the British biologist Richard Dawkins’s *The God Delusion*.³ These books do not stand alone: they are part of a concerted campaign by authors steeped in the worldview of materialistic science to eradicate religion, and to redefine the human being in the terms of a mechanistically conceived biology.⁴ It is not just God that is under attack, it is also the spiritual conception of the human being, traditionally conceived as created in the image of God.

There are two reasons why I think it is vitally important that we engage with, carefully consider, and respond to what these writers have to say, despite the temptation to dismiss or ignore them. The first reason is that this is not just a debate that is contained within the intellectual sphere—it has enormous cultural implications too. The 2007 paperback edition of Dawkins’s *The God Delusion* comes with

1. Christopher Hitchens, *God is not Great: The Case against Religion* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007); Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004; London: Simon and Schuster, 2006); and V. J. Stenger, *God, the Failed Hypothesis: How Science Shows that God Does Not Exist* (New York: Prometheus, 2007).

2. Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (London: Penguin Books, 2007; first published in the USA by Viking, 2006).

3. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Random House, 2007; first published in 2006).

4. See, for example, Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); David Sloan Wilson, *Darwin’s Cathedral: Evolution, Religion and the Nature of Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); and Scott Altran, *In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

endorsements on its outer and inner covers, as well as on several of the first pages, from a wide variety of leading cultural figures, for example the celebrated novelists Ian McEwan and Philip Pullman, and two Nobel Laureates—James Watson (the discoverer of DNA) and the physicist Steven Weinberg—as well as many prestigious newspapers and magazines. Dawkins himself—as anyone who watched his recent two-part TV documentary series *The Enemies of Reason* will know—sees his mission as being to assail not just God and religion but also the ‘epidemic of superstition’ that he thinks ‘impoverishes our culture’, and which he sees as including both astrology and alternative medicine, in particular homoeopathy. The scale of the assault, then, breaks out of the confines of a simply intellectual debate and threatens to undermine disciplines and practices that rest on a spiritual conception of the universe and the human being.

The second reason why I think it is important that we engage with, and do not succumb to the temptation simply to ignore, the new militant atheists is that they present us with a great gift. This gift is to challenge us to articulate precisely what it is we do and do not believe, and to express both *why* we disagree with them, and *what* we disagree with them about. For we may find that we do not disagree with everything they say. It could well be that they want to sweep away much that actually *needs* to be swept away. They may be performing the valuable service of clearing the ground of a lot of useless debris. And if this is the case, it would then be for us to show that the debris they have cleared are not, and never have been, the stuff of authentic religious tradition or authentic religious experience. It has indeed often seemed to me, in reading these authors, that they have not even begun to make meaningful contact with what they so furiously attack.

A RATHER DIM BRIGHTNESS

In *Breaking the Spell*, Daniel Dennett describes himself as a godless philosopher and a ‘bright’. He would like other atheists, agnostics and adherents of naturalism to call themselves ‘brights’ in an attempt to make those who don’t subscribe to a religious view of the world sound upbeat and positive. It would seem that for Dennett the spell that religion casts over the world has the effect of giving the nonreligious a grey and shadowy pallor. To come out as ‘bright’ would be one small move towards breaking this spell. A more serious move would be for

'brights' to subject religion to a scientific investigation that would treat it as a natural phenomenon like any other. This is what Dennett sets out to do in his book, which bears the subtitle: *Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*.

Dennett begins by defining religions as 'social systems whose participants avow belief in a supernatural agent or agents whose approval is sought' (p. 9). This is an unfortunate start. First of all, it leaves out those religions such as Buddhism, Jainism and Taoism for which belief in a supernatural agent or agents is not primary. In those religions that do give primacy to a supernatural agent or agents, seeking approval is hardly considered the most important element in the relationship. Secondly, by concentrating exclusively on religious *belief*, Dennett's definition leaves out the dimension of religious *experience* that must be taken into account if we are to gain any real understanding of religion. Thirdly, Dennett's definition leaves out the rich world of religious ritual, symbolism and art. Dennett is evidently unaware of the discussions of scholars of religion concerning the complex issues involved in how religion should best be defined.⁵

Dennett is clearly not interested in Religious Studies, an academic discipline that emerged in the last quarter of the nineteenth century dedicating itself to the scholarly study of religion. He believes that research to date into religion has not been 'neutral'. He claims that 'researchers have almost never even attempted to be neutral', but have invariably been biased, either defending their favourite religion from critics or else being openly hostile to religion (p. 32). Dennett cites no examples, but the claim is unfair. He appears to be unaware of the phenomenological approach to the study of religion, which has been extremely influential within the field of Religious Studies.⁶ At the heart of the phenomenological method is the *epoché* or 'suspension of judgement', which involves the conscious exclusion of presuppositions and value judgements in order to be fully and impartially present to the phenomenon in question. Such a method could hardly be dismissed as not even attempting to be neutral. This is not to say that within Religious Studies approaches other than the phenomeno-

5. See, for example, Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), Ch. 1, and Peter Connolly, ed., *Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London and New York: Cassell, 1999), pp. 1-9.

6. See Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (London: Duckworth, 1986), Ch. 10.

logical are not also pursued. There is an ongoing debate about the merits of different methodological approaches to the study of religion but Dennett is apparently unaware of this debate, and certainly does not engage in it.⁷

While stating that he wishes to embark on a neutral scientific enquiry into religion, Dennett compares such an enquiry to the examination of a patient with cancer symptoms (p. 39). He describes religion as 'toxic' (ibid.) and compares it not only to cancer but also to a parasite that has lodged in our brains (p. 4) and to a deadly virus that has infected humanity (p. 45). Elaborating on the latter image, Dennett suggests that respect for religion could be likened to the protective outer shell that conceals the virus from our immune system (ibid.). Given these biases, the reader has good reason for lacking confidence in the avowed 'neutrality' of Dennett's approach!

Let us try to understand where Dennett is coming from. As a scientific materialist, he believes that all phenomena—social, cultural, psychological and religious—can be explained without recourse to anything immaterial. He believes this *because* he is a materialist. This is a basic presupposition of his thinking. As a materialist he is committed to the view that for something to have real existence it must have material existence. And because according to Dennett nothing immaterial exists, it is obvious to him that objective knowledge will consist only of that which can be materially demonstrated or proven by scientific analysis and experiment. If something cannot be demonstrated or proven in this way then for Dennett it will fall outside the scope of objective knowledge. It will be no more than belief. This is why he feels justified in defining religion in terms of belief alone.

There is evidently a problem here. Because Dennett's preferred methodology for the study of religion is one that denies the validity of the premise of religion, namely the existence of a spiritual dimension, the methodology itself precludes the possibility of understanding religion in its own terms. For Dennett, scientific objectivity requires that religious phenomena be understood in terms of *nonreligious* phenomena, for it assumes that only nonreligious (or natural) phenomena have real existence. While Dennett may trumpet his approach as the only truly objective way of studying religion, the problem is

7. For an introduction to the range of approaches, see Connolly, *Approaches to the Study of Religion*.

that it bypasses the *religious* character of religious phenomena. Given that he maintains that all religious phenomena are *really* natural phenomena, we should not be too surprised if he has next to nothing to tell us about religion—which, as it happens, turns out to be the case.

In assuming that methods of investigation that are used in biology will also be applicable to the understanding of religion, Dennett is driven to adopt the pseudo-scientific concept of 'memes' to account for the development and growth of religion via the process of natural selection. The concept of memes, first introduced by Richard Dawkins,⁸ is enthusiastically championed by Dennett. A meme is to be understood as a 'cultural replicator' or 'information packet' that lodges in the human brain, and could include anything from a social convention like shaking hands (p. 81) or a memorable tune (p. 80) to a religious belief (p. 310). It reproduces itself in the cultural sphere in a manner analogous to genetic transmission, subject to selective pressures such as competition from other memes (pp. 120f). The explanatory poverty of the meme concept becomes all too apparent when Dennett attempts to account for such diverse religious phenomena as divination, the origins of religious ritual, the nature of shamanism and the relationship of the priesthood to the kingship in ancient Near Eastern cultures, all of which he discusses with varying degrees of inadequacy. Dennett does not even come near to giving a recognizable account of these religious phenomena, and it is evident that his interest in them is minimal. He does not refer to, and presumably has not studied, the scholarly literature on any of these subjects, and the remarks that he makes only reveal the lamentable level of his ignorance.

Dennett's general theory of the origins of religion shows a similar inadequacy. Because he has not read the scholarly literature, he propounds long-since abandoned theories about the origins of religion akin to those held by Tylor and Frazer in the nineteenth century, apparently unaware that he is doing so. He neither acknowledges these antecedents to his own theory nor does he take into account the counter-arguments, that also belong to a bygone era of Religious Studies. His view, briefly stated, is that spirits and gods are primitive scientific hypotheses to explain puzzling or frightening phenomena.

8. Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), Ch. 11.

These primitive hypotheses are really just fantasies that happened to be more memorable than other fantasies and thus were more successful at surviving and replicating themselves. Dennett has a condescending attitude towards peoples of the past whom he assumes to have had a mentality much like our own, except that they were more stupid and more given to fantasizing. Because he has no conception of the nature of religious experience, he projects the modern secular mentality back in time, as if the chief characteristic of the historical development of human consciousness has consisted in nothing more than a sharpening of the capacity for rational analysis and the perfecting—by trial and error—of the scientific method.

Dennett claims that conceptions of God have changed beyond all recognition since the time of Alexander the Great (p. 206), when (according to him) the conception of God was anthropomorphic. The process of de-anthropomorphizing and intellectualizing the conception of the divine is an example for him of the astonishing proclivity of the God virus to mutate. Dennett clearly has studied neither the history of religion nor the history of philosophy. Non-anthropomorphic conceptions of the divine were current in Greek philosophical circles long before Alexander's time, and Alexander's tutor Aristotle articulated precisely such a conception of divinity. Aristotle's conception was subsequently influential in the medieval Schools, especially on Thomas Aquinas, one of the principal theologians of Roman Catholicism.

Along with the arrogance, prejudice, and woeful ignorance that characterise this book, one further feature should be noted. This is that despite his trenchant materialism, Dennett presents himself as a curiously *religious* atheist. Just like any religious person, he too believes in 'transcendent values' such as truth and justice (p. 376), freedom, beauty and love (p. 305). It is not clear exactly how he understands these values to be transcendent, but the very fact that he affirms them takes him beyond the bounds of a strictly materialist worldview. Far from addressing the incoherence of his position, Dennett further dims his 'brightness' by also referring to these values as 'sacred' (p. 23). He even asserts that the natural world, too, is 'sacred' (p. 245). Most dictionary definitions of the word 'sacred' will tell you that it means 'set apart or dedicated to God': it is a key religious concept.⁹ Whether

9. This definition is from *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary. The Oxford Dictionary* gives (1) 'consecrated to; esteemed especially dear or accessible to a deity'

we interpret Dennett's co-opting of the language of religion as a cynical ploy or simply as a failure of nerve, it would seem that, despite his best efforts to free himself of it, the God virus still has him in its grip.

DELUDED ABOUT GOD

Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion* has a similar aim to Dennett's *Breaking The Spell*. It is to persuade the reader that belief in God is a delusion. By 'delusion' Dawkins means 'persistent false belief held in the face of strong contradictory evidence' (p. 28). It is Richard Dawkins's hope that deluded religious readers who open the book will be atheists when they put it down (*ibid.*). Atheism, he says, is a 'brave and splendid' aspiration. Religion, by contrast, does not deserve the respect that it has been generally accorded. It is not only a 'vice' from which he wishes to encourage his readers to break free (*ibid.*), but it is also a 'virus' that has infected their minds (pp. 216–18)—a view that he shares with Dennett. Like Dennett, Dawkins is on a mission to attack and destroy this mental virus.

I earlier described Dawkins, Dennett and the others (Sam Harris, V. J. Stenger, Christopher Hitchens and so on) as 'militant atheists'. This seems a fair description, as they all regard religion as an enemy to be attacked, and eradicated, without mercy. While the focus of their antagonism is religion in its most fundamentalist forms, it is not just religious fundamentalism that they want to eradicate. Dawkins states:

I decry supernaturalism in all its forms . . . 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 or will be invented. (p. 57)

The scale of Dawkins's campaign is all-out war. He would like to see metaphysics, theology, esotericism and spirituality eliminated, and to establish once and for all that religious questions can and should be answered by materialist science and by materialist science alone (pp. 80–83).

and (2) 'set apart for or dedicated to some religious purpose; made holy by association with a god or other object of worship'. For the centrality of the concept of the sacred to religious discourse, see Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959) and Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1959).

Dawkins writes with a kind of demonic energy. While he is often incisive and willing to sustain a line of rational argument if he feels he is on a winning streak, he also tends to dismiss the more recalcitrant and deeper questions of religion with a passing caustic remark. He is a master of sarcasm, ridicule and mockery. Like Dennett, Dawkins hasn't the patience to enter into meaningful dialogue with religion, or with the religious mentality, to which he is inveterately opposed. We see this in his all too brief consideration of polytheism (in the religions of antiquity rather than contemporary Hinduism, to which Dawkins only briefly refers). He writes with exasperation: 'Life is too short to bother with the distinction between one figment of the imagination and many.' (p. 56)

This is a tactical weakness on his part. He does not get to know his enemy. The consequence is that while many false gods are swept away by his onslaught, the cavalry charge does not reach the real object of his hatred—'the supernatural'.

Dawkins asserts that, as a scientist, he has a 'passionate commitment to evidence' (p. 19), but for him only those phenomena that can be physically analysed—through being weighed, measured, subjected to chemical analysis, or systematically experimented upon—can count as evidence. On this view, personal experience cannot be brought forward as evidence because it is subjective. So, for example, the massive database of personal experiences of the supernatural which has been assembled under the auspices of The Alister Hardy Trust, and which includes Near Death Experiences, telepathy, Out of Body Experiences, etc., would not have the status of *genuine* evidence for Dawkins.¹⁰ Presumably this is why he does not refer to these testimonies of the 'supernatural', even if only to dismiss them with his customary disdain. For Dawkins, unless something can be made into an object of physical analysis, it falls outside the domain of scientific investigation, and thus outside the domain of objective knowledge. For Dawkins only *objects*—that is to say physical objects—can be known 'objectively'. His assumption is that if something is not a physical object, it simply cannot exist. The 'real world' is the physical world, and this excludes the world of 'subjective' experience.

Dawkins does nevertheless discuss arguments for the existence of

10. The database is currently being collated by the Religious Experience Research Centre at the University of Wales, Lampeter.

God from personal experience in a rather brief section (pp. 112–17), in which he dismisses a few randomly selected experiences of the supernatural as either misinterpretations of natural phenomena, which have been blown up out of all relationship to their true cause by the imagination, or else simply as psychotic hallucinations. Nowhere in his book does he touch on the enormous range of religious experiences contained in the literature of shamanism, mysticism and esotericism, which one would have thought he might have wished to rebut. We must assume that he would include shamans, mystics and esotericists under his two categories of the mistaken and the psychotic, as there really is no other category under which they could fall, given his basic premise regarding the nature of reality. One cannot help noticing that, compared to his fulsome diatribes against crackpot fundamentalists, he is oddly silent about the disciplined cultivation of states of consciousness through which those on a spiritual path seek to become aware of another kind of reality than the physical.

Dawkins's silence on this important dimension of religious life stems from his assumption that it is only in the physical sphere that reliable evidence can be gained concerning the nature of reality, for this assumption demands that there is only one valid state of consciousness: that for which the world reveals itself as physical stuff. Dawkins describes himself as a 'philosophical naturalist', that is 'somebody who believes there is nothing beyond the natural, physical world' (p. 35). He quotes with approval Julian Baggini's assertion in *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction*,¹¹ that 'there is only one kind of stuff in the universe and it is physical; out of this stuff come minds, beauty, emotions, moral values—in short the full gamut of phenomena that gives richness to human life' (quoted on p. 34). The latter are, however, to be viewed merely as subjective by-products of the objectively real physical stuff of the universe. For the philosophical naturalist, any claim that there are states of consciousness that reveal an objective non-physical reality clearly cannot be countenanced, for such claims offend against the presupposition that only the state of consciousness which experiences reality as physical is valid. This state of consciousness, crucially for Dawkins, is itself to be understood as nothing more than a manifestation of physical brain processes (p. 209).

11. Julian Baggini, *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Dawkins's philosophical naturalism can be faulted on at least two grounds. First, his view of the status of thought is contradictory. The concepts of philosophical naturalism are clearly not physical stuff. Even if it were possible to correlate specific concepts with specific physical electro-chemical events in the brain, concepts themselves are not *reducible* to any physically observable object or event, for were this the case neurosurgeons operating on the brain would find concepts there. But they do not. So too the laws and principles that operate in the universe, which science has articulated in conceptual and mathematical form, are not physical stuff. They are discovered by human thought, not simply by observation. Dawkins happily refers to these 'fundamental constants' (p. 171), 'laws' and 'by-laws' (p. 173) as if they were completely real, but he is unable to see that as a non-physical component of the universe, just as real as the physical objects that obey them, they totally undermine his materialist assumptions about the nature of reality.

Despite referring to fundamental constants and laws, Dawkins is a relativist, arguing that as a bird has one kind of model of the world, a mole another and a squirrel yet another, so we humans construct only a *model* of the world that suits our creaturely needs (pp. 416f). For the last thirty years, he has advocated the idea that human thoughts are merely units of replication, or 'memes'—an idea which, as we have seen, Daniel Dennett wholeheartedly embraces. Memes are supposed to reproduce themselves in the cultural sphere in a manner analogous to genetic transmission, subject to selective pressures from other memes. On this view, fundamental concepts of science, philosophy and religion—being no more than successful memes—could never claim objective validity, only high survival value. It follows that arguments for or against the existence of God will be settled on the basis of how well they can survive in the face of selective pressures that may not necessarily take the form of rational arguments, but might just as well derive from their emotional appeal, or from the political power of their proponents. This is dangerous thinking, especially in the hands of those who are as emotive and as stridently militant as Dawkins. When it suits him, Dawkins appeals to reason and scientific evidence, as if to champion the idea that there is such a thing as objective truth. But at the same time he holds the radically relativist view that any idea has no more claim to validity than its ability to successfully replicate in the human mind.

Secondly, Dawkins can be faulted on his view of the status of consciousness. Consciousness cannot simply be identified with, or viewed as the by-product of, physical brain processes when knowledge of these brain processes is impossible without a knowing consciousness. The observation of physical brain processes presupposes the consciousness that observes them: without consciousness there can be no knowledge of the brain. The starting point of knowledge is *consciousness*, not the physical phenomena of which consciousness is aware. Dawkins believes his position to be unassailable because philosophical naturalism cannot be contradicted by *the world of physical objects* revealed to the philosophical naturalist's consciousness. He does not see that philosophical naturalism is in reality contradicted by the philosophical naturalist's experience of being conscious of the world of physical objects, because this immediate experience of consciousness *is not itself a physical object*.

In so far as we are self-conscious, thinking beings, the 'supernatural' is an inescapable fact of human experience. Dawkins attempts to escape this fact by not only denying the existence of God, but also the human being, through making us all into mere physical objects. In one of his more rhapsodic passages, he describes human beings as 'chunks of complex matter' capable of thinking, feeling and falling in love with other 'chunks of complex matter' (p. 411). This unlikely behaviour of chunks of matter, he believes, is due to the evolution of the brain, which he describes as an 'on-board computer' (p. 412). While such views are at least consistent with his whole-scale reductionism, they are not based on clear thinking about the nature of human consciousness. Dawkins has not understood that the experience of consciousness—in other words self-consciousness—is of a quite different order from the experience of the physical objects toward which consciousness may or may not be directed. We do not experience ourselves simply as chunks of complex matter, but also as consciousnesses aware of both an external world of physical objects and an inner world of thoughts, feelings, emotions and so on. To deny the reality of this experience is effectively to deny our humanity.

Because Dawkins does not regard the inner life of human beings as real, it is not possible for him to understand that the cultivation of the inner life is the precondition for experiencing levels of reality beyond the 'natural'. This is not to deny that our inner life is interwoven with the physical reality of our brains and nervous systems, but it is to

suggest that human consciousness can become aware of non-physical phenomena that have an objective reality despite our inability to weigh, measure or physically analyse them. The vast inner world of non-physical phenomena has traditionally been the province of religion to navigate, chart and understand. In the twentieth century, scholars of comparative religion such as Henry Corbin and Mircea Eliade, and visionaries such as Rudolf Steiner have, in their different ways, contributed enormously to a modern understanding of this inner dimension, as has also the depth psychology of C. G. Jung. While Dawkins does not mention Corbin, Eliade or Steiner, he does refer just once to Jung, who consistently argued that non-physical, psychic phenomena deserve to be studied with as much scientific rigour as physical phenomena. Instead of engaging seriously with him, Dawkins pours upon Jung the ridicule that throughout the book he accords to those against whom he can't be bothered to argue (p. 74): he has clearly not read him, and that is a shame. But then neither has he read any serious metaphysicians, mystics or esotericists.

Dawkins is apparently unaware of the wide range of philosophical, religious, mystical and esoteric paths concerned with *knowledge* of the spiritual rather than simply belief—from Plato to Tibetan Buddhism, from Sufism to Kabbalah, let alone Jung and anthroposophy. One senses his total indifference to the deeper questions concerning the nature of reality, and his obliviousness of the presence of the 'supernatural' in his midst. Dawkins's conception of God not surprisingly fits snugly into the contours of the pit that he has dug himself into. If God exists, then for Dawkins He must be some kind of object 'out there'. Dawkins's God is crudely conceived as a very big brain, a sort of super-computer (p. 184), because his philosophical naturalist imagination cannot conceive of a consciousness existing that is not linked to some kind of brain. Well might he prefer 'a big bang singularity' or some other 'physical concept' (p. 101). Dawkins's God is a grotesque conception, a materialist parody, and he is right to argue against it. But all through this book, one feels that the author is arguing against parodies generated by his own ill-informed imagination, which are so absurd as to demand that we agree with him. Of course such a God as Dawkins conceives does not exist.

The God Delusion opens the door to all who would like to join Dawkins in his self-created prison of 'philosophical naturalism'. To go through this door is to enter a world in which not only God but also

the human soul is abolished. It is a world in which reality is reduced to nothing more than material processes that are ultimately meaningless. And it is a world in which our spiritual response to the numinous is characterised as nothing more than an 'irrationality mechanism' built into our brains by natural selection (p. 215). Dawkins beckons us in with arguments that seem persuasive, but that are in fact profoundly flawed. His style is slick, his rhetoric is clever, but Dawkins is superficial and, worse than superficial, he is philosophically incoherent. While there is little hope that we might be able to persuade him out of his prison, neither is there any good reason why we should join him there.

In the coming years, the new crusade against God, of which Dennett and Dawkins are the standard-bearers, is likely to intensify. It is also likely to broaden out, for its goal is the radical secularization of thinking, not just in the domain of philosophy, but in every area of human deliberation and decision-making. Already we have unholy alliances of Government and big business moving against traditional methods of food production, alternative medicine, child-centred education and civil liberties. The religious and philosophical questions concerning our conception of God and the nature of the human being are not removed from these assaults in the wider social, economic and political spheres, but are intimately connected to them. It is for this reason essential that we are clear about where we stand philosophically on these questions, the better to prepare ourselves for the present and forthcoming battles over fundamental principles and values.

