

DOES CALLING GOD A SPIRIT MEAN THAT SPIRIT COULD BE A UNICORN OR A TEAPOT?

THE QUESTION

"We are all atheists about most of the gods that societies have ever believed in. Some of us just go one god further,"
Richard Dawkins.

There are countless things you do not passively believe in. There are many things you actively do not believe in such as that politicians care about you. The Christian says they do not passively believe in other gods. They actively do not believe these gods are real. To them only God is real. So they say that to say God alone is real is to deny the existence of the countless gods that people have ever adored. Dawkins would say they are only a hairs breadth from denying God as well and should take that step.

They answer that God as creator of all is not like those other pathetic gods and has good explanatory force. So it is not the same thing.

Is believing in a spiritual God with supernatural powers as bad or silly as believing in any pagan God or witch or unicorn or whatever with supernatural or godlike powers? Or is it worse? We are talking about the idea that dropping belief in God is similar to dropping belief in magical unicorns or fairies or whatever. If it is just a magical belief like them, then those who discard faith in God are in the same camp as those who dismiss magical beings such as unicorns, goblins, ghosts etc except they just go one further. They just drop God. Believers in God are atheists except with one God and the secularists agree with them except that they go a step further and abandon God. Big deal. If you throw away your sweets and have one left then you might as well throw it away as well.

ALISTER MCGRATH V RICHARD DAWKIN'S UNICORN

Page 85 of Alister McGrath's book, *Mere Theology* (SPCK, London, 2010) states that the following argument of Richard Dawkins is wrong. "I do not believe in God. It is an unnecessary belief such as belief in a magical invisible unicorn. The believers in God do not believe in all tales about supernatural entities. I am just going a bit further than them and abandoning God."

So McGrath says it is a mistake to think that God is an alleged object in the universe such as the invisible unicorn. McGrath then implies that God is necessary for accounting for how all things exist and the unicorn is not. He means the unicorn does not explain how things exist or where they came from and God does. He assumes that if there is a unicorn then God made it and that is the explanation but God cannot be explained for he is not a creature like the unicorn. Thus he thinks that God is a more sensible idea than the unicorn and so in a different league.

This overlooks the fact that it is not always irrational or foolish to favour a view that might not seem to be the most sensible. If God is a smarter idea than the unicorn it could still be wrong. If you admit you do not know how all things came to be the unicorn is as good as God.

All you know about God if he is real is that he is non-physical and can command things to appear and they appear. He made all things from his word. That does not rule out God being a non-physical computer or even a unicorn. It says they are possibilities. McGrath in that way overlooks how the unicorn could explain how things exist or where they came from if unicorn is what a God would be.

There are different degrees of rationality. Being a bit irrational does not define you as irrational. If you can be called irrational and believe in God then you can be called rational if you believe in God as in the unicorn instead. You could be a more rational person as you believe in the God-unicorn than you would be if you believed in the standard God.

The claim that God is immune to Dawkins criticism for he is not an object in the universe but its spiritual creator source is actually a red herring. For God to be the source means he has the miraculous power to make the universe from nothing. So the point is not if God is an object in the universe or not but his supernatural powers. God by definition is a spiritual and magical power. Dawkins correctly reasons that if you reject a unicorn with magical powers, just go a step further and reject a God with magical powers. If you reject one magical being why not another?

THE MAGIC

If you say that God makes all things and the unicorn is not God but has magical power then what?

God would be more magical than the unicorn for he is seen as more powerful and maker of all. So God would be a worse idea than a magical unicorn! It is mad to argue that a unicorn is a necessarily ridiculous idea and to say that a God who can make a unicorn is not!

God making all things from nothing is a trick with language. Using nothing to make something is not making. What is happening is that God is telling things to appear and they appear. That is magic.

THEORY

McGrath says the mistake of Dawkins is that God is thought to be an alleged object in the universe such as the invisible unicorn. McGrath says God is not an object in the universe but its source. Think about this. It actually exalts God as in theory. It is saying God as theory matters in itself. Are they wondering how the universe can exist unless there is a God to make it? That is arguing from effect to cause. But why can't God be theorised to exist even if we pretend there is no creation? He should be if he is that important. It turns God into an explanation for the universe instead of God being an explanation for God. We cannot understand how anything can be an explanation for itself. It ends up just being words. Thus any theory will do. It is just as understandable to say a dog explains itself as it is to say a ghost did or a God did.

The fact of the matter is, that though pagans did see their gods as objects in the universe their faith was as much theory as faith in God is. The problem is not about the source but about the theory. And what if pagans argued that though the idea of gods being the source of all has problems those problems do not disprove it for its a mystery?

THE CREATION "EXPLANATION"

Is believing in a spiritual God with CREATOR powers as bad or silly as believing in a spiritual unicorn or witch or whatever with CREATOR powers? Or is it worse?

McGrath thinks that the reason it makes more sense to believe in God than the unicorn is that God explains why the universe exists and the unicorn does not. That is what his source and object talk is all about. He sees God as a source and anything that is not God as an object that exists because of the source.

But God is not really an explanation. We do not know how somebody can make something without using anything. At best for the Christians, we do not know if it is possible. But many of us realise that we do know it is impossible.

The fact that we are here instead of being non-existent does not help. It is like saying that because a rock is on the shore that somebody put it there. We do not know if God creates or makes all things from or out of himself.

We do not know if the idea of spirit - a being with no parts - like God makes sense. We may as well pick a unicorn as an explanation for creation as God!

UNICORN AS CREATOR?

A unicorn creator of all is more comprehensible to us than a Christian God. It would be a better option. God can never be greater to us than how our minds conceive God and the mystery of God. In other words, anything we think God is, is only going to be a guess. We tend to see the unicorn as a magical fictional thing and God as real for that is the way we have been conditioned. We think there is no comparison between God and a supernatural unicorn. But the problem is not that the unicorn is magical but that his existence cannot be proven or disproven. Thus it is in the same category as God. It is not question of myth but a question of knowing one way or the other. So God and the unicorn are in the same boat.

God is too much of a mystery and too unknowable. The unicorn making all things is a better explanation. We have a better idea of what we are talking about then.

IS THE UNICORN OR GOD THE BEST EXPLANATION?

If magic exists, we should not assume that it is more powerful than what it is or assume there is more powerful magic than we need to. God with his infinite power would have infinite magic power so belief in the the unicorn who has limited magic would make more sense.

Magic is making something with something that rationally should not make it. Witches and God casts spells for the magic words make things out of nothing. Infinite magic or limited makes no difference. Magic is magic.

If there is no evidence, logical or otherwise, for God or the unicorn or against them, we can draw some morals from this.

Moral 1 is that our being unable to prove their non-existence does not make it reasonable to assume or believe that they exist.

Moral 2 is that our being unable to prove their non-existence does not make it unreasonable to assume or believe that they don't exist.

Moral 3 is that we cannot prove the non-existence of either but it does not mean that it is equally likely that they exist or do not exist

Moral 4 their non-existence cannot be proven with absolute certainty but the chance of their existing is very small

Moral 5 we must assume their non-existence until suitable evidence for their existence comes along. This assumption is reasonable and needs no defence.

Christians and some philosophers say the morals are correct as regarding the unicorn but that God is a different case. So they take us back to where we started.

We don't need to go back thank you. Spirit could be anything even a unicorn so God could be a unicorn. And magic is magic so you don't need a God of vast and infinite power for magic is able to create without it making any sense anyway. And a God of incredible power is more magical than a unicorn that has enough magic to generate a universe so God is a worse idea.

