Viruses of the mind by richard dawkins

Dawkins is right in thinking that beliefs that are not grounded in empirical evidence or logical argumentation are mind viruses. That is, our conceptof reality (or what is factual) should be grounded in evidence or logic, and religious beliefs simply are not.

Almost without exception, I find that I agree with Dawkins in this matter. I have never encountered anything that proves the claims of religion. When people insist that they know there is a god, further pressing will reveal that they actually only " feel" the existence of god, and in asking for further proof they will most likely say " look around you" or " us humans"-meaning that the existence of life is evidence of a god-which is nothing but begging the question.

Religion does not have much to do with reason. Religion imposes a reality rife with belief and faith, and without requiring reason (it is interesting that the very few people who claim that they can converse with god are labeled as quacks or insane by the very ones who believe in god).

Religion does have much to do with the pressure of conformity; this, among other reasons, is why most people unquestioningly accept and adhere to the religion of their youth. As Dawkins states, "... it is a telling fact that, the world over, the vast majority of children follow the religion of their parents rather than any of the other available religions."

According to Dawkins, a person exhibits faith when he is " impelled by some deep, inner conviction that something is true, or right, or virtuous: a conviction that doesn't seem to owe anything to evidence or reason, but which, nevertheless, he feels as totally compelling and convincing." and that most religions " make a positive virtue of faith's being strong and unshakable, in spite of not being based upon evidence. Indeed, they may

feel that the less evidence there is, the more virtuous the belief." Faith, which is the primary requirement of religion, does not establish any fact, and belief s only act as limiters of knowledge.

A common argument for religion is that it inhibits humans from exhibiting their wilder characteristics, and prevents violence (although this argument does not answer to the claim of religion's irrationality). Looking back at human history, we see that religion has had the opposite effect-it has created extreme violence (notably, in the time of the Inquisition and the Christian crusades). Religion does not unite, but actually divides the peoples of the world and creates unnecessary conflicts. Religion cannot unite Christians, Muslims, etc. because a religion requires that its followers share the same set of beliefs, while the " correctness" of any one set of beliefs cannot be proven; thus, conflict is inevitable. It is only reason that can unite a people, because reason depends on evidence that is available to everyone.

Furthermore, to argue that adhering to reason is just another form of faith is false, because reason has unfailingly been proven reliable by the evidence of my senses. Although it can be argued that our concept of reality exists entirely in our minds (as demonstrated in The Matrix), we must still depend on sensory impressions that we gather from outside. Feelings do not tell us much about reality outside of ourselves, and religion rarely agrees with the evidence of our senses.

Many will choose to stay with their religion for life to have meaning, and this has no bearing with reason either. A chronic gambler will need to believe that he will win in order to keep playing, just a a religious person will need to believe in his religion in order to keep living meaningfully, but these needs

do not correspond with reality. Even if " reality is what we make it," it is what we make it within the bounds of reason. I find that there is no necessity in burdening myself with the charges of religion or any similar ideology. What we have is reason, and that is enough to get by.