

Nietzsche's Challenge

by Dylan Evans

Preface

Reflecting on the French revolution, Alexis de Tocqueville commented:

The French made, in 1789, the greatest effort that has ever been made by any people to sever their history into two parts, so to speak, and to tear open a gulf between their past and their future. In this design, they took the greatest care to leave every trace of their past condition behind them; they imposed all kinds of restraints upon themselves in order to be different from their ancestry; they omitted nothing which could disguise them.

Yet, as de Tocqueville went on to observe, the revolution wasn't quite so revolutionary as it is sometimes made out to be:

I have always fancied that they were less successful in this enterprise than has been generally believed abroad, or even supposed at home. I have always suspected that they unconsciously retained most of the sentiments, habits, and ideas which the old regime had taught them, and by whose aid they achieved the Revolution; and that, without intending it, they used its ruins as materials for the construction of their new society.

One of the main claims in this book is that the same can be said for atheists. Atheists may well take the greatest care to leave every trace of religion behind them; and yet they have been less successful in this enterprise than has generally been believed. Even the most daring atheists have unconsciously retained most of the sentiments, habits, and ideas of the religion they have supposedly left behind. Without intending it, atheists have constructed their purportedly "new" philosophy almost entirely out of building blocks they have stolen from the ruins of religion.

For over a thousand years, human equality, social justice, world peace and community leadership were regarded by most Europeans as core Christian values. These values were all derived directly from the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus. It seems more than a mere coincidence that most European atheists today cherish the very same values. Perhaps I am just naturally suspicious¹, but I can't help raising an eyebrow when I hear these enlightened beings claiming to have independently rederived these values from pure reason and universal ethics. Such a concurrence between pure reason and the New Testament would appear to be almost a miracle in itself.

To be fair, many European atheists have acknowledged their debt to Christianity. Even Richard Dawkins, who seems to pride himself on making the most ill-tempered attacks on the Christian religion, has described himself² occasionally as a "cultural Christian." Yet few atheists seem to realise the devastating consequences that this debt entails for the purported rationality of their secular worldview. If atheists reject the Christian idea of God because they think it is irrational, then they must also reject Christian values - unless, of course, they happen to deduce similar values from entirely rational and non-Christian premises. One or two contemporary atheists - notably Sam Harris - have attempted to perform the latter feat, but (as I will show later) none has succeeded.

The first person to point out the inconsistency of rejecting the Christian God while clinging to Christian values was, of course, Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche regarded this inconsistency as an appalling failure of nerve. The sophisticated bourgeois of late nineteenth century Europe wanted to have his cake and eat it. He wanted to be both enlightened (i.e. an atheist) and respectable (i.e. a champion of human equality, social justice, and world peace). Nietzsche thought this was both cowardly and short-sighted. Cowardly, because it was fear that seemed to prevent the bourgeois from carrying atheism through to its logical

1. The phrasing and thought process in this and the following sentence is borrowed shamelessly from Mencius Moldbug:
<https://unqualifiedreservations.wordpress.com/2007/10/04/how-dawkins-got-pwned-part-2/>

conclusion. And short-sighted, because this compromise also failed to see how thoroughly Christian these values (human equality and so on) really were.

Nietzsche challenged his fellow atheists to rid themselves of every last vestige of Christianity, including all its pusillanimous values, and to construct an entirely new worldview in its place, with an entirely new set of values, untainted by any Christian remnant. It is a central claim of this book that nobody has yet succeeded in meeting Nietzsche's challenge.

What does this failure tell us about ourselves? Does our inability to escape from the religious categories we have inherited from our ancestors mean that we are fundamentally religious creatures, doomed to remain forever in thrall to superstition? Or does it, perhaps, refute the challenge itself, by a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*? Does it, in other words, suggest that Nietzsche was wrong to claim that "God is dead"? Does the poverty of atheism reveal the superabundance of religion?

Chapter One

Beliefs as memes

The term *belief* is one of those deceptively simple terms that proves remarkably hard to analyse. A vast philosophical literature has grown up around this term, and it is not my intention to delve into it here. With apologies to serious philosophers, I will sidestep this debate and content myself with a rather simplistic approach, though it is one that is broadly in line with the contemporary philosophical mainstream. In the terminology of contemporary philosophy, I will adopt a representational approach to belief, according to which a belief is a kind of proposition that plays a certain role in someone's mind. In other words, to say that someone believes that snow is white is to say that there is something like the sentence "snow is white" in that person's mind.

Throughout this book, however, I will generally talk not about beliefs but about memes. A meme is not quite the same thing as a belief, but it is quite similar. The word was coined by the British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins to refer to ideas, behaviours, or styles that can spread from one person to another by means of writing, speech, gestures, rituals, and forms of cultural transmission. Dawkins cites melodies, catchphrases, fashion, and the technology of building arches all as examples of memes.

It should be clear from these examples that memes are not limited to beliefs. A melody is certainly not a kind of belief, but it can be passed on from one person's mind to another by humming it. Most of the memes I will discuss in this book are, in fact, beliefs, but I still prefer to talk about memes because the word has by now become a term of art, and is used by some of the writers whose work I will draw on heavily in what follows.

Some of these writers regard memes as cultural analogues to genes in that they self-replicate, mutate, and respond to selective pressures. Others think the analogy with genes is misleading, and argue that it is more helpful to compare memes with viruses. On this

account, brains are to memes what hosts are to viruses. Memes that propagate less prolifically may become extinct, while others may survive, spread, and (for better or for worse) mutate. Memes that replicate most effectively enjoy more success, and, like certain viruses, some memes may replicate effectively even when they prove to be detrimental to the welfare of their hosts. In other words, beliefs do not have to be true or useful to replicate.

Just because belief in God is a very successful meme does not mean, therefore, that this belief is true, nor that it is necessarily beneficial to the believer. It may be or it may not be; calling it a meme does not entail taking a stand either way on these issues. It merely directs our attention to the evolutionary history of the belief in question.

Menomes and memplexes

Just as the many genes that are found in a single organism together constitute that organism's *genome*, so we may say that the many memes that are found in a single mind together constitute that a kind of *mental genome* or *menome*.

And just as we talk about *the* human genome, so we can also talk about *the* human menome. Both of these concepts are abstractions, as is *the* human body. *The* human body doesn't actually exist anywhere as a tangible physical object. No individual human being ever had a body that looked exactly like the "ideal" body depicted in textbooks of anatomy. The human body depicted by anatomists is a kind of composite formed by averaging over all individual human bodies.

In the same way, the human genome is a composite formed by averaging over all individual human genomes. No individual human possess a genome that is identical in every way to the idealised genome that has been mapped by the Human Genome Project. This abstraction represents the broad parameters within which individual genomes vary.

It is in this sense that we can also talk of the human menome. The human menome doesn't exist in anyone particular head, and nor does it exist as some kind of Platonic form,

“out there” in the world.

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Relate this to the debate between realists and nominalists about universals vs particulars.

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Like genes, certain memes tend to group together. This may result from a variety of causes, the most common of which is that certain ideas are often presented as part of a single package or belief system. For example, the idea that Jesus was the son of God is often presented as part of a single belief system that also includes other ideas such as that Jesus was resurrected three days after he died, and that he later ascended into heaven. This belief system is usually called Christianity.

To use the terminology of the previous section, in which the word *meme* was introduced as an analogous term for *belief*, we may introduce the term *memeplex* as an analogous term for a *belief system*. In both cases, the terms are analogous, and not exact equivalents. The term belief system suggests a fairly complex set of logically related beliefs. A memeplex, on the other hand, may be very simple, consisting of perhaps as little as two or three memes, and there need not be any logical relationship between these memes. In England, it is common to add salt and vinegar to chips (that is, to what the Americans call *French fries*). The two memes <It’s good to add salt to chips> and <It’s good to add **vinegar to chips**> together form a very simple memeplex, but this hardly qualifies as a belief system. The more memes there are in a given memeplex, the more plausible it is to regard it as a belief system. If the memeplex is very large indeed, it may even be appropriate to call it a *worldview*.

Like the gene complexes found in biology, memeplexes are groups of memes that are often found together in the same individual. Like *the human genome*, the term *memeplex* is an abstraction. It is not the case that everyone who ever believed that Jesus was the son of God also believed that Jesus ascended into heaven. Just because the first of these memes is to

be found in someone's menome, it does not necessarily follow that the second will also be found there. Nevertheless, these two memes occur together often enough to regard them as part of the same memeplex - namely, the one we call Christianity.

There may be many different memeplexes in a given menome. The same person may be both a Christian and a socialist. In other words, both the Christian memeplex and the socialist memeplex are to be found in that person's menome.

Not all the memes in a given menome form part of a memeplex. Many, perhaps most, of the beliefs in any given mind stand alone as "free-floating beliefs," unattached to any belief system. My belief that I have a sister called Charlotte is not part of any more comprehensive set of beliefs. To the best of my knowledge, there's no such thing as *Charlottism*.

Memetic phylogeny

Gene complexes evolve. So do memeplexes. And so we may construct family trees for memeplexes, just as we do for gene complexes. In so doing, we can use the same terminology that biologists use when constructing their tree diagrams. It may be helpful to review some of this terminology before proceeding any further.

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1. In biology a **taxon** (plural: *taxa*) is any named group of organisms - eg fish, mammals, primates etc. For the purposes of our discussion here we will define a **memetic taxon** as any named group of **memeplexes** (*not* menomes) - eg feminism. There are many kinds of feminism; when the word is used in the singular it must therefore be understood as referring to all such varieties. Feminism is thus the name of a taxon - namely, the set of memeplexes that include the belief that women deserve to have the same opportunities as men etc.

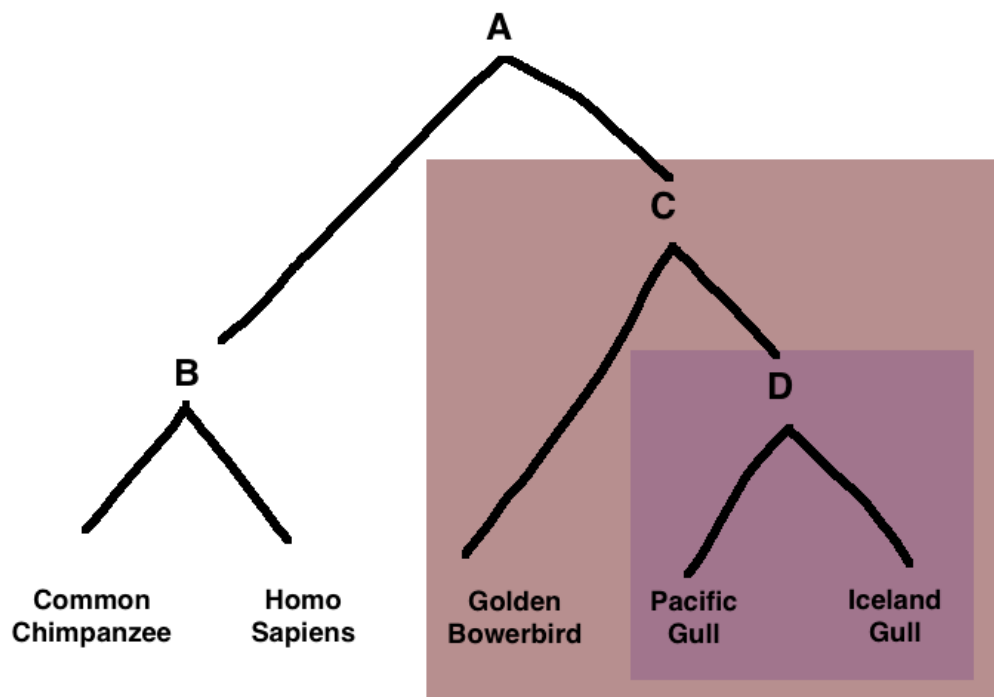
2. A taxon is **monophyletic** when it includes the last common ancestor of all of its members and all of the descendants of that most recent common ancestor.

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I also want to introduce an idea which I will call the **Darwinian principle of naming**. This principle states that the best label for a monophyletic taxon is one that reflect the distinctive nature of the last common ancestor shared by all members in that taxon.

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Let's illustrate all this with a few diagrams....



This diagram represents a fragment of the tree of life. **A** stands for the last common ancestor of all the species at the terminal nodes (Homo Sapiens, Pacific Gull, etc.). This long-extinct species lived some 350 million years ago in terrestrial environments already overrun with plant-life, insects and land-walking amphibians. They were stout ribbed ground-dwelling creatures with slender bodies of about 20 centimeters from nose to tail-tip. They were covered in thick dermal plates and probably resembled certain species of insectivorous

terrestrial lizards that exist today. This was the first vertebrate to lay its eggs on land, as opposed to earlier vertebrates which typically laid their eggs in water. Animals with this trait are referred to by biologists as amniotes. Hence, by the **Darwinian naming system** discussed above, all the species in this diagram count as amniotes. According to this naming system, even humans and chimpanzees count as amniotes, even though neither of these species lay eggs (either in water or on land). Laying eggs on land is an ancestral trait of all amniotes. Various species of amniote no longer possess this trait, but they are still classed as amniotes because they are members of the monophyletic group that includes all the species that do lay their eggs on land.

By the same principle, humans and chimpanzees are both classified as great apes, since they are members of the same monophyletic group whose last common ancestor is designated by the letter B in the diagram.

Again by the same principle, all the species contained within the lighter-shaded box, including C, D, the golden bowerbird, the Pacific gull, and the Iceland gull, are all classed as birds, because they are members of the same monophyletic group whose last common ancestor is designated by the letter C, which stands for whichever species is the last common ancestor of all birds (the *Urvogel*). And all the species contained within the darker-shaded box (D, the Pacific gull, and the Iceland gull) are all gulls.

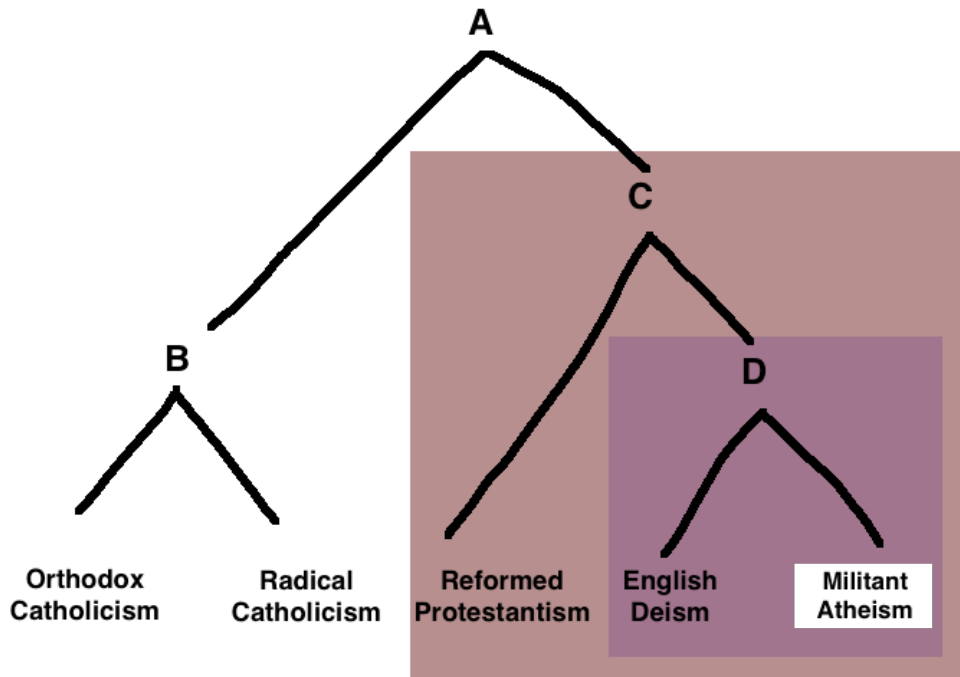
There was a time when people were reluctant to call regard humans as apes, even when they accepted that humans are descended from apes. Nowadays, however, the Darwinian naming is largely accepted in biology. The same cannot be said of the history of ideas. To see what I mean, let's try to trace the ancestry of a particular variety of atheism that I will call **Militant Atheism**.

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What do I mean by the term Militant Atheism? [Give an outline of Militant Atheism in this section]

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The diagram below is a rough outline of the ancestry of the curious memeplex that I'm calling Militant Atheism.



This diagram represents a fragment of the tree of human memeplexes. **A** stands for the last common ancestor of all the species at the terminal nodes (Orthodox Catholicism, Militant Atheism, etc). This long-extinct species lived some 500 years ago in Western Europe. Historians generally refer to it as Medieval Latin Christianity. Hence, by the **Darwinian naming system** discussed above, all the species in this diagram count as forms of Medieval Latin Christianity. According to this principle, even Militant Atheism is a form of Medieval Latin Christianity, even though it lacks many of the ancestral traits characteristic of its religious forebear, such as belief in the Christian God and in the existence of heaven and hell. Various species of Medieval Latin Christianity no longer possess these traits, but they are still classed as forms of Medieval Latin Christianity because they are members of the monophyletic group that includes all the species descended from **A**.

By the same principle, all the species contained within the lighter-shaded box,

including C, D, Reformed Protestantism, English Deism, and Militant Atheism, should all be classed as forms of Calvinism, because they are members of the same monophyletic group whose last common ancestor is designated by the letter C , which stands for Calvinism. And all the species contained within the darker-shaded box (D, English Deism, and Militant Atheism) are forms of deism because they are members of the same monophyletic group whose last common ancestor is designated by the letter D , which stands for deism.

Just as there was a time when people were reluctant to regard humans as apes, even when they accepted that humans are descended from apes, so there may be many people today who are reluctant to regard Militant Atheism as a form of Christianity. Yet just as the Darwinian naming system is nowadays largely accepted in biology, it is to be hoped that it may also soon become commonplace in the history of ideas.

To be more precise, we may regard Militant Atheism as a form of **nontheistic Christianity**³. Now, some people may object to this way of speaking, on the grounds that belief in God is an essential component in the Christian belief system. Yet this is to adopt a distinctively *non-Darwinian* naming system - one which defines taxa, not in terms of their ancestry, but in terms of some supposedly essential traits. Let's call this the **Linnaean naming system**. If we adopt a Linnaean approach, we might define birds as, say, *flying creatures with feathers*. This definition takes flight and feathers to be regarded essential traits of birds. The ability to fly and the possession of feathers are both necessary conditions for something to be a bird. According to this approach, if a creature can't fly, it can't be a bird. Ergo, penguins are not birds. For various reasons, biologists no longer think it's useful to define species in this way. I am suggesting here that historians of ideas should follow biologists in this respect.

If you accept my suggestion, and adopt a Darwinian naming system when discussing the history of ideas, it makes perfect sense to regard Militant Atheism as a form of nontheistic

3. I owe this term to Mencius Moldbug:

Christianity. As Mencius Moldbug argues⁴:

The concept of *nontheistic Christianity* is not, as most readers would probably assume at first glance, self-contradictory or meaningless. This is very easy to see. In the biological analogy, *nontheistic Christianity* is a phrase in the same class as *flightless bird* or *bipedal tetrapod*. The adjective in this phrase is morphological, the noun is taxonomic. There is no contradiction at all.

Penguins are birds because they are members of the same monophyletic group whose last common ancestor was also a bird. This ancestral species could fly, but some of its descendants lost the ability to fly, and the penguin is descended from one such lineage. It is therefore rightly regarded as a kind of flightless bird. In the same way, the term *nontheistic Christianity* can describe any tradition in the Christian clade in which the ancestral God theme has been replaced by the derived theme of atheism or agnosticism.

Note the similarity between this approach to the history of ideas and what Nietzsche called **genealogy**, as in *The Genealogy of Morals*.

<https://unqualifiedreservations.wordpress.com/2007/10/04/how-dawkins-got-pwned-part-2/>
4. <https://unqualifiedreservations.wordpress.com/2007/10/04/how-dawkins-got-pwned-part-2/>

Chapter Two

Independent origins

See John Gray - *Seven Kinds of Atheism* (2018)

What origins have in common

In each atheist tradition, the first atheist is a lone mutant in a community of believers.

It follows from this that it is impossible to be a “naive atheist.” Those who claim to be naive atheists are being disingenuous - eg. Jonathan Miller.

How origins differ

The importance of phylogeny in atheism. This follows from the previous remarks about the “osmotic” acquisition of most beliefs.

Why this matters - because the considerations discussed in the chapter on Changing your mind suggest that many (perhaps most) of the surrounding beliefs, which are thoroughly Christian, may remain in the atheist memplex long after deletion of the God-meme, undisturbed by this change and unreflectively adhered to, even when they depended on the God-meme for their logical support. Like the fine hair on human forearms, an aspect of our chimpanzee ancestry that we have retained long after deleting/modifying many other aspects of this ancestry.

This idea lies at the heart of Nietzsche’s challenge. Various thinkers have written about this idea in recent years, including:

1. Douglas Murray
2. Charles Taylor

3. Curtis Jarvin
4. John Gray

Nietzsche was the first to notice this, and to recognise its importance.

Christianity without God

The Christian phylogeny of the following belief systems is clear from their retention of many Christian ancestral traits:

1. Liberal humanism (eg. US constitution)
2. Jungian psychoanalysis
3. Marxism (eg. USSR, China today)
4. Militant Atheism

As explained above, if we adopt a Darwinian naming system when discussing the history of ideas we must regard all these four belief systems as forms of Christianity. To be more precise, we may regard them as forms of **nontheistic Christianity**

Chapter Three

Let's look at one particular kind of atheism that has received a lot of attention in the past few decades. I'll call it **Militant Atheism**.

This kind of atheism originated as a mutation in a very specific kind of Christianity - namely, the kind promulgated by the English Dissenters of the seventeenth century.

Let's try to reconstruct the phylogeny of Militant Atheism by looking at some of its most important ancestors and the traits that it has derived from them:

1. Medieval Latin Christianity (ca 1500)
1. English Puritanism (ca 1630)
2. English Dissenters (ca 1650)
3. English Deism (ca 1700)

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In tracing this phylogeny I have drawn heavily on the work of Charles Taylor and Mencius Moldbug.

Medieval Latin Christianity

Now let's trace this phylogeny in more detail, looking at each species in turn. I'm going to identify the memplex that I'm calling Medieval Latin Christianity (henceforth MLC) with a type species that existed around 1500 AD. MLC was a complex memplex, consisting of hundreds of memes, and I have no intention of attempting to list all of them. Instead, I have selected eighteen of those that are most relevant to the discussion here. These are listed in the box below:

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| Memplex1: Medieval Latin Christianity (ca 1500) |
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1. God exists.
2. God intervenes in human history
3. After they die, some humans will go to a place called heaven and others will go to a place called hell.
4. Acceptance of anti-structure
5. Equality of all humans
6. Sharing (fair distribution of goods)
7. Fraternalism (the universal brotherhood of man)

Let's say a few words about these memes.

Meme 1: The existence of God

Meme 2: Providence

Meme 3: Heaven and Hell

Meme 4: Anti-structure

Meme 5: Equality

Meme 6: Sharing

Meme 7: Fraternalism

It was virtually impossible for atheism to gain a foothold in Western Europe as long as MLC remained the dominant memplex . A number of seismic shifts in the ideological landscape had to occur before it became remotely plausible for to deny the existence of God. These shifts, which will be outlined in the following sections, involved a series of mutations in the

MLC memeplex whose cumulative effect was to render disbelief in God in 1800 a far less threatening idea than it would have been three centuries before.

For an inhabitant of Europe in 1500 to contemplate a world without God would have been utterly devastating. It would have called into question a large number of ideas that gave his life meaning and purpose, including not only belief in the afterlife, but also a whole host of ideas and practices related to life in this world, such as the values of **sharing** and **fraternism** and the many rituals and customs that structured his everyday life.

The role played by belief in God (meme 1) in the MLC memeplex was akin to the role played by the keystone at the apex of a vault. The keystone locks all the other stones in the vault into position, allowing the vault to bear weight. Remove the keystone, and the whole edifice crumbles.

Or, to employ a different metaphor, the God meme occupied a place in the MLC memeplex analogous to that occupied by the figure of Jesus in *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci. Imagine that, each night, a painter sneaks into the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie and alters a small detail here and there, but without ever touching the figure of Jesus. Over the course of several months, the apostles are gradually transformed into the leading figures of the French Revolution: Peter becomes Danton, Judas becomes Napoleon, and Simon the Zealot becomes Robespierre. Eventually, Jesus will look rather out of place.

In the same way, the Protestant Reformation gave rise to a lineage of memeplexes that culminated in a worldview in which God looked equally incongruous. This worldview was English Deism, which thus served as a the vital precursor to Militant Atheism. Just as human beings could not have evolved directly from the shrew-like animal that was probably the first mammal, but only via a long series of intermediate species, each of which differed only slightly from the previous one, so Militant Atheism could not have sprung fully-formed from the womb of Medieval Latin Christianity, but required a number of intermediate steps before it could become even remotely conceivable.

That most of these intermediate steps occurred principally in England is a remarkable phenomenon in itself. If Israel was the womb of monotheism, then England has a strong claim to be the womb of atheism, or at least of the kind of atheism that predominates today. It is perhaps no accident that the most famous contemporary atheist is an Englishman, nor that today England is one of the most secular countries on earth.

English Puritanism

English Puritanism is distinguished from MLC by, among other things, a mutation in meme 4, which changes from an acceptance of anti-structure into a rage for order.

Memplex 2: English Puritanism (ca 1630)

1. God exists.
2. God intervenes in human history
3. After they die, some humans will go to a place called heaven and others will go to a place called hell.
4. Rage for order
5. Equality of all humans
6. Sharing (fair distribution of goods)
7. Fraternalism (the universal brotherhood of man)

What do I mean by “a rage for order”?

English Dissenters

The English Dissenter tradition is distinguished from English Puritanism by a mutation in meme 3 which removes hell as a possible destination in the afterlife. According to this new belief, *everyone* will go heaven in the end:

Memplex 3: English Dissenters (ca 1650)

1. God exists.
2. God intervenes in human history
3. After they die, all humans will go to a place called heaven
4. Rage for order
5. Equality of all humans
6. Sharing (fair distribution of goods)
7. Fraternalism (the universal brotherhood of man)

How did this come about?

English Deism

English Deism is distinguished from the English Dissenter Tradition by a mutation in meme 2 according to which God is no longer seen as deeply interested and involved in human history:

Memplex 4: English Deism (ca 1700)

1. God exists.
2. God does not intervene in human history
3. After they die, all humans will go to a place called heaven
4. Rage for order
5. Equality of all humans
6. Sharing (fair distribution of goods)
7. Fraternalism (the universal brotherhood of man)

How did this change come about?

Militant Atheism

Militant Atheism is distinguished from English Deism by a mutation in meme 1 that substitutes disbelief for belief in God.

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It also involves a mutation in meme 3, in which belief in universal salvation is replaced by disbelief in an afterlife of any kind. But does universalism still persist in some kind of vestigial form in Militant Atheism?

Memplex 5: Militant Atheism (ca 1770)

1. God does not exist
2. God does not intervene in human history
3. There is no life after death
4. Rage for order
5. Equality of all humans
6. Sharing (fair distribution of goods)

7. Fraternalism (the universal brotherhood of man)

The switch to atheism (that is, the mutation in meme 1) was much easier in the context of English Deism than it would have been in the context of MLC.

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Derived traits in Militant Atheism:

1. Equality of all humans (derived from MLC)
2. Sharing /fair distribution of goods (derived from MLC)
3. Fraternism (derived from MLC)
4. Rage for order (derived from ENGLISH PURITANS)
5. Something akin to universalism (derived from ENGLISH DISSENTERS)

Fear and loathing in Militant Atheism

The particular hatred that certain atheists feel for Islam betrays the Christian ancestry of their atheism. The Islamophobia that may be observed in Militant Atheism, for example, is clearly an ancestral trait inherited from the common ancestor that it shares with contemporary Catholicism clade (this is a large clade group). This trait has undergone little change since it first appeared in the seventh century AD. It is yet another synapomorphy, to be added to those listed in the previous section, such as anticlericalism and pacifism.

We may also add to this list another kind of loathing that is present in Militant Atheism; namely, a loathing for Catholicism. Like Islamophobia this is also probably a derived trait, though this time from a more recent common ancestor than that which Militant Atheism shares with the other members of the Puritanism clade. In this case, the ancestors in question are the Puritans. There are certainly times when Professor Dawkins and his fellow travellers sound remarkably similar to a Puritan denouncing “those scheming Papists.”

Nietzsche's challenge restated

What exactly is Nietzsche's challenge, then? Nietzsche argued that Militant Atheism was, in a sense, not militant enough. By focusing all its attention on the God meme, it had unwittingly conserved many other ancestral Christian memes. The atheist revolution was incomplete.

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Nietzsche's challenge focused on two broad areas of the ancestral Christian memplex:

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1. Ethics
2. Meaning of life.

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This book is concerned mainly with the second of these two areas. The next section of the book explores several different responses to the second part of Nietzsche's challenge. Before we embark on this survey, however, I will say some brief words about the responses to the first part of Nietzsche's challenge.

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There are, broadly speaking, three main ways in which atheists have tended to respond to the first part of Nietzsche's challenge:

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1. Kantian deontology
2. Utilitarianism
3. Classical revival
 - Aristotelian ethics (Alisdair MacIntyre)
 - Neo-Stoicism (Ryan Holliday and others)