



## **Richard Dawkins**

### **Evolutionary biologist**

Richard Dawkins is a British ethologist, evolutionary biologist and popular science writer who has broadened our understanding of the genetic origin of our species and has helped lay readers understand complex scientific concepts.

## **Richard's biography**

### **About Richard Dawkins**

He holds the Charles Simonyi Chair for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University. Dawkins is an atheist and [humanist](#), a Vice President of the British Humanist Association and supporter of the Brights movement. He is well known for his criticism of creationism and intelligent design. He first came to prominence with his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*, which popularised the gene-centered view of evolution and introduced the term meme into the lexicon, helping found memetics. He defines the concept of meme as a self-replicating unit of culture – an idea, a chain letter, a catchy tune, an urban legend — which is passed person-to-person, its longevity based on its ability to lodge in the brain and inspire transmission to others. The concept of memes has itself proven highly contagious, inspiring countless accounts and explanations of idea propagation in the information age. In his 1986 book *The Blind Watchmaker*, he argued against the watchmaker analogy, an argument for the existence of a supernatural creator based upon the complexity of living organisms. Instead, he described evolutionary processes as analogous to a blind watchmaker. His ideas laid out in *The Selfish Gene* were further fleshed out in *The Extended Phenotype*: the rather radical notion that Darwinian selection happens not at the level of the individual, but at the level of our DNA. The implication: We evolved for only one purpose — to serve our genes. In his 2006 book *The God Delusion*, Dawkins contends that a supernatural creator almost certainly does not exist and that religious faith is a delusion—a fixed false belief. As of January 2010 the English-language version has sold more than two million copies and had been translated into 31 languages,

making it his most popular book to date.

In recent years, Dawkins has become outspoken in his atheism, coining the word “bright” (as an alternate to atheist), and encouraging fellow non-believers to stand up and be identified.

He makes regular television and radio appearances and has been referred to in the media as “Darwin’s Rottweiler”, a reference to English biologist T. H. Huxley, who was known as “Darwin’s Bulldog” for his advocacy of Charles Darwin’s evolutionary ideas.

## Richard's talks

- **Arguing with Religion**

Richard Dawkins urges non-religious people into commandeering actions in his atheism belief speech. The debate between creationism and atheism has propelled society to diverge into two secular belief groups, with atheism perceived as an amoral belief group. In his atheism belief speech, Dawkins says that the reason for the disagreements between the two groups are based on non-scientific prejudice placed upon atheism by creationist. Creationism is a tool that politicians and people with power use to forward their own political agenda according to Dawkins. Dawkins implores atheists to make their beliefs more public and battle the constant integration of religion in politics and education. Religion holds a detrimental facet to it that constantly restrains the progressive nature of society according to Dawkins.

- **How Science Informs Morality**

Richard Dawkins talks about the way in which science helps to inform moral decision-making in this science and morality speech. While Dawkins points out that scientists don’t typically set out to settle moral debates, he does believe that scientific facts can help inform people so that they can better decide what is moral. Dawkins uses abortion as an example in this speech. Abortion is a moral hot topic because some individuals wouldn’t consider an unborn fetus to be a person, while others would. Dawkins says that a scientist could tell people at what point a fetus develops a nervous system, which without a doubt makes it a human being. Dawkins also discusses evolution and the ancestors of humans. He claims that when one considers that evolution is a proven fact, it gets harder to separate one species from another because humans evolved from apes. If one can’t separate apes from humans it gets harder to justify placing human life above animal life in terms of importance.

- **Disputing the Idea of Immortality**

In this immortality speech, Richard Dawkins disputes the idea of living forever through medical advancements. While Dawkins acknowledges that this is not currently an issue, he predicts that as time goes on people will look for ways to prolong life by hundreds of years. Dawkins knocks the idea of living forever because he claims that it’s irresponsible. It calls for a cease in birth rates, which have showed no signs of slowing. The more living people there are on Earth, the more resources will be needed, so over-population would quickly become an issue. Dawkins also points out that it would be rather selfish to tell people to stop having children so that others could live forever. This topic may seem a little bit like science fiction, but Dawkins believes that this is something that many people are intrigued by. Perhaps that’s because people have an inherent fear their own mortality.

- **The Science of Leisure Time**

This leisure keynote by Richard Dawkins offers a most impressive defense for the use of social activity that would otherwise be deemed useless.

Dawkins agrees that things like poetry and belly dancing are difficult to make a case for as useful contributors for human survival. But he feels that the brain that is capable of participating in such will not only be able to perform other tasks, but will also attract the opposite sex. His leisure keynote brings up a sexual choice theory in which is exemplified by the mind being the equivalent to a peacock's tail. Potential mates think 'clever is sexy' and those with big brains can 'remember epic poetry' to impress them.

Speakers Associates Ltd | +44 (0)1628 636600 | [info@speakersassociates.com](mailto:info@speakersassociates.com) | [www.speakersassociates.com](http://www.speakersassociates.com)