St. Gregory of Nyssa:

“Concepts create idols; only wonder comprehends anything. People kill one another over idols. Wonder makes us fall to our knees.”

Dawkin's Selfish Gene Fallacy-False Premise "limited form of altruism"

Dawkins says that his "purpose" in writing The Selfish Gene is "to examine the biology of selfishness and altruism." He does this by supporting the claim that "gene selfishness will usually give rise to selfishness in individual behaviour. However, as we shall see, there are special circumstances in which a gene can achieve its own selfish goals best by fostering a limited form of altruism at the level of individual animals." Gene selection provides one explanation for kin selection and eusociality, where organisms act altruistically, against their individual interests (in the sense of health, safety or personal reproduction), namely the argument that by helping related organisms reproduce, a gene succeeds in "helping" copies of themselves (or sequences with the same phenotypic effect) in other bodies to replicate. The claim is made that these "selfish" actions of genes lead to unselfish actions by organisms.

Although Dawkins agrees that groups can assist survival, they rank as a "vehicle" for survival only if the group activity is replicated in descendants, recorded in the gene, the gene being the only true replicator. An improvement in the survival lottery for the group must improve that for the gene for sufficient replication to occur.
"We can now see that the organism and the group of organisms are true rivals for the vehicle role in the story, but neither of them is even a candidate for the replicator role. The controversy between ‘individual selection’ and ‘group selection’ is a real controversy between alternative vehicles...." —Richard Dawkins, The Selfish Gene, pp. 254-255 (Wikipedia)

Dawkins Fallacy – False Premise

The statement, “However, as we shall see, there are special circumstances in which a gene can achieve its own selfish goals best by fostering a limited form of altruism at the level of individual animals." Is a fallacy/false premise Historically, compassion and self-less behaviors are not a "limited form of altruism." Right off the bat, in one day in the WWI Battle of the Somme, there were 50,000 casualties in the British army. – 50,000 casualties in one day is not a “limited form of altruism”

Scientifically, the Oxford Handbook on Compassion observes, “Compassion for others and social support have survival value and health benefits....(p. 171) The powerful consequences of the presence or absence of others are seen as shaping forces in the evolution. Social interactions and within species interdependence are universal components of life on earth. Even bacteria are more reproductively successful in the presence of others of their own species.

1. Historically, Compassion is not a "limited form of altruism."

As a point of order, I would add: Jesus Christ taught were the two great commandments. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. “This is the first and great commandment. “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

a. In 1950, Mother Teresa founded the Missionaries of Charity, a Roman Catholic religious congregation that had over 4,500 nuns and was active in 133 countries as of 2012. The congregation manages homes for people who are dying of HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis. It also runs soup kitchens, dispensaries, mobile clinics, children's and family counselling programmes, as well as orphanages and schools. Members take vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, and also profess a fourth vow – to give "wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor." (Wikipedia)
b. Ludwig Philipp Albert Schweitzer OM (German: 14 January 1875 – 4 September 1965) was an Alsatian-German[3] polymath. He was a theologian, organist, musicologist, writer, humanitarian, philosopher, and physician. A Lutheran minister, Schweitzer challenged both the secular view of Jesus as depicted by the historical-critical method current at this time, as well as the traditional Christian view. His contributions to the interpretation of Pauline Christianity concern the role of Paul's mysticism of "being in Christ" as primary and the doctrine of Justification by Faith as secondary.

He received the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize for his philosophy of "Reverence for Life",[4] becoming the eighth Frenchman to be awarded that prize. His philosophy was expressed in many ways, but most famously in founding and sustaining the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Lambaréné, which up to 1958 was situated in French Equatorial Africa, and after this in Gabon. As a music scholar and organist, he studied the music of German composer Johann Sebastian Bach and influenced the Organ Reform Movement (Orgelbewegung). (Wikipedia)

c. How Many Caregivers in the U.S.?

Approximately 43.5 million caregivers have provided unpaid care to an adult or child in the last 12 months. [National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. (2015). Caregiving in the U.S.]

About 34.2 million Americans have provided unpaid care to an adult age 50 or older in the last 12 months. [National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. (2015). Caregiving in the U.S.]

The majority of caregivers (82%) care for one other adult, while 15% care for 2 adults, and 3% for 3 or more adults. [National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. (2015). Caregiving in the U.S.]

Gender 65% of care recipients are female, with an average age of 69.4. The younger the care recipient, the more likely the recipient is to be male. 45% of recipients aged 18-45 are male, while 33% of recipients aged 50 or higher are male. [National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. (2015). Caregiving in the U.S.]

4. The genetic and environmental origins of emotional and cognitive empathy: Review and meta-analyses of twin studies Lior Abramsona Florina Uzefovskyb Virgilia Toccacelic Ariel Knafo-Noama

Empathy is considered a cornerstone of human social experience, and as such has been widely investigated from psychological and neuroscientific approaches. To better understand the factors influencing individual differences in empathy, we reviewed and meta-analyzed the behavioral genetic literature of emotional empathy- sharing others’ emotions (k=13), and cognitive empathy- understanding others’ emotions (k = 15), as manifested in twin studies. Results showed that emotional empathy is more heritable, 48.3 % [41.3 %-50.6 %], than cognitive empathy, 26.9 % [18.1 %-35.8 %]. Moreover, cognitive empathy as examined by performance tests was affected by the environment shared by family members, 11.9 % [2.6 %-21.0 %], suggesting that emotional understanding is influenced, to some degree, by environmental factors that have similar effects on family members beyond their genetic relatedness. The effects of participants’ age and the method used to asses empathy on the etiology of empathy were also examined. These findings have implications for understanding how individual differences in empathy are formed. After discussing these implications, we suggest theoretical and methodological future research directions that could potentially elucidate the relations between genes, brain, and empathy.

5. Compassion: From the Oxford Handbook on Compassion: Compassion for others and social support have survival value and health benefits....(p. 171) The powerful consequences of the presence or absence of others are seen as shaping forces in the evolution. Social interactions and within species interdependence are universal components of life on earth. Even bacteria are more reproductively successful in the presence of others of their own species. The sophisticated expression of or full expression of compassion depends on cognitive processes and cortical capacities that are unique to humans.....(p.174) The desire to help others can be elicited by stimuli such as witnessing pain in others. For some, but
not all, individuals, these kinds of stimuli have an inherent capacity to induce an autonomic and sense of distress... (p. 184) (Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science – edited by Emma M. Seppala, Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Stephanie L. Brown, Monica C Worline, C. Daryl Cameron, James R. Dory)

6. Excerpts from Sprecher and Fehr article: Those who were more religious or spiritual experienced more compassionate love than those who were less religious or spiritual. Evidence was found that compassionate love is distinct from empathy (p. 629)

As hypothesized, religiosity and spirituality were associated positively with compassionate love both for close others (friends, family) and for humanity (strangers). However, religiosity and spirituality were uncorrelated with compassionate love for a specific close other (Study 3). Thus, although we can conclude that those who are more religious and spiritual report experiencing greater compassionate love, our data point to a more finely grained conclusion. To the extent that spirituality motivates compassionate love (and we recognize that the causal direction may be otherwise), it is strangers and humanity who are likely to be the recipients. (p. 646)

Compassionate love for close others and humanity Susan Sprecher Illinois State University Beverley Fehr University of Winnipeg Journal of Social and Personal Relationships 22(5)

7. Battle of Somme and Group related Instincts “The Battle of the Somme, also known as the Somme offensive, was a battle of the First World War fought by the armies of the British Empire and French Third Republic against the German Empire. It took place between 1 July and 18 November 1916 on both sides of the upper reaches of the Somme, a river in France. The battle was intended to hasten a victory for the Allies. More than three million men fought in the battle and one million men were wounded or killed, making it one of the deadliest battles in human history.

The 57,470 casualties suffered by the British, including 19,240 killed, were the worst in the history of the British Army. Most of the British casualties were suffered on the front between the Albert–Bapaume road and Gommecourt to the north, which was the area where the principal German defensive effort (Schwerpunkt) was made. The battle became notable for the importance of air
power and the first use of the tank in September but these were a product of new
technology and exceedingly unreliable.” (From Wikipedia):

I believe most would agree that 57,470 casualties in one day does NOT fit in Dawkins category of a “limited form of altruism”

8. Esprit de corps, the unspoken bond between soldiers and the Battle of Chosin Reservoir

American military leaders, including General Douglas MacArthur, were caught off guard by the entrance of the People’s Republic of China, led by Mao Zedong, into the five-month-old Korean War. Twelve thousand men of the First Marine Division, along with a few thousand Army soldiers, suddenly found themselves surrounded, outnumbered and at risk of annihilation at the Chosin Reservoir, high in the mountains of North Korea. The Battle of Chosin Reservoir is perhaps the hardest fought battle in American history was the Battle of Chosin Reservoir during the Korean War. “On 27 November 1950, the Chinese force surprised the US X Corps commanded by Major General Edward Almond at the Chosin Reservoir area. A brutal 17-day battle in freezing weather soon followed. Between 27 November and 13 December, 30,000 United Nations Command troops (later nicknamed "The Chosin Few") under the field command of Major General Oliver P. Smith were encircled and attacked by about 120,000 Chinese troops.” The Marines fought in rugged mountain terrain for 17 long days in the bitterest Korean winter cold in memory. Frostbite was a common problem. Marines who fought at the Chosin Reservoir Battle would say that the cold was so penetrating that it “would sink right to your bones.

Though surrounded and encircled and in spite of being attacked constantly, ceaselessly, and without pause the Marines and Army units managed to hold together and fight their way out of the Chinese encirclement to the embarkment point at Hungnam – in spite of the fact that the main road connecting the Chosin Reservoir and the city of Hungnam quality was poor, and at times it was only a one lane gravel trail. At the end, 836 Marines had died and roughly 10,000 marines had been wounded. The Army fared worse with 2,000 dead with 1,000 wounded. Reports indicated that the Chinese losses were catastrophic and that six complete Chinese divisions were totally destroyed. Some analysts estimate Chinese losses
anywhere from 30,000 to 80,000 killed. When the marine guard got to the extraction point, they sang the marine anthem.

Several military documentaries show soldiers who often say they were not fighting for apple pie, or mom and country, but they were fighting for their "buddies" and fellow soldiers. Obviously, there is an unspoken and nonverbal bond and attachment between people. This bond is the fundamental characteristic – or nucleus – of social consciousness. The other point here is that a “mode of thought is not a “philosophical discussion,” but a very active “force” that shapes peoples’ motivations, drives, and behaviors into a coherent worldview.

Reflections and Commentary: St. Gregory of Nyssa: “Making an idol of God”

First, I should highlight the fact that, in the book, Life of Moses, St. Gregory emphatically points out that “…every concept formed by our understanding which attempts to attain and to them in the divine nature serves only to make an idol of God, not to make God known”. ~ from “The Life of Moses.” I feel I should add that abstractions – especially in ideologies such as communism, capitalism have shown historically to have a distinct downside and some negative consequences – as well as conceptualization in modern Christianity in my view - such as the politicization of Christ.

Academics are often way too fond of abstractions. Dawkins and others get into some really contorted argumentation. “He [Dawkins] does this by supporting the claim that "gene selfishness will usually give rise to selfishness in individual behaviour.” In the Battle of Somme in WWI the British suffered over 57,000 casualties in a single day. A rather common sense and elementary deduction would be that there are genes that enable the creation and maintenance of groups. “However, as we shall see, there are special circumstances in which a gene can achieve its own selfish goals best by fostering a limited form of altruism at the level of individual animals.” 57,000 casualties in a day are not “limited.”

Besides thousands and thousands of years of history which demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt that human beings are social – or group – “animals, there are laboratory experiments which show that there are brain processes that
demonstrate that human beings are group animals and that would be the ingroup-outgroup syndrome – which has been proven time and gain that group related brain processes are built into the human brain and mind. When you have over 57,000 casualties in a single day, the “altruism question” shouldn’t even come up. A biology PhD did say that generally biologists don’t think very highly of Dawkins. An analogy might be that Dawkins is explaining to women, who are mothers of numerous children, that she can’t get pregnant.

Compassion for others and social support have survival value and health benefits....(p. 171) The powerful consequences of the presence or absence of others are seen as shaping forces in the evolution. Social interactions and within species interdependence are universal components of life on earth. Even bacteria are more reproductively successful in the presence of others of their own species. The sophisticated expression of or full expression of compassion depends on cognitive processes and cortical capacities that are unique to humans.....(p.174)

The desire to help others can be elicited by stimuli such as witnessing pain in others. For some, but not all, individuals, these kinds of stimuli have an inherent capacity to induce an autonomic and sense of distress...(p. 184) (Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science – edited by Emma M. Seppala, Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Stephanie L. Brown, Monica C Worline, C. Daryl Cameron, James R. Dory)

The Selfish gene argument is an empty argument – just like the materialist arguments

Postscript: Materialism is a mindset

Excerpt from a mini essay which went viral - 80,000 views without a single criticism

“Why stay in prison when the door is open!” Rumi

John Bargh filtering and the materialist problem in a nutshell

What Bargh's mini-essay on filtering and attention indicates is that the filtering process - as Mannheim/Maimones points out is so strong that it does skew the orientation of people.
John Bargh, a research and psychologist of the unconscious, observes, “When I was about twelve years old, we had a big family reunion and I decided to bring a tape recorder so we’d have a recording of our grandparents and uncles and aunts and cousins for posterity. I come from a large extended family so it was a really noisy room. During the gathering, our grandma sat on the couch and told some great stories in the middle of all other conversations. We listened and enjoyed all of them, and a few days after the reunion, we went back to listen to it again. What a disappointment! Just noise, noise, noise, a million people talking at once and no way to pick out her voice from the other people talking, even though we heard her so clearly at the time.

We quickly figured out that we hadn’t noticed the background noise because we had been so captivated by our grandmother’s stories. We’d filtered out what everyone else was saying. The actual, physical sounds in that room at the time, without the mind’s built-in filters, were there on the tape recording.” My personal experience in my forty years of dealing with mainstream psychologists and psychiatrists is that spiritual psychic is outside their awareness - just simply not on their radar - and it should be. (p. 111 Before you know it)

The stereotype that "quantification" unequivocally equates to "science" is widespread. Strict quantification excludes art, music, hope, dreaming, dancing, creativity, poetry, true love, idealism, freedom, as well as justice and even imagination [Einstein and other scientists viewed imagination as vital to science] Long ago William James observed paying attention and focusing necessarily required excluding and ignoring much else - confirmed by modern neuroscience.

Arthur Mullins in Truth and Ideology: Reflections on Mannheim’s Paradox, states that “Nevertheless, with these few exceptions, Mannheim holds that historical and political thought is determined by the socio-historical location of the thinker and the political aspirations and material ambitions of the group or groups to which he belongs. Such thought is inherently value-laden, one-sided, distorted, and therefore false.

“Ideology [including philosophy & social science] is, as Mannheim uses the term, a mode of thought that obscures the real condition of society.... Groups are simply unable to see particular facts that would undermine their conception of the world! (Christina Maimone)
MAJOR Flaws, Errors and Omissions

1. Geertz's “universal definition” of religion (Chernus) has no "spirit" & no concept of community

2. No Social Consciousness: Allport (1927): "There is no psychology of groups" & consciousness confined to the firing of neurons

3. No role for the "Teachings of Religion" in the psychology of religion such as forming a sense of community

4. No concept of spirituality and religious beliefs as major drive or motivation

5. Extreme forms of violence historically evidenced by genocides, atrocities and racism left out of social identity theory As Kay Deaux points out the Academic Materialist fixation with experiments excludes this factor.

6. Dr. Neal, a psychiatrist, trained at Johns Hopkins, states she has no education/training in people who have spiritual-psychic experiences. J. E Kennedy states “Very little research has been aimed at investigating the overall effects of paranormal experiences.” That appears true from my research

Academic Materialism is a Mindset and Ideology and from that list of major flaws it should be clear that the Materialist Mindset has indeed skewed the orientation of scientists and religious people alike! Academic Materialism deviates from “scientific” materialism - in part due to the Definist fallacy & false premises, + as Kay Deaux highlighted a fixation with laboratory experiments

"We" have set our house on sand!

Brief commentary and reflections: I asked an Anglican and an Episcopalian priest if they thought that it isn't historically ironic that - in light of the fact that Christianity fought science tooth and nail from Galileo who argued the sun was the center of the solar system and not earth to Darwin's theory of evolution but failed to challenge or even question psychology (which is historically true) whether that is historically ironic

They both said, "Yes."
A PRRI study said that 50 to 60% of the younger generation who did not attend church stated the reason is because they viewed spiritual and religious beliefs as not "relevant". I will let the reader figure out why that might be.

Link to academia profile: "Academic Materialism is unscientific and destructive"
https://independentscholar.academia.edu/CharlesPeckJr