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Bridging Ideological Chasms: Rhetorical Criticism of Scientific Atheism and

(Post)Modern Theology in the Works of Dawkins and Keller

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Letter of Recommendation

I hereby certify that this dissertation entitled "Bridging Ideological Chasms: Rhetorical Criticism of Scientific Atheism and (Post)modern Theology in the Works of Dawkins and Keller" was prepared by Umesh Bajagain under my guidance. He carried out this study from April to June 2023. I hereby recommend this dissertation for final viva voce. Thank you.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Bridging Ideological Chasms: Rhetorical Criticism of Scientific Atheism and (Post)Modern Theology in the Works of Dawkins and Keller" submitted to the Central Department of English, TU, Kirtipur by Umesh Bajagain has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

This paper presents a comparative rhetorical criticism of Richard Dawkins's The Greatest Show on Earth *and Timothy Keller's* The Reason for God *using the theoretical framework of Kenneth Burke's concepts of identification and division. Despite the seemingly disparate stances of Dawkins, a proponent of scientific atheism, and Keller, a defender of Christian theology, the study uncovers often-overlooked similarities in their rhetorical strategies. The research process involved a thorough corpus analysis of both texts using AntConc software, with a focus on specific keyword frequency. The most frequent and prominent keywords "evolution" and "god/Jesus" from the respective texts were identified. Subsequently, clustering terms surrounding these keywords were scrutinized, utilizing OpenAI's Generative-Pretrained-Transformer-4 for the selection of relevant terms. These terms were then categorized into Burkean 'god-terms' and 'devil-terms' to delineate the authors' primary advocacies and rejections. The analysis elucidates how both authors foster a sense of identification and division with self and the dichotomic 'other' and employ division as well, as a rhetorical device, to establish their points of view. The four tendencies that emerged from the analysis were contradiction with self (Burkean division with self), complementing the 'other' (Burkean identification with the 'other'), catering to the target audience (Burkean identification with self), and rejecting the other (Burkean division with the other). The research concludes by highlighting the striking commonality in the rhetorical construction of these distinct atheistic and theological philosophical perspectives, thereby broadening the understanding of discourses on science and religion. This paper attempts to*

contribute to the transitional interdisciplinary literature that bridges scientific atheism and theology, suggesting that even in highly polarized debates, shared rhetorical strategies can be discerned, providing insights into the complexities of public discourses on controversial topics.

Keywords: atheism, cluster criticism, identification and division, rhetorical strategies, scientific discourse, theological discourse, textual analysis

Introduction

In a world where the contradistinction between science and religion often seems irreconcilable, potential areas of convergence in their respective discourses are easily overlooked. This research explores these latent intersections within the works of two acclaimed authors: Richard Dawkins, a staunch advocate for scientific atheism, and Timothy Keller, a respected voice in Christian theology. Despite their contrasting perspectives, the analysis focuses on the similarities in their rhetorical strategies, as illustrated in Dawkins's *The Greatest Show on Earth* and Keller's *The Reason for God*.

Both Dawkins and Keller, albeit their ideological differences, seem to incorporate similar rhetorical strategies, specifically Kenneth Burke's concepts of *identification* (or *consubstantiation*) and *division*, albeit unconsciously, to persuade their respective audiences. This paper explores how these persuasive techniques are used to grapple with existential themes and engage readers in a dialogue, fostering a sense of community around shared beliefs and values, while at the same time accentuating the divides between these communities and their ideological counterparts and self-contradicting their own philosophical and literary stances.

Ernst Mayr defines Science as "a system of generalizations, theories, and concepts[,] which form the explanatory framework of the observed phenomenon"

(qtd. in Flannery 385). Throughout history, scientific rhetoric has clashed with theological beliefs and often resulted in heated exchanges. Two such rejections have been practiced over the years as counteractive explanations to religion: humanistic atheism and scientific atheism. While the former has flourished on philosophies of Marx, Hegel, Lenin, and Engels (Blakeley 277–95), along with the "Death of God" thesis of Nietzsche and similar variations in the theories of Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Martin Buber (Trotter 42), the later bases on the positivist ground (Feigl).

Scientific atheism, as Stephen LeDrew suggests, originated from Darwinism and Enlightenment rationalism (70). Darwin published *The Origin of Species* in 1859, which elaborated on an observation-based possibility of evolution. Darwinism reinforced scientific philosophy and largely contrasted the faith in determinism among the creationists. Traditional theology struggled to deter scientific evidence until 1996 when, as Robert John Russell and Kirk Wegter-McNelly writes, "Elizabeth A. Johnson, the President of the Catholic Theological Society of America, called for a 're-engagement with the sciences[,] which would entail a 'return to cosmology, in order to restore fullness of vision and get theology back on the track from which it fell off a few hundred years ago'" (qtd. in Russel and McNelly 512). The post-1960s literary theories then inspired the subsequent philosophies of modern and postmodern theology and equipped theology with modern perspectives, such as deconstructivism. Since then, the engagement of scientific atheism with modern theological discourse has been in antithetical paths.

After the 1960s, theology adopted a deconstructionist approach with an influence from Jacques Derrida's thinking and his theory of deconstruction and finally became labeled as postmodern theology (Michener 60). The "[r]eformed

[e]pistemological [a]pologetic" (164) methodology presented by postmodern deconstructive theology, as Michener suggests, should be taken seriously and "should reflect on [theological] concerns with respect to [believers'] own religious hypocrisies through a process of critical reflection" (190). This critical approach adopted by modern theology has been a philosophical milestone in upgrading the efficacy of counter-discourses that it often engages with scientific atheism.

Theoretical and Conceptual Review

Most literature that make a comparative analysis of the two mainly focus on the issues of contradistinction. The fundamental contradiction in history, however, arose after Charles Darwin explained the lawfulness of natural selection and the theory of evolution, followed by a series of arguments and counterarguments. As Ian G. Barbour notes, some suggested the "concept of God as primary cause," and evolution, "secondary means"; ". . . God's activity had simply been assumed to be like that of a workman, and evolution made this simple 'maker' analogy untenable" (90). Barbour considers this difference between science and religion "alleged," which indicates that in depth, there are indeed similarities.

In *Fact versus Faith: Why Science and Religion are Incompatible*, Jerry A. Coyne states that this incompatibility should be seen in careful ways (54). The author argues that science and religion are incompatible due to their differing methods of acquiring knowledge about reality, their distinct approaches to assessing the reliability of that knowledge, and their conflicting conclusions about the nature of the universe (54). The claim does not suggest logical or practical incompatibility, as it acknowledges the possibility of coexistence between science and religion. However, the author asserts that their fundamental disparities in epistemology and outcomes make them incompatible. Coyne's argument is rather direct: that there can be no

dialogue between science and religion because they fundamentally oppose each other in terms of method. Nevertheless, this methodological opposition could not contain those writers who were optimistic about the overlapping tendencies in these two areas.

Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson in *The Oxford Handbook of Science and Religion* suggest that science and religion should work together to address issues like biotechnology, human existence, ecology, environmental ethics, and other dimensions to establish the rationale of humans living on earth (889–962). Barbour, too, departs from the exclusivity of scientific and theological fields and suggests that they can find a "modernist" way to bridge them through "liberal theology, [. . .] Schleiermacher's view of theology and 'process philosophy', without any major digressions" (126–127). Indeed, there are some common epistemological, philosophical, and rhetorical grounds on which atheism and modern theology can work together. They have worked together for ages as complementary to the understanding of human consciousness and other moral and ethical issues.

Alfred North Whitehead, in *Science and the Modern World*, first published in 1925, asserts that the rise of scientific rationality in the modern era has had a dual impact on the perception of religion (180–190). Science has challenged traditional religious beliefs, positioning them in opposition to empirical evidence and logical reasoning. Whitehead observes the tumultuous relationship between these two domains, noting that where science has often been seen as a tool of materialism, it has inadvertently nudged religious thought towards dogmatism (180–183).

Yet, Whitehead also sees a complementary relationship between science and religion. He writes: "the conflict between science and religion is a *slight* matter which has been unduly emphasised (184; my emphasis). Whitehead also asserts that both

domains stem from the human desire to understand the universe's fundamental nature. While science seeks explanations through "observed […] physical phenomena," religion grapples with questions of meaning, purpose, and the nature of ultimate reality (184). Whitehead favors that contradistinction is where evolution of knowledge starts (186).

Kenneth Burke argues in his book *Language as a Symbolic Action* that "Rhetoric" includes persuasive tools that go beyond mere words but still have a strong influence on convincing others (301). He contends that defining "rhetoric" is difficult because it "defies definition in part because of the elusiveness of its subject matter […] and in part because definition itself is a rhetorical act that imposes a point of view on its subject and may even call it into being" (301–315). However, for simplicity, the researcher understands rhetoric as the art of effective composition and persuasion in speech, writing, and other media (McDonald 5). Edwin Black, in simple terms, explains rhetorical criticism as "the criticism of rhetorical discourses" (10). Jim A. Kuypers asserts that by doing rhetorical criticism, "we are allowing ourselves to take a closer [and] critical look at how rhetoric operates to persuade and influence us" (13). Rhetorical criticism, thus, is a qualitative analysis that closely scrutinizes a text for its covert and overt attempts of persuasion. Among many such criticism techniques, cluster criticism, taking theoretical paradigms from psychoanalysis, is a systematic method of rhetorical criticism. It was propounded by Kenneth Burke as a method of rhetorical criticism. Burke notes that the power of cluster criticism is not just exposing what lies on the surface but also what lies within, which he explains in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* as:

> We find that [the rhetor's] roles have not been like "repertory acting," but like "type casting." This "statistical" view of his work, in disclosing a trend, puts

us upon the track of the ways in which his selection of a role is a "symbolic

act." [The rhetor] is like a man with a tic, who spasmodically blinks his eyes

when certain subjects are mentioned. If you kept a list of these subjects, noting

what was said each time he spasmodically blinked his eyes, you would find

what the tic was "symbolic" of. (20)

For Burke, the rhetor's intentions can indeed be brought to the surface through cluster

criticism. In *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, Sonja K. Foss, citing

Burke, claims that cluster criticism can be used to resurface what the rhetor has both

been aware and unaware of writing the artifact (Foss 62). She furthers that the

equations or patterns that a critic identifies in a rhetor's work are typically not

consciously intended by the rhetor (63). While the rhetor may be aware of the act of

writing and making deliberate choices regarding imagery and mood, they cannot

possibly be aware of all the interrelationships among these elements. Consequently, as

Foss states, the clusters of patterns that emerge in someone's rhetoric can expose a

deeper level of authenticity, revealing the impossibility of deception behind the

author's intended façade.

Hence, cluster criticism can analyze both conscious and unconscious

ideologies in the text. There are few literatures that explicate the detailed cluster

analysis in texts. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the only author to

explicate both the theoretical and pragmatic parts of the analysis is Sonja K. Foss.

Even though Kenneth Burke has propounded the technique, his explanation is largely

theoretical. Sonja Foss depicts in her book *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and*

Practice that rhetorical criticism should incorporate five major components:

(a) an introduction in which you discuss the research question, its contribution

to rhetorical theory and its significance and literature review; (b) a description

of artifact and its context; (c) a description of method of analysis; (d) a report of the findings of the analysis; and (e) a discussion of the contribution the analysis makes to rhetorical theory. (18)

The texts chosen for this analysis are Richard Dawkins's *The Greatest Show on Earth: The Evidence for Evolution* and Timothy Keller's *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Scepticism*. Both authors are influential figures within their respective domains—Dawkins as a leading voice for atheism and evolutionary biology and Keller as a prominent Christian pastor and theologian. The selection of these two texts for comparative analysis is not arbitrary. Though key Hindu texts might be more familiar to the researcher, Christian theological text was chosen for two primary reasons. First, Christian theology and atheism have long engaged in direct discourse, forming an intricate dialectic of opposition (Draper v–vi). Second, Hindu philosophy typically allows for a wider degree of deviation and flexibility in interpretation (Turner 275), the foundation of which does not explicitly align with Western atheism. Therefore, the prominence and depth of the authors' arguments within their respective ideological fields make them suitable for a detailed rhetorical investigation.

The Greatest Show on Earth: The Evidence for Evolution by British biologist Richard Dawkins is a comprehensive exploration of the evidence supporting the theory of evolution. Published in 2009, the book presents a passionate refutation of creationist and intelligent design viewpoints, unfolding through discussions on dating methods, fossil records, comparative anatomy, genetic mutations and recombination, and the mechanism of natural selection. Using numerous examples from the natural world and addressing common misconceptions about evolution, Dawkins builds an unassailable case for viewing evolution as an indisputable fact. He argues that the

breathtaking diversity and complexity of life on Earth is the "greatest show"—an outcome of over 3.5 billion years of evolutionary history (Dawkins 426).

Dawkins's *The Greatest Show on Earth* is a book on scientific rhetoric and presents evidence for the support of evolution and also thus subtly makes a distinct departure from creationism. Douglas J. Futuyma writes "that creationism, in its many guises, poses [threat] not only to science but also to rationalism and evidence-based decision-making" (905). Futuyma further remarks that Dawkins approaches his subject matter similar to that of Darwin, i.e., with artificial selection and then natural selection, and provides a chapter-by-chapter analysis of why evolution is a fact, thus refuting creationism (906). Robert L. Dorit comments on the target audience of the polemical exchange between an atheist and a creationist written by the author:

> Dawkins himself makes clear, in an entertaining but depressing transcript of an exchange he had with an anti-evolutionist he interviewed for a television documentary, there may be no book, no argument, no weight of evidence that will move some people from their rehearsed positions. This book is addressed to the small sliver of the undecided and to those who will enjoy a book that brings the modern evidence for evolution together in a single accessible volume. (340)

Keller's *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Scepticism* takes a modern deconstructive stance to persuade non-believers into believing in Christianity. Scott Newling finds "[the book] [. . .] a window into the character of its author—winsome, insightful, persuasive, sympathetic to the frustrations non-Christians have towards 'religion', yet unafraid to tackle the hard questions often put to Christians" ("Book Review" 2013). Addressing the skepticism associated with Christian theology,

Nicholas Kristof in an interview with author Timothy Keller asks him about the

skepticism of biblical "revelations" like resurrection, who answers:

> Jesus' teaching was not the main point of his mission. He came to save people
>
> through his death for sin and his resurrection. So his important ethical teaching
>
> only makes sense when you don't separate it from these historic doctrines. If
>
> the resurrection is a genuine reality, it explains why Jesus can say that the poor
>
> and the meek will 'inherit the earth' (Matthew 5:5). St. Paul said without a real
>
> resurrection, Christianity is useless (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Hence, Keller's theological rhetoric targets skeptics and doubters alike. In the first

part of the book, he tries to "review the seven biggest objections and doubts about

Christianity […], then in the second half of the book [he] examines the reasons

underlying Christian beliefs" (Keller xx). Keller's argument about skeptics' non-

belief takes a deconstructive form when he argumentatively dismantles the reasons for

believing in a positivist method. Glenn R. Kreider comments on the rhetorical

technique of the rhetor and says that: "this book is written for both Christians and

skeptics. To Christians, Keller encourages wrestling with doubts and questions [. . .]

Only if you struggle long and hard with objections to your faith will you be able to

provide grounds for your beliefs to skeptics, including yourself, that are plausible

rather than ridiculous or offensive" ("The Reason" 2009). Understandably, Keller puts

his argument in the language and manner skeptics like and understand by first

doubting his own faith and then claiming authority as opposed to the means of

traditional theology that uses the Bible as an authority.

  The literature on Kenneth Burke's rhetorical theories encompasses a broad

range of perspectives, underlining their relevance and adaptability across diverse

fields. Burke, one of the most influential rhetoricians of the 20th century, pioneered

the idea that rhetoric is a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that, by nature, respond to symbols (*The Rhetoric of Motives* 41). His work revolutionized the study of language and its role in social interactions, as he elaborated intricate theories of identification and division.

Kenneth Burke's theory of rhetoric pivots on the concept of "identification" that he explains in *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Burke contends that rhetoric's primary function is the creation of unity among individuals, forging connections that facilitate mutual understanding (20). His work established the groundwork for a nuanced understanding of rhetorical practices, redefining the way rhetoric was perceived in academic and practical spheres. Identification, in Burke's perspective, is seen as an inherent characteristic of communication; it is an integrative process that brings individuals together by creating shared spaces of understanding. As Burke aptly puts it, "you persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, identifying your ways with his" (55). This quote underscores the complexity and multi-layered nature of the identification process, highlighting its significance in rhetoric and persuasion. A close examination of Burke's work reveals his insight into the dual nature of identification, which he posited has both conscious and unconscious aspects (45). He highlighted that people consciously identify with others who share similar views, backgrounds, or objectives. However, he also pointed out that unconscious processes often guide identification, influencing how individuals perceive and connect with others. By acknowledging these unconscious elements, Burke's theory unravels the often-overlooked intricacies involved in rhetorical communication, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of persuasion and influence.

The conscious aspect of identification, as described by Burke in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, is a deliberate attempt to find common ground (140). This often takes the form of aligning one's beliefs or values with those of another individual or group. By consciously identifying with the other, an individual becomes part of a collective identity, fostering a sense of unity and shared understanding (67). However, Burke's conceptualization of unconscious identification adds a level of depth to this understanding. Unconscious identification occurs when individuals connect with others without explicitly recognizing this connection, often because of deeply ingrained beliefs, experiences, or cultural norms (*A Grammar of Motives* 81). This unconscious dimension helps explain why people might identify with certain groups or individuals, even when their explicit beliefs or values do not align. Burke further writes, despite a rhetor is "perfectly conscious of the act of writing, conscious of selecting a certain kind of imagery to reinforce a certain kind of mood, etc., he cannot possibly be conscious of the interrelationships among all these equations" (*Attitudes Toward History* 232–233).

In today's rapidly changing social and political landscapes, Burke's theory of identification holds significant relevance. It provides a robust framework to understand and navigate the complex terrain of group dynamics, social cohesion, and political-religious discourse. Burke's theory helps elucidate how individuals and groups use rhetorical strategies to foster unity and build consensus, offering crucial insights into contemporary issues like identity politics, social polarization, and digital communication (Heath 103; George and Selzer 175). Moreover, Burke's notion of identification can be an effective tool to bridge divides among different individuals or groups. By identifying commonalities and creating shared narratives, it can promote communication and cooperation, mitigating conflicts and fostering mutual

understanding (Cheney 345). Thus, Burke's identification theory transcends theoretical analysis and provides practical insights for enhancing interpersonal and intergroup communication in a diverse and complex world.

Simultaneously, Burke's rhetorical theory also acknowledges the inherent presence of division. While the concept of identification is foundational in Burke's work, his recognition of division is equally crucial. Burke understands human interactions as inherently imbued with both unifying and divisive elements (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 22). Division, as articulated by Burke, recognizes the inevitable distinctions and differences among individuals and groups (35). This awareness forms a necessary counterpart to the principle of identification that underlines the unifying aspects of communication. While identification attempts to draw commonalities and build connections among different parties, division acknowledges the uniqueness and individuality inherent in each participant; however, identification is compensatory to division" (22). This dichotomy is vital to Burke's rhetorical theory, as it portrays a realistic and nuanced depiction of human interactions.

As a theory, Burke's division transcends the realm of rhetoric to pervade the spheres of social and political interactions. Burke writes, "You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, identifying your ways with his" (55), which encapsulates the dialectic of identification and division. It indicates that the process of persuasion does not merely rely on shared identities but also necessitates an understanding and recognition of the divisions that exist among different parties.

Several scholars have elucidated the applicability and importance of Burke's concept of division in contemporary discourse. Clark and Halloran, for instance, assert that Burke's concept of division allows for a more profound understanding of

societal conflicts and their potential resolutions (Clark and Halloran 141). Meanwhile, Crusius suggests that acknowledging divisions is pivotal to any fruitful discussion or negotiation (87). Understanding and incorporating division into communicative efforts can promote a more nuanced and effective dialogue. This allows for a more empathetic approach, recognizing the individuality of the 'other' and providing space for their unique perspective within the discourse (Rossolatos 82).

In essence, Burke's concept of consubstantiality is a synthesis of identification and division. Consubstantiality describes the process by which two separate entities become one, in spite of retaining their unique identities: "To identify A with B is to make A 'consubstantial' with B" (Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives* 21). It proposes that through shared substance—interests, values, experiences—different individuals can achieve a degree of unity. Burke's theory of consubstantiality epitomizes his vision of rhetoric as a tool to promote unity and cooperation.

Sonja Foss has drawn extensively from Burke's rhetorical theories in her work. She often quotes Burke to substantiate her theories about the nature of rhetoric and its social functions. For instance, Foss states that "Burke's theory, with its emphasis on the human use of symbols to induce cooperation, offers a productive lens through which to examine and understand communicative practices" (110). Foss recognizes the valuable contributions made by Burke in the fields of communication and rhetoric, which serve as the foundation for the methodology employed in this research.

Methodology and Research Design

The methodology of this study is anchored in a digital humanities approach, specifically leveraging close textual analysis to extract, compare, and interpret patterns within the works of Richard Dawkins and Timothy Keller. The research

process involved three distinct stages: conversion and preparation of the texts, keyword and cluster analysis, and application of rhetorical theories for in-depth analysis. Below, each of these stages is explained in detail.

The initial stage was transforming the books: *The Greatest Show on Earth* and *The Reason for God* into a digital format that would facilitate text analysis. This involved converting the *pdf* versions of these books into *.docx* Word files. Following the conversion, the front and back matter of each book were removed, leaving only the primary text and the Table of Contents intact. This process was essential to ensure that the subsequent analyses would solely focus on the core content, thereby enhancing the accuracy of the results.

The software used for textual analysis was *AntConc*, a freeware tool explicitly designed for classroom use and corpus analysis. This multi-platform software facilitated the investigation of the chosen texts in ways not possible through manual methods, allowing for the extraction of keyword frequencies, cluster analysis, and other useful metrics.

Following the conversion and preparation of the texts, the first step in cluster rhetorical criticism is to select the key terms in the artifact (Foss 64). The keyword significance can be determined based on intensity or frequency (64–65), reflecting the objective stance required in analyzing large textual data. The researcher chose frequency for the analysis owing to its enhanced objectivity. This entailed identifying the most frequently occurring words in each book, which were then used as the primary keywords for further investigation.

In Dawkins's text, the most frequent, prominent keyword was "evolution" (56th), followed by "species" (59th), and "selection" (63rd). On the other hand, the most frequent keywords in Keller's text were "God" (11th) and "Jesus" (36th),

"people" (45th), and "Christian" (57th). However, due to logistical and space

constraints, only one keyword, the most prominent one, was chosen for deeper

analysis in each text: "evolution" for Dawkins's and "God/Jesus" for Keller's texts.

Once the primary keywords were established, the next step was to charter the

clustering terms surrounding these keywords (65). These are terms that occur in

proximity to the keywords in the text and help elucidate their contexts and

implications. Given the vast amount of clustering terms identified, the GPT-4

language model was used to sift through and select the most relevant ones in relation

to the research motive. The model was queried with 500 clustering terms for each

keyword, resulting in a curated list of terms that were deemed most relevant to the

rhetorical analysis.

With the keyword and cluster analysis completed, the subsequent step was to

employ Burke's theories of identification and division and analyze the clustering

terms to categorize them into Burkean *god* and *devil* terms. Kenneth Burke's rhetoric

theory further extends into the domain of language through his conception of *god* and

devil terms. These concepts play a pivotal role in Burke's understanding of the

rhetoric of social and political discourse. Burke contends that language is not just a

neutral medium of communication; instead, it embodies and perpetuates societal

values and ideologies (*Grammar of Motives* 20). *God* and *devil* terms are crucial

components of Burke's terministic screens, a concept that refers to the language

system used to understand the world and that "directs attention to particular aspects of

reality rather than others" (Foss 62). *God* terms are those that are revered,

representing the ultimate values of a society or "names for the [rhetor's] motives";

conversely, *devil* terms are despised and associated with negative connotations (74).

These terms often act as persuasive tools in rhetoric, evoking specific emotions and

attitudes in the audience (74). An exploration of Burke's idea of *god* terms reveals that they embody the highest ideals of a given society or discourse. As Burke argues, these terms are "the ultimate source of motives," representing what is most admired and pursued in a given context (*A Grammar of Motives* 69).

On the other hand, Burke's *devil* terms represent societal taboos, embodying what is rejected or feared. They often create opposition and serve to distinguish an 'us' from a 'them,' playing a vital role in societal division and conflict (89). In this regard, the understanding of *god* and *devil* terms can offer substantial insights into societal values and conflicts, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of social and political rhetoric. Furthermore, Burke's concepts of *god* and *devil* terms reveal substantially about societal structures and power dynamics. As Hayakawa argues, these terms are frequently employed by those in power to manipulate discourse and control public opinion (115). By analyzing these terms, one can glean insights into the ways power is exercised and maintained in a given society.

The impact of Burke's *god* and *devil* terms extends into the contemporary socio-political context. With the advent of social media and digital communication, these terms have gained even more significance, often shaping online discourse and influencing public opinion (Warnick and Heineman 153). Consequently, Burke's concepts continue to provide a potent framework for understanding and navigating contemporary rhetorical landscapes.

The selected clustering terms were evaluated in the context of these theories to understand how Dawkins and Keller create a sense of identification with their audience and use division to differentiate their stances from opposing views. Furthermore, the concepts of *god* and *devil* terms were used to identify terms that hold the highest and lowest values within each text, respectively. This process involved

manual evaluation of the clustering terms and their context within the text, highlighting similarities and differences between the two authors in their rhetorical approaches. For each keyword, the clustering terms were manually sifted and categorized into four thematic groups, henceforth known as themes or thematic clusters: *(God's or human's) existence*, *human behavior*, *reality and the world*, and *appeal to emotion and experience*. These thematic clusters revealed their similar and contradictory natures. The analysis served as the foundation for comparing the rhetorical strategies employed by Dawkins and Keller in their respective works.

However, the analysis, while fruitful, was not without its hurdles. The challenges encountered ranged from issues related to the conversion and preparation of the texts for analysis to the handling of the vast amounts of data generated from keyword and cluster analysis. However, each problem was met with a creative solution. The first challenge presented itself during the conversion of the books from *pdf* format to *.docx* Word files. It was important to maintain the integrity of the original texts during this process. However, certain formatting elements, such as italics, bold text, and special characters, were occasionally misrepresented or lost in the converted files. In order to address this issue, the converted texts were meticulously compared with the original *pdf* versions to rectify any such discrepancies. This ensured that the integrity of the original text was preserved.

Another significant challenge arose during the selection of keywords and their associated clustering terms. Given the extensive content of the books, the analysis produced hundreds to thousands of potential keywords and associated clustering terms. Manual evaluation of such vast data was logistically overwhelming and time-consuming. As a solution, the generative-pre-trained-transformer (GPT-4) based on OpenAI's large language model (LLC) was deployed. GPT-4 was queried with

clustering terms for each keyword in a batch of 500 using the following command: "For a cluster rhetorical analysis, you are currently focusing on the agon analysis. You will be provided with a batch of 500 clustering terms, alongside four thematic categories that encapsulate these keywords. Please filter out those keywords that align the most closely with the themes of scientific atheism and theology. Agon analysis involves identifying terms that stand in opposition or contradiction to other terms within the rhetoric. Proceeding, the clustering terms are as follows:." Through this, the process of sifting through and selecting the most relevant terms was significantly expedited. GPT-4's AI-powered processing capabilities provided a curated list of terms that were deemed most relevant to the rhetorical analysis, effectively overcoming the challenge of data volume.

The application of Burke's concepts of *god* and *devil* terms presented its own set of challenges. The classification of clustering terms into these categories required a deep understanding of the texts and the authors' perspectives. It was not a straightforward task and demanded careful reading and interpretation of the texts. To address this issue, the texts were read multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of the authors' positions. The analysis of *god* and *devil* terms was then grounded in this understanding, coupled with the findings from the keyword and cluster analysis. This comprehensive approach helped to effectively categorize the clustering terms and to illuminate their roles in the authors' arguments. This began with a meticulous process of identifying and categorizing key terms and clusters within each text. The selected terms were then organized into thematic groups based on the ideological focus they represent.

Once these terms were cataloged, the researcher explored the texts comprehensively, scrutinizing the usage and implications of these keywords in

context. This enabled them to discern the underpinning ideologies that inform each author's stance and the rhetorical strategies they employ to communicate their perspectives. The examination provided insight into the deep-rooted ideologies that pervaded these works while also highlighting the manner in which these ideologies were communicated. The analytical framework of this methodology offers a clear path to understand the dichotomy between scientific atheism and (post)modern theology as presented in these two prominent texts.

This thesis accompanies other complementary documents that explicate the research-identified *god*/positive and *devil*/negative terms and list of hundreds of clustered terms incorporated into the four thematic clusters. This will be supplemented by an in-depth explanation and exploration of the primary texts, focusing on how these terms are used to construct and communicate each author's viewpoint, followed by how they employ Burkean ideas. In doing so, the researcher aims to shed light on the similarities, self-contradictions, and even ideological duplicities that shape these contrasting discourses and their implication for the larger debate between science and faith.

Findings and Analysis

The god/positive terms in Dawkins's book for the cluster theme *existence* were identified, some of which are "natural selection" (17), "million years" (37), "random mutation" (130), "convincingly filled out" (171), and "anybody can understand," among others. These clustering terms link human existence to the consequence of evolution, which is one of the standard atheistic viewpoints for the denial of god, even though many scientists agree that evolution may not make claims about God/gods" (Barnes 1). Upon examining Dawkins's use of *god* terms in this thematic, a clear leaning toward evolutionary biology's principles and theories is

evident. Terms such as "Natural Selection" (17), "Darwin" (131), "reputable biologists" (18), "million years" (37), and "strong evidence" (146) all underscore Dawkins's unwavering belief in the power of empirical science to explain life's complexity and origins (Dawkins 42). However, despite the overall coherence in this theme, certain terms indeed introduce contradictions. For instance, the term "random mutation" is crucial in understanding evolutionary biology's essence. However, modern genetic studies suggest that while mutations are unpredictable, calling them "random" may oversimplify the complex processes involved (Lynch). By presenting this term as a god term, Dawkins seems to align with a predated interpretation of evolutionary theory. He argues that "many of the essential components of evolution [are the result of] natural selection: random mutation followed by non-random natural selection" (Dawkins 130). Thus, Dawkins appears to endorse a somewhat deterministic view of evolution. Moreover, the linkage of human existence with the "second law of thermodynamics" (415)—which posits that disorder or entropy in a closed system always increases—is puzzling. Dawkins seems to hint at the inevitable entropy of humanity, which is a rather bleak proposition, echoing doomsday theories (145).

Furthermore, the clustering terms "never been 'proved'" (10), "falsifiable" (100), "distortion" (314), and "watertight" (146) signify Dawkins's staunch adherence to scientific rigor and his readiness to challenge the unproven hypothesis. Nevertheless, this also highlights a rather somber view of humanity, seemingly caught in an endless cycle of trial and error and struggle against the relentless tide of entropy.

In the examination of the *god* terms central to Christian theology prevalent in Keller's artifact, the contradiction between certain terms might appear paradoxical. For instance, the coexistence of terms like "heaven" with "hell" (29–30), "grace" with

"sinners" (42), and "forgiveness" with "punish and "judgment" (192) could be

perceived as diametrically opposed concepts, each representing entirely different

spheres of the Christian worldview. However, according to Christian thought, these

terms' co-presence suggests a complex understanding of human existence. For

example, the presence of "heaven" and "hell" within the same context might not

strictly adhere to the popular understanding of these terms as metaphysical locations

attained post-mortem. Instead, their juxtaposition could hint at the concurrent

existence of these realities in the lived experience of believers. It indicates the

potential for individuals to grapple with experiences and choices that reflect either the

grace and redemption associated with heaven or the sin and judgment tied to hell.

Similarly, the coupling of "grace" and "sin" underscores the Christian belief

that humans, while innately sinful (Romans 3:23), can access divine grace through

faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). It posits the idea that humans navigate between these

contradictory spheres in their spiritual journey, emphasizing the transformative power

of faith and divine mercy. These potential contradictions can be reconciled within the

framework of Christian theology through the concept of divine justice and mercy, as

well as the salvific work of Christ. The existence of "judgment" and "forgiveness" in

the same context does not necessarily denote a contradiction but rather a tension that

finds resolution in the figure of Christ, who embodies divine judgment and offers

forgiveness through his sacrificial death and resurrection, according to Christian

theology.

Next, the researcher analyzed the *god* terms for the cluster theme *human*

behavior. Dawkins's representation of human behavior, grounded in biological and

evolutionary principles, is encapsulated in the terms he chooses: "mutation" (130),

"camouflage" (134), and "falsifiable" (100), among others. These terms suggest

inherent flexibility, adaptability, and openness to questioning in human behavior, mirroring the process of evolution itself. However, it brings along certain self-contradictory stances. At first glance, some terms like "mutation" and "class" (112–141) could seem at odds—"mutation" suggests irregular or unanticipated changes, while "class" alludes to a sense of order and structure, which are diametrically opposite. Similarly, "falsifiable," a cornerstone of empirical science, denotes a continual openness to challenge that might seem contradictory to "impossibility," which infers unequivocal certainty.

In the context of these contradictions, the inclusion of terms like "impossibility" (112), "violated" (34), "wrong" (17–18), "dispute" (9), and "random" (130) further complicates the discourse. The fact that such terms, often negatively associated and couched within discussions of *human behavior*, suggests an underlying belief that scientific knowledge and its comprehension might be beyond the grasp of the 'common' individual. This reinforces a conception of scientific elitism, a criticism often directed at the scientific community, insinuating that the realm of scientific thought and understanding is, at times, inaccessible and alienating to the layperson. Thus, the core framework of scientific discourse may inadvertently propagate a sense of exclusivity rather than foster a universal understanding and appreciation of scientific phenomena.

Similarly, *human behavior*, as represented in Keller's works, houses the terms "save yourself" (177), "inviting anyone who doubted" (204), "witnesses" (101), and "ruthless authenticity" (30) among others, which emerge as focal points of discussion. Upon closer inspection, these phrases coalesce to form, revealing complexities and contradictions inherent in religious behavior. The phrase "save yourself" insinuates an element of self-preservation within the religious framework. It is perhaps indicative of

a sense of urgency or threat and suggests an impulse towards self-protection that lies at the heart of religious observance. Nevertheless, this instinct to safeguard one's spiritual well-being could, at times, be perceived as bordering on selfishness or self-centeredness, throwing into sharp relief the perceived hypocrisy that sometimes surrounds religious behavior.

Keller discusses St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, in which he states that "Paul was inviting anyone who doubted that Jesus had appeared to people after his death to go and talk to the eyewitnesses if they wished" (204). At the Burkean unconscious level, the phrase "inviting anyone who doubted" associated with *human behavior* connotes a missionary zeal, a desire to expand the circle of faith by reaching out to those in doubt. However, this openness towards doubters could be construed as opportunistic, too. It could seem as though religion is capitalizing on moments of doubt and uncertainty to proliferate its influence and increase its numbers. This presents another dimension to the apparent contradiction within religious behavior, as it positions faith as a potential tool of sociocultural manipulation rather than a conduit for divine connection.

Likewise, Keller discusses the term "witnesses" in various contexts, and in one of them, he argues: "You can't write [the resurrection of Jesus] in a document designed for public reading unless there really were surviving witnesses whose testimony agreed and who could confirm what the author said" (101). This usage is also layered with implications. On the one hand, it suggests a community of believers who bore testament to their faith. On the other hand, it can be perceived as indicative of a lack of sociocultural agency, where people are positioned merely as observers, reinforcing hierarchical structures within the religious framework.

Finally, in an account in which Keller quotes New Testament scholar Bill Lane, he writes: "[Jesus's] cry has a ruthless authenticity . . . [he] did not die renouncing God" (30). When associated with the theme *human behavior*, the term "ruthless authenticity" seems to encapsulate an ideal of unwavering and absolute adherence to religious principles, a kind of unflinching devotion that brings no compromise. However, this relentless pursuit of authenticity could, in some instances, come across as performative or excessively zealous, again revealing a possible disconnection between the espoused ideals of faith and the realities of its practice.

In sum, these keywords, while illuminating the rich tapestry of religious behavior, also reveal potential contradictions and the hypocritical stances that can sometimes color the practice of religion. By purging others and saving themselves, opportunistically converting those who doubt, positioning them as witnesses to a prescribed truth, and showcasing a ruthless authenticity, religious behavior, as portrayed through these terms, manifests a nuanced and often paradoxical landscape. These terminologies, therefore, seem to allude to a complex dialectic within religious behavior—a tension between self and other, between private faith and public witness, and between absolute authenticity and the strategic display of faith. These tensions may reflect a broader, often unspoken, contradiction within religious communities— the struggle to balance self-preservation and the commitment to the conversion of others.

Next, the cluster theme *reality and the world* for *god* terms in Dawkins's *The Greatest Show on Earth* is analyzed. Dawkins's choice of the terms "worker ants" (349), "lost their wings" (344–345), "family tree" (328), and "define in terms of" (312–313) creates expressions that narrate a potent socio-economic story, reminiscent of a middle-class predicament perpetuated by the mechanics of capitalism, with

science and technology acting as driving factors. This metaphorical narrative resonates with the lived experiences of many in contemporary society. As Dawkins discusses the obliteration of wings in worker ants: "Presumably worker ants lost their wings in evolution because they are a nuisance and get in the way underground" (349), upon coupling "worker ants" with *reality and the world*, a tireless middle-class workforce seems to come to the fore. The "lost wings" might signify the constraints of social mobility (349); and the "family tree" (243) serves as a reminder of the often overlooked role that generational wealth (or the lack thereof) plays in shaping one's social and economic destiny when viewed from the Marxist stance. Meanwhile, the "excellent zoological artist" (309) that the author alludes to in *reality and the world* represents the highly specialized, skilled labor force that, albeit its expertise, struggles to break free from the socio-economic shackles.

In the backdrop of this narrative, Dawkins posits his unique understanding of reality. He employs terms such as "mutation" (309, 330, 355) and "reputable" (8, 17), suggesting that reality, much like the biological world Dawkins so often elucidates, is mutable and subject to the laws of nature. Reality, to Dawkins, is not a static construct but an evolving entity. The term "reputable" imbues reality with the authority of being a final arbiter of truth, independent of subjective interpretations. Reality, in Dawkins's narrative, is also improbable: "too improbable to have happened by chance" (125) and operates on a "race against" species (265), adding another layer of complexity to the understanding. The "improbability" might refer to the unexpected twists and turns that life (or evolution) presents, making outcomes uncertain and challenging to predict. Meanwhile, the "race against" might allude to the pressures of time, another undeniable factor that shapes both biological evolution and human socio-economic dynamics.

Keller uses multiple *god* terms in his book for the cluster theme *reality and the world*. Words and phrases such as "nondivine" (Keller 99), "nihilism" (99), "moral relativism" (146), "Greeks imagined" (208), "nothing illogical at all" (86), "unthinkable" (207), "impossible" (102), and "very large numbered" (108) emerge. Intriguingly, these terms, when examined in conjunction, seem to contradict traditional theological assertions that God and the meaningful life proposed through faith are readily accessible and definable entities. The contradictions inherent in these terms represent a fundamental tension that emerges when contrasting a worldview centered on existential dread, nihilism, and moral relativism and one anchored in Christian theology, which promises a purposeful existence, an absolute moral code, and a personal, loving God.

These divergent worldviews are at odds with each other, and it is in this conflict that we see the power of the Burkean analysis. For instance, when the *god* terms for *reality and the world* are analyzed in Keller's artifact, negative connoting terms such as "unthinkable" and "impossible" are discovered that challenge the accessibility of God's comprehension (64). This contradicts the core tenet of Christian theology that advocates for a relational and personal God. As Keller contends, "God is not a distant, unengaged deity, but one who deeply desires a personal relationship with his creations" (68). Nevertheless, the usage of terms such as "unthinkable" and "impossible" undermines this, creating an image of a God who is inaccessible and beyond comprehension.

What follows next is the analysis of the cluster theme *appeal to human emotion and experience* for the *god* terms in Dawkins's text. While Dawkins's chosen keywords such as "disproof" (147), "disproved" (17, 147), "alleged" (155, 161), "fact" (5, 8, 10, 112, 283, 345), "prove" (147), "secure" (145), "direct" (16, 312, 426),

"testable" (129), "falsifiable" (100), "case" (10, 71, 80), "evidence" (6, 7, 8, 330),

"evidence against" (146, 146, 321), "show" (16, 130, 426), "claim" (10, 201, 212),

"define" (312, 313), and "document" (145), among others, emphasize the importance

of evidence-based reasoning in the scientific discourse, they also reveal an inherent

tension when dealing with the realm of human emotions and experiences. Scientific

methods rely on objective measurements and empirical evidence; they follow a

systematic approach that seeks to separate facts from beliefs and truth from opinion.

This is mirrored in the words Dawkins uses, words that echo the rigidity of the

scientific process. However, regarding appeals to human emotions and experiences,

the same empirical approach that offers clarity and certainty can appear to fall short.

Emotions and experiences, by their very nature, are subjective and individualistic.

They resist being confined by rigid categories or being accurately measured by

empirical tools. This is where terms like "disproof," "disproved," and "alleged" come

into play, indicating a sense of uncertainty and contestability that is often an inherent

part of human emotions and experiences. In many ways, this can cast a light on the

challenges the scientific world faces in communicating complex concepts to a diverse

audience. While the evidence-based, logical rigor of the scientific process can provide

clarity and certainty, it might not fully cater to the emotional and experiential

dimensions of human understanding. Often, facts and evidence alone may not be

enough for humans to adopt a point of view. This calls for a more nuanced approach

that can blend scientific rigor with an understanding and appreciation of human

emotions and experiences, making scientific knowledge more relatable and

accessible. In essence, while the focus on empirical evidence is crucial, the

importance of emotional resonance and experiential relatability in communicating

science cannot be underestimated.

Examining further for the *god* terms in Keller's text for the above thematic cluster, the researcher observes that Keller's use of a range of emotional terms might reflect a deliberate strategy to appeal to the full gamut of human emotional experiences. Words like "love" (4, 4, 29, 221), "compassion" (71), and "joy" (66) are counterbalanced by those evoking negative emotions like "envy" (240), "loneliness" (30), and "bitterness" (28). While on the surface, this may seem contradictory, it may also reveal a critical aspect of theological discourse and its approach to human experience. In essence, these contradictory emotions reflect the diversity of human experiences—ones that religious narratives seek to encompass and respond to. However, it's worth noting the frequent invocation of negative emotions like "resent" (165), "envy" (240), "loneliness" (30), "despair" (30, 31, 162), "bitterness" (28), and "suffering" (xxv, 22, 22, 29, …, 207). This preponderance suggests that theology, as represented in Keller's work, may intentionally draw on these darker shades of human emotion, such as suffering, more heavily. The appeal to negative emotions may serve several functions. First, it validates the suffering and hardship experienced by many, acknowledging the reality of these feelings and experiences. This acknowledgment can be comforting and offer a sense of understanding and acceptance to those experiencing such emotions. Second, by leaning into these negative emotions, religion may also tap into a universal desire for relief, offering a pathway out of suffering through faith. This is a powerful tool for persuasion, as it positions religion as a potential solution to these negative feelings. However, the heavy reliance on negative emotions also raises questions about the balance of representation of human experience within religious narratives. It could be argued that this approach risks painting an overly bleak picture of human existence, which might skew perceptions of reality and reinforce feelings of suffering and despair.

The subsequent sections analyze the *devil* terms for Dawkins's and Keller's work for the four thematic clusters. Concerning Dawkins's artifact for the thematic cluster *existence*, it is worth noting that certain terms, such as "religion" (null), "theology" (6), "believers" (null), "preachers" (7), *god* (5, 6, 248) are negated, neglected, or excluded, for instance, "religion"—an approach that surfaces from his commitment to scientific atheism. This seems to hint at a deeper, structural underpinning of atheistic narratives. The empirical evidence and rigorous scientific methods typically employed to establish the logos of scientific arguments seem insufficient on their own to ground atheism's worldview, which brings forth a critical observation: the inability of pure science to self-validate within its own rational structures. If science is considered as a system of knowledge that prides itself on its ability to independently explain and comprehend the natural world, then the discourse of scientific atheism is expected to follow suit, substantiating its arguments solely within its own methodological framework. However, this does not seem to be the case. Instead, the use of the mentioned clusters by Dawkins suggests that atheism appears to gain relevance and potency only in its reference to and, often negation of, theistic principles. This dependency on what it opposes is paradoxical and revealing. It suggests that though the atheistic perspective relies explicitly on scientific rationality, it inadvertently underscores its need for a theistic foil to construct and communicate its stance.

In light of the above argument, Dawkins's text can be seen as an example of a classic complementary discourse (Burke "A Rhetoric of Motives." 1950). The robustness of his atheistic arguments is hinged upon the very theistic concepts it seeks to debunk. Rather than carving out an entirely independent epistemological space, atheism finds itself bound to a relational discourse, where it assumes relevance

through a dialectic process of "othering" religious principles. Its identity, in a sense, is defined more by what it is against than what it is for.

Next, upon analyzing the *devil* terms in Keller's text, it is found that his discourse in *The Reason for God* takes on a distinct form, primarily noticeable through his choice of negative terms for the cluster group *existence*. The presence of scientific terms like "natural selection" (Keller 26–136), "skepticism" (138), "secularism" (xiv), and "evolution" (26, 56, 84, 140) distinguishes his religious perspective from the scientific outlook. Simultaneously, he underscores the limitations of the scientific method by associating it with doubt, uncertainty, and impersonality, which is inherent in these terms. However, it is also worth noting the words Keller associates with the human condition, such as "problems" (xvii, 7, 22, 22, 237), "self-improvement" (57), "far-fetched" (229, 229, 230), "very active in seeking" (237), and "justify" (63, 154, 155). This word choice suggests that Keller views the existence of god or humans as inherently problematic, even somewhat absurd. For him, life seems to be a perpetual quest for self-improvement and a continuous search for meaning and justification. Keller's combination of these two types of terms—the scientific and the experiential—suggests that he finds the scientific worldview, typically associated with secularism and skepticism, to be lacking. Its emphasis on empirical evidence and objectivity, he seems to imply, can often miss out on the richness, complexity, and struggle of human life, rendering it far-fetched, improbable, or even meaningless. In this sense, Keller can be seen as advocating for a complementary role of religion in human life (88–89). He implies that while science is adept at explaining natural phenomena, religion is crucial in providing meaning, moral framework, and emotional solace in the face of existential dilemmas and human suffering. For instance, he writes, "A faith without some doubts is like a human body

without any antibodies in it" (17). This quote underscores his view that faith and religion are not about blind belief but rather about engaging deeply with the most profound questions and challenges of human existence.

While Keller acknowledges the language of science, he seems to argue that it is insufficient in capturing the full breadth of human experience, particularly the struggles inherent in existence. There is an implicit argument here that the secular scientific worldview might be too limited or even problematic, and therefore, a religious perspective, offering purpose, meaning, and a moral framework, might be necessary for a fulfilling human existence. People who blithely go through life too busy or indifferent to ask hard questions about why they believe as they do will find themselves defenseless against either the experience of tragedy or the probing questions of a smart skeptic" (Keller 17). This quote exemplifies Keller's nuanced understanding of existence that is fraught with struggles, doubts, and questions and a recognition of the insufficiency of secular worldviews to address these issues.

The *devil* terms for the cluster theme *human behavior* reveals Dawkins's use of terms such as "action" (407), "consequences" (426), "wisdom" (364), "evil" (392), "history" (145), "hope" (330–331) and others more within negative contexts in *The Greatest Show on Earth*. Dawkins, as a renowned biologist and atheistic philosopher, frequently delves into discussions surrounding determinism and free will. However, his use of these human-centric terms as negative suggests a deeper level of cynicism or even nihilism, a stark contrast to the generally empowering or neutral tone often associated with scientific discourse about human action and its consequences. This dichotomy might be reflective of deterministic views, which Dawkins does not fully subscribe to: "[…] genetic programming of our lives is not fully deterministic" (PBS.org "Richard Dawkins"). Determinism suggests that all events, including moral

choices, are ultimately determined by previously existing causes (Britannica 2022). In a conversation with physicist Lawrence Krauss, Dawkins noted, "We are survival machines—robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes. This is a truth which still fills me with astonishment" (Dawkins "The Selfish Gene" 1989). This assertion aligns with his use of terms like "action," "consequences," and "hope" as negative, reinforcing his stance that human actions while appearing significant to us, may be little more than the mechanistic output of our genetic programming.

On the other hand, Timothy Keller puts forth a traditional Christian worldview—evident upon analyzing the *devil* terms for the thematic cluster *human behavior*—that underscores human frailty and sinful nature. His choice of words, such as "evil," "suffering," "misery," "doubt," and "deceit," used as negative terms to describe human behavior, are rooted in the concept of original sin, an intrinsic aspect of Christian theology (Keller 2008). This emphasis on negative human behaviors could be seen as a reflection of the complex history of Christianity in America. For instance, historian Mark Noll suggests that American evangelicalism, including Keller's brand of reformed Christianity, has long wrestled with the sins of racism and exploitation, with white Christians often failing to challenge or even perpetuating these systemic injustices (418–420). However, attributing Keller's rhetoric directly to white America's exploitation of Black labor would necessitate a much more detailed analysis, considering the broad scope and depth of these historical injustices. Nevertheless, it shows all the hallmarks of such a tendency, as further substantiated by other terms such as "ruthless" (30), "greed" (58), "betrayal" (29), "bitterness" (28), "despair" (30), "destructive ways" (197), and "flawed" (53) that he uses to cast human behavior in a negative light.

In this context, the consistent use of negative terms to describe human behavior can be seen as a means of underscoring Christianity's salvific message. By presenting human nature as inherently flawed, he sets up Christianity as a redemptive force, an 'absolute non-corruptible entity,' thus creating a stark division between the faith and secular worldviews. This framing of human behavior and Christianity's role aligns with the Burkean idea of identification and division, where rhetoric serves to highlight a shared identity among the 'ingroup', that is, Christians, while simultaneously creating a divide with the 'outgroup' or non-Christians (Burke "A Rhetoric of Motives" 20–24).

Next, the researcher analyzed the *devil* terms in *The Greatest Show on Earth* for the thematic cluster *reality and the world*. Dawkins employs terms such as "life" (408), "purpose" (371), "change" (37), "time," "generations," and "philosophy," among others in a way that suggests a worldview of existential nihilism. For Dawkins, reality and existence lack any intrinsic "meaning" or "point" (Vernon 2013), akin to the nihilistic perspective found in philosophical discourses, such as that of Friedrich Nietzsche who asserted, "There are no facts, only interpretations" (Nietzsche 458). Some have posited alternative conceptions of reality, such as physicist Andrei Linde's suggestion of a 'self-aware' universe (Linde 230–231). These different viewpoints illustrate the breadth of thought within the scientific community, challenging the monolithic portrayal of science.

Despite his groundbreaking work in biology and his tireless advocacy for the power and importance of the scientific method, Dawkins identifies "philosophy" and "language" as negative terms. This perspective aligns with the existentialist philosophy of Albert Camus, who argued that life is inherently absurd, with human attempts to find meaning or value doomed to fail (Camus 96–97). Dawkins's stance

could be seen as suggesting that the tools human beings have created to understand and communicate with their world, such as language and philosophy, are ultimately ineffectual. However, this viewpoint could appear contradictory. As prominent physicist and mathematician Sir Roger Penrose has noted, language and philosophy are inextricably tied to the process of scientific inquiry, and these fields have contributed greatly to scientific advancements (888–889).

Subsequently, for the thematic cluster *appeal to human emotion and experience*, the researcher analyzed *The Greatest Show on Earth* for the presence of Burkean *devil* terms. Firstly, Dawkins's use of "belief" and "believe" as negative terms reflects his stance towards faith-based understanding, which contrasts with the evidence-based reasoning that underpins scientific inquiry. This aligns with Dawkins's well-known position as a staunch atheist and an advocate of scientific education, as expressed in his previous works like *The God Delusion*. However, a contradiction arises when considering the scientific ethos of remaining open to new evidence and findings, even when they challenge established beliefs. As the philosopher of science Karl Popper posited, Science is a "system of hypotheses" or a way of thinking much more than it is a "body of knowledge" (Popper 318). This approach may also contradict Dawkins's portrayal of "confidence" and "direct" as negative, suggesting an aversion to conviction and straightforwardness. This perspective could also suggest a nuanced understanding of how scientific knowledge should be communicated, highlighted by the negative connotations attached to "blown apart" and "tiny bit." The phrasing critiques the idea of dismantling complex theories or concepts without providing sufficient information for an informed judgment, a sentiment echoed by cognitive psychologist and popular science author Steven Pinker, who asserts the importance of clear and nuanced science communication (Pinker 53).

What follows next is the analysis of *devil* terms in Keller's *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* for the same thematic cluster *appeal to human emotions and experience*. The author seeks to explain and rationalize religious belief to a secular audience, utilizing both theological and philosophical arguments (xiii–xxvii). However, a close examination of the language used reveals that many terms traditionally associated with science and rationalism, such as "universal" (19), "impersonal" (209), "empirical" (118), and "rational" (84) are employed negatively. This usage is significant as these terms are not merely indicative of atheism or scientific methodology but are fundamental to our modern understanding of the world. These terms also carry an inherent universalizing ability, allowing different individuals, regardless of their cultural or personal background, to engage with and comprehend them. Keller's portrayal of these terms as "*devil* terms" highlights a tension between science and religion. In doing so, Keller possibly aligns unconsciously with conservative Christian ideology, which often critiques scientific rationalism for undermining religious belief. This stance is prevalent among white American conservatives, who have shown a trend towards rejecting mainstream science when it conflicts with their religious or political beliefs (Gauchat 167–187). This rhetoric often finds expression in the rejection of certain scientific theories or concepts, such as evolution or climate change (Evans 368–385). Moreover, Keller's dismissal of "active seeking" through historical, narrative, and didactic methods as a way of understanding God further highlights this divide. Active seeking implies questioning, a process fundamental to the scientific method. By discouraging this, Keller seems to be advocating for a more passive acceptance of religious doctrine, mediated by religious authority figures such as pastors.

Though Tim Keller advocates as a modern theological critic, his use of certain words as negative puts him into the list of the most conservative, even anti-science, though he has favored the 'third camp', a theological centrist stance (xxiii). Keller considers that human emotions and experience have to be appealed to in ways that are not "universal," "impersonal," "empirical," "objective," and "unknowable" contrary to not just atheism but everyday life, too. He goes on to demonize the rational appeal to human senses to the extent that he does not consider how religion appeals to human emotions should be "true" (xxiii–3), "rational," and "intellectual" (156) and "logical" (118). Furthermore, he rejects any idea of appealing to God through historical, narrative, and didactical methods through active seeking, as opposed to passive seeking through a mediatory such as a Church pastor. This unconsciously reveals the deep White ultraconservatism prevalent in the US, the fervent supporters of which reject science to the extent of absurdity.

Discussion

Upon analyzing the god and *devil* terms in both texts for the four thematic clusters: *existence*, *human behavior*, *reality and the world*, and *appeal to emotions and experience*, four major tendencies emerged in both the primary texts. These four tendencies can be understood using Kenneth Burke's theory of identification and division, which posits that rhetoric's primary function is not just persuasion, but the identification of 'us' versus 'them' and the navigation of shared substances or interests (Burke 20). The four tendencies that emerged from the analysis are as follows: "contradiction with self" (Burkean division with self), "complementing the 'other'" (Burkean identification with the 'other'), "catering to the target audience" (Burkean identification with self), and "rejecting the other" (Burkean division with the other).

The concept of self-division, as put forth by Burke, implies an inherent contradiction within an individual's or text's identity, leading to a fracturing of unity and an ideological conflict (Burke "A Rhetoric of Motives" 25). Both Dawkins and Keller exhibit this internal contradiction through their rhetoric and argumentative positioning. In the case of Dawkins, a noted proponent of evolutionary biology and scientific rationality, he uses *god* terms such as "random mutation" and "second law of thermodynamics" to advocate for his scientific worldview (Dawkins 130–145). However, these terms, in essence, reveal a contradiction. "Random mutation," while being a core component of evolutionary biology, implies a form of determinism that challenges the supposed objectivity and predictability of the scientific world (130). It presents an image of the world that is subject to chance and randomness, contrasting with Dawkins's own endorsement of a strictly rational and empirical scientific methodology. Furthermore, the invocation of the "second law of thermodynamics" suggests an inevitably bleak future for humanity, hinting at a doomsday theory (145). While the law itself—a fundamental principle in physics—states that in an isolated system, entropy will always increase over time, its application to human existence seems to depict a fatalistic worldview, contradicting Dawkins's claim of scientific progress and understanding as a beacon of hope for humanity.

Likewise, Keller, a stalwart of modern Christian theology, presents a paradox in his discourse. Keller frequently emphasizes the importance of a personal relationship with God. Nevertheless, he simultaneously describes God as 'unknowable,' a term that suggests an inherent distance or inaccessibility (Keller 56). This distancing contradicts the Christian concept of God as a personal, relational entity. By underscoring the mystery and transcendence of God, Keller inadvertently sets up a barrier between God and believers, a move that contradicts his own assertion

of the intimacy between God and His followers (62). These occurrences of self-division in Dawkins's and Keller's texts reveal the inherent complexities of ideological discourse. While attempting to establish a cohesive, robust worldview, both authors inadvertently introduce contradictions, highlighting the intricacies and paradoxes inherent in any form of discursive argumentation.

The second dimension to the texts is the Burkean concept of identification with the other. As Burke (1969) states, identification is rooted in division; we acknowledge an 'other' as distinct and then identify with it to some degree (21). This phenomenon is clearly discernible in the writings of both Dawkins and Keller, albeit manifested in a nuanced way. In his work, *The Reason for God,* Keller, despite being a profound theological critic, recognizes the importance of empirical and rational concepts (62). These principles are typically associated with a scientific and secular worldview, the very ideology that Keller often critiques. However, his acknowledgment of these concepts illustrates his understanding of their relevance in contemporary discourse. This kind of understanding is crucial for engaging with faith in the context of a culture heavily influenced by scientific reasoning and empirical data. While Keller views these terms negatively, his mention and integration of them into his argumentative framework resemble a type of identification with the 'other'. It is an acknowledgment that he is dealing with a counter-discourse that has its own validity and resonance within its cultural context.

A similar tendency can be observed in Dawkins's *The Greatest Show on Earth*. Dawkins doesn't refrain from using religious terminology (Dawkins 45); he resorts to extensive religious language to express his arguments. Although Dawkins uses these terms negatively, their usage signifies a form of identification with the opposing religious discourse. The use of the 'other's' language, even in a negative

light, attests to a shared acknowledgment of each other's linguistic and conceptual frameworks. This commonality shows how both Dawkins and Keller, in their unique ways, contribute to a discursive space where opposing ideologies are not merely rejected outright but are engaged with, critiqued, and ultimately, understood better. This form of identification with the 'other' underlines a deep-seated interconnectedness between seemingly diametrically opposed discourses, highlighting the complex interplay of identification and division that characterizes rhetorical exchanges.

The third facet of the Burkean construct of identification emerges from the analysis of "identification with self." This dimension reflects how both authors leverage the power of language to appeal to their target audience strategically. This tactic allows the authors to resonate with their readers' preexisting knowledge and beliefs, thereby creating a form of consubstantiality. In *The Greatest Show on Earth*, Dawkins extensively employs scientific terminology and concepts to enhance his arguments for evolution and to cater to a readership primarily comprising scientifically-minded individuals or those interested in empirical evidence (45). The author's language aims to resonate with his audience's shared belief in scientific rationality, fostering a sense of unity and shared understanding between the author and reader.

On the other hand, in *The Reason for God*, Keller draws heavily on Christian theological concepts to craft his arguments, catering to an audience largely composed of believers or those seeking a more profound understanding of the Christian faith (70). Keller's usage of concepts like 'unknowable God', 'personal relationship with God' emphasizes the importance of faith and spiritual exploration in Christian theology (56–62). Keller's chosen terminology reinforces his religious arguments

while simultaneously building a sense of shared understanding and community among his readers who identify with the Christian faith.

The final tendency revealed through the Burkean analysis is 'division with the other', as manifested in their explicit rejection of contrasting worldviews. Both authors employ specific language to construct the opposing viewpoint as the 'other', fostering a form of division through their texts. Richard Dawkins, in *The Greatest Show on Earth*, demonstrates this tendency by categorizing religious terms as '*devil* terms', therefore implicitly rejecting the religious worldview (Dawkins 50). An examination of his god and *devil* terms reveals a distinct bias towards empirical and rational concepts, with a concurrent negative view of spiritual or religious constructs. Terms such as "belief," "believe," and "alleged" are associated with a lack of empirical evidence and are therefore devalued in his discourse (130). This linguistic categorization serves as a clear rhetorical strategy to dismiss religious faith as ungrounded and inferior to scientific reasoning.

Likewise, Timothy Keller employs a similar strategy but against empirical and rational concepts, which he frames as *devil* terms, clearly signaling a repudiation of the scientific atheistic worldview (Keller 70). For instance, he frames terms such as "universal," "impersonal," "empirical," and "objective" negatively. His language points towards an inherent skepticism towards empirical knowledge and scientific rationality (Keller 56). This linguistic maneuver serves to undermine the legitimacy of the scientific atheistic worldview and thereby reinforces his own theological position.

In both cases, Dawkins and Keller reject the opposing viewpoint through their rhetorical and linguistic choices. This rejection serves to solidify their arguments within their respective discourses and reaffirm the ideological positions of their target

audience. By focusing on what they are not, they clarify and strengthen what they are, creating a sense of unity among their readers against the shared 'other'.

As evident, finding common ground between religion and science has always been a rich area of scholarly investigation. Though seemingly dichotomous, these domains share rhetorical similarities, reflecting the inherent human pursuit of understanding the world and our place within it. Scholars such as Gould (1999) and Haught (2010) have proposed perspectives that aim to harmonize these two domains, asserting that they serve non-overlapping but equally essential roles in human existence.

Drawing from the analysis of Dawkins's and Keller's texts, it is observed that despite their differing ideological perspectives, both authors utilize similar rhetorical strategies, such as the use of god and *devil* terms to appeal to human emotions and experiences. This reveals a shared purpose of both scientific atheism and Christian theology: to engage, persuade, and connect with their audience (Gould 161; Haught 94). Even though their concepts and methodologies diverge, their fundamental objective is to provide answers to existential questions, instill a sense of purpose, and help individuals navigate their lives.

Both scientific atheism and Christian theology aim to explore the nature of existence, albeit in different ways. Dawkins emphasizes the scientific method's pursuit of empirical truth, appealing to human reasoning and the need for concrete evidence (Dawkins 45). Conversely, Keller prioritizes spiritual experiences and faith, highlighting the value of personal relationships with the divine and moral absolutes in understanding existence (Keller 56). Despite their contrasting approaches, both narratives engage in the pursuit of meaning—an intrinsic aspect of the human condition.

The higher purpose of both science and religion also becomes evident in their shared commitment to providing a framework for understanding the world. Dawkins's scientific atheism values the natural world's exploration, advocating for continuous learning and understanding through empirical evidence (Dawkins 145). On the other hand, Keller's Christian theology provides a moral and spiritual framework, guiding believers on how to live a purposeful life based on divine law (Keller 62). The rhetorical similarities between ideologically contrasting artifacts like Dawkins and Keller's texts indicate a shared purpose. Despite their ideological divergence, they both seek to engage with existential questions and offer a means to navigate life's complexities. Whether through the lens of empirical investigation or spiritual faith, these discourses address the fundamental human need for understanding, purpose, and connection.

This inquiry significantly enhances the field of rhetorical criticism, elucidating shared rhetorical strategies within polemical dialogues, notably those between scientific atheism and (post)modern theology. Utilizing Burkean theory, it disentangles the complexities of how god and *devil* terms function to delineate, and surprisingly, to bridge disparate discourses, demonstrating the simultaneous identification and division at work. The investigation imparts an innovative comprehension of how distinct texts, despite ideological divergence, engage in discourse and exhibit shared rhetorical echoes. This comprehension fosters a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms of concurrence and divergence operating within adversarial discourses. Consequently, this study broadens the scope of rhetorical criticism, illuminating the complexities of polemical dialogues, thereby potentially catalyzing discussions between seemingly irreconcilable ideologies.

However, despite that the research contributes to the shared rhetorical strategies of opposing ideologies, it has several limitations. Primarily, the scope of the analysis was confined to two representative texts, limiting the generalizability of the findings. The diverse spectrum of atheistic and theistic discourses extends far beyond Dawkins's and Keller's perspectives. Furthermore, the study employed Burkean rhetoric as the primary analytical lens, which might overlook other rhetorical or linguistic strategies at play. Additionally, the categorization of god and *devil* terms is somewhat subjective and could vary depending on the interpreter's perspective. Lastly, the research focused predominantly on the linguistic elements of the texts and did not thoroughly consider the broader sociopolitical and cultural contexts influencing these discourses. Consequently, future studies could expand the scope, incorporate additional analytical frameworks, and take into account broader contextual factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these complex discourses.

Conclusion

To sum up, this research presents a comprehensive rhetorical analysis of two ideologically opposing texts: Richard Dawkins's *The Greatest Show on Earth* and Timothy Keller's *The Reason for God*. By applying Burkean rhetoric of identification and division as the primary analytical framework, the research explored the dynamics of these antagonistic discourses in light of their thematic clusters: *existence*, *human behavior*, *reality and the world*, and *appeal to emotions and experience*. The results yielded a multifaceted perspective on the communicative strategies employed by both Dawkins and Keller. Despite their ideological opposition, the texts displayed similar rhetorical patterns, underlining the existence of a shared communicative ground. Four distinct tendencies emerged from this analysis: textual self-contradiction,

complementing the 'other,' catering to their target audience, and rejection of the 'other.' These patterns hint at a more nuanced interaction between scientific atheism and Christian theology than is typically acknowledged.

While both texts decidedly reject the respective 'other,' the complexities of their rhetorical strategies reveal a subtle identification with the other's linguistic and conceptual frameworks. This indicates a shared acknowledgment of the essential role both science and religion play in understanding human existence and the world. The research underscores the potential for establishing a constructive dialogue between these diametrically opposing viewpoints. Through identifying shared rhetorical strategies, the analysis highlights areas where these discourses intersect, opening up opportunities for mutual understanding and coexistence. It is through understanding and acknowledging these shared linguistic structures and strategies that the perceived boundaries between science and religion can begin to blur.

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