



“
the students were
not pleased to
hear the word
soul, and Nick
Paraguay declared
he hadn't come
along for religious
instruction
”

Let's suppose that the crisis isn't over, and that the atheism of the young is still good, because it is conscientious.

But there's another kind of atheism, and this kind is negative. Its proponents are middle-aged men, who are probably trying to regain their youth. *Ad hominem*? Come on! D'you think you can isolate the attitude from the hair graft? You don't find women of the same age making such a pose of non-belief, so this is clearly a problem of masculinity and would be quite funny – if only these men didn't get taken pretty seriously. Their governor is called Richard Dawkins.

Dawkins' book *The Selfish Gene* (1978) was an explanation for the lay reader of Darwinism at the level of genetic activity, and a good book too, since Dawkins was here writing of something he knew about. Through natural selection, genes perpetuate their own survival *by means* of animal life: the animal is the 'survival machine' of the gene over successive generations. The human individual has no special place in such a scheme and indeed Dawkins declared that his interest was solely in behaviour, not psychology, or consciousness. No souls for the zoologist. To Dawkins, human existence was interesting only in terms of its species quality. Yet this book couldn't help resorting to figures of conscious human purpose to illustrate blind genetic processes, and in doing this *The Selfish Gene* was admitting that a purely genetic or natural account is inadequate for human needs.

In a recent book, *The God Delusion* (2006), Dawkins seems to be taking revenge on the existence of these needs, arguing that the existence of God