

Certainty is a funny kind of concept, really. On the one hand, if someone says to you: 'You can't be certain of anything in this life', all you have to say is: 'Are you certain of that?' On the other hand, absolute and total certainty belongs only to the insane. Or to extremists – which is the same thing.

Doubt is often a good thing. We can learn a lot from animals in this regard: they symbolize our own deep inner instincts. If an animal – especially a domesticated one – hesitates, or seems to doubt, it's because they're not sure whether a person or a situation is good or bad, helpful or harmful. If there's something that animals really don't like, you can bet that it's not good for us, either. Like fireworks. Animals are not an inferior species – they're not inferior at all- they're different. Gandhi said you can judge a civilisation on the way it treats its animals. They, like us, are of God – but they're better at it than we are.

Doubt is not the opposite of faith. The opposite of faith, of belief, is knowledge. If you know something, you don't need to believe it. Do you believe, do you have faith that the sun is hot? Of course not – you don't have to believe, you know. Science has given you proof.

This was Thomas's big mistake. Despite the fact that he has passed into language as 'Doubting Thomas', he didn't doubt at all. He flatly refused to believe without proof. He should be the patron saint of scientists – especially Richard Dawkins, who reduces every great work of art, every grand symphony – or even the Boom

Town Rats, come to that – every classical building, every book ever written on any subject whatsoever and the passionate of all the world's greatest romantic lovers – to the meaningless effect of a primal biological squirt.

What Dawkins (and others) fail to understand, is that science and religion – I'd rather say 'spiritual faith' – are actually very good friends... but they have different roles to play. Science tells us what is a thing is, but faith tells us what it means. Look at your wedding ring. What would science say about it?

It would be described as a metallic compound composed primarily of the element gold (Au) in its pure form or alloyed with other metals. Gold is often alloyed with other metals to improve its properties. Common alloying metals include copper, silver, and palladium. The composition of the alloy affects the ring's colour, hardness, and durability.

Is that what it would mean to you? Absolutely not. It has a richness and a depth and an emotional-symbolic meaning that goes way, way beyond any chemical analysis. Thomas was demanding proof – he should have been looking for meaning. So should we, of course.