

FOREWORD

NIETZSCHE REMARKED THAT OF all the animals man is the one that has “most dangerously strayed from its instincts.” He had a full range of uniquely human propensities in mind, but among these is the widespread impulse to believe in realities that transcend the natural world. Nearly nine out of every ten people living harbor some variety of religious belief. Though the beliefs themselves differ widely, a common thread is the conviction of some metaphysically and axiologically ultimate reality that infuses human existence with meaning and determines the nature and course of the human Good Life. This is a feature of human nature that calls for explanation. One sort of explanation finds the source of this widespread religious impulse in certain naturally occurring human propensities, and thus seeks to undercut both the religious beliefs and whatever experiences have spawned them. Thus, Daniel Dennett has recently suggested that the religion “meme” is a kind of self-replicating mental parasite that has infested the human mind not wholly unlike the way liver flukes infest the brains of ants. Fluke-infested ants do crazy things like climb to the tips of the grass where they are readily eaten by grazing cattle and sheep who become the new and unwitting hosts of these parasites. Humans infested with the religion meme sometimes (and sometimes do not) exhibit similarly bizarre—and sometimes self-destructive—behaviors, such as climbing atop pillars to sit in meditation for decades, or choosing to be raised up on crosses over denying their faith. Of course, if we begin with the assumption that “We exist as material beings in a material world, all of whose phenomena are the consequences of physical relations among material entities,” as Richard Lewontin once dogmatically insisted, that is, if we assume the truth of naturalism, then *some* such undercutting explanation of religious belief is correct. Lewontin, of course, is determined to prevent any “divine foot” from gaining entrance to the world.

But whether anything like naturalism is true is a part of the question at hand. Another possibility is that so many of us believe in some sort of religious reality because some such thing is there to be perceived—even if only through a glass and darkly. Augustine confessed, “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.” He would have us believe that there is a longing in the human heart, and that longing points to an object that alone can satisfy it, namely, the very Creator who has placed eternity in our hearts. If Bertrand Russell thought it a “strange mystery” that nature, “in her secular hurrying,” should have “brought forth at last a child, subject still to her power, but gifted with sight, with knowledge of good and evil, with the capacity of judging all the works of his unthinking Mother,” it is stranger still that the child should have strayed from his instincts and found himself in need of things that cannot be afforded by that mother.

C. S. Lewis’s “Argument from Desire” takes its cue from such observations. Lewis argues that the best explanation for the human experience of “joy” and the accompanying longing for the transcendent and permanent is found in the Judeo-Christian creation narrative. Theism explains—where naturalism explains *away*—this nearly universal feature of human nature.

Until now, Lewis’s interesting argument has largely been neglected by apologists making a case for Christian theism. But I believe the Argument from Desire has a rightful place within a comprehensive “cumulative case” argument for theism, and I am delighted that Joe Puckett’s *The Apologetics of Joy* fills this gap by developing the argument and defending it against its detractors. *The Apologetics of Joy* is, to my knowledge, the first book-length treatment of Lewis’s argument, and I am happy to commend it to his readers.

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