

Religion Explained The Evolutionary Origins Of Religious Thought Pascal Boyer

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[The Human Swarm](#) Oxford University Press

Around the world and throughout history, in cultures as diverse as ancient Mesopotamia and modern America, human beings have been compelled by belief in gods and developed complex religions around them. But why? What makes belief in supernatural beings so widespread? And why are the gods of so many different people so similar in nature? This provocative book explains the origins and persistence of religious ideas by looking through the lens of science at the common structures and functions of human thought. The first general introduction to the "cognitive science of religion," *Minds and Gods* presents the major themes, theories, and thinkers involved in this revolutionary new approach to human religiosity. Arguing that we cannot understand what we think until we first understand how we think, the book sets out to study the evolutionary forces that modeled the modern human mind and continue to shape our ideas and actions today. Todd Tremlin details many of the adapted features of the brain -- illustrating their operation with examples of everyday human behavior -- and shows how mental endowments inherited from our ancestral past lead many people to naturally entertain religious ideas. In short, belief in gods and the social formation of religion have their genesis in biology, in powerful cognitive processes that all humans share. In the course of illuminating the nature of religion, this book also sheds light on human nature: why we think we do the things we do and how the reasons for these things are so often hidden from view. This discussion ranges broadly across recent scientific findings in areas such as paleoanthropology, primate studies, evolutionary psychology, early brain development, and cultural transmission. While these subjects are complex, the story is told here in a conversational style that is engaging, jargon free, and accessible to all readers. With *Minds and Gods*, Tremlin offers a roadmap to a fascinating and growing field of study, one that is sure to generate interest and debate and provide readers with a better understanding of themselves and their beliefs.

[On the Origin of Stories](#) Penguin

Tradition is a central concept in the social sciences, but it is commonly treated as unproblematic. Dr. Boyer insists that social anthropology requires a theory of tradition, its constitution and transmission. He treats tradition "as a type of interaction which results in the repetition of certain communicative events," and therefore as a form of social action. Tradition as Truth and Communication deals particularly with oral communication and focuses on the privileged role of licensed speakers and the ritual contexts in which certain aspects of tradition are characteristically transmitted. Drawing on cognitive psychology, Dr. Boyer proposes a set of general hypotheses to be tested by ethnographic field research. He has opened up an important new field for investigation within social anthropology.

[The Cognitive Foundations of Religion](#) Univ of California Press

"How do gods and spirits come to feel vividly real to people-as if they were standing right next to them? Humans tend to see supernatural agents everywhere, as the cognitive science of religion has shown. But it isn't easy to maintain a sense that there are invisible spirits who care about you. In *How God Becomes Real*, acclaimed anthropologist and scholar of religion T. M. Luhmann argues that people must work incredibly hard to make gods real and that this effort-by changing the people who do it and giving them the benefits they seek from invisible others-helps to explain the enduring power of faith"--

[Evolving Brains, Emerging Gods](#) Bloomsbury Publishing

This ambitious, interdisciplinary book seeks to explain the origins of religion using our knowledge of the evolution of cognition. A cognitive anthropologist and psychologist, Scott Atran argues that religion is a by-product of human evolution just as the cognitive intervention, cultural selection, and historical survival of religion is an accommodation of certain existential and moral elements that have evolved in the human condition.

[Cultural Evolution](#) Random House

Brian Boyd explains why we tell stories and how our minds are shaped to understand them. After considering art as adaptation, Boyd examines Homer's *Odyssey* and Dr. Seuss's *Horton Hears a Who!* demonstrating how an evolutionary lens can offer new understanding and appreciation of specific works.

Published for the bicentenary of Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *Origin of Species*, Boyd's study embraces a Darwinian view of human nature and art, and offers a credo for a new humanism.

[The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society](#) Oxford University Press

Written by leading theorists and empirical researchers, this book presents new ways of addressing the old question: Why did religion first emerge and then continue to evolve in all human societies? The authors of the book--each with a different background across the social sciences and humanities--assimilate conceptual leads and empirical findings from anthropology, evolutionary biology, evolutionary sociology, neurology, primate behavioral studies, explanations of human interaction and group dynamics, and a wide range of religious scholarship to construct a deeper and more powerful explanation of the origins and subsequent evolutionary development of religions than can currently be found in what is now vast literature. While explaining religion has been a central question in many disciplines for a long time, this book draws upon a much wider array of literature to develop a robust and cross-disciplinary analysis of religion. The book remains true to its subtitle by emphasizing an array of both biological and sociocultural forms of selection dynamics that are fundamental to explaining religion as a universal institution in human societies. In addition to Darwinian selection, which can explain the biology and neurology of religion, the book outlines a set of four additional types of sociocultural natural selection that can fill out the explanation of why religion first emerged as an institutional system in human societies, and why it has continued to evolve over the last 300,000 years of societal evolution. These sociocultural forms of natural selection are labeled by the names of the early sociologists who first emphasized them, and they can be seen as a necessary supplement to the type of natural selection theorized by Charles Darwin. Explanations of religion that remain in the shadow cast by Darwin's great insights will, it is argued, remain narrow and incomplete when explaining a robust sociocultural phenomenon like religion.

[How the Christ-Like God Revealed Himself to Mankind](#) Religion ExplainedThe Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought

"Marvelously funny and provocative."—Publishers Weekly Why do 70 percent of Americans believe in angels, while others are convinced that they were abducted by aliens? What makes people believe in improbable things when all the evidence points to the contrary? And don't almost all of us, at some time or another, engage in magical thinking?In *Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast*, evolutionary biologist Lewis Wolpert delves into the important and timely debate over the nature of belief, looking at its psychological foundations to discover just what evolutionary purpose it could serve. Wolpert takes us through all that science can tell us about the beliefs we feel are instinctive. He deftly explores different types of belief—those of children, of the religious, and of those suffering from psychiatric disorders—and he asks whether it is possible to live without belief, or whether it is a necessary component of a functioning society.

[Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom](#) Routledge

Evolution, Games, and God explores how cooperation and altruism, alongside mutation and natural selection, play a critical role in evolution, from microbes to human societies. Inheriting a tendency to cooperate and self-sacrifice on behalf of others may be as beneficial to a population's survival as the self-preserving instincts of individuals.

[The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Ethics and Violence](#) Prometheus Books

[Religion ExplainedThe Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought](#)Basic Books

[Religion as a Natural Phenomenon](#) Basic Books

The epic story and ultimate big history of how human society evolved from intimate chimp communities into the sprawling civilizations of a world-dominating species If a chimpanzee ventures into the territory of a different group, it will almost certainly be killed. But a New Yorker can fly to Los Angeles--or Borneo--with very little fear. Psychologists have done little to explain this: for years, they have held that our biology puts a hard upper limit--about 150 people--on the size of our social groups. But human societies are in fact vastly larger. How do we manage--by and large--to get along with each other? In this paradigm-shattering book, biologist Mark W. Moffett draws on findings in psychology, sociology and anthropology to explain the social adaptations that bind societies. He explores how the tension between identity and anonymity defines how societies develop, function, and fail. Surpassing Guns, Germs, and Steel and Sapiens, *The Human Swarm* reveals how mankind created sprawling civilizations of unrivaled complexity--and what it will take to sustain them.

[Religion Explained?](#) Wiley-Blackwell

"A dazzlingly erudite synthesis of history, philosophy, anthropology, genetics, sociology, economics, epidemiology, statistics, and more" (Frank Bruni, *The New York Times*), *Blueprint* shows why evolution has placed us on a humane path -- and how we are united by our common humanity. For too long, scientists have focused on the dark side of our biological heritage: our capacity for aggression, cruelty, prejudice, and self-interest. But natural selection has given us a suite of beneficial social features, including our capacity for love, friendship, cooperation, and learning. Beneath all of our inventions -- our tools, farms, machines, cities, nations -- we carry

with us innate proclivities to make a good society. In *Blueprint*, Nicholas A. Christakis introduces the compelling idea that our genes affect not only our bodies and behaviors, but also the ways in which we make societies, ones that are surprisingly similar worldwide. With many vivid examples -- including diverse historical and contemporary cultures, communities formed in the wake of shipwrecks, commune dwellers seeking utopia, online groups thrown together by design or involving artificially intelligent bots, and even the tender and complex social arrangements of elephants and dolphins that so resemble our own -- Christakis shows that, despite a human history replete with violence, we cannot escape our social blueprint for goodness. In a world of increasing political and economic polarization, it's tempting to ignore the positive role of our evolutionary past. But by exploring the ancient roots of goodness in civilization, *Blueprint* shows that our genes have shaped societies for our welfare and that, in a feedback loop stretching back many thousands of years, societies are still shaping our genes today.

[The Evolutionary Origins of Faith and Religion](#) Harvard University Press

In this long-awaited book, pre-eminent analytical philosopher Alvin Plantinga argues that the conflict between science and theistic religion is actually superficial, and that at a deeper level they are in concord. By Means of Natural Selection BRILL

This book presents a detailed argument to support the view that religion as a cultural practice cannot be properly explained without knowledge of the evolved cognitive mechanisms by which humans process information. This publication has also been published in paperback, please click here for details.

[The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Ethics and Violence](#) University of Michigan Press

Many of our questions about religion, says renowned anthropologist Pascal Boyer, are no longer mysteries. We are beginning to know how to answer questions such as "Why do people have religion?" Using findings from anthropology, cognitive science, linguistics, and evolutionary biology, *Religion Explained* shows how this aspect of human consciousness is increasingly admissible to coherent, naturalistic explanation. This brilliant and controversial book gives readers the first scientific explanation for what religious feeling is really about, what it consists of, and where it comes from.

[Towards a New Cognitive Science of Religion](#) Routledge

In his bestselling *The Moral Animal*, Robert Wright applied the principles of evolutionary biology to the study of the human mind. Now Wright attempts something even more ambitious: explaining the direction of evolution and human history -- and discerning where history will lead us next. In *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny*, Wright asserts that, ever since the primordial ooze, life has followed a basic pattern. Organisms and human societies alike have grown more complex by mastering the challenges of internal cooperation. Wright's narrative ranges from fossilized bacteria to vampire bats, from stone-age villages to the World Trade Organization, uncovering such surprises as the benefits of barbarian hordes and the useful stability of feudalism. Here is history endowed with moral significance -- a way of looking at our biological and cultural evolution that suggests, refreshingly, that human morality has improved over time, and that our instinct to discover meaning may itself serve a higher purpose. Insightful, witty, profound, *Nonzero* offers breathtaking implications for what we believe and how we adapt to technology's ongoing transformation of the world.

[The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought](#) MIT Press

Today many school students are shielded from one of the most important concepts in modern science: evolution. In engaging and conversational style, *Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science* provides a well-structured framework for understanding and teaching evolution. Written for teachers, parents, and community officials as well as scientists and educators, this book describes how evolution reveals both the great diversity and similarity among the Earth's organisms; it explores how scientists approach the question of evolution; and it illustrates the nature of science as a way of knowing about the natural world. In addition, the book provides answers to frequently asked questions to help readers understand many of the issues and misconceptions about evolution. The book includes sample activities for teaching about evolution and the nature of science. For example, the book includes activities that investigate fossil footprints and population growth that teachers of science can use to introduce principles of evolution. Background information, materials, and step-by-step presentations are provided for each activity. In addition, this volume: Presents the evidence for evolution, including how evolution can be observed today. Explains the nature of science through a variety of examples. Describes how science differs from other human endeavors and why evolution is one of the best avenues for helping students understand this distinction. Answers frequently asked questions about evolution. *Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science* builds on the 1996 National Science Education Standards released by the National Research Council--and offers detailed guidance on how to evaluate and choose

instructional materials that support the standards. Comprehensive and practical, this book brings one of today's educational challenges into focus in a balanced and reasoned discussion. It will be of special interest to teachers of science, school administrators, and interested members of the community.

Religion in Human Evolution Princeton University Press

'... a very important book that marks a turning point in the way anthropologists think about religious ideas and practices.' Pascal Boyer, American Anthropologist

The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion Praeger

The New York Times bestseller — a “ crystal-clear, constantly engaging ” (Jared Diamond)

exploration of the role that religious belief plays in our lives and our interactions For all the thousands of books that have been written about religion, few until this one have attempted to examine it scientifically: to ask why—and how—it has shaped so many lives so strongly. Is religion a product of blind evolutionary instinct or rational choice? Is it truly the best way to live a moral life? Ranging through biology, history, and psychology, Daniel C. Dennett charts religion ' s evolution from “ wild ” folk belief to “ domesticated ” dogma. Not an antireligious screed but an unblinking look beneath the veil of orthodoxy, *Breaking the Spell* will be read and debated by believers and skeptics alike.

Nonzero Yale University Press

Noted science writer Nicholas Wade offers for the first time a convincing case based on a broad range of scientific evidence for the evolutionary basis of religion.

In Gods We Trust Princeton University Press

One of the great intellectual battles of modern times is between evolution and religion. Until now, they have been considered completely irreconcilable theories of origin and existence. David Sloan Wilson's *Darwin's Cathedral* takes the radical step of joining the two, in the process proposing an evolutionary theory of religion that shakes both evolutionary biology and social theory at their foundations. The key, argues Wilson, is to think of society as an organism, an old idea that has received new life based on recent developments in evolutionary biology. If society is an organism, can we then think of morality and religion as biologically and culturally evolved adaptations that enable human groups to function as single units rather than mere collections of individuals?

Wilson brings a variety of evidence to bear on this question, from both the biological and social sciences. From Calvinism in sixteenth-century Geneva to Balinese water temples, from hunter-gatherer societies to urban America, Wilson demonstrates how religions have enabled people to achieve by collective action what they never could do alone. He also includes a chapter considering forgiveness from an evolutionary perspective and concludes by discussing how all social organizations, including science, could benefit by incorporating elements of religion. Religious believers often compare their communities to single organisms and even to insect colonies. Astoundingly, Wilson shows that they might be literally correct. Intended for any educated reader, *Darwin's Cathedral* will change forever the way we view the relations among evolution, religion, and human society.