

ARGUMENT ON THE ONTOLOGY
REQUIRED BY NATURAL DESIRES:
FINDING THE WATER OF LIFE
WHERE OTHERS DROWN¹

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Abstract

Natural desires are among the most fundamental features of mankind. In this article six natural and fundamental desires will be covered: will to live, to be free of fear, to be happy, to have purpose, to acquire knowledge to be free of doubt, and to be treated well by others. The fulfilment of all these natural and fundamental desires requires a God-centred ontology. The best explanation for the reason why these fundamental desires that are independent from each other, all require the same ontology is that they are planted by God. In addition, the desires will be evaluated in their relation to the attributes of God, the Hereafter and religions.

Key words: Argument From Desire, Existence of God, Theism, Atheism, Naturalism, Desires

Introduction

The ontology of the Judeo-Christian tradition and of Islam is God-centred. All beings except for God owe their existence, in all its details, to Him. God is the necessary being. Everything from the galaxies to our world, from plants to animals and humans, from human consciousness to all natural desires, are all products of God's conscious creation. On the other hand, those who believe in a naturalist-atheist ontology explain all of these via "chance and necessity" and assert that the universe and its laws exist necessarily

¹ I am grateful to Richard Swinburne, Keith Ward, Rodney Holder and Enis Doko for all their comments and contributions related to this article.

and that everything from the galaxies to our world, from plants to animals and humans, from human consciousness to all natural desires are the products of chance, within the necessary framework of universal laws.² Whether theism or the naturalist-atheist approach is more rational has been and continues to be a subject of debate in philosophy under the headings of “design argument,” “cosmological argument” and “argument from consciousness.” Although such a debate has been held on the basis of human desires under the heading of “argument from desire,” this subject has not been treated as much in detail as in the above-mentioned arguments. This is a lacuna in the area, in terms of philosophy, psychology, anthropology and theology, that needs to be filled.

Human beings feel a direct desire for God; this view contains an individual experience and it is difficult to advocate and will not be included in this argument. This article will deal with the six natural and fundamental desires, the existence of which in human beings is recognised, even by many naturalist-atheists, and will draw attention to the fact that these very important and diverse desires all require God’s existence. Through the examination of this, we will see that theism is a better explanation for our desires than naturalism and respond to objections that have been brought, or may be brought, to this approach.

The Argument from Desire as a Direct Desire for God

Some theist thinkers have drawn attention to the fact that human beings have a direct desire for God. A small number of these thinkers have considered this as an argument for God’s existence, but the majority have not used it as part of an argument. Despite this, some theist thinkers have still drawn attention to the existence of such a desire within human beings, and there have been attempts to support this view via religious texts. In the famous medieval philosopher

² While there may be some that are excluded from this general definition of the theist and naturalist-atheist approaches, it can be easily said that these general definitions briefly summarise the theist and naturalist-atheist approaches. For a definition via “chance” and “necessity” of those advocating a naturalist-atheist approach: See Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972).

Augustine's *Confessions*, we observe the claim that a direct desire for God exists in all human beings:

So where and when did I experience my life of happiness, so as to remember, love and desire it? This desire is not confined to me alone, nor to me and a few others; absolutely all of us want to be happy. ...but to those only who worship you without looking for reward, because you yourself are their joy. This is the happy life, and this alone: to rejoice in you, about you and because of you. This is the life of happiness, and it is not to be found anywhere else... Now the happy life is joy in the truth; and that means joy in you, who are the truth... Everyone wants this happy life, this life which alone deserves to be called happy...³

We see that the 17th century Christian philosopher, mathematician and physicist, Blaise Pascal, presents a similar approach. Pascal says that even princes and nobles, who are in a position to fulfil almost all their worldly desires, are not able to do so, that most of our desires do not concern the world and that only God, the object of our desires, is able to fulfil these desires.

All men seek happiness. There are no exceptions... All men complain: princes, subjects, nobles, commoners, old, young, strong, weak, learned, ignorant, healthy, sick, in every country, at every time, of all ages, and all conditions... This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.⁴

Believers of the Judeo-Christian tradition cite the following verses from the Psalms, one of the most widely read parts of the Bible, as an example for the existence of a desire for God:

³ St. Augustine, *The Confessions* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 218-219.

⁴ Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (London: Penguin Classics, 1966), 74-75.

- 1- As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.
- 2- My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? (Psalms 42: 1-2).⁵

Believers in the Islamic faith cite the following verse from the Quran as proof of an innate desire for turning towards God:

For without doubt in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction(13-Rad 28).⁶

Whether the verses from the Bible and from the Quran actually indicate a natural desire for God is debatable. However, it is clear that even if such a desire exists, believers in God may say “I have turned to God, my desires are fulfilled; God is therefore the object of unfulfilled desires.” Despite this, it does not seem possible to turn these individual experiences of believers into an objective argument to be presented to non-believers. Indeed, many atheists and agnostics reject the existence of such a desire within themselves. In criticising this argument, the contemporary philosopher of religion, John Beversluis, too, has stated that it cannot be claimed that such a desire exists⁷.

Human Universals and Presentation of the Argument

To develop an objective and persuasive argument for God’s existence on the basis of desires, we must first take as starting points the natural and fundamental desires that everybody can easily agree upon. Some philosophers, anthropologists, biologists and psychologists have drawn up long lists concerning human universals; for example, in objecting to cultural relativist approaches, contemporary American anthropologist, Donald Brown, cites elements such as music, dance, gossip, hairstyles, jokes and gift-giving, as well as close to two hundred intercultural common

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2003), Psalms 42: 1-2, 469.

⁶ *The Holy Quran*, trans. A. Yusuf Ali (Durban: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 1946), 13-Rad 28, 612.

⁷ John Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2007), 56-57.

elements identified by ethnographers.⁸ Edward Wilson, considered the founder of socio-biology, a hybrid discipline, has stated that our social behaviour is founded on a biological basis. According to an extreme theory in this field, if a man and a woman who are completely unaware of cultural elements were isolated from all other human beings, they would still reinvent everything, from gambling of some kind to laws of property, from dancing to rules about incest.⁹ Those who believe that the list of human universals is very extensive and that the major part of cultural elements are a consequence of genes that humans are born with have been the target of significant criticism on the part of scientific circles. For example, influential American palaeontologist, Stephen Jay Gould, considers the socio-biological approach as “unsupported speculative storytelling” and criticises its weakness of methodology. Gould recognises that human beings are born with a genetic potential range and that there is connection between these and many cultural elements; however, he believes that it is impossible to claim that if a new community were created by destroying all existing cultural knowledge, over time this society would develop music, dance, gambling and property laws as in our day.¹⁰

Even scientists who reject long lists of human universals, and see the contents of such lists as relative and culture dependent, recognise that there is an essence that is common to all human beings, an essence that includes hunger, thirst and sexual desire, and that acts as a boundary in the development of cultures. The reason for emphasising this point is that the desires that constitute a starting point for the argument presented here are of a kind that cannot be rejected even by those who reject the extensive lists of human universals. Many scientists reject the idea that phenomena like dance, music and gambling are human universals and that they are inevitable

⁸ Donald Brown, *Human Universals* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991).

⁹ On this subject, see Wilson’s books: Edward O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978); Edward O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000).

¹⁰ Stephen Jay Gould, “Sociobiology and the Theory of Natural Selection” in *Sociobiology: Beyond Nature/ Nurture?*, ed. G.W. Barlow and J. Silverberg, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), 257-269.

consequences of our biology; however, it appears that it is not possible, for example, to include the desire/will to live, the desire to be free of fear and the desire to have purpose in this same category. In fact, as it will be seen later on, most famous atheists have attempted to base their views on the existence of some of these desires. Consequently, the argument on the natural and fundamental desires of human beings. Can be seen as the follows:

- 1- We see that many human natural and fundamental desires have an object.
- 2- These are six desires that are natural and fundamental:
 - 2.1- To live
 - 2.2- To be free of fear
 - 2.3- To be happy
 - 2.4- To have purpose
 - 2.5- To acquire knowledge free of doubt
 - 2.6- To be treated well by others
- 3- Although connected to each other, these natural and fundamental desires cannot be reduced, and their fulfilment requires the existence of God.
- 4- There are two alternative explanations that may explain this situation:
 - 4.1- As prescribed by naturalism, these desires have emerged out of chance and necessity.
 - 4.2- These desires have been planted by God.
- 5- The fact that all the said natural and fundamental desires (2), require the same ontology (3) and the fact that we see that many natural and fundamental desires have an object (1) shows the existence of God and that He has planted these desires (4-2), It is

a more rational explanation than naturalism, which is the only other alternative explanation (4-1).

Objections to the First Premise: Natural and Artificial Desires

The argument put forward here can also be presented without the first premise. However, this premise was included because recognising that natural and fundamental desires such as those for food, water and sexuality have an object would strengthen the conclusion of this argument.

To start with, it will be useful to respond to a criticism brought to the argument from desire. Those who bring this criticism present the argument that they desire to own a Ferrari, but that this does not happen, and that they desire to go to the Land of Oz, but they are not able to do so.¹¹ By making this statement they say that it is impossible to switch from the existence of human desires to the existence of the objects of these desires. To respond to this criticism, Catholic philosopher and apologetic, Peter Kreeft, classifies desires as “natural” and “artificial.” He says that natural desires come from within, while artificial desires come from without, from society, advertising or fiction: “There is no word like Ozlessness that is parallel to sleeplessness.” The main difference between the two is that natural desires are common to all of us, while artificial desires vary from person to person.¹² One of the reasons why in the first premise it is emphasized that many of “natural” and “fundamental” desires have an object, is to prevent such objections from the very beginning.

Just as people who do not feel hunger, thirst or sexual desire constitute anomalies that would not falsify the generalisation according to which human beings universally feel hunger, thirst or sexual desire, there may be some who do not feel the six desires presented here. This constitutes an anomaly that does not infringe upon the idea that these desires are natural and fundamental. This is an element that strengthens the argument presented here in that it

¹¹ Beversluis, *C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion*, 47.

¹² J. Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, *Pocket Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 26-27.

shows that the natural and fundamental desires of human beings definitely constitute the starting points for this argument.

On the other hand, those who object to the argument from desire on the basis of the fact that many of our natural desires are not fulfilled are also mistaken, for example through people who die of starvation. English philosopher and apologist C. S. Lewis responds to this objection as follows:

A man's physical hunger does not prove that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes of a race that repairs its body by eating and inhibits a world where eatable substances exist.¹³

My reason for saying “desires have an object,” rather than “desires are fulfilled,” in the first premise of the argument, is to prevent such objections from the very beginning. Let us elaborate on the second and third premises of this argument by dealing with the six natural and fundamental desires one by one. While it is easy to see that some of these can only be fulfilled through a God centred ontology, the others require contemplation; for example, the desire to be free of fear is an example for the first situation, while the desire to acquire knowledge free of doubt is an example for the latter situation.

The First Desire: To Live

The “desire/will to live” is one of the most fundamental desires that normal and healthy people have. It is so fundamental that we can easily relinquish most of our natural desires for its sake. For example, let us think of people who are thirsty and drink, who are hungry and eat, or who feel sexual desire and turn towards their partner; if these people heard that a tsunami was about to hit the area where they were, or they saw the waves of the tsunami approaching, they would most probably put aside the fulfilment of their natural desires and run. Most people, from the cleverest to those with an intelligence below the average, move out of a “desire/will to live” and run away from the tsunami. We can understand the force of this fundamental

¹³ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1980), 8-9.

desire through a short introspection.

The famous German atheist philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, is among those philosophers who laid special emphasis on the “will to live.” According to him this will is more fundamental than everything else. Schopenhauer says that even suicide is not a rejection of the will to live and that the only thing that is rejected is suffering and the current conditions of life.¹⁴

Nobel Prize winner, theologian and philosopher, Albert Schweitzer also places “the will to live” at the centre of his theological, philosophical and ethical approaches.

Only this: That the will to live is everywhere present, even as in me. I do not need science to tell me this; but it cannot tell me anything more essential. Profound and marvelous as chemistry is, for example, it is like all science in the fact that it can lead me only to the mystery of life, which is essentially in me, however near or far away it may be observed.¹⁵

In contrast to all other species, the human mind can reflect on a very distant past and on a very distant future. When the mind establishes a connection between the future and its desire to live, it is inevitable that it should feel a desire for the Hereafter. Anybody who listens to the desire to live inside himself, and knows the certainty of death, can possibly be “fulfilled” in this world. In this case the existence of the Hereafter requires one Being who transcends this universe, who is immanent as to be aware of human desires, and knowledgeable and powerful enough to fulfil these desires; in other words it requires the existence of God. It is not difficult to see that to be recreated from our decayed bodies is only possible via the existence of God, who is All-Powerful and All-Knowledgeable and is aware of our desires.

In short, humans are equipped with the *a priori* characteristic

¹⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation Vol: 2* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 8.

¹⁵ Albert Schweitzer, “The Ethics of Reverence for Life”, *Christendom* 1 (1936): 225-239.

of establishing a relation with the future and the *a priori* desire to live. This situation, which is unique to human beings requires that we are in the *a priori* need for God's existence for the fulfilment of our desires. Our being aware or unaware of this situation does not affect it. To draw a parallel, the fact that we are unaware that $(a+b)^2$ is equal to $(a^2+2ab+b^2)$ does not affect this equation. Some may object to the existence of a direct desire for God and say that they do not feel this desire. However, the starting point here is the desire to live. It is not difficult to see that this desire can only be fulfilled if God exists.

The Second Desire: To be Free of Fears

Fear is one of the emotions that we all experience directly within ourselves. There cannot be anyone who has not witnessed how strong an emotion fear can be and how effective and fundamental it can be in the guidance of human action. The requirement of the existence of God for the fulfilment of the desire to be free of fear is similar to the requirement of the existence of God for the fulfilment of the desire/will to live. However, as the "desire/will to live" and the "desire to be free of fear" are two separate desires that cannot be reduced to each other, let us deal with them under two separate headings. The existence of the Hereafter, which requires the existence of God, frees man from the fear of death, the most fundamental fear of the human mind, which is able to establish a connection with the future.

In addition, the greatness and the magnificence of the universe leads human beings to become aware of their impotence and this too produces fear. The appeasement of such fears can only be possible by taking refuge with a God that dominates the whole of the universe. Indeed, many famous atheists have said that the belief in the existence of God has been fabricated by people with the aim of appeasing fears and fulfilling all other desires. The prominent Scottish empiricist-philosopher, David Hume, has established a connection between the feeling of fear and the existence of religions.¹⁶ The founding father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud,

¹⁶ David Hume, *Dialogues and Natural History of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 176.

who is among those who stand out the most concerning this subject, says the following regarding religions, which he sees as wish-fulfilling:

... Religious ideas have arisen from the same need as have all the other achievements of civilization: from the necessity of defending oneself against the crushingly superior force of nature.¹⁷

...A man of later days, of our own day, behaves in the same way. He, too, remains childish and in need of protection, even when he is grown up; he thinks he cannot do without support from his god.¹⁸

You can interpret Freud's "the necessity of defending" and "in need of protection" as the fulfilment of the "desire to be free of fears" by religion. When the famous social-psychologist, Erich Fromm, emphasises that human beings turn to religion "in search of security;" he also points to the fulfilment of the "desire to be free of fears."¹⁹ The fact that being free of the most fundamental fears requires God's existence constitutes a phenomenon that atheists and theists can easily agree on; the real problem here lies in identifying whether this phenomenon is better supported by theism or naturalism, and that is the aim of this article. When our *a priori* instinct of fear and our desire to be free of fears merges with our *a priori* ability to reflect on the future, on the universe and on our feeling of impotence, what emerges is the realisation that we have desires that require the existence of God.

The Third Desire: Happiness

All human beings desire to be happy. The meaning of happiness in the most general sense includes the famous ancient Greek

¹⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI (1927-1931): The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents, and Other Works* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), 21.

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Origins of Religion* (London: Penguin, 1991), 376.

¹⁹ Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 4.

philosopher Aristotle's *eudaimonia* to a pleasure-centred understanding. If we take the desire for happiness as a starting point, we can understand that neither the quality of what is offered in this world nor the time period on this world can be sufficient for the fulfilment of this desire. This means that the fulfilment of this desire requires the existence of the Hereafter, but as we have stated before, the existence of the Hereafter requires the existence of God. Everybody who sees that this world cannot fulfill the desire for happiness will see also that this desire cannot be fulfilled without God. In fact, Lewis' presentation of the argument from desire contains a direct desire for God, as well as a desire for the Hereafter:

Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be in this world. ...are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning, can really satisfy. I am not now speaking of what would be ordinarily called unsuccessful marriages, or holidays, or learned careers. I am speaking of the best possible ones... If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death...²⁰

Many atheists, like the 19th century German philosopher and anthropologist, Ludwig Feuerbach, who says that "theology is anthropology," have established that human desires require the

²⁰ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), 135-137.

Hereafter and that the Hereafter requires the existence of God, but they have seen this fact as the reason why human beings have fabricated the existence of God and the Hereafter. Feuerbach does not believe in God's existence, so he considers human desires as "imaginary desires," among which there is also the desire for happiness:

God I have said, is the fulfiller, or the reality, of the human desires for happiness, perfection and immortality. From this it may be inferred that to deprive man of God is to tear the heart out of his breast. But I contest the premises from which religion and theology deduce the necessity and existence of God, or of immortality, which is the same thing...²¹

The Fourth Desire: Purpose

Psychology surveys conducted in recent years have shown the propensity of children in pre-school years to define natural phenomena purposefully and have therefore proven the existence of an *a priori* ability in humans.^{22 23} In fact the leading thinker of the New Atheist movement, Richard Dawkins, has cited children's propensity to provide teleological explanations as the reason why many people become theists and has made use of this in the interest of his atheist views:

The assignment of purpose to everything is called teleology. Children are native teleologists, and many never grow out of it... Even more obviously, childish teleology sets us up for religion. If everything has a purpose, whose purpose is it? God's, of course.²⁴

²¹ Ludwig Feuerbach, "Lectures on the Essence of Religion", 1851, Accessed September 15, 2011, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/feuerbach/works/lectures/lec30.htm>

²² Deborah Kelemen, "The Scope of Teleological Thinking in Preschool Children", *Cognition* 70 (1999): 241-272.

²³ Deborah Kelemen, "Are children intuitive theists? Reasoning about Purpose and Design in Nature", *Psychological Science* 15/5 (2004): 295-301.

²⁴ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Black Swan, 2007), 210.

On the other hand, some psychologists, such as the Director of the Thrive Center for Human Development, Justin Barrett, say that this feature could also be interpreted in the sense that it has been planted by God.²⁵ When the Muslim theologian, Ibn Taymiyyah, who lived in the 12th-13th centuries, stated that human beings have *a priori* characteristics that allow them –in the face of the beings they witness around them- to have direct knowledge of God’s existence without the need for any argument or discussion, he came close to the psychological views of those who said that human beings are equipped with features that let them reach teleological deductions.²⁶

Human beings interpret the existence around them as purposeful and, more importantly, when they turn towards the universe as a whole and then towards their own existence they desire to learn about their own purpose. However, this desire to discover meaning can only be fulfilled if there is a God who transcends the universe and who has created the universe and mankind. According to the naturalist approach, the universe is consisted of nothing but non-rational and purposeless atoms, and human beings have emerged haphazardly, out of a combination of necessity and chance. In this picture, which does not contain God, there can be no purpose to the universe or to mankind; the desire within human beings cannot, therefore, be fulfilled and the logical consequence of this is “unyielding despair.” We can see this in what Bertrand Russell, one of the founders of analytic philosophy said:

Such, in outline, but even more purposeless, more void of meaning, is the world which Science presents for our belief... That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and his fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms... Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm

²⁵ Justin Barrett, “Is The Spell Really Broken? Bio-psychological Explanations of Religion and Theistic Belief”, *Theology and Science* 5/1 (2007): 57-72.

²⁶ Wael Hallaq, “İbn Teymiyye’ye Göre Allah’ın Varlığı”, *Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 3 (1993): 144.

foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.²⁷

The Fifth Desire: To Acquire Knowledge Free of Doubt

As in the case of all other previously mentioned desires, there will not be many people who will object to the desire to “acquire knowledge free of doubt” as one of the natural and fundamental desires of human beings. Many agnostic and atheist thinkers have acknowledged that the real fulfilment of the previously mentioned desires requires the existence of God and they have considered this fact as the reason why human beings believe in God. On the other hand, most atheists will not believe in a similar way that the desire to acquire knowledge free of doubt requires God's existence. It should be mentioned here that understanding how this desire requires God's existence necessitates more meditation than the other desires did and it can be the subject of a more intensive debate. We must examine how this desire requires God's existence with brief references to the works of two philosophers: the 17th century rationalist philosopher Rene Descartes, and the prominent philosopher Alvin Plantinga. Although these philosophers have acknowledged the limits of human knowledge, they have also said that it is only by believing in God's existence that we can be sure of the correctness of the very basic knowledge. Yet they have not based the argument from desire on this approach, as has been discussed here. However, since to acquire knowledge free of doubt is a desire, as part of the consilience we are aiming at let us consider their approach in terms of the argument from desire.

The existence of the external world is a prerequisite for the majority of our most fundamental knowledge. Most of this, such as the existence of our loved ones and of our own body depends on the existence of the external world. As pointed out by some philosophers, the reality of phenomena that give us pleasure constitutes one of the main prerequisites for happiness. Descartes assumed that all his knowledge as well as the existence of the external world was

²⁷ Bertrand Russell, “A Free Man's Worship” in *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays* (London: Longmans, 1918), 40.

doubtful and tried to set up a philosophical system free of doubts. He said that if God's existence is recognised, we will not doubt of things – such as the external world – hence, we will perceive “very clearly and very distinctly.” There may be some who see Descartes' approach as old-fashioned: however, a satisfying answer has not been given up to now to this approach. (Descartes' approach is an argument for the external world's existence rather than for God's existence.) Descartes says as follows:

And may the most intelligent men study this question as much as they please, I do not believe that they can give any reason which would be sufficient to remove this doubt, unless they presuppose the existence of God. For, firstly, even the rule which I stated above that I held, namely, that the things we grasp very clearly and very distinctly are all true, is assured only because God is or exists, and because he is a perfect Being, and because everything that is in us comes from him... But if we did not know that all that is in us which is real and true comes from a perfect and infinite Being, we would have no reason which would assure us that, however clear and distinct our ideas might be, they had the perfection of being true.²⁸

Plantinga's “evolutionary argument against naturalism” leads to the same conclusion. He endeavoured to show that the combination of naturalism and evolutionary theory is self defeating, contrary to the belief of atheists like Dawkins. Plantinga says that according to the naturalist-evolutionary approach we should not be expected to have reliable cognitive faculties because mechanisms of evolution are expected to be able to choose that which is adaptive, which survives and which is able to reproduce, but this is no reason why they should select reliable cognitive faculties, which achieve true belief. On the other hand, believing that God creates mankind “in His image” – via evolution or not – a theist may easily believe that our cognitive systems may lead to true beliefs. Since those who

²⁸ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method and The Meditations* (London: Penguin Classics, 1968), 58-59.

advocate a naturalist-evolutionary approach, cannot say that cognitive facilities are reliable, they cannot make any claims of correctness, including the correctness of evolution. Through this approach, Plantinga has endeavoured to show that the conjunction of naturalism with evolutionary theory is self-defeating.²⁹ However, in doing so, although he has not carried out an evaluation in terms of the approach presented here, he shows that the desire “to acquire knowledge free of doubt” is not possible from a naturalist point of view and requires belief in God.

The Sixth Desire: To be Treated Well by Others

The intellectual skills and desires of human beings enable them to communicate with others; for example, mankind has the innate ability to speak.³⁰ This means that man is an *a priori* sociological being.³¹ When people encounter others, they wish not to be subjected to physical or psychological harm, in short, human beings have the desire to be treated well by others. The prerequisites for people to be treated well by others are best provided by the existence of morality. The rational foundation of moral values requires God. There are of course, good people from an ethical point of view who do not believe in God, but endeavour not to harm others, and bad people in terms of ethics, who believe in God, but harm others. However, the main point here is that the “rational foundation” for morality requires God. Naturalist ontology, according to which the universe is nothing but atoms, does not contain a rational basis for values independent of human minds. In fact, this was recognised also by philosophers like the founder of French existentialism, the atheist philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre:

The existentialist, on the contrary, finds it extremely embarrassing that God does not exist, for there disappears with Him all possibility of finding values in an intelligible heaven. There can no longer be any

²⁹ Alvin Plantinga, “An Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism”, *Logos* 12 (1991): 27-48.

³⁰ Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002).

³¹ Muhammed Abduh, *Tevhid Risalesi* (Ankara: Feer Yayınları, 1986), 143.

good a priori, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it. It is nowhere written that “the good” exists, that one must be honest or must not lie, since we are now upon the plane where there are only men. Dostoevsky once wrote “If God did not exist, everything would be permitted,” and that, for existentialism, is the starting point. Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn...³²

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, another atheist, also recognised that the rejection of God precluded a rational foundation for morality, and he frequently expressed this:

We deny God, we deny the responsibility that originates from God... My demand of the philosopher is well known: that he take his stand beyond good and evil and treat the illusion of moral judgement as beneath him. This demand follows from an insight that I was the first to articulate: that there are no moral facts.³³

Whether moral laws are eternal truths related to God’s nature or they simply derive from God’s commands has constituted a subject of debate both within the Judeo-Christian tradition and in Islamic tradition. For example, according to the Mutazila school in Islamic tradition, God orders or prohibits things because they are good or bad, while according to the Ashari school, things are good or bad because of God’s commands.³⁴ This subject is analysed under the heading of “Euthyphro dilemma” in philosophy. The two different approaches in theistic traditions may result in a difference in approaches regarding theological views, but they do not create any differences in terms of the approach presented here. This fundamental

³² Jean-Paul Sartre, *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 2001), 32.

³³ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols with the Antichrist and Ecce Homo* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2007), 37.

³⁴ Macid Fahri, *İslam Ahlak Teorileri*, (Istanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2004), 56-58, 76-79.

desire requires morality and the rational foundation of morality requires God's existence. Whether we consider moral laws as an eternal truth related to God's nature or we think that they simply derive from God's commands, both views will constitute a rational foundation for moral laws.

Moreover, people with a Kantian approach to morality are also not excluded from the approach presented here. Kant stated that morality is autonomous and that pure reason cannot provide a basis either for God's existence or for his absence. On the other hand, he also said that in order to achieve *summum bonum*, moral virtue needs to combine with complete happiness and that without this the objective demand of moral law cannot be met. As a result, although The German Idealist-philosopher, Immanuel Kant, one of the most influential philosophers of all time, said that morality is autonomous, he also postulated God's existence and immortality as "requirements for practical purposes."³⁵ In terms of the present argument, it is sufficient to show that the said desire requires morality and that morality requires God's existence. From the point of view of the moral arguments, there are significant differences between Kant's postulates for practical reasons and those who defend objective arguments for God's existence on the basis of morality. However, in terms of the claim presented here, all these approaches can be adapted to this argument.

In consequence, it is not difficult to see that mankind, an *a priori* social being, is equipped with the *a priori* desire to be treated well by others and this desire requires moral laws. There may be some who reject the idea that we have an instinct to treat others in line with the laws of morality, however, I believe that objections cannot be raised against the fact that the desire to be treated well by others is a fundamental and universal desire. That rational base for moral laws requires God's existence is a claim that is easily acknowledged by a wide group of people, from atheists such as Nietzsche and Sartre to those who adopt the Kantian approach.

³⁵ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. J.M.D. Meiklejon (Chicago: William Benton, 1971).

Naturalism or Theism?

The fourth premise of the argument is probably the one objected least; many naturalists (atheists) and theists will easily accept this premise. When we look at both the history of philosophy and contemporary philosophy, we see that (although there are significant differences between different theist and naturalist-atheist approaches) the naturalist approaches and the theist approaches are positioned against each other, and we can say the falsification of one of these views is seen as the verification of the other. Agnostic approaches do not constitute a third alternative, rather, they are based on our not knowing which of these alternatives is true.

The premise that naturalists and agnostics will to object the most in this argument is the fifth one. If it is a true conclusion - the sixth premise- will necessarily follow. As we have seen before, naturalists who have agreed that some of the six desires I examined here exist in mankind, have also seen that these desires require God's existence and have defined the belief in God and in religion as a wish-fulfilment. However, this approach can only be valid if we accept naturalism *a priori* as a correct philosophy. When this *a priori* postulate is set aside, we will see that those who present the wish-fulfilment approach are actually engaging in a genetic fallacy, which is one of the most common logical fallacies. People who are engaged in a genetic fallacy believe that by pointing to the origin of something they can prove whether it is right or wrong. Whether the conclusion reached by the people who are engaged in genetic fallacy is right or wrong, their reasoning still constitutes a fallacy. For example, whether people who say "I have heard of the existence of the Hereafter from my family, the Hereafter is therefore real" or "Hans studied physics in Nazi Germany, therefore his knowledge of physics must contain fascist ideas" are considered right or wrong, these people are still engaged in a genetic fallacy, and the origin cited in their argument is not proof of their conclusion. Similarly, as those who advocate the wish-fulfilment theory say, a desire may lie at the origin of some or most people's belief in God/religion, but to cite the origin of the belief in religion and then say that God/religions are human fabrications would be a genetic fallacy. It could very well be said, as Augustine did when he said that God "made us for Himself,"

that God led people to believe in Him by planting these desires in them.³⁶

Evolution? Natural Selection?

Those who say that the desires in question have emerged as envisaged by naturalism, rather than as the result of God's plan, will say that these desires have developed as a consequence of natural selection or that they are by-products of evolution. To start with, desires listed here are the most fundamental desires; an alternative list of fundamental desires that would result in the requirement of a naturalistic ontology contrary to the conclusions reached here cannot be formed. Apart from the desires in question, we also have natural desires like eating, drinking, sexual needs and sleep; these desires, which enable us to continue our existence on earth, also support the existence of the objects of natural desires. If it is accepted that the six desires in question develop via natural selection during the process of evolution, would not this be in support of views asserting that evolution is God's method of creation and natural selection is "one of the hammers of God?" If all these natural and fundamental desires that are *a priori* in mankind require the existence of a God who transcends this world, does not it mean that evolution and natural selection enable us to turn to God? In this case, does not this support the approaches of thinkers such as Jesuit priest and palaeontologist, Pierte Teilhard de Chardin, British philosopher Richard Swinburne, one of the founders of Neo-Darwinism Theodosius Dobzhansky and the former head of the Human Genome Project Francis Collins – although they differ significantly – who see evolution as God's way of creation? The fact that all these desires that are independent from each other require the same ontology that includes God who is transcendental to this universe, cannot be explained solely through a natural selection that only favours survival in this world and reproduction. When we analyse these desires, we see that they are related to much more than survival in this world and reproduction.

³⁶ Steven Jon James Lovell, *Philosophical Themes from C. S. Lewis* (Department of Philosophy, University of Sheffield, PhD Thesis, 2003), 95, 154.

The First Desire: To Live: It is clear from the name of this desire that it is the one that supports the most pertaining to our survival in this world and our reproduction. However, the fact that the human mind, in contrast to other species, is able to establish a relation with a very distant past and a very distant future and that it desires to survive in the Hereafter, a desire that is not permitted by our biological organisms, has nothing to do with survival in this world and reproduction.

The Second Desire: To be Free of Fear: Fear of predatory animals or fear of falling from somewhere high do, of course, contribute to our survival in this world and our reproduction. However, the fact that the human mind perceives the vastness of the universe, and together with this fact, the desire to be free of fear can be only fulfilled by constituting a connection with a Being that is All-Powerful, has nothing to do with survival in this world and reproduction. Truly, many species seem to present a feeling similar to fear from other beings that may kill them, but we do not see them reflecting on their helplessness before the vastness of the universe and turning to a transcendental being out of their desires to be free of fear.

The Third Desire: To Be Happy: We may identify happiness with pleasure and therefore say that the pleasure that living beings obtain from activities such as eating, drinking and sexual relations contribute to their survival and to their reproduction. However, the human mind, which can establish a relation with a very distant past and a very distant future, wishes to maintain its happiness in the Hereafter, too. This happens when human nature, which has a desire of happiness *a priori*, combines with *a priori* intellectual skills. Such a desire for happiness in the Hereafter has nothing to do with survival in this world and reproduction either.

The Fourth Desire: To Have Purpose: The teleological views of human beings may enable them to understand other living beings and therefore contribute to their survival in this world and their reproduction. However, most importantly, the search for one's own purpose and the universe's purpose has nothing to do with survival in this world and reproduction.

The Fifth Desire: To Acquire Knowledge Free of Doubt:

the desire of human being to acquire knowledge about everything, from the origin of the universe and of distant galaxies to the structure of the atom, is much higher than what is required for surviving in this universe and for reproducing. When humans who want to acquire more knowledge than is necessary to pursue their life, ponder on the process of knowledge and then realise how doubtful their fundamental knowledge is, they feel the desire to acquire knowledge that is free of doubt. Being equipped with an intellectual capacity that can produce these doubts and the degree of the desire for knowledge is not necessary to survive in this world and to reproduce. Moreover, the claim that our most fundamental knowledge about the existence of the external world can only have a rational foundation if we recognise God's existence, can only be understood by people who are interested in philosophy, even though some of them would reject this claim. As a result, the fact that the fulfilment of man's desire to acquire knowledge free of doubt requires God's existence does not provide an advantage in terms of survival and reproduction.

The Sixth Desire: To Be Treated Well by Others:

Being treated well by others is important in terms of survival and reproduction because of the psychological and physical needs of human being. Most cultures fabricated by mankind work towards this objective and thus create ethical rules. However, as we have seen before, the rational foundation of this desire requires God's existence, since many cultures are able to fulfil this desire even without its rational foundation and without referring to God's existence. The fact that the rational foundation behind this desire requires God's existence has nothing to do with mankind's survival and reproduction.

Conclusion

We were born with *a priori* desires in our mind that require God's existence. We experience our desires in our inner world and they are therefore even more certain than the outer world's existence. Even if we were to put the existence of the external world in brackets, like the father of phenomenology, philosopher Edmund Husserl, we

would still not be able to reject these desires.³⁷ Just as in the case of “a” is greater than “b” ($a > b$) and “b” is greater than “c” ($b > c$), then it is a clearly logical conclusion that “a” should be greater than “c” ($a > c$). Similarly, the analytical examination of the fact that our *a priori* desires require God’s existence will lead us to conclude that human beings are beings that have an *a priori* need for God’s existence. While it is easy to see that desires like the desire to live and the desire to be free of fear require God’s existence, understanding that desires, such as the desire to acquire knowledge free of doubt, require God’s existence and necessitates deeper meditation than is needed for the previous examples.

Indeed, the most famous atheists in history have endeavoured to show that the fact that human desires require God’s existence is a reason why human beings have fabricated God’s existence. However, what we have show that there is a water of life in which atheist philosophers have drowned. The best explanation for the consilience deriving from the requirement of God’s existence by different desires that are natural and very fundamental lies in that these have been planted by God. The development of different desires that require the existence of a God that transcends this world cannot be explained through the approach of an atheistic natural selection that only favours survival in this world and reproduction. The theist view that states that these desires have been arranged as such by God provides a better explanation than the naturalist view that explains as haphazard the fact that all these different desires require the same ontology. That consilience of induction, in other words, by reaching a conclusion through different data is a good method in reasoning and in science. Consilience has indeed been used here, keeping in mind the problem of induction, not in the form of induction, but as an inference to the best explanation.³⁸ The position that I advocate here is to show that theism is more rational than its only significant philosophical rival, naturalism.

³⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Boston: Kluwer, 1977).

³⁸ For inference for the best explanation, see: Peter Lipton, “Inference to the Best Explanation” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Science*, ed. W. H. Newton-Smith (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 184-192.

One of the reasons why this argument is so important is that it also contributes to the provision of a foundation for God's attributes. The fulfilment of our desires requires a God who is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and eternal. It is also important to show that on the basis of our desires it is rational to expect the existence of the Hereafter and of religions sent by God. We are not postulating that we can choose between existing religions and sects on the basis of our desires. However, the conclusions that we can draw from this argument contribute to our understanding some of the fundamental prerequisites that religions should have.

Our desires are among the essential elements that characterise us. We agree with those who say that there are significant shortcomings in cognitive sciences, in terms of the importance given to emotions/desires.³⁹ That the development of approaches like Justin Barrett's "Preparedness hypothesis," which states that we were born with an *a priori* ability to think about God, and their combination with the present approach to desires, could bring about significant opportunities.⁴⁰ Moreover, an approach of this type, that encourages introspection, would contribute to theistic existentialist approaches. Reflecting on our desires will result in many more opportunities than most people would expect. A "theology of desires" or a "philosophy of desires" would open up significant horizons for philosophers and theologians.

³⁹ Joseph LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

⁴⁰ Justin L. Barrett and Rebekah Richert, "Anthropomorphism or Preparedness? Exploring Children's God Concepts", *Review of Religious Research*, 44/3 (2003): 300-312.