

## Eudaimonia: An Argument for Pantheism

In 2010, a coworker returning from a pilgrimage to Lourdes, France, was full of religious zeal. I listened as he described the history of the site, how a little girl had seen the Virgin Mary appear to her in a cave previously inhabited only by pigs and refuse from the town. He went on to describe that a spring from the cave floor, previously covered in pig swill, now healed by the miraculous power of God. When he asked me my own beliefs, I replied that *pantheist* was probably the most fitting term. With that, he launched into a fit of angry condescension, 'enlightening' me to the fact that I "had not developed a real world view". More recently, a different coworker openly pitied me because I "would never feel the love of God", heavily implying that she, of course, would. How humble.

I, too, have looked upon the most intricate and beautiful eternity of Nature, yet not even once thought to myself that it looked created. Even as a child, I could tell the difference between something contrived and something natural. I, too, have been in a car spinning off the highway in the middle of the night, feeling I may die within a moment or two, yet never felt a divine presence- only a peace and calm in its absence. I have had, as many have had, several powerful experiences during which my consciousness seemed to transcend my body- without one inclination that they were anything other than states of my own mind.

I have discovered, and now am strongly convinced, that self-knowledge comes not only from self-exploration, but from bravery as well. It is a frightful thing to see who we are sometimes, as a species and as individuals. Yet it may be true that we are soulless, and this is what it feels like to be *the* thing which experiences our experiences. Consciousness may simply be another natural law governing certain kinds of matter, us, without the need for the supernatural realm. It is certain that we think, and we are matter of this Universe, so it is inescapable that the Universe has intelligence- at least in tiny parts, at least in some places, at least in us.

Carl Sagan said, "We are a way for the Cosmos to know itself." You and I are both part of this, not separate from it. You are a direct descendent of the very first events at the very beginning of the Universe, and have the right and privilege to be alive and aware. You are made of the very matter of the Universe, and you are looking around trying to understand yourself. To me, there can be no more of a divine and grand calling than that. These are the deepest thoughts within me which keep me sustained and satisfied with myself and my world.

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