

Contents

1. Is there such a thing as religion?	9
The Kant-Darwin Axis	11
Religions without doctrines	13
No “religion” in most cultures	14
Who invented religion?	16
Religions as brands	20
Does the study of religion need “religion”?	22
An uncertain and unnecessary concept	23
2. What is natural in religions?	25
Natural religion as a theory	25
What is the phenomenon?	26
The cognitive picture – supernatural concepts	27
Why are supernatural concepts culturally stable?	30
The cognitive picture – non-physical agency	32
Natural religion is not (just) for the primitive Other	35
Probabilistic, experience-distant model	36
What makes religious notions culturally viable	37
3. Do religions make people better?	41
Humans are “prosocial”	43
Apparently, morality could not possibly evolve	44
Models of commitment	47
Could “religion” be a form of prosocial signaling?	50
So why are superhuman agents also moral enforcers?	54
Epilogue	55
4. Is there a religious experience?	57
Why bother with experience?	57
Who invented “religious experience”?	60
Monks and magnets	61
Rituals: a real (and most common) form of religious experience	63
Ritualized behavior and precaution systems	66
What about collective “rituals”?	67
Religion and experience redux	69
5. Are religions against reason and freedom?	73
A recapitulation of natural religious elements	73
Understanding religious cognition without “belief”	76

Religion is not the sleep of reason	77
The troubled consciousness of modern religions	78
Two escape routes – fundamentalism and “spirituality”	80
No need for “science and religion” or different “magisteria”	85
Two varieties of Enlightenment	89
Misleading policies: the specificity of “religion”	91
Political psychology and secularization	93
Epilogue – fracture of an illusion	95
Afterword	99
Bibliography	105