

ETERNITY IN THEIR HEARTS

THE ARGUMENT FROM JOY

Introduction

Of all the arguments for the existence of God, there is one that stands out as something more than just an argument. It is the argument from joy or desire. Primarily associated with Christian author and apologist C. S. Lewis, the argument from joy conquers the heart as well as the mind. Catholic apologist Peter Kreeft notes the weight of the argument. He says:

Next to Anselm's famous 'ontological argument,' I think it is the single most intriguing argument in the history of human thought. For one thing, it not only argues for the existence of God, but at the same time it argues for the existence of heaven and for something of the essential nature of heaven and of God - four conclusions, not just one. For another thing, it is far more moving, arresting, and apologetically effective than any other argument for God or for heaven. . . . Finally, it is more than an argument. Like Anselm's argument, it is also a meditation, an illumination, an experience, an invitation to an experiment with yourself, a pilgrimage.¹

What is this argument? It is the contention that God has instilled in the heart of every human being a longing for immortality. Lewis used the argument from joy in several of his works, notably *Mere Christianity*, *Pilgrim's Regress*, and *The Problem of Pain*. He says, "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire

¹Peter Kreeft, *Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1980), 201.

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.”²

What is this desire which finds no satisfaction in the present world but, as Lewis says, points us to Heaven? It is the desire for Joy. He explains that every human being has “an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and from Pleasure. Joy (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic, and one only, in common with them; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again. Apart from that, and considered only in its quality, it might almost equally well be called a particular kind of unhappiness or grief. But then it is a kind we want. I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world. But then Joy is never in our power and pleasure often is.”³ For Lewis the whole history of man is a testimony of the quest for this Joy, a quest that has never succeeded in this world.

As with all arguments for the existence of God, the argument from joy has been objected to on several grounds, such as denying either of the two premises, or by denying the validity of induction. In order to use the argument effectively, Christian apologists must be able to refute these objections. When these objections are met, the argument becomes a powerful tool in the hands of a skilled apologist.

²C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1943), 120.

³C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1955), 17-18.

The Form of the Argument

Lewis is not the only Christian to assert the argument from desire, or joy. Peter Kreeft uses the argument and does so in somewhat more precise terms. He states the argument in four points: “1. Every natural, innate desire in us corresponds to some real object that can satisfy that desire. 2. But there exists in us a desire which nothing in time, nothing on earth, no creature can satisfy. 3. Therefore there must exist something more than time, earth and creatures, which can satisfy this desire. 4. This something is what people call ‘God’ and ‘life with God forever.’”⁴

Christian philosopher and apologist Norman Geisler sets forth an even simpler version of the argument: “1. Every natural innate desire has a real object that can fulfill it. 2. Human beings have a natural, innate desire for immortality. 3. Therefore, there must be an immortal life after death.”⁵ This version highlights something of the nature of both the major and the minor premise of the argument, that neither is self-evident. While the syllogism is valid, neither premise is true by definition and each must therefore be demonstrated to be true. This, of course, leaves the argument open to objection. Evaluating the argument Geisler says, “This argument is not logically airtight. Few if any of the arguments [for the existence of God] are. However, it has a certain existential force to it that cannot be denied. Even great unbelievers have admitted a longing for God.”⁶ For Geisler and Kreeft, the argument has the authority of a formal syllogism and the power of experience.

⁴Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (Downers’ Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 78.

⁵Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999), 282.

⁶Geisler, *BECA*, 282.

The value of the argument from joy should not be underestimated. It can speak not only to the mind but also to the heart, and it has a universal appeal. All people everywhere can relate to the desire for something more, something that this life just doesn't seem to offer, or at least hasn't offered yet. In light of this fact, Christian apologists should be prepared to not only assert the argument but also to defend it.

The Validity of the Argument

Two questions immediately present themselves concerning the argument from joy. First, is it logically valid? And second, is it biblically based? In order for the argument to be successful as an apologetical tool it must be able to answer both of these questions affirmatively. Most objections to the argument are indeed arguments against its logical validity or evidential support and apologists must be able to defend it on these grounds. It is also important, however, for Christian apologists to remain true to the teachings of Scripture and thus it is necessary to demonstrate that the argument is in agreement with the Bible.

Scriptural Validity

The author of Ecclesiastes indicates that God has placed in the heart of every man a desire for eternity, or immortality. "What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end."⁷ (Eccl. 3:9-11) The work that a man accomplishes

⁷All Scripture quotations from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

on this earth is not ultimately fulfilling. There remains a desire in every heart for something more, something lasting, something beyond the here and now.

Other Bible passages also indicate that God has put a desire in the heart of man for something more. Rom. 1:18-19 says, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.” God has put in the heart of every man a basic knowledge of Himself and this knowledge makes sin inexcusable. According to the first chapter of the book of Ephesians, God has a purpose for the redeemed: “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” God’s intent is for man to have a relationship with Him. He has created everyone with the knowledge of Himself and He has a plan to redeem men from their sins and to bring them into His presence. This relationship consists primarily of the worship of God on the part of men and it is a relationship that has a universal mandate according to Rom. 1:21, “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” As a result the wrath of God will come upon those who turn from God and reject the purpose for which they were created. (Rom. 1:18)

Some would object, however, that other passages suggest that there is no universal desire for God in the heart of man. As Rom. 3:11 says, “There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.” In light of this passage, if no one seeks after God, then how can it be true that there exists a universal desire for God in the heart of man? Furthermore, Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:44) In fact, Scripture indicates that it is God who is seeking man, and not man who is seeking God. (Gen. 3:8-9)

It must be responded, however, that this objection confuses the terms “desire” and “seek.” Seeking God and having an innate desire for God are not the same thing. The argument from joy simply asserts the presence of an unfulfilled desire in the heart of every human being. That the ultimate fulfillment of this desire is eternal life with God does not mean that everyone will *seek* God. The very problem of idolatry is that something other than God is sought as a means to fulfill this innate desire. While there exists in the heart of man a desire and longing for eternal bliss, the sin of man compels him to seek some other means of fulfillment, means of his own choosing.

The argument from joy then is consistent with the biblical portrait of man as created to love and serve God but choosing to love and serve himself. The innate desire for eternal bliss put in the heart of every man by God compels man to seek the good life, or the good things, but also leaves man unfulfilled by those things. It points beyond this world, and all it has to offer, to another world where true joy can be obtained. Thus the argument is solidly biblical.

Logical Validity

Not only is the argument from joy biblically valid it is also formally valid. Geisler states the argument as a categorical syllogism in the form of a universal affirmative with a distributed middle term.⁸ In this form, the argument is logically valid. If the premises are true then the conclusion follows necessarily. Since this is the case it is only necessary to demonstrate the truth of the premises to demonstrate the truth of the conclusion. The only objection that can be raised against the logic of the argument is the problem of induction encountered in establishing the first

⁸Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002), 85.

premise. This problem, however, will be dealt with under the section dealing with objections against the argument.

The Evidence for the Argument

To support the argument from joy several lines of evidence are offered. Both premises, that every natural desire has a fulfillment and that every human being has a desire for immortality, are substantiated by evidence. Geisler says, “In defense of the first premise, it is argued that ‘If there is hunger, there is food; if thirst, drink; if eros, sex; if curiosity, knowledge; if loneliness, society.’ Nature rushes to fill a vacuum. The second premise is supported by appeal to a mysterious longing that differs from all others in two ways: First, its object is indefinable and unobtainable in this life. Second, the mere presence of this desire in the soul is felt to be more precious and joyful than any other satisfaction. However inadequately we express it, what we long for is paradise, heaven, or eternity. Even atheists experience this longing.”⁹

Evidence for Premise One

The first premise, that every natural innate desire has a real object that can fulfill it, entails a basic presupposition about desire - distinction in kind. Kreeft says, “The first premise implies a distinction of desires into two kinds: innate and externally conditioned, or natural and artificial. We naturally desire things like food, drink, sex, sleep, knowledge, friendship and beauty; and we naturally shun things like starvation, loneliness, ignorance and ugliness. We also desire (but not innately or naturally) things like sports cars, political office, flying through the air

⁹Ibid., *BECA*, 282.

like Superman, the land of Oz and a Red Sox world Championship.”¹⁰ In support of this distinction in kind, Kreeft notes three differences between natural and artificial desires. He says:

Now there are differences between these two kinds of desires. We do not for example, for the most part, recognize corresponding states of deprivation for the second, the artificial, desires, as we do for the first. There is no word like ‘Ozlessness’ parallel to ‘sleeplessness.’ But more importantly, the natural desires come from within, from our nature, while the artificial ones come from without, from society, advertising or fiction. This second difference is the reason for a third difference: the natural desires are found in all of us, but the artificial ones vary from person to person.¹¹

One more distinction can also be made between the two kinds of desires. Natural desires always have a real object that can fulfill it, while artificial desires may or may not. For instance, cars and political offices exist but Oz does not. On the other hand, food and drink, things for which we have natural desires, do exist and it is so in every case. Kreeft says, “No one has ever found one case of an innate desire for a nonexistent object.”¹² In other words, whenever a desire can be identified as a natural innate desire based on the three criteria, that certain desires ought to be fulfilled, that they are internally generated, and that they are universal, there is always an object that fulfills that desire. Only by demonstrating the existence of such an innate but unfulfillable desire can the first premise be denied, something which detractors have been unable to do.

Evidence for Premise Two

¹⁰Kreeft, *Handbook*, 78.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

The second premise of the argument, that human beings have a natural innate desire for immortality, also rests on strong evidence. Specifically that it is a universal desire for which there has never been discovered an object of fulfillment in this present world. Furthermore, the mere presence of this desire brings a greater sense of pleasure and joy than any desire that has been satisfied. The desire itself is so, mainly because it points to such a greater fulfillment than anything yet experienced.

It is abundantly clear from history that there is in the heart of man, or at least some men, a desire for Paradise, or at the very least lasting happiness. The religious and cultural practices of peoples throughout history and all over the world manifest this desire. Many primitive cultures expressed this desire through their belief that the afterlife would at least be a step above the earthly life. The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* says, "Such a fuller life is, of course, generally expressed among savages in terms of savage life - there will be better hunting and fishing, and plenty of food; the huts will be larger, and all bodily desires will be amply fulfilled."¹³ Furthermore, in many instances "there is also the belief . . . that man is naturally immortal, and that pain, unhappiness, hunger, and thirst are unnatural. Hence they will no longer exist beyond the grave."¹⁴ The Andaman Islanders believed that "between earth and sky is a cane bridge, over which the souls of the dead go to paradise, while the souls of those who have committed such sins as murder go to a cold region called *jereglar-mugu*. But all souls will finally be re-united with their spirits, and will live permanently on a new earth in the prime of life. Sickness and death will be unknown."¹⁵

¹³*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v., "Abode of the Blest," 680.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 681.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

A hope for Paradise was not unknown among the Greeks either. In Homer the idea appears in a prophecy by Proteus to Menelaus: “But it is not thy destiny, O Menelaus, child of Zeus, to die and meet thy fate in horse-pasturing Argos. The immortal gods will send thee to the Elysian plain and the verge of the world where fair-haired Rhadamanthys dwells, where life is easiest for man. No snow falls there, nor any violent storm, nor rain at any time; but Ocean ever sends forth the clear, shrill blast of the West wind to refresh mankind; because thou hast Helen to wife and they count thee to be son-in-law to Zeus.”¹⁶ Of this concept the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* says, “In the history of religion the idea is absorbed by the belief in immortality, which was soon fostered in Greece under the influence of imported mystical tenets and of philosophic systems founded upon them. The earthly bliss, which at best could be attained only by the favoured few, is transmuted into heavenly bliss, which is promised after death to all who have lived uprightly. In the history of literature the idea survives as a beautiful fancy which is cherished by poets and often serves in later times as a basis for the romantic constructions of human society in which the Greeks found a melancholy consolation for some of the darkest periods in their national life.”¹⁷

The evidence from history is overwhelming; man has an innate desire for something more, something better. This longing is usually expressed in terms of a happy afterlife in which the needs and desires of man are completely fulfilled. It is apparently the product of an inward desire for happiness or Paradise. Even the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, in discussing the evolutionary origin of the idea of a blissful afterlife for the blessed, says, “Man’s experience of

¹⁶Ibid., 696.

¹⁷Ibid.

the miseries of this world and *his instinctive desire for happiness* may have suggested a blissful other-world as an offset to this earth (emphasis added).”¹⁸

John Hick points out that there are three major points of view on the issue of life after death, two of which assert some kind of Paradise or at least release from suffering:

These are: (1) the materialist and humanist rejection of belief in any form of personal survival; (2) the western and semitic belief in the preservation of the individual personality beyond death, whether as disembodied mind or reconstituted psychophysical being, in an ultimate heavenly state in which some or all are eternally to dwell; and (3) the eastern belief in the continual rebirth of what we can for the moment call the soul, until (according to hindu thought) it attains to a realization of its identity with the one infinite and eternal Spirit, or (according to Buddhism) until it attains to nirvana by obliterating within itself the needs and drives which have kept the illusion-bound and pain-bearing ego going through life after life.¹⁹

Generally, it is only atheists who assert that there is no future state of existence in which peace or happiness is attained. Nevertheless, their contention does not contradict the second premise of the argument, that human beings have a natural innate desire for immortality, because too often they betray their conviction with expressions that manifest their own desire for immortality. Atheistic humanist F. A. E. Crew, though attempting to downplay the concept of eternal life, reveals his reluctance to pass into complete non-existence:

Because I am old I can accept the idea that death is the end of me as an individual without any undue disquiet. I have lived a long and very full life. I have loved and been loved. I have passed on a genetic endowment to posterity - there are now two great grandchildren - and so have ensured continuance. A few of the results of my activities as a scientist have become embodied in the very texture of the science I tried to serve - this is the immortality that every scientist hopes for. I have enjoyed the privilege, as a university teacher, of being in a position to influence the thought of many hundreds of young people and in them and their lives I shall continue to live on vicariously for a while. All the things I care for will continue for they will be served by those who come after me. I find great pleasure in the

¹⁸Ibid., 680.

¹⁹John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1976), 28.

thought that those who stand on my shoulders will see much further than I did in my time. What more could any man want?²⁰

Crew takes “great pleasure” in contemplating a better future for mankind, a future which holds, at the very least, a vicarious existence for himself. In this passage he reveals the inner longing of the heart for something better than what this world presently offers, even if he does not believe that he himself will enjoy it. Crew, like everyone else, has not found ultimate satisfaction in this life.

Not only do atheists tend to express an unsatisfied longing for lasting contentment, but they also reveal a deep desire for meaning in life. In a letter to Lady Otto, atheist Bertrand Russell admitted: “Even when one feels nearest to other people, something in one seems obstinately to belong to God, and to refuse to enter into any earthly communion - at least that is how I should express it if I thought there was a God. It is odd, isn’t it? I care passionately for this world and many things and people in it, and yet . . . what is it all for? There must be something more important, one feels, though I don’t believe there is.”²¹ Atheism does not offer an escape from the longing for immortality that God has set in the hearts of men, it only deepens it. Albert Camus expressed the dilemma of atheism: “For anyone who is alone, without God and without a master, the weight of days is dreadful.”²² Jean-Paul Sartre expressed the same sentiment when he

²⁰F. A. E. Crew, ‘The Meaning of Death’, in *The Humanist Outlook*, ed. A. J. Ayer, 257-8, quoted in Hick, *Death*, 148.

²¹Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), 125-6, quoted in Geisler, *BECA*, 282.

²²Albert Camus, *The Fall* (New York: Random House, 1956), 133, quoted in Norman Geisler, *Is Man the Measure?: An Evaluation of Contemporary Humanism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 171.

asserted that “atheism is a cruel and long range affair.”²³ Atheism’s cruelty consists in its contradiction of one of humanity’s deepest longings, the desire for immortal life.

It is not enough, however, to demonstrate that there exists in the heart of man a deep seated and instinctive desire for happiness and meaning. The argument rests on the fact that this desire remains unfulfilled in the present life, a point made by Lewis: “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.”²⁴

Pascal also believed that the longing in the heart of man cannot be satisfied by the things of this world; “All men seek happiness. There are no exceptions. . . . Yet all men complain. . . . A test which has gone on so long, without pause or change, really ought to convince us that we are incapable of attaining the good by our own efforts . . . this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite object.”²⁵ Pascal and Lewis asserted that not only is the desire for happiness universal, but so is our impotence in satiating it. They are not alone, however. Malcolm Muggeridge relates that even Samuel Johnson was pessimistic about any claims to enduring happiness in this world. He explains, “The sister-in-law of a friend of Samuel Johnson was imprudent enough once to claim in his presence that she was happy. He pounced on her hard, remarking in a loud, emphatic

²³Jean-Paul Sartre, *Words*, (New York: Braziller, 1964), 252-3, quoted in Geisler, *Man*, 167.

²⁴Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 120.

²⁵Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, 148.

voice that if she was indeed the contented being she professed herself to be then her life gave the lie to every research of humanity.’²⁶

It is clear then that both premises for the argument from joy rest on solid evidence indicating that they are both true premises. Since the argument is formally valid, it follows then that the conclusion is true. The argument from joy demonstrates that there is in the heart of man a natural desire for immortality, an immortality that can only be obtained from the eternal hand of God.

Objections Against the Argument

Though the argument from joy is a very powerful argument, numerous objections have, nevertheless, been raised against it. Attacks range from objections against the truth of the premises to rejections of the logical validity of induction. In order to defend the argument an apologist must be able to answer these objections. Having done so, he will be able to use the argument effectively.

Objections to the First Premise

There are two main objections to the first premise. The first objection denies that the evidence supports the assertion that natural, innate desires have a corresponding object that can fulfill that desire. The second objection challenges the validity of inductive reasoning. While both of these are strong challenges, neither of them is insurmountable.

The first objection to premise one is that the evidence does not support the premise. It is argued that the occurrence of starvation or dehydration demonstrates that not all natural desires can be fulfilled. But this misses the point. It is not the case that every desire should obtain its

²⁶Kreeft, *Heaven*, 56-67, note.

object, but simply that the object exists. C. S. Lewis points out that “a man’s physical hunger does not prove that 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 which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist. In the same way, though I do not believe (I wish I did) that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men will. A man may love a woman and not win her; but it would be very odd if the phenomenon called ‘falling in love’ occurred in a sexless world.”²⁷

Instances in which the object of desire is not obtained do not demonstrate the real absence of the object. For this objection to work there must be real proof that natural, innate desires are without real objects. As mentioned above, no such evidence has been forthcoming and thus the evidence for the first premise stands. Natural desires are desires that have objects that fulfill those desires. Hunger has food, thirst has water, and procreation has sex. Not until a truly natural desire is discovered in which there is not only no real object but not even a possible object of fulfillment can the premise be denied.

The second objection asserts the problem of induction, or question begging. After all, how can it be known to be universally true that a natural desire has a real object without first examining *every* natural desire? In other words, in order to know that the first premise is true one would have to know that the natural desire postulated in the second premise has a real object, but this is the very question at hand. You must know the conclusion of the argument to be true in order to assert the first premise. But the argument rests on the truth of the first premise. It

²⁷C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 6.

becomes a vicious circle which leads to no real knowledge. Kreeft says, “It is the old saw of John Stuart Mill and the nominalists against the syllogism.”²⁸

This objection rests on the presuppositions of nominalism which denies the existence of natures, or essences. For nominalists, a universal is not a nature that individuals may be said to have or to share in. Instead they are, as Francis Parker says, “no more than an arbitrary sum or grouping of particulars which could only be consequent upon an exhaustive enumeration of these same particulars.”²⁹ The problem with nominalism is that it is ultimately destructive to all knowledge. Parker explains that “unless we could somehow know the universal without having to know all the particulars in its extension, we could never understand anything; we could not even talk or say anything, since all human thought and speech involve the use of universal concepts, which we simply do in fact have in our minds, but which we certainly do not come by as a result of any prior familiarity with every possible particular instance of such universals.”³⁰

Once the presuppositions of nominalism are removed from the argument, the solution becomes simple. If a nature can be abstracted from the particulars, it is not necessary to examine every particular to identify and define the nature. If a particular has that same nature, then it will have those attributes consequent with that nature and thus those attributes can be assigned to any particular that has that nature even before it has been examined. For example, Kreeft says, “We know that all humans are mortal because humanity, as such, involves mortality, it is the *nature* of

²⁸Kreeft, *Handbook*, 79.

²⁹Francis H. Parker and Henry B. Veatch, *Logic as a Human Instrument* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 269.

³⁰Parker, 268.

a human being to be mortal; mortality follows necessarily from its having an animal body.”³¹

Elaborating on the point he continues: “When there is no real connection between the nature of a proposition’s subject and the nature of the predicate, the only way we can know the truth of that proposition is by sense experience and induction. For instance, we can know that all the books on this shelf are red only by looking at each one and counting them. But when there is a real connection between the nature of the subject and the nature of the predicate, we can know the truth of the proposition by understanding and insight.”³²

It follows then that every natural, innate desire does have a real object because it is the nature of such desires that they do so. This nature is discovered in particular innate, natural desires and not determined in them by mere arbitrary definition. Once this discovery takes place through abstracting the nature from the particular, then valid predications based upon that nature can be made about any particular which has that same nature.

Objections to the Second Premise

The objection against the second premise of the argument rests on the denial that there is a universal desire for God or infinite joy and happiness. The objection takes two forms. In the first form it is asserted that some people are perfectly happy in the here and now. In the second form it is asserted that while a person may not presently be perfectly happy, some future circumstance, such as winning the lottery, will bring them perfect happiness.³³

³¹Kreeft, *Handbook*, 80.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

In responding to the first objection in which a person makes the claim that they are now perfectly happy, Kreeft says, “This, we suggest, verges on idiocy or, worse, dishonesty. It requires something more like exorcism than refutation. This is Merseult in Camus’s *The Stranger*. This is subhuman, vegetation, pop psychology. Even the hedonist utilitarian John Stuart Mill, one of the shallowest (though cleverest) minds in the history of philosophy, said that ‘it is better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied.’”³⁴

The second objection is similar to the first in that it is simply not credible from the standpoint of human experience. Kreeft says:

Because it is not a matter of temperament, this deep unhappiness appears most clearly not when one would expect, when life is full of fears or sufferings. If it appeared mainly at such times, we might dismiss it as escapism. But it is precisely when life treats us best that the deepest dissatisfaction arises. As long as we lack worldly happiness, we can deceive ourselves with the ‘if only’ syndrome: If only I had this or that, I would be happy. But once we have all our thises and thats and are still unhappy, the deception is exposed. That’s why rich and powerful modernity is not happier than previous cultures.³⁵

Even humanistic psychiatrist Sigmund Freud recognized that obtaining all that we seem to desire of this world never seems to bring true happiness. Speaking of the progress of science and technology, Freud says that they are the fulfillment of “fairy tale” wishes constructed by man long ago. He says that man “formed an ideal conception of omnipotence and omniscience which he embodied in his gods. To these gods he attributed every thing that seemed unattainable to his wishes, or that was forbidden to him. One may say, therefore, that these gods were cultural

³⁴Ibid., 81.

³⁵Kreeft, *Heaven*, 57-58.

ideals. Today he has come very close to the attainment of his ideal; he has almost become a god himself. . . . But . . . present-day man does not feel happy in his Godlike character.”³⁶

The hope that the future, whether through materialism or idealism, is going to provide the highly coveted state of happiness is blind hope indeed. Kreeft says:

The history of revolutions is most instructive here, and most depressing. Nowhere, perhaps, is the gap between promises and deliveries, the ideal and the real more astonishing. The only thing more astonishing is the fact that we are not astonished by it, that we blandly accept it with the words ‘Oh well, that’s human nature.’ Consider the difference between “liberty, equality, fraternity” and the Jacobins, Robespierre, the guillotine, and the eventual dictatorship of Napoleon; between the “new order” National Socialism promised and the old barbarian disorder it delivered; between “the dictatorship of the proletariat” and the dictatorship of the Kremlin. Then consider the fact that this discrepancy is the rule, not the exception. Our history is largely the history of hypocrisy.³⁷

The hypocrisy is that men claim to have found happiness or the means to happiness in this world even though they know that it is not possible to do so. Lewis exposes the hypocrisy when he says:

Almost our whole education has been directed to silencing this shy, persistent, inner voice; almost all our modern philosophies have devised to convince us that the good of man is to be found on this earth. And yet it is a remarkable thing that such philosophies of Progress or Creative Evolution themselves bear reluctant witness to the truth that our real goal is elsewhere. When they want to convince you that earth is your home, notice how they set about it. They begin by trying to persuade you that earth can be made into heaven, thus giving a sop to your sense of exile in earth as it is. Next, they tell you that this fortunate event is still a good way off in the future, thus giving a sop to your knowledge that the fatherland is not here and now. Finally, lest your longing for the transtemporal should awake and spoil the whole affair, they use rhetoric that comes to hand to keep out of your mind the recollection that even if all the happiness they promised could come to man on earth, yet still each generation would lose it by death, including the last generation of all, and the whole story would be nothing, not even a story, for ever and ever.³⁸

³⁶Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey, (New York: Norton, 1961), 38-39.

³⁷Kreeft, *Heaven*, 28.

³⁸Lewis, *Glory*, 5.

It is just not true that this world cannot satisfy our deepest longing for joy. There must be more. As Maritain points out: “Because this desire which asks for what is impossible to nature is a desire of nature in its profoundest depths, it cannot issue in an absolute impossibility. It is in no wise necessary that it *be* satisfied, since it asks for what is impossible for nature. But it is necessary that by some means (which is not nature) it *be able* to be satisfied, since it necessarily emanates from nature. In other words it is necessary that an order superior to nature be possible in which man is capable of that of which nature is incapable but which it necessarily desires.”³⁹

Conclusion

It is the nature of humanity to desire ultimate happiness and this desire points to an immortal life with God. Only by obtaining eternal life in His presence can the desire be satiated. It is how He has made us. The things of this world simply serve to point the way. As Lewis says, “If a transtemporal, transfinite good is our real destiny, then any other good on which our desire fixes must be in some degree fallacious, must bear at best only a symbolical relation to what will truly satisfy.”⁴⁰ The things we desire in this present life are only mirrors of the true object of our desire. They are mirrors of God.

³⁹Jacques Maritain, *Approaches to God* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 112.

⁴⁰Lewis, *Glory*, 4.