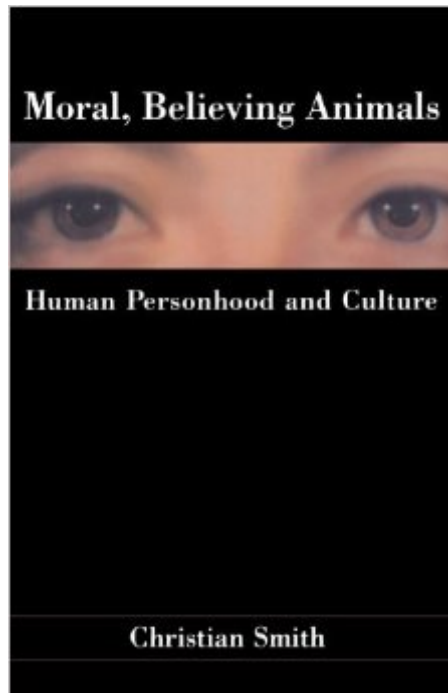


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Moral, Believing Animals: Human Personhood And Culture



Synopsis

What kind of animals are human beings? And how do our visions of the human shape our theories of social action and institutions? In *Moral, Believing Animals*, Christian Smith advances a creative theory of human persons and culture that offers innovative, challenging answers to these and other fundamental questions in sociological, cultural, and religious theory. Smith suggests that human beings have a peculiar set of capacities and proclivities that distinguishes them significantly from other animals on this planet. Despite the vast differences in humanity between cultures and across history, no matter how differently people narrate their lives and histories, there remains an underlying structure of human personhood that helps to order human culture, history, and narration. Drawing on important recent insights in moral philosophy, epistemology, and narrative studies, Smith argues that humans are animals who have an inescapable moral and spiritual dimension. They cannot avoid a fundamental moral orientation in life and this, says Smith, has profound consequences for how sociology must study human beings.

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Customer Reviews

I must say this author Christian Smith is the gift that keeps on giving. It is often very hard to sum up the misunderstandings and essentially anti-intellectual propaganda surrounding errors of interpretation involving the Enlightenment. It is easy to do it with Evangelicals on TV, like the 700 club who are regularly so obsessed with the "Illuminati" that they imagine they are still around somewhere hiding behind a bush. The "Illuminati" are a paranoid symbol for a huge caricature of the Enlightenment's intents that they find objectionable. So objectionable that it would seem to cancel

out collaterally the very founding notions of the United States. But, no matter, they continue in their obsessions. By contrast, there seems to be a whole realm of academics, often Catholics but not always, who are dedicated to trying to eviscerate any real real critical power from the Enlightenment ethos, and re-establish rationality in a context more akin to unchanging religious dogma. But it is a rather slippery affair with these folks. Unlike the sometime anti-intellectualism of the Evangelicals, these crypto-anti-intellectuals want to use intellectual matters themselves to do it. And it must be admitted that they have a long tradition in Western culture in their corner. And they are welcome to it. No one sane disputes their right to busy themselves with their long tradition. But it is quite another thing for these people to be involved essentially in intellectual skullduggery and manifestly thuggish hit jobs against the very basis of modern societies -- the Enlightenment. Well sadly that is exactly what one finds in this book.

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