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Are Evolutionary Explanations of Religion Debunking Explanations?

Apparently parallel arguments have been advanced according to which the evolutionary origin of human cognitive systems provides grounds for doubting the beliefs produced by those systems in three domains: morality, religion, and science/commonsense. However, the advocates of each argument do not usually accept both of the others. This paper suggests that there is a counterargument that works in one domain, but not in the other two. One way to counter an 'evolutionary debunking argument' is to defend a connection between the truth of beliefs in the target domain and evolutionary success, so that evolution can be expected to design systems that produce true beliefs in that domain. This might be termed the 'Milvian bridge' reply, by analogy with the traditional view that Constantine's success was explained by his adoption of true religious beliefs. It is argued that by adopting a conception of truth which is suited to play a role in evolutionary explanations a successful 'Milvian bridge' can be constructed connecting the truth of scientific and commonsense beliefs with evolutionary success. This construction cannot be extended to moral and religious beliefs. However, the sense in which beliefs in those other two domains are 'debunked' by evolutionary explanation is quite weak, amounting to little more than the fact that they receive no support from an evolutionary perspective.