

HANNAH WALLACE: CRISIS IN TURKISH EDUCATION

FREE INQUIRY

CELEBRATING REASON AND HUMANITY

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HOW MORALITY EVOLVED

DOUG MANN

LINDA KAY KLEIN
Dissects the Christian
Purity Movement

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Tom Flynn | Faisal Saeed Al Mutar
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Poetry by Max Jacob

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Beyond Atheism Beyond Agnosticism **Secular Humanism**

For many, mere atheism (the absence of belief in gods and the supernatural) or agnosticism (the view that such questions cannot be answered) aren't enough. It's liberating to recognize that supernatural beings are human creations ... that there's no such thing as "spirit" or "transcendence" ... that people are undesigned, unintended, and responsible for themselves. But what's next?

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For the questions that remain unanswered after we've cleared our minds of gods and souls and spirits, many atheists, agnostics, skeptics, and freethinkers turn to **secular humanism**.

Secular. "Pertaining to the world or things not spiritual or sacred."

Humanism. "Any system of thought or action concerned with the interests or ideals of people ... the intellectual and cultural movement ... characterized by an emphasis on human interests rather than ... religion."

— Webster's Dictionary

Secular humanism is a **comprehensive, nonreligious life stance** incorporating:

A **naturalistic philosophy**

A **cosmic outlook** rooted in science, and

A **consequentialist ethical system** in which acts are judged not by their conformance to preselected norms but by their consequences for men and women in the world.

Secular humanism incorporates the Enlightenment principle of individualism, which celebrates emancipating the individual from traditional controls by family, church, and state, increasingly empowering each of us to set the terms of his or her own life.

The Council for Secular Humanism is North America's leading organization for nonreligious people who seek to live value-rich lives. FREE INQUIRY is its magazine.

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TOM FLYNN
EDITORIAL

Humanism's Chasm

Here is one of organized humanism's most persistent puzzles: In an America where the number who live without religion has snowballed, why hasn't the membership of national "movement" groups—atheist, agnostic, freethought, and secular humanist—kept pace?

I've been covering the "Rise of the Nones" since 1990, when Barry Kosmin (now a Center for Inquiry [CFI] board member) and his colleagues at the City University of New York released their first American Religious

"In an America where the number who live without religion has snowballed, why hasn't the membership of national 'movement' groups ... kept pace?"

Identification Study. They announced that "Nones"—persons whose religious preference, when presented a list of creeds, was "none of the above"—had risen to a then-unprecedented 8 percent of the U.S. population. Of course, it kept on rising. Today, it's estimated that 23 percent of Americans of all ages are Nones. (The number is sharply higher among the young.) There are about 329 million Americans, so that 23 percent equates to 75.67 million Nones. Granted, many Nones are spiritual seekers or other sorts of supernaturalists, eclectic and otherwise. Only a minority among them

embrace the thoroughgoing naturalism of a life stance such as atheism or secular humanism. Still, let's suppose (very conservatively) that only 10 percent of Nones live without a hint of the supernatural. (I presume the true figure is substantially higher.) Still, even at the 10 percent level, that suggests that 7.567 million Americans are atheists, freethinkers, or secular humanists. Yet across our nation, no "movement" organization boasts even 100,000 members. Moreover, membership numbers have held relatively steady, or at best grown modestly, for many years. (Even if an organization's membership has doubled, that's a drop in the bucket compared to the potential for growth the number of Nones suggests.)

There isn't just a gap between the "Rise of the Nones" and the membership growth of national secular organizations; there's a *chasm*. In reason's name, why?

I've been looking everywhere for the answer—and I had a lot of places to look.

I've enjoyed multiple vantage points from which to watch our movement's dynamics. As a journalist, I got to cover the Rise of the Nones and then the explosion of original sociological research about the nonreligious that followed. As executive director of the Council for Secular Humanism, I got to know hundreds of active members of face-to-face humanist and atheist groups around the country. During the same years, I enjoyed opportunities to meet young atheists and humanists through the Council's Campus Free-thought Alliance and more recently CFI On Campus.

Last spring, CFI CEO Robyn Blumner and I attended a scholarly colloquium in Greece that attracted some of the world's top social scientists studying religious unbelief. I shared with them the ideas I'd synthesized based on what I'd observed from my assorted vantage points. The responses I received made me think I might just be on to something. (Or they were just humoring me.)

So here goes. I think organized secular humanism has reached a dramatic turning point. I speculate that the

chasm between the breakneck growth of the Nones and the near-stasis of movement organizations actually reflects an abrupt change in the sorts of people who connected with movement atheism and humanism in decades past and those who do so—or don't bother to do so—today. And I think this offers a possible explanation why secular movement organizations have grown so much more slowly than the nonreligious population itself.

Consider *FREE INQUIRY*. Its readership skews older. These days, most *FI* readers are Baby Boomers. Most grew up in a more-or-less traditional religious faith. Most of them thought their way out from under their childhood conditioning; many did that slowly, fearfully, and alone, only discovering that there was such a thing as "movement" atheism or humanism after becoming post-religious. Indeed, many thought (rightly or wrongly) that *they didn't know a single other unbeliever* until after achieving unbelief themselves. (It's true that some freethinking Boomers grew up in nonreligious households, but they make up a relatively small minority.) For most formerly religious Boomers, the passage toward unbelief wasn't just arduous and lonely, it was perilous too: when Boomers were young, being an unbeliever carried substantial stigma. Therefore, following one's reason away from religious belief wasn't just an act of intellectual integrity; it required courage. For those reasons, Boomer unbelievers tend to view their deconversions from childhood faiths among their proudest achievements and as deeply central to their humanist or atheist identities.

Small wonder, then, that one of the features that has struck the most powerful chord with *FREE INQUIRY* readers was "The Faith I Left Behind." Beginning in the February/March 2014 issue, this initial collection of *FI* readers' first-person deconversion stories ran in four successive issues, comprising twenty-eight articles. Those essays—plus fourteen more that there hadn't been room to print—were gathered together into a successful little book titled, yes, *The Faith I Left Behind*. And the deconversion stories kept coming—so that

now, almost five years later, "The Faith I Left Behind" is the back-of-the-book department that boasts *FREE INQUIRY*'s deepest backlog of already accepted articles.

Make no mistake, most Boomer unbelievers cherish their deconversion experiences. (In this, they are like free-thinkers of previous generations, reaching back at least into the early and middle nineteenth century.) By and large, Boomer unbelievers are endlessly curious about other people's deconversion experiences. Moreover, that fascination extends to intense interest in a panoply of religious subjects. What creeds do the world's religions teach, and how do we know they are untrue? What psychological mechanisms predispose us to believe in impossible and fantastic things, and how can we guard against them? Since the world's religions are untrue—that is, since nothing supernatural ever informed their development—what *did* drive their history? What interplay of purely human and physical influences led them to assume their present forms? Many Boomer unbelievers have an appetite for such topics that seems limitless.

To examine *FREE INQUIRY* is to conclude that its hardcore readers, non-religious as they are, are nonetheless obsessed with religion—and most are.

In the cohorts that have followed the Boomers, that obsession—and that personal background—are far less apparent. Younger cohorts were born into an era of greater religious diversity and more open tolerance. Today's young people—at least, those of them born in the United States—were born into a culture in which the Rise of the Nones was already underway. Among them, only a minority had grown up in a traditional religion they found demanding or repressive—precisely the opposite of their elders! As I noted in a recent review of a sociology-of-unbelief book, "Significant numbers of the new unbelievers did not grow up in a demanding religious tradition and had no personal experience of self-emancipation from a childhood faith."^{*}

* Tom Flynn, "The Sociology of Irreligion Grows Up" (review of *Organized Secularism in the United States: New Directions in Research*,

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For letters intended for publication, please include name, address (including city and state), and daytime telephone number (for verification purposes only). Letters should be 300 words or fewer and pertain to previous *FREE INQUIRY* articles.

The mission of the Council for Secular Humanism is to advocate and defend a nonreligious life stance rooted in science, naturalistic philosophy, and humanist ethics and to serve and support adherents of that life stance.



Here, I think, we find the roots of the chasm. A majority of younger unbelievers are *profoundly* unlike those who preceded them. Most have had little experience with—and, surely, little sense of oppression in connection with—a childhood religion. Vastly more among the young grew up irreligious or in a household where what one did or didn't believe about the supernatural simply wasn't a big deal. Being an atheist, agnostic, humanist, or freethinker carried little stigma. Most in this cohort knew plenty of others who saw the world as they did, so for them being an unbeliever was neither dangerous nor particularly special. (That's not to say that unbelievers obsessed with religion

“Even if an organization's membership has doubled, that's a drop in the bucket compared to the potential for growth the number of Nones suggests.”

and angry about their childhood hoodwinking no longer exist; from its origin in 2006, the New Atheist movement recruited quite a few young activists meeting that description. Nonetheless, based on the surveys and my personal experience, such “angry unbelievers” make up a minority among young unbelievers, in much the same way as unbelievers who'd grown up without religion compose a minority among unbelieving Boomers.)

For all these reasons, religion is nowhere near as weighty a concern for most younger unbelievers as it was for their elders. As a cohort, they tend not to care about a new interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls or in what order the various characteristics attributed to Jesus first appeared in Christian think-

ing or even whether the Qur'an explicitly incites violence. They're not going to be snatching up *FREE INQUIRY* (literally or digitally) and paging toward the back of the magazine to read the latest “Faith I Left Behind” installment first.

If I'm right about this, it's a vast generational shift. Most atheists, humanists, and freethinkers older than age forty-five or so have very different motives—and a markedly different psychology—than their younger counterparts. Yet the existing national organizations are finely attuned to serve a public that's fascinated with religious controversy and views any opportunity to associate with like-minded people as a welcome—and *rare*—respite from a society that generally discriminates against the nonreligious.

That's just not how most younger unbelievers see things. This 180-degree reversal in motivations and interests between older and younger nonreligious individuals is, I think, the chasm we face. I suspect it's the main reason, while millions of newcomers entered the ranks of the nonreligious over the past three decades, only a tiny fraction engaged with one or more of the existing national organizations. It's the reason, to quote my review again, “the movement as old-timers have known it is not delivering what most newcomers are looking for.” It offers an explanation why younger unbelievers seem to attach so little importance to the separation of church and state, as multiple studies have revealed. It's hard for people who care little about religion and have never known discrimination because of their unbelief to get worked up about Mr. Jefferson's Wall.

Finally, the idea of the chasm helps us understand another reason younger unbelievers *may* not be looking to join atheist or humanist organizations: when unbelief is just one aspect of your identity rather than central to it and when you have never knowingly experienced social disapproval on grounds of your life stance, you may see few benefits from aligning yourself with a life stance-centered movement in the first place.

Among the national movement organizations, the Center for Inquiry has

probably done the best job of realigning itself to meet the coming generations—but at best, it is meeting them halfway. CFI combines classic humanist and skeptical interests with a strong scientific viewpoint. It organizes a campaign to rescue endangered secular advocates from countries where religious fanaticism is rife, a focus that appears to engage younger people otherwise apathetic about religious matters. It conducts legal activism state by state to win equal rights for nonreligious celebrants—not as a First Amendment (that is, church-state) issue but rather on grounds of equal protection. (Other national organizations have experimented with equal-protection litigation also, mostly in hopes that conservative judges would be friendlier toward it than toward Establishment Clause litigation.) CFI also undertakes varieties of activism that no purely humanist or atheist organization could tackle, such as an ambitious lawsuit challenging the way CVS markets worthless homeopathic medications side-by-side with science-based medicines.

The chasm is sobering to contemplate. Since the nineteenth century, organized freethought has focused on serving hardy, lonesome iconoclasts who had thought their way out of oppressive childhood creeds, were resigned to a lifetime of discrimination because of their way of thinking, and sought out rare interludes among the like-minded as a primary source of solace. If you're a Boomer like me, you belong to (probably) the last generation of nonreligious Americans who may come anywhere near fitting that profile.

What does the future of organized secularism hold? Right now, I'm not sure anyone knows. What a voyage of discovery lies before us! **FI**

Tom Flynn is editor of *FREE INQUIRY*, executive director of the Council of Secular Humanism, editor of *The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief* (Prometheus Books, 2007), and author of the novel *Behold, He Said* (Double Dragon, 2018).

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FAISAL SAEED
AL MUTAR
OP-ED

Walking on Eggshells: Discussing Extremism in the West

I am approaching my sixth year since I landed in the United States as a refugee from Iraq.

Since then, there have been so many changes—gaining eighty pounds is the most obvious of them—but I can say now that I can speak with some authority when I engage in discussions about extremism, and in particular Islamist extremism, in North America. Since my arrival in the United States, I have been consulting, attending, and speaking at institutions in more than thirty states and provinces and at events reflecting pretty much all sides of the political spectrum (except the far Right and the far Left, of course).

I never thought I would say this, but discussions about Islamist extremism where I came from (the Middle East in general and Iraq in particular) tended to be far more honest and nuanced than the ones in which I've taken part in North America.

I attribute this to multiple factors. First, interlocutors in the Middle East are in constant contact with the enemy. (In Iraq, Islamists won May's parliamentary elections, and Jihadists took over more than a third of the country). Second, Middle Easterners are understandably more familiar with the religion of Islam, its history, and its various divisions. In contrast, most Americans and Canadians knew little about Islam until 9/11 and the subsequent terrorist attacks. To put it mildly, this is not the best introduction to a re-

ligion, a culture, and a group of more than 1.2 billion individuals who live all over the planet, most of whom are not members of terrorist organizations or have any relationship to terrorism in general.

The third factor is race. The Middle East has a much different racial history than North America. While it has also had its history of brutal practices, including the enslavement of native Africans, most Middle Easterners are either not familiar with that history or simply don't associate extremism with people of a darker skin color.

As a result, accusations of "Islamophobia" and "racism" hardly ever arise when Islamic extremism is discussed in the region. Islam is a majority religion; therefore, statements critical of Islam are not perceived as an "attack" on a vulnerable minority group. (Granted, minority religions have few rights in the region, but that's another matter.) So in the Middle East, there is no such thing as the dynamic we so often see in North America, where even valid criticisms of a minority religion or group are viewed as attacks by the majority group (white people) on a minority group (brown people), triggering defensive attitudes among minority-rights advocates determined to take the side of the underdog.

The fourth factor is the existence in North America (and especially the United States) of the far Right, many of whose adherents genuinely hate people of different skin colors and faiths. This creates the reaction one might expect, a form of "Right-Wing-Phobia" among critics of extremism in the Muslim community. Far too often,

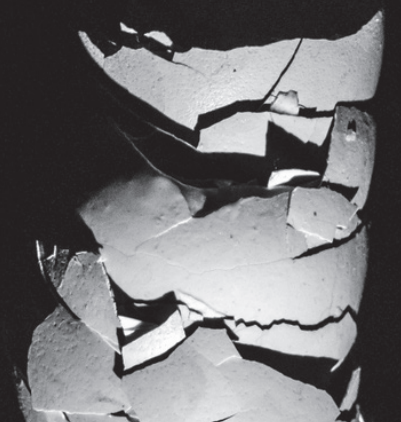
these critics feel that to protect their reputations, they must bash the far Right and Trump in a hysterical way at every opportunity, whether relevant or not, just to demonstrate that they are not right-wingers or advancing some right-wing agenda. "I am not right-wing! I am not right-wing! Please look at my skin! I am brown too!"

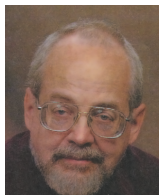
Which is why many critics of Islam sound hysterical these days: On the one hand, they have to fight accusations that they are spreading "hatred" and "Islamophobia"; on the other hand, in the eyes of critics on the far Right, they look as "Muslim" as any other Muslims and are either viewed with mistrust or as tools, either of which undercuts their effectiveness.

For all these reasons, it's tremendously difficult for North American critics of Islamism to engage in discourse that stands the chance of making a difference. As I've maintained in previous essays, if the Middle East is to change for the better, this change has to come from its people fighting for their rights by themselves. If foreign allies offer their support, that is well and good, but those who live amid the conflict should not rely on salvation from outside. **FI**

Faisal Saeed Al Mutar is an Iraqi-born award-winning human rights activist, satirist, speaker, and writer. He is an advocate for universal human rights, secularism, and the free market of ideas and is enthusiastic about the intersection of technology and advocacy. He is also the founder of multiple online platforms that together have more than 400,000 subscribers and millions of visitors.

"Discussions about Islamist extremism where I came from ... tended to be far more honest and nuanced than the ones in which I've taken part in North America."





GREGORY S. PAUL
OP-ED

The Failure of Fusion Power

As a young Royal Air Force officer, Arthur C. Clarke helped develop a radar landing system as part of a team with Louis Alvarez, who then aided the Manhattan project, later helped determine when the three shots were fired at president Kennedy, and then proposed that a meteor impact wiped out the dinosaurs. Shortly after World War II, Clarke explained how satellites in geosynchronous orbit could be used for global communications. One of the most prominent hardcore science-fiction authors of the era, and always my favorite—I was lucky enough to have limited communication with him around the turn of the century—Clarke cocreated *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

“While fission is pretty easy to achieve on planet Earth, fusion is extremely difficult. Blame the laws of physics.”

In the fifties and sixties, Clarke wrote a number of novels set on Earth during the late twentieth and/or twenty-first centuries, including *Childhood's End*, *The Deep Range*, and *Dolphin Island*, that shared a common premise. A rational atheist, Clarke assumed that as modernity and middle-class prosperity at long last pervaded a peaceful world, deeply supernaturalistic faiths such as Abra-

hamism and Hinduism would finally fade away, leaving only atheism, along perhaps with the philosophical Buddhism for which Clarke maintained a fondness until the virulent strife that afflicted his beloved Sri Lanka.

Obviously that didn't happen, although secularism has made remarkable strides and continues to do so in our time. Why is that?

Clarke similarly casually assumed that fusion power would solve the planet's energy problems and thereby create a quasi-utopia. An engineer, Clarke thought that much as producing power via fairly risky and crude heavy-metal atom-splitting fission had been solved by science and engineering, it was only a matter of time before the more difficult but very safe, effectively infinite power source of fusion came online. That would effectively eliminate the need to tap into any other major energy sources, while aborting global warming and pollution. Had elegant hydrogen-to-helium-fusing reactors gone commercial in the final quarter of the 1900s, such low-cost, high-benefit energy could have laid the foundations for a much more prosperous, peaceful, and, yes, atheistic planet than the one we are stuck with.

That has not happened because while fission is pretty easy to achieve on planet Earth, fusion is extremely difficult. Blame the laws of physics. Controlled fission is so easy to achieve at normal surface conditions that back in the Precambrian, when uranium was more highly enriched, natural reactors spontaneously formed in concentrated uranium ores. Because once-abundant uranium 235 has mostly decayed over the hundreds of millions of years since then, the uranium that is left over has to go through intensive processing to enrich the metal until it has a high enough percentage of U-235 to be fissionable in reactors. Although that is a quite difficult physical process, it was feasible enough that U-235 could be produced in the large amounts to power reactors starting in the 1950s and '60s, when slide rules were still in common use. Once sufficiently enriched uranium is on hand, it is pretty

easy to get it to undergo a chain reaction in a reactor. The tricky part is keeping the reaction from going haywire when things go bad, as they did at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Fukushima.

One of the reasons fusion is so safe is because far from it being possible for it to go wild in a reactor, it is incredibly difficult to get fusion going in the first place. Sustained thermonuclear reactions so far occur only under the fantastic pressure-temperature conditions at the centers of stars. Getting such reactions to happen elsewhere to the degree that one obtains more energy out than is put in—and to do so on a sustained, commercially viable basis—may not be feasible. Major government-funded projects, largely centered on using hypermagnetic fields to squeeze hydrogen into helium, have been creeping along for decades. Some private projects have been initiated in the hope of jump-starting the effort, in some cases by using lasers to shoot hydrogen pellets into fusion, but who knows whether they will succeed.

Lacking fusion reactors, we have had to continue to rely mainly on fossil fuels that are largely located in regions of ill repute—such as Texas and Oklahoma, where in my last column I noted that oil money has literally helped pay for the power and influence of the Christian version of the religious Right, and the Middle Eastern Gulf regions where it ended up funding virulent Wahhabist mosques and schools around much of the world that helped spread hyper-violent forms of Islam. It has further become apparent that a nation rich in oil almost always falls into massive corruption that seriously damages the development of the overall economy and democracy in favor of nationalist, ethnic, and religious strife.

Even worse, the absence of cheap fusion power has probably seriously hindered the development of economies around the world. A major body of research in which I have participated has established that mass religiosity is a psychological means by which the individuals within a population cope

with the stresses and anxieties that occur when most live in a dysfunctional society that does not deliver secure prosperity. Whenever a nation is sufficiently well-run that the majority of inhabitants enjoy secure, middle-class lives, then religiosity implodes, as it already has in Western nations. There are no exceptions to the pattern in which socioeconomic success consistently leads to a rise in atheism at the expense of theism. Nor is it likely to be a coincidence that the rise of the nonreligious around the planet from 30 to 40 percent over a dozen years closely tracks the rise of the middle class. Ergo, a fusion-fueled world economy, expanding faster than it does today and with less environmental degradation than we are suffering, should have inspired even more spectacular decreases in theism than the world has enjoyed.

The failure of fusion power has had lethal consequences. Since the end of the Cold War drastically reduced mass lethal violence from atheistic Communists, a few million have died in war-level conflicts that generally share a strong religious component tied to bad economic circumstances. Defective socioeconomics aggravated by drought contributed to the Syrian Shiite-vs.-Sunni strife that has in turn destabilized Europe with the influx of refugees. Christians are going after Muslims, and vice-versa, across poverty stricken sub-Saharan Africa. In Russia, the Orthodox Church backs dictator Putin as the economy stagnates. Buddhists target Muslims in an economically moribund Burma.

Clarke lived long enough to be distressed when his dream of thermonuclear power was not coming to pass and the unpleasant theo-social consequences were becoming all too clear. It is a lost opportunity that can never be fully recovered. Even if efficient hydrogen-fusing plants can be made practical in the fairly near future, it will take decades for enough reactors to be constructed to make a big difference in terms of rational rather than faith-based socioeconomics and the environment. **FI**

Gregory S. Paul is an independent researcher, analyst, and author. His latest book is *The Princeton Field Guide to Dinosaurs* (Princeton University Press, 2010).



S. T. JOSHI
OP-ED

The Long View

Let's step back a bit.

At a time when we are constantly bombarded with information (true, false, biased, or fabricated), it can be difficult to take note of broader social and cultural developments that have radically changed the simple act of living in the United States at this moment in history—and, in my view, changed it for the better. Having recently entered the ranks of sexagenarians, I have found myself reflecting on how different things are now from that remote period—the summer of 1963—when, as a wide-eyed five-year-old immigrant from India, I attempted to take stock of the country, halfway across the globe from my native land, where my parents had brought me.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s, set against the grim backdrop of the Vietnam War, was painful and bloody, but it did achieve significant gains in the fairer treatment of persons of color and other previously scorned minorities. And an entire treatise could be written on the strides women have made in social, political, and legal equality. One only has to look at any film or television show of fifty or sixty years ago to see how a bland and unthinking misogyny was deeply rooted in the culture as a whole and pop culture in particular. An episode of *Bewitched* from 1970 featured little Tabitha Stephens complaining about a puppet show in which Punch repeatedly beat Judy with a stick—whereupon her mother Samantha immediately branded her a “women’s libber”! The upshot of the episode was not that Punch should give up his violent abuse of his wife; apparently the best we can hope for is that Punch hits Judy a little less

hard with that stick.

Then there’s the environment. I can remember a time when Lake Erie occasionally caught fire because of the oil slicks coating its surface. What a revelation the first Earth Day (April 22, 1970) was! Who knew that we couldn’t heedlessly keep using up the planet’s resources without ultimately paying a penalty? That same year President Richard Nixon (a Republican, in case you’ve forgotten) established the Environmental Protection Agency, and the results have been revolutionary.

The animal-rights movement has emerged from nonexistence to a significant force in the humane treatment of the creatures we share this Earth with. I can remember a time when casual cruelty to animals was so widespread—especially among teenage boys—that it was hardly remarked upon. One of my friends would seize his cat, whirl it around his head, and fling it violently to the floor. For him it was all great fun! I was too cowardly to make even the

“Look at any film or television show of fifty or sixty years ago to see how a bland and unthinking misogyny was deeply rooted in the culture.”

slightest protest at the time. Today, if he had done that, I would have made sure to give him a swift kick where it counted most and render him incapable of having children.

Many people much younger than I have seen a wholesale revision of our understanding of gay rights. If anyone in 1990 had suggested that gays and lesbians would be allowed to marry in twenty-five years, I would have replied with derisive ridicule. I can remember a time when I unthinkingly absorbed the prevailing culture’s prejudice toward gays. But

then I went to New York and actually met some gay people—and what do you know? My prejudice fell away like an ill-fitting cloak.

It is a sad fact that orthodox religion has stood in the way of many of these developments. I have witnessed with appalled bemusement the rise, decline, and fall of the religious Right. Fall? Yes, fall! (Disclosure: This was written shortly before the mid-term elections on November 6.) It may well be that the last election was the last hurrah of this pestiferous movement, for we are witnessing signs of its demise everywhere:

1. In great numbers, young evangelicals are sloughing off the stiff-necked dogmatism of their parents. Some are even embracing the fight against climate change (on the principle of being good “stewards of the Earth”) and other causes relating to social justice. I suppose we should embrace our allies wherever we can find them.
2. The religious Right’s close embrace of President Trump has resulted

in a devastating annihilation of its (always hollow and hypocritical) claims to moral uprightness. The idea that evangelicals are now nothing but one more political pressure group—analogue to the NRA or the pharmaceutical industry—is thoroughly entrenched in the public mind.

3. Some evangelicals are simply throwing in the towel. Read *The Benedict Option* (2017) by the political and religious conservative Rod Dreher. The book is a scream. For you see, Dreher is so despondent over the rampant secularization of society that his only solution is for the dwindling numbers of the faithful to gather into tightly knit communities to protect their faith—although he envisions occasional forays into the wider world to “evangelize barbarian peoples” (that would be us). Pull your kids out of public schools, deny them television and the internet, and so on and so forth! All I have to say to Dreher is: Good luck with that.

Nothing I’ve said here should be taken as an argument for political, religious, or social passivity. I’m no Pollyanna, and I am well aware of the dangers of backsliding (pardon the religious metaphor). There is no shortage of recent evidence that we have a long way to go on all the issues I’ve outlined, but I think we need to take a realistic view of the immense progress that has been made. However viciously the forces of reaction seek to drag us back to the bad old times when women, gays, persons of color, and others were consigned to the margins of society, there are too many vested interests leading us forward. When corporations (yes, corporations!) are increasingly taking a role in promoting fairness, you know an important threshold has been reached.

So, despite recent setbacks, the wind is at our backs. We will prevail—and deserve to prevail. **FI**

S. T. Joshi is the editor of *Atheism: A Reader* (2000) and other works on atheism, agnosticism, and freethought.

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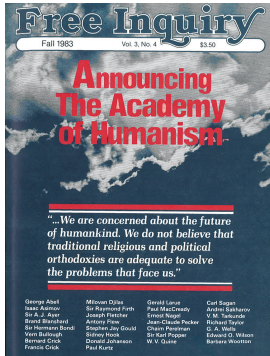


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35 Years Ago in FREE INQUIRY

"... the question of the sacrifice of innocent life in war ... I find an extremely difficult problem. Temperamentally I am inclined to the simple view (to misquote one of the late Michael Flinders's characters) that 'killing people is wrong,' but I have to recognize that, until mankind finds some reasonable way of settling differences other than by military force, the appalling damage that one Hitler can do to millions of innocent persons makes it difficult to maintain that other innocent lives must never be risked in order to stop the likes of him. But there I must leave the matter, cherishing the hope that the human race will soon find a better way of settling disputes than the idiotic process of multiplying the production of lethal instruments as the only way of *preventing* their use."

—Barbara Wootton, "Reflections of a Lifelong Agnostic," *FREE INQUIRY*, Volume 3, No. 4 (Fall 1983)

Editor's Note: Barbara Wootton, Baroness Wootton of Abinger (1897–1988) was a British criminologist and sociologist. In 1958, she was appointed to the House of Lords under the Life Peerage Act, becoming one of its first woman members. An ethical utilitarian and an early advocate for physician-assisted suicide, she nonetheless opposed abortion on other-than-religious grounds and was removed as a vice president of the then-British Humanist Association.



25 Years Ago in FREE INQUIRY

"... If Jesus did *not* say most of the things attributed to him, he *might* have said anything one would wish to attribute to him. If our picture of Jesus is marred by so much wear and tear, so much varnish and so much new paint that the original image is irrecoverable, then he *might* have looked like anybody. ... The Jesus of the Westar project and the new new quest is a talking doll with a questionable repertoire of thirty-one sayings: pull a string and he blesses the poor."

—R. Joseph Hoffmann,

"Jesus Through the Looking Glass: An Update on the Who-Was-Jesus Movement,"
FREE INQUIRY, Volume 14, No. 1 (Winter 1993-94)

Editor's Note: R. Joseph Hoffmann is a historian of early Christianity who cohosted FREE INQUIRY's influential 1985 conference "Jesus in History and Myth" at the University of Michigan. He has held academic positions all over the world, including as director of the Center for Inquiry Institute and cofounder of its Jesus Project (2007–2009). In this article, Hoffmann commented on the "new new quest for the historical Jesus," then of current interest among scholars. The "Westar project" he mentions became better known as The Jesus Seminar.

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Signature of Freedom

After reading Tom Flynn's editorial ("The Signature of Freedom," *FI*, October/November 2018), I wanted to respond because, although it could be argued that the right to suicide might indeed be the ultimate right and "signature of freedom" as Tom Flynn describes it, it still may be an enormous mistake and loss for the individual and for others. For many individuals, there is no doubt that committing suicide is the result of a momentary lapse of reason or a sudden poorly thought out decision due to an emotional shock. There is no doubt that for many, preventing their deaths is a huge moral good. Unless we can devise a way to know in advance whether this choice was rational or instead drug impaired or brought on by a crisis that would eventually pass, I believe it is best to err on the side of prevention.

The compromise would be to decriminalize, remove the stigma, and not necessarily brand suicide as a mental illness while at the same time offering all the assistance to prevent it, even if, at the time, the individual protests. The concession would be to allow a form of assisted suicide that would not be abused by others and not be the result of a rash decision-making process by an individual. That would be the best of both sides of the argument.

Gerry Dantone
Cofounder and former
coordinator for CFI Long Island

I am writing about Tom Flynn's editorial. I found it a bit casual about a rather big issue. I am in favor of suicide for people who, for example, have unending pain that cannot be treated or for those who are in situations such as Auschwitz.

But most people who are considering suicide deserve a good psychiatric evaluation and a chance to talk to reasonable, intelligent, experienced, caring people who might give them some ideas about what might help improve the situation.

Also, what suicide does to the people who are left is terrible.

Carl Saviano, MD
Northampton, Massachusetts

Tom Flynn responds:

Carl Saviano is right that "what suicide does to the people who are left is terrible." But I suspect that much of suicide's negative impact on survivors is not inherent in the act but rather reflects the social stigma surrounding it. Contemporary culture offers those left behind few tools for coming to accept, much less affirm, a friend or loved one's choice to stop living. At the same time, it serves up an endless smorgasbord of concepts that encourage survivors to blame the deceased—and, too often, themselves—for the "horrible thing" that happened. As for Gary Dantone's compromise proposal, I would welcome it if some way could be found to achieve it starting from our dysfunctional present situation. Fortunately, as I noted in my editorial, more accepting attitudes toward suicide appear to be building among the young.

Age of Theism

James H. Dee's excellent article ("The Age of Theism Is Over," *FI*, October/November 2018) listing the untenable definitions of "god" in the monotheistic religions omitted a few, just as

important as those he listed: God is perfect, unchanging, and has always existed.

What does "perfect" mean, anyway? The Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible, which are usually translated as "perfect" mean complete, faultless, whole, finished. Believers usually also claim that God has always existed. God never changes, so he must have always been perfect. Believers can cite scriptural passages to support all these claims.

But why would a perfect god create a universe? Imagine God in the eternities before he created the universe. What was he doing? Remember, he was perfect. He needed nothing; he wanted for nothing. He was perfectly content, since if he was not content with just himself, it would imply that he was needing something else. It would be inconsistent with the idea of perfection to use the verb *want* with a perfect being as the subject, as in "God wanted to create mankind" Merely saying that amounts to an admission that God was not perfect—he lacked something.

What was this perfect being doing? Since he had not yet created anything, there was nothing for him to be acting upon or even contemplating. He was the only thing that existed. Was he just thinking? About what? He can only have been thinking about himself. (Can you be perfect and narcissistic?)

He would have simply remained the perfect, complete, solitary being that he was frozen, immobile, in an eternal solitary state.

It seems that the existence of the universe, rather than being evidence for the existence of God (as many believers assert) is instead evidence that the perfect god they believe in does not exist and never did.

Richard Packham
Roseburg, Oregon

I almost sighed from sheer relief when I received *FI*'s October/November 2018 issue and saw the title of James Dee's arti-

cle: "The Age of Theism Is Over." No more executions and incarcerations of the brave and clear-headed by religionists abusing the state, no more discrimination against anything without (a) god(s) anywhere. Greatly disappointed, however, was I by a spoiler right at the beginning: "the title says, theism should now be considered a failed understanding of the universe." That's not what the title told me! Dee's conclusion that theology is the baby talk of adults did not bother me. Actually, I was pleased by the mention of Plato's Euthyphro Dilemma with its two fundamental choices, of which one, indeed, renders divinity superfluous. But today that necessity to choose can and must be formulated in more general and systematic terms. The option is, then, either the recognition of the primacy of one or more gods and/or demons or the primacy of one or more values and/or norms. The former position is theocentrist, the latter I like to call "normistic." The choice between them lies at the root of a basic distinction between worldviews, and of what we will be talking about: our domain of discourse. The theocentric issue is the same for theists and atheists alike, the future of God or gods being at stake. Self-labeled atheists or "antitheists" forget that all their continued attempts at proving that God does not exist and how bad theism is merely serves the domain of the theocentrist discourse, while meanwhile the other domain misses out on any comparable zeal for the evolution of a new, now normistic paradigm. This is the main intellectual reason the Age of Theocentrism is not over yet. It is theists who keep it alive and atheists who keep it kicking.

M. Vincent van Mechelen
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

(Continued on p. 64)

Is There A Christopher Hitchens Associate Who Will Help Implement His Plea?

In His Very Last Message To Atheists, Hitchens Wrote:

“WE MUST FIND NEW WAYS OF COMBATING THIS LETHAL DELUSION [RELIGION] IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE”

Must—new ways—in the public sphere. He knew this was his last message and we must believe it was carefully considered. Has anyone paid the slightest attention? I am aware of only the same old ways. Where are his friends? Where are his friends when someone tries to *do something new*?

Before Hitchens issued that advice, I had tried a new way by showing examples of atheist advertisements written for the general public. I published about 25-30 ads, mainly in *Free Inquiry*, to demonstrate to fellow atheists how short, arresting, interesting and challenging ads could be presented to the public in language they could understand, making cases they had never heard before. These were not expected to be effective with any more than those in the public already on the weakest end of the faith curve.

These were based on 45 years of experience writing to the general public to generate donations, subscriptions, petitions and sales of all kinds for national clients. My real objective was to interest one of our existing atheist organizations to see the merits and, at least, develop a plan for testing its effectiveness.

I was disappointed, not by the content of the responses received, but that they were few, and none were from existing atheist organizations.

So I took them to the public directly, most as full pages every Sunday for fourteen straight weeks in *The South Bend Tribune* (to challenge the worthies at Notre Dame University). Nine of these were published. Then the backlash got too intense for the publisher so the remaining five *scheduled* ads were summarily cancelled. You can see and download any or all of them at theingersolltimes.com and click to the location.

Perhaps the most disheartening result of this unprecedented experiment, which I thought would be of great interest to atheists everywhere, was that only one of the many notables who received the actual newspaper ads encouraged me; and no one and no existing atheist organization even asked about the reaction in South Bend!

SENSATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT, justifying the whole effort, was what I thought of responses from just two ministers in South Bend:

One said he was scheduling two whole Sunday sermons to deal with the ads! If any in his church had not read or paid attention to them—or, even if they had—this could not be better for us. A trusted third party rebuttal is next to an endorsement! Imagine the meme tic possibilities of such notoriety?

The other, after only the third ad had run, said they were ‘the topic’ at his weekly Minister’s Meeting! One wonders what their reaction, after fourteen in a row? Or, to the nine which ran?

Most others who wrote were complimentary and none of the objectors was uncivil.

It was awful that the full power of all fourteen successive ads was never learned. But, that made clear that such censorship would doom any future effort involving public media.

So I tried another new way: Making the Case Against Free Will—I mean by Free Will what Christians claim—that we all have equally the capacity (except children, those forced, and incompetents) to make deliberated moral choices entirely free of the influences of our brains and bodies and all the experiences we have ever had, and the interactions between biology and experience which have made us who we are.

“Entirely free” is crucial, because sin cannot be due even in part to anything beyond the control of the sinner. Thus, Free Will is the magic faculty which amounts to a Passport to Hell, if free will is not used correctly before death.

If Free Will is not true, it is the Achilles Heel of Christianity!

For Christianity it must be true, there must be deserved guilt to need a Savior!

Since we have fast-advancing science on our side, Free Will is far easier to combat than ever before.

It is a virtual certainty that nothing new in philosophy can be expected to defeat Christianity or Free Will after two thousand years of standoff.

But just the opposite is the case for science! With the evidence presently in hand, the majority of neuroscientists are convinced that free will is an illusion. They are joined by famed Drs. Sam Harris; Jerry Coyne, biologist, U. of Chicago; Robert Sapolsky, neuro-endocrinologist, Stanford U.; and Sean Carroll, physicist, Cal-Tech; all of whom have been quite vocal in their efforts to explain to the general public why free will is scientifically untenable. Of course, there are many more scientists in psychology and the social sciences who also find the present science quite sufficient.

It is even better. Since there are still a huge number not yet convinced, even among the well educated, Dr. Sapolsky has good news. Unlike philosophy with little new to say, he reports

in his book, *BEHAVE*, that of the science papers bearing on this subject which are projected to be published through 2020 (98,229) from only 3 in 1920, almost 89% will have been published just since 2000! This is due mainly to fantastic advances in technology and methods, also expected to grow dramatically. His book of 717 pages is packed with evidence already developed and substantiated about the decisive role of chemical discharges in the body that Free Will is simply impossible.

For all these reasons, I suggested in a 2016 Free Inquiry ad the establishment of a Center for the Sciences on Free Will—a non-profit think tank to focus on free will. In the hard sciences, biology, neuroscience, endocrinology, genetics, etc., probably little, if any, research is conducted directly at free will. More likely, findings are made in pursuit of other knowledge, which in fact bears on the question. In the social sciences, particularly psychology, sociology, abnormal behavior, etc., the case may be otherwise.

In both the hard and soft sciences, work is being done all over the world. So this Center would be charged with gathering, classifying, evaluating studies made using the scientific method from all over which bear on free will. Then use them in an up-to-date presentation, in non-technical language, of the scientific case against free will (after also including the effect, if any, of any credible evidence in favor of free will). It would also, as funds permitted, actively disseminate this information. It would *not* conduct research nor include any philosophical arguments.

At least, that would be my idea of its function. But that would be up to the science organizers to determine. The only thing my offer below would require would be focus solely on findings from empirical studies made using standard scientific methods.

I offered to donate \$50,000 to establish the legal and organizational framework for the FW Center and obtained the promise of legal help from an outstanding lawyer-authority to do the work—most of you would know of him—with decades of experience in non-profits.

I made this offer to an internationally known and celebrated scientist-atheist who has aggressively and very publicly shown why the idea of Free Will is an illusion. He responded with praise for the purpose and expressed interest, asked if I had suggestions. I sent my proposal for a think tank, and then after weeks, no further word. Other prominent scientist-atheists, some known friends of Hitchens, never commented.

I simply do not want to let this die! Not with science on our side, and on an issue so crucial to killing the foundation of Hitchens' "lethal delusion"—always the greatest enemy of science and reason.

**Does This Not Respond to What Hitchens May Have Meant By a
“New Idea to Combat This Lethal Delusion in the Public Sphere”?**

Please tell me what you think: fellowfeather@gmail.com. Paid ad.

The case against any kind of free will is already devastating:

- **As mentioned above, the evidence we already have** has convinced the majority of neuroscientists that is merely an illusion.
- **Dr. Sapolsky cautions those not yet convinced to wait,** new evidence is coming in every month at an increasing rate.
- **Some of the greatest scientists and philosophers of all** time wrote against it: Darwin, Einstein, Feynman, Crick, Hawking, Planck and more; Spinoza, Voltaire, Russell, Schopenhauer, and more.
- **It has crucial elements which are self verifiable—** everyone knows he/she had no choice about being, brain, body, time and place, ad infinitum. They know the power of these influences on themselves.
- **Eternal punishment, enabled by free will, is repugnant** to the *human instinct* for sympathy. Steven Pinker, public teacher extraordinaire, Harvard Professor of Psychology, says in his new book, “ENLIGHTENMENT NOW,” “You have been endowed with a sense of sympathy—the ability to like, love, respect and show kindness...and because your reason tells you none of this is particular to you, you have the responsibility to provide to others what you expect from them.”
- **It provides the *real* reason not to hate: *truly* under-** standing that there, but for LUCK, go I.
- **The common sense case is almost irresistible and is** easily stated; beautifully so by the English author, Raoul Martinez, in his highly acclaimed 2017 book, *CREATING FREEDOM*. You can listen to a 21 minute précis in a TED Talk at: <http://www.creatingfreedom.info/>

Where will the money come from? I roughly estimated that maybe \$600,000 a year would permit a real start, with an Executive Director (\$200M), 2 staff (\$200M), Office (\$200M), all under supervision of an uncompensated Board. From there the role and the budget could expand as funds were found.

With the Templeton Foundation funded with billions cannot one or two million be raised from millionaire atheists, existing atheist organizations—for whom killing Free Will is far more important than even atheist-scientists—and a relatively few individuals?

It depends on who asks whom. With the enthusiastic endorsement of our best, surely it can be done. *We simply need the will!*

The Science of the Evolution of Morality

Doug Mann

Since Charles Darwin published *The Descent of Man*, his second major book about evolution, in 1871, researchers have made many discoveries that flesh out Darwin's little-known ideas about the evolution of morality. Recent papers in *FREE INQUIRY* by Ronald Lindsay and James Hughes have touched briefly on the evolution of morality, but there's much more to this important story. In this article, I will review key steps in the evolution of morality during three phases of the evolution of life on Earth and discuss implications for organized religion and its relationship to morality.

Darwin knew that his theory of evolution by natural selection faced several daunting explanatory challenges to be understood and accepted by scientists and the public. For example, in *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859, Darwin described a general process for the seemingly improbable evolution of "organs of extreme perfection," such as the human eye, whereby simple forms of the evolving eye might provide a benefit to survival. Darwin knew of few intermediate forms to list in support of his explanation, but he was right; scientists have since discovered a series of steps representing the evolution of the eye in a variety of current species, from simple light-sensitive spots, to spots within cups, to cups partially closed to form a "pinhole camera" proto-eye, to eyes with very simple lenses, and so forth.

The story of the intuitively improbable evolution of human morality is analogous to the story of the evolution of the eye, in that science has subsequently discovered many intermediate steps that flesh out Darwin's broad but conceptually correct view of the origins of morality. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin provided a general description of how morality evolved, with the advantageous foundations of morality emerging in social animals, in particular among our primate ancestors. Darwin's explanation—and subsequent scientific discoveries—show that morality is not a

mysterious exception to evolutionary theory that required supernatural intervention to emerge, as claimed by proponents of "theistic evolution." In contrast to such supernaturalism, a naturalistic view of the theory of evolution helps us to see the parallels and the high degree of continuity between our species and others.

The evolution of human morality is entirely explained by the competitive and reproductive advantages of a highly structured, cooperative social life within groups whose members are of the same species. Humans represent one of only about twenty small branches of the vast evolutionary tree of life that display particularly high levels of social organization. When did this advantageous but rare level of social organization first appear in the evolutionary history of life on Earth, prior to the recent evolution of our own species? And how is the emergence of a high level of social organization in humans intertwined with the evolution of morality?

During each phase of the evolution of life on Earth, individual hereditary variations that influenced social behavior encountered a variety of environmental and social selection forces. In primates, the most successful behavioral variations in terms of survival and reproduction slowly strengthened and eventually resulted in the remarkable self-domestication of our species, shaping our minds and bodies and producing powerful traits such as empathy, reciprocity (a desire to exchange and repay favors), and the strong desire for social affinity and the approval of others. This process of evolutionary self-domestication culminated in the individual prosocial traits and cultural rules of behavior that we refer to as "morality." This story begins with the evolution of life on Earth almost four billion years ago and moves forward in three distinct phases, culminating in the emergence of human sociality and morality as they exist today.

The First Phase: The Slow Genetic Evolution of High Sociality and Pre-Moral Traits

In *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin summarized the theory of evolution by natural selection as follows:

As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive; and as, consequently, there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be naturally selected. From the strong principle of inheritance, any selected variety will tend to propagate its new and modified form.

The advantages of a cooperative, highly organized social life to help a species succeed “under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life” are many, but there was no guarantee that the process of evolution by natural selection would result in any particular social structure emerging among the diverse forms of life that gradually evolved. It’s now understood that Darwin’s “strong principle of inheritance” is made possible by genes carried on strands of DNA, and that random errors occurring in the DNA copying process may make an organism “vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself.” However, the small hereditary variations that prove to be advantageous typically take a very long time and a multitude of generations to result in significant changes to a species. Life first appeared on the Earth about four billion years ago, and a full 3.8 billion years, or 95 percent of the evolutionary history of life, would pass before genetic mutations accumulated in a few species in a way that produced a high level of cooperative social organization.

The rise of the social insects: The power of instinctive cooperation

Insects began to appear on Earth about 400 million years ago, but it wasn’t until 150–200 million years ago that the earliest termites and ants evolved. These were the first insects that evolutionary biologists refer to as “eusocial” or “true social” species. These species have a distinctive set of characteristics: the life of a colony is based around a nest where multiple generations of the species live and take care of offspring; there are sharply defined, specialized roles for different subgroups or “castes” of the colony; and sexual reproduction is limited to specialized castes. For example, a colony of ants may have one or more actively reproducing queens in the nest, along with princesses (virgin queens who will mate with drones to establish new colonies), drones (the reproductive males), and sterile workers and soldiers. The characteristics of such species, under the right conditions, produce significant advantages in foraging for food, reproduction, care of offspring, food storage,

nest maintenance, and nest defense. This distinctive level of social organization has been highly successful since its emergence. Today, ants and termites represent less than 2 percent of the total number of current insect species, but ants and termites constitute more than half of the worldwide total body weight of living insects.

There are obvious parallels between “true social” insects and the social lives of humans, according to entomologist Edward O. Wilson. Humans often live and work in large, complex hierarchies while conforming to specialized roles and cooperating with large numbers of both familiar people and strangers, and some cultures have even featured types of reproductive caste systems (although not

“The evolution of human morality is entirely explained by the competitive and reproductive advantages of a highly structured, cooperative social life.”

the genetically wired reproductive roles found in the technical definition of a eusocial species). Furthermore, human beings often display considerable levels of altruism and self-sacrifice toward kin, familiar community members, and even strangers.

Although the behavior of “true social” insects foreshadows the evolution of human morality in terms of conformity to social roles that require self-control and self-sacrificing behavior, there are limits to this analogy. Insect behavior is instinctive, with a limited set of hard-wired behaviors made possible by a relatively simple nervous system. Furthermore, the evolution of “true social” insect species is explained by the fact that all the insects in a colony are genetically related to each other, so a self-sacrificial act by a soldier ant benefits the survival and reproduction of the genes the soldier ant carried. (In evolutionary biology, such insect behavior demonstrates “inclusive fitness” and the benefits of “kinship selection” or simply “nepotism.”)

Nevertheless, the “true social” insects illustrate an important truth about morality: the immense advantages of cooperative social life organized around specialized roles can be achieved only through self-control and the altruistic and self-sacrificing behaviors that are also central to human morality. But how did self-control and altruism evolve in organisms with much more complex brains and behavior than those of ants and termites?

Mammals and their helpless offspring: The power of attachment

Mammals begin to appear in the fossil record about 200 million years ago. Hormones such as oxytocin and vasopressin that were important in the reproductive systems of reptiles gained additional functions in the evolution of the “self-care system” in mammals. The self-care system produces feelings of pleasure and comfort when a mammal is well-fed and feelings of pain and stress when a mammal is hungry or threatened.

Warm-blooded mammals have the advantage over cold-blooded reptiles of being able to move and feed at any time of the day or night, but they also require about ten times as much food as a reptile of the same size. High energy needs required problem-solving flexibility in early mammals, and mammalian brains slowly began to enlarge. However, larger brains meant births at early stages of de-

velopment and, therefore, longer periods of helplessness and dependency in mammalian offspring. According to philosopher Patricia Churchland, it took about seventy million years for the mammalian self-care system to evolve into a robust attachment system between mothers and offspring. The hormones oxytocin and vasopressin play important roles in both the self-care system and the attachment system. The attachment system produces pleasure and feelings of well-being and comfort in the close, nurturing relationship between mothers and offspring and feelings of distress and pain when the other shows signs of distress.

“3.8 billion years, or 95 percent of the evolutionary history of life, would pass before genetic mutations ... produced a high level of cooperative social organization.”

The importance of the evolution of the attachment system in mammals to the eventual evolution of human morality cannot be overstated. The evolution of highly social insects is a powerful demonstration of the benefits of instinctive altruistic and self-sacrificial behavior, but the evolution of the attachment system in mammals was a vital step toward the possibility of high sociality supported by individual altruism and self-sacrifice in much more complex organisms, such as our species. In brief, the attachment system is the biological basis for caring for others that, once firmly established between mothers and offspring, could

Primate bands with dominant leaders: The power of coalitions

About sixty-five million years ago, a mass extinction event contributed to the demise of the dinosaurs, enabling mammals, including the early primates, to evolve freely and spread rapidly. By about eight million years ago, an evolutionary branch emerged that included gorillas, chimpanzees, and the ancestors of *Homo sapiens*. All the species found in this evolutionary branch have been highly social in nature. Chimpanzees, who—along with bonobos—are our closest genetic relatives, live in loosely organized bands that have a “dominance hierarchy” structure with an alpha male at the top of each band’s social order. However, the alpha male’s power is constrained by coalitions of less powerful chimpanzees. Chimpanzees have a complex social life and engage in problem solving to manage frequent conflicts. They have traits of self-control and deference to authority that Darwin saw as important precursors to morality, according to moral psychologist Dennis Krebs.

The emotional attachment system that evolved between mothers and offspring in earlier mammals also plays an important role in the social lives of bands of chimpanzees, according to primatologist Frans de Waal. Chimpanzees appear to care for others in the band, particularly kin and “friends.” For example, chimpanzees in coalitions groom each other and comfort a coalition member who has been in a fight, accompanied by a rise in oxytocin levels. Chimpanzees appear to sense the emotional states of others in the band and may therefore possess a form of what we call sympathy or empathy in humans. Chimpanzee social life demonstrates the effect of the attachment system when it is generalized to the extended family and others in the band.

Chimpanzees demonstrate at least two other behaviors that are also precursors of morality. Although chimpanzees do not have the sophisticated sense of fairness and justice that humans possess, they do engage in “reciprocity,” where approximately equal favors are exchanged despite a significant time lapse between the first favor and the return favor. For example, chimpanzees are more likely to groom others or share food with those who provided the same or similar favors hours before. Also, chimpanzees are well aware of the implicit rules of behavior in a band. When chimps are caught breaking a rule by an authority figure, they typically stop with minimal protest and take up another activity. Chimpanzees, therefore, possess several traits that are crucial building blocks of morality.

Genus Homo and big brains: The power of social complexity

In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin held that human morality derives directly from the traits of our primate ancestors and other social animals:

As man is a social animal, it is almost certain that he would inherit a tendency to be faithful to his comrades, and obedient to the leader of his tribe; for these qualities are common to most social animals. He would consequently possess some capacity for self-command. He would from an inherited tendency be willing to defend, in concert with others, his fellow-men; and would be ready to aid them in any way, which did not too greatly interfere with his own welfare or his own strong desires.

Around 2.6 million years ago, several species of primates now classified as genus *Homo* emerged. Some of these ancestors began to make simple stone hand axes. At the same time, the Pleistocene Epoch began, which included a series of glaciations and warmer periods, requiring our primate ancestors to move and adapt. Over the next 2.4 million years, the brain volume of genus *Homo* would triple, from about 450cc in the earliest species—the same brain volume found in chimpanzees—to 1350cc in our species, *Homo sapiens*, in the most rapid evolution of complex tissue in the history of life on Earth.

One well-supported explanation for the rapid evolutionary growth of the brain is the “social brain hypothesis,” which holds that as the size of primate bands grew and social life became correspondingly more complex, much higher demands were placed on primate brains in terms of memory and social skills. Across species of primates, brain volume positively and strongly correlates with average social group size. Among our prehuman ancestors, both potential mates and groups favored individuals who could fit in and cooperate, requiring ever more sophisticated social skills, which in turn selected for the development of larger brains. The traits that helped prehumans to cooperate and conform to roles within groups are the building blocks of morality. They are found in basic form in chimpanzees and were refined and expanded during the evolution of genus *Homo*.

By about 1.5 million years ago, prehumans were beginning to learn to maintain fires to serve as campsites. With a fire as the focus of a campsite, the campsite became like a nest, with various roles emerging to maintain the fire, care for young, defend the campsite, and gather food, analogous to the nest-based roles of social insects. These specialized roles in prehumans had obvious advantages but also made group life more complex, with greater demands on individuals to learn and conform to multiple roles.

By 400,000 years ago, prehumans had become dependent on methods of foraging (hunting and gathering food) that required cooperation by two or more members

of a group, according to psychologist Michael Tomasello. Prehumans in these foraging partnerships developed role expectations and rules, feelings of responsibility for the other partner, and mutual respect. In Tomasello’s “interdependence hypothesis,” this sort of cooperation and teamwork, with clear roles by which partners contributed equally, evaluated each other’s performance, and chose foraging partners accordingly, became the foundation for the strong sense of fairness and justice that would emerge in *Homo sapiens*. The stage was set for our ancestors to develop, commit to, and enforce rules that applied equally to all members of the group. The emergence of effective groupwide rules was intertwined with three major developments: the emergence of culture about 250,000 years ago, intensive social selection for altruistic behavior, and the evolution of the human conscience.

“Ants and termites constitute more than half of the worldwide total body weight of living insects.”

The Second Phase: Gene-Culture Coevolution and the Emergence of Human Morality

Culture is fundamentally about the creation and transmission of ideas, knowledge, skills, and rules, and therefore it depends on “social learning.” Social learning has two components: 1) the ability to learn by imitation or instruction, coupled with 2) the ability to change and improve what one has learned. Starting at least 2.5 million years ago, some of our ancestors made simple hand axes by flaking stones, but these simple tools were produced without any changes for more than two million years, so production of these tools did not demonstrate the second component of social learning. However, by 250,000 years ago, our ancestors were able to produce a great variety of improved and specialized spear points for hunting and share and build on these skills by demonstration, imitation, and, crucially, by refinement and variation. The development of a sophisticated variety of spear points had a significant impact on subsequent human evolution and, by demonstrating the first clear evidence of social learning, marked the beginning of culture.

The emergence of culture was a novel and momentous development in the evolution of life on Earth. In the words of evolutionary biologist Mark Pagel:

Having culture means we are the only species that acquires the rules of its daily living from the accumulated knowledge of our ancestors rather than from the genes

they pass on to us. Our cultures and not our genes supply the solutions we use to survive and prosper in the society of our birth; they provide the instructions for what we eat, how we live, the gods we believe in, the tools we make and use, the language we speak, the people we cooperate with and marry, and whom we may fight or even kill in a war.

To Pagel, we live in “cultural survival vehicles” that protect us but also shape and control us.

therefore changed the shape and capabilities of our ancestors’ bodies.

Culture accelerated the long process that resulted in the self-domestication of our species. The specific cultural selection forces that eventually produced human morality also changed our ancestors’ brains. In terms of brain structure, culture continued the selection for complex brains capable of managing the increasingly demanding requirements of social life. Sexual selection as well as group enforcement of basic rules of behavior selected for traits of individual self-control and conformity, which are prerequisites for morality as well as for stable, beneficial group life.

Domestication of a species can affect bodies as well as brains. In a recent example of selection favoring domesticated behavior, dog breeders who chose puppies for breeding based on their docile and friendly behavior noticed several unexpected effects on the dogs’ bodies after a few generations of selective breeding: the

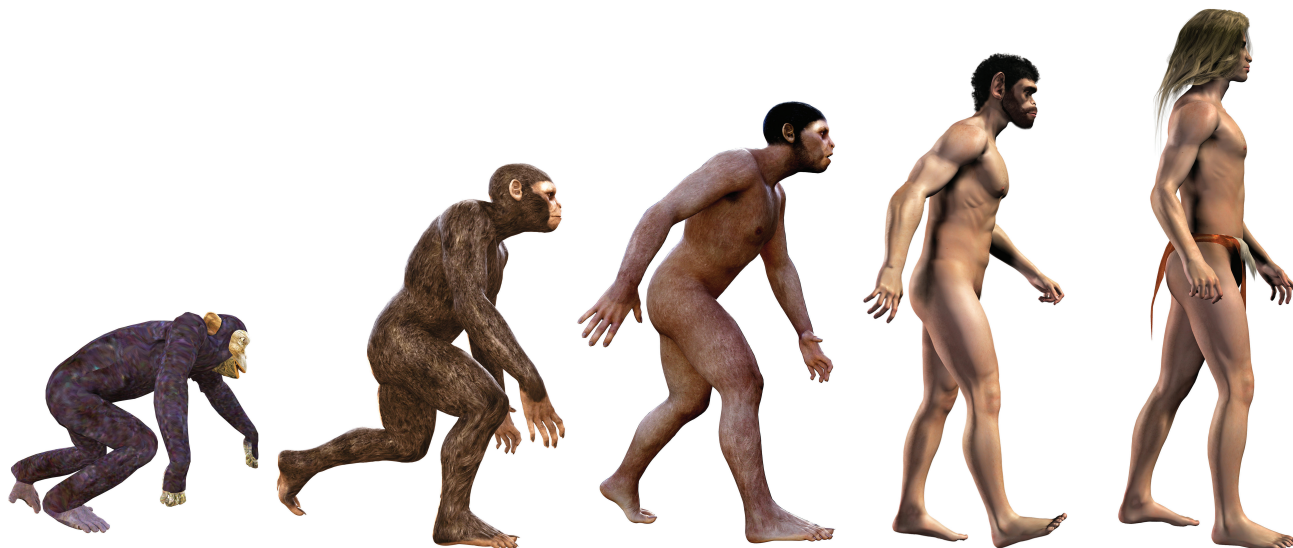
dogs’ tails became curly, ears were longer, and the faces of adult dogs retained some puppy-like characteristics. Selection for docility had produced *neoteny*, the persistence of some juvenile physical features in the adult form. Similarly, social selection among our ancestors for strong social skills, for the tendency to form lasting emotional attachments, and for social conformity produced not only larger brains but flatter, more expressive faces with larger eyes.

The familiar illustration of an early primate morphing into an upright modern human in a few steps illustrates the cumulative effects of primate genetic evolution and subsequent gene-culture coevolution that persistently selected for social skills and prosocial traits. The very shapes of our brains, bodies, and faces are a testament to the survival

“How did self-control and altruism evolve in organisms with much more complex brains and behavior than those of ants and termites?”

Gene-culture coevolution shaped our bodies and brains

Culture was (and still is) such a powerful selection force and influence on human behavior that it had a lasting effect on human bodies and brains. In other words, the powerful interaction between genetic traits and cultural selection forces produced “gene-culture coevolution,” as described by Peter Richerson and Robert Boyd. To build on the previous example, the early cultural development of specialized spear points made large-game hunting possible, which could provide large amounts of high-quality food; however, large game hunting with spears requires more in the way of endurance and coordination than brute strength. Over thousands of generations, reliance on large-game hunting selected for slender bodies with greater endurance and



value of high sociality, which requires morality for its full expression.

Hunter-gatherer life shaped morality and produced the human conscience

By 150,000 years ago, and possibly even earlier, members of *Homo sapiens* were the same as modern humans in general appearance. These ancestors lived in nomadic hunter-gatherer tribes. Thousands of generations of life in these hunter-gatherer tribes strengthened human prosocial traits, accelerated the evolution of language, and formalized the basic moral rules of group living. This manner of life also led to the evolution of the human conscience, according to evolutionary anthropologist Christopher Boehm. A crucial period for the evolution of morality was the late Pleistocene, from 125,000 to 45,000 years ago, when our ancestors, using a sophisticated array of spears and other weapons, became increasingly reliant on the hunting of animals for the largest part of a tribe's food supply. A successful hunt provided a rich supply of protein and fat, but the results were intermittent and uneven; several hunters might go out for an entire day and only one might return with meat. Equitable sharing of meat from a successful hunt among a tribe's members became essential for the tribe's survival.

The necessity of egalitarian meat-sharing was an important crucible for the evolution of morality. Boehm has personally studied or reviewed others' detailed observations of the social lives of about fifty current nomadic hunter-gatherer tribes that probably live much as their late-Pleistocene ancestors did. These tribes have elaborate mechanisms of social control to promote and enforce egalitarian food-sharing. For example, successful hunters are expected to be humble about their skill; someone not from a successful hunter's family is assigned to distribute the food evenly throughout the tribe; and the tribe monitors the results of a day's hunt, gossiping so that any attempted cheating concerning food-sharing is detected quickly and known widely, so that the entire tribe can form a united front to confront a hunter who may be trying to hoard game for himself or his immediate family. Also, tribal elders frequently encourage generosity in terms of food-sharing and other forms of helping.

In other words, these hunter-gatherer tribes require hunters and others to engage in altruism, in that each tribe may contain several unrelated kinship groups; egalitarian food-sharing therefore requires giving food to non-kin with no immediate or specific expectation of a comparable amount of food in return. Every member of a tribe must actively participate in enforcing rules such as food-sharing to suppress "free riders" who, openly (in the case of bullies) or secretly (in the case of cheaters and liars), break rules and undermine the rule-followers and the stability of the tribe's social order. Cheaters and liars are serious types of

"free riders" because they attempt to maintain good reputations, which have many benefits, while breaking important rules. Constant judgmental gossip plays an important moral function in these hunter-gatherer tribes, helping to catch free riders and unify the tribe against them. Free riders are the natural enemies of rule-followers and altruists, and they must be caught and disciplined if the tribe is to survive and social order is to be maintained.

Boehm describes this battle between altruists and free riders and its consequences for the evolution of moral rules and the human conscience among our late Pleistocene ancestors:

... [H]umans began to make use of social control so intensively that individuals who were better at inhibiting their own antisocial tendencies, either through fear of punishment or through absorbing and identifying with their group's rules, gained superior fitness. ["Fitness" in this context refers to advantages in survival and reproduction, not to physical fitness.] By learning to internalize rules, humankind acquired a conscience The rules individuals internalize are the cultural products of groups that gossip moralistically on an ongoing basis. That's how moral codes originate, stay in place, and are refined.

The moral codes found in studies of hunter-gatherer tribes include the same prohibitions found in the moral codes of all human cultures. According to Boehm, "... all human groups frown upon, make pronouncements against, and punish the following: murder, undue use of authority, cheating that harms group cooperation, major lying, theft, and socially disruptive sexual behavior."

But there is more to the human conscience than the ability to learn moral rules. Darwin viewed the connection between moral rules and emotions as a central feature of the conscience. He observed that the human moral sense was frequently expressed by blushing with shame when an individual's violation of a moral rule is discovered by others, but that other animals, including other primates, did not display this visible reaction. Darwin wrote to ask acquaintances from all around the world whether people in the local culture blushed with shame when caught in a violation of a moral rule of behavior. Through this pioneering piece of cross-cultural research, Darwin found that blushing with shame occurred among humans across all cultures.

Darwin had investigated a central feature of the human conscience: a universal connection between well-learned rules of behavior and powerful positive and negative emotions such as moral pride, guilt, and shame. Recent studies of normal American children show that blushing with shame begins at about two years of age. However, studies of psychopaths have shown that although they learn moral rules easily, they have no positive or negative emotional reactions to following or breaking moral rules and therefore break them with impunity. The lack of such emotional connections to moral rules justifies the conclusion that psychopaths lack a conscience.

The human conscience, therefore, has two major components: 1) internalized rules, whereby well-learned moral codes become part of one's cultural identity; and 2) powerful emotions associated with moral rules, whereby positive emotions such as pride are generated by following rules, and negative emotions such as guilt and shame arise when moral rules are broken.

The human conscience emerged from previously evolved traits. Darwin felt that both social instincts and higher mental capacities were necessary for the evolution of a conscience:

The following proposition seems to me in a high degree probable—namely, that any animal whatever, endowed with well-marked social instincts, the parental and affilial affections being here included, would inevitably acquire a moral sense or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well developed, or nearly as well developed, as in man.

“Chimpanzees ... possess several traits that are crucial building blocks of morality.”

Darwin's “parental and affilial affections” depend on our ancient mammalian attachment system to enable individuals to form a deep bond to a culture and a culture's moral rules. The strong desire for parental approval, with corresponding positive and negative emotions when parents are pleased or displeased, became a strong “affilial” desire for the approval of one's cultural group; positive and negative emotions attached to internalized moral rules provided an evolutionary means to gain and maintain that approval.

The large brains of *Homo sapiens* provided individuals with the power to learn and navigate the complex social life of a culture and follow rules well enough to maintain a good moral reputation within the culture of one's birth. The gradual evolution of language, a product of both genetic and cultural evolution, made the transmission of knowledge, including social rules of behavior, much more efficient. Through thousands of generations of tribal life, cultures rewarded and selected those who learned intricate social and moral rules and emotionally internalized those rules as part of each individual's cultural identity. Thus, our species domesticated itself, achieving a remarkable degree of social conformity to each culture's moral rules and practices, through the evolution of the human conscience.

Long before the advent of agriculture about 11,000 years ago, all the core features of human morality were in place within hunter-gatherer tribes. Deeply evolved prosocial traits, including the conscience, helped individuals to follow a tribal culture's moral rules well enough to maintain social order, despite urges that could cause individuals to engage in deceptive or overt selfish behavior. However, the success of agriculture presented new challenges to human morality in the third phase of its evolution.

The Third Phase: The Recent and Rapid Cultural Evolution of Morality

The emergence of agricultural practices about 11,000 years ago marked the beginning of a rapid increase in both the worldwide human population and the size of settled human communities. The “religious” beliefs of hunter-gatherers were mostly animistic, involving capricious spirits that were uninterested in human moral behavior, along with some burial practices that suggested belief in an afterlife. However, these animistic beliefs were of little help in maintaining social order when communities began to grow beyond the small size of tribal groups that had enabled members to monitor each other's moral behavior so effectively.

According to psychologist Ara Norenzayan, organized religions that feature supernatural “watchers” that monitor and enforce morality in larger, more anonymous human populations emerged well after the advent of agriculture. The larger the population, the more likely that a culture's predominant religion features a god that monitors and enforces morality, thus counteracting the weakened role of interpersonal moral monitoring that was sufficient in small hunter-gatherer tribes.

Viewed this way, organized religions featuring supernatural moral watchers are a functional product of cultural evolution but with a complex relationship with morality. On one hand, organized religions helped societies to scale up, codify and teach moral rules, and serve as important markers of cultural identity. On the other hand, organized religions have served as a justification for conflict between different cultures and have accentuated the “us vs. them” side of human tribalism, as described by philosopher Joshua Greene. Furthermore, religious moral rules have been added that have little to do with the essentials of human morality that were established during the hunter-gatherer tribal period of human evolution; these “add-ons” often have to do with notions of what is sacred or profane, which is one of the five or six foundational topics covered by moral systems throughout the world today, according to social psychologist Jonathan Haidt. (For brilliant if profane commentary on organized religion's accretions to moral rules, watch the brief “Ten Commandments” routine by the

late comedian George Carlin; the references include a link.) Furthermore, religion's function as a means of social control has often been used to oppress women and persecute gay people and other social subgroups.

Why has organized religion been such a mixed bag in its effects on morality? One clue is that the things being transmitted in cultural evolution are human ideas, not human genes. Genetic mutations produce small variations that require many generations to produce significant changes in a species. In contrast, any idea that "sticks" in human minds and gains broad acceptance can become a significant force in cultural evolution, widely affecting human beliefs and behavior, including moral beliefs and practices. Therefore, cultural evolution, although rapid and powerful, is not necessarily very adaptive in terms of human well-being. For example, there are tribes living today in Papua New Guinea in which witchcraft is held to be the explanation for crop success and failure, so neighbors are viewed with suspicion when their crops are conspicuously more successful than those of others, particularly by someone whose own crops failed. These superstitious beliefs, a product of cultural evolution, create an endless cycle of suspicion, accusations, violence, and misery. In addition, *within the past five years* women have been murdered in several cultures in Papua New Guinea and Africa on suspicion of being witches who have caused illness and death in others. Historically, belief in witchcraft has appeared in a number of Western cultures and religions, often with deadly consequences. The products of cultural evolution, including religious beliefs and associated moral rules and practices, can be harmful to human well-being.


Cultural evolution since the advent of agriculture has produced an estimated ten thousand religions and many corresponding versions and extensions of the central themes of morality. A large majority of these religions are no longer practiced, and just a few highly successful religions and moral codes predominate in today's world. However, at least in the Western world, religions are rapidly losing their status as essential pillars and arbiters of the morality of society. As noted by Norenzayan and others, several largely nonreligious Scandinavian countries are the happiest, most orderly, and most prosperous countries in the world.

Conclusion

Human morality is a natural phenomenon that beautifully demonstrates the central principles of the theory of evolution by natural selection. The lengthy evolutionary history of morality, which includes both genetic and cultural evolution, explains the unique power of moral rules, in that the human conscience connects deeply evolved traits and emotions to well-learned cultural rules of behavior. Morality

made it possible for humans to build and maintain highly complex but generally orderly societies, enabling our self-domesticated, hyper-social species to spread throughout the world. Organized religion, itself a product of cultural evolution, is a latecomer to the evolution of human morality and is demonstrably not essential to social order in today's world. Secular humanists have every reason to view

"The powerful interaction between genetic traits and cultural selection forces produced 'gene-culture coevolution.'"

morality as a deeply evolved and entirely human endeavor that must continue to change and adapt—in a way that is informed by the best of science and reason—for the good of humanity. 

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Pure Anguish

Linda Kay Klein

In the 1990s, a “purity industry” emerged out of white evangelical Christian culture. Purity rings, purity pledges, and purity balls came with a dangerous message: girls are potential sexual “stumbling blocks” for boys and men, and any expression of a girl’s sexuality could reflect the corruption of her character. This is the “sex education” Linda Kay Klein grew up with. After she nearly died by ignoring her worsening Crohn’s disease in an attempt to prove she was a woman of the spirit and not of the flesh, she began to question the purity ethic. Ultimately, Klein spent twelve years interviewing women from backgrounds like hers, revealing widespread sexual dysfunction, bizarre coping mechanisms, and PTSD-like symptoms. Here is a sample:



“Jesus has never been more real, present, and personal,” Katie told me, her hand wrapped around a watered-down White Russian at a local dive bar in our hometown. Her voice was steady and sure. She leaned over the small table and added in a near whisper, “I’ve never had a lover so good.”

I cocked my head. I was pretty sure that Katie, who I had known since youth group, had never had a lover of any kind—good or not. But tonight, Katie looked and sounded sexier than I had ever seen her. We’d been friends a long time and I rarely saw Katie in anything but a boxy blue postal service uniform or baggy jeans and an oversized T-shirt. Now her voluptuous body was barely hidden behind a lacy black camisole and tight black jeans. She had curled her long dark hair into ringlets and done her makeup immaculately, tracing her eyes with black liner. It was like

seeing Olivia Newton-John in the last scene of *Grease*, the one where she leaves her poodle skirt at home, walks into the carnival in black spandex and grinds her cigarette out with the toe of her shoe, making John Travolta drop to his knees and sing.

“Why are you smiling like that?” she asked.

“I don’t know, Katie,” I said. “You’re on fire tonight.”

It was the mid-2000s. An era when some single Christian women, having been too long told their life purpose could only be fulfilled in partnership with a man, took to saying: *I’ve got a man, thank you. His name is Jesus.* These women may have been virginal in the material world, but their dates with Jesus could be hot-hot-hot, and they could be hot too so long as he was around.

Despite the fact that Jesus was himself a thirty-something-year-old single man, prolonged singleness is frowned upon in evangelical purity culture. Author Joshua Harris sums the attitude up in his book *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*, writing:

Here’s my advice: Get married. Unless God has removed your desire for sex and has given you a clear vision to serve Him as a single person, then assume that you’re supposed to get married and either make yourself ready or begin pursuing it... We’re not just called to guard the marriage bed; I think more Christian singles should be running toward it!

When single evangelicals were asked by Claire Evans at London School of Theology,¹ “Do you think Christians view singleness as being equal or inferior to marriage?” 75 percent of the men said Christians view singleness as inferior. That seems like a big number! Until you hear that

1. Formerly known as London Bible College.

98 percent of the women feel this way.² Even within this pro-marriage context, men can get away with being single well into their adulthood (some even jokingly calling themselves “Bachelors to the Rapture”) in a way that women rarely feel is permitted.

When researcher Dr. Kristin Aune asked, “What are the main issues facing single Christian women today?” the most common answer single evangelical women in the United Kingdom gave was “the church’s attitude towards single women.”ⁱⁱⁱ The second most common answer was “men, sex, and dating.” Many women supplemented their answers by saying they felt that the church pressured them to get married. Several said they felt that they were viewed as a threat to married people in the subculture. One even said it can be difficult to know how to “function” in the subculture “without the leadership and ‘covering’ of a husband.”^{iv}

Generally speaking, married people between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-five are more likely to attend church than those who are not married,² and the gap between the two populations is widening with time.^v Though the same percentage of married people who were attending church between 1972 and 1976 were also attending church between 1998 and 2002, the number of single people dropped significantly.^{vi} There are surely multiple reasons for this, but I don’t think it is a leap to assume the church’s negative attitude toward single people is one of them.

Meanwhile, purity culture does not permit women to solve their singleness by taking matters into their own hands and going out and getting a man (and certainly not going out and getting any other kind of romantic partner). A “pure” woman must wait patiently for God to bring the right man to *her*. All she can do is prepare herself. Say, work through any sin that might be preventing God from bringing the gift of a relationship to her.

Many purity advocates teach that women aren’t very sexual, and so don’t need a way to vent their repressed sexual energy in their single years. But that’s not what I hear in my interviews. Dating Jesus was just one of many work-arounds I heard about from women who wanted to remain pure but couldn’t deaden their sexual, romantic, and relational impulses.

One woman went on a yearlong “fast” during which she starved herself of romantic and sexual thoughts the way one might starve oneself of food during a traditional fast. Every date was turned down; every desire was shut down; and every insecure “Does this guy like me?” was caught, stopped, and replaced with prayer, meditation, and reading the Bible.

Another woman made celibacy sexy. Every time she

2. Right now, around 80 percent of Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine are single, and nearly half of adults under the age of thirty-four have never married. Between people getting married later in life, and the increasing rate of divorce, the connection between marriage and church attendance (and singleness and not attending church) provides an important insight into the rising number of people who consider themselves religiously unaffiliated.

wanted to have sex, she went out salsa dancing instead. She came home feeling sweaty, alive, uninhibited, and unafraid of her sexuality in a way that made her feel closer to herself, to the world around her, and to God.

The same year I spoke with Katie about her experience with dating Jesus, Agnieszka Tennant, columnist and former associate editor and editor at large for *Christianity Today*, wrote about the work-around:

In a popular book, I learn of women who set up date nights with Jesus. Christie enjoys her Friday nights by going to Barnes & Noble “to drink coffee with the Lord and to read whatever book from the Christian living section he guides me to” or by cooking a wonderful meal and setting the table for two, then “talking to God as if he is actually sitting there at my table with me, because I know that he is.” ...

My friend’s mother took part in a “tea with the Lord,” during which she and the other women wore their wedding gowns—those, at least, who managed to squeeze into them—and fancied themselves as brides of Christ. An influential Kansas City church teaches thousands of people the so-called Bridal Paradigm, which encourages a quasi-romantic relationship with Christ. And who among us hasn’t detected an eerie resemblance between a contemporary Christian song and a pop diva’s breathy rendition of a sensual love ballad? ...

“A ‘pure’ woman must wait patiently for God to bring the right man to *her*.”

I don’t question the devotion of anyone who says she loves Christ intensely, whatever language she uses to express it. But I have little patience for taking biblical metaphors too far and giving one’s relationship with God an air of irreverent chumminess. Somehow, the scenario in which “his princess” shaves her legs for a date with Jesus seems to leave little room for fear of God.³

The first time I read Tennant’s article, I laughed with recognition at her reference to the sappy romanticism of modern Christian music, and *uh huh*’ed her dismissal of dating Jesus. But the more I listened to Katie and others talk, the less I laughed. Because I began to notice—when my friends were dating Jesus, they were awesome: strong, confident, and doing right by themselves in ways that I’d never seen them do before.

I looked across the table at Katie and smiled.

“I’ve never seen you this confident,” I told her.

“Well, the guys I dated before make God look good,”

3. When giving me permission to cite this article in late 2017, the author asked that I inform my readers that she has not been a Christian for a decade.

Katie answered, her winking face lit up by the multicolored lights hanging above us in the bar. "Anyway, for me sex is all in my mind. I'm a twenty-six-year-old virgin. I had my first boyfriend, Joe, a few months ago, and he was my first kiss.

"But God is giving me my dreams gift-wrapped with a chocolate on top. Jesus is saying: 'By the way, I love you. Put on your dress because I'm taking you out and the limo will pick you up at seven. And the flowers are for you. And I put \$50 on your dresser. Hugs and kisses.' I feel like a honeymooning bride oozing love for God. You know how when you love someone, you want everyone to meet him? That's how I feel."

"What are the dreams he's giving you gift-wrapped with a chocolate on top?" I asked, reading her words back to her.

"Science!" Katie exclaimed as though I should have known. "I first started thinking about myself as dating Jesus right after my breakup with Joe. A guy sitting next to me at a coffee shop was filling out applications for college and it made me think about applying to colleges and trying to get scholarships myself. I thought, 'I'm talented; I'm creative. Why am I working some dead-end job?' I wasn't calling out to God. But I just felt like God was there. Now I'm a science major. I was scared out of my mind to do it, but I feel like everything is making sense."

"Many purity advocates teach that women aren't very sexual But that's not what I hear in my interviews."

"So," I began, trying to connect everything Katie just said, "Your relationship with Jesus gave you the strength to change your life."

"Right," Katie answered definitively.

I cocked my head. "He doesn't sound like a bad boyfriend, actually."

In some ways, the modern-day evangelical trend of dating Jesus can be compared to the historic Catholic trend in which women joined convents to avoid gender expectations. Dating Jesus allowed Katie to move on with her life within a context that insisted that, after serving God, her top priority ought to be getting married. Another woman told me she often thought back longingly to the year in which she dated Jesus, though she now had a great earthly partner. She told me she was closer to God while dating Jesus than in any other period of her life but that she was also more *independent*. Women dating Jesus asked themselves what the ideal boyfriend (which Jesus would obviously be) would want for them. And the ideal boyfriend

would want them to *thrive*. So they gave themselves permission to pursue science, \$50 to take themselves out for the evening, and whatever else they needed.

Though the dating Jesus trend has waned in popularity, the idea of taking one's frustrated sexual, romantic, and relational energy and turning it into something more useful—like the pursuit of spiritual endeavors—remains popular. I have personally taken plenty of conscious dating breaks during which my life looked a lot like these women's: I journaled; I prayed; I meditated; I went on spiritual retreats with God; and I held my sexuality close. I would be the first to say that celibacy served me well in these seasons, and that I came away better emotionally and spiritually as a result of it. But as time passes and one season turns into two, then three, then four, and perhaps a lifetime, its sweetness can begin to sour.

Ten years after Katie told me about dating Jesus at the bar that night, she was still single. I sat down with a just-as-attractive, but much more casually dressed Katie at her kitchen table to talk about it. Now a science researcher, I asked Katie if she remembered telling me about dating Jesus and the role it played in her choice to pursue science in her midtwenties. She said she didn't. She remembered

dating Jesus at other points in her life, but not this one. By then, Katie had tried so many different ways to make her singleness bearable that the experience wasn't even worth remembering.

The buzzer rang on the oven and Katie stood up.

"Should we check it and see if it's ready to eat?" she asked as she opened the oven door and pulled out a chicken dish heaped with seasoned cheese and cream of mushroom soup.

"Ready!" she announced to me as she surveyed the dish. "Ready Freddy!"

As we ate, she told me that she had approached several different religious leaders over the years about how to balance her desire to be a good Christian woman with her need for sexual expression.

"They didn't seem to understand what I was going through or how to help me, and there weren't books about that," she said. "There were books about how to dress modestly or, I don't know, books on 'okay, once you are getting married, here's what sex is and how to enjoy it with your husband.' But I was like, 'Just give me the man. I know how to enjoy it,'" she laughed.

In fact, enjoying it was Katie's biggest problem.

No matter how hard she tried, Katie couldn't stop her sexual feelings, her sexual thoughts, and, most upsetting of all, her sexual expression through masturbation. She set her fork down and looked at me seriously. "I began to feel like, 'This is probably something terrible in me and I'm just—'" she struggled for words. "I must be the only terri-

ble, black-hearted, black-minded person. I must be weird; I'm a freak of nature; I must be a man.'" Katie was tripping over the purity culture stumbling block that tells girls *they* are to blame for their inability to meet a set of nearly unattainable standards, *not* the standards themselves. Katie even questioned whether she had been sexually abused or inappropriately exposed to sexual content as a child and had repressed the memory, as she couldn't think of any other reason why her sexual feelings wouldn't go away, as the purity movement demanded they must.

"I couldn't understand why I, as a girl, would desire sex so much when, supposedly, girls don't struggle with that. *You know,*" Katie gestured to me, "in the evangelical world, sex is the deepest, darkest sin for a woman. There's an expectation that sex—or, anything to do with sex, so masturbation included—is only to be enjoyed within the context of marriage.

"But like eating or breathing or needing sleep, masturbation feels more like a need than a want," Katie said, forgetting her chicken. "There is no sexual outlet for me so I obsess over it. What is my outlet? What is a 'pure' outlet? I constantly talk to God about it: 'God, you made my body this way. What's up?'

"There are times after I masturbate when I'm like, 'Oh well. It's just part of life and it's that time again and whatever,'" Katie continued. "Then other times I feel bad and I beat myself up. I think, 'I should be able to choose, but it just feels like I can't. It must be a slavery to sin that I'm just not holy enough to overcome. It must be a lack of faith in me that I can't overcome this.' Guilt is a familiar friend to me. I beat myself up about everything, so that's just standard. I feel more comfortable with guilt than with pleasure or happiness. It seems like a natural state of being to me."

"When are you more likely to feel one way or the other?" I asked.

"Well, it can go to a lustful place, or it can kind of be somewhat clinical. Depending on how I approach it, I think I can feel more or less shameful."

"What's the difference between clinical and lustful masturbation?" I asked.

"Well, I've noticed as I get older how attached it is to certain times of the month, to hormones—"

I made a *really?* face.

"Oh my gosh yes!" Katie insisted. "It's just—it just *is*. I just don't need it most of the time. Then right before my period or right around ovulation, those are the times when it's almost like a physical need. My body's like, 'Go make peace.' And I say, 'Okay, it is now this time of the month. It's time to masturbate in the shower, where it's clean and I will not think about any particular man. This is just all physical touching and whatever.' Trying to keep it separate from that enjoyment you get when you are with somebody and the excitement of being with somebody." I nodded, remembering interviewees who told me about thinking about their laundry or trying to go into a Zen place of nothingness while masturbating so they wouldn't feel as much shame about it afterward.

"It's like, 'this is a procedure,'" Katie continued. "'This is a procedure, and we are going to try to separate it from anything dark and horrible.'"

"What do you mean by dark and horrible?" I asked her.

"Fantasizing about somebody that I find attractive or somebody that I've been in intimate situations with before, and just recalling those feelings of being with them. Or imagining somebody touching me or saying things to me that I want to hear that make me excited. It's complicated," Katie summed it up. "I think masturbation is a comfort thing. The pleasure, the happy endorphins. It's a way for me—if I'm feeling super tired or super insecure—you get the good feelings and you feel better or relaxed, or whatever."

"It's a form of self-care," I suggested.

"But then there's the loathing that comes afterward. The fantasy helps you to get excited, and that gives you that physical reaction of happy endorphins, but then comes the self-loathing."

"When you describe the clinical masturbation, it almost sounds like you are trying to avoid shame by stripping sexuality of pleasure."

"Yes. Totally, yes," she agreed. "I think that it's hard to separate what may truly be ..." Katie trailed off. "I *do* believe in sin," she began again. "And I do believe in a sin nature. But to what extent is true joy and pleasure robbed of me because I'm calling it sin when maybe ... it's not?" She shrugged, picked her fork back up, and took a bite out of her now cold chicken. 🍴

Notes

- I. Joshua Harris, *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is): Sexual Purity in a Lust-Saturated World* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 111–112.
- II. Kristin Aune, *Single Women: Challenge to the Church?* (Carlisle; Waynesboro, PA: Paternoster Press, 2002), 19.
- III. Aune, *Single Women*, 23.
- IV. Aune, *Single Women*, 24–25.
- V. Rebecca Traister, "The Single American Woman," *New York Magazine*, February 2016.
- VI. Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 55.

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From Darwin to *Jihad*: The Erosion of Turkey's Secular Education System

Hannah Wallace

Turkey's secular education system is under threat. According to a 2018 *Washington Post* article, an education official called for all school children to be taken to local mosques for morning prayers before lessons. While it may be a seemingly incongruous demand in a country known for its secular constitution, it represents growing confidence on the part of those pushing a religious agenda. This follows controversial changes to the school curriculum introduced last year. These changes include the omission of evolution theory from the high school curriculum and compulsory gender-segregated prayer rooms in all new public schools. In the place of evolution theory,

children will be taught about the concept of *Jihad*. Government officials have been quick to stress that the meaning of the term in modern parlance has been misappropriated. *Jihad* in classrooms will, instead, be taught in its nonviolent variant. This is despite the Speaker of Turkey's National Assembly, only this year, using the term to describe a military offensive against the Kurds. An increase in lessons devoted to religious studies is also on the agenda.

These moves represent a worrisome trend for those concerned about the continuing encroachment of religion into the education system. For many, it is a microcosm of debate between secular and liberal sections of society and

conservative elements pushing for greater religious influence. While 99 percent of citizens describe themselves as "Muslim," the country has long remained loyal to its founding secular principles. The architect of the Turkish republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, set out to establish a modern Western-oriented nation in the early 1920s. To achieve this aim, sweeping reforms were implemented that limited the influence of religion in public life. However, under the leadership of Recep

"Controversial changes to the school curriculum ... include the omission of evolution theory from the high school curriculum and compulsory gender segregated prayer rooms in all new public schools."



Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling AK Party, there has been a gradual erosion of practices and ideas associated with the West. These have been replaced with piety and religious conservatism. Erdogan has long spoken of his ambition to “raise a religious youth.” As a result, education has become the battleground for ideological influence among younger generations.

Statistics reveal an exponential increase in the number of religious schools during Erdogan’s reign. In the past fifteen years, the number of such schools has increased from 450 to 4,500 across the country. Despite educating only a minority (11 percent) of the country’s children, the budget for religious schools is disproportionately high. So-called *Imam Hatip* schools were originally founded to educate religious leaders and preachers. They now educate children for whom—given the cost of private schooling and the conversion of general public schools to religious ones—a religious education is the only option.

While general subjects are studied in *Imam Hatip* schools, around half of the curriculum is devoted to studying the Qur’an and Arabic. Equally worrisome is the decline in educational achievement that has coincided with the proliferation of these schools. International tables show a decline in performance in subjects including math and science. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) rankings for 2015—the most comprehensive study of international student assessment—showed Turkey second from the bottom among thirty-five OECD countries in mathematics, science, and reading scores. The results marked a continual decline since 2012.

Erdogan himself was the product of an *Imam Hatip* education. For many within his core support base—largely derived from rural and conservative sections of the country—a greater focus on religious education represents a progressive step. Religious education had long been a target of secular loyalists. This included a ban on students wearing the headscarf in school and the eventual banning of religious schools.

Under Erdogan’s leadership, Ottoman nostalgia has replaced progressive secularism. The country’s path to illiberalism is a far cry from the optimism of many liberals who helped bring Erdogan and the AKP to power in 2002. Erdogan was initially viewed as a liberal reformer by many in Turkish society; he was expected to provide a bulwark against the threat of military coups and increasing freedoms for marginalized groups.

Over the years, however, Erdogan’s consolidation of power has taken the country in an authoritarian direction. This has coincided with an increasingly religious agenda, marked by an increase in the role of Islam in the educational system.


However, the school curriculum has not been the

only target of the government’s reforms. The purge of civil servants following the failed coup of 2016 included thousands of teachers and academics. The coup arguably provided the pretext for removing many dissenters against the reforms. Those targeted included leftists, liberals, and secularists. One of the victims of the emergency decree following the coup told the *Middle East Eye* that she was “blacklisted on the social security system as a terrorist [and] can’t get a job anywhere else,” adding, “not even in the private sector because employers are afraid.”

The government has refused to back down after much criticism of its reforms. According to a 2017 article in the *Telegraph*, a senior government official defended the decision to remove Darwin’s theory of evolution, describing the theory as “controversial” and beyond the comprehension

“Erdogan’s consolidation of power has taken the country in an authoritarian direction.”

of students of high-school age. This is despite its being widely regarded as the scientific basis for understanding the origin of life. Orhan Yildirim, head of one of the biggest teachers’ unions in the country, was critical of the changes. He told the BBC: “This curriculum is a *coup d’etat* targeting education in Turkey. You don’t have to have guns to make a coup. If you strike a country’s education as such, then it will be impossible for it to catch up with prosperous nations.”

The overhaul of the education system continues to be met with protests by those who remain committed to fighting for a scientific, secular education system. They are carrying out the battle for Turkey’s secular soul in the classroom. 

Further Reading

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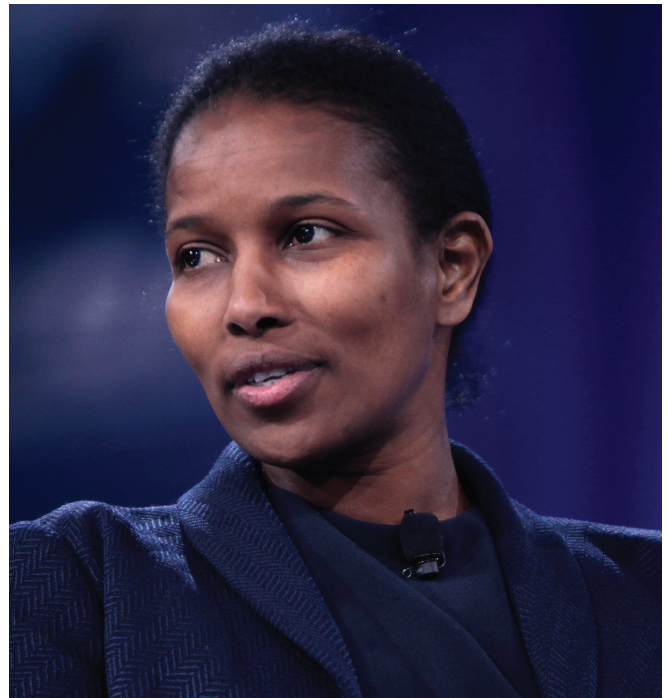
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Understanding Ayaan Hirsi Ali: A Critical Examination

Mark Kolsen

One of America's most prominent atheists, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, has been severely criticized, even threatened, for her views regarding Islam. Critics say she has misinterpreted the Qur'an, inaccurately characterized Muslims, and promoted "Islamophobia" in the United States. They further posit that she does not understand that Islam is a religion of peace, not war, and that only a radical fringe threatens the West, a minority that can be contained by military means. In her argument that Islamic doctrine must be "reformed" (delineated in her book *Heretic*), Hirsi Ali has also been characterized as a delusional wishful thinker. One humanist critic has even suggested Hirsi Ali must think Muslims are "stupid," incapable of making the same (atheistic) choices she has made.

Criticism of Hirsi Ali has been especially sharp because of her support of Donald Trump and his administration. In her most recent book, *The Challenge of Dawa: Political Islam as Ideology and Movement and How to Counter It*, she endorses the broad goals outlined by Trump in a Youngstown campaign speech from August 2016. In that speech, Trump said that Americans must "take on the ide-



Ayaan Hirsi Ali

"Why does an atheist like Hirsi Ali devote so much time to ... policy recommendations that identify her more with right-wing than left-wing thinkers?"

ology of radical Islam. Our administration will be a friend to all moderate Muslim reformers in the Middle East, and will amplify their voices." Concomitantly, Hirsi Ali criticizes Barack Obama's previous "narrow focus" on combating only Islamist extremism, an approach that, in her words, "has proved both costly and ineffective."

Being a friend to "all moderate Muslim reformers" seems fair enough, but some of Hirsi Ali's concrete policy recommendations seem to align her with right-wing bigots

such as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who, in the words of Peter Beinart, "has a history of making dangerously misleading statements about Muslims," and whose ally, Frank Gaffney, seems to think that Muslims secretly control the U.S. government. Like Pompeo, Hirsi Ali has recommended that the Muslim Brotherhood—the alleged orchestrator of U.S. Islamists—be declared an international

terrorist organization. Many of her vague recommendations about the ideological scrutinizing and surveillance of mosques, prison and military chaplains, as well as refugees and immigrants—all aimed to determine "their loyalty to the United States"—present the specter of trampling on the First Amendment rights that she claims to champion.

Why does an atheist like Hirsi Ali devote so much time to criticizing Islam, advocating its reform, and making policy recommendations that identify her more with right-wing

than left-wing thinkers? How was it possible for Christopher Hitchens, and now Sam Harris, to call her their “personal hero”?

Part of the explanation lies in *Infidel*, her autobiographical account of growing up as a Muslim in Somalia. Having been “cut” as a child in preparation for an arranged marriage she barely escaped and having seen many Muslim women suffer under Islam (even in Holland, where she fled and lived for a time), Hirsi Ali is deeply committed to sparing other women from the same fate. Despite death threats, she continues to speak out. But personal experience only partially explains her viewpoint and commitment: to fully understand Hirsi Ali, I think one must understand Samuel P. Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, an extremely influential book to which Hirsi Ali often refers.

Huntington argues:

In the first half of the twentieth century intellectual elites generally assumed that economic and social modernization was leading to the withering away of religion as a significant element in human existence The emerging society would be tolerant, rational, pragmatic, progressive, humanistic, and secular.

Instead, Huntington argues, “a global revival of religion has occurred In society after society it manifests itself in the daily lives and work of people and the concerns and projects of governments.” Huntington believes that this revival is most “dramatically evident in former communist states,” especially in Russian cities where “churches are the busiest places in town.” In Central Asia, there were 160 mosques and one *madrassa* in 1989; by 1993 there were 10,000 mosques and ten *madrassahs*! The Islamic surge has involved some fundamentalist political movements but is “basically an extremely broad-based, mainstream cultural movement.”

According to Huntington, the primary cause of the “global religious resurgence” is, ironically, the social, economic, and cultural modernizations that were supposed to cause the death of religion. Huntington believes that modernization has created a global identity crisis, especially in countries such as India, China, and South Korea, where millions have moved into cities and mass communication has penetrated village life. He says:

People move from the countryside into the city, become separated from their roots, and take new jobs or no job. They interact with large numbers of strangers and are exposed to new sets of relationships. They need new sources of identity, new forms of stable community, and new sets of moral precepts to provide them with a sense of meaning and purpose. Religion, both mainstream and fundamentalist, meets these needs.

Huntington says that the religious resurgence is also “a reaction against secularism, moral relativism and self-indul-

gence, and a reaffirmation of the values of order, discipline, work, mutual help and human solidarity.” By *secularism* Huntington means both “godlessness” and the separation between church and state, which Islam rejects.

Huntington’s argument also explains why, in Latin America, Protestantism has replaced Catholicism and why Christianity has supplanted Buddhism in South Korea. In Latin America, Protestantism has spread among the poor because, in contrast to Catholicism’s “passivity,” it better meets “the basic needs of the person—human warmth, healing, a deep spiritual experience.” In cases such as this, religion becomes (in the philosopher Debray’s words) not an “opium for the people but a vitamin for the weak.”

Religion’s resurgence is not confined to the poor. Huntington says Islam has spread most rapidly “in advanced and seemingly more secular Muslim societies” (Algeria, Iran, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia), among people who are

“The Muslim revival is ‘not a rejection of modernity,’ it is rejection of the West’s ‘secular, relativistic, degenerate culture ... a proud statement that ‘We will be modern but we won’t be you.’”

“modern oriented, well educated, and pursue careers in the professions, government and commerce.” As with Hindus in India, religion for these Muslims means (in the words of historian William McNeill) “the repudiation of European and American influence upon local society, politics and morals.” Huntington stresses that among these peoples, the Muslim revival is “not a rejection of modernity,” it is rejection of the West’s “secular, relativistic, degenerate culture ... a proud statement that ‘We will be modern but we won’t be you.’”

In the larger context of his book, Huntington’s argument is alarming. He offers very powerful evidence that, at least since 1920, the West’s power and influence has been declining and will continue to decline well into the twenty-first century. Of course, economic development in China and other Asian countries primarily challenges Western power, but “social mobilization and population growth” in Muslim countries—especially among the fifteen to twenty-four age group—is the engine powering what Huntington calls the “Islamic Resurgence,” an event he compares to the Protestant Reformation in Western societies. He again stresses this Resurgence “is mainstream, not extremist, pervasive, not isolated,” an attempt to make Islam not just a religion but a way of life by reconstructing society from the top to the bottom and implementing *sharia* as the law of every

land. As such, the Resurgence presents a very powerful threat to the West and has, ever since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, manifested itself in a “quasi war” and a “growing clash” between Islam and the West. But not only with the West: Huntington offers substantial evidence that “Wherever one looks along the perimeter of Islam, Muslims have problems living peaceably with neighbors Muslims make up about one fifth of the world’s population but in the 1990s they have been far more involved in intergroup violence than the people of any other civilization. The evidence is overwhelming.”

the average Muslim mostly ignores the Qur’an and has not reflected critically on its meanings. When a young Muslim questions his identity and asks “What does it mean to be a Muslim?,” he or she turns to self-appointed “scholars” who provide literal interpretations of these tenets with little or no historical context to moderate their meaning. These “scholars” are part of Muslim networks marketing *dawa*, the call to become, and act like, a Muslim. A young Muslim who answers the call and “understands” the tenets can quickly become radicalized. A conflicted young Muslim who has lived a Western lifestyle and ignored obligatory prayers may especially be motivated by knowing that martyring oneself will wipe out all past sins and provide immediate happiness in heaven.

Hirsi Ali recognizes that not all Muslims are “Islamists” or “*jihad*-ists.” But throughout her writings and presentations, she offers weighty and wide-ranging evidence that, per Huntington, the Muslim “threat” is not confined to a lunatic fringe. To cite just a few examples: Convinced by the Qur’an’s teaching that happiness lies in the afterlife, some Muslim parents will encourage, and then

celebrate, their children’s “martyrdom.” What Western parents would do the same? On college campuses where Hirsi Ali has spoken, Muslim students will completely lack empathy when she offers examples of Muslim women getting beaten. In fact they will become enraged when she cites verses in the Qur’an justifying these beatings. Or consider a Pew study of 2013 that showed that in twenty-five of thirty-nine countries surveyed, a majority of Muslims wanted their countries governed by *sharia* law. In countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and among Palestinians, more than a quarter of Muslims surveyed said that acts of violence are sometimes justified. In the United States, only 86 percent thought violent tactics were rarely if ever justified: “only” because the other 14 percent constitutes more than 400,000 Americans!

In every act of terrorism, Hirsi Ali sees Islamic doctrine coming to life. She is highly critical of those “on the left” who view terrorist acts as aberrations and caution against a reactive intolerance of most Muslims: it is, she argues, Islam—as stated in the Qur’an—that is intolerant of traditional Western values such as free speech and the separation of church and state. As long as there is an inconsistency between the doctrines of the Qur’an and the words of peace-loving Muslims, the threat to Western values will exist, and more acts of terrorism can be expected. Quoting Karl Popper, Hirsi Ali says tolerance has its limits, and Westerners have the right to be intolerant of values threatening their own, just as they were intolerant of fascism during World War II. Muslim immigrants to Western nations must be strictly scrutinized, with priority given to those showing “loyalty” to the United States. The government should in-

“Hirsi Ali especially believes that ... Westerners must understand the primary ‘cause’ of this conflict and, ultimately, Islamic violence: Islamic doctrine itself, as stated in the Qur’an.”

Hirsi Ali shares Huntington’s outlook and conclusion: namely, that “[t]he underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power.” Hirsi Ali especially believes that to mitigate the threat Islam poses to the West, Westerners must understand the primary “cause” of this conflict and, ultimately, Islamic violence: Islamic doctrine itself, as stated in the Qur’an. Throughout her works and public presentations, she has stressed that the Qur’an does not simply express a “religion,” as Westerners know the term, but a political ideology that, she says, includes five “pernicious tenets”:

1. The Qur’an is the final word of God;
2. Muslims should strive not for happiness on this planet but in the afterlife;
3. *Sharia*, a comprehensive system of laws, should govern the spiritual and temporal realms;
4. Ordinary Muslims are obliged to command right and forbid wrong; and
5. To counter infidels refusing to convert, Muslims should engage in *jihad*, or holy war.

Why do these five tenets seriously threaten Western freedoms, especially its traditional separation between church and state? Because, Hirsi Ali argues, unlike the Catholic Church’s bishops or pope, Islam has no “professors of Islam” to interpret these tenets; rather, every man is a self-appointed interpreter of the Qur’an. However, unlike the Christian moderate, who may read the Bible and select only those parts that agree with his or her values,

crease its surveillance of mosques or other Muslim groups preaching *dawa*. Beyond intolerance, the only other “solution” for Westerners is to follow Trump’s Youngstown words and work to “reform Islam.”

Reform Islam? Here Hirsi Ali’s thinking hits roadblocks. When it comes to actually *reforming* the Qur’an’s five pernicious tenets, she merely suggests that “the administration should ally itself with genuine Muslim moderates and reformers, not with ‘nonviolent’ Islamists.” It should also engage in a cyber-war with those online groups preaching *dawa* and “use broadcast institutions overseas (e.g. Voice of America) to fight the war of ideas by disseminating a counter-*dawa* message, highlighting the work of Muslim reformers ... ”

Who are the “genuine Muslim moderates and reformers”? Hirsi Ali is speaking of people such as Maajid Nawaz, a former Islamist who now runs Quilliam, “the world’s first counter extremism organization.” In *Islam and the Future of Tolerance* (a book Hirsi Ali has endorsed), Nawaz explains to Sam Harris what moderates can do to change, or at least challenge, “the rigidity of ideological dogma” that Hirsi Ali sees as the primary cause of the Muslim threat. Nawaz speaks from deep experience: in *Radical*, he details his own transition from a deeply aggrieved sixteen-year-old to an Islamist and then to an advocate of a secular, liberal, human-rights perspective. Reading *Radical* will give pause to anyone doubting Hirsi Ali’s view that *dawa* and the Qur’an can quickly radicalize young Muslims.

Unlike Hirsi Ali, Nawaz believes that Islam is a religion of peace “because the vast majority of Muslims do not believe it is a religion of war.” However, he agrees with Hirsi Ali that the Qur’an is a major cause of Islamic violence and needs to be reformed. To Nawaz, the problem is that Muslims need to understand that historically, jurists have interpreted the Qur’an in different ways, and that the fundamentalist interpretation is not the “correct” one. Texts, he says, “don’t speak for themselves”; their meaning, he argues, is a function of “the relationship you have with the text.” There is no one “correct interpretation” of any text.

Nawaz hopes to persuade Muslims that the Qur’an, including its “pernicious tenets,” can be interpreted in various ways. For example, with regard to the afterlife, various Muslim jurists have seen a contradiction between the Qur’an’s depiction of God as “infinitely merciful” and hell as “infinite punishment” for those who don’t accept *dawa*. Nawaz says that, in contrast to the fundamentalist interpretations, the student of one famous jurist, Ibn al-Qaayim, “took the view that hell is not really eternal. He focused on particular passages in the Qur’an, after God’s description of ‘eternal hellfire,’ where caveats such as ‘except as God wills’ and ‘everything terminates except his grace’ appear.” In his discussion with Sam Harris, Nawaz points to other

examples of jurists who have cast doubt on fundamentalist interpretations of the Qur’an.

Given the historical and intellectual difficulties in conveying these various interpretations to Muslims, it is easy to agree with Sam Harris that moderates such as Nawaz have an “almost impossible” task. But there is also no doubt that Hirsi Ali and reformers such as Nawaz have persuasively argued that a fundamentalist interpretation of the Qur’an presents a real threat to the West, a threat not confined to a radical fringe.

And at least one government—Denmark’s—appears to be taking Hirsi Ali’s arguments seriously. In July 2018, the Danish parliament passed laws to curb potential violence and encourage greater assimilation of Muslim immigrants living in Danish ghettos. Among these laws, poorer Muslim children must attend classes on Danish culture and values for twenty-five hours each week. Parents are also forbidden to send their children abroad for “re-education” in Islamic nations. The government believes that if families

“Reading *Radical* will give pause to anyone doubting Hirsi Ali’s view that *dawa* and the Qur’an can quickly radicalize young Muslims.”

“do not willingly merge into the country’s mainstream, they should be compelled.” To discourage potential violence, the law authorizes local officials to increase surveillance in Muslim ghetto neighborhoods. More laws are forthcoming.

Are these laws “harsh,” as the *New York Times* has stated? Perhaps, but Sweden offers evidence that admitting Muslim immigrants without cultural “education” can have explosive consequences. This past summer, I spoke with many Swedes about the violence in Gothenburg and the rise of the anti-immigrant right wing throughout Sweden. Generally, they criticized their government for only addressing the economic needs of Muslim immigrants and felt that Muslims needed to understand what it means “to be a Swede.” They predicted that unless the government addresses cultural differences, violence would increase.

In the end, although Hirsi Ali’s views may irritate liberals and/or those who advocate that government respect all religious beliefs, she understands, in theory and practice, why Islam is a dangerous religion. Her willingness to advocate her controversial but well-founded position, despite persistent death threats, explains why Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris, as well as other New Atheists like me, consider her a hero. **F**

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Saint Peterasty

Robert M. Price

The Roman Catholic Church reached the point of crisis some years ago. The ever-expanding scandal of priestly sexual abuse and, just as bad, the intricate and systematic cover-up by the highest authorities has deepened the shadows in which lay Catholics have painfully struggled. What should they do? Leave the Church for Eastern Orthodoxy or Episcopalianism? Not a bad idea, it seems to me, but then I'm not a Catholic. But if I were, here are some of the factors I'd consider.

The situation is complicated by the nature of the Catholic Church as an institution. If one were dealing with a Protestant congregation in which a clergy sex scandal had been revealed (and they have been, many times), it would be a simpler matter. Fire the minister if you can (or make

if the corruption is so deep, so far-reaching, so high up the ladder that it is no longer a question of getting rid of a few (thousand) bad apples? Suppose the Church hierarchy, the institution *itself*, has become the abuser?

It has happened. Even the Pope has been credibly charged with covering the butts of offending priests, as well as those of bishops who protected the wolves instead of the lambs. You know, hosting the game of Musical Molesters. What should Catholics think? What should they do?

Let's ask Saint Augustine. He was the theologian-bishop of Carthage in the early fourth century who defined important aspects of Catholic belief and practice as they still exist today. Some of his influence was good, some bad (and the verdict will vary according to whom you ask): pre-

destination, infant baptism, and more. Here, I am thinking of his "solution" to the Donatist Controversy. As you may already know, the last serious persecution of Manicheans and Christians was that commanded by the pagan emperor Diocletian at the end of the third century, just before the Christian Constantine became Caesar. The trouble was this: during the persecution, a number of bishops knuckled under, renouncing their faith, embracing Caesar-

worship, and handing over copies of scripture to be burned. When the danger passed and clergy were in short supply, some of these fair-weather bishops showed up at church waving a white flag with a lot of explaining to do. Many managed to get their old jobs back after suitable penance involving public embarrassment. (The penance *had* to be pretty serious—after all, what these yellowbellies had done was to buy a one-way ticket to the Inferno according to Mark 8:38!)

Others, however, were rudely told to hit the road. These guys had forfeited any right to administer the sacraments. It would be the worst kind of farce. It must make a mockery of the sacraments. Even worse, any sacraments they had

"Suppose the Church hierarchy, the institution *itself*, has become the abuser?"

him undergo "counseling," which I have always suspected was a euphemistic "Get Out of Jail Free" card provided by a sanctified Good Ol' Boys club). Sometimes the loyalty of the congregation to a beloved minister makes church members reluctant to believe the charges against him, no matter how well-founded; either that or it makes them too forgiving. In these cases, one's recourse would be simple: quit the church or split the church.

But the Catholic Church is, by ancient design, a closely integrated, massive, and rigidly hierarchical institution. Only so could it ensure uniformity of doctrine, morals, and discipline. It ought to be able to employ this great machine to stamp out abuses such as clergy sex predation. But what

administered *before* their persecution and apostasy must be declared null and void! It is no surprise that churches throughout North Africa took sides, resulting in a schism. The stricter group was named for one of its chief leaders, Donatus Magnus. This is where Augustine came in. He tried to come up with a theoretical basis for reconciling the factions. It didn't go over big. Augustine really just defended the Catholic side and hoped the Donatists would come on board. They didn't. Here's what he suggested.

He was apparently less concerned with the hat-in-hand bishops than with the laity who worried that the absolutions they had received, their church marriages, and their babies' baptisms would all be negated, at considerable peril to their souls. Both priest and people, Augustine reasoned, would be served by his proposal.

Let's take a couple of steps back. First, why are priests ordained at all? They are to administer sacraments, and to enable and entitle them to do this they themselves must receive the sacrament of ordination.

Second, what is a sacrament? What is it about a sacrament that requires an ordained priest to administer it? Here is a major point of difference between Catholics and Protestants. The latter regard the ministry as a sacred task, yes, but essentially a profession. The Protestant minister has no greater access to God than the layperson. He is simply trained and skilled for pastoral duties, exactly analogous to a physician or a lawyer. The Catholic priest of course receives much the same training, but the nature of the sacraments adds a crucial element to priesthood. The minister knows his Bible and how to baptize, how to preside over the Lord's Supper, how to perform weddings and funerals, and the like. A layperson who studied up could pinch-hit for the minister if needed. But one must be an ordained priest to administer the Catholic sacraments because these rites are understood as "means of grace."

Some Protestants use this term, too, but the Catholic belief is that "grace" is a supernatural saving power. (I'd say it's like the Holy Spirit but without the personhood.) It is this grace that makes it possible for baptism to cleanse one from Original Sin, which transforms the communion elements into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and effects the absolution of sins. These acts are metaphysical and miraculous, not just symbolic.

Moreover, the priest does not do these things in virtue of his own personal holiness. Likewise, even a saintly layperson dares not administer the sacraments (though there are special cases). The ordained priest is set apart and equipped for his role by his own sacramental anointing.

Augustine reasoned that since the sacraments are divine works—not human ones, not "works of the flesh"—their value does not depend upon the character of the priest who administers them. The bread and wine become

the Body and Blood by divine grace. The power of God, not the personal sanctity of the priest, is the electricity; the priest is but the wire along which it travels. So if the priest should turn out to lack holiness or even moral integrity, it wouldn't affect the sacrament. The sinful priest would be in trouble with God, but he wouldn't be ruining things for his unsuspecting parishioners. This makes a lot of sense: it is God, not the priest, who is saving and sanctifying you.

But there is an unintended possible consequence of

"Even the Pope has been credibly charged with covering the butts of offending priests, as well as those of bishops who protected the wolves instead of the lambs."



this thinking. It takes only a step or two in the wrong direction and you have a whole clergy establishment in which a sacramental system of divine grace independent of human morality exists side by side with an immoral libertinism. The two come to coexist more and more comfortably. And that's where we are today. If this were not so, we would have to imagine some insidious secret cabal seeking to infest and subvert a Church that once valued personal sanctity. That would indeed be bad enough, but I think it is worse if the Church hierarchy has, by itself, come to accommodate itself to immoral libertinism as an acceptable norm.

Now let's ask Dostoyevsky's advice. We find it in his great novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. Alyosha, a pious monk, attempts to win his profane brother Ivan back to Mother Church. But no sale. Ivan tells Alyosha that he cannot reconcile God's ostensible justice with the manifest suffering of innocent children. The moment you offer some sophisticated rationalization for God allowing such atrocities, you are becoming his accomplice-after-the-fact.

"A sacramental system of divine grace independent of human morality exists side by side with an immoral libertinism And that's where we are today."

You are saying, in effect, "It's okay with me! There's a good reason for it, even if I can't say what it is." I think of this scene every time Cardinal Dolan or Bill Donahue disgraces himself by splitting hairs to try to mitigate the seriousness of the scandal. How can they live with themselves? And when His Popishness himself asks (cheap) forgiveness for the tsk-tsk "outrage" over the scandal, I think of Claude Rains in *Casablanca*: "I am shocked, *shocked*, to find pederasty going on here!" Also the moment in Moliere's play *Tartuffe* when the live-in charlatan tearfully confesses his charlatantry, which of course only makes his gullible suckers adore him all the more.

But of course the Church is not the same as God. Or is it? I take a lesson from Emil Durkheim, who suggested that God, the gods, and totem animals are projections, mystifications of the communities that believe in them. In the present case, "God" functions as a decoy: "Oh, sure, we have shortcomings, but don't blame God!" The institutional nature of the Catholic Church, I think, really makes it impossible to distinguish between the two. The ground rules include the belief in a Pope who speaks infallibly when he wants to, together with every Catholic's obligation to believe and obey this "vicar," or stand-in, for Jesus Christ. Especially revealing is the belief that there is "no salvation outside the Church."

Remember the gospel parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1–12)? The religious authorities are portrayed as a group of sharecroppers who refuse to turn over to the landowner his share of the harvest, beating up his representatives and sending them home empty-handed, finally even lynching his son, thinking that with him out of the way, they will be in line to inherit the vineyard, by virtue of occupation, once the old man dies. But they have counted the owner out too quickly: he sends in armed enforcers to kill the sharecroppers. Then he replaces them with better, more trustworthy sharecroppers. Even so, says Jesus, God is about to take from the corrupt Temple authorities their oversight of the sanctuary and its rituals. Did that happen? Yes; the parable was written after the fact, blaming the Jerusalem priesthood for the Roman destruction of the city and the Temple in 70 CE.

If you applied this parable to the rulers of the Catholic Church, what would it look like? Not violent destruction at the hands of outside powers. At least, I hope not. Let me shift over to a different biblical precedent: the withdrawal of a pious community from a religious body deemed corrupt and the formation of an alternative "church in exile." A prime case would be that of the Zadokite covenanters of the Dead Sea Scrolls, who disdained the Herodian Temple and its priesthood for perceived unorthodoxy and moral corruption. They organized their own counter-community with its own version of the Torah-prescribed rituals.

This is what I humbly suggest happens today.

As long as you continue to identify with the disgustingly corrupt institution of the Catholic Church with its lecherous and hypocritical hierarchy, are you not making excuses for it? By protesting that the Church is yours, not that of these Wicked Tenants, aren't you just making it easier for them to continue doing what they have always done? If you offer that excuse for remaining, I even wonder if you really understand what Catholicism is! It is a top-down operation, not a bottom-up one.

I'm not saying become a Presbyterian. Start a schism like the Donatists, the Old Catholic Church, and the Polish National Catholic Church. Preserve your traditions, your rituals, your doctrines. Have your bishops choose a new Pope, an "Antipope" as they used to call them in times of schism. You don't have to hate anybody. Take your leave prayerfully and amicably.

Better schism than stigma. 🙏

This essay was adapted with permission from Robert M. Price's blog *Zarathustra Speaks*.

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Science vs. Religion (Redux?): How (Not) to Discuss/Debate the Subject

Sheldon F. Gottlieb

If I were not a rational human being averse to the supernatural, I might be less painfully aware that I live in a world obsessed with subjects that should long be dead, buried, and in many cases forgotten. Surely one such is the question of whether science and religion are compatible or in conflict.

On one level, it is ridiculous that we must even think about this subject. Notwithstanding that the official positions of various major religions have become friendlier toward evolution in recent years, society remains torn over the subject of science and religion.¹ Are the two in eternal conflict? Are they reconcilable? By now, the whole subject of science vs. religion (SvR) should have been dead and buried in a place where *Kaddish* (the Jewish prayer for the dead) could not be said over it. Yet the question won't go away: Are they reconcilable? Much as the Templeton Foundation (see below) and others seek to blur the issue, strict religious views about the physical, chemical, and biological nature of Earth and the universe are irreconcilable with scientific views. Nowhere is this clearer than on the subject of biological evolution. Yet the SvR debate blunders on, exerting deadly influence and raising havoc (primarily with the educational system, secondarily with the legal system and politics). Anyone who has taught either high school biology or non-majors Bio 101 at the university level experiences the needless turmoil created by religion. The National Center for Science Education (NCSE) can attest to the veracity of my observations, because defending the integrity of science education—that is, defending science and evolution—is the primary reason for its existence. (I discussed my university experiences teaching evolution in two demographically different American communities in the first chapter of my book *The Naked Mind*.²

One question that comes to the fore: If the scientific worldview is the correct one and if many Western religions truly have accepted evolution, then what societal mechanisms keep this old, sterile contention between science and religion needlessly roiling?

The answer points primarily to *people*, in their scientific ignorance and their unwillingness to accept fact and reason over belief, revelation, and unreason. I say *primarily* because there are always those scientists who are “believers” and whose positive opinions on whether or not there

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is a god, or whether science and religion are reconcilable, are taken as factual truth. Of course religionists revert to authority, not empirical data, to buttress their arguments that religion is a valid way of knowing about the natural and supernatural worlds and the only way to answer questions that science cannot. Thus, to such people, opinions—not established fact—from famous scientists who are religious represent something more than just an opinion. I say “of course” because religion has always resorted to authority to support all its social (including moral) and political positions; religion has not and does not test its fundamental tenets (more below). In the past, believers referred to scientists who lived in a different time and place, one in which religion played a more prominent and coercive role in society. Didn't Darwin hold off in publishing his magnificent research and insights into the workings of nature because he feared the reaction of the Church? If not for competition

1. Glenn Branch, “Understanding Gallup's Latest Poll on Evolution.” *Skeptical Inquirer* (September/October 2017).

2. Sheldon F. Gottlieb, *The Naked Mind*. Flagstaff, Ariz.: Best Publishing Co., 2003.

from Wallace, to the best of my knowledge it is unlikely that Darwin would have even published his work in his lifetime. In recent years, believers have lionized Dr. Francis Collins, head of the National Institutes of Health, a former atheist who became a committed Christian, who supports the concept that faith in science and in God are not incompatible.

In understanding religion and science and the false debates—SvR and “Is there a god?”—one has to confront the fact that the origins of religion are similar to the origins of science: initially, both were once steeped in ignorance, fear, and superstition.³ In the evolution of human thought, religion and science diverged in their ways of understanding the world. Religion postulated the existence of one or more supernatural deities to explain natural phenomena; the celestial beings possessed powers that controlled the workings of the world. Science sought to overcome ignorance and fear by obtaining objective knowledge by means of

ple and projects designed to show that religion and science are reconcilable. As an aside, such support demonstrates the importance of money in influencing the hearts and interests of people.

Organizations such as Templeton exist in part to sow intellectual confusion. Advocates (among them no small number of Templeton grantees) often allege that science and religion are both based on underlying assumptions. Both can be understood as being based on faith, this argument goes—although the faith in religion is quite different from the faith in science.⁴ Still, the fact that assumptions and faith are involved implies that on some level, science is no different from religion; science is just another belief system, one among many from which a person can select. One could choose religion instead. Therefore, it is just a question of which belief system one chooses.

This confusion exploits the difference between what the word *faith* means in science and what it means in religion. It is important to differentiate between them.

Faith is defined as the willingness, especially when first considering a subject, to accept something as true despite a lack of evidence, or even in the face of evidence to the contrary. The first part of that definition lends itself to testing: evidence for or against a given idea can be looked for and amassed,

whereas I am not sure what, other than omission or denial, can be done to overcome evidence to the contrary.

There are six fundamental interrelated assumptions on which science is based. The first was beautifully and succinctly formulated by the bacteriologists Evelyn L. Oginisky and Wayne W. Umbreit: “The unknown is knowable and we are capable of knowing the unknown.” The “we” refers to the collective intelligence, wisdom, and knowledge of the human species. The second is that there is order in nature, and the third is that the collective human intellect is capable of discovering that order. The last three will be discussed briefly below. Underlying these axioms are the ideas that the human senses can observe accurately and that human intellect and judgment can deal with the observations and discover their order by a process called reason, such as by integrating and coordinating the observations into coherent patterns.

In science these assumptions must be validated; it is the validation procedures that are important in differentiating between such faith as scientists and religionists, respectively, entertain. The continuous testing and retesting of science is sustained by continuous successful experiences: over centuries, unknown aspects of the natural world have

“If many Western religions truly have accepted evolution, then what societal mechanisms keep this old, sterile contention between science and religion needlessly roiling?”

measuring and testing. While religious thought stagnated, continued successful learning about the natural causes of natural phenomena validated the assumptions underlying science; support for scientific methodology grew.

Unfortunately, the religious stagnation in scientific thought not only has raised havoc with modern education—particularly science education—but also has great and adverse social and political effects. It is absurd that the so-called “science” of 5,000 years ago should be considered more reliable than the science of today. I wish I could say that no one knowledgeable in history could deny this. But I cannot, because there are people who deny it: their rejection is not based on evidence but rather on a vile, perverted, hateful political ideology supported by abject lies. But that is a different subject for another day.

Other driving forces for keeping the false discussion alive include first, organizations that provide grants and awards to individuals working to reconcile science and religion and, second, the influence of religion on early childhood education.

Perhaps the most important of the offending organizations is the John Templeton Foundation, which has spent (and spends each year) millions of dollars supporting peo-

3. Richard Sneed, “What Is Religion?” Mobile, Alabama: *The Harbinger* (April 8, 1997). Available online at http://www.theharbinger.org/articles/rel_sci/sneed.html.

4. Sheldon F. Gottlieb, “What Is Science?” Mobile, Alabama: *The Harbinger* (April 8, 1997). Available online at http://www.theharbinger.org/articles/rel_sci/gottlieb.html.

become known and, in many cases, their physical bases understood: such repeated successes not only justify continuing credence as to the faith of science but also give rise to technologies that provide creature comforts, greater health, rapid and comfortable transportation, expansion of the economy, a more efficient military, and expansion of personal freedoms. Since, over time, no violations have been uncovered, scientists have concluded that the underlying assumptions of science are valid. This substantiates the conclusion that science is an honest, self-correcting intellectual activity.

It is in understanding the scientific method that the other three assumptions become important: causality, uniformity in time and space, and common perception.

Causality in essence states that there is no result in nature without a preceding cause. Further, it means that the data collected about the causes of natural phenomena are reliable; the evidence has not been distorted to provide false clues. If humans cannot trust the evidence provided by the universe, then the search for objective knowledge becomes futile and no scientific knowledge gathered can be true. Religionists have difficulty with causality because the majority of humans in Western society think in terms of a personal god who will suspend the laws of nature just to satisfy their selfish needs or wants in response to an activity called prayer. If a belief system that denies causality and posits that a god can behave according to whim and caprice were true, humans would live in a world of perpetual ignorance.

Uniformity in time and space refers to the concept that natural laws do not change with time and distance: the fundamental forces at work in nature today are the same as they were yesterday and will be tomorrow, and they hold at any point in the universe. This principle is very important in science.

Common perception refers to the idea that all human beings perceive natural events in fundamentally the same way; that is, when encountering the same stimulus, we expect our senses to agree.

In contrast to science, religion does not—and cannot—continuously and carefully test and retest its underlying assumptions. It would be anathema to do so. Religion could not tolerate learning that its assumptions are invalid. Religion is not a self-correcting discipline. Further, the tenets, dogmas, and catechisms of religion, over thousands of years, have not truly added positive benefits to the health and welfare of human society.

Also, and very importantly, unlike faith in religion, faith in science has not and does not lead to social and political pathology, resulting in the unnecessary subjugation, torture, maiming, and murder of millions of innocent people because they think differently. Unfortunately, the findings of science and technological developments have been and still are being used by religion to execute its murderous designs.

Issues of science can be resolved only in the “laboratory”—not by majority vote by the public, by the Justices of the Supreme Court, in untested beliefs presumably stated in books claimed to be “holy,” or in the people-developed tenets of a faith based on revelation. There are exceptions to this statement. The one exception I am concerned with is evolution. There have been several high-profile lawsuits against the teaching of evolution without also teaching its religious counterpart, creationism (irrespective of the guise under which it is presented, such as intelligent design). To the best of my knowledge, no judge has ever thrown one of these cases out of court while saying that *the courts do not solve issues of science*. Instead, the courts remain involved because this issue is framed in terms of education and/or the First Amendment, and those are in the public domain. Their subject matter may be answerable only by science, yet the decisions are based on answering the questions “What is science?” and “What is religion?” Unfortunately, the fact that the courts can be so influential on a scientific

“It is absurd that the so-called ‘science’ of 5,000 years ago should be considered more reliable than the science of today.”

issue means that scientists and the general public must be concerned about the philosophical make-up of the members of the judiciary. For example, the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia in *Edwards v. Aguillard* (the 1986 case concerning Louisiana’s Balanced Treatment Act) permitted his religious beliefs to dominate his thinking. I deduce this from his dissent, in which he supported the concept that religious and scientific views should be taught simultaneously as co-equals. Scalia’s views vary widely from those promulgated since the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, when Francis Bacon and his contemporaries promoted the idea that if one wants to understand nature one must consult nature and not the writings of ancient authority figures.

The primary assumption in Western religions is that there exists a god that is endowed with certain powers. There is no way of testing the truth of that assumption—it cannot be measured, quantified, verified, or falsified. Nor can any deductions be derived therefrom, including the made-up supernatural world associated with a god. Though science may have nothing to say about the supernatural, it has much to say regarding some of the concepts put forth in the name of the supernatural.

An interesting aspect of any discussions or debates on

these subjects is the language that is used. In my teaching days, when students or debate opponents would say to me “I believe ...” I would stop them and say, “I am not interested in what you believe. This is the USA and you are free to believe whatever you want. The First Amendment guarantees that. I am interested in what you *know* and *how* you know it. The fact is that you have a belief, but that which you believe is not necessarily fact.” Any would-be defender of science who engages in a discussion/debate on the basis of belief—that is, in the language of religion—automatically loses. Discussion/debate on these issues must be carried out using the language of science.

When challenging someone to go beyond statements of belief, I would point out that scientists accept or reject ideas based on evidence, not belief. I came to insist that my interlocutor provide the *evidence* on which he or she accepted or rejected, say, any religious or scientific aspect of evolution. I insisted that if someone didn’t *believe* in evolution (note the religious terminology) he or she must tell me the *evidence* evolution was rejected. After all, if I am required to provide the evidence for my accepting

interact unless required. This is not a hard-wired separation, but a functional separation. When the compartments are forced to interact, the ensuing interaction leads to cognitive dissonance. Because of their ties to their religious beliefs, for whatever reason(s), I find that such individuals primarily tend to protect their beliefs and convince themselves that they really have succeeded in combining the two; they simply refuse to see the reality of differences. But what about those scientists who are believers and also know the differences yet still hold fast to their religious beliefs? Without knowing the individuals, without having discussed aspects of the subject with them, I cannot provide a knowledgeable answer. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to discuss any such issues with someone who states “I am a believer.” Those four words are conversation stoppers.

Before critics accuse me of shortchanging religion by not discussing its value to society, specifically “any aspect of life that science cannot resolve,” that was never my intention. To restrain critical emotions I will state that there are those who hold the view championed by Stephen Jay Gould that science and religion should confine their activities to

their respective realms of human behavior: science should concentrate on the factual realm of the nature of the natural world, whereas religion should concentrate on an equally important but utterly different realm of purpose, meaning, and values—subjects on which religion claims science might shed light but can never resolve.⁵ Each should stay in its own realm and not interfere in the realm of the other. Yet it has been my experience that religion interferes more in the realm of science than vice versa; therein lay all the public discord.

While on the subject, I have some observations and a few questions. For the most part, from what I have observed throughout my life that some people claimed to have derived purpose, meaning, and values from the concept of a deity; others claim to do so from human experience. In either case, the answers all seem to be opinions, not facts: the religious view presumably is based on priestly interpretations (and visions) of a specific deity and supposedly sacred writings, whereas the nonreligious view is grounded on the concepts developed in ever-changing societies driven by advances in science and technology. Why not let people decide for themselves what their individual purpose(s) in life are? Who really knows what any god wants from, or for, us? There is no way we can prove God wanted it. Why should religious opinions be more valuable than human experience?

In the title of this essay, I mentioned how (not) to debate this subject. Throughout this essay, I referred to specific difficulties that also pertain to debating—or defending a decision not to debate—this subject. Based on years of

“I am not interested in what you believe. ... I am interested in what you *know* and *how* you know it.”

evolution as fact, then my students or debate opponents must be required to provide evidence to the contrary. I do not accept biblical references or reference to God as being equivalent to empirical scientific evidence.

Further, one must understand that in science, knowledge is cumulative and builds on preexisting knowledge; scientific knowledge and theories are tentative and always subject to revision depending on the best available evidence; the language of science involves the correct use of language, precision of terminology, and the avoidance of confusion. For example, the scientific definition of the word *theory* differs greatly from its usual lay usage. All this is as distinct as it could possibly be from the way religion treats its dogma.

What about those individuals who claim that in their worldview science and religion are *not* incompatible? I cannot speak for all people; I do not feel competent in psychology to speak about people I have never met. I can only report to you what I have learned from the people I have met and with whom I have discussed this situation. The only explanation that I have ever considered plausible is that these individuals have compartmentalized their minds, striving not to let the religious and science compartments

5. Stephen Jay Gould, “Nonoverlapping Magisteria,” *Natural History* 106 (1997).

public and university classroom experience, I would advise people to avoid debating science vs. religion, so as not to give the tired notion that the conflict is real any further credence. Whether you accept it or not, the truth is that such debates are designed for pro-science, pro-evolution advocates to lose. As I mentioned above, it is very difficult to overcome any argument in which one position is based on those conversation-stopping words "I believe." In an hour or less, it is virtually impossible to provide audience members with sufficient scientific background in astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, physics, paleontology, philosophy, and statistics to appreciate the magnificent concept of evolution. All too often, I found that the people defending science/evolution were knowledgeable about their area of expertise but, inevitably, deficient in their knowledge of the ancillary disciplines. Trying to explain the differences between science and religion requires an inordinate amount of time. Even books specifically written for public consumption demand hours to read, let alone understand. It has been my experience that at the end of either a quarter or a semester of classes in which evolutionary thought is used to underlie the basic biology being taught, most students come away still unconvinced. It is extremely difficult to overcome the religious inculcation to which too many in the audience have been subjected to since birth. Also, unfortunately, too many of these events take place in church environments in which the audience is already hostile toward pro-science or pro-evolutionary concepts. (Although I did participate in several such encounters, my primary experience has been with the print and electronic media.)

On to the obvious question. Why did I participate (fortunately not too often) in such public discussions—the very sort of discussion I now advise readers such as you to avoid? I have three reasons:

1. Earlier in my life, I did not have the insights that I have gained over the years. If I knew then what I know now ...
2. In my classroom teaching, I introduced elementary aspects of evolution and so was obliged to defend my views over the objections raised by some students (and, occasionally, the threats of lawsuits conveyed to me by students from their parents).
3. During Alabama's contentious textbook debates of the mid-1980s,⁶ I wrote numerous letters to the editor and op-ed pieces published in area newspapers. I found myself obligated to take on the anti-evolutionists. At the time, I also was an avid letter-writer on other issues, with emphasis on the Middle East, which added to my notoriety. In contrast to more typical faculty members, I was never an ivory-tower recluse. I always considered it part of my duties to help educate the public and took that obligation very seriously.


Despite my caveats, should you decide to engage in a

public discussion concerning evolution—to beard the science vs. religion lion in its den—I would like to share one closing observation. Whenever I spoke on a controversial issue or attended an event at which others were doing so, I consistently observed that audiences for such events tended to be composed of three groups of people:

1. Those who support the speaker's position and are usually present to learn something new or have their views reinforced;
2. Those who oppose the speaker's position, for whom no amount of fact or reasoning would change their minds; they attended to challenge the speaker or to learn if there were new ideas that they had to learn to contend with; and
3. The fence-sitters who really came to learn. These were the people who had not yet made up their minds, who were amenable to fact and reason and could be influenced.

To engage these three groups most productively, I came to rely on a three-pronged approach. First, I spoke primarily to the fence-sitters (Group Three), trying to encourage them to think about what was being said and its social/political importance. By doing so, I hoped to attract them to the scientific viewpoint and a rational approach to understanding the universe. In so doing, I also met my second objective, reinforcing the views of those in Group One while hoping that I was providing them with some new information or insights. My final objective was to challenge those in Group Two through the information and arguments I provided the fence-sitters (Group Three).

Are religion and science compatible? Certainly not. I consider this an open and shut case and so should all elected and appointed officials, including members of the judiciary. So too should members of the general public. Irrespective of who one is, what one's credentials are, and what beliefs one holds, there should be no question that religion and science are vastly different and have different ways of looking at the world. Not only are they impossible to reconcile, but, very importantly, unsubstantiated religious views on the nature of the natural world must never be given any credence when developing science curricula for public schools, when drafting standards for the teaching of science, or for any other issue pertaining to the nature of the natural world and public policy concerning science.

The time has finally come—actually, the time is long overdue—to say *Kaddish* over SvR issues. Let us leave them dead and buried in some obscure grave forevermore. 

6. Alabama was briefly ground zero in a legal dispute over how public schools should treat science and religion in relation to teaching the theory of evolution. See Paul Kurtz, "The New Inquisition in the Schools," *FREE INQUIRY* (Winter 1986/87); and Ronald A. Lindsay, "Judge Hand Erred in Holding That Secular Humanism Is a Religion," *FREE INQUIRY* (Fall 1987).

Sheldon F. Gottlieb is a retired physiologist and professor of biological sciences. He is the author of *The Naked Mind* (Best Publishing Company, 2003).

Arizona's Big Win for Public Schools, Church-State Separation

Edd Doerr

On November 6, Arizonans voted sixty-five to thirty-five to crush an effort to expand the state's tax-credit voucher plan to divert public funds to mostly church-run private schools. That makes it the thirtieth (!) state referendum between 1966 and 2018, from Massachusetts to California and from Florida to Alaska, in which millions of voters have shot down every effort, large or small, to compel taxpayers to support private schools by an average of two to one.

This landslide Arizona vote was clearly a serious setback for President Donald J. Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, and large numbers of federal and state Republican lawmakers.

These victories are important because diverting public funds to private schools (of which over 85 percent are sectarian indoctrination institutions that denigrate women's rights and often science) is an attack on the religiously neutral public schools that serve 90 percent of the kids in the United States—and on the principle of church-state separation that safeguards everyone's religious liberty. Further, tax support for the more than two dozen different brands of private schools (Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist,

evangelical, Methodist, Presbyterian, Jewish, Muslim, and so on) would fragment our school population along religious, ideological, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other lines while increasing school costs overall.

Within hours of the voucher defeat, the Goldwater Institute and the extremist right-wing American Federation for Children (AFC) announced that they would "double down" on efforts to get the Arizona legislature to push vouchers again. Now get this: The AFC was headed by none other than billionaire heiress DeVos until a few days after Trump was "elected" in 2016! What outrageous contempt for the voters, for the public schools, for religious liberty, and for at least the spirit of Article 2, Section 12 of the Arizona constitution, which states that "No public money or property shall be appropriated for or applied to any religious worship, exercise, or instruction, or to the support of any religious establishment."

Voucher vultures such as DeVos, Trump, Pence, and far too many Republican lawmakers regularly sneer at the wisdom of Madison, Jefferson, and other Founders who wrote church-state separation into our Constitution in the 1780s. They all need to be reminded

of Benjamin Franklin's wisdom when he wrote: "When a religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and when it does not support itself, and God does not take care to support it so that its adherents are obliged to call for help of the civil power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one."

Meanwhile, in Europe

On November 5, *Washington Post* foreign affairs correspondent Rick Noack published a report on the enormously popular new film in Poland *Kler* (Polish for *clergy*) titled "A Blockbuster Polish Movie about Abusive Priests Triggers New Accusations." With the online version of the article, Noack ran a chart showing the percentages by which people in various countries in western and eastern Europe favor church-state separation. While I have not been able to track down the source of the poll, the results seem reasonable. Here they are:

Sweden, 80	Poland, 70
Finland, 77	Croatia, 69
Denmark, 76	Estonia, 68
Czech Republic, 75	France, 68
Spain, 75	Netherlands, 68
Belgium, 72	Hungary, 67
Slovakia, 72	Greece, 62


Along with that poll Noack ran a Pew Research study from 2015–2017 on the percentages of persons identified as Catholics in a number of European countries:

Poland, 87	Slovakia, 63
Croatia, 84	France, 60
Italy, 78	Spain, 60
Portugal, 77	Hungary, 56
Austria, 75	Switzerland, 55
Lithuania, 75	Belgium, 49
Ireland, 75	Germany, 43

Of course, these figures tell nothing about anyone's beliefs, church attendance, or political opinions.

And in Spain

On October 26, *Katholiek Nieuwsblad*, a Catholic weekly in the Netherlands, reported that Spain's moderate Socialist government plans to inventory all of the Catholic Church's real estate in the country. Spain's Catholic bishops "vehemently" oppose the plan, fearing a possible "clandestine confiscation" and a revival of "the old spirit of anti-clericalism." María García of the Observatory for Religious and Conscience Freedom claims that there has been an increase of unspecified violations of religious freedom in Spain and that the Church property inventory is part of a "campaign to drive religion out of the public domain."

Anyone at all familiar with the history of Spain will recall the expulsion or forced conversion of Jews and Muslims there after 1492, the brutality of the Inquisition, the Church's long dominance in the country, its siding with political conservatives, and the fact that civil wars in Spain were often accompanied by anger and violence directed at the Church. Note also that according to Rick Noack (above), 75 percent of Spaniards favor church-state separation. This could get very interesting. Stay tuned. 

Edd Doerr is a senior editor of *FREE INQUIRY*. He headed Americans for Religious Liberty for thirty-six years and is a past president of the American Humanist Association.

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Rules for Playing the Race Card

Steve Cuno

Not long ago, a champion of humanity set me straight. Someone in our monochromatic, melanin-deficient lunch gathering had mentioned race, and before I could think better of it I had naively blurted something about racism not being a good thing. The above-referenced champion politely pointed out my error. The real problem, he explained, is that *They* play the Race card. (I didn't add the italics and capital T. They were as audible as the rattling coming from the pale heads around our table nodding in enthusiastic agreement.)

You can imagine my chagrin upon realizing that, my whole life, I'd mistaken a parlor game for something serious. I wondered how many points I had lost through incorrect play, how many opportunities to advance I'd missed through ignorance. Well, never again. I resolved to learn the rules so that I could compete with the best of *Them*.

Tracking down the rules proved a challenge. *Hoyle's* makes no mention of the game. Google is rife with complaints about misplay but devoid of rules as to correct play. Undaunted, I was able to infer a good many of the rules by watching the pros go at it. Here, for the benefit of fellow naïfs, are the fruits of my research.

There are two teams, Alikes and Differents, and the selection process couldn't be simpler or fairer. You're an Alike if other Alikes think you look like them. You're a Different if they don't. Differents who would prefer to play on

Team Alike should have thought about that before showing up looking different.

The object of the game depends on whether you think the game is fair or rigged. Alikes, who view the game as fair, play with the object of maintaining the status quo. Differents, who think the game is rigged—against them, of

“You can imagine my chagrin upon realizing that, my whole life, I'd mistaken a parlor game for something serious.”

course—play with the object of leveling things out. This often results in silly misunderstandings where Alikes accuse Differents of trying to gain an unfair advantage and Differents accuse Alikes of trying to maintain one.

There are seven kinds of cards, all of which are distributed at the outset of the game. The Race card is the best known, and because it's the most powerful, two strict rules govern its use. The first is that only Differents are allowed

to play it. The second is that there is only one instance in which its use is valid: Never. This protects Alikes from spurious charges of racism, which, as any Alike can tell you, most charges of racism are. It also helps neutralize inconvenient statistics about Differents' abysmal odds with respect to arrests, sentencing, violence, health, longevity, hiring, pay, education, and housing, which Differents bring upon themselves or which they would bring upon themselves if the statistics weren't all made up, which, I'm told, they are.

Trouble is, as every Alike knows, Differents have innate disregard for rules, so they merrily plunk down Race cards willy-nilly anyway. That's what the other six cards, dealt only to Alikes, are for.

Alikes would be lost without the Complaining about the Race Card card. It nullifies any use of the Race card. Caution: If you play a Complaining about the Race Card card within earshot of a Different, you may spend an uncomfortable few minutes in a penalty box wearing a Caught Looking like a Racist Even Though You Swear You're Not hat (sold separately). If someone tweets a video of you playing a Complaining about the Race Card card, you may forfeit a turn. The only way to escape either penalty is to produce an I Can't Be a Racist Because One of My Friends Is a Different card.

Don't be fooled into thinking that Alikes start out a number of spaces ahead and move more spaces per turn. This myth is readily dispatched by the

There's No Such Thing as Privilege card. "Alikes have earned the head start and extra spaces, which don't exist," explains the small type on the back of the card, "If Differents put as much effort into the game as they put into whining, they would catch up in no time." Admittedly, the rules forbid catching up, but that's what keeps the game fair and exciting.

In the event of a dispute, Alikes can pull out a We Make the Rules card.

That usually settles the matter, but, when necessary, it is unbeatable when paired with a Because That's the Way It Has Always Been card.

I saved the two most important rules for last. The first is *Only Alikes liken racism to a game*. The second is *There's no rule that says anyone has to play*. The latter is not as easy as it sounds. Not playing requires a strong sense of fairness backed by commitment, intelligence, and vigilance. Go

for it if you think you're up to the challenge, but don't be surprised if someone stops you cold with a Don't Be Such a Libtard card. **FI**

Steve Cuno is the as-told-to author of Joanne Hanks's memoir, *It's Not About the Sex My Ass: Confessions of an Ex-Mormon Ex-Polygamist Ex-Wife*. A recovering marketing writer, Cuno lives and writes in Utah. Why they let him stay is beyond him.

GREAT MINDS

Hot and Wild Sufficiency: Epicurus, the *Mehness* of Death, and the Pleasures of Enough

Dale DeBakcsy

A hunk of cheese.
A glass of watered-down
wine.

The company of a good friend.

That, according to the most influential philosopher of the Hellenistic Age, is pretty much the summit of human happiness. Epicurus of Samos (341 BCE–270 BCE) inherited an Athens that had been broken by the Macedonian might of Alexander the Great and a philosophical tradition that had been hobbled by the abstract metaphysical excesses of Plato. Over the course of his long life, he crafted a powerful return-to-Earth approach to philosophy and science that it took humanity the better part of two millennia to rediscover, appreciate, and ultimately miss almost the entire point of.

As we tend to do.

Epicurean today, depending on

who you ask, means either a philosophy devoted to a Dude Bro worldview of *110 Percent Exxtreme Pleasure Always*, or *A Guy Who Enjoys Food a Lot and Will Tell You about How Much He Enjoys Food. A Lot*. Both of those conceptions of Epicureanism, however, are fundamentally holdovers from the Middle Ages, when nothing was so foreign to the reigning system of thought as Epicurus's matter-of-fact philosophy that death is final and not to be feared, the gods don't intervene in the world, and metaphysical speculation is almost entirely worthless.

Rather than argue against Epicurus's individual criticisms of theoretical Platonic approaches to science and thought, these medieval theologians decided to bury the whole Epicurean system as an unlearned excuse for debauchery and excess unworthy of the

name of philosophy and certainly not a proper topic of contemplation for a religious soul, and there, excepting a few hot pockets of dusty philosophy nerds and humanist historians, it has largely remained.

Nothing, however, was further from Epicurus's point than the round-the-clock orgy-mongering of which he is accused. Born in Samos to Athenian parents, he traveled to Athens at the age of eighteen to fulfill his two-year military obligation, only to join his parents in exile in the city of Colophon after the death of Alexander the Great and the ensuing chaos caused by the dissolution of the Macedonian Empire. Athens had fallen, never to rise again, and Epicurus had a ring-side seat for the final blows.

Other philosophical schools witnessed the Athenian Crash and came

away from it with hard-scrabble lessons about the need to manfully submit to the crush of fate. Skepticism and Stoicism both developed as means of coping with an Empire that was crumbling and an intellectual system that had become so divorced from reality as to be effectively useless—Stoicism through a cult of disaffected virtue and Pyrrhonian Skepticism through a disinterested tranquility motivated by a mistrust of being able to know anything meaningful beyond appearances.

“Nothing ... was further from Epicurus’s point than the round-the-clock orgy-mongering of which he is accused.”

This was not Epicurus’s solution. He looked reality hard and steadily in the eyes and found, hey, it ain’t so bad. We die, but nothing of us survives that death, so really we’re not around when it happens, so why worry? The gods probably exist, but they have nothing to do with anything on Earth, meaning that supplicating them, praising them, and fearing them are all equally pointless and so can be dropped from one’s life with no repercussions. Life comes with pain, but pain can be lived with, and to be really happy all you need to do is secure a few basic things. Don’t seek fame or indulge in luxury, because they bring more anxiety for their loss than they bring pleasure in their attainment. Have sex if you want, but don’t get too crazy with it, because that way lies addiction, which also produces more stress of a longer duration than the sex itself alleviates.

Basically, seek what you need; enjoy it with full appreciation for what it is; and seek friends, not gods. When he returned to Athens armed with this philosophy, he set up a school at his

home called the Garden, which was known for its core philosophy of equality—man or woman, aristocrat or slave, all were welcome, and all were encouraged to address each other as friends in their journey to lead a more pleasant life. Though the Garden gained notoriety as a place where licentious orgies surely *must* be happening well-nigh constantly, its students revered it as a place of simple communion and balanced intellectual effort, causing Epicureanism to last as a functioning philosophical school far beyond its more austere contemporaries.

So, yes, freedom from fear of death and the gods, love of friendship as a human’s central need, and a championing of sufficiency over excess—wonderful, very modern, full marks. But what I love most about Epicurus is something that we as humanists tend to overlook in our mad dash to embrace his ethical and moral modernity: his physics. One of the hallmarks of pre-modern (and, some would say, current) science was a tendency to make definitive statements about which of several explanations of a phenomenon is *definitely* the right one based not so much on the data at hand but on which explanation fits best with one’s personal system of natural philosophy.

To this tendency Epicurus responds in the *Letter to Pythocles*, “When one accepts one theory and rejects another which is equally consistent with the phenomenon in question, it is clear that one has thereby blundered out of any sort of proper physics and blundered into mythology” (section 87, transl. Inwood and Gerson).


Not content to merely state this principle, Epicurus spends the rest of the letter showing how it works in principle, going through several different meteorological phenomena and explaining how each has several different possible explanations, none of which we can judge among the data currently at hand, and about which we must therefore reserve judgment until we discover more, no matter how difficult it is to refrain from picking the one that lines up best with our personal philosophy. The whole letter is a *tour de force* of scientific restraint peppered with more than a few jaw-drop-

ping moments when Epicurus comes achingly close to modern descriptions of physical phenomena two *thousand* years before the fact.

In his time at Colophon, Epicurus was exposed to the atomistic philosophy of Democritus, whereby the movements and interactions of tiny indivisible particles careening through the void created the world as we know it. Though he modified Democritus’s viewpoint somewhat to accommodate some notion of personal agency, it was through the lens of atomism that he viewed the span of the universe’s history, hypothesizing that myriad other worlds must exist and that, on some of them, through sheer chance, atoms combined in a way to make life possible, as they did on ours. There is nothing in our origins that requires the divine, merely what we would today call a statistical combination of an unfathomably large number of elementary particles stumbling occasionally into the creation of life, but most often into the production of inanimate masses.

Epicurus died at last in 270 BCE, the center of a vast circle of friends and a thriving materialist conception of the cosmos. He had written some three hundred works during his life, of which today we have only three complete letters, two collections of maxims, and a smattering of questionable fragments; but the ideas of Epicurus were made immortal two centuries after his death by another figure beholding a crumbling world, the Roman poet Lucretius (c. 100 BCE–55 BCE). His *De Rerum Natura* is one of the treasures of the late Roman Republic, an Epicurean journey through the cosmos rooted in the startling insights of atomism, which manages to say astoundingly accurate things about solar formation, particles that transmit genetic information, the slowing of light when not in a vacuum, and a half dozen other eerily modern hypotheses beside. He raised Epicurus’s jovial theories shared among friends to the level of epic art, and today it is hard to think of Lucretius’s sweep without hearing the laughter from Epicurus’s Garden urging it on.

It is probably too late to return to Epicurus’s model of cheese-and-friend-based sufficiency. Technology and afflu-

ence have made us great chasers of Fame and Stuff, most likely to our anxious detriment, but just as you can't unsquash a frog, you can't unmake the consequences of a vastly interconnected world afloat on the ubiquity of cheap plastic and cheaper bandwidth. But as long as we keep Epicurus in our rotation of People We Think About, there is a chance we might insert a small mantra into our knee-jerk online retail therapy lifestyle: *Wouldn't I be happier just buying a hunk of smoked gouda and calling over a pal?* 

FURTHER READING: There are two common Epicurus Readers available, one featuring translations by Eugene O'Connor (Prometheus Books, 1993) and the other by Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson (Hackett Publishing, 1994). They both have largely the same texts, both comprehensibly translated, but the introductory material differs. O'Connor focuses on the biographical and historical background of Epicurus, while the Inwood/Gerson has an intro by D. S. Hutchinson that's more an analysis of his place in philosophy

and science. For a nice sourcebook in the differences between Stoicism, Skepticism, and Epicureanism, I'd pick up *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* also by Inwood and Gerson (Hackett Publishing, 1988).

Dale DeBakcsy is the author of *The Cartoon History of Humanism, Volume One* (The Humanist Press, 2016). He is a frequent contributor to *FI's* Great Minds column and also writes the weekly Women in Science series at WomenYouShouldKnow.net.

GREAT MINDS EXCERPT

Selections from the *Letter to Menoeceus* Epicurus

From *The Epicurus Reader*, edited and translated by Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis, 1994.

Epicurus to Menoeceus, greetings: Let no one delay the study of philosophy while young nor weary of it when old. For no one is either too young or too old for the health of the soul. He who says either that the time for philosophy has not yet come or that it has passed is like someone who says that the time for happiness has not yet come or that it has passed. Therefore, both young and old must philosophize, the latter so that although old he may stay young in good things owing to gratitude for what has occurred, the former so that although young he too may be like an old man owing to his lack of fear of what is to come. Therefore, one must practice the things which produce happiness, since if that is present we have everything and if it

is absent we do everything in order to have it.

Get used to believing that death is nothing to us. For all good and bad consists in sense-experience, and death is the privation of sense-experience. Hence, a correct knowledge of the fact that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life a matter for contentment, not by adding a limitless time [to life] but by removing the longing for immortality. For there is nothing fearful in life for one who has grasped that there is nothing fearful in the absence of life. Thus, he is a fool who says that he fears death not because it will be painful when present but because it is painful when it is still to come. For that which while present causes no distress causes unnecessary pain when

merely anticipated. So death, the most frightening of bad things, is nothing to us; since when we exist, death is not yet present, and when death is present, then we do not exist. Therefore, it is relevant neither to the living nor to

**“Get used to believing
that death is nothing
to us.”**

the dead, since it does not affect the former, and the latter do not exist. But the many sometimes flee death as the greatest of bad things and sometimes

choose it as a relief from the bad things in life. But the wise man neither rejects life nor fears death. For living does not offend him, nor does he believe not living to be something bad. And just as he does not unconditionally choose the largest amount of food but the most pleasant food, so he savors not the longest time but the most pleasant. He who advises the young man to live well and the old man to die well is simple-minded, not just because of the pleasing aspects of life but because the same kind of practice produces a good life and a good death.

One must reckon that of desires some are natural, some groundless; and of the natural desires some are necessary and some merely natural; and of the necessary, some are necessary for happiness and some for freeing the body from troubles and some

for life itself. The unwavering contemplation of these enables one to refer every choice and avoidance to the health of the body and the freedom of the soul from disturbance, since this is the goal of a blessed life. For we do everything for the sake of being neither in pain nor in terror. As soon as we achieve this state every storm in the soul is dispelled, since the animal is not in a position to go after some need nor to seek something else to complete the good of the body and the soul.

And this is why we say that pleasure is the starting-point and goal of living blessedly. For we recognized this as our first innate good, and this is our starting point for every choice and avoidance and we come to this by judging every good by the criterion of feeling. And it is just because this is the first innate good that we do not choose every pleasure, but sometimes we pass up many pleasures when we get a larger amount of what is uncongenial from them. And we believe many pains to be better than pleasures when a greater pleasure follows for a long while if we endure the pains. So every pleasure is a good thing, since it has a nature congenial [to us], but not every one is to be chosen. Just as every pain too is a bad thing, but not every one is such as to be always avoided.

We believe that self-sufficiency is a great good, not in order that we might make do with few things under all circumstances, but so that if we do not have a lot we can make do with few, being genuinely convinced that those who least need extravagance enjoy it most; and that everything natural is easy to obtain and whatever is groundless is hard to obtain; and that simple flavors provide a pleasure equal to that of an extravagant life-style when all pain from want is removed, and barley cakes and water provide the highest pleasure when someone in want takes them. Therefore, becoming accustomed to simple, not extravagant, ways of life makes one completely healthy, makes man unhesitant in the face of life's necessary duties, puts us in better condition for the times of extravagance which occasionally come along, and makes us

fearless in the face of chance. So when we say that pleasure is the goal we do not mean the pleasures of the profligate or the pleasures of consumption, as some believe, either from ignorance and disagreement or from deliberate misinterpretation, but rather the lack of pain in the body and disturbance in the soul. For it is not drinking bouts and continuous partying and enjoying boys and women, or consuming fish and the other dainties of an extravagant table,

“For there is nothing fearful in life for one who has grasped that there is nothing fearful in the absence of life.”




EPICURUS

“Pleasure is the starting-point and goal of living blessedly.”

which produce the pleasant life, but sober calculation which searches out the reasons for every choice and avoidance and drives out the opinions which are the sources of greatest turmoil for men's souls.

For who do you believe is better than a man who has pious opinions about the gods, is always fearless about death, has reasoned out the natural goal of life and understands that the limit of good things is easy to achieve completely and easy to provide, and that the limit of bad things either has a short duration or causes little trouble?

Practice these and the related precepts day and night, by yourself and with a like-minded friend, and you will never be disturbed either when awake or in sleep, and you will live as a god among men. For a man who lives among immortal goods is in no respect like a mere mortal animal. 

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The Likelihood of Religion Being True

Michael Meyerson

Mormonism is a sect of Christianity that has expanded to include even more incredible stories than those found in standard Christianity. In addition to believing in the absurdities of the Old and New Testaments, Mormons need to believe in the absurdities of the Book of Mormon, the Doctrines and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price as well as the sayings of a never-ending stream of prophets. Philosopher and neuroscientist Sam Harris makes the point that however unlikely it is that Christianity is true, it is nevertheless more likely to be true than Mormonism, because there are fewer unlikely phenomena posited by mainstream Christianity than by Mormonism. I'm sure non-Mormon Christians would agree. Certainly the Mormon tradition offers a great wealth of absurdities.

Consider some examples: Mormons believe that Joseph Smith, their first prophet, was directed by an angel, Moroni, to find buried gold plates that were inscribed in "reformed Egyptian" with the religious history of an ancient people. Smith translated these writings into English using "seers" consisting of two stones—Urim and Thummim. Smith then returned the gold plates to Moroni, making them unavailable for others to inspect. The "translation" was published as the Book of Mormon in 1830.

The book describes how in ca. 2400 BC God instructed the Jaredites, a tribe living in Mesopotamia, to build boats according to his design. The boats were to be small and light, leakproof

and air-tight, because they were to be buried time and again by mountainous waves on a journey across the ocean. They were to take flocks and herds with enough food supplies for a year. Eight such boats were built, each with a tight-fitting door. Once construction was complete, the brother of Jared (the Book of Mormon does not disclose his name) explained to God that the design had not allowed for air and light and that without them they would be unable to breathe or see in the vessels. God advised them to make a hole in the top and another hole in the bottom of each boat so that when they needed air in the rolling vessels they could open whichever hatch happened to be on top. God also provided a solution for the lack of light by touching several stones that then shone in the darkness.

Devout Mormons believe this story and are unconcerned about its improbabilities. How could a few primitive men using basic tools build wooden submarines capable of transporting people and animals and a huge stock of food and water for an ocean trip of 344 days? How would they keep the food from spoiling, and how would they deal with the human and animal waste? Water in troughs for the animals would be flung around the vessels.

The Book of Mormon tells us that in around 600 BC the Jaredites were joined by three tribes of Israelites who had also crossed the ocean to the Americas; these four tribes from the Near East were the original settlers of the American continent. Mormons hold to this belief in defiance of historical,

archaeological, and scientific evidence that concludes that the original settlers of the Americas were not Semitic and from the Near East but Mongoloid people, who crossed the Bering bridge during the most recent Ice Age to become the ancestors of today's Indigenous American population.

The Book of Mormon is mainly concerned with the Nephite and Lamanite tribes. Mormons believe that soon after the death and ascension of Jesus, he appeared in the Americas to visit the Nephites and Lamanites. Impressed

“Brigham Young, the prophet who succeeded Joseph Smith, taught that the moon and sun are inhabited.”

by his visit, the tribes became Christian, but in 300–400 AD the Lamanites turned away from Christianity. God responded by punishing the Lamanites. He caused their skins to turn black so that they would become “loathsome” and cursed the offspring of unions between the newly black Americans and white Americans (2 Nephi 5:21–23). The tribes engaged in centuries of warfare, which finally ended after a great battle in upstate New York on the hill of Cumorah in 385 AD. The Nephites

were vanquished and disappeared from “history.” According to the Book of Mormon, the Lamanites became the American Indians.

Like other Christians, Mormons believe in God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost. In addition, they believe that God the Father used to live on Earth as a human and is married. God also has a father who also has a father and so on. There are several other gods in whom Mormons also believe. In fact, Smith taught that in the beginning it was a council of gods that planned the creation of the world and its inhabitants.

Brigham Young, the prophet who succeeded Joseph Smith, taught that the moon and sun are inhabited.

“[Hell] is immeasurably worse than any punishments described in the Old Testament.”

Mormons take part in an endowment ceremony at which they are given special underwear embroidered with Masonic symbols (Smith was a Freemason). The garments provide symbolic protection from temptation and evil. Some also believe that the underwear has supernatural powers providing protection from physical dangers. At the same ceremony, participants are taught gestures and passwords that, following death, enable them to pass angels guarding the way to heaven.

But we needn’t dissect ridiculous Mormon doctrines in detail; there’s a more fundamental way to critique them. We need only extrapolate backward from Mormonism to consider Christianity and Judaism.

Christianity evolved from Judaism. Christianity has added to the Judaic Old Testament a further book of incredible stories—the New Testament. In addition to supernatural Old Testament phenomena such as the parting of the sea, a widow’s son being raised from the dead, or a river turned to blood, Christians must also believe in

several New Testament impossibilities such as a man walking on water, turning water into wine, and a virgin birth.

Consider only the creation story found in the first book of the Old Testament—Genesis. Here we read that the world was created by God in six days (approximately six thousand years ago). God made the first person, Adam, and from one of his ribs he made Eve. God instructed Adam and Eve not to eat fruit from a certain tree. A talking snake tempted Eve to eat from the tree. She did this and gave some fruit to Adam to eat. When God found out that they had eaten the forbidden fruit, he cursed the snake, the Earth, and Eve and banished the couple from the Garden of Eden. This infantile and absurd explanation of how the world and life came about has no further significance for Judaism.

The same cannot be said for Christianity. Christianity has grafted onto this Old Testament creation story a new sin, a new punishment, a new place of torture, and new supernatural entities. The new sin is that because of Adam’s misdemeanor in having eaten the forbidden fruit, all subsequent humans are sinners from birth (original sin). The new punishment for the new sin is that all humans are destined to spend eternity in a new place of torture, a fiery furnace called “Hell.” The new punishment is immeasurably worse than any punishments described in the Old Testament, which mercifully ended with the death of the transgressor(s).

According to Christianity, this state of affairs remained unchanged for about four thousand years until God, in an attempt to rectify this now very complicated situation, further compounded the matter. God sent a subdivision of himself, a ghost, to visit Earth and impregnate a betrothed Palestinian virgin, Mary. Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is the son of God and is also God—and is therefore his own father. God/Jesus arranged to have Jesus sacrificed so that by his death Jesus could atone on behalf of mankind for the sin that none of us committed. Jesus’s sacrifice meant that we could all be saved eternal punishment. There is, however, a catch—only those who accept Jesus and believe this story are excused their

original sin and saved from eternity in Hell. The introduction of multiple supernatural entities into Christianity not only adds more unlikely phenomena to the belief system but further complicates matters because Christianity insists on holding to the Judaic belief in only one god. Christianity addresses this issue by consolidating God and the new supernatural entities, Jesus and the ghost, into a fourth supernatural entity called the Trinity. Judaism is van-

“The introduction of multiple supernatural entities into Christianity not only adds more unlikely phenomena to the belief system but further complicates matters because Christianity insists on holding to the Judaic belief in only one god.”

ishingly unlikely to be true, but, to extend Harris’s argument, whatever probability you assign to Judaism being true, the increased number of unlikely supernatural phenomena in Christianity means that you have to assign a lesser probability to Christianity being true. Jews would agree.

Harris is correct. The more unlikely phenomena within a belief system, the less likely it is that the belief system can be true. Go back further in time and it should be clear that the sun being divine is more likely to be true than any subsequent religion’s beliefs. It makes sense that those in need of a religion should revert to sun worship. The world would also be a much better place if they did so. ☐

Michael Meyerson is a radiologist, skeptic, tennis hacker, and writer.


Death: The Great Blackboard Eraser

Jeremiah Bartlett

To me, one of the more intriguing aspects of life—in particular, “intelligent” life—is that once a life has ended it is as if it never happened, at least to the one who lived it. The reason is simple: As the memory is housed in the brain and the brain would be dead and hence no longer functioning, any and all memory of one’s life on Earth must cease to exist the instant that death occurs. As memory is an intrinsic part of life, it follows that without life there is no memory. Granted, there are those who believe the opposite: that life, and with it memory, somehow continues to endure in some form or other after physical death. But this is belief, not fact, and as such cannot be empirically proven. Or, to be more precise, that argument has not been proven so far; whether it could ever be proven is uncertain. As of now, however, any “life” after the one on Earth remains a matter of faith or belief.

What this means in practical terms is that the memory of one’s life resides solely in the memories of those who are still alive. George Washington does not remember that he was the father of our country and its first president, nor does Adolf Hitler remember that he was a heartless monster responsible for the deaths of millions of his fellow human beings. Prince or pauper, beggar or king, saint or sinner, master or slave, benevolent or rapacious, genius or cretin, male or

female—no one who is deceased remembers even the slightest detail of his or her life on Earth, as the memory has simply vanished, ceased to exist. Even if that were not the case, it would not be long (in cosmological terms) before everything that one had learned and experienced while on Earth was forgotten; indeed, much of the information received by the brain is forgotten long before a life ends. That is the nature of memory.

Only a handful of uncommon people are capable of remembering everything they feel or experience while alive; for everyone else, memory is as capricious as it is ephemeral. As noted, some people believe that life—and with it memory—continues on after one’s life on Earth has ended; others believe that the human spirit returns, perhaps in some other guise, to live again. These, however, are beliefs, not facts; as far as is known at this time, human lives are finite and given one to a customer. There are no do-overs; neither is there any verifiable proof of a life beyond the one on Earth. As it is, we must assume that life has meaning only while it is being lived. And even then, that meaning is filtered through the intellect and personal experiences of the one who is determining its relevance and value. Like snowflakes, no two meanings are exactly alike. And like snowflakes, once life and meaning are gone, they are gone forever. 

Love and Time

Max Jacob

(originally dedicated to Michel Leiris)

Revue Européenne, August 1923
Les Pénitents en maillots roses, 1925

When a white arm slips off its glove
You recall an absent love
When like a breeze in a field of wheat
A skirt rustling near your feet
Brushes against your dancing shoe
Something lightly troubles you.

When someone sings to the harpsichord
Every note and every chord
Speak of her, only of her.
Autumn and the dying leaves that stir
The train car carrying you away
Recall a kiss you shared one day
In Algiers on holiday!

Look at yourself in the mirror well!
All that’s left of what was dawn
Is evening and the vesper bell.
What has Time, to love unknown,
Done to Eleonore
While leaving you sick and sore?

Fine love, oh Mediterranean Sea
I’ve kept from all your gentleness
And from your sweet old-fashioned dress
Nothing but a mocking memory.

Pompom of broccoli green, rose-red,
Venus was born in your bed
Under an apple-green baldaquin!
In Ocean, she’d have been a man.

Max Jacob (1876–1944) was a French poet, novelist, playwright, and painter, close companion to Picasso. He helped to create Modernist poetry in France, and his most famous book is the collection of radical prose poems, *Le Cornet à dés* (The Dice Cup), published in 1917. A Jewish convert to Roman Catholicism, Jacob died in the Nazi transit camp of Drancy outside of Paris in March 1944. This poem was translated by Rosanna Warren, who is a poet, translator, and professor of Comparative Literature in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. Her most recent collection of poems is *Ghost in a Red Hat* (2011). Published with thanks to Mme Sylvia Lorient-Colle and Éditions Gallimard.

Perceptions of Humanism

Dan Davis

I greatly enjoyed the dialogue between historian Yuval Noah Harari and philosopher A. P. Norman ("The Meaning and Legacy of Humanism," *FI*, April/May 2018). Who would have thought that a debate over the definition of a single word could be so interesting and thought-provoking? Apparently the definition of *humanism* varies not only according to personal perception but also according to academic discipline.

"Ultimately, the two scholars ... are primarily arguing over whose definition should be generally accepted."

Harari defines *humanism* as "a worldview that sanctifies humanity and sees humanity as the ultimate source of authority." He suggests that *secular* humanism is a small subset within that category that may not sanctify humanity at all but instead views authority as "inherent in science."

According to Harari, most historians regard humanism as a belief that morality and ethics are determined by humans rather than mythical beings, a concept with historical and philosophical antecedents dating back to

the fourth century BCE (Protagoras: "Man is the measure of all things"). He maintains that this concept is broad enough to encompass an assertion that "humanity is the ultimate source of authority and that serving the needs of humanity and perfecting humanity are the ultimate aims or 'the supreme good.'" The shadow side of such an assertion is its potential use as a supporting argument for evils such as Nazism and Stalinism.

Norman responds that Harari's characterizations are dangerous because they could "easily frighten religious know-nothings into scapegoating humanists" and "exacerbate anti-intellectual fervor" (which, of course, would be nothing new). He argues for *secular* humanism as the latest iteration of humanism's evolution, which, in addition to relying on science and reason, is now expanding its moral concern to all sentient beings and the planet itself. He asks Harari to "cede the term *humanism* to self-identified humanists," a request unlikely to be embraced by historians as a whole even if granted by Harari himself. Ultimately, the two scholars seem to have little or no disagreement about philosophical or ethical principles; they are primarily arguing over whose definition should be generally accepted.

On the surface, a religious fundamentalist's definition of *humanism* would not be too different from Harari's: a sanctification of humanity as the ultimate source of moral authority. Fundamentalists, of course, regard their god as the ultimate source of moral authority and therefore see any form of humanism as a repudiation of their

divine dictator (punishable by eternal torture).

One fundamentalist perception of secular humanism was expressed in the April 12, 2018, issue of *The Stream*, an online journal that describes itself as follows: "The national daily championing freedom, smaller government and human dignity [*sic*]. The Stream offers a rich and lively source for breaking news, Christian inspiration and conservative commentary while challenging the worst in the mainstream media."

The relevant article, by Senior Editor Tom Gilson, is titled "Secular Humanism's Awful Inhumanity." Gilson applies his own unique style of reasoning, distilled to the points below, to conclude that secular humanism is morally bankrupt (the observations in parentheses are my own):

1. Secular humanists are atheists. (Apparently there are no non-atheists among us.)
2. Some secular philosophers have argued that atheism "means" there's no such thing as thinking. (Gilson is obviously conflating atheism with his peculiar interpretation of determinism.)
3. Since some secular philosophers have argued that atheism means there's no such thing as thinking, *all* atheists must be hard determinists who "don't believe in thinking." (I can't even guess how he makes this leap.)
4. Therefore, acceptance of secular humanism requires renouncing the existence of human choice and thought. (I must have forgotten that part of the Secular Humanist Oath.)
5. Gilson writes, "Princeton ethicist

Peter Singer says we have a duty to avoid 'speciesism.' We're no different from any other animal, he says; in fact, an 18-month-old child has less mental power—and therefore less worth—than a chimp." (Peter Singer said it; Peter Singer is a secular humanist; therefore, all secular humanists must believe it. Similarly, Jeff Sessions and Sarah Huckabee Sanders, in their capacity as conspicuously pious Christians, have said their "holy" book justifies removing babies from their parents to be warehoused in chain-link enclosures; therefore, all Christians must condone this despicable practice.)

6. Secular humanist atheism is "humanly impossible" yet "still they prefer it to God—any God, even the gracious God of the Bible, whose supreme love gives us the real worth and dignity that an empty universe cannot." (Obviously he's referring to the god of the Bizarro Bible, the only version depicting God as something other than the monster described by all the other versions.)

Gilson's twisted logic and inane conclusions are weirdly reminiscent of Nazi propaganda regarding Jews. If his levels of distortion and delusion are anywhere near typical, our prospects for peaceful coexistence with fundamentalism are close to nonexistent.

Those of us who aren't historians, philosophers, or fundamentalists perceive humanism as anywhere between "Who cares?" and some version or combination of the viewpoints described above. Even in the case of Norman's perception (which probably approximates that of most FREE INQUIRY readers), the "human" component is problematic. A few of us (me included) are uncomfortable identifying ourselves as *secular humanists* simply because the term comes across as too human-centric, an impression enhanced by Harari's definition.

As Harari suggests, Norman's version of secular humanism doesn't sanctify humanity at all but instead looks to science and reason for authority. Why, then, shouldn't this version be removed

from the definition of humanism entirely, since it seems to have evolved beyond its title?

I believe we should change the name of our life stance to one that better reflects its principles. Giving ourselves a new name would take a concerted effort, but it would not be without precedent. Awhile back, the term gay only meant happy and care-free. Non-straight males adopted the term as a non-pejorative title, and society accepted this usage within a surprisingly short period.

Probably the hardest aspect of a

**"We're all still
secular rationalists.
Let's consider adopting
that name."**

name change would be deciding upon the new moniker. The term *bright* has been proposed and largely rejected. I once favored *naturalist* (as in nothing is supernatural) but then realized people might confuse us with forest rangers or nudists. My current candidate is *rationalist*, as proposed by Norman, or, even better, *secular rationalist*. These titles have the advantages of clarity (unlike *humanist*) and the absence of a human-centric connotation. They also eliminate the historian/philosopher terminology conflict. Fundamentalists, of course, will continue to demonize us regardless of our chosen name, but stepping away from the "humanist" designation will at least confuse them further and provide one less target for their outrage.


As noted above, Norman is concerned that Harari's definition of humanism provides an argument for those who would further demonize us. In the same vein, perceptions of humanism can't be fully examined without addressing the determinism debate. Apparently the hard determinists

among us have been noisy enough to create a perception, particularly among religionists, that their position is shared by *all* secular humanists. It doesn't help that most of the religionists embracing this perception, such as Tom Gilson of *The Stream*, have a murky understanding of determinism at best.

According to Gilson and his ilk, we've all accepted the theory that every choice and event is inevitable, predetermined by antecedent causes and conditions comprising links in an eternal causal chain. The Gilsonites self-righteously suggest that we've embraced this theory *because* it precludes the existence of free will and thereby absolves us of having to take responsibility for our actions.

Most of us are aware, of course, that not all secular humanists are absolute determinists, and even the hard-liners take pains to explain how they can—and do—accept responsibility for their actions. (Admittedly, I'm generally confused by these explanations.) Many of us, including me, believe genetics, experience, and prior conditioning create a *probability* that our responses to given stimuli will be predetermined, while still believing that elements of randomness and free choice can, and sometimes do, affect outcomes.

The extent to which predetermined factors control our behavior is not quantifiable and probably never will be. The debate over this issue is unresolvable, a secular equivalent to the theological argument about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. Proclaiming that the matter is settled seems more than a little pretentious and only provides ammunition to our detractors.

In any case, we're all still secular rationalists. Let's consider adopting that name. 

Dan Davis is a misanthropic but generally decent curmudgeon. He has no relevant academic credentials.

The Biology of Addiction

John Frantz

Let us speculate about the tendency we have to become addicted to substances such as alcohol, caffeine, and cocaine. Caffeine is our primary example. Can there be any countervailing advantage associated with the ability to become addicted? Yes. Addicts tolerate fatal doses of the substances to which they are addicted without even getting sleepy. Imagine vegetarian animals

“Addicts tolerate fatal doses of the substances to which they are addicted without even getting sleepy.”

surviving a drought because they become tolerant of toxic chemicals in a plant that is also surviving the drought. If there were few or no other plants to eat, addiction would be a small price to pay for the ability to thrive by eating such a plant. Opium poppies have edible leaves, tasty seeds, nutritious bulbs—and morphine throughout the plant. These principles of evolutionary

biology and genetics have strong explanatory power in helping us understand the world in which we live—and in which we must survive, if we survive at all.

Soon after settling in Wisconsin in 1955, I was introduced to real coffee-drinking. A Norwegian patient asked me if he could drink coffee. He thought I was joking when I told him “Sure, just hold it to less than seventeen cups per day.” His face fell, because he drank almost twice that much. Then there was a barber who complained of headaches every Thursday for ten years. After a rather extensive get-acquainted conversation, the cause of this unusual complaint was revealed. He had not been a coffee drinker prior to marriage and finishing barber school. He drank the beverage heavily now but had never learned how to make coffee for himself. Thursday was his day off, and there was no business partner or wife to offer him coffee. He followed my advice to carry two thermoses of coffee everywhere he went on his day off, and his Thursday headaches ceased.

Headache as the withdrawal symptom of caffeine addiction is not sufficiently known. For instance, the mother of a teenage daughter once brought the young lady into my office because of a sudden onset of severe headache. The crucial information: the mother had recently told the daughter that she would have to buy her own (caffeinated) soft drinks, but the child’s

allowance was insufficient to support her habit. Neither of them was aware of the connection. The headache of caffeine withdrawal is intense and not relieved by morphine in doses adequate to relieve the pain of war wounds. This is illustrated by a lady with severe abdominal pain from pancreatitis. After several days of intravenous feeding, she got a severe headache not relieved by the large doses of morphine she was receiving. A more detailed history revealed that she normally drank iced tea all day long. Intravenous caffeine relieved her headache instantly.


Decades ago I was explaining caffeine withdrawal headaches to another teenage patient. Along the way I mentioned that chocolate contains theobromine, an alkaloid differing from caffeine by only one methyl group. Despite its similarity to caffeine, I told her, theobromine is not known to be addictive. She brightened up and mentioned that when she was three, she had a puppy who ate everything that she did—including large amounts of chocolate. When she found out that dogs could be fatally poisoned by a small amount of chocolate, she wondered why her dog had never been poisoned. My explanation about caffeine must have been quite cogent, because she inferred promptly that theobromine tolerance—brought about by her dog’s having consumed slowly increasing quantities of chocolate during puppyhood—explained her pet’s survival.

This episode led me, much later, to develop my thinking about the survival of the many insects that eat poisonous food to avoid being eaten. Did we inherit addiction from a common ancestor of mammals and insects, one that had evolved the ability to eat poisonous food and store the poison without being harmed? Was that trait harmless enough that later evolution would not select against it? Apparently it was.

From 1968–1970, I served overseas in the Peace Corps. Though I wasn't fond of tea, I drank much tea instead of water. That way I could get boiled water without creating a political ep-

isode. (Drinking Afghan tap water frequently causes dysentery in foreigners who have not grown up exposed to the many bacteria that contaminate virtually all of the local water.) Today I drink a cup of coffee only occasionally, and I dislike tea. Nonetheless, if I have one cup of coffee at lunch several days in a row, I can depend on developing a headache at about 4:00 p.m. on the first day I do not have coffee—a headache that can be relieved only by caffeine. A former addict becoming re-addicted unnaturally rapidly is called *tachyphylaxis*.

Presumably, addiction has sufficient benefits that it was not bred out of us.

It may be pertinent that some species of insects have evolved to look like the toxic species to get a free ride. (Incidentally—and apropos of nothing in particular—small doses of caffeine are fatal to snails and slugs.) 

John Frantz, MD, graduated from the University of Rochester Medical School in 1946 and served in the U.S. Army Air Force as a research scientist. He practiced medicine for over sixty years, including in the Peace Corps, which he served with his wife, Mary Hodge Frantz, MD, and their three school-aged daughters. Writing for his patients and the general public was an important “hobby” that has continued since his 2005 retirement.

HUMANISM AT LARGE

What Did the Lions Eat on Noah's Ark?

Douglas Whaley

Noah had no idea how old he really was, but since he was certainly the oldest person he knew it seemed like he must be six hundred, so that's what he claimed as his age. Eventually he'd really come to believe that number. It's what he told his eventual biographer.

When the bad dreams started coming, the ones about God Almighty destroying the world with a great flood and commanding the construction of a great ark, he didn't want to believe it at first, but God in those dreams was very angry and very insistent. So Noah, terrified, had done what he was told. The dreams contained detailed instructions, hazily remembered as most dreams are, and he'd had to fill in the blanks creatively. But now, amazingly, the ark was more or less built—it had taken forever to figure out what a

“cubit” was—and things seemed to be progressing better than expected. That was good, because the weather was changing. Ominous clouds presaged ugly storms approaching like troopers.

But this morning Noah was startled by a deputation of family members, come to him in a body and obviously bearing a prepared message. Seth, his oldest, was the leader, but his other sons, Ham and Japheth, were at his side, and their wives and the oldest of the children made up the rest of the pack.

Seth spoke. “Dad, we've been talking, and I'm afraid we have to face the fact that this whole venture is a failure. It's time to admit that while we tried, we should throw it all up and go back to working the farm while there's still time to get in a harvest.”

Noah was astounded. The family

had never questioned him before—well, okay, they'd made sure he was sober when he first described the whole venture, but then his descriptions of God's wrath and the coming deluge had set them to working like a dedicated ant colony.

**“But have you ever
captured and then
herded fourteen
giraffes and dragged
them back here all the
way from Africa?”
—Ham**

In a voice that betrayed nothing of his advanced age, Noah thundered, "What do you mean?"

Seth, stepping back slightly but determined to explain, persevered. "We just can't make this ark thing work! Sure, we went out and gathered all the animals we could capture, but lots of others we simply couldn't find, and the ones that we did corral aren't all of childbearing age. We're supposed to have seven couples of clean animals and two couples of unclean animals, and, well, we just don't have anything like those numbers."

"Hey!" ejaculated Ham, proud of his prowess as a carpenter. 'None of us know how to steer it, but I'm damned sure it won't sink.'"



Noah pointed at the temporary zoo area where the animals were housed. "There they are!"

Ham jumped in. "No, Dad, they're not! Sure, yeah, we've got enough of the domestic animals, but the wild ones ... not a chance! Take the giraffes. They're a clean animal so we should have seven pairs, fourteen in all. But have you ever captured and then herded fourteen giraffes and dragged them back here all the way from Africa? Well what we have left is seven of them, not fourteen, and those seven consist of six males and one female. Nobody in the giraffe pen is a happy camper."

Seth added, "And there are so many species we don't have any of, much less the required number. What will God think about that?"

Noah paused, considering. Hmm. "Well ... well, *God will provide* ... I suppose. Don't worry, guys. Species go extinct all the time. Let's just forget about the dinosaurs, okay? Ugh! Who needs them?"

"Fine," ventured Japheth, "but what about food? Right now we're having trouble feeding our menagerie, and once we've packed everybody into the ark, things will be ten times worse. We simply don't have room for the provisions we'll need if we're stuck on board for more than a day or two. After that the animals will have to be fed to one another, defeating the whole purpose."

"Start with the lions," Ham ventured. "They eat lots of meat, and that meat consists of the other passengers, including us if other sources dry up. It's the same with all the carnivores."

"God will provide," Noah mumbled again, eyes closed, trying not to think about it.

"Not good enough, Father Noah," insisted one of the wives, the one with the big mouth. "We need answers before we climb onto that floating leaky shack!"

"Hey!" ejaculated Ham, proud of his prowess as a carpenter. "None of us know how to steer it, but I'm damned sure it won't sink ... as long as we don't hit a mountain or anything."

Seth jumped back into the fray with, "And, Dad, even if we make it through this big storm you say is coming and offload the animals, what then? How could they all possibly thrive?"

"What do you mean?" asked Noah, sick of these questions.

"Well, for example, what will the lions eat on their first day free? And the other carnivores? Whole species will be gobbled up before they can propagate!"

Noah raised his hands. "Stop, stop! Enough *thinking*! God will provide, I told you. No more questions!"

As if on cue, there came a tremendous thunderclap and rain began pouring. Everyone scrambled and frantically began loading animals onto the ark, which swayed dramatically in a rising wind.

The first few days on the ark, bobbing and swinging in circles during the storm, were chaotic, and it was all the small crew could do to keep the whole shebang afloat. On the third day, finding meat for the carnivores achieved a temporary fix when the tigers somehow got into the unicorn pen, slaughtering all the inhabitants but leaving a pile of meat that lasted for a short period.

In the end the meat problem solved itself. Hundreds of corpses banged up against the ark and were easily hauled aboard. It was messy and awful cutting up bodies, but that problem was solved by culling the ample floating mass for babies and small children, which were then dumped whole into the relevant carnivore pens.

It was horrible work that they all hated, but, as Noah told his little band, "God will provide."

Genesis

Chapter 6

...

⁵ And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

⁶ And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

⁷ And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

⁸ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. ...

¹³ And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

¹⁴ Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

¹⁵ And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.

¹⁶ A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.

¹⁷ And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath

of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

¹⁸ But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

**“Noah raised his hands.
‘Stop, stop!
Enough thinking!’”**

Chapter 7

...

² Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

³ Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. ...

⁵ And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him. ...

¹⁷ And the flood was forty days

upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth.

¹⁸ And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

¹⁹ And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

²⁰ Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

²¹ And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:

²² All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. **FI**

Douglas Whaley is an emeritus professor of law at The Ohio State University, a prolific blogger, and the author of the atheist thriller *Imaginary Friend* (2008).

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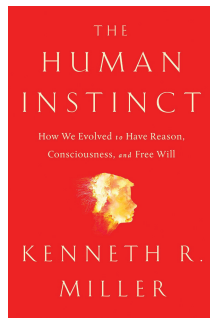
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Why No God Cares If Ken Miller Has Free Will

Gregory S. Paul

Although Kenneth Miller, a pro-evolution cell and molecular biologist, is within the modern liberal, science-friendly wing of Roman Catholics, in the end he is a creationist in the sense that he believes there really is a supernatural creator deity. As such Miller had been working to reconcile the speculative existence of the Catholic god with the natural origin of his special creation, *Homo sapiens*. In *The Human Instinct*, Miller focuses on the alleged presence of human free will, which unlike our having at least some reason and especially consciousness, is a matter of major dispute. In doing so, Miller does what theists frequently do: he compartmentalizes the subject in a way that makes the critical contradictions within the proposition that a good and



The Human Instinct, by Kenneth Miller (Simon and Schuster, 2017, ISBN 978-1476790268). 304 pp. Hardcover, \$26.00.

logical implications that badly need addressing to assess the big picture.

I am not going to engage in a detailed discussion on the non/reality of free will. As interesting and ultimately important as the question is, my provisional opinion is that the data are not yet sufficient to answer the question. That said, if we do have free will, it is not all that much to write home about. We are all so tied up by assorted compulsions and addictions of genetic and experiential origin regarding desires, fears, and needs. It's not much of a gift from a creator.

What I am going to focus on is why Miller's not-out-in-the-open ultimate agenda shows that people have a real choice in what to do—from deciding on unhealthy bacon and sausage versus yogurt for breakfast to whether or not to accept the grace of Christ. This is not only defective because it is over-compartmentalized, it is a waste of time, because the state of the planet makes it impossible that any creator cares whether or not humans have freedom of choice.

Evolutionary creationist Miller wants us to accept as plausible that the creator relied upon Darwinian natural selection to create free will—possessing beings whose post-death souls are worthy of, and disposed to dwell in, its everlasting paradise. A critical problem is that even if bioevolution can generate big brains that have the freedom to choose, how the heck does a creator know what it's going to get out of a free-wheeling, goalless system with no predetermined outcome? Miller agrees with the widely held conclusion that if most dinosaurs had not gone extinct sixty-six million years ago (primarily because of a random giant asteroid impact), it's very unlikely we mammalian primates would be writing and reading about whether we have free will. What Miller does not come close to doing is explaining how evolutionary randomness is in accord with the Holy Trinity's project to have clever creatures ardently petition a third of its divinity for its mercy.

It is true that evolution churns out lots and lots of convergent organisms,

////////////////////
“Miller does what theists frequently do: he compartmentalizes the subject.”

fair creator exists less obvious. In particular, Miller is prone to claiming that he addresses deity-related subjects as a scientist rather than from a theological perspective, even though his arguments often have important theo-

but during that same time it so far has come up with just one human-level intelligence. This is strong evidence that intellectualism is not one of the things that natural selection selects for on a common basis. Miller tries to get around the improbability of deity-worshipping apes being a low statistical probability by speculating that perhaps octopi could become smart enough to have free will. Is Miller serious? Dating back 300 million years in the fossil record, octopi have never shown indications of developing the sort of high intelligence that primates took a much shorter time to produce. Probably in part because the boneless cephalopods do not live in the terrestrial habitats that are likely best suited—if not critical—for the evolution of tool- and religion-inventing organisms. There is an air of theological desperation in this wild proposition.

Nor does Miller appreciate the scarcity of geological time for mindless evolution to fiddle around cooking up high-order intelligence without trying. With the sun getting hotter all the time, about 10 percent each billion years, the planet will not be able to avoid extreme global heating that will make what we'll experience in coming centuries like sleeping through a New Orleans summer night without air conditioning—very bad but not outright lethal. The details are unclear, but in half a billion years or so solar heating will become so intense that the oceans will evaporate and even the poles will be so hot that only small heat-resistant creatures will survive. Seeing as how it took 4.5 billion years with a lot of statistical luck to unintentionally come up with human brains, to think that sans people, something else such as octopi could become similarly smart in the additional half billion years is a big stretch.

Miller makes it clear that he is concerned that if people think the human brain is a computer, they will not think that it is something special; it lacks a connection with the divine. He even cites C. S. Lewis on the topic. Yet he acknowledges—he has to, in view of the science-based side of his thesis—that brains are machines of a

biological sort produced by natural evolution. There is nothing particularly divine about that either, so what is the point of the contradictory compartmentalized argument? Miller comes across as muddled and inconsistent, which is not surprising because he is trying to pound the obsolete square peg of faith-based supernaturalism into the round hole of what is our science-based natural world reality.

Now, about human free will and a creator of the universe caring about it. Although the compartmentalizing Miller does not go into it, free will has become of colossal importance to the thesis that we are the creation one way or another of a benign super deity, which is probably an important reason Miller has written a book defending the existence of human mental choice. That in turn is because there is a huge and obvious problem with the notion that we are the creation of a god that is anywhere close to perfect in its goodness. Namely, its project to put human souls into an eternal utopia has unfolded at the heavy price of tremendous suffering both for nonhumans (as I discussed in the June/July 2018 *FI*) and for people.

The leading theological effort to explain away this colossal mess contends that because the creator is a fair entity rather than an absolute dictator, it does not want the human souls that worship it forever in its perfect heaven to be automatons that did not choose to do so. There are patent yawning holes in this argument that I detailed in a 2009 article in *Philosophy and Theology*.

To be able to make an informed, intelligent, free will choice on their eternal fates—and thereby avoid being unfairly denied heaven via the grace of Christ through lack of opportunity to make said choice—every single human soul that is conceived must grow up to be a mentally healthy adult with solid knowledge of the message of Christ. Otherwise, one or more is going to unfairly be denied heaven, or if he or she ends up there without choosing the option, he or she will be stuck worshipping God forever whether he or she wants to or not.

This would fiercely violate the absolute need for human free will.

The problem is that one way or another—whether it be Ken Ham's special creation, Michael Behe's intelligent-design creation, or Ken Miller's evolutionary creation—any creator has out of callous and cruel criminal negligence or outright deliberation created a horrific planet infested with one deadly disease after another. Meanwhile, the creator not even bothered to equip children with adequate immune systems to defend them-



**“If we do have free will,
it is not all that much to
write home about.”**

selves against their toxic habitat. On top of that, the human reproductive system is an inane Rube Goldberg scheme guaranteed to produce bad results most of the time.

As a result, of the 400 billion *Homo sapiens* conceptions to date, about three quarters have died before birth and half of the around 100 billion born have been ruthlessly tortured to death by childhood diseases. Also, Christianity did not show up until half of those were born, and since then most people have heard little or nothing about its scriptures. This has left a mere ten billion or so mentally capable humans who know about the word of an Abrahamic god. So there can be not the slightest doubt that any creator is a barbaric, immoral entity that is in no manner prolife or particularly concerned about human free will.

That being hard fact, Miller's effort to demonstrate that evolution is compatible with a creator allowing free will to evolve in humans, even if correct

as it may well be, is pointless when it comes to the faith-based speculation that that creator is a loving moral entity intent on making sure all humans have free and informed choice on having a pleasant afterlife. Not even close.

Miller makes no mention of this problem, nor has any theologian or scriptures. I know because I have done a literature search. (If anyone knows of a theodicy argument that explicitly discusses the mass death of non-adults, please send a letter to the editor.) Why do they ignore an issue of such enormous import? Obviously

because there is no logical or decent way to explain how a good god could allow the horrific deaths of billions and billions of kids, which wrecks free will theodicy, so they don't even try. Instead, merely mentioning the subject alerts the world to how a benign creator cannot exist. And in the end religion is propaganda. I sent a PDF of my *Philosophy and Theology* paper to Miller and other leading theologians and received nary a word in reply, including in the theological literature. Why? Because they have no answer.

Miller has debated fundamentalist

and intelligent design creationists, but he has refused offers to engage with atheist critics of his efforts, saying he does not see a purpose in doing so. In other words, he does not see that it serves his agenda to do so. Readers of *The Human Instinct* may wish to keep that in mind. **FI**

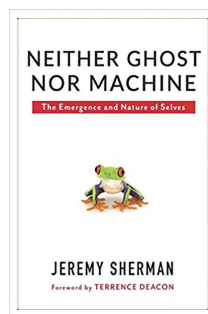
Gregory S. Paul is an independent researcher, analyst, and author. His latest book is *The Princeton Field Guide to Dinosaurs* (Princeton University Press, 2010).

The Source of Self

Kenneth Nahigian

It was not what I expected but something better. In this book, psychologist Jeremy Sherman turns a light on the mystery of goal-oriented behavior in a mechanistic world. What is the source of *purpose*? How do aims arise from aimlessness? Can brute causes produce Selves with active intentions? This is not the classic question of the origin of private experience (*qualia*), what philosopher David Chalmers called the Hard Problem. In Sherman's glossary, a Self can be as simple and insensate as a bacterium. Standing well outside the magic lantern of consciousness, he looks at bodily behavior only. But this lay-presentation of a model developed by neuroscientist Terrence Deacon (who provided the book's foreword) answers more practical questions—the question of life's origin and why goal-behavior can even exist.

Of course, our mechanical world includes many goal-focused processes, and not all are mysteries. Water seeks



Neither Ghost nor Machine: The Emergence and Nature of Selves, by Jeremy Sherman, foreword by Dr. Terrence Deacon (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017, ISBN 978-0-231-17332-2). 312 pp. Hardcover, \$90.00; softcover, \$30.00.

its own level, free markets tend toward price equilibrium, and refracted light "chooses" the path of least time (Fermat's principle of light). The goal-like behavior that engages Sherman is autonomous self-regeneration and self-preservation, the kind that's intractably difficult to explain in terms of raw billiard-ball causality, nudging us almost irrevocably toward the vocabulary of "want" and "seek," what Aristotle called *telos*. Decades of research in artificial intelligence and

protocell development have not yet convincingly reduced *telos* to causality. And while formal papers in the hard natural sciences eschew verbs such as *want*, *try*, and *choose* as a sort of bastard mysticism, softer sciences such as economics, sociology, and psychiatry just can't get by without them.

Unfortunately, the book is a tough read and difficult to distill. Sherman's proposal begins with the natural emergence of processes that conflict

and constrain each other in a way that is mutually preserving and adaptive, “bootstrapping” against entropy. Imagine a mix of naturally occurring catalysts that self-copy, given a bath of suitable reactants, but also generate *capsids*, proteins that self-assemble into shells. Reasonably enough, some of those shells (dubbed *autogens*) might enclose the catalyst mix by lucky chance then go dormant. But later an autogen might break open, again in a bath of reactants, and the catalysts go back to work, producing more autogens. Bingo: a self-reproducing system, a kind of protocell.

“Each stage is perfectly natural ... with no ghost haunting the machine.”

It is not a selective system, though, not a purpose-driven one. Sherman then posits capsid shells that bond to the reactants, so the autogen becomes “stubby” and more likely to break when reactants are present. This is a *selective autogen*. The next step involves natural sugar polymers (polysaccharides) that bond weakly to the catalysts, so that an autogen’s breaking would release them in an organized sequence. Now it is a *template autogen*, a system that not only self-copies but passes its unique characteristics to the next generation. It is the very germ of evolution.

Each stage is perfectly natural, perfectly mechanical, and leads to the seed of seeking: a system that moves toward goals or ends, with no ghost haunting the machine. It is a fascinating first answer to a mystery that has tickled philosophers for centuries.

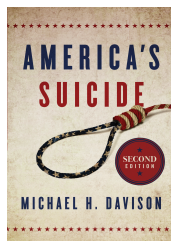
The (minor) handicap is that Sherman is not the most lucid writer

and tends to hammer his points with laborious repetition and stylistic affectations such as “for-ness,” “about-ness,” and “re-presents,” the latter to remind us that symbols are a sort of redundancy. Also, this first edition has a light dusting of typos—for example, the index misspells the name of my favorite modern cognitive philosopher, Douglas Hofstadter, though fortunately the main text gets it right. These

are cavils. *Neither Ghost nor Machine* is a worthy read that bridges the chasm between chemistry and psychology and offers a fresh direction for research in abiogenesis. **FI**

Freethinker Kenneth Nahigian, a Bright, is a part of a Sacramento-based philosophical think tank consisting of him, three cats, and some shrubbery.

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AMERICA'S SUICIDE, Second Edition by Michael H. Davison

Major themes expanded in this book:

- The human race cannot survive without moral principles.
- The religious foundation of morals in the United States has crumbled. In consequence our nation flounders in a great moral crisis.
- Crumbled especially but not only by science, the religious foundation of moral principles cannot survive the advance of thought.
- Into the no man’s land vacated by the retreat of traditional religion has rushed a secular religion masquerading as liberal, progressive, compassionate and just.
- This allegedly new but in reality ancient doctrine has all the characteristics of the theistic religions it strives to displace: the same intolerant dogmatism, the same adherence to undemonstrable principles, the same persecution of doubters and infidels, the same proselytizing of the true faith, the same presumption of moral superiority and righteousness. Earlier faiths rested their claims to power on beliefs in God or gods, the current ones on socialist pretentiousness. Either ideology can only extend our term of ignorance and lethal conflict and the beliefs trump truth.
- Our political problems are not at root political and cannot be resolved by politicians or political and social theorists no matter how well intentioned. They are psychological, rooted in the human condition and poor self awareness, and addressable only by difficult, painful and abhorrent individual self examination.
- We desperately need a rational secular foundation for morality and that, tragically, we do not have. I propose that we initially set our moral principles on the premise of not trying to defeat evolution as we are now doing. As we gain more knowledge of ourselves and genetic engineering, we should very gradually over many generations improve the human species toward ever greater intelligence, self awareness and longer, healthier, happier and more fulfilling lives. For the first time in history we would free ourselves from pretentious, arbitrary and oppressive religious and political authority, the eternal curse hanging over individuals who yearn to be free.
- One chapter focuses on President Trump, how the media treat him, and the 2018 mid term elections.
- The last chapter opens a window to a view of what a rational and minimally contentious nation would look like.

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Available on Amazon and bookstores early in 2019.

Knocking Our Cosmic Socks Off

James Morrow

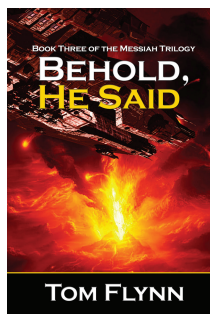
I hesitate to accord Tom Flynn's deliriously erudite oeuvre the familiar label "cult books," since cults are among the many human follies this witty and adroit novelist takes to task. In any event, the coterie of discerning fans who embraced *Galactic Rapture* (2000) and *Nothing Sacred* (2004) will be delighted to learn that the irrepressible trendrider Gram Enoda is finally back, along with 113 additional characters (some familiar, some not), plus the usual 42,000 human-inhabited planets that form the sprawling background of these cosmological comedies.

Early in *Behold, He Said*, we're told of a Terran sage called Stanlee, a clue that prepares us for the Marvel-inflected central narrative, which is, of course—how could it be otherwise?—saving the galaxy. To dramatize this *quête du millénaire*, the author transports his readers into a zone of gloriously entangled plot threads. (Imagine a brigade of Theseus dop-pelgängers solving multiple labyrinths to track down a herd of Minotaurs.) The most amusing of these through-lines finds the human race experiencing the unexpected Milky Way-wide restoration of a certain kind of dualistic apparel essential to the bipedal lifestyle. We learn the details when Senator Pamela Grice discusses the phenomenon with Gram Enoda and an intelligent machine boasting moral personhood.

"As near as anyone can tell, and to the extent that the event times can be correlated across the Galactic lens, it happened everywhere at exactly the same moment." Her face darkened as she made one more connection. "Sfelb, it happened to me. I got my sock back."

"Still have it?" Computer asked.

"No, I threw it out—I'd trashed its orphaned mate shortly before it reappeared."



Behold, He Said, by Tom Flynn (Double Dragon Publishing, 2018, ISBN 9781790470907) 778 pp., Hardcover, \$27.99.

"So that was your mission," Enoda said incredulously. "High command wants us to—what, wonk how the socks came back?"

She nodded gravely. "Gram, the Confetory is hugely concerned about this. Imagine the implications for lint theory alone that such a thing even *could* happen ..."

As the novel unfolds, we learn much about the theory of lint: subatomic vibrating strings that "writhe energetically in all available dimensions." (Flynn writes with his tongue so firmly embedded in his cheek that I fear his condition may ultimately require medical attention.) We're also apprised of "dustbunnies," elusive entities prone to taking universes displaying "stench symmetry" and linking them to their subatomic opposites, though the bunnies can be snared only by coaxing them out of their favorite hiding places, a type of black hole called a "sofa." Unlike most other practitioners of satiric science fiction, such as Robert Shekley, Frederick Pohl, Douglas Adams, and Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Flynn is committed to articulating his absurdist constructs in a disciplined, quasi-allegorical facsimile of actual scientific language. He does not settle for clinically depressed robots or chronosynclastic infundibula. Before wrapping it all up (and appending—good news—a cliffhanger), Flynn invokes a large subset of those radical innovations in physics,

cosmology, mathematics, and philosophy most worth having conversations about, from string theory to the user illusion, chirality to lateral gene-exchange, Gödelian incompleteness to cybernetic teleology. Reading *Behold, He Said* is like perusing a kind of psychoactive spreadsheet whose entries consist not of data but ideas. This is Flash Gordon for intellectuals, and I applaud it.

Although Flynn gives us a full measure of fanciful settings and invented civilizations, I would argue that *Behold, He Said* achieves its charm not so much through world-building as word-building. On page after page, the author lavishes neologisms, *bons mots*, and other linguistic felicities on his readers. Sometimes the game takes the form of simple syllable substitutions, as when "ontology" becomes "oftology" and the Templeton Prize becomes the Temperdung Prize. (FREE INQUIRY readers will recall that Richard Dawkins once sardonically defined this award as "a very large sum of money" bestowed annually and reflexively on scientists who are "prepared to say something nice about religion.") Deadpan puns abound. When a primitive poison dart-throwing weapon called a *pfitt* is fired at a tribal chieftain, the warrior Lubvit reports that the worst has happened: "The *pfitt* hit the Shan." And the neologisms just keep on coming: bubbleprint, detex, experient, flashi-

dent, imposer, koscon, linties, pelfrag, punitorium, resonon, strel, transphotic, vibriion—116 in all. Readers will find themselves grateful for the glossary at the end of the book.

Eyeballing the pages of *Behold, He Said*, one quickly realizes that, as with *Galactic Rapture* and *Nothing Sacred*, the author relies heavily on dialogue to tell his story. While this technique is ostensibly a lackadaisical way to make prose fiction happen—a novel is not a play—I'm willing to give Flynn a pass, because the exchanges are so rollicking, as in this conversation between a Mormon mountebank and a member of his harem:

... Alrue made magical gestures, wagging fingers thick as sausages. "O great God, deliver me from mine interment. Make bare Thy holy arm!"

Alrue directed a fierce gaze up into the filth-streaked glasteel ceiling. "Deliver us your saints from that awful monster, our captivity!" he shouted. "Send forth also the power of Thine other mighty arm. Visit these walls with destruction!" He spread his arms. "O Heavenly Father, stretch forth yet one more mighty arm!"

Zuzenah, his eldest wife, stepped to the center of the circle. "No arms left," she breathed.

"Pardon?"

"You've already asked God to bare one mighty arm, then stretch forth the second. Is that not all of them?"

Alrue frowned. "God is God. He can have as many arms as He wants. Now be quiet, woman. I'm supplicating."

What I most admire about *Behold, He Said* is its manifest impatience with what the mathematician Jacob Bronowski called, in *The Ascent of Man*, our culture's "loss of nerve" in the face of glib mystical discourse and "falsely profound" questions. Consider the case of Père Teilhard de Chardin, a scientist whom many thinkers—churchgoers and secularists alike—would credit with convening a unique and valuable theological-philosophical conversation. Although a cult of brainy "Omegists" appears

on stage throughout *Behold, He Said* (beyond Teilhard, they all seem to have read Frank J. Tipler's classic of crank teleology, *The Physics of Immortality*), Flynn is ultimately having none of it, and I expect he would agree with "The Phenomenon of Chardin," the takedown of everyone's favorite cleric-paleontologist that Peter Medawar published thirty-one years ago in *The Art of the Soluble*.

The Phenomenon of Man is anti-scientific in temper (scientists are shown up as shallow folk skating about on the surface of things), and, as if that were not recommendation enough, it was written by a scientist, a fact which seems to give it particular authority and weight. ...

[His book] is written in an all but totally unintelligible style, and this is construed as prima facie evidence of profundity. It is because Teilhard has such wonderful deep thoughts that he's so difficult to follow—really, it's beyond my poor brain but doesn't that just show how profound and important he must be?

Flynn also maintains his nerve before another troublesome set of supernaturalist teachings, the malevolent protocols of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). In recent years, four immensely talented writers for the theater have been drawn to the LDS phenomenon, and yet in the case of both *Angels in America* (1992) and *The Book of Mormon* (2011) the tone is closer to bemused appreciation than acerbic satire. Now, I'm fairly certain that if Tony Kushner had written his masterpiece after our republic learned, via the Proposition 8 debacle of 2008, just what a hideously homophobic institution the golden plates of Cumorah ushered into the world, he might have tweaked his text accordingly. As for Trey Parker, Robert Lopez, and Matt Stone's hit musical, while it skewers some of the more notorious episodes in LDS history (one lyric mocks the Elders' convenient 1978 revelation that black people are probably human beings after all), the show periodically goes mushy on Mormonism, a foible culminating in the mawkish final song, "Tomorrow Is a Latter Day."

By contrast, consider this excerpt from an edgy exchange that Flynn constructs between Nataleah, an LDS wife of African aspect, and a journalist named Meryam Mayishimu. The harem member is the first to speak.

"... Mormonism was a religion of Terran whites. You've learned your Book of Mormon; remember Third Nephi 2:14–16? One small group of the evil, dark-skinned Lamanites had shifted their loyalty to the righteous, white-skinned Nephites, and what happened next?"

"And their curse was taken from them," Meryam quoted, "and their skin became white like unto the Nephites; And their young men and their daughters became exceedingly fair ... ' Forjeler, that's still in there? I thought those old racist verses were removed long before the Galactic Encounter."

"Only some of them," Nataleah explained.

Science-fiction author Philip Klass (not to be confused with the late, great UFO skeptic Philip J. Klass), who wrote under the name William Tenn, once wryly defined his preferred genre as "the mass literature of the very few." One could speculate that Tom Flynn's novels, with their hearty page counts, bedrock contrarianism, and unflagging celebration of rarefied theories, will always remain a minority pleasure. And yet, as this loopy series itself reminds us, anything—within reason—is possible. Meanwhile, we few—we happy few, we band of blasphemy buffs—are free to revel in each new installment, imagining that their creator might have the last laugh. **E**

Behold, He Said is also available in e-book form at a lower price.

Science-fiction satirist James Morrow has twice won the Nebula Award, twice the World Fantasy Award, and twice the Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire. His critically acclaimed novels include *The Last Witchfinder*, celebrating the birth of the Enlightenment, and *Galápagos Regained*, a faux-Victorian Darwinian extravaganza.

Humanist Case against Patriotism

While I generally agree with "The Humanist Case against Patriotism" as presented by David Mountain in your October/ November 2018 issue, I am inclined to think that my American patriotism is different. It is grounded in my commitment to the humanist principles enunciated by our Founding Fathers in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. These principles are universal, and American patriots ideally seek to extend them, first to all Americans, regardless of race, gender, or national origin, and second to all humans in any country. While these ideals have been perverted and besmirched by the neoconservatives who inspired the 2003 invasion of Iraq, they remain the basis of principled criticism of American policies that violate the human rights of anyone. A good example of this came from the late John McCain, the last principled patriot in the leadership of the Republican Party. In his opposition to the use of torture against suspected Muslim terrorists, he said, "It is not about who they are; it is about who we are." "We" are the American patriots whose very identity is rooted in the principles on which our republic was founded. Barack Obama used similar language when he was president, saying, "We are better than that," in the face of the NRA enabling mass shootings.

It is not clear to me whether David Mountain distinguishes between patriotism and nationalism, but let me suggest that the latter term, which carries the ethnic connotation of the word *nation*, be applied to the attitude Donald Trump and his followers, who reflexively champion the interests of white Christian Americans, and particularly *male* white Christian Americans, above all others, and who care nothing about American principles (with the exception of the Second Amendment).

I am not unaware of the delicious irony of my argument. Like all patriots, I feel that my form of patriotism is better than any of the others!

I have just finished reading an article by Anne Applebaum in *The Atlantic* ("A Warning from Europe," October 2018, pp. 53–63) in which she describes the same split between what I called "principled patriots" and "nationalists" in several European countries as well as in the United States. That shows how foolish I was to feel that my American patriotism is superior to any of the others. But in his article, David Mountain does not note that distinction at all.

Homer Edward Price
Sylva, North Carolina

I heartily applaud David Mountain's article on the case against patriotism. Way back in 1953, I was fresh out of the military and full of unquestioning patriotic fervor, although I was beginning to have my doubts about religion. I happened to read *Man and His Gods* by Homer Smith, with a foreword by Albert Einstein. Whenever anyone tries to say that Einstein was religious, I tell them about his approving foreword of an atheistic work that even took the mythic position in regard to Christ.

While I loved the fact that Einstein was in accord with Professor Smith, a distinguished renal physiologist, I wasn't too happy with his added opinion that in addition to religion, exaggerated nationalism had done much harm to the world. He was questioning patriotism! I didn't like it then, but it got me started thinking and questioning—and I have really done a complete 180 since then! I get annoyed with politicians who always have a flag pin someplace on their suit or dress. As much as I loved the military back then, I am absolutely dismayed now with our basically garrison state and hundreds of bases around the world.

A successful democracy is by nature dependent upon an informed citizenry. People who don't question are not informed. If you take the attitude that our foreign policy is always right, relying on patriotism, you aren't informed. David Mountain is to be congratulated for his excellent and long overdue piece.

Richard F. Stratton
San Diego, California

As an infantry company commander who fought for and helped win the freedom of seventeen million South Vietnamese, only to see my nation give them to the North Vietnamese Communists, I, unlike David Mountain, author of "The Humanist Case against Patriotism," know the difference between freedom and slavery. Damned right I get teary-eyed listening to our National Anthem performed correctly and seeing our Flag of Freedom. Mountain should get down on his knees in appreciation for men and women like us who fight and give our lives for our freedom and the freedom of others, including him. Freedom is not free. I have watched my men die and held one in my arms as he died during a firefight on April 8, 1969.

And damned right there is such a thing as good patriotism as well as bad, a distinction that Mountain does not draw. In his world, all patriotism is bad. He could not be more wrong! He should ask his fellow Brits about something called the Lend Lease Act, when we came to England's support while they were standing on their shores with pitchforks, awaiting the onslaught of the Germans. But he is much too young to know anything about that, in addition to that information not supporting his thesis.

But the unforgivable act of Mountain is to equate my president with Putin, et al., not once but several times. My president and the United States are literally standing in the way of dictatorships such as Putin's that kill people such as Mountain after a takeover. He is too naive, biased, immature, or stupid to know or admit it. What a brilliant ignoramus!

Congratulations on showing your true colors! Call on them to protect you the next time danger threatens.

Dr. Clyde H. Morgan, LTC,
IN-MP, USAR, Ret.
Brandon, Mississippi

David Mountain's article is truly

engrossing.

Yes, the patriotism that our children and young people are taught in our nation's history classes is, bluntly speaking, nothing but propaganda that has enabled untold numbers of commissars to silence those who have the temerity to mention any wrongdoing, which our government has committed.

Fostering young people to become patriots should not be the goal of teaching history. If the truth is concealed to make students unaware of America's moral blemishes, they'll be robbed of the intellectual oxygen they need to make sound political decisions.

Thus, our nation's history will no longer be an academic subject. Instead, it'll be a cult whose devotees will become pliable zombies in the hands of their masters. Sadly, there are already many people who proclaim their patriotism for no other reason than what their teachers and textbooks have taught them to believe ... that our government is good, noble, just, charitable, altruistic, and unselfish.

What a pity! Those naïvetés are unaware that in Iran, Cuba, Nicaragua, Guatemala, the Philippines, *ad nauseam* ... our government eagerly supported the dictators who brutalized the people living in those nations.

David Quintero
Monrovia, California

David Mountain conflates patriotism with religion ("The Humanist Case against Patriotism," *FI*, October/November 2018) and urges humanists to reject it. But humans are social animals, hardwired by our origin as hunter-gatherers to belong to groups.

Our social instinct leads us to favor those we know and has made our identity dependent on the language, ethnicity, and culture of the group we are randomly born and/or raised in.

The group impulse is strong even for inconsequential matters. Why else do fans of a winning sports team feel superior to the loser's fans? Fans come long distances to see games in cities they left years ago but still consider "home." Otherwise irrelevant sports contests unleash powerful

emotions because they reinforce a sense of group solidarity.

For millennia, the human impulse toward group identity has proven ineradicable. Patriotism is just another expression of the need to belong to something familiar, powerful, and protective.

Patriotism needn't be a bad thing. As John B. Judis said in the *New York Times* on October 15, 2018, "the perception of a national identity is essential to democracies and to the modern welfare state, which depends on the willingness of citizens to pay taxes to aid fellow citizens whom they may never have set eyes upon."

Humanists have many battles to fight; let's not fight human nature. We must distinguish what is legitimate and justifiable in nationalism from what is small-minded, bigoted, and ultimately contrary to the national interest.

Under the current administration, it's more important than ever to stand up for our national identity as a country dedicated to the high principles on which it was founded—equality and freedom for all—even if they sometimes exceed our grasp, and even if some of our citizens wrap them up in the flag with God.

Lawrence J. Bonchek,
MD, FACS, FACC

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

It would appear that, to some extent, David Mountain, in his piece "The Humanist Case against Patriotism," may be conflating patriotism with nationalism. Webster defines *patriotism* as "love or devotion to one's country" while *nationalism* is defined as "a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups." Thus, one can certainly love his country without necessarily thinking it is better than all others. Only what's occurring in it, as far as that person is concerned, is quite good for most, if not all, of its citizens. While, obviously, this could be reactionary, it certainly could also be just the opposite—a very liberal order. Perhaps he is

convinced only a supranational regime makes sense. Eliminating the national borders physically, of course, would be rather impossible to achieve. Even a world-wide sense of "oneness" may just be idyllic. If all of the principles of secular humanism, as outlined by Paul Kurtz, were part and parcel of, say, the United States, I suspect even Mountain and other progressive humanists would literally love that, i.e., a "patriot." Nationalism, on the other hand, can be a deadly influence and has been responsible for far too much destructive history.

Marvin Thomas, MD
Blacklick, Ohio

I would like to congratulate David Mountain on his wonderful article in the October/November issue. Bravo! For many years I have been ranting about the similarities between patriotism and religion, pointing out that religion and patriotism tend to superimpose their fundamentalist, exclusivist mentality on each other, creating a symbiotic relationship in which one feeds off the other. This is especially true in the United States. My solution to the problem would be to find a way to take the emotion out of patriotism by thinking of citizenship as an almost businesslike, contractual relationship like the one that we have with an employer. I see citizenship in the following way: I agree to obey all laws and pay all taxes due in my country of residence. In return for this, the country agrees to grant me citizenship or residency and all the benefits that go with it, such as police protection, a fire department, social security, health care, the use of roads, and so on. Approaching citizenship in this unemotional, contractual manner guarantees that a country and its citizens/residents will receive everything they need to thrive but will prevent irrational, blind patriotism. Admittedly, we are a long way from achieving this kind of mentality on a large scale.

Robert Cirillo
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

David Mountain responds:
In a world where national pride is so often expressed in terms of

unshakable faith and tired mantras, it's refreshing to see it discussed here with intelligence and open-mindedness.

I do not distinguish between patriotism and nationalism. Perhaps I should have been more explicit. Mr. Price and Dr. Thomas both provide competent distinctions between the two, but I'm afraid these will have to join the hundreds of other distinctions between them that have been made over the past 150 years. We can define them how we like, but nowhere in the real world does national pride fall into our neat categories of good and bad, civic and ethnic, peaceful and aggressive. It's far too messy for that, and I think this compels us to treat it as a single phenomenon. Nevertheless, separating nationalism from patriotism remains very popular among politicians because it provides them with a convenient scapegoat for the crimes of patriotism.

I completely agree with Dr. Bonchek when he writes that "patriotism is just another expression of the need to belong to something familiar, powerful, and protective." But the argument that we therefore shouldn't reject patriotism, as it would be a battle against human nature, could be made for any other group identity, such as religion, ethnicity, or race.

As with these other group identities, it's true that patriotism can inspire good—although there's no scientific evidence to support the oft-repeated claim that national pride encourages people to vote or pay taxes. (If that were true, then why did roughly 45 percent of self-professed U.S. patriots fail to vote in the 2016 election?)

However, I maintain that patriotism and humanism are ultimately incompatible. The principles of humanism must necessarily be clipped and cramped to conform to the more parochial worldview of patriotism. As a humanist, I believe the most coherent response to this problem is to abandon patriotism altogether, although I appreciate there are other approaches. I applaud Mr. Price's humanist-influenced patriotism, even if I do not agree with it entirely, and I hope

that many more patriots will give their beliefs a similar level of consideration and critical examination.

Finally, a few words ought to be said about patriotism and the military. Not once in my article was I critical of servicemen or -women. The fact that condemnation of national pride is so often interpreted as disrespect for the armed forces shows how inseparable patriotism and militarism have become. Despite this, and as I alluded to with the story of the Belgian lieutenant, there are many accounts of troops throughout history who reject patriotism and yet continue to fight with incrementable courage and selflessness. I kindly suggest Dr. Morgan take a look at some of these accounts, including those from Vietnam, where many soldiers bitterly dismissed national pride as "a joke."

Once we appreciate this perspective on war, we can see through the myth that patriotism is needed to fight for morally worthy causes. As young and naive as I may be, I do appreciate that freedom must be fought for and that sometimes the fight will become physical. Had I been alive in 1939, would I have picked up my pitchfork and fought in the Second World War? I like to think I would have—not out of any love for my country but due to the overwhelming moral case for resisting the Axis. We don't need patriotism to fight for what we believe in.

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Tree of Life

Ted Richer

1.
once I came
...
in my dream
...
to Paradise
...
when you came with me
2.
the closer I came inside to the Garden
...
in my dream
...
the closer you became
3.
and when I walked all through Paradise
...
you came closer still
4.
yet when I stood near the Tree of Life
...
and looked all around
...
in my dream
...
in Paradise
...
I was alone

Romantic Allusions to Mardi-Gras

Max Jacob

(*Action*, vol. 1, n. 2, March 1920; *Le Laboratoire central*, 1921)

No, Monsieur Gambetta, Bolivar's taken his leave
We saw his top hat and his meteorite
Under the jet of the gas lamp's flare
Pierrot companion and cascade.
His smock at the end of the quay betrayed
I'm dining at home tonight.
The Seine has seen kings roll to the guillotine.
Night's horrors spy you from gothic dead-end streets.
O bicycle, your saddle is a velvet mask.
Love's opera boxes shivered in the Eastern breeze.
If we must die, Madame, hear me. Farewell!
Hemlines and hearts plummeted to the ground
And one curled one's little finger to drink in style.
My life is a tango, my heart a *grand-guignol*.
Fate! A halo of fear hovers over Notre-Dame!
It's a whip, you fool, what you took for a fencing foil
Forgive him, Gerald, in the name of our love, forgive
I want no more kisses from you
Ah! When will you escape the penitentiary of love.
Women offered themselves like bitches in heat.
At times, after midnight, the Seine resembles Hell.
Come! Monsieur Beelzebub, I challenge you hard.
I'll crack you like a soft boiled egg. *En garde*!
One or the other of us must leave this earth,
He said! And there spread the immense, blank ennui of
a moonless night.

Max Jacob (1876–1944) was a French poet, novelist, playwright, and painter, close companion to Picasso. He helped to create Modernist poetry in France, and his most famous book is the collection of radical prose poems, *Le Cornet à dés* (*The Dice Cup*), published in 1917. A Jewish convert to Roman Catholicism, Jacob died in the Nazi transit camp of Drancy outside of Paris in March 1944. This poem was translated by Rosanna Warren, who is a poet, translator, and professor of Comparative Literature in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. Her most recent collection of poems is *Ghost in a Red Hat* (2011). Published with thanks to Mme Sylvia Lorient-Colle and Éditions Gallimard.

THE AFFIRMATIONS OF HUMANISM: A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES*

WE ARE COMMITTED to the application of reason and science to the understanding of the universe and to the solving of human problems.

WE DEPLORE efforts to denigrate human intelligence, to seek to explain the world in supernatural terms, and to look outside nature for salvation.

WE BELIEVE that scientific discovery and technology can contribute to the betterment of human life.

WE BELIEVE in an open and pluralistic society and that democracy is the best guarantee of protecting human rights from authoritarian elites and repressive majorities.

WE ARE COMMITTED to the principle of the separation of church and state.

WE CULTIVATE the arts of negotiation and compromise as a means of resolving differences and achieving mutual understanding.

WE ARE CONCERNED with securing justice and fairness in society and with eliminating discrimination and intolerance.

WE BELIEVE in supporting the disadvantaged and the disabled so that they will be able to help themselves.

WE ATTEMPT to transcend divisive parochial loyalties based on race, religion, gender, nationality, creed, class, sexual orientation, or ethnicity and strive to work together for the common good of humanity.

WE WANT TO PROTECT and enhance Earth, to preserve it for future generations, and to avoid inflicting needless suffering on other species.

WE BELIEVE in enjoying life here and now and in developing our creative talents to their fullest.

WE BELIEVE in the cultivation of moral excellence.

WE RESPECT the right to privacy. Mature adults should be allowed to fulfill their aspirations, to express their sexual preferences, to exercise reproductive freedom, to have access to comprehensive and informed health care, and to die with dignity.

WE BELIEVE in the common moral decencies: altruism, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, responsibility. Humanist ethics is amenable to critical, rational guidance. There are normative standards that we discover together. Moral principles are tested by their consequences.

WE ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED with the moral education of our children. We want to nourish reason and compassion.

WE ARE ENGAGED by the arts no less than by the sciences.

WE ARE CITIZENS of the universe and are excited by discoveries still to be made in the cosmos.

WE ARE SKEPTICAL of untested claims to knowledge, and we are open to novel ideas and seek new departures in our thinking.

WE AFFIRM HUMANISM as a realistic alternative to theologies of despair and ideologies of violence and as a source of rich personal significance and genuine satisfaction in the service to others.

WE BELIEVE in optimism rather than pessimism, hope rather than despair, learning in the place of dogma, truth instead of ignorance, joy rather than guilt or sin, tolerance in the place of fear, love instead of hatred, compassion over selfishness, beauty instead of ugliness, and reason rather than blind faith or irrationality.

WE BELIEVE in the fullest realization of the best and noblest that we are capable of as human beings.

*BY PAUL KURTZ

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