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SCIENCE, RELIGION, AND DEMOCRACY*

ABSTRACT

Debates sometimes arise within democratic societies because of the fact that findings accepted in accordance with the standards of scientific research conflict with the beliefs of citizens. I use the example of the dispute about Darwinian evolutionary theory to explore what a commitment to democracy might require of us in circumstances of this kind. I argue that the existence of *hybrid epistemologies* – tendencies to acquiesce in scientific recommendations on some occasions and to defer to non-scientific authorities on others – poses a serious problem for democratic decision-making. We need a shared conception of public reason, and it can only be secular.

I

Contemporary affluent democracies are sometimes faced with a mismatch between the publicly-presented claims of scientific experts and the beliefs of citizens, including citizens who occupy powerful political positions. In many European countries, there are challenges to even the most modest suggestions about the safety of genetically-modified organisms. In the United States, where the split between expert testimony and popular belief is most pronounced, there has been extraordinary resistance to similarly modest claims about climate change. The "debate" about global warming has much in common with the more prominent, but far less consequential, controversy about the teaching of evolution – in both instances, the flames are fanned by using the fact of disagreement on details to hide the underlying expert consensus. My aim in what follows is to use the familiar dispute about the teaching of Darwinism as a starting point for exploring what I view as fundamental epistemological problems for contemporary democracies.

Darwinian evolutionary theory provides an extremely successful account of a diverse range of biological phenomena, and, on that basis, it is endorsed by scientists the world over. How, given the mass of evidence, does the dispute about teaching it persist? The answer to this question lies, I suggest, in the fact that what

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I'll call *hybrid epistemologies* are alive and well in the USA (and in other democracies as well). And therein lies a source of trouble for democracies far more significant than whether or not school districts are compelled to teach the children about evolution.

II

I begin by stepping back from the heated conflict about evolution and religion, and ask what a commitment to democratic values requires of us. A superficial understanding of democracy approaches it in terms of elections and voting: democratic societies are those in which leaders and representatives gain their offices through elections, and in which the voters are uncompelled and have opportunities to hear the proposals of those who seek their support. To probe more deeply is to ask why the machinery of votes and elections might be a good idea, and the obvious answer is that this provides citizens with some measure of control over decisions that affect their lives; having that control is an expression of their freedom. Yet, as is apparent in any society with a complex division of labor, in which many issues arise that have consequences for everyone, there can be little awareness, let alone control, with respect to the overwhelming majority of important questions.[1]

What protects the freedom of citizens in contemporary democracies is a constitutional framework, elaborated in a body of law, all of which delineates spaces in which people can undertake their own projects, guided by their own values and aspirations, so long as they do not impinge upon the like spaces of their fellow-citizens. As Tocqueville and Mill both saw, the majority can be as tyrannical as a single despot, and relief from tyranny comes in creating a body of law that enables each to "pursue his own good in his own way".[2] One obvious purpose of elections, therefore, is to help citizens to ensure that these constitutional safeguards, these protective boundaries, are maintained and enforced – a far more manageable and appropriate task than the utopian conception of offering control over all the decisions that affect us.

Contemporary democracies are heirs to a liberal tradition in which it is recognized that citizens may disagree, and may even diverge with respect to the most fundamental questions. Behind the Enlightenment pleas for mutual tolerance and accommodation loom the religious conflicts of the early modern period and the sufferings of the many people whose consciences single-minded rulers attempted to compel.[3] Precisely because of this, the contemporary opposition to the hegemony of evolutionary theory in the biology curriculum can be identified as an invasion of the sacrosanct space that properly surrounds an individual, an attempt, once again, to impose uniformity in ideas and values that are most central to people's lives.

Perhaps you find this a strange way to conceive the opposition between science and religion – and there is reason to question the account I've sketched. For we have different ways of approaching educational questions, ways that themselves start from the idea of the individual citizen free to pursue his or her own values. Education can be seen as a process in which young people, initially introduced

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only to the ideas and traditions favored within their family, come to appreciate a wider range of thoughts and possibilities, so that, as they grow, their vision of what is worthwhile, what is central to the lives they want to lead, is autonomously developed from consideration of diverse perspectives.[4] Where there are genuine options, they should see them clearly. By the same token, where matters have been settled, we owe it to them not to pretend, but to show them how an informed consensus has been achieved.

Human beings are, of course, fallible, and it would be folly to claim certainty with respect to much (if anything). Yet for practical purposes, we do resolve many questions beyond the point of reasonable doubt, and among the institutions that settle controversies, science has pride of place. Hence, in the science curriculum, it is appropriate to make judgments about what has been established and what remains open – to tell students that there's overwhelming evidence for the atomic theory of chemistry, for the contemporary theory of molecular genetics, and for Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. We could "teach the controversy" in any of these cases by explaining how the available evidence tells decisively in favor of the currently accepted position. It would be irresponsible, however, to "teach the controversy" by suggesting that there are two "equally valid" stories in any of these instances, for that would be phony, deceptive, a blatant distortion of the evidential situation. Moreover, it's important not to deceive young people, precisely because the point of education is to help them shape their future lives; to do that, they need to know just what the facts are, insofar as collective human inquiry has established them.

We should do our best to tell schoolchildren the truth. In deciding what to convey and where to present them with a genuine debate, the judgment must rest on considerations of evidence, not on a majority vote.

If what I've said so far is correct, there are thus two routes from broad democratic principles, routes that lead to incompatible conclusions. One recognizes the variation in ideas about how to live, what values to endorse, and what aspirations to pursue; it goes on to identify the democratic ideal in terms of preserving these individual decisions, not threatening the commitments people sincerely view as most important for their children. The other supposes that there is an obligation to the young citizens of a democratic society, a duty to acquaint them with the settled facts that constrain the real possibilities for them; it concludes that the scientific consensus should be taught to all schoolchildren, however uncomfortable that may be for the retention of the approach to life on which some of their parents place emphasis.

How should we resolve the difference? What exactly does democracy require of us?

III

There are two obvious ways to resolve the conflict I have described, both of which have been prominent in recent discussions. If it were possible to contend

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that the scientific consensus on Darwinian evolution has been improperly formed, that biologists have prematurely accepted ideas about life when there remains an alternative perspective more friendly to faith, then we could honor the principle to present what is genuinely settled as settled, without impinging on religious sensibilities. That solution is just the one for which supporters of Intelligent Design campaign. It fails, *so long as the rules for closing debate are taken to be those implicit in the practice of science*. Taken purely as a scientific controversy, the issue is dead – Intelligent Design, like other forms of Scientific Creationism, cannot come close to matching the evidence for Darwinian evolutionary theory.

The second strategy for resolving the conflict, especially popular among religious scientists, is to maintain that the supposed threat to religion is only apparent.[5] Once you've come to terms with the fact that a few passages in the Bible cannot be read as literal truth, the way is clear to accepting versions of Judaism or Christianity that take the Creator to have operated through the processes of Darwinian evolution – in the beginning, God set up the laws of nature so that the universe we inhabit would emerge over billions of years and so that, on our planet, life would be formed some four billion years ago and evolve from there in the ways Darwin and his successors have described. Only those for whom complete Biblical literalism is constitutive of religion need fear that the teaching of evolutionary theory will subvert the religious sensibilities of their children.

This solution is too facile. It will help to distinguish various types of religion.[6] I'll say that a religion is *providentialist* if it supposes that the universe expresses the purposes of a deity and that these purposes include a serious concern for human beings (possibly for other animals as well). The most prominent versions of Judaism and Christianity are providentialist, but they are hardly unique in this regard.

Let's take a religion to be *supernaturalist* if it supposes that there are entities or forces quite different in kind from those that are encountered in typical human experience, beings that somehow transcend the events and processes of the ordinary physical world.[7] Providentialist religions are supernaturalist, but there are many supernaturalist religions that don't take the universe to express the purposes of a creative deity. Supernaturalist religions usually come with a body of text or a rich oral tradition, in which the nature of the transcendent entities is explained; the faithful are expected to acquire correct beliefs about these entities and to adopt appropriate attitudes towards them and, derivatively, towards the rest of the universe.

Finally, there are religions that don't require any belief in transcendent entities, religions whose orientation is towards promoting particular attitudes – hope, reverence, awe, contentment – in the presence of everyday physical objects or in special situations. Although they may make use of some texts or oral recitations, even texts and traditions that serve the purposes of supernaturalist religion in some communities, these religions – *spiritual* religions, as I shall call them – do not require that any part of the texts or the oral performances be taken as literally true. Versions

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of Buddhism count as spiritual in this sense, as do some devotional practices that descend from Judaism or from Christianity.[8]

So, is there a conflict between science and religion? It depends crucially on what sort of religion is in question. I offer a three-part diagnosis: first, Darwinism subjects providentialist religion to considerable pressure; second, resistance to that pressure by appealing to the ideas of supernaturalist religions encounters a powerful set of arguments that I call "the Enlightenment case against supernaturalism"; these arguments can only be evaded by retreating to spiritual religion. I'll offer only a brief explanation and defense.[9]

From a Darwinian perspective on the history of life, providentialism must appear utterly implausible. For the Creator who is supposed to care for his creatures has set up an extraordinarily long and wasteful process, one in which suffering and death are intrinsic to the rules of the game. If useful variants arise in the prey, the predators will starve, and, similarly, if profitable modifications occur among the predators, the carnage among the prey will be even more bloody.[10] Over millions of years, sentient animals suffer by the billions, so that, at the end of this shaggy dog story, our own species – allegedly the main focus of concern – can emerge at the tip of a twig on the tree of life. Instead of purpose and care, all that is visible here is, at best, callous indifference.

Believers in providentialist religion know what to say about this point. Even though God's purposes aren't visible to us, we can have confidence in their existence because of the revelation of divine truth.[11] A particular version of providentialism invokes a particular version of supernaturalism – and, for present purposes, I'll suppose that both are developed under the aegis of Christianity. Providentialist Christians are sure that, despite appearances, life has a great purpose because they can rely on the deliverances of the Bible and of those whom their church has given authority to interpret it. As we shall see shortly, this is a crucial methodological move, one that has considerable significance for the prospects of democracy.

For now, however, I'm concerned with the deep difficulties of this response. As an explanation of why many contemporary people believe the substantive doctrines of supernaturalist Christianity – holding that Jesus is the Son of God, that he literally rose from the dead, and so forth – the appeal to the authority of tradition is an important part of the story. The trouble is that there are so many inconsistent traditions, each claiming authority, and that contemporary believers in strikingly incompatible religions all come to their passionate forms of faith through similar processes. Today's Christians who accept Jesus often arrive at their commitments through processes very similar to those that generate the equally firm convictions of Muslims, Hindus, the Nuer, the Navajo, or Australian aborigines.[12] Despite the irreconcilable differences among these religions, the members of each can point to the revelations of the deep past, to hallowed authorities, and to chains of transmission of doctrine across the centuries. Moreover, when the origins and growth of the religions are scrutinized, it becomes apparent how myths have been

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elaborated and precepts refined under all sorts of secular pressures. Increased understanding of the variety of early Jesus movements, of the construction of the Christian scriptures, and of the growth of Christianity in the Greco-Roman world hammers home the point that the ideas devout Christians refer to the founder of their religion have no privileged status.[13] Instead, they are contingent products of socio-political forces, an assemblage of inspiring stories and parables that has no greater claim to truth than the comparable collections achieved by different cultures.

Darwin is often seen as the principal enemy against whom evangelical Christians must fight, but if he is to be assigned to the forces of darkness, it must be recognized that he has plenty of allies. The detailed literary and historical studies of religious texts, the anthropology of the world's religions, the sociological investigation of the growth of religious movements, and the psychological exploration of religious experience all combine to make a powerful case against supernaturalist religion. The more we probe the processes through which doctrines and stories are elaborated and passed on, the more we explore the diversity of religious commitments, the more we inquire into the social processes through which religious affiliations are initiated or sustained, and the more we investigate the psychological conditions of religious experience, the clearer it becomes that none of the world's religions can make any serious claim to substantive truth. The point is well appreciated by the most sophisticated theologians of major religions, who devote themselves to constructing spiritual descendants within their particular religious traditions. Evangelical Christians view these maneuvers with suspicion. Unaware of the huge volume of scholarly work that prompts theology to move from supernaturalism to spiritualism, or perhaps simply unwilling to confront it, they concentrate their opposition on Darwin.

There's reason for this. Most American Christians, even those who are relatively well-educated, don't attend to the historical conclusions of the Jesus Seminar, or to the sociological studies of the rise of Christianity, of Mormonism, and of the Unification Church, or to the ethnographies of non-Western religions. If the many-sided case against supernaturalist religion can be kept out of sight, then the issue can be posed in far simpler terms. Darwinism is at odds with providential Christianity, but the opposition can either be handled in the traditional way (we know, on Biblical authority, that there is a God who cares about us) or, even better, it can be addressed by a "balanced treatment" of evolutionary questions in the high school classroom.

IV

At this point, I can begin to redeem my initial promise to identify a deeper problem behind the conflict about teaching evolution. During the past two centuries, a number of scientific investigations, most famously and most prominently those concerned with the history of life on our planet, have undermined the credibility of

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supernaturalist religion. Or, to be more precise, for people who view the standards of scientific inquiry as the standards for our beliefs, the inquiries towards which I've gestured have made the acceptance of supernaturalist religion unsustainable. How should the results of these inquiries shape the policies and practices of a democratic society in which a majority of people center their lives on religious doctrines and values that derive from those doctrines?

Our actual answer to this question is to allow, or perhaps even foster, ignorance about the impact of scientific investigation, broadly construed, on supernaturalist religious belief, and to muddle along. Some people recognize that this approach has obvious defects, and they would prefer one of two different solutions. Thoughtful religious people who know about the construction of scriptures, about religious diversity, and so on seek forms of religion beyond supernaturalism, varieties of spiritual Christianity, for example, that read the gospel stories as moral allegories for the human condition. Their evangelical brethren often view them as having deserted religion entirely. The alternative recommendation, trumpeted by the most militant enthusiasts for science, proposes that our societies should become thoroughly secular, officially and explicitly repudiating what are taken to be long-enduring superstitions.

Both these suggested alternatives accept a basic epistemological thesis, to which I've already adverted in some of my formulations: scientific inquiry sets the standards for the acceptability of beliefs. The heart of the conflict between science and religion is a debate about this thesis. When we recognize the character of this fundamental controversy, it will be clearer that there are deep difficulties for our democracy.

An unsympathetic observer might suppose that evangelical Christians are committed to an epistemology of wishful thinking – that they hold so tightly to the doctrines of their religion that they will not count as knowledge anything inconsistent with any major tenet. A more charitable formulation would ascribe to many religious Americans a different conception of knowledge: standard scientific investigations can reveal many things about the natural world, but where they conflict with revealed religion, they cannot be trusted; for the texts of the scriptures, as interpreted by those graced with insight, offer a higher form of evidence that cannot be overridden by our fallible inquiries. This conception of knowledge has a venerable pedigree, for something very like it has been debated for centuries; Galileo's *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina* is one of the more prominent attempts to oppose it, but the stakes over which Galileo and his contemporaries fought were far lower than those in the twenty-first-century opposition.[14] Yet the local victories achieved by Galileo and his successors make the hybrid epistemology of evangelical resistance an uncomfortable position. People who want to embrace the sciences when they are irrelevant to religious issues, or even when they are in conflict with religious tenets once regarded as important, will find it hard to defend their insistence on biblical evidence as overriding when the Enlightenment case against supernaturalist religion as a whole is in question.

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What concern me here, however, are the difficulties posed for a democracy when this hybrid epistemology co-exists with a thoroughgoing deference to the standards of scientific inquiry. Liberal democratic theory is largely dedicated to exploring how people with very different conceptions of what is valuable, divergent attitudes towards the ways in which worthwhile human lives should be structured, can find ways to agree on common policies and institutions.[15] If the analysis I've offered is correct, the current state of American democracy is one in which the differences in values are conjoined with different epistemological perspectives. That yields a serious problem.

Suppose that a democratic society consists of two groups, diverging not only in their values but also in their conceptions of knowledge and evidence. If there are issues that arise for this society in which each group makes its decision according to what it takes as the facts, and if the differing epistemic standards yield incompatible factual determinations, how will the policy dispute be resolved? Whoever loses will be committed to seeing the outcome as based in a faulty conception of the facts, one rooted in a failure by the victors to respond to what the evidence demands. That might be tolerable if the consequences of the rival policies were not at odds on any fundamental moral matter, but it is quite intolerable when human issues of the greatest seriousness are at stake.

Consider two questions that arise in American society today. Many scientists believe that blastomeres derived from human zygotes could be used to generate cell lineages for research that might provide new weapons against debilitating diseases. They see no objection to using the blastomeres in this way; they understand the mechanical processes of fertilization and DNA incorporation, and find it incredible that such processes confer on the zygote some distinctive status; they know that the blastomere is formed a major embryonic stage before the pre-pattern of the central nervous system is laid down, and that, in consequence, there isn't even the ghost of a sentient organism present. American policy on stem cell research is, however, currently shaped by a respect for the inviolability of these clusters of cells – the sacredness of a new human being, as many people would say. For religious people, including some who have had great impact on the policy debate, there is scriptural support for viewing the envisaged experiments as the destruction of a human being, and this scriptural support overrides the scientific evidence for taking the processes of embryonic formation in purely mechanical terms.

Or consider the proposal that destabilization of the Near Eastern world is a precondition for the return of Jesus. A significant minority of Christians believe that their Bible tells them that this is so, and some are inspired to think that American foreign policy should be shaped by the directive to prepare the world for the Savior's return. In considering the consequences of various possible actions, secular people (as well as many Jews and Christians) would assess the effects and the value of the effects rather differently. The devotees of the "last days", however, will take themselves to have overriding evidence for a broader view.

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In both instances, extraordinarily important outcomes depend on what is decided. Scientists look to the relief of the suffering of hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of patients; evangelical Christians see the murder of human beings. "Last days" enthusiasts conceive themselves as carrying out God's plan; others fear tumult and destruction born of fanaticism. However the issues are decided, the losing side must regard the result as one in which the most crucial evidential considerations have been ignored. There is no resolution that can compromise between the clashing perspectives, and for the defeated, the considerations advanced against them must seem a travesty of reason. So they are asked to allow policies to go forth in their name, when they must repudiate both the reasons and the conception of reason on which those policies are grounded.

Rousseau proposed that a precondition for a social contract is that the parties share a conception of the common good.[16] Analogously, I suggest that a democratic society needs a shared notion of public reason, a common agreement on what kinds of evidential considerations count and on their relative weight. Academic writings on democracy often suppose that this notion of public reason must be neutral among all private views, as if the secular standards, the view from science, were naturally paramount.[17] If, however, the epistemology of evangelical Christianity is committed to the overriding authority of the Bible, then evangelical Christians cannot accept science as the single voice of public reason. For religious reasons to be debarred from public discussion is, for them, for policy to be systematically unreasonable. By the same token, if those reasons are permitted to enter – if religious leaders testify in the name of their scriptures before policy-making bodies – then secularists (and some religious allies) will see public reason as prey to irrationality and fanaticism. Either way, there are bound to be some decisions that some citizens will feel duty-bound to protest.

V

If this is our predicament, what should we do about it? There's an obvious secularist solution, one that aligns itself with the successes of science and with the history of democracy from the seventeenth century to the present. The commitment to making religious allegiance a private matter must be maintained, and, in consequence, religious considerations must not be allowed to enter public debate. Campaigning for greater public understanding of science can readily be supported by appeal to democratic principles: insistence on using scientific standards as constitutive of genuine knowledge would support the dissemination of correct information, thus enabling citizens to identify their genuine interests. For, after all, the possibility that democratic involvement will promote freedom seems to depend on giving the citizenry the best possible factual basis for forming their judgments.

A thoroughly secular public reason threatens supernaturalist religion directly by endorsing consequential policies that believers must see as grounded in reasons that are at best incomplete, and it offers them an indirect challenge by inspiring a

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school curriculum with serious chances of undermining the religious beliefs of their descendants. It is hardly surprising that evangelical Christians resist the elimination of religious authority from public discussions or that they protest the hegemony of scientific considerations. From a secularist perspective (or from the vantage point of spiritual religion) however, the hybrid epistemology that gives limited authority to science, reserving the last word for a text that scientific investigations have discredited as literal truth, is unsustainable. If we can find a way out of this impasse, it must be, I believe, by trying to fathom the impulses that continue to fuel adherence to religion.

Why is it that, alone among the affluent democracies, the United States has not made the transition to secularism that can easily seem the natural outgrowth of political history? I suggest that the answer lies, in large part, in the fact that American religion fulfills two important functions that other democracies have found other ways of discharging. For many Americans, without religious community there would be little community at all. In an atomistic and competitive society, with little to protect against life's vicissitudes, religious institutions provide networks of social support. Secondly, religious communities provide reassurances for those who wonder why their lives matter, both in straightforward ways through providing supernaturalist answers and in a more subtle fashion by opening a space for concerted ethical action. It's no accident, I think, that secularism takes hold more easily in European societies that provide social protection for their citizens and that foster public spaces in which people readily meet, openly discuss their deepest concerns, and sometimes act together in joint projects.[18]

When the apostles of science advertise the disenchantment of nature as the greatest human adventure, a wonderful achievement of discovery and self-discovery, ordinary Americans should be unpersuaded. For they are not part of this splendid venture, and a society founded on the secularism so ardently celebrated would undermine institutions that currently play a critical role in making their lives bearable. As they listen to the supposed voices of reason, it's hardly surprising that their commitment to a different conception of knowledge deepens, that they see the appeal to expertise as a form of tyranny and become alienated from science and its methods.

Perhaps, then, we can start to understand how, by the lights of academics and other educated professionals, there's so much misinformation about nowadays. For the hybrid epistemology of many religious Americans breeds distrust of precisely those sources on which secularists rely, opening a potential market for alternative channels through which what purports to be information can be transmitted. Once people have become accustomed to the bifurcation (or fragmentation?) of public reason, they can easily warm to the idea that sources whose deliverances support their values are at least as trustworthy as those that claim a unique title to "objectivity". Moreover, when market forces have fractured the news media, allowing different accounts of the facts to attract different segments of the polity,

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it isn't easy to see how to regain a place for genuinely dispassionate reporting that will be authoritative in our public deliberations.

Thirty-seven years ago, we were more fortunate at least in this. When tragedy struck at Kent State, we all knew about it, because trustworthy sources relayed the sad news.[19] There were differences, of course, in how that news was embedded in attitudes and actions. Yet we all had a place to start from in our debates and discussions, common ground on which to stand and argue. We have lost that, and, in consequence, the public today is even more deeply fragmented than it was then.[20]

Re-knitting that public is an enormous endeavor, one that requires the renewal of shared standards of knowledge. In my secularist view, those standards can only come from insistence on the priority of science, but that insistence must make room for the religious impulses and concerns that militant secularists currently ignore. Secularism must be humane, recognizing the needs for community, for social support, for ways of exploring why human lives matter. In this, I believe, secularists should join forces with the advocates of spiritual religion, those who have gone beyond supernaturalism but continue to appreciate the predicaments to which supernaturalist religions respond.[21] That is only, of course, to gesture vaguely in a direction, and I do not know whether that direction contains a path to success or how we might find it. But, as I have argued here, without some such efforts we have much more on our hands than a relatively confined spat about what biology teachers ought to present – for without a shared conception of public reason we are truly lost.

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NOTES

1 These points are expounded and defended in the writings of Robert Dahl; see, in particular, Dahl (1956) and Dahl (1961).

2 See John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (especially part I) and Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*.

3 Mill's discussion in *On Liberty* is evidently the culmination of a tradition begun in Locke's critique of the idea of compulsion of conscience in the *Letter on Toleration* – and behind Locke's treatment stands Milton's less systematic but far more eloquent *Areopagitica*.

4 This, too, is plainly a theme in Mill's *On Liberty*. "Experiments of living" are important because they can reveal new possibilities to those who come later, and it's important that the young should have the most complete understanding of all the options so that they can more fully express their freedom and their individuality.

5 Kenneth Miller's *Finding Darwin's God* (1999) is an excellent presentation of this approach.

6 The categories I offer aren't exclusive: many (though not all) supernaturalist religions are providentialist. I do take the division between supernaturalist and spiritualist religion to be exhaustive.

7 This is necessarily vague, given the diversity among the entities posited in the world's religions, not only the many gods, but spirits, ancestors, and impersonal forces (like the *mana* prominent in some Melanesian and Polynesian religions). Even in the early twentieth century, the known diversity of religions prompted William James to offer a "circumscription of the topic" which he acknowledged as unspecific (see James 1902, ch. 2).

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8 For a discussion that recognizes a variety of religious attitudes, see Wuthnow (1993). For developments of spiritualist Judaism, see Eisen (1983); a bold venture in spiritualist Christianity is Spong (1994).

9 The Enlightenment case against supernaturalism is reviewed at much greater length in my *Living With Darwin* (2007); for an earlier, and somewhat cruder formulation, see my (2005).

10 The point is made forcefully by Richard Dawkins; see his (1995, ch. 4, "God's Utility Function").

11 The history of philosophy, right up to the present, is full of scholastic efforts to articulate a theodicy, something that will expose the reasons behind all the suffering. These efforts founder on difficulties in showing that the suffering is compatible with divine justice, that it is redeemed for those who suffer. Ordinary believers are, quite rightly, unconvinced by the logic-chopping, and they take the sensible line that the rationale is beyond human fathoming.

12 Even if the religious believer insists that there are reliable experiences that disclose the presence of supernatural entities, the same point recurs: those experiences are formulated in the categories bequeathed by tradition. As the medieval bodies that scrutinized the credentials of those who claimed visions knew all too well, orthodoxy is the test of "correct" religious experience. Hobbes saw the trouble very clearly (see *Leviathan,* ch. 32).

13 See Rodney Stark (1997, ch. 5), Lofland and Stark (1965), Ehrman (1997), Pagels (2003), and Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998) for a tiny sample of some important works in these general areas.

14 Galileo was, of course, concerned to make space for cosmological discussions – specifically denying that Joshua 10:12-4 should be read as requiring a stationary earth; in his famous aphorism, the Bible should be read as telling us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go. The Enlightenment case calls into question any idea of a heaven to which we might go.

15 The most prominent source of contemporary discussions in this vein is Rawls (1993).

16 See *The Social Contract.*

17 Rawls's references to public reason in *Political Liberalism* are uncharacteristically vague, but he might easily be read as supposing that it's exhausted by the secular standards. It's worth noting explicitly that the Rawlsian idea of an overlapping consensus will not resolve the kinds of difficulties that arise from the presence of hybrid epistemologies.

18 I think the perspective I sketch here can explain the merits of the rival positions in the contemporary sociological debate about the differences among the United States, Western Europe, and the poorer nations of the world. For two major perspectives, see Norris and Inglehart (2004) and Berger (1999).

19 When Walter Cronkite would end his newscasts with his signature phrase, "And that's the way it is", we all believed him.

20 Here my diagnosis converges with that offered by John Dewey decades ago; see his (1927).

21 Again, my suggestions are in line with those proposed by Dewey; see his (1934).

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