

New Atheist and Religionist Identity-Polarization as a Double-Bind for Process Thought

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Abstract— The New Atheists tend to see 9/11 as the tip of the religion iceberg. Presuming religions to be irreformable, their orthodoxies unchangeable, and their theologies unrevisable, atheists reject religion in favor of secular humanism and they deny the true religion / false religion distinction, dismissive, if not unaware, of liberal religion. But the either/or of atheism and theism may not be as simple as it looks. The New Atheists expose variables not only in *philosophy of religion*, but also in *philosophy of science*, *political philosophy*, and the competing *metaphysical options* that shape religious, *irreligious*, and scientific experience. This paper employs the polarity method of process thought to draw attention to factors in the polarization of atheists and religionists. Though not a historical paper, it is a way of suggesting *symbiotic* relations between Christian orthodoxies and the Radical Enlightenment, between Enlightenment Christians and fundamentalism, and between politicized fundamentalisms and the New Atheist movement that need to be re-negotiated, if possible. The paper samples New Atheist thought, responses to it, and questions about it. Rather than rehearsing classic theist / atheist debates of traditional philosophy of religion, it raises a question about the role of *persuasive definition* in the apparent *mutual-insulation* of atheist and religionist communities, and their *mutual-alienation* from a range of mediating projects. Here, I have in mind not only process thought, but science-and-religion scholarship, more than a century of Gifford Lectures on natural theology, modern theological developments (some informed by atheism), extending to naturalized theologies, religious naturalism, and even atheist spiritualities. I further suggest that partial reconciliation between these polarized groups might begin by identifying and linking ongoing dialogues across the full spectrum of belief and unbelief.

Keywords— New Atheism, 9/11 Atheism, Secularism, Process-Relational Philosophy, Whitehead, Polarity-Method, Polarization, Faith-Based Extremism, Fundamentalist Exclusivism, Scientism, Mutually-Constructed Extremes, the Spectrum of Belief and Unbelief.

The Militant believers and dogmatic atheists are bedfellows in their psychological attitudes.... Is there a middle ground between the extreme positions of absolute belief and absolute rejection? (Paul Kurtz, 1994, 250-51)

[T]he philosopher's ultimate calling...is to transcend...warring exaggerations.... Half-truths treated as truths...arouse vigorous opposition (coming especially from those wedded to contrary half-truths).... A tell-tale sign of the extremist is his fondness for the contrary extreme as his opponent or target of criticism...neither side has much zest for the examination of the moderate position.... The result of these tendencies is that the balanced truth is chronically unpopular and neglected.... (Charles Hartshorne 1970, 96-97)

[Religion's] principles may be eternal, but the expression of those principles requires continual development.... This evolution of religion is in the main a disengagement of its own proper ideas from the adventitious notions which have crept into it by reason of the expression of its own ideas in terms of the imaginative picture of the world entertained by previous ages. Such a release of religion from the bond of imperfect science is all to the good. It stresses its own genuine message.... (Alfred North Whitehead 1925 / 1953, 189)

Analytic philosophers of religion, with a few exceptions, tend to shun process theism. Even those who are atheists usually disbelieve in the God of traditional theism rather than in the process deity! (William Hasker in Wainwright 2005, 436)

I. INTRODUCTION

Although histories of religion trace processes of scripture-aggregation, doctrinal revision, and institutional reform, orthodoxies resist change and fundamentalisms seek to reverse it. Noticing this resistance to criticism and change in religion, science-minded atheists condemn it, propose reductionist explanations, and develop secular alternatives, if not functional-equivalents, rather than joining religions without God.¹ The mutual alienation of religionists from atheists is maintained by the cultivation of divergent concepts of religion, scripture, and doctrine through *persuasive definitions* based on particular selections of evidence, in which both sides deny the inevitability of selection and belittle the need for hermeneutics.

Is anybody listening? It is hard not to be sucked immediately into the *immunizing* rhetoric and the *polarizing* debate, even though one might like to offer a *mediating* response which seeks to appropriate the contributions of atheism as a “counter-balance to dogma of every kind but particularly [that which is] religion inspired.”² Rather like John Caputo, I’d like to be able to say, “I am interested in displacing distinctions between...theist and atheist.... We are all in this...together, all exposed to the event under whatever name...” (2006, 20). It may be that each side is part of the problem, and that each, in turn, contains part of the solution. Perhaps, in the right circumstances, atheists and religionists could learn a thing or two from each other. A dictionary of atheism implores that “There is a crying need for serious, informed debate on religious and moral issues across the humanist-religious divide” (Cooke 2005, 520). For example, on the one side, Sam Harris says, “Religious faith...will not admit of even the *possibility* of correction,”³ even though historic divisions between and within religions are often the residue of attempted corrections.⁴ Richard Dawkins worries that “as long as we accept the principle that religious faith must be respected simply because it is religious faith, it is hard to withhold respect from the faith of Osama bin Laden and the suicide bombers.”⁵ But factors other than religious tolerance may also be influential in keeping bin Laden in power—like failed states, imperialism, inadequate intelligence, a political need for enemies, etc... Ahmed Rashid, a Pakistani journalist and author of books on al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and jihad, writes that “The American conduct of its war on terror has, in fact,

strengthened the impact of the jihadist message and fostered the spread of al-Qaeda....There is no quick solution...” (2008, 22).

On the other side, for example, conservative Dinesh D’Sousa dismisses atheism by stating that “Christianity is winning and secularism is losing.... God is the future and atheism is on its way out.”⁶ Secular political philosopher, John Gray says, “The current hostility against religion is a reaction to this turnabout. Secularization is in retreat....secular faith is ebbing...” (2008). Ethicist Jeffrey Stout explains that “secularists are driving religious moderates into the hands of theocrats” (2007). Is it even *possible* to be more interested in truth than in rhetorical victory? Daniel Dennett asks and answers, “Is there a conflict between science and religion here? There most certainly is”;⁷ to which D. Z. Phillips’ observation that “To say, ‘There is no God’ is more like rejecting a whole mode of discourse than expressing an opposite view within one” (1976, 183) may be relevant. The atheist position is often a rejection of religion made from the stance of an interpretation of science.

Exposing *many* fissures, the New Atheist agenda, I suggest, usefully spills out of the boundaries of traditional philosophy of religion, indicating the need for conceptual analyses of *many* divisions, such as: irreligion / religion, atheism / theism, naturalism / supernaturalism, monism / dualism, scientism / religionism, secularism / theocracy. For a framework of systematic thought to encompass this agenda, I employ process thought, singled out of a typology of philosophies, including pluralism, dualism, naturalism, polarity, idealism, and nihilism. It is shaped by a generic method that I call “polarity / balance” found in some process thinkers. The *niche* that process thinkers seek to create *between* hard naturalism and dualistic theism coalesces a family of traditions: *process*, *polarity*, *panentheist*, *panpsychist*, *pragmatist*, *postmodern*, *personalist*, and the *paradigm of emergence*.

From this generic process perspective, the paper first surveys and responds to the New Atheism *in general* with a supplementary explanation of “faith-based extremism,” and then to *selected* claims of Dawkins, Dennett, Hitchens, and Harris. In general, the New Atheists focus on religion in its *populist* expressions, offering reductive explanations, thereby ignoring or dismissing modern and postmodern theologies, or

condemning them for putting a good face on a dangerous phenomenon. This, in turn, constitutes the “double-bind” of “third-way” liberal theologies. But without qualification, the atheist perspective is vulnerable to the charge that it commits the genetic fallacy, while its reductionist tendency can be counterbalanced with neo-emergentist science and philosophies.⁸ Specifically, I present an alternative to Dawkins’ concepts of religion and the religious ultimate. As an alternative to Dennett’s *atheist* interpretation of cognitive science of religion, I propose a consideration of Dean Hamer’s *agnostic* version that perhaps lends itself to theistic as well as to atheistic interpretations, releasing meme-theory to explain the perennial nature of philosophies. To Hitchens’ secularist liberation of philosophy, science, and history *from* religion, I cite scholarship on the pre-Socratics that acknowledges a *transdisciplinary* concept of philosophy, subsequently developed in the larger process-polarity tradition. I respond to Harris’ appeal to atheist, scientific, and secular society with reference to Michael Sandel’s alternative of “deliberative democracy.” Next, I note evidence of a larger social movement of which the New Atheists are the most prominent representatives – thus the *ideological* dimension (using “ideological” in a non-pejorative sense). Last, I cite expressions of concern, from both sides, about the polarized character of the discussion, reinforcing my search for middle ground, a type of which process thought seeks to theorize and develop.

II. EXPANDING THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AGENDA

How might this process-thought discussion of New Atheists fit into philosophy of religion? In traditional philosophy of religion, theism and atheism can seem to constitute a simple, clear-cut option decidable purely by rational analysis, and independently from an analysis of religion. The legitimacy of religion can appear to depend on judgments of the success or failure of the classical arguments for the existence of God. One side develops ontological, cosmological, design, and moral arguments for God, arguments from religious experience and scripture, and theodicies. The other side *criticizes* these arguments, intensifies the problem of evil, and develops scientific explanations of religion, presuming the superiority of modern knowledge over ancient wisdom. But such debate can end up reinforcing atheist / theist polarization—preventing mutual learning and transformation of positions.

Again, a global context for philosophy of religion was cultivated by John Hutchison, John Hick, Ninian Smart, Stephen Philips, Joseph Runzo, Gary Kessler and others, by analyzing concepts of *world* religions (cosmic and acosmic, as well as theistic), religious experience and language, alternate concepts of the religious ultimate, personal identity and destiny, and comparative religious ethics, etc. Yet the agenda easily collapses back into cumulative arguments for classical theism and rebuttals by “classical” atheists. But some of the issues raised by the New Atheists are not confined to traditional philosophy of religion, extending to philosophy of science and metaphysics—*concepts* of religion and atheism; scientism vs. anti-science mediated by critical realism; monism vs. dualism, mediated by polarity. Yet again, the New Atheist movement focuses on the *dangers* of religion, so we have an agenda that enters political philosophy, which examines *secularism vs. theocracy*, mediated by varieties of pluralist democracy without a “naked public square” (Modak-Truran 2008).

So until, if ever, “philosophy of atheism” is established as a subdiscipline of philosophy, its existence will need to be inferred from atheist representation in the canon and debate of philosophy of religion, providing opportunities for mutual and creative transformation of positions on both sides. This might counter the impression that philosophy of religion is just sophisticated apologetics for orthodox religion. By the same token, New Atheist writing has been criticized by some atheists as unsophisticated humanist apologetics rather than serious philosophizing. But one contribution it does make to philosophy of religion is to show the importance for atheism of the critique *of religion* (not just God), thereby revealing the need for the conceptual analysis of atheism as well as religion, because of the extent of atheism’s dependence on a rejection of a certain concept of religion.

From the perspective of process thought, the New Atheist contribution might be its intensification of *polarized* characterizations of the “community of reason” and “people of faith,” raising inadvertently the question of whether these, on analysis, might be susceptible to some measure of ideological *depolarization*. But then we need a metaphilosophical framework for combining philosophies of religion and science *with political* philosophies. Can the resources of process thought

provide such a framework for identifying and explaining a *seemingly-excluded middle* between these polarized communities? With this extended agenda, we can offer reminders not only of the diversity of religion, but also the diversity of forms of non-theism—*spiritual* as well as irreligious.

This paper, then, presupposes a *method* paper, which I have titled, “Process Thought: Evidence of a Global Type, Method, and Canon.”⁹ The latter contains arguments for a polarity-balance method, from a generic process perspective, which seeks *mediating* positions in polarized issues. It constitutes a *hermeneutic* that is applied *here in this paper* as a framework for asking if it is even possible to entertain a process of *questioning* and *explaining*, if not quite *unraveling* and *dismantling*, the mutually-polarizing constructions of atheist reaction to religious conservatism. The latter two families of positions both *deny legitimacy* to liberal, inter-faith, religious reforms, and third-way developments in theology, such as historic panentheism.

The method paper, just mentioned, seeks to establish a niche for process-polarity thought, *initially pluralistically*, as one of six perennial outlooks—unavoidable, powerful, tempting hypotheses in world philosophy that seek to frame all experience. It employs the types-approach to philosophy.¹⁰ *Connected by* “mathematical relations,” the six philosophies are *differentiated by* the presumed number of ultimate dimensions (many, two, one-in-many, one, or none) – pluralism, dualism, polarity-process, monism (in two forms—naturalism and idealism), and nihilism. Its typology of six philosophies consists of six sets of positions in the areas of method, epistemology, *concept of* metaphysics, metaphysical theory, philosophy of science, religious experience, theology, aesthetics, ethical theory, and political philosophy. While atheism obviously arises out of a desire for a simple, clean break from the perceived negativities in populist religion and the obscurities of theology, it may actually involve *a complex of selections from variables at the preceding levels* and many more.

But the paper argues, further, that process thought and dualistic theism can be seen as *mediating* positions between two sets of extremes (pluralism vs. nihilism, and two competing forms of monism—hard naturalism vs. idealism).¹¹ As forms of anti-realism, pluralism and nihilism are difficult to live out consistently. Being reductionistic, the two

monistic substance theories of idealism and hard naturalism have difficulty explaining each other’s core evidence (science and consciousness or freedom). But where dualism arguably *juxtaposes* naturalism and idealism to frame theistic religious experience, process thought can be seen as a *complete synthesis (hard polarity)* that reframes the core experience-bases of the other five (*différance*, duality, nature, consciousness, and death or negativity), and *all three* forms of religious experience (cosmic, theistic, and acosmic) with *triple aspect* concepts of the ultimate, like being-supreme being-beings, being-nothing-becoming, or creativity-one-many.

III. THE NEW ATHEISM

What is *new* about “the New Atheists”? They draw our attention to the physical threats that religions pose, apparently presuming that these can be defused by weakening religion’s hold on our minds. New Atheist rhetoric is designed to *penetrate what is seen to be a shield that protects religion and faith from criticism*. Here we need to consider that, historically, the internal divisions of religions evidence internal criteria of criticism while, more recently, resources for critical thinking in religion have been developed, and not only in philosophy of religion.¹²

Two macro-sets of themes can be found in New Atheist writings. Primarily, one finds criticisms of religion and God-belief, faith, belief-in-belief, dogmatism, fundamentalism, terrorism, Islam, Mormonism, religion-in-politics, religious extremists and moderates, and religious and metaphysical claims about origins, purpose, freedom, immortality, spirituality, and ethics. The New Atheist alternative is found in affirmations of reason, evidence, evolution, cognitive science, unbelief, and secular humanism.¹³ Author Sam Harris, for example, defends atheism as a belief system that is superior to religious *ideology*.¹⁴ Pundit and activist, Christopher Hitchens pictures religion as infantile speculation that “contradicts science or outrages reason.”¹⁵ Biologist Richard Dawkins seeks to undermine the design argument for God with a scientific explanation of design as incremental evolutionary change. Philosopher Daniel Dennett contributes evidence from one strand of cognitive science explanations of religion.¹⁶

In the context of the increasing prominence of religion in public affairs and the attempted

relativizing of “First Enlightenment” values by “Second Enlightenment” postmodernists, the “New Atheism,” among other things, is a *social movement* seeking to mobilize¹⁷ irreligionists. The views of Dawkins, Dennett, Harris, and Hitchens are encountered in newspapers, magazines, best-sellers, and public lectures, but movement websites draw attention to a larger context and long history of unbelief.¹⁸ Other recent contributors are A. C. Grayling, Michel Onfray, Colin McGinn, Victor Stenger, Peter Atkins, John Horgan, John Allen Paulos, Marc Hauser, Lewis Wolpert, Steven Weinberg, Francis Crick, Michael Shermer, and Steven Pinker. Behind them stand traditions of American humanists, British skeptics, French and Australian materialists, Vienna positivists, and other developers of hard naturalism and scientism.¹⁹

A composite argument derived from Jonathan Miller’s “Atheism Tapes”²⁰ is that “Atheism,” “anti-theism,” and “irreligion” are warranted by the following understandings. According to Dawkins, *Atheism* is justified because theism is a false *scientific* hypothesis of a supernatural cause of the design of the universe. This hypothesis in cosmology was discarded long ago by science and replaced by an explanation of apparent design as caused by evolution, the incremental “ratcheting” of adaptations with survival value over billions of years. “Yes”, says Dennett, “there’s fantastic design in the biosphere, and...you can get that design without a designer.” He continues, “Everything...is made up of little ratchets” and “it’s all mechanical and blind and purposeless at the bottom,” a perspective constituting, as Jonathan Miller states, a “radical mechanization of our own picture.” But one might ask, is that naturalism, or nihilism? Philosopher Colin McGinn states that *anti-theism* is justified because religion is harmful, as evidenced by 9/11. Thus *irreligion* is justified because religion is both false science and is harmful. Science made irreligion possible, as Steven Weinberg suggests, since through it, “It became possible to understand how things worked without the religious explanation.” Furthermore, according to Weinberg and Dawkins, the concept of God as a terrible character can be constructed from resources of traditional Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and easily dismissed.

If one responds that *alternative* concepts of God are available in scripture and refined by theology, the New Atheist response is that *the majority* of

religious people believe in a being that interferes with the universe, not in what Dawkins labels “transcendent mystical experience.” Atheists, such as Weinberg, say that religious liberals are dishonest and have forgotten what it is like to *really* “believe” in something, or are just “cherry-picking” the Bible, perhaps like those who say (e.g. Hamid Mavani) that all that progressives *can* do is be “better proof-texters” of the Qur’an than the fundamentalists. But it is said that this merely generates a “hermeneutically filtered religious view that interprets away bench-mark doctrines” (Tappenden 2007, 106). Dennett says that liberal theology generates an academic smokescreen that is unintelligible and shows once again that *faith is a meme for insulating belief from criticism*.²¹ Correspondingly, A. C. Grayling writes,

Apologists for faith... deflect criticism by slipping behind the abstractions of higher theology, a mist-shrouded domain of long words, superfine distinctions and vague subtleties.... But religion is not theology; it is the practice and outlook of ordinary people into most of whom supernaturalistic beliefs and superstitions were inculcated as children.... [I]n its concessive, modest, palliative modern form Christianity is a... highly modified version of... an often violent and always oppressive ideology.... (2007, 9-10, 24)

If you go on to say that not all religious people are fundamentalists, and that the vast majority do not advocate suicide-bombing, then we are told that moderate religion merely “diverts criticism” from bad religion, or as Dennett holds, that giving a good name to religion provides a cover for fundamentalist activity. Alternatively, the distinction between good and bad religion shows that you already have a moral sense, so that you do not need religion, as Weinberg might say, or that, as Dennett might respond, at best, religion is just “moral Viagra.”

Interestingly, Julian Baggini concedes that some of his fellow atheists may have a distorted conception of religion. Asked his opinion of Onfray’s *In Defense of Atheism*, he responded that

[He] neglects the moderate ‘dogma-lite’ versions of religion that most people actually follow, claiming that these are no more than pick-and-mix dilutions of the true faith. That is, I think, a weakness he shares with many atheists. In a way, we have a more fundamentalist view

of religion than most believers, because we insist to truly be a believer, you have to swallow a whole lot of doctrine, and that anyone who doesn't is just following a 'wishy-washy,' not entirely bona fide religion. (Baggini in Melville 2007)

Similarly, Richard Norman says of Onfray that "After criticizing religions' selective reading he embarks on his own selective reading" (in Melville 2007). But let this not be a barrier to considering Onfray's contribution to "the demasking of all false gods[!]" (Ireland 2006). The critique of idolatry takes many forms. We just differ over what survives the cut.

It is tempting to dub the New Atheism "9/11 atheism." Would this imply *too narrow* a focus? Indeed, the thousands of sudden deaths on 9/11 were the catalyst for the *recent* writings of the four prominent "New Atheists." But how would the argument go? 9/11 was evil, 9/11 was caused by Muslims (with alleged Christian complicity²²), Islam is a religion, and therefore religion is evil? Each wants to send a message to Muslims, pro-life radicals, and others that *terrorism* is intolerable. But Dawkins also says *Jerusalem* is the microcosm of everything that is wrong with religion, and the comments of all four New Atheists invariably expand to critiques of *religion in general*. But can their message come close to al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Taliban? Or if it did, would it *reform* them or *reinforce* their resolve to resist what they see as Western decadence and imperialism? Suppose we share this major New Atheist concern about the dark side of religion.²³ What *would* it take to organize or reinforce linkages that extend appropriate messages into terrorist cells and networks of other purveyors of terror? As it turns out, the legitimacy of the terrorist interpretation of jihad has been challenged for some time now by Islamists in Egypt's Tora Prison.²⁴ So, then, is there any way to better position ourselves to encourage the process of incremental movement from terrorism to extremism, to rigidity, to literalism, to normal life?

IV. "FAITH-BASED EXTREMISM": SECULAR AS WELL AS RELIGIOUS FACTORS

Interrelated factors in the New Atheist *critique of religious moderation* can be noted. For Harris, "The very ideal of religious *tolerance*—born of the notion that every human being should be *free to believe whatever he wants* about God—is one of

the principle forces driving us toward the abyss." For Harris, "Religious *moderates* are, in large part, responsible for the religious conflict in our world, because their beliefs provide the *context* in which scriptural *literalism* and religious violence *can never be adequately opposed*." Again, "By failing to *live by the letter* of the texts, while *tolerating the irrationality* of those who do, religious moderates *betray faith and reason* equally." He continues, "It is time we acknowledged that no real foundation exists within the *canons* of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, or any of our other faiths for religious tolerance and religious *diversity*."²⁵ Even "interfaith dialogue...only makes it more difficult to criticize faith-based extremism."²⁶

At first sight, Harris's claim that fundamentalism exists because *religious moderates* tolerate it seems absurd. Liberal religionists are perhaps as appalled by fundamentalism as atheists are. The claim about religious moderates tolerating irrationality and violence needs to be addressed. It seems that we could distinguish *political* rights from *intellectual* responsibilities. Rights to conscience, privacy, free speech, etc., can be based on secular observations as well as religious claims about human dignity—on equality of species being, common needs, capacity for freedom or reason, as well as claims about divine image, soul, atman, universal selflessness, etc. But these rights are not intended to excuse anyone from responsibility for logical, scientific, moral, theological, or other kinds of correctness.

By the same token, tolerance among denominations of some religions has been achieved (e.g. the *World Council of Churches*), at least formally, by identifying areas of common, minimal, creedal ascent. Indeed, it seems that we could not justifiably use the one word "religion" to refer to the world's spiritual movements if *parallels* had not been discovered in comparative scholarship. On the other hand, commonality is combined with recognition that selectivity and interpretation of texts is inevitable in justifying details of theologies. Differences of judgment and selection are involved in the interpretation of words as symbolic or literal.

But are religious *ideas* the only or most important cause of religious violence? Along with the clash-of-civilizations hypothesis, arguably *secularity itself* is a two-fold factor. On the one hand, part of the "secularization hypothesis" was that in modern

societies religion would be a fading superstition.²⁷ But on the other hand, in addition to fundamentalism's conservative *ideological* function²⁸ in opposition to liberal ideologies, it has been argued that secularization is itself a factor in *unleashing* religious extremism.

Charles Liebman argues that "Extremism is restrained when religion is an organic part of society diffused throughout its institutions" (1983, 79f). An atheist like Quine acknowledged the *social utility* of religion.²⁹ Virginia Harrison summarizes Liebman's explanation of religious violence as follows: "In pre-modern societies, this tendency was counterbalanced by the many interconnections that existed between culture, communal life and religion. After the Enlightenment, however, these connections were broken as religion became increasingly isolated from other aspects of life" (2007, 329).

In my own rendering, the *genuine radicality* of religion lies in its techniques of identity-transformation. The one-sided *extremisms* of religion (right and left, violent and ascetic) stem from the lure of notions of apocalypse (or "ideal time"), or ideal visions of God, heaven, salvation, nirvana, paradise, saintly living, and peaceable kingdoms. Theoretically, at least, religious moderation is maintained by *balancing* its varieties of idealism with its own realist accounts of human nature, empowering development. Religion is medicine for the soul. Normally, religious institutions function as correctives, counterbalanced by their embeddedness in imperfect persons and societies that are shaped as well by other corruptible institutions—families, schools, governments, economies, etc... But when religion is marginalized and privatized by secularism and secularization, religious ideals can be politicized, naively displaced or cynically co-opted into one-sided ideological agendas. John Gray, for example, writes that "The attempt to eradicate religion...only leads to it reappearing in grotesque and degraded forms." He says that "The mass political movements of the 20th century were vehicles for myths inherited from religion" (2008). His recent book claims to trace apocalyptic-utopian thinking from its presence in early Christianity to its Enlightenment secularization—from Marx to post-Marxist neo-conservatism, from the French Revolution to radical Islamism.³⁰

V. DAWKINS, DENNETT, HARRIS, HITCHENS

Dawkins says "I prefer to use words like religion, like God, in the way that the vast majority of people in the world would understand them..." He thinks that "what the vast majority of people mean by religious is something utterly different from...transcendent, mystical experience. What they mean is ... an entity which interferes in the world ... and therefore is a scientific hypothesis." Dawkins writes that "the most basic claims of religion are scientific. Religion is a scientific theory" (1994). Dawkins says "the existence of God is a scientific hypothesis like any other."³¹ He says that "The question of whether there exists a supernatural creator, a God ... is a scientific question" (*Time*, Nov. 13, 2006, 51). To Jonathan Miller he said, "the moment you talk about a supernatural creator, designer ... you are advancing a scientific hypothesis which is either right or wrong. I mean ... a universe that has a supernatural ... intelligence, a supernatural over-mind in it, is a very very different kind of universe from a purely scientific point of view...."³²

The New Atheist reaffirmation of Enlightenment ideology is expressed by Dawkins as follows:

Religions make existence claims, and this means scientific claims.... Are science and religion converging? No.... Over the centuries, we've moved on from Scripture to accumulate precepts of ethical, legal and moral philosophy. We've evolved a liberal consensus ... in opposition to the teeth of religion.... The enlightenment is under threat. So is reason. So is truth. So is science.... We have to devote...resources to defending it... We even have to go out on the attack ourselves.... Of course, excellent organizations already exist.... But the money that these organizations can raise is dwarfed by ... religious foundations such as the Templeton Foundation.³³

Here we note the need for a discussion — historical and sociological — about the mutual-construction of the Enlightenment and varieties of conservatism. The Enlightenment, *as an ideology of modernism*, includes science, individualism, democracy, liberal religion, capitalism, socialism, technocracy, the sexual revolution, multiculturalism, etc. Many were "left behind" by the Enlightenment, and for them religion remains important. But who owns the Enlightenment? Concepts of the Enlightenment and its consequences are a matter of considerable historical debate. Distinctions are made between

mainstream and radical Enlightenments,³⁴ or First and Second, or Anglo-American and Continental. It can be seen as the fount of democratization or utopian radicalism, legitimate secularization or secular ideological extremism. It might even be useful to think of *three* Enlightenments—Atheist, Deist, and Christian (Hobbes, Hume, and the French materialists; Voltaire, Kant, Rousseau, Paine, and Jefferson; Leibniz, Pascal, Locke, Reid, Berkeley, Butler, Milton, and the Wesleys). Then too, modernity can be seen as the competition between “Radical, Moderate, and Counter-Enlightenment” (Chamberlain 2008) values. Isaiah Berlin and John Gray hold that criticisms from the Counter-Enlightenment need to be absorbed if further destructive potentials of the Enlightenment are to be avoided.

Then, too, is religion only, or even, proto-science? Is a balanced definition possible or only persuasive definitions? Which definitions of “religion” count: realist or ideal, negative or positive, populist or professional? Who speaks for religion and God, only laity, televangelists, missionaries, Sunday School teachers, pastors, priests, and popes? What about religion-founders, reformers, theologians, mystics, monks, nuns, and saints? What about professionalized educators in religion—APA philosophers of religion, AAR religious studies teachers and seminary professors, SBL scripture scholars and the Jesus Seminar? By analogy, whose definition of “medicine” do we accept, only the AMA’s or also Alternative and Integrative?

Analyses of the concepts of religion and the religious ultimate or God are called for. For example, Dawkins’ concept of the “nasty god ...who stalks every page of the Old Testament” (2006, 135) has been alternatively rendered in theologies whose hermeneutic has been controlled and developed by centuries of denominational devotional use.³⁵ We need to recognize that the same temptations to persuasive definition are present when insiders and outsiders contrast the sayings of Marx and Mao with histories of Russian and Chinese communism, or when contemporary science is contrasted with the history of science, or with the dark side of the technologies science made possible (e.g., nuclear proliferation; globalization as a “megamachine” on a collision course with Earth’s limits).

Before proposing alternate descriptions of religion and the religious ultimate, let me suggest an initial distinction, the lack of which may be involved in

the sincere perpetuation of science vs. religion conflict. If we differentiate between “*cosmic consciousness*” (Bucke 1900 / 1974) and cosmology (or cosmogony), we have a way to begin to discuss the closeness and divergence of what Whitehead might call the “genuine message” of religion from science. Alternatively, we could differentiate “*God-consciousness*” (infinity, oneness, *samadhi*, *taqwa*) from theistic explanation of the order and existence of the universe. This would defer to a discussion of multicultural *paradigms of salvation or liberation*³⁶ as the core phenomenon of religion, rather than explanations that compete with science. Cosmology and cosmogony generate theories about *the universe* (structure, process, origin). While these undoubtedly shape and reshape *concepts* of the religious ultimate, arguably religions claim to mediate the *power* of the ultimate in the context of *human need*. Long before there were theologians, apologists, and religious philosophers, typical forms of religious leadership included down-to-earth wisdom sages, gurus of altered consciousness, shamanic healers, charismatic conversion, prophetic warning, messianic heroes, scribal scholars, priestly authorities, and kingly theocrats, etc.

An alternative to the concepts of religion as proto-science and God as a scientific hypothesis can be derived from a comparative reading of world scriptures, shaped by John Hick’s phenomenology,³⁷ the findings of transpersonal psychologists,³⁸ and world mythography.³⁹

The *religious ultimate* is widely characterized in the scriptures of the world religions (in some primal faiths and some feminist theologies) as eternal, imperishable, undifferentiated (or One), omnipresent, immanent in the heart of things, yet beyond (or transcendent), the infinite in the finite, elusive, all-embracing, and that from which all things come and to which all things return. The religious ultimate is said to be *knowable* through love of others, mindfulness of impermanence, inwardness, transcendence of wordiness and intellection, and communion, union, or Oneness (at-one-ment) by dissociation with or mystical death of one’s false self, ego, or heart, and mystical identification with the true Self, Ego, or Heart.

The lifestyle *empowered* by oneness with the ultimate is widely characterized as practice of the golden rule predicated on the intrinsic relatedness or equality of all. This makes work for the good of all possible, through

compassion, love, justice, kindness, generosity, and service to all, including one's enemies. Good is returned for evil. Through self-control and adherence to the golden mean, enslavement to desires and hedonism are prevented. In living a materially simple, humble, and nonviolent life, the temptations for acquisition of excess by theft or war are minimized. (Quiring 1996, 65)

Dennett, in his *Breaking the Spell* book-tour interview with Bill Moyers, said that he's "not trying to destroy religion," just "trying to ensure that religion isn't toxic."⁴⁰ He says that the "really dangerous thing about religion is that it gives people a gold-plated excuse to stop thinking." He thinks a meme for faith, or belief in belief, protects God-belief from disproof. This charge extends to academic theologians who "change belief in God so drastically." In *Breaking the Spell*, he says that "The belief that belief in God is so important that it must not be subjected to the risks of disconfirmation or serious criticism has led the devout to "save" their beliefs by making them incomprehensible even to themselves" (246). He says, "God has been designed to be out of touch with science." But if I understand the history of science and the scientific method, it was *also the other way around*—scientists had to struggle to extricate their projects from church authority. What can one say? It appears to me that the phenomenon of *insulated belief is as applicable* to atheist irreligion as to religious orthodoxy and fundamentalism. What prevents atheist naturalism from being explained in terms of meme-theory? Antony Flew is a rare (and contested) example of defection from atheism, along with Francis Collins, Alister McGrath, C. S. Lewis, and the son of Madalyn Murray O'Hair.⁴¹

To this end, Dennett seeks to explain "religion as a natural phenomenon." He believes that "everything can be partially understood via rational enquiry," including religion. He thinks he can "see through" things without destroying them—belief, spirituality, cathedrals, Bach choirs, Christmas carols. He employs cognitive science and evolutionary thinking to "look under the hood" to uncover "technologies of belief-maintenance." Practically, he says "we should have compulsory world religions courses for all grades and home schools," although he admits that he himself has not had the time to study more than Christianity. Politically, he says, "Everybody stand up and say it's barbaric to say 'death for apostasy!' We shouldn't be afraid to say to Muslims, 'We Christians and Jews made this mistake, but we got

over it.'" *But here, it seems, is an atheist acknowledgement of the fact and legitimacy of religious reform.*

In *Breaking the Spell*, Dennett writes, "The most pressing questions concern how we should deal with the *excesses* of religious upbringing and the recruitment of terrorists, but these can only be understood against a background of wider theories of religious conviction and practice" (307). He says that a scientific materialist just believes that spiritual health is physical (305) and can embrace the core phenomenon of spirituality, to "let your *self go*" (303). This much, I suggest, may be compatible with Dean Hamer's perhaps mis-named *God-Gene hypothesis* that the gene VMAT2 encodes, not necessarily for God-belief, but for spiritual or mystical experiences that are interpreted in terms of local cultures and metaphysics.⁴² Trading on a distinction between consciousness and cognition, it can be said that religions emerge at the interfaces between this genetically-structured capacity for experiencing oneness *and* our various geographic cultures. Dennett's work is designed to see through the protective barriers so that "we can calmly consider the pros and cons of religious allegiance" (277). He says that "the evidence to date on that question is mixed" (277). Here, I suggest that we need more philosophy of religion for the masses.⁴³

Hitchens writes, echoing Marx, that "The argument with faith is the foundation and origin of all arguments, because it is the beginning—but not the end—of all arguments about philosophy, science, history, and human nature." That is to say, philosophy, science, and history seek autonomy from religion in their various attempts to understand human nature. From their perspectives, a four-fold critique emerges. That religion "misrepresents the origins of man and the cosmos" is said to be based on "wish-thinking," enforced by social control, achieved through "servility," resting on a foundation of cultural "solipsism" and "sexual repression."⁴⁴

For Hitchens, then, philosophy, science, history, etc... are liberated permanently from religion, supplanting it. But some scholarship on ancient Greek thought shows a more complex set of relations between religion, science, and philosophy. (An historicism claiming to relativize science and philosophy as well as religion had to wait for at least two millennia). The pre-Socratics *differentiate* between religion, science, and philosophy in such a way that (1) while each *can* be

seen as an autonomous project, (2) philosophy can *side with* religion or science, or (3) philosophy can *integrate* science and religion, the latter being attempted within the process-polarity tradition. Robert Neville said that “Whitehead was one of the few recent philosophers to recognize that philosophy’s affiliation with religion is as close as, though different from, its affiliation with science” (1987, 296). This is perhaps what Whitehead meant when he wrote:

You cannot shelter theology from science, or science from theology; nor can you shelter either of them from metaphysics, or metaphysics from either of them.... Religion, therefore, while in the framing of dogmas it must admit modifications from the complete circle of knowledge, still brings its own contribution of immediate experience. (1926 /1960, 76-77)

Two strands of pre-Socratic thought are both influenced by the prevailing polytheistic religion, but give rise to new movements, scientific and religious. A. H. Armstrong says:

In the ancient world ... the need of marking off philosophy from theology and science ... was not yet felt... The basic Ionian question is ‘I wonder why things are as they are and happen as they do?’... The basic Italian, Pythagorean question is ‘How may I deliver myself from the body of this death, from the sorrowful weary wheel of mortal existence...?’ (1947 / 1989, 1)

F. M. Cornford says:

Diogenes Laertius groups the philosophers in two successions, Ionian and Italiote, headed by Anaximander and Pythagoras.... [T]here were, in fact two traditions, which may be called ‘scientific’ and ‘mystical’... These impulses are *still operative* in our own speculation, for the simple reason that they correspond to two *permanent needs* of human nature, and characterized two *familiar types of human temperament*... In the Ionian schools of Eastern Greece, *science* comes to its fulfillment in Atomism.... The mystical spirit, prompted by a different need, works along other lines. To Pythagoras, philosophy was not an engine of curiosity, but *a way of life and death*. (1912 / 1957, vi, emphasis added)

Terrence Irwin describes a *dialectic* between speculative, critical, systematic, and transcendent philosophy:

Before Socrates philosophy develops through the successive speculative systems of the Presocratic naturalists. Many of these thinkers put forward very general views about the *nature* and origin of the world; sometimes they recall the myths about the gods, sometimes they seem to be primitive natural scientists.... Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle construct philosophy as a discipline distinct from mythology and empirical science, concerned with the *foundations* of knowledge and morality.... The Stoics and Epicureans use Presocratic, Platonic, and Aristotelian material to construct self-consciously integrated philosophical systems, applying a single set of principles to questions about knowledge, nature, and morality.... The revival of Platonism in the later Classical world turns philosophers’ attention from the understanding of observable reality to the search for knowledge of the unobservable and *supersensible*. Such an outlook makes later Platonism a natural companion to Christian theology. (1989, 2-3, emphasis added)

Harris debated political philosopher Michael Sandel on the topic, “Religion in American Society: Threat or Necessity?” before a standing-room-only crowd at Pomona College.⁴⁵ Harris began by saying “I’m not deliberately provocative” though “I’m bound to say derogatory things” because “religion is the most dangerous ideology” in the world and it is “systematically protected from criticism.” He continued, “I happily break this taboo against criticizing religion”—it’s not “indecent to criticize, to break the spell” of religion.

Harris said “people rise to the defense of God” by saying that “religion is true” or “religion is useful” or that “atheism is just another religion.” Evidence that religion is not useful is that “religion genuinely gets people killed.” “Bomb-blasts daily” are driven by a “metaphysics of martyrdom” employed by people who believe that “a patch of desert was given to them by God.” They “fly planes into buildings,” “killing each other over rival interpretations,” and “Dangerous imbeciles preach against condoms.” Harris said “theology is a branch of human ignorance ... The problem is dogma—in religion dogma is a good word ... It is completely without foundation that a glorious eternity awaits us”—“mommy doesn’t know grammy went to heaven.”

That religion is not true, says Harris, is evidenced by the mutual contradiction between one religion that says you must believe “Jesus is divine” in order to go to heaven and another religion holding that if you do believe “Jesus is divine” you will go to hell. The argument that religious contradictions, combined with absolute claims for each side, cancel each other out can be countered.⁴⁶ Consider the observation that the common theme of the oneness of the religious ultimate (Joseph Campbell, John Hick) is refracted through three types of religious experience (John Hutchison)—cosmic, theistic, acosmic—and can be theorized in complementary pluralism (John Cobb, David Griffin) rather than perennialism or fundamentalist exclusivism.

Harris said “the criticism of religion goes in one direction,” toward reason, science, atheism, and secularity. There is a “zero-sum between good and bad reasons,” “New knowledge trumps religion, ... science answers religious questions.” He continued, “Science is not mere culture—science transcends the vagaries of culture ... There’s no Jewish science, Muslim algebra.... We helplessly believe good reasons.... The most atheist society (Sweden) is the most moral, most generous, least needy.” But the only way science transcends culture is by limiting itself to an external portrait of things, disclaiming responsibility for the inner—arguably the other half of the story.

Harris said people are trying to manage “21st century technology” with the moral resources of “iron age philosophy.” The “world is shattered by competing moral communities” of “iron-age superstition.” Religious ideas are “fixated in the first or seventh centuries” and “*scripture is a perpetual engine of extremism.*” One of its “pearls of wisdom” is “stoning for homosexuality.” He said, “knowing a scriptural tradition well is irrelevant to ethics.” Accordingly, “Religion gives bad reasons to be good” (eg., fear of hell)—“people don’t need religion to be good.” And, “We don’t get morality from religion—it’s hard wired ... Our moral impulses are on a continuum with other primates ... It’s possible to teach children about compassion and the golden rule...that we should care for others and check diseases.”

Harris’s critique of religious moderates functions as part of his response to those who say of atheists that “we’re as fundamentalist as *religious*

extremists.” He says that religious moderates “demand respect for faith,” “freedom to believe anything”, and thereby “provide cover for extremists.” He adds, “*God is not a moderate* in the scripture—unbelievers are ground up in God’s loving machinery of justice.... The Qur’an and the Bible support slavery—nowhere in the OT or NT is slavery rejected.... Of course people cherry-pick the Bible to support abolitionism—reading selectively.”

Sandel said that “religion has no monopoly on dogma.” He said that there is no necessary opposition between science and religion, citing figures on God-belief among scientists (although different surveys have yielded different ratios). Not all scientists (Einstein, for example) are as antagonistic to religion as Dawkins and Dennett. He said the “overreaching scientism” of Weinberg undermines the possibility of dialogue on the compatibility of science and religion—“Weinberg agrees with those fundamentalists who say science destroys faith.” Rejecting the forced options of theocracy vs. “naked public square,” or pure dogma vs. pure, universal, unalloyed, uncontested reason, Sandel proposed a concept of democracy as an interpretive, deliberative forum of “contestable reason”—“all voices, all convictions.”

Sandel acknowledged that “religion has a mixed record in public life,” and he provided reminders that “religion is on both sides of the political spectrum.” For instance, just-war theory (Talmudic and Catholic) entails selective pacifism and selective militarism. In the U.S., the Protestant social gospel movement was active throughout the 20th century, while Religious Right activism developed after the 1960s with its focus on family values, abortion, homosexuality, and stem cell research. Another example was Quaker and Evangelical leadership in the 19th century Abolitionist movement, countering biblical tolerance of slavery. Though Sandel agreed with Harris that it is a “foolish exercise to weigh religious and secular wars,” he didn’t deny that *both* traditions are implicated in wars. He worried about the claim that morality is hard-wired and doubted the possibility of a science of moral reasoning. Sandel’s measured responses drew less applause, overall, than Harris’s hyperbole; although the loudest applause was for Sandel’s warnings about the “naked public square.”

VI. NEW ATHEISTS, SCIENTISM, AND “THE BRIGHTS”: NEW RELIGION, IDEOLOGY, OR BOTH?

New Atheists seek not only to undermine the convictions of fundamentalists and other religionists, but also to legitimize secularism, convince the uncommitted, and mobilize atheists ideologically into a secular movement countering conservative religion. Nevertheless, some of us may be able to appreciate selected features and claims of the New Atheist movement and interpret it as a recent chapter in the history of cosmic religion—or the religion of nature. That is, we could try to absorb New Atheist critiques, enabling them to function in the *reform* of mainstream religion,⁴⁷ while we also explain that *and why* such a stance might be interpreted as a recent version of a historic persuasion—cosmic religion.⁴⁸

In his article on “Atheism and Religion,”⁴⁹ Michael Martin says that “atheism itself is not a religion” because it “fails to meet the conditions of being a religion” (221) as defined by *philosophers* William Alston, Monroe Beardsley, and Elizabeth Beardsley. But this seems to leave the argument vulnerable to other characterizations of religion, perhaps by *religion* scholars, in which atheism might be seen as a functional equivalent of religion for some people.⁵⁰ Martin also reviews features of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Jainism, concluding that they are atheist in his narrow sense (lacking belief in a theistic creator god), and they could easily get along without any belief in gods (his broad sense of atheism), although this view is vulnerable to claims that some *attributes of deity* can be found in the ultimates of East Asian thought.⁵¹ Martin concludes that “*atheism and religion do not necessarily stand in opposition to each other*” (2006, 230, emphasis added). He also holds that “Atheists can even support aspects of theistic religions on, for instance, aesthetic and moral grounds” (2006, 230). Here, perhaps, we have an *opening for atheist / religionist dialogue*—in the recognition of some commonalities between them. I would like to reinforce the observation with evidence that some atheists do in fact cultivate religion-like instincts.

The *New Scientist* magazine’s 50th anniversary issue⁵² carried a 40-page special on “The Biggest Questions Ever Asked” about life, death, freedom, consciousness, and the theory of everything. Its top story of the week was on the “Beyond Belief” conference, titled “In Place of God” (8-11).⁵³ The article’s cover page had a photo of Saturn labeled

“an icon for a secular church.” The reporter acknowledged critical and skeptical voices at the conference, such as Ayala and Roughgarden, but concluded that “the mood was clear: science can take on religion and win” (as voiced by Weinberg, Dawkins, Harris, and Shermer). But planetary scientist Carolyn Porco was quoted as saying “At the heart of scientific inquiry is a spiritual quest.... Being a scientist and staring immensity and eternity in the face every day is about as meaningful and awe-inspiring as it gets.... The [scientific] answers to these questions [of wonder] have produced the greatest story ever told and there isn’t a religion that can offer anything better.”

A June 2002 *Scientific American* editorial by Michael Shermer affirmed scientism not only as a philosophy for the Age of Science, but as embodying ideological and theological implications. He sees scientism as a bridge between sciences and the humanities. Cosmology and biology ask “the ultimate origin questions,” and provide spiritual sustenance with naturalistic answers that *supplant* supernaturalistic ones. As storytelling, mythmaking primates, scientists are “the premier mythmakers of our time,” and scientism is the foundational story. The “shamans of scientism” stem from Galileo and Huxley to Bronowski, Sagan, Wilson, Gould, Dawkins, and Diamond. The embodiment of the social phenomenon of the “scientism culture” is its “scientific saint” Stephen Hawking who “dares to answer ersatz theological questions” and inspires us by his “unmitigated heroism.”⁵⁴

On the one hand, atheists claim that the burden of proof is on theists to show that there is a reality other than the world that everyone accepts. On the other hand, the Brights movement shows that there is a counterbalancing burden of proof, at least public if not metaphysical, to justify naturalism. They are in something of a bind. They are trying to present a *non-negative image* of naturalism, yet public attention has been drawn to them by the New Atheists. Indeed their most famous champions are Dennett and Dawkins to whose articles their website homepage is linked. The Brights movement characterizes itself as attempting to advance public recognition that naturalism is “actually a strikingly wholesome worldview.” It is seeking precisely to project itself in “positive” terms as an autonomous and legitimate outlook, in order to avoid the stigma

and loss of “cultural authority” attendant to the historic movements and labels that negate mainstream religious views—atheists, unbelievers, secular humanists, etc.⁵⁵

In other words, the Brights are trying to articulate a “generic civic umbrella” for those whose identity is not defined in terms of other views—religious, theistic, faith-based, etc. Brights seek to “influence society,” so as “to be able to exercise social and political influence” on a “level playing field” and, to that end, seek ways to overcome marginalization and discrimination that excludes “a place in politics and society for persons who hold a naturalistic outlook.”⁵⁶

VII. SCIENTISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM AS MUTUALLY-CONSTRUCTED EXTREMES, AND APPEALS FOR MEDIATION

Outside of process philosophy, acknowledgement of the polarization problem can be noted. *From both sides*—science and religion—it is possible to find support for the view that science is not innocent. At least a particular philosophy of science—scientism—is a factor in the rise of fundamentalism. We will look at the charge *against religious fundamentalism*, and the suggestion that *atheism and scientism can also be forms of fundamentalism*. We will listen to voices calling for *mediation of the two perspectives*—science and religion. My point is to reinforce an impression that the responsibility for polarization may be *mutual*. Camps of extreme positions have emerged in the communities of science *as well as* religion. How might the crises, perceived from both sides, be impacted, unless interpreters from both sides are brought into dialogue *beyond* the either-or debates?

In *Wired* magazine’s article on the New Atheists, Gary Wolf interviews Dennett, Dawkins, Harris, and a leader of the Brights movement. “Dawkins,” he writes, “is openly agreeing with the most stubborn fundamentalists that evolution must lead to atheism” (Wolf 2006). Leader of the London Brights, Glen Slade, says that “Moderates give a power base to extremists.” Dawkins says “the ‘sensible’ religious people are really on the side of the fundamentalists, because they believe in supernaturalism. That puts me on the other side.” Dawkins writes, “As long as we accept the principle that religious faith must be respected simply because it is religious faith, it is hard to withhold respect from the faith of Osama bin Laden and the suicide bombers.” Wolf concludes

that this is “*extremism in opposition to extremism* ... Contemptuous of the faith of others, its proponents never doubt their own belief. *They are fundamentalists*” (2006, emphasis added).

Scholars of the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism have indicated a number of recurring characteristics: reaction, identity-preservation, boundary-maintenance, dualist resistance to compromise, opposition to historical consciousness, and ideology. Religious fundamentalists are *reacting* to a perceived crisis, generated, as they see it, precisely by the forces of modernity and postmodernism (i.e. Enlightenment, liberalism, evolutionary science, biblical criticism, pluralism, hermeneutics, and relativism). The motivation is to preserve the religious *identity* of a particular community from ideas and media that might prove subversive of its families and young people. Consequently the *boundaries* between the faithful and its perceived enemies need to be maintained by resisting those who would *countenance the revision* of claims and values. By perceiving such as “compromisers,” a type of *dualism* is reinforced. That fundamentalist systems can be viewed as *selective* “retrieval of doctrines, beliefs, and practices” from a given tradition can be denied only by *resisting hermeneutics*, the historical consciousness that notices precisely the changes in identities over time. Also, fundamentalism can be seen to involve the re-embedding of religious content in *ideological* contexts.⁵⁷ *University theologian*, Langdon Gilkey explains:

Apparently, modern culture—modern scientific, technological, and industrial culture—continuously produces deep anxieties: fears arising from technological developments, fears of economic insecurity, terror at a seeming abyss of relativism, despair at rootlessness and alienation, and, probably most fundamental of all, the common loss of a firm confidence in progress.... All this represents a deep threat, the terror—and it is a terror—of the loss of assured meaning.... Such anxieties, if heavy enough, breed fanaticism. Our creative engines of modern progress—science, technology and industry—have also generated a host of deep dilemmas and apparently insoluble problems.... The irony is that a scientific culture seems to be breeding the very forms of religion that will, if they prevail, eliminate science—just as the rootless diversity of culture engenders a religion intent on eliminating diversity. (1996, 525)

From a perspective in science, Gerald Holton (1993, 172-175) lists characteristics of: (1) the "Modern World Picture" and (2) themes common to various anti-science groups. Note the polarization: (1) On one side are such themes as objectivity, quantitative, universalized, anti-individualism, rationality, problems, proofs, specialization, skepticism, Enlightenment, knowledge is power, hierarchy, secular, anti-metaphysical, disenchanting, evolutionary, cosmopolitan, globalist, and progressive; (2) On the other side we see the following themes: subjective, qualitative, personalized, ego-centered, concrete, moralistic, uniqueness, accessible to all, purpose, mystery, low interest in falsifiability, faith-based, individual authority, power determines knowledge, no hierarchy of specialties. Again, the asymmetries can be interpreted as polarization: objectivity / subjectivity, quantitative / qualitative, universalized / personalized, rationality / concrete, specialization / no hierarchy of specialization, knowledge is power / power determines knowledge, Enlightenment / mystery, anti-metaphysical / faith-based.

Also from the side of science, Richard Levin's characterization of contradictions in science helps us understand the fundamentalist resistance:

Modern European / North American science is a product of the capitalist revolution. It shares with modern capitalism the liberal progressivist ideology.... Creationists quite accurately identify the ideological content of science, which they label as secular humanism, against the liberal formula that science is the neutral opposite of ideology.... The most consistent liberal critics of science... deplore the class, gender, and racial barriers to scientific training, employment, and credibility.... Because of the increasingly obvious blindnesses, narrowness, dogmatism, intolerance, and vested interests in official science, alternative movements have sprung up.... (1996, 184-185)

Perhaps the characterization of Dawkins and Dennett as "Darwinian Fundamentalists" can be extended beyond their resistance to the possibility of a plurality of evolutionary factors.⁵⁸ They are reacting to a perceived crisis of resurgent religious influence and the undermining of Enlightenment values. *Are they not also seeking to preserve the purity of their identity as representatives of the life of reason?* To maintain a firm boundary between science and religious fundamentalists, it seems crucial that they also ignore, or diminish, the

significance of scientists, philosophers, and theologians who argue for the compatibility of their disciplines.⁵⁹ Thereby they preserve their distance from the religious mind. Perhaps they ignore alternative *hermeneutics* of science that indicate the difficulty of differentiating between scientism *as ideological* and the relation of mainstream science *to ideology*.⁶⁰

From the side of *theism*, Denys Turner says:

I find the likes of a card carrying atheist like Richard Dawkins to be really just an inverted image of a certain kind of rather narrowed down theism. There's a sort of fundamentalism about Dawkins' atheism which matches ... as in the reversing of a mirror image that which he's rejected, and it seems to me there's a certain locking of that card carrying atheist into a fixed form of theism which it opposes which..., if you like, also matches on the atheist side the refusal to ask certain sorts of questions on the theistic side. To give you a practical example, it seems to me that if you suppose that in this world there is a space which must be occupied by evolution, and that whatever space is occupied by evolution God has to be excluded from, then it doesn't really matter which way round you have it if you're an evolutionary theorist, you're going to have to exclude God. If you're a theist of the same sort then you're going to have to exclude evolution and there is, as it were, an equivalent fundamentalism on either side.... (Interview of Jonathan Miller, "The Atheist Tapes")

In contrast, from the side of *atheism*: *Who do atheists say they are?* In the *Cambridge Companion to Atheism* a profile is given of atheists as more intelligent, better educated, less authoritarian, less suggestible, *less dogmatic*, less prejudiced, more tolerant, law-abiding, compassionate, and conscientious.⁶¹ But a somewhat different portrait is found in Hunsberger and Altemeyer's *Atheists* (2006, 106-109). In its "Summary of Findings on 'active' American Atheists" the authors say "we were surprised to find *consistent evidence of dogmatism* in their thinking" (107). They write:

Even if active American fundamentalists look as dogmatic, zealous, and ethnocentric as their enemies believe they are, some of the data in hand [on atheists] cannot bring much joy to the groups that provided them.... in some respects at least the people who so intensely oppose and dislike each other from each end of the religious-belief spectrum have some things in common.

There seem to be *fundamentalists at each pole...* (108)

Specifically, they say:

They not only reject the traditional Judeo-Christian God, but also any supernatural being or power whatsoever.... God does not exist, they very strongly believe. They do doubt the truth and worth of organized religion.... In the main they doubt religion for intellectual reasons.... In the main, they simply found it all unbelievable ... Most of them had very little religious upbringing as children.... usually, what they had been taught stopped making sense to them.... Religion's big enemy in losing the battle for these minds proved not to be Satan, but its own scriptures, its various teachings, and its history. (106-107)

VIII. BROADENING THE SPECTRUM OF BELIEF AND UNBELIEF

The double-bind is articulated by Ronald Aronson. His article on "The New Atheists" in the progressive magazine *The Nation*⁶² embraces their work, though not uncritically, in the interest of shaping this "intellectual wave" into a coalition to resist the imposition of conservative religious values in the U. S. But such an alliance would need to include liberal religionists along with atheists (tacit and explicit). So Aronson calls for a "*more nuanced discussion of the range of belief and unbelief in America... discussing religion openly and critically—as well as atheism and agnosticism.*"

My interest in Aronson's opinion is not to support his goal of restoration of the vision of secular America (secularity in all things—knowledge, education, popular philosophies, society, etc.—less political discussion of religion, separation of church and state, etc.). Rather, I wish to support the search for contexts to address what to me is perhaps the most troubling feature of new atheist opinion: the castigation of all believers for sharing the premises of conservative religionists, the excoriation of "religious moderates, accusing them of providing cover for fundamentalists at home and abroad by refusing to contest the extremists' premises—because they share them."⁶³

Aronson acknowledges that the new atheists "show little understanding of religion or interest in it." But if there is something to the critiques of religious moderates, Aronson's coalition could provide one of many needed settings for

transmission of both sets of critiques (atheist *and* fundamentalist) to each end of the spectrum. Aronson says:

[S]uch an alliance could become one place where Dennett's goal of discussing religion openly and critically—as well as atheism and agnosticism—could begin to be realized. A number of questions might be explored: What, for example, is the *common ground* and what are the differences between believers and unbelievers? And...shouldn't all Americans be instructed in the great religious and secular traditions...? After all, achieving literacy in both religion and secularism might allow us to discuss them more intelligently."⁶⁴

Aronson's alliance could do worse than follow Paul Kurtz's outline of options from this lengthy quotation. Kurtz begins by asking:

What should be our attitude toward appraising the truth claims of religions? (249) Is there a middle ground between the extreme positions of absolute belief and absolute rejection? (250-51) I wish to identify *three states of mind*, or psychological attitudes, that one encounters.... The first attitude is that of *absolute faith* and conviction. This approach accepts the dogma of the religion as "The Gospel Truth." Opposed to this is the second attitude, militant atheism, which *rejects all religions* out of hand. The third, *lying between two extremes*, is a common ground occupied by both (a) fallible believers in religious claims—those possessed of some humility and indecision—and (b) tentative *skeptics and unbelievers*, who, having drawn upon scientific inquiry or philosophical analysis, express doubts about such claims. The first and second attitudes are at opposite ends of the spectrum yet they are similar in their dogmatic predispositions.... (1994, 249)

Kurtz first offers a portrait of the religious fundamentalist:

The orthodox fundamentalist approach is audacious and insistent in its declarations.... God exists. He has revealed himself to Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, or some other prophet, and the truths of one or more of these prophets are to be accepted by true believers if they are to be saved from damnation. This ... is *accepted without question*, and it is interpreted as law. The articles of faith and catechisms are taken as *final, absolute, infallible*, exactly as revealed and interpreted by priests, ministers, rabbis, mullahs,

or other representatives of official doctrine. The canons, principles, commandments, or laws are the *only true teaching*. All other faiths or systems of belief are opposed. True believers condemn unbelievers as apostates, infidels.... They accuse them of conspiring to destroy religion, to tear down society, to do away with the family, and to debauch the young. Any *questioning of the faith must then be stamped out as dangerous, heretical, and sinful*, particularly where a religious institution has been established to promulgate or protect the truth and has a monopoly of power and uses the state to enforce its orthodoxy. (1994, 249)

Next Kurtz characterizes the militant atheist:

Ranged against the true believer are the militant atheists, who *adamantly reject the faith* as false, stupid, and reactionary. They consider all religious believers to be gullible fools and claim that they are given to accepting gross exaggerations and untenable premises. Historic religious claims, they think, are *totally implausible*, unbelievable, disreputable, and controvertible, for they go beyond the bounds of reason. Militant atheists can find *no value* at all to any religious beliefs or institutions. *They resist any effort to engage in inquiry or debate*. Madalyn Murray O'Hair is as arrogant in her rejection of religion as is the true believer in his or her profession of faith. This form of atheism thus becomes mere dogma.... *Militant believers and dogmatic atheists are bedfellows in their psychological attitudes*. (1994, 250)

Thirdly, Kurtz portrays those who revise religious orthodoxy:

The first is that of the *fallible religious believer* or liberal theologian who has not abandoned all doubt or uncertainty. This approach yearns for a deeper meaning to life; it may be uncertain about whether death is the final chapter; but it believes that there are indications of a deeper, transcendent reality. It does not take the Bible as literally true or absolute, but reads it *metaphorically* as an expression of human longing for a more significant universe. This attitude perhaps may be called 'latitudinarianism', for its advocates recognize that other religious traditions may express cognate values or truths about the human condition. Latitudinarians are willing to deviate from standard or fixed beliefs or opinions and are receptive to and can appreciate a variety of doctrines. They accept the principle of tolerance

and respect for other opinions as basic to their position. They are committed to freedom of inquiry and recognize that questions concerning the historicity of Jesus and the truth of *biblical claims are arguable and open to different interpretations*.... Representatives of this viewpoint are diverse: among them William James, Paul Tillich, and Hans Küng. (1994, 250-51)

Lastly, Kurtz characterizes the skeptic:

The second, cognate aspect of this approach is that of skepticism. Skeptics are agnostics but first they are seekers of the truth. They may have not entirely foreclosed the theistic option, though they maintain that the burden of proof is upon the believer and that the believer's arguments are not convincing. They may be nontheist or atheist in this respect, because they think that theism is unlikely or improbable. However, they admit that they are *unable to 'disprove' the existence of God*. They are *ever willing to engage in further debate*. Many terms have been used to describe those ... who hold this position. They may be called freethinkers, rationalists, secular humanists, nonconformists, dissenters.... Their basic approach is that of the inquiring scientist or philosopher. As such, they begin as *neutral investigators*, without a predisposition to believe or not to believe. They seek *testable and coherent hypotheses, and a range of evidence* to support them (1994, 251).

IX. CONCLUSION

A brute fact of history is diversity within and between religions, denominations, scriptures, theologies, ethical applications, religious institutions, etc. An *external* explanation is the inevitable (and hence original) *shaping* of religious experience by geography, culture, language, personality, gender, ideology, metaphysics, etc... An *internal* explanation is the history of attempts at doctrinal *revision* and institutional *reform*, generating a spectrum of positions—from fundamentalist and ultra-orthodox to orthodox and neo-orthodox, from liberal to progressive, and radical. However, atheist / religionist polarization is firmly maintained, partly by overlooking or dismissing the spectrum of positions *between* atheism and orthodoxy, *between* religions (cosmic, theist, acosmic), and *within* in each religion (conservative-progressive). Again, both atheists and religious ultra-conservatives seem mutually-inclined to *deny* such religious *development*,⁶⁵ i.e.,

deny the *legitimacy of revision of orthodox ideas* in changing contexts and the *necessity of reform* of religious institutions (given the inevitability of decadence).

The resultant *diversity of spiritual resources*—apparently from the very beginning of each religion—involves selection and interpretation of anecdotes, scriptures, and doctrine, requiring *principles* of selection. Indeed, both atheists and fundamentalists are inclined to deny or dismiss this process despite the varieties of hermeneutics that have long been available to render transparent the limited perspective of each participant and group. On the one hand, atheists say that world religions *reduce to* irrational, “iron age” orthodoxies which, in turn, *reduce to* primal culture superstitions. On the other hand, fundamentalists presume a *slippery slope* leading to relativism and atheism if *selectivity* is admitted and *revision* permitted. Thus, the developed, sophisticated theologies of religious moderates are dismissed—they are said only to provide “cover” for extremists (including suicide- and abortion-clinic-bombers). The New Atheists rightly notice that Islam and other religions are implicated in terrorist acts. They seem to think that if people are exposed to arguments for the total falsity of religion and truth of secular scientism the religious factor in terrorism will decline. I agree that it would be good to eliminate the religious and other factors in terrorism. I would remind us of the obvious fact that most religionists are not terrorists, that some religionists are peaceable—according to narratives about the Buddha, Lao Tzu, Gandhi, Jesus,⁶⁶ Quakers, Mennonites, Sufis, and Baha’is, etc. The answer is to differentiate *true* religion from *false* religion.

But on the one hand the total rejection of religion by the New Atheists dismisses world-wide projects of religious reform and theological revision. They even say that something about the liberal reformist mentality requires toleration of all religion—apparently including terrorists. On the other hand, New Atheists seem oblivious to the possibility that the modern, Enlightenment, secular, scientific, liberal, neo-liberal worldview not only is *perceived* as a threat by terrorists and others but is also arguably *implicated* in Western imperialism—political, economic, religious, cultural—to which some terrorists say they are reacting.

Might we seek to bridge these polarized groups, at least in principle, by striving to link ongoing dialogues across the full spectrum of belief and unbelief? None of us can communicate very far beyond our own situatedness on the long spectrum of positions extending from the New Atheism at one end to orthodoxy, fundamentalism, and terrorism at the other end. But we might strategize a project of identifying ongoing dialogues across the spectrum. By establishing or cultivating dialogues on relevant issues with the outsiders nearest to us *on both sides*, we might fill some of the gaps in the chain (or “bucket brigade”) of communication.⁶⁷

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¹ Billington (2002).

² This is part of the mission statement of *The Humanist*, the UK magazine for rationalists and humanists: newhumanist.org.uk/mission.

³ See: www.en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Sam_Harris#_note-eof.

⁴ For instance, Polytheism > Axial Age “monizing” in Greece, Israel, India, China; Judaism > Christianity > Islam, Catholicism > Protestantism, Hinduism > Buddhism, Hindus vs. Muslims > Sikhism, etc.

⁵ See: www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.11/atheism.html?pg=2&topic=atheism&topic_set=.

⁶ In *What's So Great About Christianity?*: www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/march/25.79.html?start=2.

⁷ atheism.about.com/library/quotes/bl_q_DDennett.htm.

⁸ See Clayton and Davies (2006).

⁹ For the 7th International Whitehead Conference, Bangalore, India, January 5-9, 2009.

¹⁰ Aspects of the types-approach to philosophy can be seen in the following: Hocking (1929 / 1959, 280); Reck (1972); McKeon and Swenson (1998, 6-9, 218); Watson (1985); Dilworth (1989, 173-4); Moore (1951, 2); Raju (1962, 164); Pepper (1970, 328); Sprigge (1984); Sheldon (1954); Titus (2002).

¹¹ Sheldon argued for “the polarity of the perennial types” in *Process and Polarity*, xii, and Louis William Norris demonstrated it in *Polarity: A Philosophy of Tensions Among Values* (1956).

¹² See Murphy (1994); Penaskovic (1997); Virkler (1993).

¹³ From tables of contents of New Atheist books.

¹⁴ Los Angeles Times (December 24, 2006) M3.

¹⁵ *Slate* excerpt from Hitchens’ *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*: www.slate.com/id/2165033/entry/2165035/.

¹⁶ See Dennett (2006, 263).

¹⁷ See *The Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science*: www.richarddawkinsfoundation.org/ and the official Richard Dawkins website: www.richarddawkins.net/ sporting its scarlet letter of atheism t-shirts. See “Science of Religion,” “Religion as Child Abuse,” and “Children and Religion” links.

¹⁸ See: www.atheists-online.com/links.asp; www.4atheists.com/links.cfm.

¹⁹ See Epicurus, Lucretius, D’Holbach, Marx, Feuerbach, Nietzsche in Thrower (1971). The public prominence of the new representatives is a change from the organizing work of the American Humanist Association, and the scholarship of Paul Edwards, Anthony Flew, Kai Nielsen, Richard Poidevin, J. L. Mackie and the Australian school of materialism (John Anderson, U. T. Place, J. J. C. Smart, D. M. Armstrong), Michael Martin and the *Cambridge Companion to Atheism* (2006), etc.

²⁰ See: www.deitywatch.007sites.com/index.php.

²¹ But one might ask how effective are reasons against memes? Couldn’t meme theory be used to explain the insularity of atheist belief as well?

²² See: www.9/11truth.org.

²³ See Ward (2006); Kimball (2002). For example, its 1) absolute truth claims, 2) blind obedience, 3) establishing the “ideal time,” 4) the end justifies any means, 5) declaring holy war.

²⁴ Though repudiated by Al-Qaeda’s Zawahiri, it is now reported that substantial revisions of the violent jihad interpretation by imprisoned members of Egypt’s Jihad Group began as early as 1986, recently reinforced by the retractions of Al-Qaeda’s major theorist, Sayyed Imam al-Sharif (Dr. Fadl) in his book, *Document to Rationalizing Jihadi Action in Egypt and the World*. See Wright, “The Rebellion Within” (2008, 37-53). Also see *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2008) and Black (2007).

²⁵ See: www.en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Sam_Harris.

²⁶ See: www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter_to_a_Christian_Nation.

²⁷ As B. Russell states, “Religion is something left over from the infancy of our intelligence, it will fade away as we adopt reason and science as our guidelines.” See: www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/b/bertrand_russell.html.

²⁸ See Marty and Appleby (1991, 824-26).

²⁹ W. V. Quine in Booth (1984, 73) states “...religion has been a boon to society, promoting charity and curbing crime. These social benefits...are a sound reason for propounding religious doctrine....but they afford no evidence of truth.”

³⁰ See Gray (2007).

³¹ See: www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Dawkins.

³² See Jonathan Miller, “The Atheist Tapes.”

³³ Richard Dawkins, www.positiveatheism.org/hist/quotes/dawkins.htm. One might be excused for thinking that science-and-religion scholarship is *the most appropriate forum* for addressing atheist/religionist polarization. But here especially the resistance to what process thinkers call “mutual-transformation” must be at its greatest. Though “the mission of the John Templeton Foundation is to serve as a philanthropic catalyst for scientific discovery on what scientists and philosophers call the ‘Big Questions’” (*John Templeton Foundation Capabilities Report 2006*, 4), Dawkins characterizes the JTF as a “religious foundation.” Similarly, science journalist Paul Horgan reports on reservations and misgivings about the legitimacy of Templeton-funded work by some atheist scientists. He says that some fellows have expressed fear at offending the funders, thus keeping their real opinions to themselves. Horgan’s vision is of “a world without religion.” He doesn’t want science and religion reconciled. His ambivalence was reinforced by finding the representation at a recent Cambridge conference “skewed in favor of religion and Christianity.” So he suggests that “[t]o demonstrate its open-mindedness, the foundation should award the Templeton Prize to an opponent of religion” such as Weinberg or Dawkins. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

(April 7, 2006), www.edge.org/3rd_culture/horgan06/horgan06_index.html. It seems, however, that a New Atheist could rather *emphasize the science* in science-and-religion work and see *Templeton initiatives with Muslims and Evangelicals* as encouraging experience and reason in communities traditionally resistant to Enlightenment values, rather than just giving a good name to religion. See "Science and Religion in Islam" and "Templeton Oxford Seminars" for Evangelicals in the *JTF Capabilities Report 2006*, 49-50 and 59-60.

Again, Dr. Eugenie Scott, Executive Director of the National Council for Science Education, writes that "the 'science-and-religion' movement...is not a challenge.... Only the 'theistic science' movement is a challenge both to science and to the acceptance of evolution in our society.... Theistic science proposes that we abandon methodological materialism in science, in favor of the 'occasional' supernatural intervention. This is, in Plantinga's own words, a 'science stopper', because once one stops looking for a natural explanation of a phenomenon, one is assured of never finding it" (1998).

On the other hand, Scott, a secular humanist, agreed with Plantinga and Huston Smith that 'unsupervised' and 'impersonal' should be dropped from the "Statement on Teaching Evolution" (of the National Association of Biology Teachers) on the ground that "they made philosophical and theological claims beyond those science could claim to make based on its principle of methodological naturalism -- and the statement was altered" (see: www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenie_Scott).

³⁴ See Israel (2002; 2006).

³⁵ With a Bible concordance it shouldn't be too hard to find parallels to the Muslim 99 names of Allah. See: www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/99_Names_of_God_in_the_Qur'an.

³⁶ See Hick (1989).

³⁷ See Hick (1989). Hick's notion of religion as transformation from self-centeredness to Reality or God-centeredness can be rendered *transformation from false-to true-centeredness*, allowing for alternatively-shaped concepts of self, reality, and center.

³⁸ See Shapiro, Lee, Gross (2002, 31), (transcending individual ego, self, personal identity; unitive consciousness; cosmic relationship).

³⁹ Campbell (1988), (the universe is a manifestation of a transcendent energy that unifies life and death. Identity with this unity is realized in acceptance of death and "death" to egocentrism, empowering mutual service and love. Mythic or religious truth about this unity is expressed in metaphoric language).

⁴⁰ See: www.charlierose.com/shows/2006/04/03/1/an-hour-with-guest-host-bill-moyers-and-philosopher-daniel-c-dennett.

⁴¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madalyn_Murray_O'Hair.

⁴² See Hamer (2004); www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_gene.

⁴³ Harrison's *Religion and Modern Thought* (2007) is designed as "a core text" for wide-spread use.

⁴⁴ *Slate* excerpts.

⁴⁵ October 4, 2007.

⁴⁶ See Michael Martin's *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification*, quoted by Velasquez (2008) in *Philosophy 10th Edition*, 305.

⁴⁷ For a precedent, see Westphal (1999).

⁴⁸ This project would differentiate *non-theism* from *irreligion*. Resources for a religion of nature might include, in addition to Solomon and Goodenough (footnote #10), Peter Atkins's poetic nihilism in *Creation Revisited* (1992), Willem Drees's *Creation: From Nothing Until Now* (2002), *The Universe Story* (1992) of Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, Brian Greene's *The Elegant Universe* (1999), the nature writings of Lewis Thomas, Loren Eiseley, John McPhee, and Barry Lopez; and Carl Sagan's *Varieties of Scientific Experience* (2006). Sagan's editor and widow, Ann Druyen emphasized "Carl's spirituality" during a *Cosmos* retrospective. See also Dawkins (1997).

Additional resources would include Donald Crosby's *A Religion of Nature* (2002), Catherine Albanese's *Reconsidering Nature Religion* (2002), Mary Midgley's critical *Evolution as a Religion* (1985), some science fiction (e.g., George Lucas's *Star Wars*, advised by mythographer Joseph Campbell), the nature poetry of Robinson Jeffers and Gary Snyder, Secular Humanist rituals (e.g. skepticfiles.org/human/memlserv.htm), James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis, Paul Harrison's world-affirming scientific pantheism (pantheism.net/), also his 1999 *Elements of Pantheism* (Pantheist creed #6—religion and aesthetics based on science), Remi Brague's *The Wisdom of the World* (2003), and Stephen Schneider's (ed.) *Scientists Debate Gaia* (2004).

⁴⁹ Martin, M. "Atheism and Religion" in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* (2006), 217-232.

⁵⁰ According to Carmody and Carmody (1993), "...we think...that the center of the humanist perspective is another window onto transcendence and ultimate mystery" (415, concluding Ch. 11, "Alternatives to Religion: Secularism and Humanism").

⁵¹ "Tao and God" was the theme of *The Journal of Chinese Philosophy* Vol. 29, No. 1, March 2002; see also Jackson and Makransky (2000).

⁵² Nov. 18-24, 2006.

⁵³ Should Dawkins, Weinberg, Horgan and others be justified in their suspicions of Templeton Foundation funding of science-and-religion research, perhaps the Beyond Belief conferences might be seen as having a counterbalancing agenda, though presumably dwarfed, by comparison, in funding.

⁵⁴ During an interview on *The Charlie Rose Show*, KCET television, March 7, 2008, when asked if he believes in

God, Hawking said, “The laws of the universe exclude God.” When asked if he believes in life after death, he said, “Immortality is a fairy tale for those who are afraid of the dark.”

⁵⁵ See www.the-brights.net/vision/principles.html; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brights_movement.

⁵⁶ See www.the-brights.net/vision/principles.html; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brights_movement.

⁵⁷ See Marty (1992, A56); Marty and Appleby (1991, 817-835). See also Lawrence (1989).

⁵⁸ See Gould (1997). Varieties of cooperation seem to have emerged as factors in evolutionary competition: three levels of reciprocity (direct, indirect, network) and two levels of selection (kin and group). See *John Templeton Foundation Capabilities Report 2006*, 55-56.

⁵⁹ Again, perhaps the spectrum of views funded by Templeton narrows from *Weinberg* and *Horgan*, *Dawkins*, *Boyer*, *Susskind*, *Vilenkin*, and *Searle* to the AAAS Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion, to its conferences, to its publication series (e.g., *Davies-Peacocke-Rolston-Ellis-Polkinghorne-Schloss*), to its prize-winners, to its programs for Evangelical and Muslim scientists.

⁶⁰ See Lewontin (1991).

⁶¹ See the summary of Benjamin Beit-Hallami’s article in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* (2007, 5).

⁶² See: www.thenation.com/doc/20070625/aronson.

⁶³ See: www.thenation.com/doc/20070625/aronson.

⁶⁴ See: www.thenation.com/doc/20070625/aronson.

⁶⁵ But see Ken Wilber’s synthesis of developmental scholarship in Reynolds (2004); Fowler (1981); and Hans Küng’s critical histories: *Judaism* (1995), *Christianity* (1996), and *Islam* (2007).

⁶⁶ See also Wilcock (1993).

⁶⁷ Evidence of attempted expansion of the dialogue in both directions by process thinkers might be seen in the aged Charles Hartshorne’s rambling reflections on his discussions with Weinberg, Sagan, and E.O. Wilson in “Three Important Scientists on Mind, Matter, and the Metaphysics of Religion,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1994), 211-27, and the process-influenced “Open and Relational Theology Engaging Science” conference with human genome pioneer Francis Collins at evangelical Azusa Pacific University (April 10-12, 2008); not to mention the ongoing challenges of teaching conservative, high-desert, community college students in my philosophy of science and philosophy of religion units.