

## The Jewish Mind and the American Mind

1.....Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (d.1972) and his martini came to mind as I read this “On Faith” assignment: “We know what ‘Jewish identity’ has meant in the past. What will it mean in the future? How does a minority religion retain its roots and embrace change?”

Of all the Jews I have known, Abe Heschel best represents the Jewish mind in its affirmation of roots, exploration of range, and adjustment to change. A master of Judaism’s formative literature, he lived a profound spirituality through his Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative periods, had more Christian readers than any other rabbi of his time, and was a vigorous proponent of justice in ecumenical and political life.

2.....His martini? My sharpest memory of him is not the public image of his marching at Selma with Martin Luther King Jr. It was of a cocktail party. We were in close conversation, both of us leaning on the curve of a Steinway. When I mentioned the name of the then-President of the United States, Richard Nixon, Heschel so trembled with rage that, fearing its spilling, he set his martini down on the piano. (Also, so that he could use both hands to talk.) Of Selma, he later said “My feet were praying.” Of that experience at an authors’ Manhattan party, he could have said “My hand trembled.” (As for Nixon, a few years later, in his last interview with David Frost, he confessed that he had betrayed everyone and everything he ever loved.)

3.....Rage is the emotional form INTEGRITY takes at the thought of fraud, as “wrath” is the form God’s love takes in the presence of sin. As a theologian, Heschel is remembered for favoring anthropopathism over anthropomorphism: we should be concerned not with the form of God but with his feelings. (Here, God’s wrath and Abe’s rage.) (Heschel was both scholar and saint, and on both scores I hate to disagree with him. But we Christians are concerned with God’s form as well as his feelings. As the Son in the Holy Trinity, Jesus was in God’s “form,” but to redeem humanity he “took the form of a slave”: Philippians 2:5-11.)

4.....I use “the *American* mind” in the full sense in which here I speak of “the *Jewish* mind.” The past (the roots) is present in decision-making, so that the future (the fruits) will have continuity, integrity, with the origins; and so that change does not destroy IDENTITY, as it does when a people become amnesiac about their roots. This reality about tradition and community applies alike to majorities and minorities.

5.....If it’s integrity we most want in the next president of the United States, maybe we shouldn’t limit our search for models to past presidents. Integrity means having it all together in the interest of TRUTH and LOVE, not of self and power. Because God made us free, integrity is optional. Because the God of Truth and Love made us “in his image,” we sin against him, violate our own being, and fail our responsibilities if we center our decision-making in self-interested power. In this, there is little difference between faithful Jews and faithful Christians.

6.....I must add two notes on “MINDS.” Heschel’s mind was compounded of four minds. (1) The Hebrew mind. (He was master of the language and literature of the Hebrew Scriptures, which we Christians call the Old Testament.) (2) The Jewish mind, the continuance of the Hebrew mind. (He was a double descendant of eminent rabbis.) (3) The mind of “the West,” compounded of the Bible (Old Testament + New Testament) and the Enlightenment. (After high achievement in Jewish education, he earned a PhD at the University of Berlin.) (4) The American mind, the mind of the West in its particular shaping in the 17th and 18th centuries along the western shores of the north Atlantic—its distinctive contribution to governance being that the institutional management of law and religion are never to be in the same hands. (Escaping from Hitler, he became an American.)

7.....While minds (3) and (4) are predominantly *Christian*, the very fact that the “Bible” (a Christian term) binds together the Hebrew and Christian formative literatures evidences that in the Biblical mind, the Jewish and Christian minds are in inseparable dialectical relationship. No one should have been surprised when Abraham Joshua Heschel, longtime walking companion of Reinhold Niebuhr, preached at the funeral of that great Christian public intellectual.



## Comments

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Basically, Mad, ...it's all too often about 'control,' even illusory control. People want to believe I'm an 'evil witch' muttering the \*wrong\* magic words because they feel the need to believe they are muttering the \*right\* magic words... and that \*that\* has power, as opposed to waking up, looking around, and really actually dealing with life.

Sorry to disappoint, but I don't mutter words. This is not the way.

The good Reverend here referred to a story about the Gods coming to someone's house... This is not important cause it's \*words.\* People can get frenzied about the words and act \*totally backwards\* about them. Like about it being the fault of a 'stranger' (in his own country) for saying the 'wrong words.'

Did those people really think through the Reverend's arguments, or were they just in the wrong dream?

Associating in the backs of their minds what folks like the Reverend keep saying: 'Christian is American, not-overtly-Christian-is Unamerican, and out to ruin your holidays... Blame them for your own conflicted consumerism...'

Never a word about 'Umm, if you wanted to, you could, umm... Stop buying crap...'

Just... 'Jesus says support those who say Keep Buying, helplessly keep buying, blame someone else for not-Jesus and associated helplessness.'

Bang. Someone gets hurt. Denials and rationalizations follow. No one probably saw what they were doing, never mind \*looking at what happens.\*

Lucid dreaming? How about lucid waking?

Seriously.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JANUARY 16, 2008 3:41 AM

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Oh, and, my, my, but I'm chatty tonight, Mad.

Do wonder who Anonymous is, but when discussing the 'American Mind' ...what better than the collective consciousness to speak of? :)

" Even though Jung didn't believe in lucid dreaming himself I've found it to be a fantastic way of dealing with my own psyche, especially combined with a Jungian overview."

Jung managed to bring these ideas to us by \*not\* postulating a mechanism, but rather by observing \*people\* and starting to work with \*how our consciousness actually works as subjectively-perceiving creatures.\*

We're dreaming \*now,\* in the waking world, and if we can't dream lucidly when we're \*awake,\* is it any wonder people behave in bizarre and contradictory, and helplessly-adversarial in compulsive ways?

It's people who don't know how to dream... Always looking for the one thing to make this other thing happen, without which they can't stop and look around and see and be and do.

Jung spoke of archetypes, ...I say these are as much of the Gods as is the 'fact' that 'sky is up and ground is down.' Our ancestors dwelt there.

Here.

"Of course playtime in these states is precious and rare and that's why I'm always on the lookout for new methods."

The method is... Be still. Pay attention. First to your body, then your thoughts, and the rest, you have every means to figure out.... as long as you're willing to live it.

There's even play involved. :)

" I'll look into the forms of yoga that you mentioned. So far Vivekananda's 'Raja Yoga' and Aleister Crowley's 'Eight Lectures on Yoga' have been the most helpful books that I've come across."

Well, Crowley was an odd duck. Seems to me he pushed every button he could find to press and hoped something would come out of it. Found a lot of things, I suppose, credit for daring, but, I'd take his last words seriously, after all he said so 'authoritatively,' with all his words and systems and funny hats:

"I am perplexed." :)

Good man. Summed it right up. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JANUARY 16, 2008 3:07 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Anyway, maybe if I speak in that manner, Reverend, you could understand a bit about how unjustly you portray others, and how it appears to those you characterize... motivated as you may feel you are by the idea you have the 'best book.'

Books are only as good as the heart makes them.

Your ilk, and those you teach, seem to so often labor under the notion that anyone who doesn't worship as you do must be 'setting themselves up as 'God,' ...you claim you 'know' all manner of things about us, by virtue of what looks to us like a \*verbal idol claiming to be, not an idol, not a book, not a bunch of myths and stories, but in fact actually in a verbal way, God.\*

You've got a way of projecting on us this shadow, usually expressed as 'You worship trees and dirt and statues and yourselves as 'God.' ...As \*if.\*

No, we don't.

Certainly not in terms of any delusion that there are things that are \*not\* 'God.' There are things we treat as particularly sacred because they \*function\* that way, not cause we think an object \*is\* a God-being in the way you presume through your own lens of what constitutes 'God' or 'A God.'

That book again.

We say Goddess a lot. Even mighty kings have a mother. Who knew.

Seems that your book-idol has things it 'tells' you we're all about, and won't let you hear us say different when we speak for ourselves.

As Americans.

Hrm.

Maybe that's cause that's all your \*book\* will say about others, ...all that the people who wrote the book cared to \*think\* about others, for their own reasons at the time.

I'd say that's \*not\* 'The American mind.'

That's about some 'Kingdom' you would rather have.

The American mind is smarter than that.

Also more hospitable.

And, ... Hello, Mad:

"I hardly ever take issue with anything you say, but while I agree science is not a religion, there is an area where science and mystery are starting to dovetail in a new and exciting way."

Dovetails are nice for certain rarely-seen-but-essential joints, yes? :)

To strain the carpentry metaphor, those don't work so well if one direction of grain is trying to pretend to be the other. :)

"Science as a whole hasn't jumped on this viewpoint, but it's clearly there. As a practitioner of an Earth based religion yourself I would think you have to agree that in a way science can't do anything BUT reveal 'God', no?"

Well, I'll emend Lovecraft to say, 'Science does not remove the Gods.' Certainly, as a practitioner of an Earth religion, I'd say it's folly to hobble or spin or limit science for fear it \*might\* somehow disprove an essential link to the Gods, or the Gods, or 'God' himself, ...but as someone who lives in a magical world that \*is\* to me a manifestation of the Goddess, I'll take all the hard science I can get.

Too often people believe that science and their \*particular\* religion are at odds (even if members of these religions never met a high-tech weapon system they didn't like while denying the fact that it's a bad idea to pollute the future,) ...even in Earth-religions there is a lot of fear that if one looks too hard, the magic and mystery and sacredness will go away...

Like it's that fragile. Heh.

If I can say \*one\* thing for all faiths, it's this: Do not fear to look as hard and long and ruthlessly and carefully at the world as you possibly can. The Sacred is not so fragile that we ever, ever, ever, need to dumb down.

So the world wasn't made in a week in 5400 BCE. Go out in a field away from the city lights and \*look into space.\*

Realize you're \*in\* space.

If that's not \*big\* enough for ya, a book or enforcing sexual taboos to assuage primate instincts while denying they exist can't help you. See the pieces of dust... Dust. Shooting stars, each a piece of \*dust\* blazing bright trails across the sky at ridiculous velocities, as the world \*continues\* to be made.

Science can't break the wonder. Neither can religion. They can only break \*us\* or our friendly ecosystem.

A lot of people try to justify a lot of things based on this idea, 'What if you found a watch on a beach.'

I say, "What if you found a galaxy in in the sky?"

Funny way the names of things go, but 'Galaxy' actually \*means\* the milk of the Mother.

No need for science to get more mystical. Science is what I rely on when mystical \*happens.\* :)

"The method of science, the aim of religion".

Pagan Place-

I hardly ever take issue with anything you say, but while I agree science is not a religion, there is an area where science and mystery are starting to dovetail in a new and exciting way. Science as a whole hasn't jumped on this viewpoint, but it's clearly there. As a practitioner of an Earth based religion yourself I would think you have to agree that in a way science can't do anything BUT reveal 'God', no?

Anonymous:

Much food for thought there, as always. I've always had a hard time 'mapping out' the differences in 'territory' between dreaming, lucid dreaming, and out of body projections. Heck, I even died once! One type of nonphysical consciousness can lead into another, yet feel so differently and the rules change. Dion Fortune made some pretty accurate observations about all of this regarding the roles of polarity between thought and form.

Even though Jung didn't believe in lucid dreaming himself I've found it to be a fantastic way of dealing with my own psyche, especially combined with a Jungian overview. My Anima, as the gatekeeper to the unconscious also reminds me of the "Holy Guardian Angel" in certain Hermetic traditions. Some of my deepest changes have been made in this way.

Of course playtime in these states is precious and rare and that's why I'm always on the lookout for new methods. I'll look into the forms of yoga that you mentioned. So far Vivekananda's 'Raja Yoga' and Aleister Crowley's 'Eight Lectures on Yoga' have been the most helpful books that I've come across.

Always a pleasure...

Anyway, Reverend: That-all aside, (you'll have to pardon if that talk of a 'Christian Nation' hasn't just plain lost my patience. It really has. Gods know I faced down my share of skinheads in my \*ahem\* adventurous youth, and they were always full of that stuff...)

Well, we have the tale of Baucis and Philemon...

Maybe we're in safer territory, here: Your words?

"The possibility that unidentified strangers in need of hospitality were gods in disguise was ingrained in first century culture."

It's a sentiment you won't find foreign in modern Pagan culture, either: while political Christians will use the rather parallel story of Sodom (and whatever the Hel Gomorrah did) as some 'obvious condemnation of gay people existing,' to us it's plain that the story is supposed to relate, mythically, those cities getting nuked for \*lack of hospitality.\* (Rules of hospitality are usually related to kingship in many world religions, as king-Gods are taken to teach about such spheres... whether those lessons are positive or negative. :) )

To Pagans, the meaning of such stories is clear: Treat wayward travelers as if they might be the Gods, not, 'Gays Are Evil and God's Gonna Nuke San Fransisco.'

The Metamorphoses aren't ill-named: they're about \*change.\* Not destiny. Change. (And, notice how the result is not a wasteland and a random 'pillar of salt,' but a temple. This isn't about cities \*literally\* being destroyed, it's

about the \*home\* becoming sacred to the Gods if one honors \*both\* the ideals of sovereignty \*and\* the wayward messenger. The \*goose\* is in the lap of the Good King \*because\* the home is not to be laid waste by this. (ie, don't beggar yourself out of fear)

Do you imagine good ol' Jove would approve of the 'unity' of the mob that attacked the well-wishing Jew on the subway? ('Party-poofer' and 'unamerican' as he may have been characterized?)

Think Zeus or certain other king-Gods we might have heard a thing or two about would approve of placing \*one iota of blame\* on him for being a 'stranger,' as someone billed him?

I wouldn't bet my lightning rod on it. ;)

When people start talking about 'who's the real Americans, whether it's 'my people' or Jews or Muslims or whoever, especially in terms of a 'Christian nation,' I gotta say...

It looks pretty damn inhospitable.

And when you do that, it's not Zeus who makes a wasteland of your city. You make it a wasteland by the very \*act.\*

Having been homeless, it's a wasteland... with a few bright temples, that I've known well.

I keep wishing I still had my Ovid. I ... kinda gave it away. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JANUARY 16, 2008 12:48 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"One can suppose that various kinds of paranormal events taking place synchronistically are well explained by the same universal phenomenon - the nonlocality of consciousness - albeit in a mode not easily recognized or accounted for."

That's, as we say, Anonymous... 'Good enough to be getting on with.' :)

"Science itself seems to disregard the fact that consciousness is ultimately inseparable from all and everything that is observed or experienced in any mode whatsoever."

Science, though, is \*not,\* as some religions like to claim, a religion. It is a \*method of studying the world,\* and in fact, one which is based on the very idea of knowing what can be known in certain modes: one that seeks to know all there is to know that is repeatable and not-dependent upon an individual consciousness' view.

I repeat: Science is not a religion. It is a method of studying the world.

Methods, of course, are not always performed perfectly, but really, people who claim 'Science is a (rival) religion!' and then challenge it on the basis of it being an 'incomplete' religion are basically insisting on barking up the wrong tree in an attempt to justify their own religions' untrue claims about the material world.

It's not made for that. It doesn't claim to be made for that.

Science can't touch Mystery, but it can sure kick the crap out of \*mystification,\* which is another matter entirely.

And, speaking of which, ...to the Reverend:

"On the subway Jew event, you say "I find it curious you speak on this topic now." I did so only in response to something you seem to have forgotten, viz. that YOU reintroduced the event."

No, I didn't forget, in fact, that was the \*point:\* you go talking about 'The American Mind' again after sympathizing with (and again defending) those who, in your view of 'the American Mind' apparently found a Jew insufficiently 'American' when he said 'Happy Hannukah.'

You're just rationalizing that Christian supremacism isn't Christian supremacism cause that would be bad, and you can't possibly be bad even if you argue for Christian supremacy.

You haven't, in the past said, 'The Bible is the 'Best' 'religious compass,' ...you've in fact repeatedly said that only Christians have sufficient 'moral compass' to say, have chaplains' services in the army, or be recognized as any other individual can be recognized, ...calling it 'religious freedom' to use your religious influence to try and \*remove\* the religious freedom of others, ....etc, etc, etc.

When it comes to Jews you act like you're part of the same 'majority' when it suits you, but still rationalize violence against them when the teachings of people like you 'bear evil fruit.'

As for moral compasses, the way you talk, I don't think the Bible is a compass of \*any\* kind. You put it on a table and point it wherever you darn well please, and call it 'God's Will' or 'The American Mind.'

We're \*all\* part of the American mind, sir, no matter how much you try to exclude others to claim it for yourself.

Call it a 'nonlocalized phenomenon.' :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JANUARY 16, 2008 12:14 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Dear Dr. Elliott

I do not really believe that "On Faith Forum" should be shut down. The problem is in me; the world is the way it is; I know. I like reading it and posting here, and when it gets to me, then I will take a break from it.

POSTED BY: DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN | JANUARY 15, 2008 11:07 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Mad Love -

You've named two age-old systems (and variations) for achieving focus, concentration and transformative illumination that are still widely in use. The ritual use of symbols and sacred objects in a sacred space has historically been found the world over to achieve particular desired states of mind. The world's oldest religion, shamanism, is still using these same techniques to induce trance states for particular ends (usually traveling in astral or 'other-world' realms to gain valuable knowledge/information for their own benefit or the benefit of others). From this practice of induced trance states (often chemically) the traditions and practices of white and black Magic emerge.

I don't mean to confuse this with the traditions of Hermeticism, which are often associated with Magical practices as well. You mentioned the traditions of Alchemy, and according to Jung this was a secret (Hermetical) system of personal transformation masquerading as a method for (allegorically) transmuting dross to gold (spiritual goals being the true (hidden) reason for these practices). Hermeticism as I understand it is all about personal transformation, rather than influencing and manipulating the outcomes of our daily lives (although illumination will do that in mysterious ways).

I've long had an affinity with Hermeticism and Kaballah, but am not a practitioner.

Meditation is as you say probably the most widely recognized method for achieving mystical or unitive states of mind in that more people seem to be familiar with this system, whether the methods used be from the (esoteric) yogic schools of Hinduism or Buddhism (typically). Lately we're seeing a lot on the traditions of Tibetan/Tantric Buddhism and the Dzogchen school of meditation, including the use of lucid dreaming as a method of realizing Rigpa, the fundamental or natural Mind.

My personal favorite is Zen and in particular the 'sudden' enlightenment (Rinzai) tradition. Some consider this 'radical realism' rather than mysticism. It purports to transcend religion and religion practice, as Reality is beyond all symbolic systems of representation. To Zen, philosophy and religion tend to confuse the real issue at hand - that being realization and intuitive apprehension of the nature of the One Mind (and our complete identification with it at all times - whether known or unknown to us).

In the Christian esoteric tradition, we have what is referred to as the method of Centering Prayer as elucidated by Father Thomas Keating of the Trappist (contemplative) Order of cloistered monks. Another well known Trappist practitioner and author is the late, lamented Thomas Merton who wrote widely on religion issues and even Zen as a system of enlightenment.

Both the Muslim Sufis and even George Gurdjeff used a system of meditative dancing to achieve total concentration and ecstatic states of mind.

The huge drawback to all systems is the need for both mentoring and guidance along the way. Every system mentioned promises optimum results only through the direction of a master (guru) of a particular given tradition and accompanying methodology or practice. In that sense most of us are really on our own in this pursuit.

Interestingly, the actual practice of these various methods can result in OBEs (out of body experiences). Most that accept the reality of these experiences assume that consciousness has somehow been projected 'out of the body' and is observing (the existing environment) from that vantage point. Others theorize something even more interesting - projection is actually an illusion, because unconsciously we don't believe that we can witness events unless we are 'actually there' in some incorporated manner, however subtle. In fact, what we are probably experiencing (during an OBE) is the Nonlocality of Consciousness, rather than 'astral projection' - which is a trick of the mind to make the experience 'more sensible'. In fact, we are seeing, hearing, and sensing events in our concrete material world in exactly the same fashion that the invisible 'witness' is viewing it's own creations in the land of dreams. We are not only actors in our dreams, but are completely present as transcribers of our (recalled) dreams. Lucid dreams in particular seem very tangible and real, and yet are merely another figment of our incredible 'nonlocal' consciousness.

The Buddha and many others since have stated that absolutely nothing that we perceive is objectively real, but is of the nature of dreams. Our One Mind is all that is or ever was - Gautama stated that he gained absolutely nothing from complete and unexcelled enlightenment.

If we only knew what that meant I guess we'd be Buddhas too.

best regards -

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | JANUARY 15, 2008 10:12 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Anonymous-

So assuming all that is true, and I believe it is, what are the best ways to tap into the unconscious mind? Obviously the age old practice of meditation quiets the personal mind stuff enough to allow for transcendence. On the proactive side I've always found engaging the unconscious through symbol and ritual (in the hermetic tradition) to be effective. Have your studies into this emerging Eastern/quantum view offered you any insights into new ways of engaging God/cosmos/universal mind?

POSTED BY: MAD LOVE | JANUARY 15, 2008 5:30 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Carl Jung is the modern thinker that has forged the clearest ties with the quantum concept of nonlocal relationships (at a distance) among correlated (entangled) quantum objects.

His idea of Synchronicity as the 'simultaneous occurrence of meaningful equivalences in heterogeneously, causally unrelated processes and events.....' shows clearly that the functions of the (transpersonal) Collective

Unconscious allow the psyche to operate in a transcendent plane outside of the time/space continuum. He goes on to say that 'since psyche and matter are contained in one and the same world.....it is probable that they are two different aspects of the same thing'.

The early EPR experiments & Bell's theorem as proven out by Alain Aspect's experiments in 1982 shows clearly that correlated quantum particles are related nonlocally, where any change to one (through observation) causes an instant mirror image change to the other without time delays (regardless of distance separating the two). This proves out the existence of a transcendent realm free of the laws governing time and space - consciousness (probably in the transpersonal unconscious mode) allows for the simultaneity of the changes seen in these noncausally based events to occur.

It has further been shown that consciousness (whether or not with awareness) is capable of collapsing wave functions that necessarily create the 'material' universe consisting of particles.

The complementarity of probability waves and 'manifest' particles explains the immanent or 'implicate' and 'explicate' polarities of the (consciously or unconsciously) created universe.

One can suppose that various kinds of paranormal events taking place synchronistically are well explained by the same universal phenomenon - the nonlocality of consciousness - albeit in a mode not easily recognized or accounted for.

Science itself seems to disregard the fact that consciousness is ultimately inseparable from all and everything that is observed or experienced in any mode whatsoever. Nothing is possible without it.

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | JANUARY 14, 2008 12:14 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

PAGANPLACE

On the subway Jew event, you say "I find it curious you speak on this topic now." I did so only in response to something you seem to have forgotten, viz. that YOU reintroduced the event.

No, I do not believe that without the Bible, nobody can have "a moral compass." For my praise of a preChristian instance of a moral compass, read in Wikipedia (through Google), "Philemon and Baucis" (the last paragraph is mine, reduced & rewritten). I do believe that the Bible is the best RELIGIOUS compass.

ANONYMOUS

I like your waves/particles analogy for different dimensions of truth.

Yes, Boehme was a Christian gnostic, confecting his own idiosyncratic syncretism. Poet, not theologian. We need both!

Thank you for your rich ruminations--& your conclusion that "This may be where God comes in...."

YES to your statement that the mystical traditions in all religions would, if dwelt with, reduce the runaway rationalism that produces fundamentalists on the right & (e.g., Sam Harris & Chris Hitchens) on the left.

And let's pray for your vision of Sufi "dervish dancers instead of suicide bombers"!

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | JANUARY 13, 2008 11:54 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Dr. Elliot -

You made my point at the end - Christians owe it to themselves (and others) to get acquainted with the mystical traditions of Christianity (at the very least). This may well temper tendencies toward the self-righteousness & superior attitudes that we frequently see when devoted Christians are debating/defending their religiously grounded points of view. Here we're picking on Christians but Muslims would benefit from following the same advice and review the Sufi traditions of Islam.

Imagine how different the world would be today if by some miracle the Sufi view replaced the Wahhabi movement!! We'd have dervish dancers instead of suicide bombers.....

You have probably noticed the clear absence of books on Christian mysticism in the various religion sections of Barnes & Noble, Books a Million and other books suppliers. Here in South Carolina you'd have to custom order such a book if you happened to know about it. You won't find Rudolph Otto's books on the bookshelf, although you should! Fondly remembering Portland, OR now, both Powell's and Borders did much better in the area of eclectic religious publications .... great city and great book stores galore! Why did I ever leave?!

I see Protestants and Catholics alike ignoring the mystical traditions of their respective faiths in droves (if they even know about it). And of course the 'other religions' section is very tiny indeed! Imagine covering all the other world religions at the very end of the religion stacks - for some reason the Dali Lama takes up a considerable part of that section! Marketing decisions??

You must admit 'I think therefore I am' verges on eastern mysticism (thinking being grounded in consciousness after all) - while Descartes seems to be credited as being the ultimate dualist, I believe he struggled with his realization and hedged his bets. In the end was unable to break the bonds of his grounding in Christianity.

The truth may set you free, but only up to a point.

best regards -

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | JANUARY 13, 2008 9:51 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Dr. Elliot -

True, all religion is metaphysics, even mysticism.

Here the standards of truth are completely subjective and are not comparable to objective scientific truth. They are clearly of different orders, but are not necessarily incompatible. They may be complimentary, much like particles and waves!

I appreciate your response. I have in my hand 'The Idea of the Holy' by Rudolph Otto and 'The Way of Christ' by Jacob Boehme, the German shoemaker. To be honest, Boehme sounds absolutely Gnostic in his descriptions of his own mystical experience and the ensuing knowledge of Christ (the transcendent Christ - not Jesus the person). He even speaks of Sophia, the divine female consort/counterpart of Christ.

It is fair to say that individual interpretations of mystical experiences are strongly conditioned by the religious matrix from whence these experiences arise. In my opinion, Zen in particular guards against this tendency above all other 'esoteric' or mystical traditions. Suzuki maintains Zen is not mysticism - but rather the ultimate unadorned existential experience.

Elsewhere mysticism seems replete with the archetypal Yin and the Yang of things. The Tantric Buddhists say this is the realm of Sambogakaya, as in the Platonic realm of Ideas from whence the gross material world arises.

Reading Huxley's 'The Perennial Philosophy' and William James' 'Varieties of Religious Experience' will provide plenty of examples of Christian mystics, and Catholicism is rife with mystics throughout history, including the well-known examples of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Theresa of Avila and her contemporary, St. John of the Cross to name a few (out of approximately 25,000 canonized saints, give or take, some are definitely 'holier' than others).

A few quotes - 'My being is God, not by simple participation, but by a true transformation of my being' (St. Catherine of Genoa - a close contemporary of Theresa) & - 'Thou art neither ceasing to be nor still existing. Thou are He, without one of these limitations. Then if thou know thine own existence thus, then thou knowest God: and if not, then not' (12th century Sufi mystic and Rumi contemporary, Ibn al-Arabi) & - "But when you finally discover Me, the one naked Truth arisen from within, Absolute Awareness permeates the Universe' (the divine consort of Padmasambhava, credited with Tantric Buddhism in Tibet) & - 'In this breaking-through I receive that God and I are one. Then I am what I was, and then I neither diminish nor increase, for I am then an immovable cause that moves all things' - Meister Eckert, 13th century Dominican monk (hard to imagine him being the spiritual surrogate of St. Dominic, founder of the Dominican order, and the appointed slayer of the 'heretical' Cathars (and look who got sainted). & - 'I am really without beginning, without equal. I have no part in the illusion of 'I' and 'you', 'this' and 'that'. I am Brahman, one without a second, bliss without end, the eternal, unchanging Truth ..... now I know that I am All' - Shankara, 8th century Hindu mystic. & - 'Our very self-nature is Buddha, and apart from this nature there is no other Buddha'- Hui-Neng, an early Zen illuminary and the 6th Patriarch of Zen. & finally - ' My Father and I are One' - Jesus of Nazerath.

The Buddhas all state unequivocally based on their collective enlightenment experience that there is nothing to be known (or that can be known) beyond our own natural Mind - how indeed could we know the nature of anything that was 'beyond knowing'??

According to tradition, even the Buddhas in their transcendent perfect Wisdom do not know the origin or purpose of existence. This seems to be one of those ultimate mysteries and those that claim to know definitely do not. This may be where God comes in.....

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | JANUARY 12, 2008 11:40 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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See, Reverend, \*you\* may believe that one who doesn't believe this is our one time on Earth by which we will all be judged according to your book can't \*possibly\* have a 'moral compass.'

\*I\* believe quite the opposite.

And I believe I've heard quite enough of the likes of \*you.\*

Lest we forget.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JANUARY 12, 2008 9:14 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Or... maybe it wasn't 'wrath'. Maybe it was your 'Godly Rage.'

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JANUARY 12, 2008 9:06 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"2 No, I did not "defend" the mob "for beating a Jew" I called a party-pooper. The Jew's counter-comment threw cold water on the seasonal merrymaking of many in his hearing, & some expression of irritation might not have been out of order. But wrath-become-violence was way over the hill, way out of bounds of decent human behavior."

Still, you found fault with, not the Christian mob, but the 'unity-breaker' who dared say 'Happy Hannukah.'

I find it curious you speak on this topic now, Mr. 'American Mind.'

Doesn't that break your 'Unity?'

Or has the topic shifted away from that simple human experience?

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

ANONYMOUS

Good post, good question, good assertion.

1 Your good QUESTION. How do I know that sentient consciousness within our human experiencing is derivative from a primordial-eternal Consciousness, on the Creator/creature model? To answer, I'd have to know what you mean by "know"? If you define "know" narrowly, as within the scientific confines of the verifiable/falsifiable, the answer is nobody can know what the Bible affirms as the Creator/creature relationship (e.g., Genesis 1 & Romans 1). How sad that some claim to live & judge within "science"-as-epistemology! A cure for this fundamentalist-materialist-rationalism could be Montagu's WAYS OF KNOWING.

2 Your good ASSERTION: science will survive any religions failing to come to functional terms with it. Secularists try to suppress it, both most of the early (& some later) advances in science were made by Bible-believers. As a contemporary, try John Polkinghorne.

3 Far from "sidestepping quantum mechanics," I rejoice in its good fit with biblical religion.

4 You reveal your religion in the phrase "true monism." In the Abrahamic religions (Judaism/Christianity/Islam) monism (i.e., reality as One) as monotheism preceded creation: the creation narrative is dualistic. Descartes, a father of modern science, had a useful straddle: only God is really real (a monism of "substantia"), but creation is relatively real (a dualism of substance/accidents).

5 You are correct that for the mystic, "knowledge replaces faith." That is because faith is always dialectical to both reason & doubt, two consciousness-dimensions lost in the mystical experience. The humble mystic acknowledges that mystical knowledge is in dialectical relationship with other forms of knowledge.

6 You seem to believe that the West is inferior to the East in mystical experience/knowledge. Not so. See Otto's MYSTICISM EAST AND WEST.

PAGANPLACE

1 Rightly, you've nailed a super-sin, the sin of identifying God's will/feelings/ideas with one's own. That's the ultimate egocentricity & blasphemy: "my God & I" reduced to "I am God." Morally, this always amounts to demonic evil at the personal & societal levels. We don't need the likes of Sam Harris & Chris Hitchens to tell us how evil religion can be: we need to inform them, for the sake of their reasoning as well as their souls, how good religion can be.

2 No, I did not "defend" the mob "for beating a Jew" I called a party-pooper. The Jew's counter-comment threw cold water on the seasonal merrymaking of many in his hearing, & some expression of irritation might not have been out of order. But wrath-become-violence was way over the hill, way out of bounds of decent human behavior.

A normal & necessary negative sustainer of custom, any custom, is the society's expression of disfavor toward violators. That ranges all the way from private whispering to, to killing, the offender. A doctoral thesis of mine analyzed 23 motivators for getting & staying in line, the last being the social sanction "What would the neighbors think?" My use of that Jew-beating incident was more sociological than religious. The religious aspect was in the context, viz. the discussion of public displays of religious festivals.

3 Your reference to people who "don't obey" me makes only non-sense to me. I like to be heard for what help I might be, not as a command-giver.

Maybe the mob you defended for beating a Jew in the 'subway' (cause you called him a 'party-pooper' while trying to call people who don't obey you the same) ...maybe you figure they were having 'OK wrath in the service of God... Like the saints...'

Whereas of course anyone that gets cheesed off at such actions and assertions must be being 'egocentric.'

Right?

Christian?

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JANUARY 12, 2008 3:30 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"PAGANPLACE

"Right you are that "wrath" (Lat. "ira") was one of the medieval "seven deadly sins." But note that all seven are egocentric: all the actions are "interested" in the sense of promoting not the love of God or the general welfare but one's own narcissism (secularly called sick rather than sinful)."

So, you're saying that \*your\* wrath just happens to be 'God's wrath?'

Isn't that another one of those 'sins?'

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JANUARY 12, 2008 3:21 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Dr. Elliot -

In your response to Mad Love you allowed as to how consciousness is the ultimate reality but is 'derivative' from the consciousness of the Creator. We should probably further define consciousness as 'awareness' otherwise it becomes unconsciousness. The differences herein could be significant, but back to your observation: and how exactly do you know that consciousness is derivative? Or that it has an origination point at all?? Or that it is actually housed within rather than without??

I've seen pretty convincing arguments that consciousness is not an 'internal' phenomenon at all (much less being epiphenomenal to organic brain functions). In this view, consciousness is something we simply tap into by virtue of our status as a sentient being. We don't own it or possess it - we use it.

Your point would be based your vaunted biblical dualism rather than true monism, would it not??

In your schema we have the self-existing Creator that has made the decision (an act of will) to distribute It's (?) essence throughout the Creation as individual life forms (we must reasonably assume this include all sentient life). But still, this is not the Brahman of the Vedanta (there is One & Thou art That) - this is an ever-separate Creator, eternally standing apart from the Creation.

My question again - how do you know?? Little is known of consciousness or pure awareness, although Buddhists and Hindus probably have a big headstart on the West because of their mystical/esoteric traditions. Christianity even has a (well concealed) mystical tradition. In the life of the mystic, knowledge replaces faith.

Finally, if we don't find a way to tie religion to the discoveries of science, religion will eventually cease to have any validity. I wouldn't be so quick to side step quantum mechanics - it may one day confirm what mystics throughout the ages have been telling us -

There is One and Thou Art That.....

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | JANUARY 12, 2008 10:02 AM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN – 1.11.08

ANONYMOUS

You wish to exclude a particular “On Faith” commenter, I wish to exclude none. / The only Americans I have ever called “unAmerican” were the members of the HR Un-American Activities Committee, who came down on me hard. (Calling an OPINION unAmerican is far different from calling a fellow-citizen, a PERSON, unAmerican.)

MAD LOVE (DOGMATIC SECULARIST)

Your doctrine that “consciousness is singular” is Hindu-Buddhist (Indic religion), not secularist. Further, my use of “minds” is cultural, not ontological: ways of seeing, not ways of being.

DANIEL R. SHARP

I take your point. Did you click on “Report Offensive Comments” in regard to the commenter you are objecting to?

JIHADIST

I thank you, a Malaysian Muslim banker, & admire you for your earnest efforts to understand me. / Today I bought three copies of a book by another Muslim banker, Nobel-Laureate Muhammad Yunus, Founder of the Grameen (micro-finance, social-business) Bank. / How we need to love & labor across all human divides! / You two bring to my mind two lines of a favorite Christian hymn: “By deeds of love and mercy / the heavenly kingdom comes.”

MAD LOVE

Of course “consciousness [is] at the root of everything.” But in biblical religion, that root consciousness is of the Creator, from whom distributive consciousness in the creation is derivative.

DANIEL IN THE LION’S DEN

Your description of sacred/secular is idiosyncratic. The “non-secular” are a wider category than those who “fill up their days and the majority of their time with religious matters.” All except reclusive celibates are “secular” in the sense of participating in the “saecula,” the world. Are you not confusing “secular” with “secularist,” the later meaning participating ONLY in the world (not in religion)? / On my use of “we Christians believe,” I never would say “all of us Christians believe”: you are correct that the opinion-range of those identifying themselves as Christians is wide. I could say “almost all of us Christians believe,” but that would be unnecessarily verbose & clumsy. But if you look closely, you will find that I never say “we Christians believe” except in reference to something in the core of Christian belief, so much so that it’s not probable that anyone denying it would self-describe as Christian. Thank you for your question.

REININ

You criticize Abraham Joshua Heschel for his rage at the mention of Nixon in what you call “MERE conversation.” Your notion that he was “hardly in control of himself” is fatuous, a wild misfit of his life-story. He was no zombie, but had a wide emotional-range (as did the biblical prophets, of whose mind & message he was a world-master). The inability or unwillingness to rage against what cripples human minds & hopes is itself a cause of human misery.

ANAVICTORIA

In light of the fact that I described Heschel as a participant in four “minds,” how can you imply that I speak of “minds” as simple, “homogeneous”? “Minds” are as complex as you well describe them.

MARYADRIANNA

Since you spell God “G-d,” I assume you are an Orthodox Jew. You well describe the history & present situation of you Jews (all who self-identify as Jews). As an orthodox Christian, I see our religions, yours & mine, as in

dialectical religion with each other, so I am pro-Jewish (even to the extent of teaching a continuing ed course to Orthodox/Conservative/Reform rabbis, using the Hebrew text). As for “replacement theology,” I believe that eventually “every knee shall bend” to Jesus (Phil.2.10)—but that doesn’t mean that Jews should bow to Christians!

One correction: Evidence of the Jews in Egypt is several centuries prior to your reference. A Hebrew slave in an upper-Egypt turquoise mine wrote in ancient Hebrew script, “God, deliver me.”

#### MAD LOVE

Think about this: It was the Western mind that “doesn’t work properly any more” (because of religion) that came up with quantum physics, not your touted Eastern mind.

#### DANIEL IN THE LION’S DEN

My heart is with your heart in sadness at “so much sickness and disease in the world.” As problems need to be broken down into small, manageable pieces, the suffering need to be helped one-to-one as well as by wider agencies. (Micro-capitalism is only one of the emergent designs in the service of intelligent compassion.) But as to whether “On Faith” is “a failure,” it’s hard to know: what criteria for telling? But it’s not zero-sum: closing “On Faith” would not assure that the energies put into it would be transferred to humanitarian relief/rehab/renewal.

#### PAGANPLACE

Right you are that “wrath” (Lat. “ira”) was one of the medieval “seven deadly sins.” But note that all seven are egocentric: all the actions are “interested” in the sense of promoting not the love of God or the general welfare but one’s own narcissism (secularly called sick rather than sinful).

Two other uses of “wrath”: (1) God’s, in the service of a love steadily intending the good of his creatures; (2) The saints’ (including Heschel’s), in the service of truth & justice.

#### TERRA GAZELLE

Amen!

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | JANUARY 12, 2008 12:16 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Dr. Elliot,

"Terra- Do you find this cultural analysis sufficient for protection against Warlocks?"

A Warlock is an old Scottish word that means betrayer. It is someone that betrays his own people.

I kind of see Bush as a warlock.

I think Honor is a good ward against all Fundamentalism...as is Humility, Strength, and Justice.

terra

POSTED BY: TERRA GAZELLE | JANUARY 11, 2008 4:14 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Though I can only think of the end of the movie 'Serenity,' Reverend. Very good sci fi.

\*our hero putting up video images of a corporate nightmare.\* " I'm gonna show you a world without 'sin'."

And when asked what his sin was, he was like, 'I'm gonna have to go with wrath.' :)

Bet you'd like it, that aside. :)

Might give you second thoughts about your Christian Nation, but that's the least you owe us. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JANUARY 10, 2008 11:11 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"3.....Rage is the emotional form INTEGRITY takes at the thought of fraud, as "wrath" is the form God's love takes in the presence of sin."

Funny, Reverend, I was always taught 'wrath' was one of the 'seven deadly sins' ....at least when it came to speaking up against holy fraud. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | JANUARY 10, 2008 11:07 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Dear Dr. Elliott

Look at the comments on this thread. "On Faith" doesn't seem to be thriving. There is so much sickness and disease in the world; I do not know how to help such people; I wish I did. It's a tuff problem. I wish someone at WaPo could figure it out. Maybe the only solution is to give up on "On Faith" and call it a good try, but basically, a failure.

POSTED BY: DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN | JANUARY 10, 2008 2:12 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Can you comment on apartheid israel's ethnic cleansing of palestinians.

POSTED BY: APARTHEID | JANUARY 10, 2008 8:08 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Anonymous-

That sounds like another good one. Contrasted to the same old Religion vs. Science debate that's been going on since the Dark Ages it's really nice to see where the two can complement each other beautifully as with Eastern thought and quantum physics.

I suspect it has something to do with the Eastern impulse to study the mind vs. the Western religious impulse to tangle the mind up into knots to the point that it doesn't work properly anymore.

POSTED BY: MAD LOVE | JANUARY 10, 2008 1:01 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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The Jewish People have survived for over three thousand years.

(The earliest reference to Israel is from the funerary stela of the Egyptian Pharaoh Merneptah, now in the Cairo Museum, which dates to 1209 B.C.)

All other empires that persecuted the Jews, from the Arameans to the Moabites, from the Babylonians to the Assyrians to the Selucids, from the Romans to the Spanish Inquisition to the Nazis to Communists, have fallen.

Yet the Jewish People are still here.

Yes, they are very tiny: there are only 13.2 million Jews in the world, compared to 1.7 Billion Muslims and 2 Billion Christians. However, I believe they will continue to survive.

Today, every Jew by birth that is alive is not only a descendent of the people of ancient Israel, but a descendent of those who survived great persecution and pressure to convert over countless centuries.

This is a great privilege and an incredible legacy.

Yet, today many Jews are ignorant of their own heritage, from the Hebrew Bible itself to the archaeology of Israel, from the Dead Sea Scrolls to the great works of the Rabbinic Era.

Thus, in this country and others they are intermarrying, turning away from the sacrifices of their ancestors and casting out this heritage.

Pressured by societies that still hold true to the ideas of Replacement Theology--the theology that the Church, or the Islamic Ummah, has replaced the Jewish People as G-d's chosen--they often want to assimilate into the mainstream.

Without the knowledge of their history, the Jewish People cannot understand the religious roots of Replacement Theology and how it evolved into anti-Judaism and then anti-Semitism.

They forget that Jesus was a Jew, as was Mary, Joseph, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, all the Disciples, Isaiah, Jeremiah, all the Prophets, Jacob, Isaac, and Moses...

Thus, they simply, and tragically, internalize it.

So, will the Jewish People disappear over time?

No, it cannot be a coincidence that after 2,000 years of Exile the Jews have returned to their ancestral homeland to build a state, as it was predicted by Jeremiah and Isaiah.

Here is the future of the Jewish People, and as they have done for three millenium, they will--however small their numbers become--continue to survive and continue their ancestral legacy.

POSTED BY: MARYADRIANNA | JANUARY 9, 2008 11:35 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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POSTED BY: MARYADRIANNA | JANUARY 9, 2008 11:11 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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You talk about "minds", in terms of Christian mind, American mind and Jewish mind, as if they are homogeneous groups. There is no one mind set that would define any of these groups. Within each group are vastly contrasting and conflicting views as to how even single issues are understood. Furthermore what depicts the mind of any nation is far more complex and includes historical experiences as well as the interaction with people of other nations and the interaction between groups of people within the nation in question. The real frontier where mind is concerned is its non-physical nature and how that underpins material nature. And at present science and in particular the medical profession is validating a mindset that is geared to greater profits and never mind the suffering of millions, by denying the insightfulness that arises out of relationship. And how much influence that has with respect to disease-causing stress. What about that mindset, the "Medical Mind" and the "Never Mind Big Business is all that counts?"

POSTED BY: ANNAVICTORIA | JANUARY 9, 2008 9:47 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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I cannot Tell you; can hardly THINK about

HOW I admire someone who reacts with such rage in a MERE conversation that he has to sit his martini down. On the piano.

Hardly in control of himself. Such rage in thinking of things. What a winner. Should be in charge of us all. His ideas transcendent.

Is this a joke?

What gabbling garbage.

POSTED BY: REININ | JANUARY 9, 2008 7:48 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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HOW I admire someone who reacts with such rage in a mere conversation that he has to sit his martini down. On the piano.

Hardly in control of himself. Such rage in thinking of things he cannot control himself.

Lovely.

What gabbeling garbage.

POSTED BY: REININ | JANUARY 9, 2008 7:44 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Thank you Rev. Elliot for your touching tribute to Rabbi Heschel. It is truly moving.

POSTED BY: SARI | JANUARY 9, 2008 6:57 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Mad Love -

Another book much akin to that one  
is 'The Quantum & the Lotus' by Ricard and Thuan.

An exchange between a research biologist turned Buddhist monk and a Vietnamese Buddhist turned astro-physicist - excellant back and forth...

Ricard as the monk clarifies Buddhist thinking & much is made of similarites/differences with modern cosmology and the findings of quantum physics as it defines the final frontier to understanding our 'material' reality....highly recommended if you haven't seen it yet.

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | JANUARY 9, 2008 1:58 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Dear Dr Willis

It bothers me when you use the phrase, "we Christians believe..." I am guessing that when you say that, you are addressing people who regard themselves as non-Christians. But what are we other Christians supposed to do, who do not believe as you do? I think what you mean is, "according to standard Christian theology, which Christians are supposed to believe..."

How can you speak for everyone, when there are many conflicting and diverging beliefs? Even on matters which are supposedly settled, there is flux, and the matters are not settled.

I would guess that many Christians, if not most Christians, do not understand the theology behind the holy trinity, but regard the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost as three separate and distinct individuals. I would guess that many Christians, if not most Christians, do not pray to the Christ of atonement, but they pray to the suffering Christ, and they wait, to see him again, someday in Heaven, not to thank him for his atonement for their sins, but to show him their wounds and scars, and compare them to his.

Theological canon ain't the same as belief, it just ain't.

POSTED BY: DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN | JANUARY 9, 2008 12:08 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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For Jihadist

I do not think there is any such movement as "militant atheism" or "dogmatic secularism."

An atheist is someone who does not believe in God. It is really a negative descriptor, like a cordless telephone is a phone without a cord.

I cannot possibly imagine what a "secularisst" would be, but a secular person is a person who does not put religons matters at the forefront of his life. It, also, is a negative descriptor, describing what a person is not, but not describing what a person is.

In America, almost everyone is secular. Even the very religious Right Wing Conservative Born Again Christian Evangelicals are basically secular people, because they participate and enjoy secular society which dominates their lives, and they only go to church on Sunday, say grace before meals, and maybe throw in a Bible study meeting in the middle of the week.

Only nuns, priests, the Amish, and certain very cerebral theologians might be considered non-secular people in America, because they fill up their days and the majority of their time with religious matters.

POSTED BY: DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN | JANUARY 9, 2008 11:18 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Anonymous- Thanks, I think that book is already on my Amazon wishlist, I'll go ahead and bump it to the top. It seems as far down in to the rabbit hole as science is able to look they are still finding consciousness at the root of everything. But as you put it "How could it be otherwise??"

POSTED BY: MAD LOVE | JANUARY 9, 2008 7:22 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Oy vey,

First, I pick up the term, "militant atheist" from Prof. Stevens-Arroyo.

Now, I pick up the term, "dogmatic secularist" from Dr. Willis E Elliot.

You got to love these two fellow believers of God. Both came out with terms better than what some "militant atheists" and "dogmatic secularists" hurled at believers, including "morons", "idiots", "delusionals".

I would have called some atheists who posted breathtakingly (fill in the blank yourself) posts "deluidiots". :)

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Dr. Willis E Elliot,

Thanks for this essay. It is starting to clarify for me what you mean by "The American mind".

Thank you and best regards  
"J"

POSTED BY: JIHADIST | JANUARY 8, 2008 8:54 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Mad Love -

Quite right. There is nothing but  
Consciousness as the Buddhists have been telling us for 2500 years. How could it be otherwise??

A very readable synopsis of this topic from a scientific point of view can be found in 'The Self-Aware Universe' by quantum physicist Amit Goswami.

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | JANUARY 8, 2008 2:51 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Dear Dr. Elliott,

Since you made such a major mistake posting your comments to the wrong thread, I thought I would reply here. And I notice, that this is is a major mistake, which you would correct if you could, so, I do understand that you

are probably not allowed to alter, censor, or filter the comments on your own thread. And now that is clear to me, and I understand why that must be so.

However you commented on my wanting to have an exclusion list that would include Canyon Shearer. That is not entirely correct. I am opposed to government censorship for political purposes. But filtering comments here is not government censorship, and watching out for a person who is profoundly disturbed is not political censorship.

Yes Dr. Elliott, here we are still talking about the spectacle of Canyon Shearer, on a different topic, on a different thread, all because his one and only purpose is to be disruptive of the conversation the rest of us would like to have.

I find him to be so disturbing because he is the kind of person who would pick up a gun and start shooting people, like at VA-Tech. And then afterwards, everyone says, well, we knew there was something wrong with him, but we just thought that if we ignored his disruptions and his symptoms, then maybe someone else would give him the help that he needed.

I don't want to exclude him because his opinions are different than mine. He actually doesn't have opinions. He has symptoms of profound disturbance, which, of course, I cannot really understand. Over 350 of the comments on Leith Anderson's thread were not about Leith Anderson's essay, they were all about Canyon Shearer delusionally wishing all his critics to Hell, and their miffed replies to him.

I understand that there is nothing that you, as a contributing panelest, can do about disruptive commenters, that it is probably forbidden on your part to meddle in such things, that it would probably be considered a conflict-of-interest to want to restrain an out-of-control commenter. But these are my opinions about a very unpleasant experience that I had on this Washginton Post On Faith Forum

POSTED BY: DANIEL R SHARP | JANUARY 8, 2008 12:50 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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All this talk of minds...

If we fully realized that consciousness is singular we would see that this singularity is what we call God, and that all the schizmatic waring of the different collective 'minds' is nothing more than our own ignorance of the big picture, and in fact the thing that most keeps us from understanding 'God'.

Schism is the enemy of unity.

POSTED BY: MAD LOVE (DOGMATIC SECULARIST) | JANUARY 8, 2008 12:29 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Hail Brother Elliott

A lovely and thoughtful column, and a touching remembrance of A Herschel.

William and I salute you.

POSTED BY: HENRY JAMES | JANUARY 7, 2008 10:31 PM  
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you'd think more of someone if they didn't have an exclusion list, and yet you call people 'haters' and 'unAmerican'. Nice.

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | JANUARY 7, 2008 10:19 PM  
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Error! The above comment was meant for my immediately previous entry, "The Almighty and the Mighty."

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Sex & religion being humanity's most powerful drives, I wouldn't want a president with a low sex-drive or a low religion-drive: either low would impede understanding of humanity & thus of politics. Of course the higher the drive, the easier to abuse: the greater a vehicle's speed, the higher the risk of accident. Just think of all the human wreckage from religion & sex!

None of you commented on my column's adducing Madeleine Albright's "The Mighty and the Almighty" as indicating low attention to religion as a deficit in political office. Indeed, most of the 18 posts exhibit the defect.

The political cost of this defect is detailed in Douglas Johnston's "Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik" (2003). Communism repressed religion, which (since the close of the Cold War) has been the dominant force in world-politics. Religion is "Track II" diplomacy, bypassing other political motivators. Johnston has a long list of U.S. foreign-policy failures due to not factoring religion into the analyses—blinded, he says (p.4), by "dogmatic secularism and economic determinism."

Most of you 18 posters qualify as "dogmatic secularists." I hope none of you is in the State Department!

HENRY JAMES

Good point. "Integrity" should not be confused with Forrest Gump innocence. A game played in the interest of truth or love is not the same as a game played for the maintenance or advancement of self-interested power.

LEPI...

Right, "one need not subscribe to belief in a deity to have integrity."

In buying a baseball team, what Bush had in mind was NAME RECOGNITION, not a demonstration of managerial competence. To count against him in campaigning for office, his mismanagement of his team would have had to be what it wasn't, viz. calamitous.

There's a difference between the arrogance of announcing God's will & the humility of doing God's will according to one's lights with an open mind for "more light" (as Pastor John Robinson said to his Mayflower congregation just before the 1620 sailing). / Your image of revelation is FOG we can't see God's will through; I'll go with MIST, a modest possibility over against a confident impossibility. In 1 Corinthians 13:12, the image is an imperfect REFLECTION in a metal mirror.

No, it doesn't "depend on how you define Creator," as though there were options. What "Creator" meant to America's founders is a matter of historical research, not free speculation. My shorthand for it (in my definition of the [originating] American mind) is Bible+Enlightenment.

Right, "no religious test" for the office of president. But the originating "American worldview" is life "under God" with "integrity and humility as divinely given," as a "prophylactic against the abuse of power." An atheist might be parasitic on the values of integrity and humility, lacking the historic American theological grounding of these virtues—and might make a good president despite this ontological thinness.

TERRA

Good quote from Aristotle. Your high-word, "honor," in our American tradition is informed by four peoples—the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans, the Christians. You might call it the Four-Square American Mind. To drop any one of these is like losing a stool-leg. Further, each acts as a check against the others' running off into each its own fundamentalism. (And each in its own way stands over against Islamic fundamentalism.) Do you find this cultural analysis sufficient for protection against Warlocks?

ATHENA

I like your list of qualifications for the presidency. But the “pledge to uphold the Constitution” is taken with an “oath of office,” which I prefer to have with heart & hand on the Bible.

BGONE

I want the government-fox to stay out of my religion-henhouse, & vice versa. / Your statement that I know the Bible is a hoax is so benighted as to beggar comment.

GABY

Your POV is that “God has nothing to do with it” & “under God” should be left out. Understood, & disagreed with. On the ground, in American politics, some are making the case that “God” has more to do with it than ever before.

DANIEL IN THE LION’S DEN

“Evangelical” is currently, in presidential-primary politics, an explosive word. I would be surprised if “Mr. Evangelical,” currently Leith Anderson, got little attention. / Canyon Shearer represents evangelicalism at its least informed & most dogmatic (no accident: the two are natural partners). I’m surprised you’d want him on you exclusion list; he’s at least a good Shmoo to the likes of you. And I’d think more of you if you didn’t have an exclusion list.

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | JANUARY 7, 2008 6:19 PM  
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