

CONTEXT AND CONSTRAINT: EVOLUTION'S GIFT TO THE DISCUSSION OF RELIGION WITHOUT BELIEF

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I. AN APPETIZER, AND WHY IT IS NOT THE MAIN COURSE

There are many ways of approaching the topic of this workshop. One would involve considering theories of nondoxastic faith of the sort that have recently been developed by Louis Pojman (1986), William Alston (1996), Robert Audi (2008), Daniel Howard-Snyder (2013), and myself (2005, 2013), among others. These theories suggest ways of having propositional faith (faith-that) without belief of the same proposition, where belief – that is, the believing attitude – is regarded as importantly involuntary, a disposition, as Alston puts it, that includes among its manifestations “being *struck by* (a sense of) how things are rather than deciding how they are” (1996, p. 5). Most of the authors mentioned also recognize other forms of faith and wish to show how, in the religious case, nondoxastic propositional faith may be blended with them in an authentic and serious religious life, a life still informed by transcendent goals of the realist kind pursued by religious people with a doxastic faith. And so Pojman speaks of a way of having faith-that – faith that there is a salvific divine reality, for example – that could enliven a life and is nourished by *hope* rather than belief. Alston appropriates L. Jonathan Cohen’s concept of *acceptance*. Accepting that there is a salvific divine reality, he would say, is something one might do even if one doesn’t believe that proposition. Audi, in good Audi style, distinguishes no fewer than seven faith locutions, arguing that most of them can be analyzed without invoking belief; one might, for example, have faith that there is a salvific divine reality by *trusting* that this is so even when one doesn’t believe this. Howard-Snyder would say that one can *assume* that there is a salvific divine reality without believing this, and has developed an analysis of propositional faith that incorporates this idea. I have spoken of how the *imagination* might come into play – one can hold before one’s mind the picture of a state of affairs in which there is a salvific divine reality, and show faith that this is so by forming the intention to think accordingly as a matter of policy, and following through on this intention. If one also develops a disposition to act accordingly, not just mentally but in other ways too, one may moreover be said to be showing faith *in* a salvific divine reality. In my opinion – I cannot speak for the others – at least some of these ways of having faith are compatible with each other; they might even be deployed at different times in the same life.

Of course that is no more than an appetizer for a proper consideration of such theories of nondoxastic faith. I will explain in a moment why I want swiftly to broaden the discussion instead of going further into that aspect of it, but before doing so let me briefly explain why, at least on the face of it, such theories are to be distinguished from *fictionalism*, or at any rate from forms of fictionalism that most obviously earn the label (Le Poidevin, 2016).

First, although one can have faith without belief, according to the authors I have mentioned it would be hard, if not psychologically impossible, to join it to *disbelief*: the one who has nondoxastic faith that *p* or any associated sort of faith may not believe that *p*, but she still thinks there’s some significant *chance* that *p*, taken literally, and does not flat out disbelieve it.

(Notice that such a faith perhaps most fully earns the label ‘*nondoxastic*.’) Second, and relatedly, I think, an important component of nondoxastic faith that p according to these authors is a positive evaluation of the literal truth of p: one cannot have faith that p without thinking it would be a good thing for p to be true in the ordinary sense. These two points, in the religious case, to my mind reflect the even more fundamental point I have already alluded to, which I assume no religious fictionalism can accommodate: namely, that *religious* nondoxastic faith of the sorts these authors describe is moved by goals that cannot be achieved unless some transcendent reality of the sort to which *doxastic* faith typically is directed actually exists. The way in which nondoxastic faith pulls back from belief does not involve pulling back from truth as the believer sees it.

I will come back to religious fictionalism later, as well as to a set of views I gather under the label ‘religious ineffabilism,’ since the main part of what I have to say will in the end be relevant, not just to religion without belief understood as religion without a believing attitude toward central religious propositions, but also to religion without belief understood as religion without a propositional representation of the divine to which a believing attitude might be directed. This ‘main part’ of what I want to say concerns, in part, how we can *rationally motivate* the discussion of such things. Talk of religion without belief may, at first sight, appear *unmotivated* or even badly motivated – perhaps, for example, it will be tempting to think of talk of fictionalism or nondoxasticism or ineffabilism as reflecting no more than a kind of *theological escapism*: critics of religion such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett have been known to suggest such a view. And there isn’t much point in having a discussion thus criticized if we have no way of answering the criticisms.

So can we rationally motivate the discussion? I think we clearly can, and in a way that critics like Dawkins and Dennett, who purport to represent an evolutionary perspective, really should have thought of on their own. We can find a context or home for such discussion precisely in broadly evolutionary considerations (and I emphasize ‘broadly’; not just features of life on our planet reflecting biological evolution but also various features of cultural evolution will come into play). Now much of this wider and deeper intellectual home for our discussions is, as it were, underground and invisible, and we shall need to do some spadework to expose it fully. Exposing it, to my mind, is the really interesting work, which justifies my abbreviated attention to theories of nondoxastic faith. For when we become acquainted with what lies, as it were, lower down, at a more fundamental level of thought, and with its contours and composition, we will see what – despite initial appearances – makes the exploration of religion without belief perfectly natural and appropriate. (Perhaps other things make it natural and appropriate too, though I suspect that, if so, they will be less fundamental.) Indeed, then we can learn something about (i) why there is a *place* for theories of religion without belief and about (ii) how we should *evaluate* such theories of religion without belief as have been advanced and also about (iii) how various results of such discussion might be *integrated, unified, harmonized*.

II. RELIGIOUS EVOLUTION AND EVOLUTIONARY RELIGION

So, to revert to my original metaphor, let’s move from appetizer to main course. One way to get started is to ask this question: *could a movement away from belief be part of the evolution of religion, and justified in relation thereto?* Making sense of this would clearly be a way of

seeing how, despite initial appearances, talk of religion without belief is perfectly natural and appropriate. I hasten to add that not just any evolutionary development will do. Religion might continue indefinitely to evolve without ever becoming *self-consciously* evolutionary, and so it might never cease to feature confident beliefs. And it might become self-consciously evolutionary without seeing that the human immaturity beyond which we should seek to evolve appears not just in the distant past but *also in the present*, with the result, again, that confident believing continues. The particular shift we need and can justify, so I shall argue, is a shift to the exploration of forms of religion that avoid both these shortcomings. (I should point out, as I enter this topic, that my own thinking continues to evolve, and so not everything I say here is to be found in my recent book on *Evolutionary Religion* (Schellenberg 2013).)

I have mentioned human immaturity, and that is indeed going to be my central emphasis. In the abstract, and roughly speaking, we can think of human immaturity in terms of a less than high degree of something in human life that it would be desirable to have in a higher degree, and that may come to exist in a higher degree given the right natural developments, including human efforts. But I want to get concrete pretty quickly. Let's start at the smaller scale.

Just by scanning the newspaper or consulting the comments sections of a few internet blogs, you'll notice *moral* immaturity. But there's also *intellectual* immaturity. (Of course these two are causally interrelated.) What I mean by small scale intellectual immaturity are the features of human life, generally resulting from biological or cultural evolution, that most of us would be inclined to call *limits* on our intellectual explorations, limits on inquiry. Ironically it's one of these limits that we don't think of how the limits can be converted into immaturities – *limaturities*, as I sometimes call them. And so we may complain that our brains give us less intellectual firepower than we may need to solve certain problems in science and philosophy, or that we have less participation from women than would be desirable, or less control over cognitive biases and ideologies, or less knowledge of how to resolve fundamental disagreements, and so on. These are intellectual limits. But every 'less' here could be turned into 'more' over time. Seeing this is centrally involved in converting such limits into small scale immaturities.

Now let's move up a level, as we almost never do, to issues about what I call *large scale* human maturity or immaturity involving big general facts about the species or its preoccupations rather than small fact slices or strands like those I just mentioned. One clear large scale immaturity, revealed by the evolutionary sciences, is *temporal*: given a deep time perspective, we'd have to say that our few thousand years of cultural development are just a drop in the bucket, and may be only the beginning if we even get close to the average lifespan of a mammal species – about a million years. And wouldn't it be a very good thing, from many perspectives, if we got a lot more time? We generally don't apply in this way what we've learned about scientific timescales, in part because of how profound is the impact on our behaviour even in inquiry of *human* timescales – the timescales of everyday life according to which a few thousand years is of course an enormously long time!

What about large scale *intellectual* maturity or immaturity? Construing this broadly, as one must, in terms of how close our species has come to complete and full overall knowledge and

understanding, two things beg to be noticed. One, that we have throughout the history of inquiry tended simply to presuppose that we are already in this sense intellectually mature, “almost there,” as the physicist David Deutsch puts it in a recent book – disapprovingly, it should be noted (Deutsch 2011, p. 444). And two, that there is just no good reason to believe this. Now you may be inclined to say: ‘Who knows how far we’ve got in our few thousand years?’ But that’s precisely the point I would emphasize: who knows? For all we do know, we still suffer from large scale intellectual immaturity. We can’t rule out that this is how things are – that our species is at present like a child rather than an adult, intellectually speaking. Because of the maturity presupposition and also the influence of human timescales, we have taken this possibility far less seriously than we should have. And, now, having spoken of the temporal, we can bring the temporal and intellectual together. For we can’t rule out that we are subject to an intellectual immaturity that is, as I shall put it, *temporally deep* – an immaturity that it would take a great deal longer than the few thousand years we’ve already had to grow out of. Indeed, we can draw upon the evident immaturities visible at the smaller scale to support such skepticism about large scale intellectual maturity – to support a condition of doubt or nonbelief about what is the case here. Evolutionary considerations both biological and cultural are united in their support of such maturity skepticism.

It’s important in this connection to remember how often humans have been mistaken on matters of scale and corrected by science. Think of past errors about the size of the distances between Earth and the stars, about the size of the galaxy, about the size of the universe itself. If our relevant impulses are shaped by the epistemic point of view, we will be willing to take seriously the idea that where the developmental and temporal ‘size’ or scale of intelligent inquiry is concerned, we are similarly mistaken.

Now, in ways not unlike those just mentioned, as I expect you’ll see, we can also support skepticism about other sorts of developmental maturity at the large scale, including *spiritual or religious* maturity. Does this bring us to the evolutionary view on religion I have in mind? Is the idea that we might suffer from a large scale religious immaturity that puts us close to the beginning of religious understanding, perhaps a religious immaturity that is temporally deep? Might we, so far, have only dipped our toes in an ocean of religious possibilities, with tens or hundreds of thousands of years of further development or more – perhaps *much* more – being needed before religious knowledge or understanding could possibly be achieved by Earthly beings? (Notice that we can agree on this without forming any opinion as to whether intelligent and spiritually sensitive Earthly life will survive past tomorrow.)

This is indeed an important and far too often overlooked idea. What it underwrites we might call *large scale religious maturity skepticism*: being in doubt or without a belief one way or the other as to whether large scale religious maturity has yet been achieved. Less cumbersome is the label ‘evolutionary religious skepticism,’ which accordingly I shall use. But evolutionary religious skepticism is only a first big step in the direction of my view. Taken by itself it might only lead us to imagine many new forms of religious belief following and superseding one another far into the future. But my view in fact suggests a way of avoiding *that* sort of evolutionary religion. It says not that we should become resigned to viewing religion thus, in evolutionary terms, from the outside, but that we should explore new ways for religion to view

itself in evolutionary terms *from the inside*, when, again, the idea of human immaturity is adequately taken into account – ways of viewing itself that would move religion to bend with evolutionary insights rather than resisting them and continuing to assume that we have already been raised to our full height, spiritually speaking, as a species.

The additional step needed here involves adding to our possible large scale religious immaturity our *evident* small scale religious and spiritual immaturities – for examples, consider only our tendencies toward violence, the common ignorance of religious traditions geographically or culturally distant from our own, and the absence of widespread agreement on any detailed religious formulation. And then it means asking whether there are any ways of being religious that would be appropriate *precisely given evolutionary religious skepticism and precisely for such multifacetedly immature beings as we still are*, ones that, perhaps due to our immaturity, we have so far overlooked. These would obviously be rather different ways of being religious than most or all of those on offer, which tend to presuppose intellectual and spiritual maturity, and in this difference, and in its rationale, we might find a way out of many problems. Given its fundamentality, let me repeat the question I just asked: are there any ways of being religious that would be appropriate precisely given evolutionary religious skepticism and precisely for such multifacetedly immature beings as we still are, ones that, perhaps due to our immaturity, we have so far overlooked?

I mean the term ‘evolutionary religion’ to name a type that is tokened by any instance of religiousness satisfying this description and so supplying an affirmative answer for what I have called the fundamental question. I do not mean to name my favourite candidate for that status, which, even if it were a successful candidate, might be no more than *one way* of realizing evolutionary religion. This candidate or that – whether mine or someone else’s – should in my view receive its own name, while the name ‘evolutionary religion’ should be reserved for the type of thing they seek to instantiate. Thus understood, evolutionary religion can be a subject of investigation that many address in diverse ways. We can even speak of the *quest* for evolutionary religion!

Now one thing we can do to prepare for that quest, even before discussing specific candidates, or so I suggest, is to identify certain *constraints* on our theorizing about evolutionary religion. (I first mentioned certain points of this kind in Chapter 5 of my book *Evolutionary Religion* (Schellenberg 2013), but my way of putting them now is somewhat different.) Constraint number one is just the basic idea set out earlier that defines evolutionary religion. The second constraint responds to the first’s temporal and evolutionary perspective, reminding us to keep the broader context for this in view. The third and fourth constraints result from some pretty obvious applications of the first two.

Evolutionary religion, so I suggest, will be

- (1) **temporally qualified**, identifying what is appropriate religiously with what is appropriate to our early and immature stage of development (Religious Stage Relativism);

- (2) **diachronic instead of synchronic**, situating our present stage in the context of processes and changes unfolding over vast periods of time taking us from the deep past into the far future (Religious Diachronism),
- (3) **cognitively modest**, finding, for the expression of religious intellectual commitment, attitudes and propositional contents reflecting due appreciation for the audacity of a young species engaging the most profound and controversial matters (Religious Intellectual Humility); and
- (4) **attentive to the evolutionary benefits of redesigned religion**, thinking about how religion itself might help us evolve toward ever greater maturity in all areas of human life, functioning as part of the solution to our many immaturities instead of as part of the problem (Religious Pragmatism).

These constraints help to expose how very naturally evolutionary religion could, in various ways, be religion without belief. *Any* evolutionary perspective on religion should bring with it this thought: that religion may *change* an enormous amount over the course of its career while not ceasing to be religion. And if now we integrate into our evolutionary perspective that religion is at an early and immature stage of its development on our planet (and, for all we know, in the universe), then it may occur to us that religious belief, which supposes that the truth about ultimate things has already been reached, goes too far: it could at any rate often be just the *wrong* attitude for someone with religious interests to adopt, an emphasis on which would simply reflect our immaturity rather than taking it into account. And the idea that there could be no *other* attitude that is the (or a) *right* attitude just flies in the face of evolutionary sensitivity. We should therefore be at least initially open to the loss of an emphasis on belief that would come with the search for evolutionary religion.

Of course the sort of religion that is dominant at any given time may generate deep emotions and fierce loyalties, and so there can today be resistance to religion without belief since religion *with* belief is all most people have ever known. This can be the case even if religion without belief makes perfect sense, especially within an evolutionary framework sensitive to our present immaturities. Ironically, religion without belief can seem inconceivable even to contemporary evolutionary critics of religion such as Dawkins and Dennett, who have a hard time applying a token/type distinction when it comes to religion; they're too distracted by a certain highly objectionable concrete *instance* of religion today, which stands in the way of the progress of science, to reach the level of abstraction an evolutionary perspective on religion really requires. When we reach that level, we'll see that what truly *is* inconceivable religiously can only be the loss of more general properties that can variously be instantiated at different times: what these are remains a matter for debate, but I would suggest that they at any rate include a fully general and positive life orientation shared with others and a home for our deepest and most expansive emotions and valuings. (It may be instructive here to compare 'religion without belief' with 'religion without values.')

Religious belief, and various related particulars of religion as we know it, are on this view quite contingent features of human religiousness that can be changed as we adapt to our

multifaceted immaturity. A useful thought experiment here is to consider what sort of thing might conceivably have come at the very beginning of human religiousness had we been aware of deep time and possessed of an evolutionary orientation from the start. We probably wouldn't have begun with much trust in apparent 'revelations' or with a clear, detailed picture of the divine and firm beliefs, even if we had had some hope of such things emerging further down the line. If now we see that in an important sense we are *still* at the start, should our reaction be any different?

III. PUTTING THE NEW EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE TO WORK

You can see, then, that in my view *the search for evolutionary religion rationally motivates the development of theories about religion without belief*, allowing this activity to emerge as the most natural and appropriate of preoccupations. But I made some other promises at the beginning, including this one: that once the deeper and wider perspective was unearthed we would also learn something relevant to the *evaluation* of such theories. Is this the case?

I want to spend most of the rest of my time showing how it is (though of course I won't be able to talk about all the theories that might be proposed here). As it turns out, with the constraints on *evolutionary religion* mentioned above, we also have, in effect, some new constraints for theorizing about *religion without belief*, which will help us see whether proposed theories are appropriate and (supposing they are) in what form they are appropriate.

Let's start with religious fictionalism. At least initially, we should accept a broad and disjunctive understanding of this position. I shall take as representing it any view in the literature according to which a life may gain enough guidance from religious propositions treated as fictions, somewhat like the literal falsehoods in a novel, to count as a religious life.

Notice first that Religious Diachronism and Religious Pragmatism provide some initial support for religious fictionalism: at an early immature stage in religion's development, even seemingly radical changes of the sort that a widespread adoption of a fictionalist approach to religion would represent could be quite normal and expectable. And if we are in various ways, including morally, immature, a fictionalist reconception of religion in the face of a realist collapse (should the latter occur), which would allow religious support for growing out of moral immaturities to continue, at least until religious fictions cease to have such a profound hold on us, might be greatly preferable to a wholesale rejection of religion.

But we now also have a basis for criticism of certain extant forms of religious fictionalism. Here Religious Intellectual Humility, as well as Religious Diachronism and Religious Stage Relativism, are particularly relevant. For it would be hard to embrace these parts of what we have discussed in connection with evolutionary religion while endorsing a perfectly *general* religious disbelief. These constraints indicate that it would be premature, inappropriate to our early and immature stage of development, for us to rule out the notion that some religious claim is literally true, especially when we consider that there may be religious claims that are not so much as formulable by beings such as ourselves. But then any wide religious fictionalism committed to the view that *all* religious claims are literally false is going to be problematic. And it will be problematic not just on evidential grounds but for reasons more purely axiological or

religious as well. At the beginning of this paper we saw how religious people are likely to think that it would be very good for at least some of the ideas of religion to be literally true. It would seem, then, that they will accept a wide or general fictionalist position only as a last resort. And given the evolutionary story we can tell, there is no reason to give up on religious realism yet. Far from it.

Might a more *moderate* form of religious fictionalism be developed to avoid such worries? Could we imagine a fictionalist saying only that *known* religious claims are literally false or that the claims of *the particular tradition in which she participates* are literally false and may be treated as fiction? One problem with this proposal is that fictionalists may accept their position because they accepted something like metaphysical naturalism first, which *entails* that *all* claims about realities beyond nature are false. Of course, the evolutionary perspective I am promoting is not very friendly to solid belief of ambitiously comprehensive claims like metaphysical naturalism, so perhaps we could imagine a fictionalist dropping naturalist belief and deploying fictionalism more moderately and discriminatingly. In this connection it is worth pointing out that none of the skeptical views to be associated with the evolutionary perspective I have developed requires us to refrain from *ever* endorsing the denial of a religious proposition. One may conclude that *some* religious claim could well be true while rationally having no qualms about denying whole reams of religious propositions that seem clearly false. I may, for example, think that there could be some transcendent religious reality while being pretty sure that there are no gods on Mount Olympus – or even pretty sure that traditional theism is false. So, should she accept the constraints on reasoning about religion without belief to be associated with the search for evolutionary religion, there may still remain many detailed religious propositions which the fictionalist will appropriately regard as literally false, and to which she can respond with a fictionalist attitude.

At least two problems remain. Can even a moderate and discriminating religious fictionalism, combined with openness to the literal truth of some religious proposition, be seen as facilitating the pursuit of distinctively *religious* purposes, as opposed to merely moral ones? And would even a fictionalist preoccupation with details of existing religions, because just as narrowly focused as traditional belief, be in tension with the radically exploratory impulse supported by Religious Stage Relativism, Religious Diachronism, and Religious Pragmatism? Here, of course, it might be mentioned that if different semantics are involved, then fictionalist reveries and realist explorations should be able to sit side by side (Le Poidevin 2016). But still there may be at least the appearance of tension. I will resist commenting on these problems until a bit later, when we will have more resources for dealing with them in relation to other stances.

So, for now, how about the stance of religious ineffabilism? I will accept a broad and disjunctive understanding of this position too: any view that speaks of a human incapacity to represent the divine in thought or language, and thus in belief, seeking to incorporate this perspective into the religious life, will belong. (It may be that some forms of Christian apophaticism should count as disjuncts, though I will leave this issue open, recognizing that there are subtle differences among the views on offer in this neighborhood (Coakley 2009, n. 3)). If any such view were true and adequately supported, then on what might seem the most important and

central of religious issues, the nature of the divine, rational religion would be left without belief.

Now, once again, the perspective I am offering provides initial support. If evolutionary religious skepticism (and with it Religious Intellectual Humility) is right and we might be close to the beginning of religious understanding, and should accept propositional contents for religious claims to match, then the detailed ambitious content that any religious ineffabilism will oppose must naturally appear problematic. So there is a certain alignment here. But, much as with religious fictionalism, we also get some help deciding *what sort* of ineffabilism should be accepted, if any is, and in particular a reason to look askance on any very general and temporally unqualified ineffabilism. It would not be at all surprising, given that we are still at an early and immature stage of intellectual and moral and spiritual development, were any ultimate divine reality to be – apart from the slim predicates enabling us to speak of it as such and perhaps to identify some of the ultimacies involved – entirely beyond our present capacity to represent in thought or language or belief. But the word ‘present’ is critical here. If it is vastly premature to rule out the existence of some real transcendent divine reality, it is also vastly premature to say, of any such reality, that it must *forever* be thus ineffable to us or, more generally, to the minds of finite beings. What could justify such a claim?

John Hick (1989) famously appealed to Kant for support. But there are equally famous difficulties for such a move (Plantinga 2000). Perhaps it will be said that practices such as contemplative prayer, which leave one with the strong sense that the divine is beyond naming, or consistent naming, might have a bearing here (Coakley 2009). I can see how such practices might tell us something about how at our *present stage* of development we are related to the divine, if such there be, but it seems problematic to say more than this unless we are willing to commit to the view that whenever a divine reality becomes known to finite beings, it is by means no different and no more powerful than those we have at present – that our present prayer practices and other, related religious practices and experiences in some sense speak for all time. And this appears ruled out by Religious Intellectual Humility. Perhaps surprisingly, the well known emphasis in religion on *mystery* is or can be surprisingly hubristic if it resists evolution. From a sensitive but rational perspective, informed by evolution, it may seem that there is nothing *intrinsically* wrong with a fuller understanding of the divine or a propositional representation of the divine nature, even if we have nothing like the wherewithal to produce one yet, and may never have. The crassness of many existing attempts to speak of the divine might of course leave one cold, but much as I noted before with reference to Dawkins and Dennett, we should beware of lumping the relevant type (in this case: a characterization of the divine) in with available tokens.

Another way of making this sort of point (or one like it) emerges when we consider that although the unqualified ineffabilist forswears religious beliefs about the nature of the divine, *she still has a belief about the divine* which is arguably a religious belief, a belief that, in a broad sense, purports to deliver a truth that would have to be called a central truth of religion. This is of course the belief that the nature of the divine cannot be represented propositionally. And this belief would be ruled out as inappropriate by an even *wider* religious ineffabilism willing to say that we are not yet able to represent propositionally *the central truths of religion*, including

such as would tell us whether unqualified religious ineffabilism is true. Now it seems to me that evolutionary religious skepticism might leave us in doubt as to whether such a wider religious ineffabilism is false, and that Religious Stage Relativism would prevent those who adopt a religious form of life from resisting such doubt. But then again we have a reason not to accept an unqualified religious ineffabilism.

Perhaps, however, the notion of an unqualified religious ineffabilism I have been working with relies on a caricature. Within a religious frame of reference, the ineffabilist can be seen as seeking to preserve the *purity* of the divine and to make it more likely that religious aspirants will see the object of their quest as it really is instead of being distracted by some unworthy representation. Such an ineffabilism may see itself as opening a more reliable if demanding path to knowledge of an unsurpassably great divine reality rather than declaring that there is no such path. And, by the same token, such an ineffabilism might be expected to resonate with the ideas that give us evolutionary religion, which in a new way develop the idea that the path may be long and hard and in a new way are true to the sense that any divine reality would be wondrous beyond words.

I return, finally, to the way of theorizing about religion without belief briefly discussed at the beginning of this paper, the one that emphasizes nondoxastic faith while keeping religious purposes broadly similar to those animating doxastic faith. You may be expecting me in some way to favour this way of having religion without belief over the others I have just discussed. But you will recall that my tendency *within* the discussion of theories of nondoxastic faith was quite irenic. Who knows how irenic I will be?! Well, if you were listening at the start, you will already realize that, in my view, the proposed parameters for our discussion permit us to be very irenic indeed. I want now, in conclusion, to show this and to explain why it is the case.

Let's start with the latter. The constraints on evolutionary religion, as I read them, invite us to find a balance on two fronts. First, we need to find a balance between religion's promise of metaphysical transcendence and our awareness, already, of how in so many cases that promise has gone unfulfilled. At an early immature stage of development, we have reason to be sensitive to the latter without giving up on the former and the distinctively religious purposes that come with it. But, second, we are also invited to find a balance between our present psychological needs and cognitive predilections (for which, if the cognitive science of religion is right, past evolution is responsible) and the demands of a deeper maturity. We should not simply deny or reject or ignore the former in our pursuit of the latter. Growing out of immaturity may require some transitional concessions to it.

Now the first balance is promoted where religious people do both of the following two things: (i) distinguish between more detailed religious propositions and *more general and fundamental* religious claims such as the claim that there is a transcendent spiritual reality or that there is an ultimate divine reality; *and* (ii), recognizing how good it would be if they were literally true and that such propositions remain intellectually 'live,' respond to some such general proposition with a nondoxastic faith of the sort I have delineated. Perhaps you will think that a *believing* faith remains appropriate if its object is to be so general, but even if you are right, in an age of evolutionary religious skepticism, many are likely to disagree, and for them nondoxastic faith

presents itself as a crucially significant option. Notice as well here that by reserving our central intellectual commitment, in the religious realm, for propositions that do not purport to have a firm grasp on the detailed nature of the divine, we can respect and indeed incorporate a stage-relativist ineffabilism, accommodating the deep religious reverence and mystical sensibility that often come with ineffabilism.

Finally, consider the second balance. This is promoted where, within the light cast by a more general intellectual commitment of the sort mentioned a moment ago, and in the transition to a religious life fully fitting evolutionary ideas, people adopt toward certain more *detailed* religious propositions striking them as false but still resonating for them emotionally, and use for moral ends, the attitude of the *religious fictionalist*, instead of simply setting all such propositions aside or tossing them into some metaphysical trash can. Perhaps you will say that not all detailed traditional religious propositions, even ones involving, say, interaction between gods and humans, are assuredly false, and that some such propositions may therefore be embraced in *nondoxastic faith* rather than in a fictionalist spirit. But even if you are right, in an age of evolutionary religious skepticism, many are likely to disagree, and for them religious fictionalism may present itself as a crucially significant option.

By incorporating fictionalism in the way I have proposed, in the shadow of a larger realist commitment, we solve the first of two problems I mentioned earlier, to which I said I would return, associated with achieving genuinely religious purposes. We achieve them precisely through that realist commitment, even if the fictionalist attitude serves exclusively moral purposes appropriately pursued by immature humans with larger religious goals. How about the second problem, involving the apparent tension between a preoccupation with traditional details and the exploratory impulse that comes with evolutionary religion? This, I suggest, is resolved if the fictionalist attitude is indeed seen as *transitional* and morally rather than metaphysically focused, and if the inclination to see it thus is continually kept alive by other elements of one's larger religious outlook. Notice that a transition of the relevant sort, for ourselves and perhaps for large tracts of humanity, must be seen as occurring in the context of evolutionary time, and so we needn't expect the relevance of fictionalism, on the present account, to be dispiritingly brief!

I conclude, therefore, that by placing such theories of religion without belief as I have engaged in this paper within the context of a quest for evolutionary religion, we find a clear and obvious place for them; and not only that, we are provided with tools for their evaluation; and not only *that*, we are also enabled to *harmonize* or *unify* or *integrate* the versions of these theories that are consistent with the application of those tools. I hope such results will suffice to show that the notion of evolutionary religion can make a real contribution to understanding on the issues we are discussing.

Works Cited

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