

The Place of Religious Argument in a Free and Democratic Society

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This Article provides an account of the notion of a religious argument, distinguishes several roles of religious arguments in a liberal democracy, and defends a set of principles for their proper use in such a society. It is shown that argumentation may be religious not only in its content but also in virtue of its grounds, its motivation, its history, or a combination of these four elements. Religious arguments may properly play a variety of roles in liberal democracies, for instance expressive, communicative, persuasive, evidential, and heuristic roles. It is appropriate, however, that citizens apply a kind of separation of church and state in their public use of religious arguments, especially in advocating laws or public policies that restrict liberty. More specifically, it is contended that, whatever religious arguments one may have in such cases, one should also be willing to offer, and be to a certain extent motivated by, adequate secular arguments for the same conclusions. Despite appearances, this need place no unreasonable restrictions on the conduct of religious people. That conclusion is defended by (among other things) appeal to the connection between theology and ethics.

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INTRODUCTION

We are living in a period of increasing secularity in the industrialized world and increasing sectarianism in much of the less industrialized world. In the West, however, and particularly in the United States, secularization is by no means welcomed by all, and is feared and resented by many who consider themselves religious. In the United States, at least, the tradition of separation of church and state has contributed to secularization. But even a strong separationist tradition is neither necessary nor sufficient for secularization except in certain matters of law and public policy. Many aspects of society can be largely unaffected by separation of church and state. The domains of law and public policy are, of course, large areas of human life, and any major secularization in those domains is bound to have wider effects. Still, it is easy to exaggerate how much a reasonable separation of church and state must secularize a society that practices it. The degree of secularization of a society may be less a matter of its operative principles of separation than of the personal inclinations and the historical and cultural traditions of its people.

This Article presents a theory of how, from the point of view of normative sociopolitical philosophy, religious arguments may be properly used in a free and democratic society in a way that neither masks their religious character nor undermines a desirable separation. This task requires an account of what constitutes a religious argument. It also requires a basic catalogue of the uses religious arguments may have and attention to the main contexts in which they play a socially and politically significant role. In the course of clarifying the nature and proper role of religious arguments, I will articulate two general principles of separation of church and state and illustrate how a society that abides by them can realize religious as well as secular ideals.¹ My primary focus, however, will not be the most common preoccupation of church-state discussions, the relation of the state to religious *institutions*. Rather, my focus will be on the sociopolitical role of religious *arguments* and the explicit use of, or

1. The principles I shall generally presuppose are those stated in Robert Audi, *The Separation of Church and State and the Obligations of Citizenship*, 18 PHIL. & PUB. AFF. 259 (1989) [hereinafter Audi, *Separation*]. For critical discussion of that article, see Paul J. Weithman, *The Separation of Church and State: Some Questions for Professor Audi*, 20 PHIL. & PUB. AFF. 52 (1991). For my response to Professor Weithman, see Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason: A Reply to Professor Weithman*, 20 PHIL. & PUB. AFF. 66 (1991). Also highly relevant to this Article is KENT GREENAWALT, *RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS AND POLITICAL CHOICE* (Oxford University Press ed., 1988). I have discussed the theory of that book in *Religion and the Ethics of Political Participation*, 100 ETHICS 386 (1990), and Professor Greenawalt has replied to me and others in *Religious Convictions and Political Choice: Some Further Thoughts*, 39 DEPAUL L. REV. 4 (1990).

tacit reliance on, religious considerations as grounds for laws or public policies. These arguments may occur in a variety of contexts, and they can be as important in the conduct of individuals acting outside of governmental or religious institutions as they are in the official work of the church or the state.

I. THE CONCEPT OF A RELIGIOUS ARGUMENT

What is a religious, as opposed to a secular, argument? Frequent references to religious arguments suggest that the notion of a religious argument is well understood. However, apart from the examples people commonly have in mind — such as arguing from one of the Ten Commandments as a premise to a conclusion about how people should behave — the notion of a religious argument is frequently misunderstood. The question of what constitutes a religious argument turns out to be particularly difficult when we realize that an argument can be religious in a way that is important for church-state issues even when it does not explicitly appeal to any religious notion or doctrine.² There are several criteria for a religious argument, each of them providing a condition that is sufficient (but not necessary) for an argument's being religious.

A. *The Content Criterion*

First, there is a content criterion: on this standard, an argument with essentially religious content (as opposed to, say, merely quoted religious statements) is religious. Paradigmatically, this is theistic content such as a reference to a divine command. There are also other cases, such as appeals to scripture, or to a religious leader, as a guide in human life. Full clarification of the concept of religious content would require nothing less than an analysis of the notion of a religion. For our purposes, it is sufficient to think in terms of theistic, especially monotheistic, religions like Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, which are highly representative of the challenges faced by a liberal democracy seeking to give proper weight, in civil and political life, to religious considerations.

We should also construe the relevant kind of religious content as *substantive*, for example as expressing divine commands. We are not concerned with noncommittal or accidental religious content, as

2. I follow the common and useful practice of using "church" generically to apply to any religious institution.

where a speaker refers, without endorsement, to someone else's statement of a religious doctrine.³ A more difficult case, which does concern us, is one in which legislators or other public officials argue for a position on the ground that the vast majority of their constituents, for deep religious reasons, favor it. There are at least two subcases here: one in which the reference to the religious convictions of constituents is simply added information, perhaps to indicate the depth of the people's convictions, and the other in which the constituents *being* religious is given justificatory weight in the argument. In the latter but not the former case religious content is essential to the legislator's argument. Nonetheless, the latter is only a *second-order* religious argument; roughly, one in which a positive evaluation of a set of religious reasons, but no religious reason itself, is given a justificatory role.

In the former case, where religious reasons are simply taken as evidence of deep conviction, a church-state issue arises in a way that might lead some people to call the argument religious. Granting that one's constituents favoring something for religious reasons is not itself a religious as opposed to sociological fact, giving it weight as deeply felt *because* of those reasons raises questions about the appropriate role of religious considerations in a liberal democracy. Would one, for example, take political, or ethical, or aesthetic reasons as seriously? If not, would that be justifiable solely on sociopsychological grounds concerning what does or does not indicate depth of conviction? This Article is designed to help us in dealing with such issues in whatever kind of argument they may arise. Contentually religious arguments are the primary kind that people think of as religious and may be the sort that most often raise church-state issues. They are not, however, the only kind of religious argument. We must certainly consider others if we are to develop an adequate theory of the relation between religious considerations, for example, and the sociopolitical domain.

B. *The Epistemic Criterion*

The second criterion of religious argument is the epistemic criterion. By this standard, an argument is religious not because of what it says, but, roughly speaking, because of how it must be justified. Specifically, I propose to call an argument epistemically religious provided that (a) its premises, or (b) its conclusion, or (c) both, or (d) its premises *warranting* its conclusion, cannot be known, or at

3. A sociological argument may be religious in content in the sense of having premises attributing religious beliefs to people; but here the attribution itself carries no religious commitment, and so it is not relevant to the notion we need here.

least justifiably accepted, apart from reliance on religious considerations, for example scripture or revelation.

Most epistemically religious arguments will also be theistic in content, but not all arguments with theistic or religious content need be epistemically religious. Consider, for instance, a poor argument for a sound, purely moral conclusion, say that one should try to render aid to neighbors in dire need. Let the premise be an approving attribution of a moral view to the *Bible*, for example the statement that according to Moses, God prohibited bearing false witness against one's neighbors. This attribution is not a statement of a moral view or otherwise evidentially sufficient for the conclusion, which is on a different though related topic—rendering aid to neighbors in need. Thus, this argument would not meet the proposed epistemic criterion. Specifically, the argument meets none of the basic conditions of the criterion. First, its premise, being only an attribution of a moral view and not itself a moral statement, does not warrant its conclusion, which is a moral statement. Second, the premise *cannot* be, even on a religious basis, known or justifiably believed to warrant it⁴ (so on this score there is no knowledge of justification to be had). Third, the truth of the premise *can* be known on textual as opposed to religious grounds. Finally, the conclusion itself *could*, on the non-skeptical assumptions I am making, also be known or justifiably believed on secular moral grounds.

A major reason for the importance of singling out epistemically religious arguments is that it seems possible for an argument to be epistemically religious without having *any* religious content. It is hard to find uncontroversial examples, but even a controversial one will bring out the nature of an epistemically religious argument. Consider a version of the notorious genetic argument for the personhood of the zygote: because all the normal human genetic information is present in the zygote and will normally result in a clear case of a person at the end of a natural process (pregnancy), the zygote itself *is* a person. Now it might be contended that if this conclusion can be known or justifiably believed through these premises, it is on a religious basis (e.g., on the basis of grounds for the belief that God ensouls members of the human species at conception). A plausible counter to construing the genetic argument as epistemically

4. If the premise does not warrant the conclusion, it cannot be known through that premise. Presumably, in this example religious considerations also could not justify attributing a warranting relation, but that is not quite self-evident. Still, it would not be expected in a case like this, where the premise is largely irrelevant to the conclusion.

religious is the contention that there may be a purely *metaphysical* argument for ensoulment or personhood at this stage. It is not clear, however, that any such metaphysical arguments are sound or have even been widely taken to be sound.⁵

A related source of examples derives from natural law. Consider the argument that since the natural end of intercourse is procreation, and contraception thwarts that end, contraception is wrong. It is not evident that these premises can be known or justifiably believed apart from theistic grounds. But even supposing that they can be, given a statistical or other naturalistic standard of what is natural, the premises arguably cannot warrant the conclusion except on assumptions that patterns in the natural order reveal divine intentions regarding how human life should be conducted. Unless thwarting the natural end of an act is contrary to divine intention, why should it be morally important? It is this sort of dependency on religious considerations that seems to many to underlie the typical natural law arguments for moral conclusions and hence to undermine their ostensibly naturalistic, or at least nontheistic, character.

C. *The Motivational Criterion*

Third, there is a motivational criterion, according to which an argument, as presented in a context, is religious provided an essential part of the person's motivation for presenting it is to accomplish a religious purpose (for example, to elicit obedience to God's will or to fulfill a religious obligation to one's church). There may be more than one such purpose, and the purposes may be causally or evidentially independent, as where each derives from respect for an independent religious authority or source such as text and religious experience. This is a different kind of criterion from the first two. To understand the difference, notice that "argument" has two main uses. First, the term may designate a linguistic process, roughly the offering of one or more propositions as reasons for another proposition. Second, the term may refer to an abstract product of such a process, roughly the essential content put forward in arguing. The

5. Here is a different example. Imagine an island society's discovering an inscription on the beach that reads: "Circumcise!" Someone might argue that this writing cannot be an accident. Hence, we should (*prima facie*) practice circumcision. Now arguably this conclusion cannot be known or justifiedly believed on ethical or medical grounds (at least for an adequately hygienic society). If it can be, it would likely be on grounds of just the sort of authority which only a deity could have. One might reply that the argument is enthymematic and has a suppressed religious premise, in which case it is religious in *content*; but to insist on that seems to me to import the likeliest *defense* of the argument into its content. The only obvious presupposition of this sort is something like this: We ought (*prima facie*) to heed a directive nonaccidentally found in nature.

motivational criterion is an *illocutionary*⁶ one, a criterion for an argument as linguistically presented not a *propositional* criterion, one applicable to an argument construed as an abstract structure of propositions. A propositional criterion applies no matter who presents the argument; an illocutionary criterion is proponent-relative and contextual. Thus, strictly speaking, the motivational criterion applies primarily to reasoning processes and only derivatively to arguments as the abstract structures realized in those processes. But since arguments do their chief work when so realized, it is appropriate to treat the motivational criterion as applicable to them.

The content of a motivationally religious argument need not be religious. Perhaps the genetic argument is an example of this. Certain natural law arguments might also illustrate the point. And if some of them, at least, need not be epistemically religious, they could exemplify arguments that are motivationally religious, but neither contentually nor epistemically so.

D. *The Historical Criterion*

Fourth, there is a historical criterion. It is illocutionary, like the motivational standard, but looser. The idea is roughly this: an argument, as used on a particular occasion, is religious in the historical sense provided that, as used on that occasion, it genetically traces, explicitly or implicitly, by some mainly cognitive chain, such as a chain of beliefs, to one or more arguments that are religious in one of the above senses, or to one or more propositions that are either religious in content or epistemically dependent on a proposition that is religious in content. Consider the argument that because taking an innocent human life is wrong, suicide is wrong. Here we have an argument that seems to many to be persuasive in its own right. Yet, there is no question that on many occasions of its use the argument traces to, and derives some of its persuasive power from, religious ideas such as the idea that God gives life, and only God should take it away, at least apart from self-defense and punishment.

There are, as this example about the permissibility of suicide suggests, at least two interesting subcases of historically religious arguments. First, there are those that are *persuasively autonomous*, in the sense that their persuasive power does not depend on their historically religious character. Second, there are those that are *persuasively dependent*, in that some of their persuasive power derives,

6. "Illocutionary" means, roughly, 'in producing a locution.'

whether evidentially or otherwise, from one or more religious sources to which they are traceable. Since persuasive power may depend on the audience, an argument can be persuasive in one case and not another, or persuasively autonomous with one audience and persuasively dependent with another. Consider the argument that monogamous marriage should be the only legally permissible kind because the only normal marital relation is between females and males. This normative assumption might, in turn, be partly based, evidentially, or historically, or in both ways, on the idea that only parents, or potential parents, or at least people who can identify in a certain way with parents, of the same child or children, should marry. Either idea might be historically religious, tracing to religious injunctions about marriage as divinely ordained for men and women from the Garden of Eden onward. The latter idea, however, might be partly based on some religious view and partly founded on a supposed moral obligation of parents to rear their children and a supposed right of children to be reared by both of their parents. An argument can thus have a mixed lineage: deriving, evidentially, or historically, or in both ways, from both a religious and a moral basis.

Two further points are in order and are readily understood in relation to the apparent historical dependence of the innocent-life, anti-suicide argument or the life-as-a-divine-gift argument. First, I take an argument or proposition to be *implicit* in the background of another argument, on an occasion of the presentation of the latter, when the first argument or proposition is not articulated, but the latter argument as presented is based on at least one of the premises of the former as a ground, or would at least be taken to be so based by a reasonable interpreter in the context. Second, the genetic line need not go through the *speaker's* mind. It is enough if the argument as presented has a history that meets the condition of traceability to religious considerations. The relevant causal chain, moreover, can branch. A single argument offered on one occasion can trace back historically, as it can motivationally, to two or more sources that are causally or evidentially independent, or independent in both ways.

The notion of a historically religious argument is of interest largely because, in some cases, we cannot account for the plausibility of an argument without so conceiving it. It convinces, as it were, by its pedigree or its associations rather than by its evidential merits. For example, whether the aforementioned marriage argument has any persuasive force apart from its religious historical connections is debatable. Note, however, that even if it has none apart from those connections, its *conclusion* could still be supported by any number of powerful considerations. Yet, it is neither epistemically religious nor necessarily motivationally religious. To say, then, that an argument is historically religious is not, even from a secular point of view, to

imply an epistemic criticism of its conclusion. Of the four kinds of religious arguments, it is only those that are epistemically religious that depend on religious considerations for the justification of some essential element in them.

II. ROLES OF RELIGIOUS ARGUMENTS

Religious arguments can play an indefinite number of roles. Some of these roles are perfectly compatible, such as expressing oneself and guiding someone else. There is no hope of providing an exhaustive list, but some of the roles most important for an account of the question of the appropriate uses of religious arguments in a liberal democracy should be noted.

One role of religious arguments is *expressive*, not merely in the minimal sense of putting something forth, but in the sense of "self-revelatory": to set out one's perspective on an issue, to articulate one's feelings on a major event, to get something off one's chest, and the like. This point has a major implication. A society that protects free expression must protect the freedom to express one's religious views, even in contexts in which there are good reasons to offer a secular case for those views, as in certain public forums. Thus, *any* constraints we establish as reasonable for religious arguments must operate *within* these freedoms. The constraints will apply to the appropriate discretion in exercising our freedoms, rather than restrict our right to do so.⁷

A second, closely-related role of religious arguments is *communicative*, to get across to someone else one's deepest feelings or to show someone else where one is "coming from." This kind of communicative argumentation may also be expressive, and must be so in the wide sense of expressing *something*. Here, however, the aim of argument is not mainly to articulate one's own position, but to change the understanding of someone else. There will be times when one cannot convey one's special sense of an issue or one's distinctive approach to a topic without using religious arguments, at least implicitly. Even if I do not expect a religious argument to persuade you, I may want to offer it as an indication of how deeply I feel and of the sources of my views. Far from necessarily seeming dogmatic or insular, this practice might suggest some common ground between us, religious or secular.

7. This point underlies my emphasis on setting forth *prima facie* normative principles, rather than restricting rights. See Audi, *Separation*, *supra* note 1.

Still another role of religious argument is *persuasive*, above all, to get people to agree with our view, or follow our prescriptions, or identify with us. Persuasion may often be best when one is communicative and self-revelatory, but it need not have either of those characteristics. There are at least two major cases. The first is persuading people who accept one's general religious view. The second is persuading those who are either nonreligious or religiously different from oneself. Often, in the second case, some arguments with religious *conclusions* are needed first by way of partial conversion. But persuasion may be achievable simply through getting the addressee to acknowledge the importance of one's conclusion if only because it is religious. In the former case, redirection is usually the main strategy (for instance showing others how a shared religious premise has led to resisting a conclusion). In the latter, one must create enough common ground to support the conclusion.

A fourth role of religious argument is *evidential*, to offer supporting reasons for a view or course of action. It may be that only religious people will accept the reasons in question as good, but that is not the point. It would be quite wrong to omit this purpose of using religious argument. It is an important underpinning for many instances of religious argumentation by conscientious people. That *they* regard their arguments as good is important for how those arguments should be received, even by those who reject them.

Fifth, religious arguments may play an important *heuristic* role. For instance, by raising the question what God would command, or what the Gospels of the Psalms imply, religious arguments may stimulate the discovery of new truths. The value of this approach should not be underestimated. The appeal to God's intellect or will as a standard of knowledge or value can open up hypotheses and clarify assumptions that might otherwise be lost. And the great religious texts are inexhaustible sources of ideas, standards, and practical wisdom. To exclude their study from public education is neither good academic policy nor required by a reasonable separation of church and state.

All five roles can be played by religious arguments in sociopolitical contexts. Here we encounter a host of questions about what, from the point of view of both normative political philosophy and the ethics of citizenship, are their appropriate uses. Those questions are the main topic of Part III.

III. THE PROPER ROLES OF RELIGIOUS ARGUMENTS IN ETHICS
AND POLITICS

Liberal democracies are free societies and are above all committed to preserving freedom, especially in religion. There are many conceptions of liberal democracy. At one end of the spectrum, perhaps unoccupied by any major historical figure in the liberal tradition, are minimalist, procedural conceptions. These simply provide for a framework in which democracy can operate, and they impose no constraints whatever on the social goals appropriate to a free and democratic society.⁸ At the other end are rich substantive conceptions that also incorporate such goals as respect for persons and social flourishing, a notion which itself can be substantively developed to a greater or lesser degree. Although a detailed conception cannot be presented here, this Article proceeds on the hypothesis that a major basis for determining how much substance is permissible is what might be called a *fidelity to essential premises constraint*: a liberal political theory should build into its vision of a just society enough substance to fulfill the theory's essential underlying ideals.

If the fidelity constraint is assumed, it seems reasonable for a liberal society to build into its structure as much in the way of substantive promotion of the good as is implied in the essential premises underlying the liberal political theory by which it lives. These are not necessarily premises actually appealed to by proponents, but rather those that must be *common* to all the sets of grounds sufficient to justify the sociopolitical vision. The relevant premises are defined, then, as those minimally required for justification, not those historically used for the purpose. Normally, these two categories substantially overlap, and if they did not the fidelity to premises idea would be less interesting. But the historical inspiration for a liberal democracy could in principle lack justificatory force, and the minimally justifying grounds could, in some historical circumstances, lack persuasive power.

To illustrate the fidelity to premises idea, suppose that justification of a liberal political theory as a basis for governing a society requires at least ideals of democracy, in a sense implying one vote for each person; autonomy, in the sense of self-determination; respect for persons, implying at least equal treatment before the law and a legal

8. For one kind of minimalist view—a neutrality conception—see CHARLES E. LARMORE, *PATTERNS OF MORAL COMPLEXITY* (Cambridge University Press ed., 1987). I, too, embrace a neutrality condition, but one less strong than his.

system nurturing self-respect; and material well-being. In that case, proponents of the liberal theory in question might reasonably require that a society take positive steps to protect and nurture these ideals.

Although such an approach would warrant something at least close to the five ideas of the good that John Rawls finds in justice as fairness,⁹ the purpose of this Article does not require endorsing any specific list of goods as essential aims in a liberal democracy. It is easy to go too far here. Someone might, for example, require religious observances by all citizens. Notice also that if a liberal society chooses to justify its liberal theory solely on certain pragmatic grounds, such as maximizing preference satisfaction within a framework of social and political liberties, it may have to use a thinner notion of the good. If, however, a morally inspired liberal political theory is justified, a richer notion of the good might be objectively warranted, such as one that emphasizes enhancing freedom and capacity for actualization of one's human capacities. But this society, being unable to countenance the grounds of that theory, would not be *justified*, in practice, in building in that richer notion.

Even within a fidelity to essential premises conception of liberalism, there is an important distinction between grounds appropriate for a liberal society in justifying promotion of the goods it may endorse and grounds appropriate to justifying coercion. Here again I appeal to a general principle as a constraint. It seems to me that once autonomy is taken sufficiently seriously—as it will be not only by liberal political theorists but also by any sound moral theory—the way is open to view the justification of coercion in a framework that gives high priority to respect for the self-determination of persons. For purposes of sociopolitical philosophy, it may be fruitful to work from a *surrogacy conception of justified coercion*, especially in cases of governmental coercion. According to this view, coercing a person, *S*, for reason *R*, to perform an action *A*, in circumstances *C*, is fully justified if and only if at least the following three conditions hold in

9. These are "(1) the idea of goodness as rationality, (2) the idea of primary goods, (3) the idea of permissible comprehensive conceptions of the good, (4) the idea of political virtues, and (5) the idea of the good of a well-ordered (political) society." See John Rawls, *The Priority of Right and Ideas of the Good*, 17 PHIL. & PUB. AFF. 251 (1988). For related discussions see THOMAS NAGEL, EQUALITY AND PARTIALITY (Oxford University Press ed., 1991); MICHAEL J. PERRY, MORALITY, POLITICS, AND LAW. A BICENTENNIAL ESSAY (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Richard E. Flathman's essays in TOWARD A LIBERALISM (Cornell University Press ed., 1989); RICHARD W. MILLER, MORAL DIFFERENCES (Princeton University Press ed., 1992). Perry is a critic of liberalism, Flathman a defender of it. For wide-ranging studies of Perry's views quite relevant to this Article, see Theodore Y. Blumoff, *Disdain for the Lessons of History: Comments on Love and Power*, 20 CAP. U. L. REV. 159 (1991), and Edward B. Foley, *Tillich and Camus, Talking Politics*, 92 COLUM. L. REV. 954 (1992) (reviewing MICHAEL J. PERRY, LOVE & POWER: THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND MORALITY IN AMERICAN POLITICS (1991)).

C: (a) *S* morally ought to *A* in *C*, for example to abstain from stealing from others (perhaps someone has a right, in the circumstances, against *S* that *S* *A*—certainly a feature of most cases in which a liberal democracy can reasonably coerce its citizens); (b) if fully rational and adequately informed about the situation, *S* would see that (a) holds and would, for reason *R* (say from a sense of how theft creates mistrust and chaos, or for some essentially related reason), perform *A*, or at least tend to *A*;¹⁰ (c) *A* is both an “important” kind of action (as opposed to breaking a casual promise to meet for lunch at the usual place) and one that may be reasonably believed to affect someone else (and perhaps not of a highly personal kind at all).¹¹ Thus, it is permissible, on grounds of the general welfare, to coerce people to pay taxes only if they ought to do so in the circumstances, and would (if fully rational and adequately informed) be appropriately motivated by seeing that they ought to do so. By contrast, it is not permissible to coerce someone to give up, say, smoking, unless it significantly affects others. (It is not self-evident that each citizen has a right that other citizens pay their taxes, but this is at least arguable.)

As these examples suggest, the greater the coercion needing to be justified (say, in terms of how much liberty it undermines), the more important the behavior in question must be; and parentalism, for normal adults, is ruled out. According to this view, then, we may coerce people to do only what they would autonomously do if appropriately informed and fully rational.¹² This view explains why justified coercion is not *resented* by agents when they adequately

10. The reason must be essentially related because otherwise the agent's hypothetical attitude will not be sufficiently connected with the coercive reason to warrant the coercion. A typical case would be this: where *R* is the state's reason, for example to protect other citizens, the related reason would be, say, to fulfill my duty not to harm others. Roughly, if the agent's reason is not *R*, it is something like a first-person version of *R*. It should also be noted that this approach does not imply that *all* moral obligation is discernible by reflection of this kind. It does seem appropriate, however, that the obligations grounding state rights of coercion should be discernible by such reflection. This is one reason to think that such obligations correspond to rights of citizens.

11. I assume here that a *fully* rational person with certain information about others has certain altruistic desires. If rationality is understood more narrowly, my formulation must be revised (unless we may assume, as I do not, that motivation to do something is entailed simply by a realization that it is one's moral obligation). The basic idea could, however, be largely preserved. I make a case for such desires in *The Architecture of Reason*, 62 PROC. & ADDRESSES AM. PHIL. ASS'N 227 (Supp. 1988).

12. This is so, at least, on the plausible assumption that fully rational persons can see their moral obligations. A further qualification is this: If purely rational considerations would convince a fully rational person to do certain religious deeds, such as worship God and follow certain religious principles, then they are not an appropriate basis of

understand its rationale, why some coercion is consonant with liberal democratic ideals of autonomy, and why the kind that is can be supported by citizens *independently* of what they happen to approve of politically, religiously, or, to a large extent, even morally.

If the perspective on liberal democracy I have sketched is correct, then it is easy to understand why in such a society the use of secular reason must in general be the main basis of sociopolitical decision. Indeed, if there is secular reason which is esoteric in a sense implying that a normal rational person lacks access to it, then a stronger requirement is needed; one might thus speak of public reason, as Rawls and others do. This seems to apply especially to decisions that result in coercion, whether through law or even through restrictive social policies not backed by legal sanctions. If I am coerced on grounds that cannot motivate me, as a rational informed person, to do the thing in question, I cannot come to identify with the deed and will tend to resent having to do it. Even if the deed should *be* my obligation, still, where only esoteric knowledge—say, through revelation that only the initiated experience—can show that it is, I will tend to resent the coercion. And it is part of the underlying rationale of liberalism that we should not have to feel this kind of resentment—that we give up autonomy only where, no matter what our specific preferences or particular world view, we can be expected, given adequate rationality and sufficient information, to see that we would have so acted on our own.

One might think that the importance of secular reasons is *derivative* from that of public reasons. But this is not so. For one thing, a liberal democracy must make special efforts to prevent religious domination of one group by another. There are, in turn, at least two reasons for this. One is that the authority structure common in many religions can make a desire to dominate other groups natural and can provide a rationale for it. (What could be more important or beneficial to others than saving their souls?) Another reason is that the dictates of a religion often extend to the religious as well as the secular conduct of persons, so that if domination occurs it undermines even religious freedom. (To save people's souls they must not only cease performing evil deeds but worship appropriately.) Religious freedom is a kind quite properly given high priority by a liberal democracy. And, if religious considerations threaten it more than nonpublic influences in general, additional reasons exist for a liberal democracy to constrain the role of those considerations.

Another ground for denying that the importance of specifically

coercion. This is one reason the condition stated here is only necessary. Similar restrictions would apply to other possible domains in which a liberal society protects one's freedom to decline even what reason requires. Morality, I take it, is not such a domain, and some of its principles are essential to fully justifying liberalism.

secular reason is not derivative from that of public reason is connected with the authority which religious principles, directives, and traditions are commonly felt to have. Where religious convictions are a basis of a disagreement, it is, other things being equal, less likely that the disputants can achieve resolution or even peacefully agree to disagree. If God's will is felt to be clear, there may seem to be only one way to view the issue. This can apply as much to prima facie nonreligious problems such as physical health care as it does to specifically religious practices. Granted, a nonreligious source of conviction can also be felt to be infallible, and it may also be nonpublic. But not every nonpublic source of views and preferences poses the authority problem, or the special threat to religious freedom, that can arise from certain kinds of unconstrained religious convictions. Particularly when people believe that extreme measures, such as bravely fighting a holy war, carry an eternal reward, they tend to be ready to take them. Being ready to die, they may find it much easier to kill.

So far, I have been imagining coercion by laws or institutional policies. But in my view, the same sorts of considerations imply that individual as well as institutional conduct—the more common domain of discussions of religion and politics—should be constrained in a related way. More specifically, I believe that just as we separate church and state institutionally, we should, in certain aspects of our thinking and public conduct, separate religion from law and public policy matters, especially when it comes to passing restrictive laws. This separation in turn implies the need for motivational as well as rationale principles. If, for example, some group has religious reasons for favoring circumcision, they should not argue for a legal requirement of it without having evidentially adequate secular reasons for such a law. Nor should they offer secular reasons that are not evidentially convincing to them or, for that reason or any other, cognitively motivating, such as statistics about cervical cancer in women married to men who are not circumcised. To do this would be to allow these reasons to serve as—or even to use them as—secular rationalizations that cloak the underlying religious motivation for seeking the legislation.

In earlier work I have articulated two principles to express these constraints upon conscience. First, the *principle of secular rationale* says that one has a prima facie obligation not to advocate or support any law or public policy that restricts human conduct unless one has, and is willing to offer, adequate secular reason for this advocacy or

support.¹³ A secular reason is roughly one whose normative force does not evidentially depend on the existence of God or on theological considerations, or on the pronouncements of a person or institution qua religious authority.¹⁴ The second, the *principle of secular motivation*, adds the idea that one also has a prima facie obligation to abstain from such advocacy or support unless one is sufficiently motivated by adequate secular reason.¹⁵ This implies that some secular reason is motivationally sufficient, roughly in the sense that one would act on it even if, other things remaining equal, other reasons were eliminated.¹⁶

Since an argument can be epistemically, motivationally, or historically religious without being religious in content, one might fail to live up to at least the second of these principles even in offering arguments that on their face are neither religious nor fail to provide an adequate secular reason for their conclusion. It might be argued, for example, that some people, in presenting a genetic argument for the personhood of the zygote, are not sufficiently motivated by the secular considerations cited in their argument and would not find the argument convincing apart from underlying religious beliefs.

Application of the principle of secular motivation can be complicated because it may be difficult to tell whether a reason for doing or believing something is in fact motivating. This difficulty is especially likely to occur before the relevant event or long afterwards. But what the motivation principle (beyond the rationale principle) requires of conscientious citizens contemplating support of restrictive laws or policies is at most this: (a) an attempt to formulate all the significant reasons for each major option—itsself often a very useful exercise; (b) where one or more reasons is religious, consideration of the motivational weight of each reason taken by itself as well as in the context of the others (if none is religious, the principle does not imply any

13. See Audi, *Separation*, *supra* note 1, at 279-80.

14. An interesting question, put to me by Kent Greenawalt, is whether reasons presupposing atheism are ruled out as religious in the broad sense that they directly concern religion. I have not construed such reasons as religious, though the wording of my principles may allow including them, and certainly doing so may be appropriate to the overall spirit of my position. But these reasons are at least not *religiously neutral* and on that ground may be objectionable in certain ways in a liberal democracy. This allows, but does not entail, that there may be special church-state reasons to restrict their use. However, the two principles proposed here are not intended to exclude them.

15. Audi, *Separation*, *supra* note 1, at 284-86.

16. Two points are important. First, it may be common that this reason would in fact be sufficient only in the context of other elements, such as a general interest in civic duty, but it may still be sufficient as a specific reason for the conduct in question. Second, the person's *believing* the reason sufficient is neither necessary nor sufficient for its *being* so; but a justified false belief that it is so would have some excusatory force.

need to go any further into motivation); and (c) an attempt to ascertain, by considering hypothetical situations and motivational or cognitive impulses or tendencies, whether each reason is motivationally sufficient. I should ask myself, for example, whether I would believe something if I did not accept a certain premise and whether a given reason taken by itself seems persuasive, in the sense of providing a sense of surety. At least one secular reason should emerge as such.

In short, my principles imply that one should ask of one's reasons certain evidential, historical, and hypothetical questions. One is entitled to use practical wisdom in deciding how much effort is reasonable to expend in a given case. Here as elsewhere in applying a standard, one can be conscientious but mistaken. For instance, I might be wrong, but not unreasonably so, in believing a reason to be secular. I might then be subject to no criticism, or at least none deriving from the rationale or motivation principles as opposed to purely evidential ones. An interesting case here would be one's being mistaken in just this way, but so disposed that if one did not believe, of what is in fact a religious reason, that it is secular, one would not be moved by it. This is a kind of second-order conformity to the motivation principle simultaneously with first-order failure to abide by it, and the former adherence would help to excuse the latter deviation.

Fortunately, if the motivation principle is widely accepted, and perhaps even if it is not, and one is in good communication with people who disagree on the issue at hand, one will likely get substantial help from them. Whenever religious reasons seem motivationally too strong, people who disagree should be expected to help one probe. Others may think of revealing questions about us that we ourselves overlook, or observe words or deeds that tell us something we did not realize about our own thinking or motivation.¹⁷

It could turn out that most people are not usually good at forming reasonable judgments regarding what reasons they have, much less which, if any, are motivating.¹⁸ If this is how it does turn out, the

17. Weithman has questioned how feasible it is to try to follow the principle of secular rationale. See Weithman, *supra* note 1. See also Lawrence B. Solum, *Faith and Justice*, 39 DEPAUL L. REV. 1083, 1089-92 (1990). Also relevant is Paul J. Weithman, *Liberalism and the Privatization of Religion: Three Theological Objections Considered*, 22 J. RELIGIOUS ETHICS (forthcoming spring 1994). The above is only the beginning of a reply to such worries.

18. One might think that a person must have *some* motivating reason for a belief or action. But this is not so, if we distinguish reasons from causes or, more subtly, reasons *for which* one believes or acts from mere (explanatory) *reasons why* one does. Wishful thinking is a nonrational source of beliefs, and actions not performed intentionally

effort to find out may be all the more needed; if I cannot tell what my reasons are, I should probably wonder whether I have any worthy of the name, and I am likely to make better decisions if I try to find some good reasons. If I cannot accurately tell which reasons motivate me and how much they do so, I cannot adequately understand myself or reasonably predict my own behavior.

The problem of ascertaining and weighing motivating reasons is not peculiar to my view. In assigning moral praise or responsibility, for instance, we need to know not just what was done, but for what reasons it was done. Acting in accordance with duty, but for a selfish reason, earns one no moral praise. In any case, if there are *any* important questions, such as the abortion issue, in which people can identify their main reasons and can form reasonable judgments regarding which reasons are motivating, that gives the principle of secular motivation an important job to do. Surely there are some such issues.

It is important to emphasize two points about the proposed principles. First, the principle of secular motivation provides that one may *also* have religious reasons and be motivated by them. Second, my use of such separationist principles by no means presupposes that religious reasons cannot be evidentially adequate. My principles also allow that religious reasons may be motivationally *sufficient* (though not motivationally necessary, since secular reasons could not then be motivationally sufficient—they would be unable to produce belief or action without the cooperation of religious elements). The principles even allow a person to judge the religious reasons to be more important than the secular ones, or be more *strongly* motivated by them, or both. The rationale and motivation principles do not rule out a major role for religious considerations, even in public political advocacy. They simply provide a measure of protection against their domination in contexts in which they should be constrained.

While my principles do not imply that religious reasons are never evidentially adequate, their evidential adequacy is not a presupposition of liberal democracy.¹⁹ Neither is their evidential inadequacy. Indeed, it may be that the absence of both presuppositions is a negative foundation of liberal democracy. It would be inappropriate for a liberal theory to contain either epistemological claim. This point need not be a positive plank in even a fully articulated democratic constitution, but it is an important strand in much liberal democratic theory.²⁰

need not be done for a reason.

19. The Declaration of Independence is one famous document supporting liberal democracy that seems to imply otherwise; but I am not certain that it must be so read, nor do I take it to be as authoritative on this matter as the work of John Stuart Mill.

20. An interesting problem arises here. Suppose one can have an objectively good

Neither of my principles precludes just pointing out to people how *their* religious commitments imply some conclusion which one is pressing. Telling me that I have an antecedent religious ground for agreeing with you is not arguing *from* that ground, and it can be done without implying that the ground is evidentially cogent. It is a persuasive, not an evidential, use of an appeal to a reason. We might call it *leveraging* by reasons; it is using other people's reasons to move them, as opposed to offering our own. In leveraging, one need not imply that the cited ground is sufficient to give *any* warrant to the conclusion. But, if one believes it is not, one is probably being manipulative rather than respectfully persuasive, since one is inviting, or exploiting, weak reasoning. I believe, however, a sufficient secular basis for using this strategy is necessary. Even then, its use can invite unwarranted appeal to religious considerations, since it may tacitly endorse their unrestricted appropriateness to laws or public policy conclusions.

Despite these restrictions, religious arguments can, in certain

secular argument for (a) God's existence and (b) His commanding our *A*-ing. One might then claim to have an (ultimately) secular reason for our *A*-ing. But notice that I characterize a secular reason as one whose justificatory force does not *evidentially* depend on God's existence or on theological considerations. So this argument would not qualify as providing a secular reason; it would evidentially depend on God's authority. Someone might protest that it does provide a secular *route* to moral knowledge, and that is all separation of church and state should demand. But although the route is *open* to any rational person, it may be questioned whether it is truly secular, since God is encountered (at least intellectually) on the way. Even apart from this, I think we need epistemically secular *reasons* for, and not merely epistemically secular *routes* to, the relevant conclusions. For (1) not all rational persons can be expected to take this route, even though it is open to them all if it is indeed objectively good. In any case, (2) one would still not have (unless through having other arguments) a sufficient (purely) secular reason for one's belief or act, and thus would be speaking, or acting (for example, voting), in a primarily religious *way*; and (3) in practice, people of other religious persuasions would be uncomfortable. Even if they followed the same route in their arguments, they would not like having to travel through someone else's theology. That brings us to the question of the truth of the supposition: even if there are, from purely naturalistic premises, objectively justifiable arguments for God's existence, the arguments for His specific *commands*, especially in areas in which there is moral disagreement, are far from generally justificatory or purely naturalistic.

Granted, one's *having* what one reasonably, even if wrongly, takes to be good secular arguments for (a) and (b) is somewhat *excusing* (though that term is misleading because I do not deny a right to vote religiously). But the best ideal is still not met. Now is the best ideal one that is simply a sociopolitical ideal reasonable in a liberal democracy, or is it a moral ideal? The contrast may be artificial. If there is a sufficient moral case for liberal democracy, the best ideal can be argued to be moral. If not, it *may* not be moral; but there are principles about how to treat others in matters of coercion that are independent of liberal democracy and which support the rationale and motivation principles. Hence, there can be an independent moral case for them.

ways, be quite properly used in all the roles I have mentioned—expressive, communicative, persuasive, evidential, and heuristic—whether in public policy contexts or others. My thesis is that their use should be constrained, not that they should be eliminated. The implicit secularization is restricted and may be quite circumscribed. Indeed, it is quite appropriate to a secular ethic to endorse a principle that religion should be taken seriously because doing so is an aspect of one's integrity as a person. This is in part because ideals and commitments should be taken seriously; doing so is important to being a mature and integrated person, and it might be considered to be implicit in the duty of self-improvement as understood by such moral philosophers as Kant and W. D. Ross. It is also in part true because morality proscribes hypocrisy, and it is hypocritical to profess a religion and pay mere lip service to it.

If secular ethics may encourage taking one's religion seriously, what about government's role in this respect? Since government should not prefer the religious as such, law and public policy may not differentially encourage religious practice. But they may encourage living up to one's ideals within the constraints of mutual respect and of separation of church and state. This allows, however, that governments may require or even encourage employers to grant leaves for self-development. Governments may even encourage employers and schools to set aside time to pursue ideals, say by declaring a holiday for reflection and stock taking. This kind of attitude might in effect lead to respect for religious holidays in a way that gives visible governmental concern for the religious. But that outcome is neither inevitable nor necessarily objectionable, and the aim of the policy need not be specifically religious.

The goals of governmental policy and the kinds of reasons appropriate to laws and sociopolitical policy are the main focus of separation of church and state. It is not reasonable to prohibit policies that are properly motivated, even if they foreseeably favor the religious or the nonreligious. However, there are special cases here, such as a vast effect that would significantly reduce the freedom of nonreligious minorities.²¹ An example of a policy that might be secularly motivated but affect the freedom of nonreligious minorities would be the mandatory observance of the Sabbath by closing government offices, where this is done for the convenience of a majority religious group though not because it is religious, but because it represents a majority. The required placement of condom machines in all public restrooms, even if motivated by public health concerns, might affect the freedom of religious minorities (who object to public exposure of

21. This paragraph has benefited from correspondence on the topic with Richard Arneson.

such things). Perhaps requiring all normal adults to donate blood in wartime or epidemic would be an example favoring the nonreligious and some of the religious over religious minorities who strongly oppose the practice. Each of these cases is different from the others, and they all come in variant forms too numerous to discuss here. With any such cases, a point may come at which secularly motivated legislation can have a religiously significant effect that makes the legislation objectionable on reasonable grounds of separation. But there is no simple criterion of ascertaining that point.

IV. RELIGIOUS ARGUMENTS AND MORAL PRINCIPLES

The restricted role I suggest for religious arguments is compatible with the idea that there can be religious knowledge in ethical and sociopolitical matters. I think, however, that liberal democracy is or at least should be committed to the *conceptual and epistemic autonomy of ethics* (in the broad sense in which ethics encompasses normative political philosophy). This commitment does not imply affirming the *ontic independence* of ethics; it is above all a commitment to the possibility of knowledge or at least justified moral beliefs or attitudes and is neutral with respect to the possibility that such beliefs can be *true* apart from God's existence (an ontological matter). Just as one might understand a poem, and know its aesthetic merits without knowing who its author is (or even that it has one), one might understand and know the truth or at least justification of a moral principle without knowing who its author is, or even whether it has one. If I believe that God necessarily exists, and is indeed the ultimate ground of moral truths and a kind of condition for the existence of anything, I can still embrace liberal democracy and defend the full sociopolitical rights of atheists. But I doubt that I could readily endorse all this if I thought there was no nontheistic route even to moral justification.

For reasons already given, it seems that liberal democracy is also committed to the possibility of justifying, on a secular moral basis, any coercion necessary for maintaining civil life, even where the conduct subject to coercion is defended by a religious justification, as with some religiously rationalized persecutions of religious minorities. Here secular coercion may have a justification that, in a liberal democracy, overrides a sincere and articulate religious rationale for allowing the proscribed conduct. This sociopolitical ascendancy of secular argument in justifying coercion does not, however, imply a

commitment to its being epistemically better than all religious argument. Agreeing on the principles—and referees—of a game does not entail believing that, from a higher point of view, there can be no better game, or superior referees.²² But at least as long as we consent to play the game, we are obligated to abide by its rules.²³

Teachers of ethics, and indeed teachers in general, should presuppose the epistemic autonomy of ethics, even if in a noncognitivist version.²⁴ It is a further question whether specific moral principles, such as the principle that people should be allowed a high degree of free expression, must be presupposed by liberal democracy and teachers. I believe that some of them must be, if only because they reflect underlying premises of such a system, and the very name “liberal democracy” suggests the same conclusion. But it is arguable that only a pragmatic assumption to this effect is presupposed. The issue is whether liberal democracy must be in a sense *morally constituted*, as opposed to being grounded simply in instrumental considerations concerning the preference of the founding parties or the current citizens. I am not certain that it must be morally constituted, but I do feel sure that, even from the point of view of nonmoral values, it is best that a liberal democracy be morally constituted.

Everything I have said here is intended to be compatible with the existence of a religious grounding of ethics, and even of a religious grounding of moral knowledge—there can be epistemic overdetermination here. That is, there can be two routes that, from the point of view of knowledge and justification, are independent ways to reach moral principles. Moreover, on the assumption of at least a broadly Western theism, we can say this much: God would surely provide a route to moral truth along rational secular paths—as I think Aquinas, for one, believed God has done. Given how the world is—for instance, with so much evil that even many theists are tempted by the atheistic conclusion that such a realm could not have been created by *God*—it would seem cruel for God to do otherwise. Religious

22. These among other points in this Article bear on the case made by Professor Larry Alexander to the effect that liberalism tends to assume that the epistemic credentials of religious claims are inferior to those of scientific claims. See Larry Alexander, *Liberalism, Religion, and the Unity of Epistemology*, 30 SAN DIEGO L. REV. 763, 764 (1993).

23. I do not take consent to play to entail *having consented* to play; and the analogy to the consent of the governed is intended. I am not even implying “tacit consent” if that entails some act of consent, as opposed to having certain dispositions and behaving in certain ways.

24. In this case one would speak of, for example, justified moral attitudes rather than of moral knowledge or warranted moral belief. One might even be a skeptic and think that ethics is autonomous in a sense. Ethics has arguments independent of theology; they simply are not good enough, and hence there is no moral knowledge (or, for a stronger skeptic, even moral justification).

doubt, and certainly rejection of theism, would have to be accompanied, in reasonably reflective people, by moral nihilism, which would only compound the problem in ways there is no good reason to think God would wish to allow.²⁵

Indeed, on the assumption that God is omniscient and omnibenevolent—all-knowing and all-good—*any* cogent argument, including an utterly nonreligious one, for a moral principle *is* in effect a good argument for God's knowing that conclusion, and hence for urging or requiring conformity to it. How could God, conceived as omniscient and omnibenevolent, not require or at least wish our conformity to a true moral principle? I should think, moreover, that in some cases good secular arguments for moral principles may be *better* reasons to believe those principles divinely enjoined than theological arguments for the principles, based on scripture or tradition. For the latter arguments seem more subject than the former to extraneous cultural influences, more vulnerable to misinterpretation of texts or their sheer corruption across time and translation, and more liable to bias stemming from political or other nonreligious aims. This turns one traditional view of the relation between ethics and religion on its head; it may be better to try to understand God through ethics than ethics through theology.

These considerations from philosophical theology suggest a positive approach. Ideally, the religious should try to achieve *theo-ethical equilibrium*, a rational integration between, on one side, religious deliverances and insights and, on the other, considerations drawn from secular thought and discussion. A seemingly moral conclusion that goes against scripture or well-established religious tradition should be scrutinized for error; a religious demand that appears to abridge moral rights should be studied for misinterpretation, errors of translation, or distortion of religious experience. Given the conception of God as omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent, the possibility of such equilibrium should surely be expected. A mature, conscientious theist who cannot reach it should be loath to stake too much on the unintegrated proposition.

It is possible that a person believes, on authority or revelation, that God commands a certain kind of action, yet has no understanding of

25. It might be objected that the same should hold for the evils themselves, or at least moral evils constituted by wrongdoing, that there must be a secular route to their elimination. Even if there is some plausibility to this conclusion, notice that it apparently *presupposes* that there is a secular route to moral principles. Otherwise free agents would not be *overcoming* evil or responsibly *abstaining* from it, but at best luckily avoiding its commission.

why it should be divinely commanded or otherwise obligatory.²⁶ This might hold for persons of little education, particularly on matters where the available arguments, if there are any, are difficult to grasp. My principles do not deny such a person a right to act, even publicly, in favor of the commanded conduct. But, they also suggest an obligation to seek secular grounds for that conduct if it promotes any law of policy restricting freedom. On the other hand, if religious authorities are the source of the person's belief, we may certainly ask that the relevant people should themselves try to provide a readily intelligible secular rationale if they are promoting laws or public policies that restrict liberty. This may be what they would reasonably wish regarding their counterparts who promote practices incompatible with their own. The kind of commitment to secular reason that I propose may constrain the use of some religious arguments, but it can protect people against coercion or pressure brought by conflicting religious arguments from others.

If I have been right about the possibility, and indeed, the desirability, of a theo-ethical equilibrium for religious people who are citizens in a liberal democracy, then separation of church and state may seem far less of a detriment to the sociocultural influence of religion, or at least of traditional monotheistic religion, in proportion as the moral requirements of religion are properly understood in the light of the divine attributes. Not only should traditional theists expect there to be secular routes to moral truth; these same paths should also be secular routes to divine truth.²⁷

V. RIGHTS, IDEALS, AND THE RANGE OF OUGHTS

My position as applied to individual conduct is above all one that lays out what we ought to do in something like an ideal case. It describes an aspect of civic virtue, not a limitation of civil (or other) rights. I have not meant to suggest that, for example, there is no *right* to base one's vote on a religious ground. But surely we can do better than guide our civic conduct merely within the constraints imposed by our rights. If ethics directs us merely to live within our rights, it gives us too minimal a guide for daily life.

One important way in which my position is highly consonant with theistic religion, and in particular with the Hebraic-Christian tradition, is its insistence that morality speaks to the heart and mind, not

26. This possibility was put to me by Kent Greenawalt.

27. Of course, on one traditional theistic outlook there is a sense in which every contingent truth is divine, since God is at least responsible for the truth of all contingent propositions, by virtue of knowingly realizing the possible world in which they hold. But we may still distinguish — and must do so to understand the problem of evil — between those truths God willingly ordains and those He merely permits, for example, those describing evils that are necessary for a greater good.

just to the hand and mouth; our thoughts, attitudes, and feelings can be morally criticizable or praiseworthy, as well as our words and deeds. And our deeds, however well they can be rationalized by the reasons we can offer for them, *bespeak* the reasons that motivate them. We are judged more by the reasons *for* which we act than by the reasons for which we *could* have acted. Loving one's neighbors as oneself implies appropriate motives as well as good deeds, and it is far more than extending them their rights of civic courtesy.

I must reiterate that in addition to expressing mainly ideals of citizenship as opposed to rights of citizens in a liberal democracy, the domain of application of my principles is primarily contexts of political advocacy and of public policy decision. The principles are addressed especially to citizens as voters and supporters of laws and public policy, to legislators in their official capacities, to judges in making and justifying decisions, and to administrators, especially government officials, laying down and interpreting policies. But the principles apply differently in different contexts. They apply less, for instance, in the classroom than in the statehouse, and less in private discussion than in corporate boardrooms.

There are, to be sure, various models of democracy, and some are highly permissive. I have been thinking of a liberal democracy, not just any system in which the people govern themselves. I am indeed particularly thinking of a *constitutional* democracy. My claim is that a substantially weaker separation of church and state than I have defended is not fully consonant with the ideals of liberal democracy, at least as it is best understood. I think that sound ethics itself dictates that, out of respect for others as free and dignified individuals, we should always have and be sufficiently motivated by adequate secular reasons for our positions on those matters of law or public policy in which our decisions might significantly restrict human freedom. If you are fully rational and I cannot convince you of my view by arguments framed in the concepts we share as rational beings, then even if mine is the majority view I should not coerce you. Perhaps the political system under which we live embodies a legal right for the majority to do so, for certain ranges of conduct; perhaps there is even a moral right to do so, given our mutual understanding of majority rule. But the principles I am suggesting still make a plausible claim on our allegiance. They require partial secularization of our advocacy, argumentation, and decisions, in certain contexts and for certain purposes. But they do not restrict our ultimate freedom of expression, and they leave us at liberty to fulfill

our cherished religious ideals in all the ways compatible with a system in which those with differing ideals are equally free to pursue theirs.