

Introduction

Philip Andrew Quadrio

Philosophy must reconsider its relation to religion.¹ Had it been voiced in the latter part of the 20th century such a claim would have appeared strange, slightly quixotic and troubling. Voiced today it has lost its air of strangeness or excess, it is merely troubling. While theoretically we recognise that political life in pluralistic multicultural societies needs to be conducted at a distance from determinate religious beliefs, practically these elements of life are becoming harder to keep separate. This manifests in a number of ways. Firstly, while politicians have instrumentalised religion for political ends, the religious have instrumentalised politics for religious ends. Secondly, efforts to keep religious reasons out of public discourse are read by the religious as discrimination, favouring those without determinate religious views. Thirdly, because of its history and origin, efforts to export secular liberal politics can appear as cultural imperialism—a ‘crusade’.

In intellectual culture, thinkers like Alastair MacIntyre (1984; 1988), Stanley Hauerwas (2000) and John Milbank (1990; 1999) have all

¹ This is a thought also expressed, although perhaps for different reasons, by Daniel C. Dennett (2007, xi-xii and 27). While I disagree with some of the claims made by Dennett in regard to religion (and the value of studying it through the humanities and social sciences) I agree that there is less profit to be had from a philosophy of religion primarily orientated on arguments for and against the existence of God than from a philosophy of religion orientated on understanding religion philosophically (whether this requires us to view it as a natural phenomenon or not).

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delivered religiously inspired criticisms of secular liberal democratic theory. Even Jürgen Habermas (2006) has voiced doubts, not just about the practicability of keeping religious reasons out of public discourse, but about the very justice of doing so. Such criticisms raise doubts about the Rawlsian and liberal priority of political values over moral and religious ones; a prioritisation that has led liberals to disengage questions of substantive values in favour of the assertion of value pluralism. For Michael Sandel this leads to a political discourse lacking moral resonance and which creates the space for “Fundamentalists [to] rush in where liberals fear to tread” (246). The liberal abandonment of values talk gives the appearance that such talk is the exclusive preserve, or birthright, of a conservative few, an enclave that, as David to Goliath, heroically asserts the good against an amoral liberal political culture. Indeed American philosopher Jeffery Stout (2004: 69–70), with John Rawls firmly in mind, has not only argued that the employment of religious reason in public debate is an important part of the American tradition of democracy but that the Rawlsian marginalisation of religious discourse constitutes a threat to that tradition by creating, in the religious, ambivalence towards, or resentment of, democracy itself (2004: 76–79). The Rawlsian prioritisation of the right over the good seems to make sense in the context of value pluralism, yet if in terms of motivation, in terms of the capacity to draw forth the commitment of engaged subjects, the good trumps the right, we risk opening a gulf of ambivalence and indifference in the heart of contemporary political practice. It is the capacity of religious discourse, and substantive values generally, to motivate a subject, which opens the possibility that this gulf of ambivalence and indifference, “the mother of chaos and night in the sciences” (Kant 1998: 100) could be filled by the narrow moralisms of some religious vanguard. In this regard Simon Critchley has recently remarked that while there is a motivational deficit in secular liberal democratic life, where our political values in fact seem de-motivating, that what does motivate

significant numbers are “frameworks of belief that call that secular project into question” (Critchley 2007a: 7).

Recent years have seen traditionally secular societies, such as Australia, Britain and the US, increasingly move towards drawing churches into the provision of social services. Writing for the *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, an online journal, Australian scholar of religion Carole Cusack claims that “the governments of John Howard and George W Bush ... [have attempted to] place certain government functions, such as job creation agencies, educational institutions, and welfare provision, back in the hands of the churches” and that such actions seek to address “the decline in social capital and civic engagement ... [brought about by] the loss of faith in Christianity” (Cusack 2005). What is more, she makes the point that Howard engaged in “American-style religious rhetoric” and that in the face of Australia’s ethnic and religious diversity “for Howard Australian values are explicitly identified with Christian values” (Cusack 2005), an identification that fosters a suspicion of difference.

This rhetoric, the identification of the Western Anglophone world with Christianity, which may be as much political strategy as the expression of Howard’s commitments, intersects with outbreaks of intolerance directed towards Muslim Australians and reinforces a sense that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan emerge from the tension between Christianity and Islam rather than a struggle for justice on one hand and the desire to control valuable resources on the other. Furthermore it is an identification that coheres with the neo-conservative religious rhetoric that has been a feature of Bush’s presidency, replete with its crusade against an ‘axis of evil’. Here, with America more in view, Cusack considers the belief by some conservative and fundamentalist Christians that the establishment of the state of Israel signals the second coming, and she remarks: “It may seem extraordinary that in the twenty first century, in countries where the

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church and state are theoretically separate, that such beliefs could contribute in any way to foreign policy. Yet they do” (Cusack 2005). As such, and with Simon Critchley, one might feel inclined to the view that in the first years of the new century we have experienced “the chronic re-theologisation of politics” (Critchley 2007b: 82). This is a re-theologisation that one might descry, as Critchley does, in the “theological symmetry between George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden” (Critchley 2007a: 7). Alternatively it might be seen in the symmetry between the apocalyptic religious beliefs of Bush and Mahmood Ahmadinejad, the current president of the Islamic Republic of Iran; or even perhaps in the Messianic tones of the 2008 Democratic Campaign. Tones that were not at all ameliorated in the invocation of God and Scripture, as presidents have generally done, in the inauguration speech of Barak Obama.

Setting aside all of the partisan efforts to intellectually affirm religion or anti-religion and the metaphysical debate, the relation of religion, politics and social life is still a problem. True, political life in a pluralistic society must be conducted with a degree of neutrality in terms of determinate belief, but such neutrality is difficult to achieve and there is a question whether it has ever been. If the religious feel a tension between secular liberal politics and religiously inspired ways of life, then this might lead to a criticism of the latter in the name of the former. Such criticisms are, however, external to the discourse of liberal secularity; they are criticisms that are mounted from a non-secular point of view. Yet in raising the question of the very neutrality of secular liberal politics a more pressing line of criticism is opened up, for the issue then becomes whether or not that mode of politics is adequate to its own principles. The discourse of secularism was not developed as a way of grappling with religious pluralism in general, but as a way for modern Christian societies to deal with sectarian disputes within Christianity. As such, secular discourse was framed largely within Christian conceptual categories, based on Christian

presuppositions about religion and the entailments of religiosity; little attention was given to other religions, even those that were part of the landscape of the early modern Europe in which secular discourse first formed (Judaism and Islam). While pointing to the origins of a discourse does little to show that it is illegitimate, it may be sufficient to motivate a critical enquiry into its scope. Such an enquiry would need, however, to be non-partisan and to allow its judgment to be formulated against a background that does not itself presume the good of that which is being interrogated.

It is clear then, that in a global context, consideration must be given to the way we have understood the relationship between politics and religion. Part of this consideration means turning to the way religion is understood in general. For if that term is primarily understood through a Christian experience—and who can doubt that a broadly Christian outlook has dominated philosophical engagement with religion—then the risk is that the categories through which we discuss it are culturally and theologically circumscribed and, as such, parochial, barely reaching beyond the confines of one religious perspective. For instance, in the Lockean account, so influential to modern liberal secular theory, the role of government is sharply distinguished from religion, dividing human life into separate spheres of authority. This is the intellectual ancestor of the contemporary liberal and broadly Rawlsian notion that life can be neatly divided into a public political sphere and a private one where substantive commitments reign (De Roover & Balagangadhara 2008: 526–27). Yet this structure itself recapitulates the division asserted by Luther and re-affirmed by Calvin (De Roover & Balagangadhara 2008: 530–33), a structure that can be traced to Augustine; venerable ideas indeed but not entirely neutral and certainly not free of presupposition.

While it is true that the origins of ideas are less important than their rationality, and true that rationality is a mark of legitimacy, the more

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important question for secular liberal theory relates to what it is that renders the two spheres rational. For it may be the case that this structure has the appearance of rationality due to certain presuppositions that Western culture carries about the nature of religious commitment itself, say the idea that religious commitment is primarily concerned with otherworldly redemption for the individual believer, or with metaphysical beyonds, or drawing value from ultra-mundane sources. In general the notion that the concerns of religion are somehow fractured from mundane existence and that religion is the concern of individual believers, is a matter of conscience. For someone with a Christian background the dual spheres may seem unproblematic and the height of rationality, but might appear so precisely because it is presumed that all modes of religiosity recapitulate the structure and shape of Christianity. But what about traditions, such as many forms of indigenous religiosity, not primarily orientated on otherworlds or otherworldly redemption for the individual believer, those more focused on this world than on some 'otherworld' or those orientated on the social rather than the individual. What about those religions that are primarily concerned with the way that life in this realm is governed and which provide specific prescriptions for how to govern it? Traditions where life is not subject to the kind of bifurcation between this world and the next that features in much Christian discourse? Do the two spheres make sense from that perspective? Further if the metaphysics of Christianity renders it easier for the Christian subject to affirm the secular liberal way of resolving the tension between religion and politics, a resolution that blossomed in Christian soil, then perhaps this places a burden on others that the Christian does not have to carry; leading to a concern about the justice of this resolution. These questions, concerns and issues throw interesting light on attempts to export liberal democracy around the globe and the notion of a cosmopolitan secular world order, for both notions seem to rely on

the idea that there can be a relatively neat or easy compartmentalisation of substantive commitments from public life.

Such complex issues cannot be resolved in an introduction; I merely raise the question of secularism to indicate that what we take to be a concluded issue might look different from outside our own conceptual framework. What looks like a settled result might in fact be just the beginning of a longer intellectual project and a more arduous historical journey, one that should include non-Western, non-Christian and non-theistic voices. For it seems to be a truism of intellectual history that novel perspectives on old problems open up new, sometimes unexpected, directions of thought and that nothing is more culturally and intellectually stifling than the insistence that a matter has been settled. A critical engagement with the notion of secularism thus helps to put the question of religion back on the table in a more open way and to highlight the way our engagements with it can be limited or even parochial, an issue that will recur more than once in the following essays.

Of course a reconsideration of the philosophical engagement with religion, particularly in its practical embodiment, raises questions not just about the relationship of politics to religion, but also about what is precisely meant by these two concepts. Further, we realise that in asking the question of the meaning of the concept 'religion' we are led to the philosophy of religion. Philosophy of religion is often seen as a subdiscipline that is primarily concerned with metaphysical issues such as arguments or 'proofs' for the existence of God. It is seen as predominantly falling within the purview of theoretical philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology and logic). This is an impression that teaching and publishing in the area does little to correct. It seems to imply that the most pressing issues for philosophers are abstract theoretical claims about the existence or non-existence of God or the problem of evil. These are issues that philosophy has done little to

settle, despite the fact that philosophers have, for centuries, attempted to resolve them. Set in the context of the first decade of the new century the assumption that philosophy of religion ought to be primarily concerned with such metaphysical and theoretical issues is deeply problematic. Against such an approach it seems that some of the most pressing problems connected to contemporary religiosity are about the practical consequences of belief and, particularly, the consequences in a religiously pluralistic context. These are the questions this book seeks to address and, to some extent, to redress.

Yet, much contemporary metaphysical argument about religion does have a practical element—even if this is seldom recognised. Many of these arguments might be considered as part of a culture war between the religious and the irreligious. I recall Richard Dawkins' documentary *The enemies of reason*,² where he waxes lyrical about the way this or that belief threatens rationality and introduces us to tarot readers and faith healers of various descriptions—as if such types are bearing down on the academy. It was striking that the documentary was set in contemporary Britain, the same Britain that saw Prime Minister Tony Blair hold off from conversion to Catholicism until after he left parliament for fear of public reaction—not to his embrace of Catholicism, but his embrace of religion. Whether or not we want to browbeat people for holding beliefs we find irrational, or whether we find many of those purveying goods in the esoteric market place to be exploitative, a rational, as opposed to rhetorical, assessment of such phenomena does not lead to the conclusion that science or rationality

² Insofar as the title represents hyperbolic excess its invocation of 'reason' is itself a humorous irony. One might imagine an army of New Age believers marching on Oxford armed with herbal remedies against scientism and ready to point their crystals at the nearest evolutionary biologist. One would suggest that Animal Rights protesters campaigning against scientific testing on animals have more effectively interrupted scientific research.

are under threat. They are not. Considering that *The God delusion* (Dawkins 2006) is the product of a British-born Oxford don, and that outward expressions of the type of theistic belief that it focuses on are marginal in that setting,³ the book becomes something of an enigma. It is when attention is focused on religiosity in the US that one can begin to descry a more significant motivation for writing such a book. Here its political, not its metaphysical, content becomes doubly important. In that context the book is not simply one that carries the banner of atheism (a substantive metaphysical commitment) into public discourse, it could also be seen as something of a political intervention within the particular religious, cultural and political milieu of the US, the hegemonic world power; and one that might be read as vocally confronting religious attempts to “clothe the public square with narrow, intolerant moralisms” (Sandel 2005: 246).

I gladly concede that Dawkins’ challenge is both rational and relevant in that context. In a social and political context where the entanglement of politics and religion is having such broad ramifications and where authors like Duane Gish use intellectual charlatanism to promote creationism’s scientific credentials, perhaps a book like *The God delusion* is just what is needed. Certainly people like Gish do much to create false doubts about the kind of evolutionary science to which Dawkins

³ Atheists who are currently preparing a pro-atheism advertising campaign in Britain tell us that 72% of British people are religious, but this figure measures the nominal affiliation with a church it is not a measure of belief. What these energetic atheists fail to acknowledge is that 65% of British people do not believe in any kind of higher being and only 15% of the public attend church on a monthly or greater basis. Nor do they give due consideration to the fact that in a British context (as in most contexts) religious affiliation has significant non-religious implications. For instance whether or not one professes to be culturally Protestant or Catholic in Britain may have little to do with belief in God. Further, it is hard to get a sense for how these efforts progress the metaphysical neutrality that many liberal thinkers see as the essence of the liberal state.

has committed his life, thus clouding public discourse. This is something that all intellectuals ought be concerned about. Using rhetoric to cloud an objective engagement with some phenomena for ideological reasons is the kind of sophistry that is the bane of the life of the mind. If texts like Dawkins' are primarily confrontations with fundamentalist obscurantism and moralism, then may they bloom like flowers in the spring. But the question is, in the broader context and setting the US aside, is Dawkins' rather general critique of religion relevant, rational or necessary? In the context of contemporary Britain, France, Germany, Japan, or even Australia, it would seem to be a slightly quixotic enterprise—even if it would make sense in other socio-political contexts. His claims are bald, radical and universal. The problem here is that speaking in the universal voice always risks running up against the problem of particularity. There is a need then to delimit carefully what is said, particularly when dealing with religion, which not only has manifold particular embodiments but its particular embodiments take on multiple forms depending on the socio-political and cultural context in which they are embedded. Blanket generalisations and a focus on the sensational or the extreme often fail to do justice to the complexity of cultural phenomena, such as religion, and bring the overall rationality of that enterprise into question.

Indeed for me, as a philosopher with intellectual investments in the discipline of Studies in Religion, books such as those by Dawkins seem unnecessarily to distort public discourse in a manner that is not unlike that of Gish. One camp clouds the public understanding of science with rhetoric to defend religion; the other clouds the public understanding of religion with rhetoric in the defence of science. Both Gish and Dawkins are combatants in a culture war, a war of position with all its political consequences. But here, if we do not proceed in the careful, precise and considered manner that is the hallmark of good scholarly work, public discourse might end up suffering significant collateral damage.

It is from this vantage point that we consider some of the questions of religion and politics facing philosophers in the contemporary world.

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These preliminary remarks broadly situate the research and reading we have undertaken in producing this book. The aim has been to present the non-specialist reader with a collection of philosophical essays that open up a practical (ethical, social and political) engagement with religion from diverse perspectives and intellectual orientations so as to stimulate reflection on religion as a practical, rather than a metaphysical problem. In particular we have sought to stimulate the reader's thinking about the relation between religion and politics and the strengths and limitations of contemporary secular discourse. For while metaphysical questions are interesting in their own right it is the practical dimension of belief, its capacity to move and motivate individual subjects, sometimes towards acts of self-sacrifice, that impacts upon social life and has consequences that ramify beyond the private realm of the individual believer. Sometimes this impact is positive, such as American abolitionists who opposed slavery for religious reasons;⁴ sometimes that impact is negative. But the fact remains that religious belief, tied as it is to substantive concep-

⁴ In an interesting discussion of the abolitionist movement Sandel takes Rawls to task for reconstructing their arguments so as to minimise the importance of substantive values. For Rawls the abolitionists were justified in bringing religious reason to public discourse because their arguments hastened the day when public discussion could be conducted in terms of political values rather than substantive doctrines. While it may be the case that these arguments contributed to such a change it is wrong to suggest: that the abolitionists had secular motivations but used religious discourse as a political expedient; or that they actually sought to secure the ground for secular discourse; or that they would take pride in the fact that their efforts did lead to the promotion of a political life where religious reasons are marginalised (Sandel: 242–43).

tions of the good, has the power to move and unite people in the name of that good. The power of religious belief to elicit an enduring commitment to some substantive value in a way that is unrivalled by contemporary secular politics renders it one of the most interesting, important and problematic products of human cultural life. People are rarely if ever argued into or out of their beliefs, but these same beliefs underlie actions that have broad social significance and as such religion as a practical, rather than a theoretical or metaphysical, problem becomes more pressing.

There are few collections currently available that address such issues from the unique disciplinary perspective of philosophy, as such this collection makes an important contribution to philosophical thinking about politics, religion and secularity generally. In compiling this book we have deliberately sought to cut across divisions and to operate according to an inclusive criterion, drawing on the one hand on the work of both theists and atheists, and on the other hand on both Anglophone Analytic and broadly Continental approaches to philosophy. Such inclusion and the deliberate cutting across divisions both religious and philosophical brings diversity to the project and plays an important role in stimulating the thinking of the reader as opposed to attempting to lead them towards a certain view or conclusion.

While each of the authors reaches their own conclusions about *Politics and religion* the discussions conducted in each of the essays fit within the broad project of turning philosophical reflection on religion away from explicitly metaphysical or theoretical concerns, towards practical considerations of social, ethical and political significance. Each of the essays contributes to a project that places religion, as a practical problem, on the philosophical table. Moreover they are open to the idea that our engagements with religion might be limited, one-sided or parochial. The conclusion running throughout the papers in this book is that we need a way of engaging with religion which, while perhaps

not completely free from religious or irreligious commitment, is at least reflective about the way such commitments might influence our engagement with, and understanding of, religion and with those who hold opposing views of whatever stripe. Scholars should be aware of the way their own commitments, whether religious or anti-religious, may create biases, prejudices and blind spots in their engagement with various phenomena and particularly with religion itself.

The latter notion, the threat of a biased or prejudiced engagement, is amply drawn out by the first contribution to the book, from Peter Slezak. In a broad ranging critique Slezak, well known as an atheist, considers the way the writings of contemporary atheistic thinkers such as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris seem to carry a certain prejudice, particularly towards Islam. This leads to a critical response to the specifically political implications of such work. As the world considers whether Israel engaged in war crimes, in its military offensive against Hamas in Gaza through December 2008 and January 2009, Slezak shines controversial light on the objectivity of such works. If one accepts the case made by Slezak then it would be difficult not to conclude that these texts are tainted by a kind of prejudice that ought not be accepted in public discourse.

Following on from the chapter by Slezak, Michael Levine takes the problem from the other direction. Again Levine is no theistic philosopher, but his work turns to a consideration of the political character of many contemporary philosophical theists, arguing that, while their work is outwardly metaphysical in nature, beneath this lie social and political impulses. The contemporary philosopher of religion needs to be critical of such impulses if they want to move beyond the culture war fought between the religious and the irreligious, to say something about religion, rather than merely to mount the pulpit of theistic or atheistic belief.

These thoughts move us naturally into the next three papers each of which takes up the relationship between politics and religion specifically within contemporary social life. Anthony Langlois turns to consider the merit of proposals for a move towards a post-secular politics, particularly through the work of Jürgen Habermas; Richard Paul Hamilton discusses the nature of the Establishment Clause within the American constitution and its application in law; and Matheson Russell considers the political nature of Christianity and its relation to secular discourse, providing an interesting historical perspective on this relationship and much food for thought for secular thinkers. If the first two contributions lead us to be pessimistic about contemporary intellectual culture the following three lead us to a sense of optimism about contemporary practice.

The question of post-secularism, raised by Langlois, leads to the issue of pluralism and the special challenges for religion in a globalising world. In this regard the essay by Peter Jonkers offers a unique existential approach to the question of religious truth, one that opens the possibility of dialogue between disparate views without necessarily giving any of them pre-eminence. To illustrate his discussion Jonkers considers the existential place of the Christian notion of forgiveness. The fact that philosophical reflection on this question of religious truth in a pluralistic context can offer hope rather than the despair of mutual incomprehensibility constitutes a reason for optimism about the future.

No engagement with politics and religion in the contemporary world could ignore the issue of terrorism and it is one of the most poignant aspects of compiling this work that the events of the first years of the new century serve both as an important point of departure for the project and hang over its very title. The two articles on that theme move within the orbit of Giovanna Borradori's interviews with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida (Borradori 2004). The first of these

comes from Michael Strawser, who focuses on forgiveness in Derrida's philosophy and asks about the possibility of forgiveness, as opposed to a cycle of vengeance, in the face of terrorism. In this way the paper intersects with issues raised by Jonkers. Following Strawser is a contribution by Raymond Aaron Younis who, through a critical engagement with the work of both Habermas and Derrida, reaches his own conclusions about the role of the philosopher in the face of terrorism, again providing a note of optimism on the powers of human reflection.

These considerations leave open, however, the question of whether religion or human impulses connected to what we might call, broadly speaking, religiosity, can have a positive role to play within political life. Such issues have become important in the context of recent work by thinkers as diverse as Michael Sandel (2005) and Simon Critchley (2007). In this regard the collection presents two very different approaches. Firstly in the contribution by Carl Power we have a discussion of the work of Bergson, in particular the notion of 'fabulation' or the human myth-making capacity. That capacity is important to both religious imagination and to imagining political community. Here Power shows how Bergson's discussion is both important and relevant to contemporary life, particularly in the political context of America in the first decade of the new century.

Following Power's contribution is one from Carleton Bruin Christensen on ecopolitics and sustainability. Given the concerns of contemporary life, no discussion of politics and religion would be complete without addressing this subject. Christensen considers the ethics of water use in an Indian context and examines the question of how a radical ecopolitics can, contra the deep-ecology movement, develop along secular lines.

The final three chapters of the book are, like Levine's, orientated on issues emerging within philosophy of religion that have a practical or

political character. In the first of these Paul Crittenden considers the relationship between faith and praxis. While it is commonly understood that most believers are neither argued into or out of their commitments, according to philosophers like John Cottingham religious practice is a more important source of motivation than reason. Crittenden's contribution is a critical engagement with Cottingham's argument and, contra Cottingham, he concludes that despite the importance of praxis to religious belief we cannot forgo a rational and critical engagement with our beliefs.

The chapter from Paolo Diego Bubbio also touches on such issues but does so through considering the contemporary debate between theistic and atheistic philosophers. This is a debate that has been the subject of a slew of texts prominent within intellectual and popular culture. Bubbio argues for an engagement with religion that, from within philosophy of religion, is neither religiously nor irreligiously committed but rather truly philosophical.

My contribution in the final chapter of the book addresses the nature of philosophical engagements with religion and does so through the work of Michael Pye. It explores some of the ways in which the ideological commitments of both the religious and the irreligious alike cast shadows over the objective study of religion and ends with some suggestions as to how philosophy of religion could be structured in a way that alleviates the concerns raised by Pye. In particular, because religion has been and still is an important element of human life and culture, one whose expressions often exceed the sometimes parochial boundaries of philosophy of religion, there is a need for philosophy to gain clarity and objectivity on the question: what is religion?

This reflection returns us to one of the conclusions of the research contained in this book. Religion is an important part of human cultural life, one that does not seem likely to disappear, at least not any time soon. Rather it is more likely to reconfigure itself, perhaps in

unexpected ways, under changing historical circumstances; but it has always done that. Religion is part of the fluxing matrix of culture and thus bound up in mutually determining ways with social life. But if religion is an enduring element of human culture so is politics and as such the questions connected to the relation between them are likely to remain important. Beliefs and substantive commitments, religious or otherwise, will continue to be wellsprings of socially engaged action. Beliefs and matters of conscience might seem entirely private but the actions based on them are often of public concern.

It is important then for philosophers not only to reflect on the practical significance of religion but also to be open to the idea that, as with any aspect of culture, religion is a fluxing phenomenon, changing shape with the movement of history. What we take to be essential to religion today, might come to be inessential to future generations. As we move forward in history, religion and its relation to the life world changes, but so does our social and political practice, and intellectually we come to a deeper and more complex understanding of ourselves. If our understanding of these three nodes of life, religion, politics and subjectivity, develops, so will our understanding of their interrelation. Our conclusions are thus open to the kind of revision that comes from gaining clarity and wisdom about the phenomenon under consideration. It is vital that we give to the future an insight into the way we see the world, but this insight is, of course, one we draw out of our own context and is marked by the concerns and prejudices that animate it. Like us, it is finite. Like a family portrait, the content of this gift will age and grow alien as time passes. Hopefully not so old or alien as to cease being evidence of our own intellectual journey, but hopefully it will remain something that we can look upon with fondness.

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