Religion and Governance

Introduction

Not many doubt the contributions of science and philosophy to our society and our system of governance. In the secular world, science and philosophy have become the reason to exist and the mode to govern. It matters little to the secularists that their contrived schemes often end with disastrous consequences.

Religion, however, has taken a bad rap among the learned philosophers and scientist of late. Their complaint, directed primarily at orthodox and traditional religious sects, is that the organizations representing and fostering the major religions, their leaders, their followers, their rituals, and their dogma, are based in irrelevant and misleading mythologies and beliefs of supernatural phenomena that cannot be reconciled with scientific research and findings.

To the philosophers, the traditional and orthodox religions are stiff, unbending, un-adaptable, unhelpful, and irrelevant to answering the myriad of new situations facing modern societies and individuals. To the scientist, the reliance on faith as a substitute for fact, and the substitution of ritual for understanding are inconceivable and antithetical to the scientific principal.

Compounding the problem of the rejections of religion by the mainstream scientific and philosophical communities, are the rejections of religion by secular governments. The so-called human-secularists popularize the notion (mistaken, in my view) that morality is arbitrary, and can be shaped at will by government intervention to suit any purpose.

While I find myself somewhat in accordance with the views of scientists and philosophers as regards the varied rituals and mythologies of the many religions, I find myself quite at odds with these learned communities when it comes to morality, ethics, spirituality, the definition and existence of a god or God, and our purpose in life. And, strangely enough, I am quite at odds with human secularists. The secularist idea that morality is arbitrary and malleable does not conform to my own observations over the years.

All actions have natural consequences, and in the realm of human morality, what we do as individuals and what we do in concert with a group, in particular, how we treat each other as fellow human beings, all have natural consequences, which, if we ignore, may be to our peril as an individual or group. Thus it is not arbitrarily determinable that our actions are free of consequences, and we cannot pick and choose our behaviors free of these consequences.

If there is a uniform failure in the various religions, it is a failure to measure human action versus natural consequence. Indeed, how can one measure the claim that the one's sins may earn an eternal reward or punishment in an imaginary 'hereafter?' A reward of eternal life as a spirit to wander peacefully in a garden, or streets paved with gold, in eternal bliss at the foot of the 'Lord of lords.' Or, if the sin isn't great enough, a punishment in a never-ending repeat of rebirth into human misery and servitude. Or, if the sin is great, to burn forever in a lake of fire at some 'day of judgment,' in the looming future that never seems to arrive.

Such beliefs smack altogether too much of fantasy and childish conjecture. It is not a strength-of-argument that millions, even billions, of human beings believe these fantastical claims. It is more of an indicator that human beings are not so far above the monkeys and apes – creatures we loathe to acknowledge as our very distant cousins far back on the tree trunk of evolution.

Rather than belabor each point of contention in the fantastical claims of the various religions, which would take volumes of pages which would convert not one believer, I would rather abandon the topic altogether, other than to present it as the predominant view of the 'believer.' So now, if I abandon the fantastical, what then is left of religion to discuss? It is this – *morality, and its consequences*, measurable and relevant.

Morality

And what is **morality**, bereft of the fantastical? **Morality is the choosing of actions that benefit the greater social organism over those that only benefit the individual or a lesser group within the greater social organism**. A moral choice is created when we can choose one or the other. When we choose that which serves the greater social organism, we are moral. When we choose that which serves our self at the expense of the greater social organism, we are immoral.

A corollary then exists that if our choice does not injure the greater social organism, than it is neither moral or immoral – it is a neutral, and therefore should be permissible – we should not as a governing body take note of it, except there be a complaint of a consequential injury from the action.

It **is the sorting of the better choice of action that more ensures our survival** in this world; our **continuance-in-kind**, as a human being in our children, as a family, clan, tribe, state, or unnamed group; **and our prosperity** as an individual, family, clan, tribe, state, or unnamed group. *The consequences of our actions do not just affect us as an individual, but propagate through our family, clan, tribe, state, and unnamed group, even to yet unborn generations.* And because the *combined* consequences of our actions as a family, clan, tribe, state or unnamed group, propagate on in time through generations yet to be born – in fact, often determining who is to beget, and who is begotten **– the very fate and continuance of the social grouping and order depend on the nature and quality of the morality practiced**.

So, it is this *morality* that I ascribe to religion, and nothing more. The proper role of religion is to define and promote what is moral and immoral. Morality unfettered by fantastical claims and fantastical consequences. Morality that is, unfortunately, tossed out with the religions so eschewed by the learned scientists and philosophers of today – like the proverbial baby tossed out with the bathwater.

And so it is here that I differ from my learned colleagues. **We cannot, as a collective, survive, continue-in-kind, and prosper without morality**. Nor can we arbitrarily declare morality free of consequences that imperil our survival, continuance-in-kind, and prosperity.

Then, if in fact, we, the learned scientists and philosophers, eschew so much the fantastical about religions, and are wont to toss it out as fodder for future consumption, as I admit is my own proclivity, then we must extract the morality from it, and preserve and propagate it as we measure and validate this tenet or that, or invalidate it. And we must give new meaning to

religion that is relevant to this life, our future, and the direction of all humanity to come. For if we do not, then in the ragged pages of chaos and catastrophe, a truly miraculous evolutionary journey of mankind through space and time may come to extinction.

One cannot make many personal choices that do not affect the larger society in which one lives. In the table below, are settings in which the same event – *begetting a child* – may be moral, neutral, or immoral, depending on how the follow-on consequences affect the large society. By no means are the examples in the table exhaustive – merely a subset that we might easily agree on as to the moral implications.

Choice, Consequence, and Morality				
Individual Choice	**Personal Consequence**	**Social Consequence**	**Morality**	**Example**
personal	gain	gain	moral	I beget a child in order to continue my linage (personal gain), which I raise to be a productive member of society (social gain).
		none	amoral	I beget a child in order to continue my linage (personal gain), which I raise to be neither a productive member of society, nor an enemy of society (no social consequence).
		loss	immoral	I beget a child in order to continue my linage (personal gain), which I raise to be an enemy of society (social loss).
	none	gain	moral	I beget a child I have neutral feelings for (no personal consequences) but whom I raise to be a productive member of society (social gain).
		none	amoral	I beget a child I have neutral feelings for (no personal consequences) but whom I raise to be a neither a productive member of society, nor an enemy of society (no social consequence).
		loss	immoral	I beget a child I have neutral feelings for (no personal consequences) but whom I raise to be an enemy of society (social loss).
	loss	gain	moral	I begat a child I want, but whom I raise by foregoing my chance for a better education and income (personal loss) and raise the child to be a productive member of society (social gain).
		none	amoral	I beget a child I want, but I must abandon it to my parents so I can get a better education and income (personal loss balances gain), and the child is raised to be neither a productive member of society, nor an enemy of society (no social consequence)
		loss	immoral	I begat a child I want, but am unable to provide for, and abandon to strangers (personal loss), and the child is raised to be an enemy of society (social loss).

An act, of itself, has no moral implications. Neither do the consequences of an act on the person committing the act determine morality. **Only the consequential result of an act on the greater society has a moral value.**

Reconciling morality conflicts between societal levels

Society, in general, is not a homogeneous entity. An individual generally belongs to multiple social groups within a greater society. An important hierarchy of groups affecting morality is that of family, clan, tribe, and state. In the common scheme of human society, an individual belongs to a family, the family belongs to a clan, the clan may be part of a tribe, and the tribe may be part of a state.

Each of these societal levels imposes its own set of moralities on the individual. Some of the moralities that serve the family may be inimical to the clan to which the family is a subset. Some of the moralities that serve the clan may be inimical to the tribe to which the clan is a subset. And some of the moralities of the tribe may be inimical to the state to which the tribe is a subset.

The general rule of a *state* is that its moralities override any competing or differing moralities from tribes, clans or families subject to the authority of the state. The general rule of a tribe, when there is no overriding state, is that the moralities of the tribe override any competing or differing moralities of the clan. The general rule of a clan, when there is no overriding tribe or state, is that the moralities of the clan override any competing or differing moralities of the family.   The general rule of a family, when there is no overriding clan, tribe, or state, is that the moralities of the family override any competing or differing moralities of the individual.

Reconciling morality conflicts between subgroups within the greater social unit

Within a greater social unit, such as a state, there may be large sub-populations with different religions, and thus different moralities. An example is a state which has large populations of Christians and Moslems. In such case, each religion promotes those moralities important to it, which may be very different between them. Then it may be become a very contentious issue as to which religion is reflected in the state's morality codes. Some of the more contentious moral issues between Christians and Moslems are listed below.

ISSUE	CHRISTIAN	MOSLEM
Apostasy	Freedom of association	Death for apostates
Proselytizing	Eager to accept converts	Reluctant to accept converts
Heresy	Freedom of expression	Death for heretics
Religion	Individual declaration	Council of Islamic authority
Clothing	Individual choice	Women must be covered
Sexual activity	Consenting adults	Death penalty for unmarried sex
Governance	Separation of church and state	Theocracy

The schism between Christianity and Islam is so great that if a shift in majority population changed from one to the other, the change in governmental policy and law would be so great that civil war would be likely. No modern state is able to function with large, equal populations of Moslems and Christians. One of the two must be very much in the minority for political stability to exist. Many western states, such as France, have unwisely allowed a large influx of Moslem

immigrants into what is essentially a Christian-dominated state. If France continues to allow such large influxes, it may find itself divided into two states, as was the former Yugoslavia when Moslems engaged in armed insurrection to wrest Bosnia away as a separate Moslem-dominated state.

Strong states and weak states

In the modern world, all existing territory has been spoken for by a state recognized by the international community of states. However, many of these "states" are so only in name, and a central government is unable to effectively impose its moralities over the tribes and clans within the state borders.   These tribes and clans vie for power, dominance and influence with little regard or concern for promoting a greater social unit. Most of the so-called "third world" consists of strong tribes and clans unwilling to share power and cooperate with each other in a greater common cause. The result is a weak weal or failed political state unable to serve the greater common good.

Strong states become so because they establish and enforce moralities which weaken or eliminate tribal or clan moralities inimical to the state.   Most strong states do not recognize any moral authority of tribes or clans within its borders. Such tribal and clan moralities are relegated to the level of "social mores," which an individual may adopt voluntarily, so long as they are not contrary to the state, but are not otherwise enforceable by the tribe or clan.

Generally, the family is entrusted by the state with socializing the individual, but only while the individual is a minor child. After the individual child reaches a majority in age, the state looks directly to that individual, and may impose social obligations to the state on the individual, such as payment of taxes, military service, jury duty, and similar obligations. Even before the individual reaches a majority in age, the state may impose educational standards and obligations on the family to which the individual belongs.

Another mechanism used to redirect individual loyalty and allegiance to the greater social organism is to weaken familial bonds between an individual and their family, clan or tribe, and replace them with ties to the state.

Strong clans require family loyalty to diminish in favor of clan ties. One important and effective way to accomplish this was to discourage or prohibit incestuous family relations and replace them by cousin marriages. Thus the prohibition of brother-sister, father-daughter, and mother-son marriage became a strong, useful moral tenant.

However, strong tribes require family and clan loyalty to diminish in favor of tribal ties. One important and effective way to accomplish this was to discourage or prohibit cousin marriage in favor of marriage between different clans within the tribe. Thus first-cousin marriage and marriages to uncles and aunts were added to the morality list of things prohibited, along with the already established morality prohibiting brother-sister, father-daughter, mother-son marriage.

Finally, strong states require family, clan, and tribal loyalty to diminish in favor of state ties. One important and effective way to accomplish this was to discourage or prohibit marriage between individuals with blood ties to the third, fourth or even greater degrees of consanguinity, in favor of marriage between unrelated individuals within the state. Thus marriage between individuals within third-and higher degrees of consanguinity was added to the morality list of things prohibited, along with the already established morality prohibiting brother-sister, father-daughter, mother-son marriage.

Thus it is that morality is very often situational. What is moral depends on the level of social evolution – whether the greater social organism is a clan, tribe or state. The evolutionary progress is often only partially complete, with a great deal of doubt as to the ultimate outcome as to whether a state becomes strong and prosperous, or whether it withers and dies.

Relevant, Pragmatic Religion Re-found

In order for religion to regain its role in western society of defining and promoting morality, it must make some adjustments away from the fantastical and become realigned with reality.

God: *Replace*

the mystical: a fantastical, superhuman, omniscient, omnipotent, mythical, magic being surrounded by mythical, fantastic angels, demons, and genies;

with the reality: the collective consciousness of the greater social organism we compose.

Religion: *Replace*

the mystical: a set of rituals and symbols meant to appease or please a fantastical, superhuman, omniscient, omnipotent, mythical, magic being surrounded by mythical fantastic angels, demons, and genies;

with the relevant: the collective conscience of the greater social organism we compose, which reveals what actions serve the greater common good, and which do not.

Purpose: *Replace*

the fantastical: An eternal life of bliss, in a heavenly garden or palace, at the foot, and in the grace, of the Lord of lords.

with the realizable: Heaven is an earthly goal – a model of incremental improvement of our environment, to be achieved little by little by each generation making some improvement to the world they inherited, and charging each succeeding generations to add their improvements in turn.

Choice: *Replace*

personal salvation – the ultimate selfishness – which allows one to do whatever is *imagined* to gain personal salvation only by believing – all for an eternal live in an imaginary heaven.

with the realization: that promoting the greater social good over our own personal welfare is the only way to secure a just future for generations to come.

Personal Responsibility: *Replace*

abdication to ritual and dogma: to believe whatever my religious texts and leaders say. To take no action o my part to influence my fate.

with personal responsibility: to investigate all our environment with our scientific tools, realizing their limitations and that they are not infallible, and constantly improve them. To learn the unsubstantiated assumptions of our decision models, realize their limitations, and improve them. To measure the efficacy of our decisions and decision models as to whether they adequately promotes survival, continuance-in-kind, and prosperity for one's self, one's family, one's clan, one's tribe, one's state, and the human race; to abandon those decision models that do not promote such; and to improve and extend those decision models that do promote such.

What to call this renewed pragmatic religion?

Neo-religion? I hope not. Too much akin to neo-Nazi, and other passing paradigms best left dead.

New religion? No, it's not so much new, as it is revolutionary.

Revolutionary religion? I hope not. Revolution connotes too much of bloodshed and force.

Evolutionary religion? Well, sort of. Certainly the requirement to measure and modify decision models will result in evolution of the models.

Reality religion. Well, sort of, in that it must be measured in real terms, with real tools, consistent with scientific methodology.

Transcendent religion? Well, sort of. The religion does transcend the '*fantasticism*, to coin a word,' and rituals of religions in general.

Transcendent Reality! Well, that's what I call it, and I hope the name sticks. The *transcendence* comes from the idea of *transcendent evolution*, and a *reality* base wherein decision model efficacy is measured against the degree that a morality tenet promotes *survival, continuance-in-kind, and prosperity* for the individual, family, clan, tribe, state, and humankind. *Transcendent evolution* is an idea I promote that evolution proceeds in two directions: *morphologically* in alteration of the body and functions, and *transcendently* in the coalescence of individual entities into a single cooperative entity.

Transcendent evolution. We can cast *transcendent evolution* into seven levels of transcendence that have occurred so far:

    1) the coalition of proto-matter into atoms;

    2) the coalition of atoms into molecules; eventually comprising complex, replicating chains and structures such as prions and viruses;

    3) the coalescence of complex, replicating molecules into single-celled organisms;

    4) the coalescence of single celled organisms into multi-cellular organisms, the morphological evolution of which eventually produced humans;

    (5) the coalescence of human families and clans into a tribe, with the awakening of a greater collective consciousness (god) to promote unity, and a collective social conscience (religion) to promote the greater good of the tribe over that of the individual, family, or clan;

    (6) the coalescence of tribes and clans into a state, with the amalgamation of the lesser tribal collective consciousnesses (tribal gods) into a greater state collective consciousness (God) to promote unity, and a greater collective social conscience (Religion) to promote the greater good of the state over that of the individual, family, clan or tribe; and

    (7) the coalescence of states into some "super-state" social organism, with the awakening of a greater super-state consciousness (GOD) to promote unity, and a social conscience (RELIGION) to promote the greater good of the "super-state" over that of the individual, family, clan, tribe or state.

I believe the seventh transcendence is incipient – we are in the beginnings of its formation and evolution – we are in the seventh transcendence, and we are unsure of what form it may

ultimately take. GOD is conceived, and the "super-state" to come is embryonic. Many trial forms will birth before one matures to survive the random tests of chaos and catastrophe.