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Title: The Sources of Depth in Hallowed Secularism: Science

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8/17/2007--Hallowed Secularism does not challenge science at all but accepts everything science can legitimately claim. Unlike the defenders of Our Religions, Hallowed Secularism agrees that much religious teaching is indeed ruled out by science. Nor does Hallowed Secularism object that this is setting man above God. Undoubtedly, man was meant to use his brain in much the way he is doing.

Hallowed Secularism denies, however, that science rules out much that is fundamental in Our Religions. Our Religions do not make many claims that actually violate the natural order that science has shown us. Atheists love to point out, for example, that God or Jesus heal people but such people never regrow organs. This is supposed to show that God or Jesus lack supernatural power. What it actually shows, however, is that the Bible generally tells us about events that could, at least physically, happen. For example, Jesus heals people. There are many examples in history of healers who can by touch remove disease. Indeed Jesus himself reminds his critics that they also heal the sick.

There are details in biblical accounts that probably could not have happened--for example, no one can actually walk on water. And certainly there is exaggeration in the Bible—an older couple might have a child after all hope has been given up, as in the example of Abraham and Sarah, but the age they are given in the account might be older than they actually were. Other events are most improbable, but do not actually violate the laws of science. A virgin could theoretically give birth, for example.

The most important claim in the Bible is that God speaks to us. This does not violate the laws of nature. The second most important claim is that God enters history. Science certainly has nothing to say about that. In other words, the project of scientific atheism to disprove the existence of God does not succeed.

It gives atheists a lot of comfort that the Big Bang could have happened “naturally,”--that the universe could have begun without violating any natural laws we know. Or, that the universe might always have been existing in some sense. I don't follow the math but I'll accept what they say. And I suppose, if those things were true, that this would rule out the “button-pusher” God who creates by his will.

But, what I want to know is whether the creation of the universe matters. Is self-conscious, morally self-defining life both the goal—the teleology--and the most important accomplishment of the universe? I think the answers to both questions are, Yes, and I fail to see what science can contribute to those answers.

On the other hand, scientific limits on religion go beyond mere physical impossibility. Science gives us a physical account of the world. An important part of that account is regularity. So, I cannot believe in a God who could alter that regularity. Such a God could not be. That has enormous theological implications. In addition, science shows us that everything we know about ourselves roots in our physical being. This rules out for me anything like an existence after death. Perhaps even more important, it keeps me from regarding death as an enemy to be overcome, as opposed to a natural course of events.

Finally, the question must be asked, why is science so important? I know that it is not impossible to believe the Torah/Gospel more or less as traditionally understood. Once, I believed it. Furthermore, I don't know that much about science. I certainly don't vouch for it.

So the issue is not really science. What is at issue is the nature of human life. I insist that human life as I know it is approximately what human life has always been like. If there are no voices at Sinai today, there never were. If there are no miracles today there never were. Conversely, if slaves go free today, then they always were being freed. If human greed today causes the rains to fail, as it does in global warming, then such a curse could always have been sent by heaven. The Kingdom of God must be something that we can seek here and now or it doesn't exist at all.