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### November 23, 2009: A Serious Man, A Serious Movie

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Title: A Serious Man, A Serious Movie

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11/23/2009—Last night, my wife Patt and I saw A Serious Man, the most recent movie by the Coen brothers. The movie is regarded as a remembrance of contemporary Judaism, which it is in part. But that is not the part of most interest on this blog. The everyman at the heart of the movie, Larry Gopnik, is a physics professor, a teacher of quantum indeterminacy. In the movie, his life seems to disintegrate. Larry seeks help, unsuccessfully, from three rabbis. But what does Larry want? Larry seems stuck between a quantum view of the universe, in which the indeterminacy that he teaches would be all the explanation for his troubles that one could have, even in principle, and the traditional, biblical view of God, in which all actions are moral causes of moral results. By this measure, his life's troubles seem way out of proportion to his failings. The irony of the movie is that at the end, Larry seems to get the linear moral universe he sought, much to his regret. This movie is a serious study in moral living. The problem it poses for Hallowed Secularism is that the Coen brothers can raise these issues only by reference to two established traditions: Judaism and physics. What is the tradition of Hallowed Secularism?