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November 25, 2010: Happy Thanksgiving

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Title: Happy Thanksgiving

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11/25/2010—The Chronicle of Higher Education has a story today about Sarah Palin's comment in her book that most college professors don't believe in God and regard religious believers as alien and ignorant. The story refutes this, but I wonder if there is not truth to it on a deeper level. What after all is the religious belief of most Americans, including college professors? When people say they believe in God, do they mean a personal being who intervenes in the world when requested? That is what Palin means and many educated people find that belief rather alien even if they say they do believe in God. Such a God, which is the God of the Bible only in part, contradicts the regularity of science. On the other hand, today at Thanksgiving tables all over America, people will give thanks for their blessings, college professors too. They will not all be thanking a being who gave us these things and might take them away. But they will all be acknowledging that we are not the authors of our own stories. We rely on many things—family, friends, luck, social forces beyond our control and also something quite mysterious that the religions sometimes call grace. Palin is wrong that there is not common ground here between believers and nonbelievers. But who is responsible for the plausibility of her criticism? We secularists are. So today if you do not believe in God, make sure especially to express your gratitude to everything that is for everything you have.