

Welcome to TimesPeople What's this?	 TimesPeople Lets You Share and Discover the Best of NY...	1:02 PM Get Started <input type="button" value="No, thanks"/>
--	---	--

- [Get Home Delivery](#)
- [Log In](#)
- [Register Now](#)

- [Home Page](#)
- [Today's Paper](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Most Popular](#)
- [Times Topics](#)

Search All NYTimes.com

The New York Times

Monday, May 18, 2009

Opinion

- [World](#)
- [U.S.](#)
- [N.Y. / Region](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Arts](#)
- [Style](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Autos](#)

- [Editorials](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Contributors](#)
- [Letters](#)
- [The Public Editor](#)
- [Global Opinion](#)

Think Again

Stanley Fish



May 3, 2009, 10:00 pm

God Talk

In the opening sentence of the last chapter of his new book, "[Reason, Faith and Revolution.](#)" the British critic Terry Eagleton asks, "Why are the most unlikely people, including myself, suddenly talking about God?" His answer, elaborated in prose that is alternately witty, scabrous and angry, is that the other candidates for guidance — science, reason, liberalism, capitalism — just don't deliver what is ultimately needed. "What other symbolic form," he queries, "has managed to forge such direct links between the most universal and absolute of truths and the everyday practices of countless millions of men and women?"

Eagleton acknowledges that the links forged are not always benign — many terrible things have been done in religion's name — but at least religion is trying for something more than local satisfactions, for its "subject is nothing less than the nature and destiny of humanity itself, in relation to what it takes to be its transcendent source of life." And it is only that great subject, and the aspirations it generates, that can lead, Eagleton insists, to "a radical transformation of what we say and do."

The other projects, he concedes, provide various comforts and pleasures, but they are finally superficial and tend to the perpetuation of the status quo rather than to meaningful change: "A society of packaged fulfillment, administered desire, managerialized politics and consumerist economics is unlikely to cut to the depth where theological questions can ever be properly raised."

By theological questions, Eagleton means questions like, “Why is there anything in the first place?”, “Why what we do have is actually intelligible to us?” and “Where do our notions of explanation, regularity and intelligibility come from?”

The fact that science, liberal rationalism and economic calculation can not ask — never mind answer — such questions should not be held against them, for that is not what they do.

And, conversely, the fact that religion and theology cannot provide a technology for explaining how the material world works should not be held against them, either, for that is not what *they* do. When [Christopher Hitchens declares](#) that given the emergence of “the telescope and the microscope” religion “no longer offers an explanation of anything important,” Eagleton replies, “But Christianity was never meant to be an explanation of anything in the first place. It’s rather like saying that thanks to the electric toaster we can forget about Chekhov.”

Eagleton likes this turn of speech, and he has recourse to it often when making the same point: “[B]elieving that religion is a botched attempt to explain the world . . . is like seeing ballet as a botched attempt to run for a bus.” Running for a bus is a focused empirical act and the steps you take are instrumental to its end. The positions one assumes in ballet have no such end; they are after something else, and that something doesn’t yield to the usual forms of measurement. Religion, Eagleton is saying, is like ballet (and Chekhov); it’s after something else.

After what? Eagleton, of course, does not tell us, except in the most general terms: “The coming kingdom of God, a condition of justice, fellowship, and self-fulfillment far beyond anything that might normally be considered possible or even desirable in the more well-heeled quarters of Oxford and Washington.” Such a condition would not be desirable in Oxford and Washington because, according to Eagleton, the inhabitants of those places are complacently in bondage to the false idols of wealth, power and progress. That is, they feel little of the tragedy and pain of the human condition, but instead “adopt some bright-eyed superstition such as the dream of untrammelled human progress” and put their baseless “trust in the efficacy of a spot of social engineering here and a dose of liberal enlightenment there.”

Progress, liberalism and enlightenment — these are the watchwords of those, like Hitchens, who believe that in a modern world, religion has nothing to offer us. Don’t we discover cures for diseases every day? Doesn’t technology continually extend our powers and offer the promise of mastering nature? Who needs an outmoded, left-over medieval superstition?

Eagleton punctures the complacency of these questions when he turns the tables and applies the label of “superstition” to the idea of progress. It is a superstition — an idol or “a belief not logically related to a course of events” (American Heritage Dictionary) — because it is blind to what is now done in its name: “The language of enlightenment has been hijacked in the name of corporate greed, the police state, a politically compromised science, and a permanent war economy,” all in the service, Eagleton contends, of an empty suburbanism that produces ever more things without any care as to whether or not the things produced have true value.

And as for the vaunted triumph of liberalism, what about “the misery wreaked by racism and sexism, the sordid history of colonialism and imperialism, the generation of poverty and famine”? Only by ignoring all this and much more can the claim of human progress at the end of history be maintained: “If ever there was a pious myth and a piece of credulous superstition, it is the liberal-rationalist belief that, a few hiccups apart, we are all steadily en route to a finer world.”

That kind of belief will have little use for a creed that has at its center “one who spoke up for love and justice and was done to death for his pains.” No wonder “Ditchkins” — Eagleton’s contemptuous amalgam of Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, perhaps with a sidelong glance at Luke 6:39, “Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?” — seems incapable of responding to “the kind of commitment made manifest by a human being at the end of his tether, foundering in darkness, pain, and bewilderment, who nevertheless remains faithful to the promise of a transformative love.”

You won’t be interested in any such promise, you won’t see the point of clinging to it, if you think that “apart from the odd, stubbornly lingering spot of barbarism here and there, history on the whole is still steadily on the up,” if you think that “not only is the salvation of the human species possible but that contrary to all we read in the newspapers, it has in principle already taken place.” How, Eagleton asks, can a civilization “which regards itself as pretty well self-sufficient” see any point in or need of “faith or hope”?

“Self-sufficient” gets to the heart of what Eagleton sees as wrong with the “brittle triumphalism” of liberal rationalism and its ideology of science. From the perspective of a theistic religion, the cardinal error is the claim of the creature to be “self-originating”: “Self-authorship,” Eagleton proclaims, “is the bourgeois fantasy par excellence,” and he could have cited in support the words of that great bourgeois villain, Milton’s Satan, who, upon being reminded that he was created by another, retorts, “[W]ho saw/ When this creation was...?/ We know no time when we were not as now/ Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised” (Paradise Lost, V, 856-860). That is, we created ourselves (although how there can be agency before there is being and therefore an agent is not explained), and if we are able to do that, why can’t we just keep on going and pull progress and eventual perfection out of our own entrails?

That is where science and reason come in. Science, says Eagleton, “does not start far back enough”; it can run its operations, but it can’t tell you what they ultimately mean or provide a corrective to its own excesses. Likewise, reason is “too skin deep a creed to tackle what is at stake”; its laws — the laws of entailment and evidence — cannot get going without some substantive proposition from which they proceed but which they cannot contain; reason is a non-starter in the absence of an a priori specification of what is real and important, and where is that going to come from? Only from some kind of faith.

“Ditchkins,” Eagleton observes, cannot ground his belief “in the value of individual freedom” in scientific observation. It is for him an article of faith, and once in place, it generates facts and reasons and judgments of right and wrong. “Faith and knowledge,” Eagleton concludes, are not antithetical but “interwoven.” You can’t have one without the other, despite the Satanic claim that you can go it alone by applying your own independent intellect to an unmediated reality: “All reasoning is conducted within the ambit of some sort of faith, attraction, inclination, orientation, predisposition, or prior commitment.” Meaning, value and truth are not “reducible to the facts themselves, in the sense of being ineluctably motivated by a bare account of them.” Which is to say that there is no such thing as a bare account of them. (Here, as many have noted, is where religion and postmodernism meet.)

If this is so, the basis for what Eagleton calls “the rejection of religion on the cheap” by contrasting its unsupported (except by faith) assertions with the scientifically grounded assertions of atheism collapses; and we are where we always were, confronted with a choice between a flawed but aspiring religious faith or a spectacularly hubristic faith in the power of unaided reason and a progress that has no content but, like the capitalism it reflects and extends, just makes its valueless way into every nook and cranny.

For Eagleton the choice is obvious, although he does not have complete faith in the faith he prefers. “There are no guarantees,” he concedes that a “transfigured future will ever be born.” But we can be sure that it will never be born, he says in his last sentence, “if liberal dogmatists, doctrinaire flag-wavers for Progress, and Islamophobic intellectuals . . . continue to stand in its way.”

One more point. The book starts out witty and then gets angrier and angrier. (There is the possibility, of course, that the later chapters were written first; I’m just talking about the temporal experience of reading it.) I spent some time trying to figure out why the anger was there and I came up with two explanations.

One is given by Eagleton, and it is personal. Christianity may or may not be the faith he holds to (he doesn’t tell us), but he speaks, he says, “partly in defense of my own forbearers, against the charge that the creed to which they dedicated their lives is worthless and void.”

The other source of his anger is implied but never quite made explicit. He is angry, I think, at having to expend so much mental and emotional energy refuting the shallow arguments of school-yard atheists like Hitchens and Dawkins. I know just how he feels.

- [E-mail This](#)
- [Print](#)
- Share Close
 - [LinkedIn](#)
 - [Digg](#)
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [Mixx](#)
 - [My Space](#)
 - [Yahoo! Buzz](#)
 - [Permalink](#)
 -
- [Sign in to Recommend](#)

[Religion, technology](#)

Related Posts

From Stanley Fish

- [God Talk, Part 2](#)
- [Atheism and Evidence](#)
- [Religion Without Truth, Part Two](#)
- [The Religion Clause Divided Against Itself](#)
- [Is the Establishment Clause Unconstitutional?](#)

-
- [Previous post Previous Post](#)
 - [Next post Car Nuts](#)

From 1 to 25 of 721 Comments

1 2 3 ... 29 [Next »](#)

1. 1. May 3, 2009 11:04 pm [Link](#)

I have not read Eagleton’s book, and so, I can deal only with Fish’s summary. From that summary, it appears that Eagleton engages in repeated circular reasoning to support the conclusion that the faith-based religious arena (encompassing often inconsistent or contradictory theological views) somehow opens a reliable path to truth as to matters outside the competence of science and reason.

In reaching that conclusion, Eagleton seems to put aside any requirement that faith based theology demonstrate its competence. The inability of science to provide accurate answers concerning the supernatural is not proof that one of the multiple faiths does so or that we will be able to reliably recognize which of those faiths does so.

It is odd that, in his summary, Fish does not mention the roles of rational and cultural ethics in supplementing the truths we learn from science.

It would be more useful to discuss whether right and wrong depend upon whether there is a God, an after-life and faith, and whether our

knowledge of what is right and wrong depends upon the intermediation of clerics and theologians.

HJBoitel

— *HJBoitel*

2. 2. May 3, 2009 11:05 pm [Link](#)

I know how he feels too. It's nice to read a solid response to "Ditchkins."

— *Scott G*

3. 3. May 4, 2009 12:04 am [Link](#)

Dr. Fish,

I was surprised with your phrase "that great bourgeois villain" to describe Milton's Satan. I've always thought of Satan as a kind of aristocrat of sin, for Milton characterizes him as a rebel prince of evil, guilty of overweening pride and totally lacking in humility. Perhaps the greatest thing religion teaches us is the importance of a love for our Creator that is steeped in humility, however symbolic He or She may be. Regardless of my view of Satan, your review of the Eagleton text is superb, although you must admit that the title of Hitchens' latest screed, "God is not Great," is right up your provocative alley.

— *Martin Yanosek*

4. 4. May 4, 2009 12:06 am [Link](#)

Eagleton asks of religion, "[w]hat other symbolic form... has managed to forge such direct links between the most universal and absolute of truths and the everyday practices of countless millions of men and women?" Perhaps the implications of fundamental scientific laws for the daily lives of "men and women" cannot be determined easily, but of course such implications exist. Substituting theories that sacrifice truth in favor of simplicity (or familiarity) for theories whose ultimate objective is truth might quench the psychological thirsts of some, but cannot, in the final analysis, instill confidence that we, in fact, comprehend the non-trivial.

The questions that Eagleton (as interpreted by Fish) classifies as 'theological' strike me as lying within the province of science. What reason does Eagleton/Fish have for thinking that science is unable to tackle these questions? Philosophers of the Anglophone tradition have been interested in questions such as these for quite some time. Many of these philosophers deem themselves 'naturalists' – that is, they believe that in order to address these questions, the philosophy/science distinction must be abandoned, so that philosophy may draw upon scientific methods (along with scientific ideas) in theorizing about such issues. It might be that this approach is wrong-headed, but Eagleton/Fish would do well to consider such approaches before declaring a priori that science is incapable of resolving these problems.

The claim that "religion and theology cannot provide a technology for explaining how the material world works" because "that is not what they do" is similarly put forward without motivation. It may be true that there is more to religion and theology than the historical narratives presented in the sacred texts of the world's dominant religions, but that does not mean that such historical narratives cannot be placed before the tribunal of truth. Nor is it the case that literalism represents a marginal current in religious thought, past or present. As such, to verify (or falsify) the claims of major religious texts is not to reduce religion or theology to literal doctrine, but just to examine the one dimension in which religion comes into conflict with science – namely, the inconsistencies between our mature scientific understanding of the world and the propositions of countless sacred texts.

The tale about the 'liberal-rationalist' is the tale of a strawman. No sensible person, 'liberal-rationalist' or otherwise, would insist that the history of human civilization is one of blemish-free progress, nor one of progress laced with minor difficulties in its unfolding. Nor does being a liberal, or a 'rationalist' (by which I suspect Eagleton/Fish means someone who holds scientific methods in high regard), commit one to such silly illusions. Furthermore, the supposed "complacency" of science, liberalism, etc., in all of the tragedies of human history is, once more, declared without demonstration. It is, to be sure, a worthy question, whether the post-Enlightenment rhetoric inspired by science contributed to the tragedies to which Eagleton/Fish alludes, but this is a question for social scientists. Eagleton/Fish does little to convince one of its position on this complicated question.

Fish writes: "Science, says Eagleton, 'does not start far back enough'; it can run its operations, but it can't tell you what they ultimately mean or provide a corrective to its own excesses. Likewise, reason is 'too skin deep a creed to tackle what is at stake'; its laws — the laws of entailment and evidence — cannot get going without some substantive proposition from which they proceed but which they cannot contain; reason is a non-starter in the absence of an a prior specification of what is real and important, and where is that going to come from? Only from some kind of faith." The idea that science "does not start far back enough" once more limits what science is capable of exploring in a random fashion. Naturalism counsels that philosophical questions about the 'foundations' of science must be construed as themselves scientific questions if progress is to be made. Again, perhaps naturalism is flawed, but Eagleton/Fish ought to grapple with it instead of just stipulating it out of the picture. It is not clear what is meant by 'faith' in this context (I suspect a deliberate effort from Fish to equivocate two (or more) senses of 'faith'), but it is not true that the kind of faith characteristic of religion is needed to 'ground' science.

I hope that Fish will clear up some of these issues in future columns.

— *Lebombo Bone* (<http://lebombo-bone.blogspot.com/>)

5. 5. May 4, 2009 12:25 am [Link](#)

You don't really tell us where you stand on Eagleton's arguments in themselves, but when Eagleton, as you say, claims that our choice is between the values of religion and contentless dogmatic faith in "progress," isn't he attacking a straw man? Even by his own argument, a faith in liberal progress has its own values (individual liberty, freedom from want, etc.). So how can he attack such a faith both for being valueless and for having values it claims not to have? Is this not a contradiction?

— Fred

6. 6. May 4, 2009 12:50 am [Link](#)

Hmm... I am not sure I understand. The claim that science is just another faith is old reactionary hat. I disagree that reason is not equipped to handle the "theological" questions — if anything, it is a more spiritual experience dealing with sensual practical matters of eternity rather than abstract faith-based ideas; even if reason is still a faith, it approximates experience far better than many others. I guess the problem is not everyone is educated enough to appreciate the practical. Religion and reason really should be able to coexist, but religion does a pretty good job of making sure that doesn't happen. Not to say reason doesn't but into religion, but believers and faith-based institutions are not exactly infant, struggling, marginalized powers...

Are "school-yard athiests" that difficult to ignore?

— pear

7. 7. May 4, 2009 1:14 am [Link](#)

So the proposition is that it is better to have faith in a divine being because it feels better? Who is saying that reason was self-invented and what does that have to do with the truth or falsehood of the existence of the divine? The logic is flawed. The proposition of the existence of god is not furthered by moral considerations..

— Nate

8. 8. May 4, 2009 1:33 am [Link](#)

The arguments of some atheists may be shallow, but the evidence proffered in this column is just about non-existent. The idea certainly suggests itself that the more sophisticated arguments are always going to be on the side that lacks evidence. (Which was after all the point of sophistry in the first place.)

The evidence for human progress since the Enlightenment is irrefutable: more people, longer life-spans, and reported levels of life satisfaction that are either static or rising (meaning that, in conjunction with longer life-spans, more people are actually enjoying more happy years on average than their forebears).

That this has been achieved at the cost of the despoilment of something like, say, 70% of the life-bearing capacity of the planet, is true enough, but it is unclear that the bargain offered by the faithful (human lives less injurious to the environment because they are spent in misery and wretchedness) is more appealing.

— Jean L.

9. 9. May 4, 2009 1:38 am [Link](#)

So Hitchens and Dawkins have just "school-yard" arguments unlike those of course who use the term 'Ditchkins' when trying to refute them. Oh Mr Eagleton is just joking there so we don't have to take him seriously but can someone point out when he makes any kind of argument that is to be taken at face value?

Eagleton likes faith of some form but will not specify which one, only the fact that he likes something-anything as long as it is not atheism. Mr Eagleton is very happy with faith in faith-whatever that means. Mr Fish also does not like "shallow arguments" ,is very keen on this faith thing, but does not define anything while being very happy to argue against atheism.

So if I believe in scientific progress it makes me an "Islamophobic intellectual"? If this is what amounts to reasoned argument in Mr Eagleton's world then give me the test tubes any time.

— AndyB

10. 10. May 4, 2009 1:42 am [Link](#)

Go Terry! Food for thought.

— L Carson

11. 11. May 4, 2009 1:44 am [Link](#)

He's angry at having to refute his opponents?...seems more likely his anger is directed against his understanding that the pro-science culture he is a part of is incomplete, it has a hole that can't be filled, but it rejects the available thing (religion) that could make it whole...The only way we don't drive ourselves mad is to ignore this contradiction...focusing on this problem is like nails on a chalkboard for the soul...I can imagine that writing a book about such a fundamental problem would be quite engaging.

— Jacob Gerber

12. 12. May 4, 2009 1:47 am [Link](#)

"...school-yard atheists like Hitchens and Dawkins."

I can't so much speak for Dawkins since I am not well-versed in his work, but sir let me assure you that Mr. Hitchens would destroy you in a debate about religion, atheism, or virtually any other topic. You are out of your league there, my friend. Most people are.

— John L. Griffon

13. 13. May 4, 2009 1:48 am [Link](#)

If the arguments of Hitchens and Dawkins are shallow, they shouldn't require much energy to refute.

— *howard etlinger*

14. 14. May 4, 2009 1:50 am [Link](#)

Stan,

You seem to have almost completely forgotten Nature.

Science and religion aren't the only ways to achieve the sense of belonging to something bigger than ourselves.

A jump in the deep ocean or walk in quiet woods can also get one there.

Try it. And take your time at it.

J.

— *J*

15. 15. May 4, 2009 1:51 am [Link](#)

Dr. Fish states that anger over refuting atheists is the justification for the rants he is ranting about. There's a lot of flowery words concerning truth bandied about.

Religion abhors truth since it is definable and science is a method to measure truth. I know, I know, there's the metaphor of the cave and the shadows but this is just a way to describe the method to the inexperienced.

Personally, I think the anger and the rants are a waste of time. Religion doesn't answer questions. It says "don't worry, be happy" instead. I've always wanted answers so I chose science. I'm pretty sure that Dr. Fish will be passed over in the future (by me) since he doesn't have any answers either, just like Eagleton. Maybe that's why he's angry!

— *charles M*

16. 16. May 4, 2009 1:52 am [Link](#)

I would suppose that Mr. Eagleton wrote his text on a computer, or at least with the benefit of electric light. I would also conjecture that he rides gasoline-powered vehicles made in modern industrial plants. He is probably fully vaccinated against common pathogens, and eats food that is prepared using electric or gas ranges. He no doubt attend movies occasionally, speaks on a cell phone, wears clothes made with modern manufacturing processes. I could go on. It is obviously the height of hypocrisy for someone like this to rail against "progress" and "reason". I will take him seriously when he dispenses with all of these benefits of "reason" and becomes a monk in seclusion.

— *Billy Bob*

17. 17. May 4, 2009 1:54 am [Link](#)

To quote the late (great) George Carlin, "Atheism is a 'non-prophet' religion." Need more be said?

— *WorldWideTed*

18. 18. May 4, 2009 1:55 am [Link](#)

We should think of both science and religion as ways of perceiving, interpreting, and understanding the world, each purporting to be dealing with the same thing those times when it actually isn't, and with different things, the times when those happen to be the same thing.

But, caveat, applicable where both sides are concerned, unchecked relativism rooted in ignorance is the most dangerous of all.

— *m*

19. 19. May 4, 2009 1:57 am [Link](#)

Professor Fish seems to believe that the smugness and derisive attitude Christopher Hitchens has towards religion is common to all atheists. This is not the case. I am an atheist who respects the benefits faith can confer on individuals and recognizes the value religious communities can provide to human societies.

He also seems to think that a belief in the divine is a prerequisite for aspiring to something beyond "local satisfactions". Non-believers can and do care about posterity and the relationship human beings have with nature.

Darwin's famous remark, which inspired the title of Stephen Jay Gould's wonderful series of essays in "Natural History", provides us with a secular idea of transcendence which many people find just as satisfying as anything provided by religion: "There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

— *Justin Pickens*

20. 20. May 4, 2009 2:05 am [Link](#)

Does Eagleton actually believe that he was created in the image of God? If he does, there is no room for discussion, for such faith presupposes a delusion so profound that no reasoning can possibly break it. It sounds to me like he's angry because he's afraid and conscious of the flimsiness of his faith when measured against evidence. It takes courage to take on truth. The bottom line is that human intellect and consciousness are so limited and shallow that such limitation precludes an understanding of such a being as commonly understood to be God, given the vastness and complexity of the cosmos. Therefore it is a moot point to even try to argue about such entity. Religion however is often time not in any way associated with such an entity and is being used increasing as a political instrument, a military instrument, a social engineering instrument, and we, as a species, will be better off the sooner we recognize religion for what it really is- its being everything that imprisons the human spirit and nothing to do with God. As such I am proud to be Ditchkin.

— *nick*

21. 21. May 4, 2009 2:08 am [Link](#)

I'm not quite sure what you have against the scientific method and, more generally, reason itself. Say what you will about the fallacy of perpetual progress (an area in which I fully agree with you), but the methods used to critically evaluate our world have no place in your theistic argument. If not reason, then what do you propose? Indisputable, unwavering faith? That answer falls embarrassingly short, Mr. Fish.

— *Patrick*

22. 22. May 4, 2009 2:09 am [Link](#)

It's an amazing article. I've often meet people who still think that being atheist means being open-minded, liberal, revolutionary. But I disagree with that statement. Eagleton has explained in other of his wonderful essays the real notion of being open-minded. I recommend 'After theory' for instance. By the way I agree with this quotation: "Christianity may or may not be the faith he holds to (he doesn't tell us), but he speaks, he says, "partly in defense of my own forbearers, against the charge that the creed to which they dedicated their lives is worthless and void."

— *Sebastian Pineda*

23. 23. May 4, 2009 2:09 am [Link](#)

My oh my was this article excessively wordy (and empty). The entire argument could have been condensed into a single sentence. You could have just said, "Science, reason, and liberalism may explain much of our world, but since they can't explain everything, stop thinking and just accept these tenants of religion".

If science can't explain the entirety of our past, and reason can't determine the entirety of our future, and liberalism can't elevate the entirety of our present, then logically we should reject all three as devices of Satan and just believe in an everlasting holy love for mankind...Did you take your medication this morning?

And by the way, all those questions that you are asking sound a lot like philosophy, not religion. Religion gives an answer. Reason and philosophy ask you to find one. But I guess you just aren't interested in something that requires actual thought.

— *Nat*

24. 24. May 4, 2009 2:11 am [Link](#)

It is not so easy for us religious - believers as Eagleton and Fish make it. For religion does make truth- claims about the world. And the great religions have stories of origins and ends which their sophisticated followers may take to be 'myths' but which may not have been intended to have been taken that way.

So while it is true that Science and Technology cannot provide the kinds of answers and meanings for us as Religion can, it is not true that the kinds of realities they reveal do not create problems and raise questions about the validity of religious views of the world.

— *Shalom Freedman*

25. 25. May 4, 2009 2:12 am [Link](#)

Science and spirituality are different symbols for the same reality. It's now possible to prove this. What religion calls G-d is what science calls the anomaly. See <http://www.SolomonsProof.com>.

— *RAB*

1 2 3 ... [29 Next »](#)

Comments are no longer being accepted.

Search This Blog

- *Previous Post:* [Previous Post](#)
- *Next Post:* [Car Nuts](#)

About Stanley Fish



Stanley Fish is the Davidson-Kahn Distinguished University Professor and a professor of law at Florida International University, in Miami, and dean emeritus of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He has also taught at the University of California at Berkeley, Johns Hopkins and Duke University. He is the author of 10 books. His new book on higher education, "Save the World On Your Own Time," has just been published.



Comments of the Moment

[" Please don't get too worked up... or tomorrow's post could read: 'Pounded Fish Gets Steamed.'"](#)

— [Larry](#)
[Headline Art](#)

[" The evidence for law based on individual conscience lies not in the fact that conscience and law occasionally find themselves at odds in the United States, but rather in the fact that they so very rarely do."](#)

— [Wayne, NYC](#)
[Conscience vs. Conscience](#)

[" Universities should always fire quacks, even if their quackery came to light through sensationalism."](#)

— [Alex K](#)
[Ward Churchill Redux](#)

[" I'm one of Ward Churchill's colleagues, unfortunately. ... When he "ghostwrote" articles and then cited them as proof for arguments he wrote under his own name, he lied. It was a deliberate lie, pure and simple. I'm ashamed to be on the same faculty as he is."](#)

— [Elizabeth](#)
[Ward Churchill Redux](#)

[" 'Amateur' originally meant "one who loves." Love can make a surprisingly decent athlete out of practically anyone."](#)

— [harry](#)
[My Life on the Court](#)

Movies Update E-Mail



Sign up for the latest movie news and reviews, sent every Friday.

[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

Archive

Select Month

Tag List

- [POLITICS](#) 9
- [RELIGION](#) 8

- [ACADEMIC FREEDOM](#) 7
- [READERS](#) 6
- [HILLARY CLINTON](#) 6
- [FREE SPEECH](#) 5
- [FIRST AMENDMENT](#) 5
- [UNIVERSITIES](#) 5
- [ACADEMIA](#) 5
- [BARACK OBAMA](#) 5
- [THE CONSTITUTION](#) 4
- [HIGHER EDUCATION](#) 4
- [JOHN MILTON](#) 4
- [MORAL PRINCIPLES](#) 3
- [ACADEMICIZE](#) 3

- [GEORGE W. BUSH](#) 3
- [ATHEISM](#) 3
- [HUMANITIES](#) 3
- [JOHN MCCAIN](#) 3
- [DEMOCRATS](#) 2
- [RADIO AND TELEVISION](#) 2
- [WRITING](#) 2
- [CLASSROOM IMPERATIVES](#) 2
- [FREE EXPRESSION](#) 2
- [ISRAEL](#) 2
- [ESTABLISHMENT CLAUSE](#) 2
- [SPIN](#) 2
- [SUPREME COURT](#) 2
- [RACE](#) 2
- [THOMAS HOBBS](#) 2

Recent Posts

May 17
(393 comments)

[God Talk, Part 2](#)

A response to reader comments on a column about a new book on technology and religion.

May 10
(320 comments)

[Car Nuts](#)

The news regarding the auto industry has been dire, but magazines devoted to car buffs just roll along.

May 03
(721 comments)

[God Talk](#)

A new book suggests that believing in technology and progress might be more superstitious than believing in religion.

April 26
(10 comments)

[...]

April 19
(244 comments)

[Headline Art](#)

Behind a simple tabloid headline there often lurks a tangle of allusions.

From the Opinion Blogs

[Schott's Vocab](#)

[Veggiedag](#)

The Belgian term for a day upon which people abstain from meat – literally, “veggie day.”

[Freakonomics](#)

[When Airline Tickets Start Looking Like Cigarettes](#)

Cigarettes are some of the most heavily taxed goods around. According to [this source](#), the average state tax per pack of cigarettes is \$1.23, plus an additional \$1.01 of federal taxes, as well as any local taxes. With an average price per pack in the United States of \$4.82, the combined state and federal taxes make up 46 percent of the price. In Chicago, total taxes per pack are a whopping \$4.67 per pack! I don't know the exact price of cigarettes in Chicago, but taxes must be around two thirds of the total cost.



[New catnip for buyers](#)

ALSO IN REAL ESTATE »

[Baby boomers' second act](#)

[Searching for an asthma-free zone](#)

nytimes.com

REAL ESTATE

Feeds

-  [RSS](#)
-  [ATOM](#)

Home

- [World](#)
- [U.S.](#)
- [N.Y. / Region](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Arts](#)
- [Style](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Autos](#)
- [Back to Top](#)

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Corrections](#)
- [RSS](#)
- [First Look](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Work for Us](#)
- [Media Kit](#)
- [Site Map](#)