

***X26 – EXchanging Worldviews, 26:
EXploring Prospects for Peace & Prosperity, 18:
EXtricating Humanity from EXcruciating Problems by, 12:
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EXtrapolating Laws from EXamining EXtremes***

Dear: For this chapter, ya gotta cut me some slack! I wanna look at some limits, I wanna look at some extremes, and from examining those extremes, I wanna extrapolate what laws might someday come into existence.

And if you don't know what I mean, Dear, then you'll need to cut me more slack! The point is: when challenged by problems so seemingly intractable as ending child abuse, freeing women from primitive patriachs, liberating men from various types of tribalism and communalism, extinguishing physical violence, and so on, including cleaning up the Israeli-Palestinian mess, I'm tempted to suggest extreme solutions.

In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian mess, for example, how about supplying both sides with essentially unlimited "firepower" and encouraging them to fight it out? Or if that solution "turns you off", how about the more humane approach of making me dictator of the region?! If I were dictator, I bet I could make major progress solving all the problems within a year and that all problems would be essentially solved within a generation. I'd ban all "holy books" (with severe penalties to violators of the ban), I'd sell off all "holy sites" to the highest bidder (e.g., Saudi Muslims might want to buy the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, American Jews might want to buy the Western Wall of the Temple Mount, the Vatican might want to buy the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and so on), and I'd demolish the sites that weren't sold and removed. I'd separate kids from parents who instructed their kids in any religious balderdash (and punish the parents for attempting to brainwash their kids), nationalize all private property in the whole area and then re-privatize it as I saw fit (based on studies of the history of each household), and so on. Incidentally, I'd require everyone to speak the same language (probably English), I'd promote "mixed marriages" (i.e., Muslims and Jews), I'd require that all couples learn good-parenting skills before they were permitted to have children, and I'd require that all kids learn critical-thinking skills before they could graduate from high school. In brief, I'd "lay down the law".

For this chapter, similarly, I want to look at some extremes, to try to see how to extrapolate laws. My goal is to suggest some laws that might eventually be promulgated to rid the world of religious ignorance. Socrates said, “There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance”; religion is organized ignorance; it then follows that all religions are evil.

And yes, Dear, I agree that some horrible evil has been perpetrated that had nothing to do with any religion (e.g., think of Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot). Such cases are frequently cited as arguments against atheism, but such claims are ill informed: they’re cases of power mongering by egotistical megalomaniacs, drunk on power and/or crazed with some ideology (in the cases listed, communism). That is, such cases provide more evidence supporting Socrates’ assessment that the source of evil is ignorance – such as the ignorance of power mongers and ideologues.

Further, as a huge number of religious wars demonstrate (including the current “War on Terror”), religion is probably the most common of the crazy ideologies in which power mongers, such as Moses (if he ever existed), Ezra, “Saint” Constantine and multiple popes, Muhammad and multiple caliphs, Joseph Smith, et al. not only promote but “sanctify” violence. Thereby, in their pasts, Judaism, Christianity, and Mormonism “glorified” death, and currently, Islam still “glorifies” death – in wars judged to be “holy” by their damnable clerics. Witness (again) the idiotic comment from that terrorist: “We love death.” If, instead, people realized that when they die, they’re dead (and that’s the end of them), then surely they’d be less willing to “fight to the death”.

Which brings to mind the frequently repeated idiocy: “There are no atheists in foxholes.” First and unfortunately, it’s untrue: many brave atheists have fought and died in foxholes; to say otherwise, horribly dishonors them; in my view, laws should be promulgated to punish people who dishonor the brave “nonbelievers” who died fighting for their country. Second and significantly, it’s the atheists in the foxholes who are the bravest: they realize (and realized) that death is the end of their existences. In contrast, theists aren’t nearly so brave: they’re duped into “believing” that they have continued existences waiting for them after their death, usually duped by war mongering clerics who want someone else to fight their battles for them.

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More generally, it's self contradictory (an oxymoron) to describe someone who believes in "life after death" as a "hero." Such people aren't heroes, they're delusional. Consequently, I'd adjust the frequently repeated "There are no atheists in foxholes" into a form such as

There are no dumb atheists in foxholes; however, there certainly are a lot of dumb, duped, delusional theists in foxholes.

In turn, those thoughts lead me to a host of questions about how large-scale violence (e.g., wars) can be extinguished – questions such as the following.

- If all ideas about all gods were rejected as the silly speculations that they are, then would prospects for peace improve?
- If people were convinced that the universe is entirely natural, if they were convinced that their awareness (their existence) will soon end, would it influence the way they'd live their lives?
- If everyone appreciated that each of us is the temporary host of a life-form that has been living for at least a billion years and that, with help from each of us (e.g., by protecting the environment of this wonderful planet), then this life can continue for at least another billion years (and continue to become even more intelligent), then would each of us try harder to help?
- If everyone realized that each of us is the universe "I'ing" – and that the universe is "I'ing", also, in everyone else – then would such realizations influence the way people interact?

Perhaps obviously to you (if you've read this far in this huge book), my general answer to such questions is: "Yes, in general, I think so."

That's not to suggest that strife would disappear (strife that, in some cases, might lead to interpersonal violence and even to wars), but surely (sane) people would be less willing to "fight to the death" if they adopt more realistic views of both life and death. Thereby, perhaps you, too, are led to considering the possibility of enacting laws that would prohibit the large-scale, wholesale marketing and sales of religious delusions. That possibility, plus my continued attempt to try to answer a certain trouble-making grandchild's question about why I don't believe in God, stimulate me to try to identify laws that might be promulgated to exterminate the god meme and thereby to extinguish violence.

POSSIBLE LAWS TO EXTINGUISH PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

I trust, Dear, that the possibility of promulgating laws in an attempt to diminish physical violence seems to you to be a reasonable approach. Thus, if you think a bit about the past many X-chapters (dealing with Exchanging Worldviews and Exploring Prospects for Peace & Prosperity), particularly about the past dozen chapters (dealing with Extricating Humanity from Excruciating Problems) and especially about the past half-dozen chapters (dealing with Expediting Cultural Change), then perhaps you'll recall the many hints and suggestions that a key to progress would be to promulgate and enforce new laws, for example, laws dealing with the environment, with educating children, and with human rights (e.g., to stop child abuse, to liberate women, and to extinguish violence).

Further, if you think about the past 4,000-or-so years of human history, I expect you'll agree that a key feature has been the evolution of laws, e.g., in Western cultures, from the laws of Hammurabi, Salon, and Cyrus the Great to those currently being considered by legislators throughout the world. In this chapter, therefore, I want you to think at least a little about possible future laws, i.e., about "Extrapolating Laws", including laws that attempt to exterminate the god meme and to extinguish violence.

Immediately, though, I should admit that I don't have enough knowledge about politics to provide useful suggestions about how to promulgate appropriate laws. Yet, I claim as much "right" and as much "common sense" as the next person to be able to say: "There otta be a law against..."!

Furthermore, and more generally than promulgating new laws, I doubt if there's a single, neat answer to the question of how to expedite any cultural change. In essentially any such change, there are winners and losers – and it's to be expected that those worried they'll lose will resist the potential change. Therefore, if a specific cultural change is to occur (e.g., through enactment of a new law), then resistance from such losers must in some manner be overcome, e.g., by convincing them that they won't lose, that they'll be compensated for their loss, that their loss will be less than their gain, etc. As a last resort, the losers must be effectively pushed aside. And of course it's the case that in "revolutionary" cultural changes, sometimes being "pushed aside" has meant imprisonment or death.

* Go to other chapters *via*

In the case of attempting to extinguish violence, then as I already mentioned (and anyway, as no doubt you already knew), the prime method used during at least the past 4,000 years has been to enact and enforce laws. Yet, as I also mentioned, this method has its own nemesis (or Catch-22): the method attempts to restrain violence with threats (and acts) of violence! And if the people conclude that the laws are “unjust”, then more violence can erupt, in a revolution. As a sad but obviously realistic assessment of this “dynamic”, recall Thomas Jefferson’s statement (in his 30 January 1787 letter to James Madison):

I hold it, that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical.

And later that same year, in his 13 November 1787 letter to William Smith, Jefferson wrote:

What country before ever existed a century and a half without rebellion?... The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.

But maybe humanity is making some progress toward enacting laws that diminish violence – thanks in no small measure to Jefferson, Madison, and other co-founders of this country. That is, although demonstrations and even riots have occurred in this country during my lifetime, yet almost “a century and a half without rebellion” has now passed, and I don’t think a rebellion in this country is imminent. Further, perhaps other nations (Australia, Canada, Great Britain...) have even better records and prospects.

I expect that the prime reason for such improvements is not laws against violence but better laws. That is, although the prime method used to suppress violence during the past ~4,000 years has been to enact and enforce laws (such as “**Thou shalt not kill**”), yet during almost all of that time, the laws were dictated by tyrants and enforced through their “storm troopers”. In contrast, Jefferson *et al.* developed methods to establish “people-approved” laws and enforcement methods: not laws dictated and enforced by Hammurabi’s henchmen, not commandments concocted by Moses and enforced by his mobsters, not *fatwas* issued by power mongering Muslim clerics and executed by crazed Islamists... and so on, through all the dictators of the world, but instead, laws promulgated by the people (or their temporarily elected representatives) and enforced by police and a judicial system similarly responsible to the people.

One of the questions that I therefore want to address is: What new laws might “we the people” be well advised to establish to further suppress violence – even if it continues to be necessary to enforce the laws using violence perpetrated by the state. But in this chapter, I want to speculate even further, to try to discern laws that not only suppress violence but also that at least begin to exterminate the god meme.

LOOKING AT THE LIMITS

Toward those ends, my plan for the chapter is to try to guide your thoughts using a technique that I’ve advocated (and used) many times in this book, namely, by “looking at the limits”. Immediately, however, I should add several caveats and associated restrictions on my plan to “look at the limits”.

- First, I agree that it’s inconsistent (an oxymoron) to plan to restrict “looking at the limits”, but then, as Walt Whitman said: “[Do I contradict myself? Very well, then, I contradict myself. I am large, I contain multitudes!](#)” But more informatively, I should say that my plan is to look at only a few limits of a few possible laws.
- Second, I’d agree if you’d complain that it’s silly to try to “look at the limits” for laws, if those limits are in time: in a few billion years, the Earth will be destroyed by the expanding Sun, and I wouldn’t be surprised if the ultimate fate of the universe is to reassemble itself (within the final Black Hole) into the “total nothingness” from which it was originally created. If so, then in the limit as time approaches infinity, there’ll be neither laws nor people! Consequently, it would be better if I wrote that I’d like to look at some possible laws – in the limit of what I expect that people might accept, maybe in a century-or-so from now.
- And third, I should probably repeat the point that I made above: if an important goal is to reduce physical violence, then promulgating and enforcing laws to that end, is somewhat self-defeating, because violence or the threat of violence is needed to enforce the laws. Yet, the reality is that, if laws are at least “half decent”, then data show that most people tend to abide by them, without the need for agents of “the state” (e.g., the police) to apply violence.

There is, moreover, another huge restriction on my plans to “look at the limits, extrapolating laws” in that, generally, I don’t plan to address the question about how such laws might be promulgated. Instead, when convenient, I’ll make appropriate assumptions, e.g., that the people of the world would be smart enough to choose me as the world’s dictator. (☺)

Now, Dear, if all of the above seems to be so silly that you're about to omit reading this chapter, let me try to "redeem myself" – or maybe better, plead for mercy – or maybe better yet, try to "lay a guilt trip" on you! Thus, I was sweating "blood and tears" to try to find any method to write this chapter! And if you think you can identify a better way to write a similar chapter (or a book!), then go for it! Besides, after I have my "fling with fancy", looking at the limits, then in the remaining X-chapters, I'll try to "get real".

I should further caution you, Dear, that this chapter will be even more disjointed than most have been: it'll be like a trip with a lot of stop-overs, but getting between places *via* a Star Trek "transporter"! Nonetheless, to try to bring some unity to the whole, I'll say that the general idea driving my "fantasy trip", extrapolating laws, is an obvious one: there's a much better chance of reaching your destination, if you have at least a general idea of where we want to go!

And again, where I want to go (or better, where I want to lead you) is to try to discern ways that humanity might be able to expedite breaking-free from the "vicious circle" (or Catch-22) that leads to the indoctrination of children in religious balderdash (by their parents, by clerics, and by their societies). Stated differently, my goal is to try to see how kids could at least theoretically be "inoculated" against various "God memes" ("[parasitic mental processes... the cultural equivalents of computer viruses](#)"). After my "fling with fancy" in this chapter (trying to see what might be "theoretically" possible), then in later X-chapters, I'll suggest what might be practical.

SOME "FAR-OUT" WAYS TO ELIMINATE THE GOD MEME

So, to begin – and starting way out on my "extrapolation limb" – I'll suggest a direct, effective, and obvious way to eliminate the God meme, namely, install me as the world's "Director of Propaganda and Minister of Cultural Affairs"! With control of "mass media" and a police force to back me up, then based on the "successes" of Moses (or Ezra), Constantine, and Muhammad, as well as the "successes" by Mussolini in Italy, Hitler in Germany, Stalin in Russia, Mao in China, and current policies in Saudi Arabia and Iran, I'm quite confident that, in fairly short order, I could eliminate the God meme. Even "better", if the people of the world really wanted to "get serious", then I could guarantee that I'd eliminate the God meme if they'd make me dictator of the world.

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As the world's dictator, one of my first act would be to expurgate all clearly invented balderdash (including all racist statements) from all holy books (as well as from all "hate literature") – or as a minimum, I'd have all such statement suitably qualified. As an example, in an earlier chapter I showed you appropriate expurgation of the Bible's *Genesis*, starting with the phrase "In the beginning...", which itself requires significant qualification and rephrasing. To accomplish the enormous task of cleansing all balderdash from all "holy books", I'd assign it to a huge number of teams of humanists and scientists. After a decade of so, new editions of all "holy book" would be forcefully exchanged for all copies of existing versions, saving only a few copies of the old versions (as reference books for scholars who in the future might want to examine how ignorant, racist, and hateful people once were).

Of course, there are many other actions that I'd take as the world's dictator (eliminate all wars, minimize all non-state-sponsored violence, prohibit any child abuse, liberate women from patriachs, reduce the birth rate, end poverty, protect the environment, etc.), but given that there aren't enough intelligent people (or even sane people!) willing to install me as the dictator of the world (☺), I have another suggestion for how to eliminate the God meme – another method that most assuredly won't work!

Thus, whereas somewhere between 50 to 90% of all people "believe" that death is just an entrance to another existence, that they possess an "eternal soul", that though they die they won't be dead (even though no evidence supports such gibberish), then another candidate method is to encourage all people who "believe" in "life after death" to "get on with it", i.e., move on to their next existence! I've already been working on an appropriate ad campaign to be expedited by my Director of Propaganda and Minister of Culture, namely, the bumper sticker:

GO FOR IT!

To be sure, there'd be benefits all around if this "encouragement" were as humane as possible. All appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that "believers" find their transition (from this life to what they assume will be their next life) to be not only painless but also as pleasurable as can be economically arranged. Thus, those of us who rely on evidence and have found no data supporting the concept of "life after death" could assist the religious nuts by "putting them to sleep", as is done with animals too injured or unhealthy to be helped. Surely we could find a pain-killing but lethal pill.

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Also, the bodies of the religious kooks should be disposed of in an appropriately dignified manner, complete with their religion's "rites of passage." That plan, however, would have the disadvantage that religious leaders would be the last to go, while it would obviously be more appropriate for their leaders to lead. Consequently, it might be necessary to "solemnize" the "rites of passage" only with taped messages from their already-departed leaders. Also, children under the age of 16 should be exempt from the program, should be given additional education in evaluative thinking until the age of 21, and then be offered the same choice as their parents: to either accept or reject data-less speculations about an "afterlife".

Although I don't expect that the method will be accepted, it would seem that the method would have "win-win" possibilities. Thus, religious kooks of all persuasions would no longer need to face "sinful temptations" in this existence; they'd be able to proceed directly to their imagined paradise. As a case in point, I remember when Tammy Faye Bakker [the former wife and co-host of Jim Bakker's "televangelical ministry" PTL (Praise The Lord) – the forerunner of Pat Robertson's rip-off televangelical program dubbed "The 700 Club"] said something close to: "Every morning, Jim and I wake up and wish we were dead." And I'm fairly sure she made that remark before their "evangelical empire" collapsed, i.e., before Jim's affair with Jessica Hahn was exposed and before he was sent to prison for 45 years (a sentence later reduced) for fraud. That is, surely both of them would have been grateful if, several years earlier, a caring community would have helped them off to their next existence.

Meanwhile, this method would yield substantial benefits for the rest of us, i.e., those of us who would continue with what seems to us to be our sole experience with awareness. At present, there are too many people on Earth (roughly by a factor of ten), destroying ecosystems, consuming irreplaceable resources, overcrowding cities, and generally stepping on other people's toes. Simultaneously, approximately 90% of the people demonstrate their mental incompetence by "believing" in ideas unsupported by evidence (such as the existence of various "gods") and who typically cause most of the problems associated with overpopulation and stepping on other people's toes. Therefore, consistent with the idea that 100 generations of imbeciles is enough, the method has the potential to "kill" many birds (and viruses) with a single stone.

Thus, since at least half the total population of the world “believes” in “life after death”, the method would immediately cut the world’s population at least in half – which would be a great relief to the world’s strained natural resources and ecosystems. Simultaneously, the birth rate would also be cut substantially, not only because birth control could be promoted without needing to cope with religious idiocy but also because religious couples are commonly the most prolific breeders. In addition, education would have a better chance of flourishing, with all religious fundamentalists generously assisted in their move to their next existence.

Consequently, the results of such a worldwide program would be significant:

- 1) Within a few generations, the Earth’s population would decrease by the desired factor of ten (or so),
- 2) People remaining on Earth (doomed to live only a single life) would feel good, knowing that they benevolently helped people on their way to their desired next existence,
- 3) People remaining on Earth would place their trust not in musty old “holy books” but in the scientific method (i.e., they’d obtain relevant and reliable data before making major decisions), and
- 4) Humanity could get to work on the task of expanding and applying scientific knowledge to help solve remaining problems, which, significantly, would be vastly simpler, absent religious kooks.

Yet, almost certainly, the method won’t work – not only because I don’t expect to be offered the job as Dictator of the World (☺) but also because I strongly suspect that, basically, few people actually “believe” in their clerics’ balderdash about “life after death”. That is, I bet that, when push-came-to-shove, most religious people would want to “hedge their bets” and to continue living the life they have – “just in case”. Thereby, there’d probably be only a few exceptional “takers” of the generous offer to help them on their way to their “next life”. Such exceptions would probably include the crazy members of “the Higher Source” cult (who committed suicide when the Hale-Bopp comet passed near the Earth in March 1997) and (I hope) all the idiotic Islamic suicide bombers (who actually deserve some praise, at least insofar as their crazy actions are consistent with their crazy “thoughts”).

Further, my proposed method almost certainly won't work, because such lame-brained people normally do only what their leaders tell them, and it's rare for power-mongering clerics to encourage their members to move on to their next existence (since it would have a tendency to reduce the number of purchasers of the clerics' snake oil). Consistently, clerics commonly claim (conveniently!) that their god disapproves of suicide.

Exceptions occur when the leaders are as crazy as their followers, such as the leader of "the Higher Source Cult" and "radical" Islamic clerics or equally power-crazed Christian clerics during Europe's Dark Ages. In the latter two cases, leading to mass-suicide missions of Christians and Muslims, the power-mongering clerics felt that their power was being threatened (by the Muslims and the Christians, respectively); therefore, they were quite willing to send their "soldiers" on suicide missions. After all, the clerics know full well that religion is a business – in fact, the original "cut-throat business", always trying to "blow the competition away".

Which then leads me to my third and final suggestion of a method, which almost certainly won't work, for exterminating the god meme. For this method, those of us not infected would first divide the world with otherwise impenetrable barricades (to let the religious stew in their own stupidity), and then, encourage wars between the believers – in essence, hold their coats while they kill each other. I won't go into details, but I'll just mention the need to "take care", e.g., by keeping nuclear, biological, and even chemical weapons away from both sides (best would be if both sides were restricted to guns, swords, knives, arrows, and when the battle winds down, just sticks and stones). And I'll add the suggestion that perhaps a good place for the fundies to fight it out would be in some desert (e.g., the Sahara or in Saudi Arabia), so the corpses wouldn't pollute some water supply. To test the method, I'd immediately transport all Zionists and members of Hamas to the Sinai desert, with nothing but the clothes on their backs, there to let them kill each other with stones and thereby provide the rest of us with the results of an experimental test of whether Yahweh or Allah is more powerful.

But assuming that the world's people aren't smart enough to make me their dictator (☹) and climbing back a little from the extremities of my "extrapolation limb", I expect that I could still make major progress eliminating the god meme if the people would at least make me "Director (or Master) of World Education"!

Although, from the position of Director (or Master) of World Education, it would take me a generation or so to rid the world of the God meme, surely I could eventually succeed. As the philosopher-mathematician (Baron Gottfried Wilhelm von) Leibniz (1646–1716) said:

Make me the master of education, and I will undertake to change the world.

In particular, I expect I could make considerable progress eliminating the god meme by pursuing the ideas that I little-more-than mentioned in an earlier chapter, dealing with:

THE ABCs of BETTER EDUCATION

In that chapter (**X-20**, entitled “Expelling Educational Delusions”), trying to promote better Accountability, Banking, and Competition in education, I labeled the proposed method as the “ABCs” of better education. Here, I want to provide some additional descriptions – which as “Master of Education”, I’d enforce! I’ll describe details in reverse order, starting with:

C – Competition (via School Choice).

I’ll not go into much detail on this topic, because it’s huge. I will, however, provide some references, in case you want to investigate the subject in greater depth by yourself. I’ll start with a list of “notes”:

- If you want to consider some consequences of current *versus* competitive education (i.e., state-controlled *vs.* parental-controlled education), then first, you might want to consider the difference between Ancient Sparta *vs.* Ancient Athens. From that example, an obvious inference is that the best way to train kids to be soldiers is *via* state-controlled schools, but the best way to train kids to think for themselves is to avoid state control of education.
- If you want to learn more about how those in control of education have indoctrinated kids and led their societies to ruin, then look into details about how Christian and (centuries later) Muslim clerics dragged their societies into their Dark Ages and also how, during the 20th Century, fascists and communists damaged their societies by controlling education.
- If you want to begin to examine the current controversies in this country about “school choice”, then I’d suggest that you start by reading the 1955 seminal paper by the winner of the Nobel prize in economics, Milton Friedman, entitled “The Role of Government in Education”.¹

¹ At, e.g., <http://www.schoolchoices.org/roo/fried1.htm>.

- Also, I should admit to making still another mistake. Before thinking much about such matters, my “gut feeling” was that it was critically important to maintain the familiar “public school systems”, feeling that competitive private schools would be disastrous for social cohesion. I’ve subsequently abandoned that idea – even though I realize that some privatization has led to major problems, *via* religious and racist schools. Stated differently, I now see another application of the principle that I’ve mentioned in earlier chapters: **If in doubt let the system go free**. In the case of trying to keep the educational system free from bureaucrats, I trust that, eventually, undesirable excesses would be weeded out *via* competition.

Fifty years after Friedman wrote his article (already referenced), he wrote a survey article for the Wall Street Journal, some of which is quoted below.²

SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT – Free to Choose

After 50 years, education vouchers are beginning to catch on.

BY MILTON FRIEDMAN *Thursday, June 9, 2005 12:01 a.m. EDT*

Little did I know when I published an article in 1955 on “The Role of Government in Education” that it would lead to my becoming an activist for a major reform in the organization of schooling, and indeed that my wife and I would be led to establish a foundation to promote parental choice. The original article was not a reaction to a perceived deficiency in schooling. The quality of schooling in the United States then was far better than it is now, and both my wife and I were satisfied with the public schools we had attended. My interest was in the philosophy of a free society. Education was the area that I happened to write on early...

With respect to education, I pointed out that government was playing three major roles: (1) legislating compulsory schooling, (2) financing schooling, [and] (3) administering schools. I concluded that there was some justification for compulsory schooling and the financing of schooling, but “the actual administration of educational institutions by the government, the ‘nationalization,’ as it were, of the bulk of the ‘education industry’ is much more difficult to justify on [free market] or, so far as I can see, on any other grounds.” Yet finance and administration “could readily be separated. Governments could require a minimum of schooling financed by giving the parents vouchers redeemable for a given sum per child per year to be spent on purely educational services... Denationalizing schooling,” I went on, “would widen the range of choice available to parents. If present public expenditure were made available to parents regardless of where they send their children, a wide variety of schools would spring up to meet the demand... Here, as in other fields, competitive enterprise is likely to be far more efficient in meeting consumer demand than either nationalized enterprises or enterprises run to serve other purposes.”

² Available at <http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110006796>.

Though the article... generated some academic and popular attention at the time, so far as we know no attempts were made to introduce a system of educational vouchers until the Nixon administration, when the Office of Economic Opportunity took up the idea and offered to finance the actual experiments. One result of that initiative was an ambitious attempt to introduce vouchers in the large cities of New Hampshire, which appeared to be headed for success until it was aborted by the opposition of the teachers unions and the educational administrators – one of the first instances of the oppositional role they were destined to play in subsequent decades. Another result was an experiment in California's Alum Rock school system involving a choice of schools within a public system.

What really led to increased interest in vouchers was the deterioration of schooling, dating in particular from 1965 when the National Education Association converted itself from a professional association to a trade union. Concern about the quality of education led to the establishment of the National Commission of Excellence in Education, whose final report, *A Nation at Risk*, was published in 1983. It used the following quote from Paul Copperman to dramatize its own conclusion:

Each generation of Americans has outstripped its parents in education, in literacy, and in economic attainment. For the first time in the history of our country, the educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach, those of their parents.

A Nation at Risk stimulated much soul-searching and a whole series of major attempts to reform the government educational system. These reforms, however extensive or bold, have, it is widely agreed, had negligible effect on the quality of the public school system. Though spending per pupil has more than doubled since 1970 after allowing for inflation, students continue to rank low in international comparisons; dropout rates are high; scores on SATs and the like have fallen and remain flat. Simple literacy, let alone functional literacy, in the United States is almost surely lower at the beginning of the 21st Century than it was a century earlier. And all this is despite a major increase in real spending per student since *A Nation at Risk* was published.

One result has been experimentation with such alternatives as vouchers, tax credits, and charter schools. Government voucher programs are in effect in a few places (Wisconsin, Ohio, Florida, the District of Columbia); private voucher programs are widespread; tax credits for educational expenses have been adopted in at least three states and tax credit vouchers (tax credits for gifts to scholarship-granting organizations) in three states. In addition, a major legal obstacle to the adoption of vouchers was removed when the Supreme Court affirmed the legality of the Cleveland voucher in 2002. However, all of these programs are limited; taken together they cover only a small fraction of all children in the country. Throughout this long period, we have been repeatedly frustrated by the gulf between the clear and present need, the burning desire of parents to have more control over the

schooling of their children, on the one hand, and the adamant and effective opposition of trade union leaders and educational administrators to any change that would in any way reduce their control of the educational system...

The good news is that, despite... setbacks, public interest in and support for vouchers and tax credits continues to grow. Legislative proposals to channel government funds directly to students rather than to schools are under consideration in something like 20 states. Sooner or later there will be a breakthrough; we shall get a universal voucher plan in one or more states. When we do, a competitive private educational market (serving parents who are free to choose the school they believe best for each child) will demonstrate how it can revolutionize schooling.

A few years ago, I saw a TV-interview with Friedman in which he made his point well about the funding of education. I can't quote him exactly, but the thrust of his argument (by analogy) was along the following lines: If a society decides to ensure that no citizen should starve, then the society can choose either to fund grocery stores to provide basic foods to citizens at no cost or provide each citizen "vouchers" to buy basic foods. Providing citizens vouchers gives choices to consumers and forces grocery stores to compete; the alternative, which is similar to the current educational systems in essentially every nation, invites a huge variety of corruptions, leading to higher prices and lower quality goods and services.

But as I already wrote, I don't want to go into details (evidence to the contrary notwithstanding!) about this first portion ("C", dealing with Competition) of my proposed "ABC-method" of improving education. Instead, let me just list a few comments.

As with any new idea, originally the efficacy of the plan to give parents vouchers (and, thereby, choices) for their kids' education had little, sound, direct, experimental support, but it had substantial indirect support, in that, almost invariably, monopolies (such as government monopolies on K-12 education) are bad economic policies. Some direct evidence supporting the idea that vouchers lead to better education at less cost have subsequently become available, but if you desire to dig deeper, Dear, be careful: some of the studies aren't worth the paper they're written on (and certainly aren't worth the money spent on them). You might want to start by reading an article that does appear to be valuable: available on the internet, it's by Caroline Hoxby and entitled "Do Charter Schools Help Their Students?" It was originally published in the February 2005 issue of *Civic Bulletin* and

shows from a “randomized study” (comparing progress of students who did and who did not “win the lottery” to attend Charter schools) that

... the lotteried-in students who attended charter schools had math and reading achievement that was about 6 percentile points higher than lotteried-out students who continued in the regular public schools. These gains were achieved after only a couple of years. If we extrapolate the gains to an entire primary and secondary education, a student could gain almost four grade-equivalents by being in the charter schools as opposed to the regular public schools. Ultimately, we won't need to extrapolate because we'll continue to follow the students until they graduate from high school.

If you dig deeper, I expect you'll find what I found, namely, support for Friedman's indictment that the American Federation of Teachers (the biggest union in the country!) is fighting the advance of voucher programs with some “dirty tricks”, including supporting negative assessments of such programs – when the assessments, themselves, are scientifically unsound.

Further, not only are essentially all K–12 educational systems, throughout the world, government monopolies, but similar to other public-service monopolies (such as those for postal service, police and fire protection, social services, military defense, etc.), they're like pigs at a public feeding-trough, each squealing for as much as it can get. Even so, individual, competent science teachers are paid only a fraction of what's appropriate for their societal contributions (and a fraction of what competent scientists can earn in other economic sectors) – in part because the public constrains how much feed is in the trough and in part because teacher unions (e.g., the American teachers' union) are (in the main) democratic organizations; therefore, the majority of teachers (viz., nonscience teachers) dictates the rules, which minorities (e.g., science teachers) are then forced to obey.

As you may know (and as you can certainly learn from the internet), many attempts have been made (and continue to be made), to try to correct inadequacies in public school systems, which in the US are now costing ~\$8,000 per student per year, totaling ~\$500 billion per year. If you search on the internet to learn about such “alternative schools”, use terms such as “school vouchers”, “charter schools”, “private schools”, “religious schools”, and “home schooling”. If you dig into details on your own, Dear, I expect you'll soon conclude that there are disadvantages in essentially every alternative tried.

Also, you may be especially troubled to learn that most inner-city public schools in the US are providing atrocious schooling and that many private “schools” (especially those affiliated with religious groups) are little more than indoctrination centers. Meanwhile, kids with rich parents can gain significant educational advantages in excellent private schools – through no personal merit of the kids. In sum, thereby, some kids become indoctrinated in their parent’s ignorance, most kids from slums will probably become adult slum-dwellers, while most rich kids will probably continue to have the privileges of plutocracy rather than struggle with the challenges of a meritocracy.

The “C” of the ABCs for improving educational systems is, therefore, to return to competition. That’s how the university system in this country has become the best in the world (courtesy the leading competitors, such as MIT, Harvard, Cornell, Stanford, and other private universities). K–12 schools should be similarly competitive – just as are most nursery schools! But rather than my going into any more of this (huge!) subject area, I’ll turn to the second part of the ABCs of my recommendation for improving education system: trying to solve problems arising from misunderstanding of school financing, i.e., recommendations dealing with

B – Banking.

In the second part of Freidman’s original paper (referenced above) he made a not-overly-compelling argument for more investment in “human capital” *via* educational loans. Defending the concept, he mentioned a major societal advantage of such loans, even for “professional education” in colleges in universities:

Existing imperfections in the capital market tend to restrict the more expensive vocational and professional training to individuals whose parents or benefactors can finance the training required. They make such individuals a “non-competing” group sheltered from competition by the unavailability of the necessary capital to many individuals, among whom must be large numbers with equal ability. The result is to perpetuate inequalities in wealth and status. The development of arrangements such as those outlined above [describing how such loans might be administered] would make capital more widely available and would thereby do much to make equality of opportunity a reality, to diminish inequalities of income and wealth, and to promote the full use of our human resources. And it would do so not, like the outright redistribution of income, by impeding competition, destroying incentive, and dealing with symptoms, but by strengthening competition, making incentives effective, and eliminating the causes of inequality.

My view, however, is that Freidman was unable to convince himself that such a loan program would work, questioning if private organizations would be willing to assume the risks inherent in such loans. Thus, with respect to governments acting as such bankers, he wrote:

This and other administrative problems of conducting the scheme on a Federal level, [e.g., obtaining repayment of loans] while doubtless troublesome in detail, do not seem serious. The really serious problem is the political one... how to prevent the scheme from becoming a political football and in the process being converted from a self-financing project to a means of subsidizing vocational education.

Not only do I disagree with Friedman, I think that he erred 1) by focusing on professional training (e.g., at universities) and/or “vocational training”, 2) by not considering how taxes collected generally increase with educational level attained, and 3) by not recognizing that all governmental funding of education can realistically be seen as “just” intergenerational loans.

During the ~50 years since Freidman’s paper was published, two factors strengthen the case for treating all educational expenses for all students (from kindergarten through graduate school and including all professional and vocational education) as intergenerational loans (which they are). One such factor is the deterioration in student motivations to learn (especially for K–12 students in “inner cities”). Another factor is data showing what most of us probably expected all along, namely, that student motivation is a prime (if not “the” prime) key to educational success. I won’t pause to supply references that support those statements; a huge amount of relevant information is available on the internet. The relevant economic principle is a limiting form of the law of supply and demand: if any commodity or service (such as education) is provided at no obvious cost, then its true value is depreciated (in the limit, to being considered worthless) – and as the perceived value of education decreases, students will develop less motivation to acquire education.

One quick and sure way to remedy resulting problems (especially the problems caused by lack of student motivation) is to discontinue all “free” education: if parents paid for their kids’ education (as arguably they should), then I’d bet there’d be far fewer disruptions in classes caused by unmotivated students, students would work much harder (and therefore, perform much better), and “to boot”, pressures from the overcrowding of schools would diminish.

A more realistic way to increase the motivations of students (and parents!), however, would be to make it clear to both students and parents that the “loans”, which kids receive to continue their education, are conditional on their performing to the best of their abilities – starting with kindergarten and continuing through the rest of their educational career (including vocational and professional training, through graduate school).

At present, the basic problems (not only in the US but in most nations) are not only that public schools are government monopolies (which should be eliminated *via* competition) but also that they’re funded by incompetent bankers (i.e., politicians and bureaucrats). No banker worth her salt would make a loan without digging deeply to try evaluate the probable return on the investment. In contrast, politicians and bureaucrats spend money as if it wasn’t theirs – because it isn’t! Consequently, what I’d advocate (for school systems throughout the world) is not only that all governments (and, of course, all religious organizations) be forced out of “the education business” but also that the education of kids be treated as a business – with expenses for kids’ education treated as intergenerational loans.

How to determine “the best way” to “educate” both kids and parents about conditions that would be applied on intergenerational educational loans should, of course, be determined *via* carefully controlled experiments. One possibility (to test) is to give authority over all educational funds (e.g., in selected test-communities) to a new type of educational banker (who passes necessary examinations and whose performance would be monitored by locally elected officials). In this proposed scheme, throughout each year each banker would interview at least 5 kids (and their guardians) per day, i.e., at least 1,000 kids per year, to decide on funding for each kid’s next four years of education. At the going rate for “public education”, each banker would then control the expenditure of $\sim 1,000$ kids \times \$10,000 per year per kid \times 4 years = 40 million educational-dollars per year (or more, depending on how many of the banker’s “clients” were attending college). In a nutshell, each banker’s job would be this: for each kid (in Grades 4, 8, and 12 – or appropriate and corresponding years in trade schools – and all the way through college, including graduate school) the banker would decide if continued funding of each kid’s education would be a wise investment, i.e., if the public is likely to get a good return on its investment, with the “return” in the form of taxation on the student’s life-long earnings.

And since this scheme would obviously give enormous power over so many kids' lives, equally obvious would be the need for each banker to be extremely competent. I'd think that each banker would not only need a thorough background in finance but also be competent in psychology and educational administration. For example, as pre-requisite to being chosen as an "educational banker" for 1,000 students (of all ages), maybe the candidate should have taught in school or university, held a position in school administration (e.g., as a principal or vice-principal), and have demonstrated competence making financial decisions.

I expect that such competent bankers could reduce the current budgets for education by a factor of about 10 (e.g., in the US, down from about \$1 trillion per year, counting higher-education costs, to about \$100 billion per year) – even while accomplishing the needed at-least-doubling of all teacher salaries – basically by stopping the spending of money for educating kids who wouldn't be able to pay back their "loans" (*via* their life-long taxes). Besides that cost reduction – and more importantly – I expect that such a scheme would be sufficient stimulation (for both kids and their parents) to get a lot of kids off their butts, stuffing their faces while watching TV, then to either get a job (that uneducated immigrants are now taking) or to get busy doing some serious studying.

Another expected, desirable consequence of such a banking scheme (besides decreasing total educational expenses and increasing both teacher salaries and motivations of both students and parents) would be a massive de-emphasis in schools as entertainment and sports centers. Not that I'm opposed to entertainment, but it has its place and it can be arranged outside of schools. And as for competitive sports, well, on your own you can dig into the damages they cause; I'll just add that, if I had my way, every gymnasium at every school would be turned over to the community for its activities, and every football field (and similar "areas") at every city school would be plowed under, turning each into a small farm, worked by kids, producing food for school lunches and for sale.³ Summarizing my opinions, I'd say that sports needn't (and shouldn't) be associated with schools: essentially every city in this country, for example, has various "city league" sports – whose prime goal isn't to soothe the ego of "sports jocks" but to provide opportunities for kids to socialize, have fun, and get exercise.

³ If you want to dig deeper into that idea, Dear, you might want to start at the webpage (e.g., go to <http://www.ecoliteracy.org>) of Fritjof Capra, who wrote *The Tao of Physics* and co-wrote the screenplay for the film *Mindwalk*, which was based on his books.

But such potential benefits aside, for now, there's another huge topic that would need to be satisfactorily addressed, the final in my list of the ABCs of school funding, namely:

A – Accountability.

Accountability is an area where, finally, some “governmental oversight” should be applied: to guarantee that the teaching profession is able to police itself, to ensure that competing schools are meeting educational standards, to audit the new banking system (to root out any financial and other corruption that might arise), and to put violators out of “the education business” and perpetrators in jail. As for who would watch the watchers, of course it should be the people *via* their elected representatives – who wouldn't be re-elected if they failed in their responsibilities.

Now, Dear, I admit: 1) that there would be many objections to the instigation of the proposed ABC-method of school financing (as outlined above), 2) that even if it were approved, it would be a long time before it could be operational, and 3) that if it became operational, there would be many ways for it to fail. And I don't make those admissions lightly, because previously, I was one of the naysayers, in turn because I felt so indebted to “free” public education for my own opportunities to be able climb up from being “a welfare brat”. But I now admit: there were still more errors in my thinking. Not only did I fail to see that the current system is not the claimed “level playing-field” (because rich kids are set on a fast track to the best school systems, from kindergarten through graduate school, while most poor kids in slums are destined to stay in the slums) but also I failed to see that those who pay for public education are, in fact, not current taxpayers; instead, current taxpayers just loan money to kids, who then pay for their education, after they leave school, by paying taxes.

Yet, before tackling some of the long-term problems associated with the proposed ABC-method of school financing, some immediate problems would obviously need to be solved. One immediate problem would be to obtain voter approval for the idea that parents are no longer entitled to “free” education for their kids. In general, though, it's essentially impossible to get voters to approve the withdrawal of any of their “entitlements”! Therefore, it would be necessary to convince enough taxpayers who don't have kids in school to stop the current “give aways”. Another immediate problem is to develop accountability criteria and methods – in this country, tasks presumably to be assigned to local school boards.

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And still another immediate problem is the one I briefly mentioned in an earlier chapter (X-20) dealing with examinations. As I wrote in that chapter,

...the fundamental goal (or question) of all exams, for each student at any educational level, would be: “Should the public loan more money to continue the kid’s education?”, or alternatively, “By funding this kids’ continued education, will the public get a decent return on its investment?”

If a question of that type were the fundamental question of all exams of all students, then obviously it would turn the entire educational system “upside down”: all exams would then contain, not questions for each student, but questions for each teacher, and the dominant competition would then be, not among students, but against standards set by each teacher. Of course this would give enormously more authority to each teacher – but I’m certain that such is exactly what should occur.

Let me outline some suggestions about how such exams might be initially conducted – with the proviso that any method would be introduced on an experimental basis, tested, evaluated, and then appropriately modified, tested again, etc. I’ll call such an exam an EXAM, an acronym for Employment Xtrapolation Assessment Memorandum (in part because educators apparently love to use acronyms).

But the silliness of the title aside, each EXAM would basically be a note from the student’s teacher or home-room teacher (or in the case of trade schools, colleges, and universities, maybe from department heads) addressed to the student’s guardian (or directly to the student, if over 16 years old), sent after each term, containing whatever the educator desired – plus a critical final section, something similar to the following.

Of course it’s difficult to foresee anyone’s future, but I wouldn’t be surprised if _____ [student’s name] becomes a _____, or possibly a _____, or a _____: Based on those possibilities, some knowledge of the taxes paid by people working in those fields, and my assessment of performance as summarized earlier in this EXAM, I will recommend to the Educational Banker any one of the following tabulated financial offers for the indicated courses of study at the identified educational institutions be made for the time period _____:

% Funding	Course of Study	Educational Institution
_____ %	_____	_____
_____ %	_____	_____
_____ %	_____	_____

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And, Dear, let me add my strongly-held opinion that such an EXAM should be kept confidential among only the author, the student's guardian, and the Educational Banker's Office, in an attempt to ensure that assessments and prognostications of future teachers would not be influenced by past reports.

As for how such an EXAM system would work in practice, experiments should seek a best method. My preliminary recommendations for where to start would contain the following ingredients:

1. All students would be fully funded for elementary school (kindergarten through Grade 4).
2. Before students finished Grade 4, their guardians would meet with the Educational Banker (who would have copies of four-year's worth of EXAMs for every student) to learn (and possibly to argue about) funding offered for the student's middle-school education – or possibly some trade school or even some reform school.
3. After another four years, student guardians would again meet with the Educational Banker (who would have copies of an additional four-year's worth of EXAMs), to learn about funding offered for the next phase of the student's education (high school or some specific art school or trade school, etc.), including the possibility of no offer for additional funding (or possibly a pre-set minimum offer, such as 10% funding).

And so on, through additional years of education, with the assessments probably done more frequently (e.g., every two years for “professional” trade schools and for undergraduate students, and every year for graduate students).

Such a scheme would obviously require that each teacher become a much more competent judge of character, predictor of each student's potential, and assessor of the future economic needs of the teacher's society. All teachers would need to be fully aware that a person's potential can't be judged merely on intellectual capability and competitiveness: only a few students will become “prime producers”, but meanwhile, any society has a huge need for people who are cooperative, diplomatic, service-orientated, artistic, musical, etc., etc.

As a result of such EXAMs, I expect that teachers would be recognized for having much more authority in society than is now given them, at least in the US. Associated with such authority and responsibility, unfortunately, there would be additional opportunities for corruption, including possible financial

“kickbacks” from some schools (and colleges) to teachers who recommend their educational institutions. To fight such potential corruption, bankers would need to be alert to anomalies, and stringent laws against such corruption would need to be promulgated and enforced.

In addition and importantly, the scheme would force parents (and students) to become much more serious about education. For example, if a kid causes trouble in elementary school, then the EXAM would be “fair notice” to parents that, unless the parents convince their child about the need to behave, it would be unlikely that their kid’s middle-school education would be funded by the Banker. That would put the responsibility for the kid’s learning (and behavior) where it belongs: not on the kid’s teacher but on the kid’s parents. Similarly, if a kid couldn’t demonstrate ability to read, write, and do arithmetic after Grade 3, then the EXAM would inform the kid’s parent that public funding for middle-school education would be unlikely – unless and until progress is demonstrated (e.g., through home schooling, parentally paid tutoring, or similar). And so on, through enrollment in auto-mechanics or hair-dressing school – or in a postdoctoral school in quantum gravity.

Further, at every step in each kid’s schooling in this scheme, the banker would recommend what “school” the kid should attend – to get maximum return on the investment of the people’s money. For example, the banker might recommend that the best investment would be to send most young kids to local public schools (or, in the future, to specific e-learning facilities), a few kids to expensive private schools (with all expenses paid), and some kids to specific tutors or to be home-schooled. For older kids, the banker might recommend sending some to community colleges, others to state universities, and still others to the best universities in the world (with all expenses paid, i.e., with all money loaned against the kids’ future taxes). In each case, the banker would base his or her decision solely on the criterion: is it a sound banking decision, with a high probability of yielding a good return on the people’s money? Of course it would be left to the kids (or parents) to either accept or reject such recommendations, but then, they would bear the consequences of poor decisions.

And I probably should add that the above-sketches would give each Educational Banker very substantial influence over the future of a great number of lives – which is still another invitation for corruption. Consequently, maybe a better alternative would be to give the “banking

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authority” to existing teachers. This scheme would have the desirable effect of increasing, still further, the authority of all teachers in their classrooms. In this envisioned variation, each student’s teacher would simply add a (powerful!) line to each report card, such as:

Based on my experience with ‘Johnny’ during the first term, my first impression is that he should be awarded a loan of no more than 30% of the funds that he will need to pay for his Grade 4 education. I hope his performance during the next term will improve significantly, so my final conclusion will not be so dire.

But enough of my proposed ABC-method for improving education. If you think that the idea has merit, then maybe you’d like to start digging into the “messy details” of determining possible ways to sell such a scheme to the public and then to promulgate relevant laws. Now, instead, I’ll turn to some more-general methods to eliminate the god meme, methods that I readily admit won’t work, **yet** – unless, again, people would be smart enough to choose me as the world’s dictator!

OTHER WAYS TO EXTERMINATE THE GOD MEME

I’ll start by summarizing an additional set of recommendations:

Promulgate laws that 1) prohibit mental abuse of children, 2) set standards (in thinking skills) required for voting, holding public office, and rearing children, and 3) expand consumer-protection to make people and institutions liable for damages caused by their publicly promoting clearly invented balderdash.

Below, I’ll “chat a bit” about each of these proposed laws, which I’m sure can’t be passed, yet, in any democracy (who would vote for no longer having the “right” to vote?!), let alone in Muslim countries (except, perhaps, in some Muslim countries ruled by dictators). Someday, however, surely sooner than a thousand years from now, surely such restrictions will become “the law the land” – for the world!

1) Eliminating Mental Abuse of Children

Surely someday, mental abuse of children, indoctrinating them in clearly invented balderdash (religious, racial, political, philosophical, or whatever) will be prohibited, just as physical abuse of children is now prohibited in many nations.

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Currently in the news are many reports of physical (actually, sexual) abuse of children by Catholic clerics throughout the world – and of course it's not just Catholic clerics (and of course it's not just clerics) who sexually abuse children. There are many more cases of physical abuse (including sexual abuse) of children by their parents; in fact, such cases are so common that they rarely make the news. But meanwhile, somewhere between 50 to 90% of all parents (and 100% of all clerics) mentally abuse children – filling their heads with totally data-less ideas about “souls”, “gods”, “heaven”, “hell”, “life after death”, and similar nonsense.

Someday – and the sooner the better – such abuses will be recognized for the crimes that they are, and the perpetrators (similar to your mother and mine) will be punished for what will eventually be classified as crimes. Your mother would respond (in fact, as I mentioned in an earlier chapter, she did respond): “**How else can children be taught what's ‘right’ and ‘wrong’?**” But as I suggested in an earlier chapter, Dear, if you ever hear such a silly statement, then perhaps you'd respond with something similar to:

Just teach them how to use their brains as best they can. That's all there is to morality. It worked for my gramma and grampa when they reared their children, including my father – and it works for dolphins, too. Moral codes are just ways that social animals have learned to cooperatively pursue their dual survival goals, of themselves and their families. The clerics of the world lie when they claim that some god dictated morality to their “profits”. It's part of the clerics' con game, concocted by clerical leaders to avoid their working for a living.

And yes, Dear, I'd advocate that parents who indoctrinate their children in clearly invented balderdash should lose “their licenses” to rear their children – but of course, at present, the problem is currently too widespread for children to be taken from their parents and reared by others. Yet, I suspect that the time will come when such will occur. In the meantime, parents (by themselves) will continue to lose their children – when the children mature sufficiently to be able to think for themselves.

2) Requiring Capabilities in Critical Thinking Skills

Moving on to proposed laws setting standards in thinking skills required for voting, holding public office, and rearing children, my idea is this. Currently there are no conditions either for having children (other than for the parents to reach sexual maturity) or for voting (at least in most modern countries and other than reaching a certain age).

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With the proposed law, then just as candidates must now pass appropriate competency exams before they're permitted to drive a car, pilot an aircraft, practice medicine, etc., the new law would require people to pass appropriate exams before they're permitted to vote, hold public office, or be parents. As for the details of how to prohibit people from being parents if they don't pass appropriate exams, I'd recommend an obvious alternative: reversibly sterilize all kids before they reach sexual maturity, and then, don't reverse the procedure unless the kids pass their exams.

As for the "exams" (required to be passed before anyone could become a parent), I'll leave it to you to dig into details. If you decide to do so, you might want to start at the website of the Prepare Tomorrow's Parents organization, which addresses the question of what future parents should be taught and from which the following is quoted:⁴

What we believe: Parenting, empathy and nurturing skills must be taught in schools and other settings to young people from pre-K and elementary grades through high school.

... and why: All children deserve parents who are prepared to be present, bonded, nurturing, and effective.

Understanding the responsibilities of effective parenting helps teens postpone this demanding role and helps adults choose it wisely.

The ability to empathize with and nurture others is crucial to positive early human development and cannot be left to chance.

Youngsters who have empathy and nurturing skills are less violent and less likely to become abusive parents.

Schools that promote emotional literacy report improved classroom climates in which learning flourishes.

You might notice, however, that although the above (good) suggestions include the statement "**the ability... cannot be left to chance**", yet no suggestions are made about how to ensure that all future parents learn such skills. That is, learning such skills isn't required, no exams are proposed, and no consequences are mentioned if future parents don't pass the exams (all for obvious reasons).

⁴ From <http://www.parentingproject.org/abouttpp.htm>.

In contrast, Dear, if you'd demonstrate to me that you had mastered all known "good parenting skills" (and showed me data from your experiments showing that the methods were sound), then as dictator of the world (or even just director of world education), then maybe I'd assign you the job of creating the exam!

But before doing so, Dear, I'd grill you to try to determine if your studies of "good parenting skills" were complete. For example, I'd seek to determine if your investigations of whether any proposed method to "train kids to behave" was any better than the way competent animal trainers train animals! Thus, in spite of how certain grandkids might object to the idea, a lot of evidence suggests (at I'll show you in a later Y-chapter) that kids aren't just "miniature adults": their thinking abilities develop only slowly, and therefore, before a kid is about sixteen (!), parents will usually become extremely frustrated trying to hold a "rational discussion" about how kids should behave. Further, evidence suggests that it's better to train kids as if they were "little animals" (which of course they are!) – and which, of course, includes treating them well!

For example (and as you can find at many internet sites), to train a puppy to "behave", then far more productive than to punish it when it's bad is to reward it when it's good – and almost ignore it when it's bad (save in some cases to restrain its undesirable behavior, by removing opportunities or similar). That is, "enforce the positive; try to ignore the negative." Evidence suggests that puppies (and other animals, such as little kids!), are amazingly competent at seeking to please the provider of food (and love). Ingratiating little characters that they are, puppies (and little kids) soon learn to do what their trainer wants – because it's in their own interest! Beat a dog for misbehaving, and you'll "confuse" him ("How come the provider also hits me?") and maybe make him cower (i.e., "crouch down in fear"); ignore him when he misbehaves, and he'll "conclude" that whatever he's doing, doesn't lead to food, patting, friendly tones, or similar; but reward him for behaving well, and he'll "conclude": "Soooo... that's the way I get what I want!" Similarly with kids – and spouses!⁵

⁵ Dear: An excellent article on the topic of "training spouses" was written by Amy Sutherland and published in the 25 June 2005 issue of *The New York Times*. The title is "What Shamu Taught Me About a Happy Marriage". That information is probably sufficient for you to find a copy of the article on the web.

And if you think that my ideas are “crazy”, Dear, then let me show you that Thomas Jefferson wrestled with a similar idea and proposed something similar, at least for granting people the right to vote:

In the constitution of Spain as proposed by the late Cortes, there was a principle entirely new to me... that no person born after that day should ever acquire the rights of citizenship until he could read and write. It is impossible sufficiently to estimate the wisdom of this provision. Of all those which have been thought of for securing fidelity in the administration of the government, constant reliance to the principles of the constitution, and progressive amendments with the progressive advances of the human mind or changes in human affairs, it is the most effectual...

Is it a right or a duty in society to take care of their infant members in opposition to the will of the parent? How far does this right and duty extend? – to guard the life of the infant, his property, his instruction, his morals? The Roman father was supreme in all these: we draw a line, but where? – public sentiment does not seem to have traced it precisely... It is better to tolerate the rare instance of a parent refusing to let his child be educated, than to shock the common feelings and ideas by the forcible... education of the infant against the will of the father...

What is proposed... is to remove the objection of expense, by offering education *gratis*, and to strengthen parental excitement by the disfranchisement of his child while uneducated. Society has certainly a right to disavow him whom they offer, and are permitted to qualify for the duties of a citizen. If we do not force instruction, let us at least strengthen the motives to receive it when offered.

Somewhat similar to Jefferson’s conditions – but more stringent – my proposed “appropriate exam” to become qualified voters would be to determine if candidate voters have developed adequate skills in thinking (or, to be more precise, that they know how to apply the scientific method in their daily lives).

The desired “evaluative-thinking skill” of course includes thinking logically, but it also includes knowing the limitations of both deductive logic (at best yielding inferences consistent with premisses) and inductive logic (whose inferences must yield testable predictions and which are always to be accepted tentatively, pending the results of additional experiments). In fact, since apparently I’m at liberty (at least here!) to write this law, I’d couple it with my plan (mentioned earlier) for having “bankers” control the funding of kids’ education. Thus I hope that, someday not too far in the future, the following would be “the law of the land”.

- To be fully funded to proceed beyond kindergarten, all children must demonstrate that they know all the letters of the alphabet, can count to 100, and can use the scientific method (guess, test, and re-assess) to solve practical problems,
- To be fully funded to proceed beyond Grade 1, all children must demonstrate that they can read simple sentences, add and subtract two-digit numbers, know that beliefs should be held only as strongly as relevant evidence warrants, and understand that some children are duped into believing in Santa Claus,
- And so on, through Grades 2 and 3, until
- To be fully funded to proceed from elementary school into middle school, all kids must demonstrate: competence in the 3Rs, willingness to suspend belief until sufficient evidence becomes available, and understanding that people were duped into belief in god (any god), “life-after-death”, and all similar supernatural silliness,
- And so on, through high school (to gain the right to vote and to have children) and even through college and graduate school!

Thus, the essence of the proposed law would be to require that, before people are permitted to have children, vote, or hold any public office, they must demonstrate that they knew how to distinguish clearly invented balderdash from statements supported by data and whose predictions have been tested, they’d need to be competent in saying “**Show me the data**”, and they’d need to demonstrate (in the vernacular) that their “BS-detector” was calibrated. With special criticism of religion, George Bernard Shaw suggested something similar:

The Bible is hopelessly pre-evolutionary; its descriptions of the origin of life and morals are obviously fairy tales; its astronomy is terracentric; its notions of the starry universe are childish; its history is epic and legendary; in short, people whose education in these departments is derived from the Bible [and similarly, for those whose education is derived from the Quran, the Book of Mormon, and similar “holy books”] are so absurdly misinformed as to be unfit for public employment, parental responsibility, or the franchise.

And yes, Dear, I agree that my proposed law would never pass in this country:

- Current voters in the US wouldn’t vote for it, because the ~60% of them who agree with the statement “**I know God exists and have no doubt about it**” would fail the competency exam and lose their franchise – and of course, would therefore vote not to lose their “right” to vote!

- Even if the proposed law specified that only new voters would need to demonstrate competency in thinking, current “believers” probably wouldn’t approve it, because they’d realize that their children whom they successfully indoctrinated wouldn’t pass the exam.
- In addition, no doubt politicians, clerics, and industries that sell consumer goods would mount massive campaigns against the new law, because the last thing they want is people who are capable of clear thinking.
- Besides, I expect that a substantial fraction of all women would be opposed to any requirement to demonstrate skill in evaluative thinking before being permitted to have children, because many women apparently have concluded that (if only they could find the right male) having children would lead to a much more pleasant and comfortable lifestyle than if they were required to accept those minimum-wage jobs at which their talents would be challenged.

Furthermore, besides recognizing that the above proposals wouldn’t be enacted into laws in this country, I should point out that my proposals are dangerously near the now socially unacceptable concept of “eugenics”.

According to my dictionary, ‘eugenics’ is “[the proposed improvement of the human species by encouraging or permitting reproduction of only those individuals with genetic characteristics judged desirable...](#)” As you can learn from many sources on the internet, the idea of eugenics (literally “good genes”) started in the UK in the late 1800s (one of the leaders being Charles Darwin’s cousin, Sir Francis Galton), the idea spread to the US in the early 20th Century, and then to Nazi Germany. In 1927, for a particular, relevant case (details of which you can find on the internet), US Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote the opinion:

[It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind... Three generations of imbeciles are enough.](#)

As pointed out by Edwin Black in his 9 November 2003 article in the San Francisco Chronicle entitled *Eugenics and the Nazis – the California connection*:⁶

[This decision \[the 1927 Supreme Court decision\] opened the floodgates \[in the US\] for thousands to be coercively sterilized or otherwise persecuted as subhuman. Years later, the Nazis at the Nuremberg trials quoted Holmes’ words in their own defense.](#)

⁶ At <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2003/11/09/ING9C2QSKB1.DTL>

I'd therefore agree with critics that it could be a dangerously slippery slope to prohibit those who haven't developed evaluative thinking skills from having children. Yet, the slope that we're on now (e.g., consuming resources like crazy, waging wars over whose magic man in the sky conveyed "the truth" to which "profit") is covered with sheer ice! Consequently, I'd respond to critics (of any plan to require people to pass "parenthood-competency tests" before they're permitted to have children) by asking my own set of questions, such as:

- Why do we require people to pass exams before allowing them to drive automobiles but not to become parents? Is driving more important?
- What are the plans: to continue breeding until there's "standing room only"? Isn't it sensible – and moral – to use our brains as best we can to try to establish a sustainable human population?
- Are we to be held hostage to a dumb molecule (or even dumber clerics and their idiotic gods), with population controlled only by starvation?
- You demand protection for the rights of people to be parents, but what of the rights of children to have competent parents?
- Parents claim the "right" to have as many children as they want – but who gave parents the right not only to produce children for whom they can't provide but who will consume resources (such as oxygen, water, food, fiber, living space, minerals...) that the rest of us must share?
- Parents produce children and simultaneously claim that their children have various "rights" (to a housing, to "free" education, to employment opportunities, to police protection, to...), but by what "right" do they make such a claim on the producers of the world? And so on.

But there's not much point in raising such questions, since I see essentially zero possibility of making any progress by raising the issues. On the other hand, were I dictator of the world (☺), I'd proceed with a proclamation similar to the following:

Henceforth, all of us will do our best to try to ensure that all children of the world have equal opportunities – provided, however, that all would-be parents first demonstrate (by passing appropriate exams) that they have the potential to be competent parents. Those who fail the exams can have as much sex as they can arrange by mutual consent – but having babies is another matter.

But pushing all that aside, I'll now move on to my next proposed law, which deals with expanding consumer protection to make people and institutions liable for damages caused by their publicly promoting clearly invented balderdash.

3) Expanding Consumer Protection Against Balderdash

By “clearly invented balderdash” I mean statements that are unsupported by evidence, such as:

God exists

Jesus is the son of God

Mary was impregnated by the Holy Spirit

There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his messenger

The angel Moroni told Joseph Smith where to find the Golden Bible.

The goal of the new law would be the eventual disintegration of all groups that teach people what to think. That people would want to join groups that tell them what to think (e.g., all organized religions) is astounding, but since people apparently do, then as I already stated, I'd favor a law that leads to the demise of all such organizations, e.g., by making them liable for the damages they cause.

Currently, such groups manage to indoctrinate their members to adopt “preserving the group's purpose” as one of each member's principal values. Then, when the indoctrination “takes”, not only does each member pursue the group's purpose as part of each member's trio of survival goals (i.e., as one of each member's principal values) but also all members inculcate their values in their offspring – and the virus lives on.

A huge number of examples could be given, but here, I'll mention just two.

- A mentally unbalanced Muslim [one who hasn't learned to rely on data and who has been indoctrinated with the data-less idea that some angel conveyed messages from God (aka Allah) to Muhammad] joins some Islamic “Jihad” (i.e., “holy war”), convinced not only that “the cause” has great value but also that, by blowing himself up (or, now, even “herself”) in a “suicide bombing”, his or her family's survival will be promoted and his or her own “eternal survival” will be guaranteed.

- A mentally unbalanced Catholic or Mormon or member of some other silly Christian sect (someone who hasn't learned to rely on data and who has been indoctrinated with the data-less idea that a wandering Jewish mystic, trained in the ways of "Ancient-Egyptian healing", was the son of some god), convinced that his or her actions promote his or her own trio of survival goals (values, family survival, and even his or her own "eternal" survival), kills a doctor who provided abortions, or shoots a song writer who wrote "offensive" lyrics, or joins a militia to attack "unbelievers" or to "take a stand" against "unbelievers", or...

Similarly for members of a huge number of other religious sects and cults: once a member's indoctrination is complete, then a member's actions can be controlled by the cult's leadership. Similarly, also, for various racist, patriotic, nationalistic, and other cults, as well as for various other groups (from the Masons to the Marines): members are mentally manipulated to adopt the group's purpose as one of their own principal "values".

For this manipulation to be successful, however, the group's leadership (usually working through various recruiters or proselytizers or missionaries) must convince a potential member that the group's purpose "in fact" promotes the individual's dual survival goals (of personal survival and survival of the member's extended family). In many cases, members are inculcated with the concept that fellow group-members belong to an individual's "extended family" – a feat accomplished, in part, through frequent repetition of expressions such as "fellow Masons", "fellow Marines", "fellow Americans", etc. In the case of the Mormons (as you well know) "fellow Mormons" are addressed even with the words "brother", "sister", "elder", etc. in front of their names. Similar is done in Islam.

As a relevant illustration, consider the actions of the terrorists who flew the two hijacked planes into the World Trade Center. Their evil can be traced to their ignorance. In turn, the ignorance of the terrorists can be traced to the ignorance and associated power mongering of the Muslim clerics who brainwashed their "followers" with the idiocy in their "holy book" – similar to the ignorance and associated power mongering of the Jewish and Christian clerics who brainwashed their "followers" with the idiocy in their "holy books". And although in the short run there seems no reasonable way to stop the terrorists except by bombing them out of existence, in the long run, the best way to stop such evil is to eliminate organizations that teach people what to think.

Let me show you how John Murdock put it (here quoted from Aiken's collection):

Any religion which requires its adherents to look upon non-believers as heretics, lost souls, sinners, apostates, devils, etc., is fundamentally evil. It is the most pernicious form of brainwashing known to man, because it is administered by loving parents and well-meaning clerics to children who cannot possibly defend themselves from the fallacies and madness inherent in the religion, and they want desperately to receive "god's love" and go to heaven, paradise, nirvana, etc., and avoid the everlasting punishment of "hell". All humans, until corrupted by adults somewhere along the way, want to be good, want to be rewarded, want to believe in an almighty and loving creator or dharma. It is this drive to serve "Allah", or "God", that can lead people to kill others in the name of their god. The Muslims and Christians in Ambon, Indonesia, are literally killing each other daily for the sake of their religious beliefs – even though they supposedly worship the same mono-god described in the bible and the quran! The Muslim concept of "jihad" is incredible – suicide bombers are told, and they actually believe, that their outrageous killing of innocent civilians will be rewarded by an instant entry to paradise...

Thus, Dear, my proposed law is the antithesis of any law establishing "thought control".

And yes, Dear, of course I'm in favor of anybody thinking whatever they want and sharing their thoughts with anyone – in an appropriate manner. To define "appropriate manner", it's necessary to distinguish "private space" from "public space". By "private space" I mean those cases when there's a basic understanding among all present: "What's said here, stays here" (and usually, everyone knows everyone). As a contrasting example of "public space", I remember with relish traveling to Hyde Park in London and listening to people pontificate on a variety of subjects from their "soap boxes". I purposefully traveled to Hyde Park, to an appropriate public space, where (as far as I know) no one knew others who were present.

But associated with the freedom to share thoughts in any public space, there are responsibilities. As examples, it's unlawful to yell "Fire!" in a crowded theatre and it's unlawful (or should be unlawful) to yell "Free Food" to a crowd of starving people. Similarly, my proposed law would extend legal responsibilities to religious people and organizations for what they say in public space: the law would hold people and institutions liable for damages caused by their publicly promoting clearly invented balderdash, such as telling people that, unless they "repent", they're headed for "everlasting fire" (and other torments) in some clerically invented hell, whereas if they do

what the clerics want, then they'll get "free" everything in some clerically concocted heaven. Unless data support the clerics' claims that there really is a "fire" (either in a theater or in hell) and that there really is "free" (whatever, where-ever) then as a minimum, I want those who make false claims prohibited from making further promises in public space, e.g., by throwing the bums in jail.

As another example, although in a private space I might relay to your grandmother that a certain grandchild is a skunk, you could sue me for damages if I similarly slandered you in public. Likewise, you could sue me if I wrote similar in a book that was put in the public domain. (Hmmm – that's cause for pause for thought!)

Anyway, the proposed law would similarly hold religions liable: the descendants of the Canaanites (now living in Palestine) should be able to sue the socks off religious Jews for what's written in the publicly available Old Testament, the Jews should be able to sue the socks off the Christians for what's written in the publicly available New Testament, both the Jews and Christians should be able to sue the socks of the Muslims for what's written in the publicly available Quran, the Christians (especially the Catholics) should be able to sue the socks of the Mormons for what's written in the publicly available Book of Mormon, and we Humanists should be able to sue the sock off all of them for what's written in all their damnable "holy books" about us horrible "unbelievers" and "infidels"!

In fact, given the way that technology has expanded "public space", I'd promote even more stringent responsibilities on "public speaking". I'm thinking of the clearly invented balderdash that religious kooks spread on TV – be it some crazy TV Evangelical Christian (such as Pat Robertson or James Dobson), some idiotic spokesman for the Mormon Church, or the pope. A case in point that comes to mind is one of the first statements of the new pope (Pope Benedict XVI). Speaking on 19 April 2005 to a "General Audience", in an address broadcast on TV, he stated:

History, in fact, is not in the hands of dark forces, left to chance or just human choices... Above the unleashing of evil energy, above the vehement interruptions of Satan, above the so many scourges of evil, rises the Lord, supreme arbiter of history.

He stated that as a "fact". Let him demonstrate that it's a "fact" – or throw the bum in jail for telling lies in public for his own profit.

Another example is contained in this same pope's "homily" in his "Inaugural Mass" on 24 April 2005:

We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God.

Of course it's clear why he would make such a statement: if evolution is correct (as it is) then Christianity is a crock (as it is), since if humans never "fell", there's no need of a "savior" for "the fallen". Thereby, Christianity in general (and Catholicism, in particular, as well as Mormonism) is revealed to be nothing but a con game. But the pope's obviously self-serving motive aside, the point is that he made public statement (that "[humans] are not [a] product of evolution") and my proposed law would require that he provide data to support his statement – or if he doesn't (and of course he can't, because his statement is self-serving, clearly invented balderdash), then he be held liable for the damages such ignorance causes (e.g., to the minds of children throughout the world).

As still another example (which I bumped into on the internet while searching for the exact wording of the above statement by the new pope), look at what some nincompoop by the name of J. Grant Swank, Jr. wrote about subsequent comments on the new pope's statement. The title of his article is "Humanists Dislike Pope Benedict XVI Being Anti-Evolution".⁷

What makes no sense to me is why any atheist / humanist would care about anybody's beliefs about anything. If we are all going to die so as to rot in the ground, why then does it matter what any mortal proclaims about anything? [What a dumb comment! Humanists "care" because they care about humans! I would suggest that it "makes no sense" to Swank because he doesn't know how to make sense.]

If this is all there is, why battle about any theological or philosophical position? Just let live and be done with it. However, Christians realize that atheists / humanists are not just that. They are instruments of Satan; therefore, they speak, sometimes more evangelistically in their methods than Christians.

Consequently, realizing that atheists / humanists are always an integral part in the right-versus-wrong war raging over all time, believers understand that atheists / humanists cannot be silent. They are agents of the dark powers and therefore will always have something to preach from the corridors of the damned.

⁷ The article is (or was) at <http://www.michnews.com/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi/153/8012/printer>.

My response is: “Sue the nincompoop!” He states “They [humanists and atheists] are instruments of Satan” and “They are agents of the dark powers... from the corridors of the damned.” Unless he can provide data to support such claims, he belongs in jail for promoting hate – after forfeiting all he owns to those humans who can still think for themselves.

If I had the time, industry, and inclination, I could provide you with thousands if not hundreds of thousands of additional example, resulting in the suing (for example) of Supreme Court Justice Scalia, both Presidents Bush and President Clinton, former House Speakers Tom Delay and Newt Gingrich, and on and on, probably including every single leader of the Mormon Church! Instead, I’ll give you just a single additional example, from your father’s experience. When he finally saw (after about 20 years wallowing in error) that Mormonism was a colossal con game (with the final straw being his realization that the Book of Abraham was a total fake), he asked your uncle-who-is-a-lawyer about the possibility of suing the Mormon Church, in an attempt to recover the money it had swindled from him. Your uncle essentially laughed at him; no legal precedent was available; it was your father’s choice to give the money to the Church; the only “precedent” available is *caveat emptor* (“let the buyer beware”).

But, Dear, *caveat emptor* was the basis of commerce a thousand-and-more years ago. More recently, laws and regulations have been promulgated (in most Western countries) to protect consumers. The justification for such protection is obvious: large companies and other organizations (such as religious organizations) have enormously larger financial (and other) resources than do individual “customers”, and companies and other organizations can use (have used, and continue to use) such resources basically to defraud customers (e.g., *via* fraudulent product advertising and labeling). Consequently, “we the people” have (through our representatives) promulgated regulations and laws to protect consumers against fraud in sales of cars, computers, prescription drugs, etc. For example, I can’t do a chemical analysis or conduct clinical trials to determine if some medication isn’t snake oil, but collectively, “we the people” can.

With my proposed law, similar consumer protection would be extended to the case of religious organizations, to ensure that they’re not selling just more snake oil. But of course they are! As I’ll show you in Yx and as you can find for yourself if you dig into details, Mormonism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism... all promote clearly invented balderdash – and all

* Go to other chapters *via*

clearly do it for clerical profit at the people's expense. Currently, however, they're immune either from prosecution for running con games or from lawsuits attempting to pay for damages and recover from losses resulting from their lies. Thus, it shouldn't be called 'religion' but what it is: racketeering. They shouldn't be called 'clerics' but what they are: members of the original Mafia. As Voltaire said: [“The first priest was the first rogue who met the first fool.”](#)

Think of the changes if their con games were prohibited. I can imagine the new standard “sermon” given by Christian (and Mormon) leaders:

Fellow believers, let us pray (not, of course, to suggest that any data support the idea that praying is worth a damn). God in Heaven, Creator of the universe (by which, of course, I don't mean to suggest that there actually is a Heaven – it's more just a figure of speech – and, of course, by 'God' all I mean is “Creator of the universe”, freely admitting that I don't know how the universe was created, if it was created at all, or perhaps it created itself in a symmetry-breaking quantum-like fluctuation in a total void, in which case by 'God' I suppose I mean “symmetry-breaking quantum-like fluctuation in a total void”, but in general what I mean by 'God' is “I dunno”), we are gathered here in solemn service to praise your only begotten son Jesus (which, of course, is not to suggest that “I dunno” has a son, or only one son, or can have a son, and not to suggest that Jesus was in fact the son of “I dunno”, for apparently he was only identified as being “son of god” by the butcher Emperor Constantine for political reasons, and who also was “son of god”, since he earlier had proclaimed his own father to be a god), who has taught us the true meaning of “family values” (by which I mean, of course, that the clerics who claimed that they were describing Jesus provided us with some idea of his family values, and as usual, we read these selectively, ignoring the alleged comments by Jesus that he came to cause dissension among family members, that he hated his mother and father, that we were to do the same, and that he disowned his family), and...

Unfortunately, however, my proposed law requiring that religious claims be supported by reliable data can't be promulgated (yet!), not only because of the same Catch-22 mentioned earlier (i.e., too many people have bought into religious con games) but also because, in the US, first a Constitutional Amendment would be needed – which won't occur, so long as so many people have been brainwashed by the clerics. In particular, our Constitution's First Amendment would need to be revised; it states:

[Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.](#)

Inadequacies in this first of “The Bill of Rights” (as with all such “rights”) include failure to specify responsibilities. Thus, people are to have “freedom of speech” – but this freedom carries with it responsibilities in public space (such as the constraint, now recognized legally, that people aren’t allowed to yell “Fire!” in a crowded theater). Similarly, of course freedom of the press is fine – but carries responsibilities (e.g., if someone prints libelous statements). As for “**Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion**”, it should be revised to something similar to:

Congress has no authority to establish or promote any religion, but that doesn’t mean various and sundry snake-oil salesmen (Evangelical Christians, Catholics, Mormons, Muslims, Jews, whoever) have immunity when they promote clearly invented balderdash under the guise of ‘religion’.

But again: there doesn’t seem to be much point in my continuing to address needed changes in the law (including our Constitution), because of the aforementioned Catch-22, i.e., so many people are already brainwashed into believing religious balderdash that they won’t permit the promulgation of a law prohibiting the continued propagation of their data-less beliefs; so, the clerics’ con games continue. There are, however, other ways to expedite cultural change, to exterminate the god meme, ways that I’ll address in the remaining X-chapters – which will wait until after you get some exercise!