The 2025 Silber-Obrecht Lecture
What Does it Mean to Be Human? Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Perspectives
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Lecture 2

Thanks for hanging in there with us, tuning in for Part 2 of "What Does It Mean to Be Human? Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Perspectives."

In Part 1, I presented my thesis: When we are pressed by technology, science, philosophy, politics, or the simple fact of difference to think about what it means to be human, religious notions that are embedded in our cultural imaginations will surface—and they shape our common life. This is not simply saying that religious teachings have something to say about being human. That should be obvious. It's that, whether we like it or not, whether we imagine our society as secular or not, the way we think about being human—and the social norms and policies that result—are shaped by religious teachings.

To examine this thesis, we're focusing on three questions:

- *Are we good?*
- *Are we free?*
- *Are we more than dust, more than the flesh and blood that decomposes in the earth?*

Part 1 laid the foundation with interpretations of our creation stories in Bible and Qur'an, and then we explored **the first question**. We unpacked ideas of *yetzer hara and yetzer tov*, original sin, and *fiṭra*, and looked at the potential impact of ideas about human nature on our criminal justice system.

Let's take up the 3rd question next, because I think here we have the best evidence of religious conceptions shaping our common life. We'll see the ways that ideas about body and soul impact public policy regarding abortion and public attitudes regarding embodiment—particularly sexuality. We'll save free will for last.

Are We More than Dust?

According to Genesis, after humans eat from the forbidden tree, God announces that we will labor by the sweat of our brow until we return to the ground…For dust we are, and to dust we shall return (Gen 3:19). *But is that all we are?* In striving for lives of meaning, humans have long wrestled with our finitude.[1] The author of Ecclesiastes articulates our deepest fears—that it's all *hevel*, utter futility. One generation goes, another comes. The eye never has enough of seeing. The wise person dies, just like the fool—and neither is remembered forever (Eccl 1:4, 8; 2:16). *Hevel*—futility.

We could reason that, on the contrary, leading finite lives in vulnerable bodies in fact facilitates lives of meaning: it creates a sense of urgency that fosters our need for relationships, our appreciation of beauty, our drive to create, our quest for purpose. Even if you find yourself nodding sagaciously at this insight, however, it doesn't resolve most people's existential anxiety.

The traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam address our conundrum by teaching that yes, we are mortal, but we are more than that. We have teleological significance, playing a key role in God's plan for history. We transcend our finitude in relationship with the Divine. And—here is the concept we'll explore—we are finite bodies with immortal souls.

All three traditions teach about life beyond death—

- Judaism talks of *olam haba,* the next world
- Christianity speaks of Heaven
- Islam teaches about *jannat al-adn*, the everlasting garden

There is much interreligious debate about who gets in, but that's not our concern. While a conception of the soul is integral to these religions' teachings of the *after*life, we're going to focus on the relationship of the soul to the body in *this* life.

Denigration of the Body

We live in a society that frequently treats the body and its desires as morally suspect, leading to feelings of guilt associated with sex and bodily pleasure. Sex shaming. Fat shaming. Normal bodily functions are embarrassing. Pressed by contemporary efforts to teach body positivity, religious ideas linger. It is easier to change the law than to change the culture. *How did we get here?*

Again, I apologize that we must simplify complex subjects and ignore the dynamic multiplicity within each tradition, but we can present a basic framework for study.

Let's start again with biblical exegesis. There are fundamental differences between Jewish and Christian interpretations, differences that get accentuated by historical polemic and cultural politics.

Genesis 2:7 states, *God formed the human from the dust of the earth, and blew into its nostrils the breath of life (nishmat chayim), and the human became a living being (nefesh chaya).* According to biblical scholar Jon Levenson, "In this understanding, the human being is not an

amalgam of perishable body and immortal soul, but a psychophysical unity who depends on God for life itself."[2]

While rabbinic literature talks a great deal about the soul (sometimes as *nefesh,* sometimes as *neshamah*,[3] this "psychophysical unity" remains central. There is a 4-5th-century midrash, brought as a commentary on Lev 4:2, *When a "nefesh" sins….* that is illustrative.

Rabbi Ishmael offered a parable of a king with an orchard. He placed two watchmen to guard it, one lame and the other blind. At some point, the lame guard said to the blind one, "The figs look *really* good," and his fellow responded, "Let's go eat them." Of course, the one who could see the figs couldn't walk, and the one who could walk couldn't see them. *So how to get them?* The lame guard hopped on the back of the blind one, guiding him where to go, and together they raided the garden. When the king accused them of stealing, they each tried to claim they couldn't have done it—but the king knew better. Similarly, when God calls the soul to account, it cannot claim to be innocent. Nor can the body claim to have been impotent. They did it all together, and God judges them together (*Lev Rab 4:5*, similarly *b. San. 91a-b*).

Yet the Church Fathers understood the Genesis passage as the creation of separate substances in hierarchical relation, with the soul on top. For example, the 4th-century Archbishop of Constantinople Gregory of Nazanius wrote, "The soul is the breath of God, a substance of heaven mixed with the lowest earth, a light entombed in a cave, yet wholly divine and unquenchable (*Dogmatic Hymns 7*).[4]

Diminishment of the body was more than metaphorical in the formation of Christianity—and sexual desire was identified as the body's most problematic characteristic. While marital sex was not considered sinful—as long as it was potentially procreative—celibacy was deemed superior. Fourth-century Church Father Jerome identified the former as not doing something wrong, while the latter demonstrated active pursuit of the good (*Adversus Jovinianum* 1.13). The vast majority of patristic writings about marriage were intended to discourage it.[5]

Even Augustine, who acknowledged blessings within marriage, identified sexual desire as a problem. He recognized that God instructed the humans in Genesis 1 to procreate—before the "fruit incident" of Chapter 2—but he believed that it would have been sex without lust, coupling without shame or desire that could overwhelm one's will (*Genesis Against the Manicheans 1.1.9.30, City of God 14.21*).

Rabbinic Judaism, on the other hand, saw sexual desire as a natural part of the created world, a world that God declared "good." They taught that everyone was expected to marry, have sex, and raise children. It is a *mitzvah,* a commandment: *Be fruitful and multiply*. People who elected not to were hyperbolically stigmatized as murderers and blasphemers (*t. Yevamot 8:7, b. Yevamot 63b, Gen Rab 34:14*). While halacha limits sex to sanctified relationships, it is not only for the sake of procreation.[6]

The idea of body and soul as separate substances—"substance dualism"—was largely influenced by Hellenistic philosophy; it could be found among Greek-speaking Jews too before the emergence of Christianity, and within medieval Jewish philosophy. But the nature of the body was understood differently, and the gap expanded as negative Christian attitudes became entangled with two strategies for supersession—strategies that identified Judaism as the body and Christianity as the superior soul or spirit.

First, New Testament identified the "law" (an inadequate rendering of Torah, which means "instruction") as a fleshly burden. **In Romans** Paul states, *"While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are freed from the law, dead to that which held us captive. So we are not slaves under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit"* (Rom 7:5-6).[7]

Even Jews who read allegorically, like Philo, rejected the idea that letter and spirit were dichotomous; they insisted that the physical performance of the commandments was an essential part of understanding and fulfilling the Spirit of the covenant.[8]

A second supersessionary strategy involved the Church's claim to be the "new Israel," a spiritual community that replaced the body of Israel. "True spiritual Israel," Justin Martyr (100–165 CE) called "those who have been led to God by this crucified Christ" (*Dialogue with Trypho 11*).[910] The corporeal is again diminished, dispensable.

Since the Reformation, a number of Christian theologians have questioned substance dualism, seeing it as counter to biblical testimony or inconsistent with the doctrine of resurrection.[11] But folk theology seems to hold on tightly to the notion of an immortal soul.

How do these differing approaches to body and soul compare with Islamic interpretation? While the creation of humanity in Qur'an mentions both a bodily form and the spirit of God (e.g. 32:7-9, 15:29), *early* texts tend to treat them as an integral whole. *Nafs*, the Arabic cognate of the Hebrew *nefesh*, is just a person, or a "self"—as we find in the Bible.[12]

Later, as Islamic scholars dug into the Hellenistic philosophical heritage, *nafs* also came to be equated with the soul. Qur'anic commentary points to specific verses to tease out **three levels**. There is the part of our soul that incites to evil (*al-nafs al-ammarah*, Q 12:53), as well as the self-accusing soul (*al-nafs al-lawwamah*, see Q 75:2), and the soul at peace (*al-nafs al-muta'ina*, see Q 89:27). The first describes being driven by desire, the second our learning to be self-critical and hold ourselves morally accountable, and the third is aligned with Divine instruction.[13] We try to cultivate the elevation of our soul—but note that it is not itself elevated above the body.

Ibn Sina, an 11th-century philosopher better known in the West as Avicenna, wrote one of the first Islamic works dedicated to study of the soul, *Al-Nafs.* There he first presented his famous "floating man" argument: Imagine yourself suspended in air, he said, with no sensation—including any sense of your own body. The fact that we can even imagine ourselves in this way implies that our sense of self does not depend on a body; there is a distinct consciousness that is

part of our "substance"—our soul. Yet body and soul are still profoundly linked: ibn Sina talked about the body as an instrument of the soul, or the soul as the captain of the ship.[14]

This kind of soft dualism of body and soul was adopted by the dominant Ashari school of medieval Sunni theology. There is also a Shi'ite hadith (narrated by Muhammad Baqir Majlisi) that distinguishes the capacities of body, soul, and spirit:

> God created Adam as He wills...He created his flesh and blood, his bones, hair, and his body from soil and water; this is the beginning of the creation of Adam. Then He put the soul (*nafs*) into his body. Then by the soul man can stand and sit, listen and see, learn and know what animals can know and beware of dangers. Then God put the spirit (*ruh*) into the body. By the spirit Adam knows right from wrong and guidance from error and he camouflages and learns and manages all of his affairs.[15]

We occasionally find privileging the soul in some fashion. Al-Ghazali, for example, says that "this subtle tenuous substance is the real essence of the human."[16] And 20th-century political theorist Sayyid Qutb identified the physical part of our nature as that which tends toward *nizam jahili*—an ignorant social order—while the part infused with the spirit of God tends toward *nizam zslami*—a peaceful, wholesome social order. Yet there is not a regular diminishment of our bodily selves.

Islamic attitudes toward the body tend to be positive, including being sex-positive within marriage. Ingrid Mattson notes,

> It is first and foremost through embodied worship that the heart is purified and elevated. The body is not an enemy to the soul, but an ally in the struggle to become an elevated and enlightened person. By performing purification rituals and embodied worship, the Muslim imbues his or her embodied existence with meaning, purpose, and dignity.[17]

It is a reflection that could easily be applied to Jewish practice as well.

Ensoulment and Abortion[18]

However, Islam shares with Christianity deep interest in questions of ensoulment. Given their dualist approach, both traditions repeatedly discuss: At what point does a body acquire its soul, taking on that unique aspect that makes us human? It's a question of substantial significance in historical and contemporary discussions about abortion.

At what point does a zygote, embryo, or fetus become a human being? Here we have a strong case that religious notions of what it means to be human affect our common life—in this case, public policy.

In 1973, drafting the 7-2 majority opinion in *Roe v. Wade*, Justice Blackmun acknowledged the broad range of religious perspectives. Rejecting Texas' claim that an embryo has human rights from the moment of conception and requires protection by the State, the Court declined to

speculate on the question of when life begins, since "those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus." He noted predominant Stoic and Jewish opinions that life begins at birth, and Protestants who organized to advocate that abortion is a matter of conscience for the individual and her family. He reviewed common law limits at quickening (when women can feel movement in the womb), medical considerations of viability, Aristotelian theories of mediate animation, and varying notions of ensoulment in the Roman Catholic Church.

In the 2024 Alabama Supreme Court decision that determined frozen embryos are unborn children, on the other hand, Justice Mitchell wrote for the majority that all participants in the case "agree that an unborn child is a genetically unique human being whose life begins at fertilization and ends at death." And in a concurring opinion, then Chief Justice Tom Parker (an adherent of the Seven Mountains mandate to reshape American policy based on a particular interpretation of Christian beliefs) proudly proclaimed:

> The People of Alabama have declared the public policy of this State to be that unborn human life is sacred. We believe that each human being, from the moment of conception, is made in the image of God, created by Him to reflect His likeness. It is as if the People of Alabama took what was spoken of the prophet Jeremiah and applied it to every unborn person in this state: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, Before you were born I sanctified you." Jeremiah 1:5 (NKJV 1982).[19]

The biblical language, citing both Jeremiah and the image of God, makes the religious influence explicit. Abandoning the federal standard of viability in the wake of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*,[20] the decision embeds religious ideas about the status of the zygote. Even though it doesn't use the language of ensoulment, the idea that this the single cell at conception is a human being is obviously *not* about a body

Not everyone agrees with the Alabama court's perspective, of course. According to PRRI's 2023 study, 81% of American Jews support legal access to abortion in most/all cases. Support among Muslims and Christians is more modest, but still a majority.[21]

U.S. abortion policy has been more varied than many people know. Before the Civil War, abortion was legal any time before quickening. Pressure to change the law came largely from the American Medical Association, as they wrested control of birth from women and midwives; it took until 1900 for national policy to rule abortion illegal.[22] Then, amidst a broad campaign to expand women's rights and civil rights in the 60s and 70s, it became legal again--with bipartisan albeit not universal support.

Although 72% of White evangelical Protestants today think it should be illegal in most/all cases, evangelicals were largely supportive of legalizing abortion when *Roe v Wade* was first decided; some argued that it would better support family values.[23] The Republican Party's growing hostility, which since 1984 has had a plank in the party platform insisting that human life begins at conception, was instigated by political strategists who wanted to woo Christians by making

abortion and segregation polarizing issues.[24] Some Catholics who believe "the protection of life is a seamless garment" struggle to find their political home—aligning with conservative voices on abortion and liberal ones on anti-poverty programs, death penalty, and immigrant rights.[25]

What role do religious teachings play in shaping our politics and policies?

Again, we have to take into account our "mongrel epistemology," unable to prove that religion is the fundament of our convictions about the human. To ask whether it is politics in service of religious values or religion in the service of political ones, however, sets up a false dichotomy. We don't have tidy, separate bins for our sources of value. Yet our differences illuminate ways in which religious ideas about the human are embedded in the abortion debate.

To get a clearer view, we again need to trace the historical discourse. One critical difference in Jewish and Christian attitudes traces back to translation of a single word in Exodus. In the only explicit reference to legal consequences when a pregnancy is disrupted—in this case a miscarriage—**the text makes a distinction** between the status of the fetus and the woman:

> *"When men fight, and one of them pushes a pregnant woman and a miscarriage results, but no other damage (ason) ensues, the one responsible shall be punished when the woman's husband exacts it, paying a fine based on reckoning. But if other damage ensues, the penalty shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth […].* (Ex 21:22-25)

Death of the fetus isn't considered murder, or it couldn't be reconciled with a fine. Even manslaughter would require that the assailant flee to a city of refuge. The familiar trope of life for life applies only if the woman is otherwise harmed.[26]

Rabbinic Judaism sustained this emphasis on the welfare of the woman. The Mishnah, a 3rd-century codification of Rabbinic practice, actually *requires* abortion if the mother's life is in danger. Only once the majority of the fetus has emerged from the womb does it have equal status as a human life, at which point we may not set aside one *nefesh* (living being) for another (*m. Ohal 7:6*). Some modern Jewish authorities argue from this text that saving the mother's life is the only acceptable justification for abortion; others maintain that such a circumstance is the only time it is required, but abortion is permissible in other circumstances as well.[27] Rashi, the premier medieval explicator in the Ashkenazi world (11th cent.), commented simply that the fetus is not a *nefesh* (*ad b. San 72b*).

To see how Christian approaches to abortion differ, let's go back to the biblical text. The Septuagint, the Greek translation that became influential in early Christianity, translates the Hebrew word *ason* (damage) as "form" (*exeikonismenon*, literally "made from the image").[28]

The change yields a very different understanding: if the fetus is unformed when the woman miscarries, the penalty is only a fine; if it is formed, the law of *talion* applies. The central question becomes the nature of the fetus, not the welfare of the woman. Although both the Hebrew and

Greek texts were "Jewish" in origin, these Judean (Hebrew) versus Alexandrian (Greek) perspectives came to shape Jewish versus Christian approaches to questions of abortion.[29]

Christian commentary focused on questions of fetal development and ensoulment. There wasn't consensus; even the work of a single author presents mixed messages.[30] But the 6th-century Justinian Code, which shaped most of Europe's laws until the twelfth century, ruled that a fetus did not have a soul until after forty days of gestation.[31] Aquinas (13th cent.), demonstrating the returning influence of Hellenistic philosophy in medieval religious thought, described an embryo as first imbued with a vegetative soul, later with a sensitive soul (akin to animals), and only after six weeks (42 days) is it endowed with the mark of human life—a rational soul. While he thought it unnatural to abort a pregnancy except in cases of violence or deception, he didn't view it as criminal until after a soul achieved human form.[32]

Official rulings varied, even with the centralization of papal authority.

- In 1211, Pope Innocent III proclaimed that an abortion after quickening was punishable by excommunication (*Sicut ex*).
- Pope Sixtus V issued a bull in 1588 declaring that abortion is murder at any point during pregnancy, to be punished by excommunication and prosecuted by civil authorities.
- Three years later, Pope Gregory IX rescinded that ruling and returned to the standard of quickening which he identified as 16 weeks of gestation (*Sedes Apolstolica*).
- His opinion prevailed until 1869 (over 250 years!) when Pope Pius IX reinstated the harsher bull.

Modern Vatican statements implying an unchanging, unanimous theological conviction that an embryo is a human being from the moment of conception disregard this history.[33] But the question of ensoulment was a constant factor.

Islamic literature also focuses on ensoulment. One hadith suggests that it occurs around the 120th day from conception [which happens to be around the time of quickening]:

> Abdullah narrated: Allah's Apostle, the true and truly inspired said, "(as regards your creation), every one of you is collected in the womb of his mother for the first forty days, and then he becomes a clot for another forty days, and then a piece of flesh for another forty days. Then Allah sends an angel to write four words: He writes his deeds, time of his death, means of his livelihood, and whether he will be wretched or blessed (in religion). Then the soul is breathed into his body" (*Sahih Bukhari 4.55.549*).

All schools of Muslim law permit abortion if continuing the pregnancy would endanger the woman, even after 120 days. Between 40 and 120 days, however, the four Sunni *madhabs* (schools of legal thought) disagreed, even within their own ranks. Similar to Christian discourse, we find a range of ideas about when ensoulment occurs—some as early as forty days, others at quickening.[34]

Although the question of ensoulment is not central to *Jewish* thought, it is deeply embedded in U.S. debates about abortion, and its impact on public policy is evident. The growing influence of

conservative Christian interpretations, asserting that the single-celled zygote at conception is already a human being, has led to overturning *Roe v. Wade* and increasing restrictions on abortions—including 12 states that ban abortion entirely. There's also a bill reintroduced in South Carolina that proposes "equal protection of the laws to all preborn children from the moment of fertilization," categorizing abortion at any stage of pregnancy as homicide.[35]

There is another premise shared by all three traditions—not related to body and soul, but we'll get back to it—a premise that is also influential in how we talk about abortion: giving birth is a *prima facia* moral good. (I'd say all three traditions are "pro-life" in this sense, if you release the term from its politicized meaning.) It has led to what Rebecca Todd Peters calls the "justification framework," debating what circumstances might override the general religious preference for carrying the pregnancy to term: rape, incest, severe fetal deformity, maternal health.

"By beginning with the premise that women should continue their pregnancies," she argues, "the justification framework misidentifies the act of terminating a pregnancy as the starting point for our ethical conversation." It ignores the ethical considerations in bringing children into a world of limited resources, and the broad range of reproductive justice concerns highlighted by women of color in recent generations, including affordable housing and health care, safe communities, effective schools, food security. These are just a few of the ethical concerns that relate to pregnancy.

The justification framework reveals deeper cultural expectations about women's sexuality and purpose, and suspicion of their capacity to act as rational, responsible moral agents.[36] Gender could obviously be another category to explore in terms of what it means to be human, where culture wars press religious notions into service—and religious teachings are again significantly more diverse than is acknowledged in public discourse.[37] Even limiting ourselves to the subjects I've already addressed, we see the impact of patriarchal culture with its desire to subordinate the lives and bodies of women. It is evident in the justification framework. It is evident in the AMA wresting control of birth from women and midwives. And it is evident in the discourse of body and soul. (*I told you I'd get back to this.*)

Classic substance dualism, with its mortification of the flesh, has been critiqued by contemporary theologians—particularly ones who think through feminist lenses. Women as well as racially and religiously marginalized groups have historically been judged as overly physical—emotional and hyper-sexual. It has been judged a sign of their inferiority and justification for their subjugation.

The hierarchy of soul over body has other societal implications we don't have time to discuss. For example, diminishing the importance of the body also makes it too easy to do nothing about those whose material needs aren't met. Denigrating creaturehood denies our interdependence with the natural world. And it ignores the fact that our intellectual and spiritual capacities are "rooted in our living, breathing, and sensing bodies."[38]

At the same time, there is resistance to erasing the idea of soul altogether. American philosopher Daniel Dennett argues that the notion we have these "immaterial and immortal clumps of

Godstuff" called souls that are the source of meaning—our suffering, joy, glory, and shame--has "outlived its credibility thanks to the advance of the natural sciences."[39] Most Americans don't agree; 83% still believe that humans have a soul.[40]

For a while, we had a "theory of mind" that held a middle ground, but now scientific research demonstrates how *everything* happens in the brain. There is only *matter*, which challenges our entire sense of self. Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the double-helix formation of DNA, called it "The Astonishing Hypothesis": "'You,' your joys and sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules."[41] That means moral judgment, religious belief, spiritual experience, and sense of self are merely neural excitations.

What is it that makes this thought so unnerving for many of us? While it raises *a zillion* questions about what it means to be human, the fear that digs under our skin and floods the spaces between our thoughts is: What if we are not in the driver's seat? What if we're just a biological machine?

Are We Free?

So we arrive at our third question: Do we have free will? This one will be short, because I don't have theories about the societal impact of religion—at least not yet. Instead, I want to investigate the first part of the thesis: When pressed by technological and scientific advances to question what it means to be human, religious ideas resurface as part of our individual and collective grappling.

Modern scholarship has been chipping away at the idea of free will for some time, with environmental, psychological, biological, and sociological constraints.[42] Previous forays into scientific determinism, however, have been deeply problematic.

- "The belief in an unalterable human nature legitimized a host of discriminatory and sometimes genocidal measures—based on ethnicity, gender, national origin, and physical disability. Both the Nazis and the architects of Jim Crow swore they were only replacing an artificial egalitarianism with a 'natural' hierarchy of races."[43]
- Women were assigned supposedly innate characteristics as a reason to restrict their social roles—still being advanced in discussions of complementarianism—in ways that disadvantage them economically and politically.
- Social sciences are just as prone to bias. European colonialism, First Nations peoples forced into residential schools, and discriminatory immigration policies all relied on analyses that rendered some cultures superior to others.[44]

Science has repeatedly been put in the service of racism and other unjust power relationships.

So has religion, of course. But when neuroscience, evolutionary biology or physics press us to ask again, "Are we free?"—theology never lets us forget that this is an ethical question. "What does it mean to be human" is *always* an ethical question.

The problem of free will is not a new one. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all viewed it in tension with Divine omniscience and omnipotence. There are differences of perspective both within and among the traditions, of course. In Islamic thought, the Mutazilite school of philosophy argued that Divine justice requires we be able to act freely. The Ashari school of thought, however, was more worried that human freedom would restrict the sovereign freedom of the Creator. They won.

Al-qaḍāʾ wa l-qadar, Islamic theology asserts—everything in the universe happens according to Allah's will. At the same time, humans have moral accountability. *How can that be? How can we be held responsible for our actions if we have no choice?*

While the overall thrust of Christian theology emphasized free will a bit more, and Jewish theology even more, the similarities are more striking. All three traditions have multiple teachings that emphasize the ethical tension and offer many of the same possibilities for how to grapple with it. For example:

- God determines what will happen, but then we exercise our will as we *acquire* the action.
- Or: Everything is in the hands of heaven except the fear of Heaven. We choose whether or not to align our will with God's, but God's will will prevail.
- Or: We are free to *act* as we want, but we are not free in what we want. We do not control our desires and thoughts.
- Or: God leads us in the path that is the one we choose, like hardening Pharaoh's heart after he did it himself multiple times—or God makes it easy for us to elect the path ordained for us.[45]

And still, over the centuries, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic texts kept asking the questions because the tension remained. Contemporary Muslim thinker Fazlur Rahman shared an insight that can be drawn from all three traditions: the paradox of Divine Providence and Free Will is not a problem to be resolved theologically, but rather a problem to be lived with in faithfulness. We strive to exercise *what we experience as our freedom* to accept moral accountability and strive to live in accordance with Divine teaching.[46] Live "as if" we are free.

Even though questions of free will are not new, today's paradigm-busting scientific discoveries revive them with a new sense of urgency. So there is fresh wisdom for us in the religious paradox. Live *as if.* While the reality of whether we have free will may be uncertain, the impact of *belief* in free will can be measured.

Multiple studies demonstrate that persons who believe they have free will are more psychologically and physically whole. It enhances academic performance, inspires creativity, increases gratitude, and elevates job performance.[47] Gerald Winslow argues that our experience of free will undergirds our capacity to love.[48] The idea that people are agents—that they are responsible for their actions—is at the heart of our legal system and religious notions of reward and punishment. It is central to our understanding of ourselves as human beings.[49]

There *are* times that humans might like to imagine they don't have free will—so they can engage in bad behavior and not feel responsible. ("The Devil made me do it.") Anne Foerst tells a story about voles, who have a genetic code that makes some monogamous and others polygamous. In the room where she first heard a lecture on this fact, the first question was from a man in the audience who wanted to know if his own sexual behavior was genetically determined. The answer: Yes, but only if you are a vole.[50] On the theistic side, I have spoken with folks who think we don't need to do anything about the climate crisis because it's up to God. The "as if" equation, however, doesn't allow us to forfeit moral responsibility.

Another valuable insight we can draw from religious discourse is the intuition—long before neuroscience, genetics, particle physics, or even cultural anthropology confirmed it—that our experience of free will is not a straightforward or obvious thing. Over 80% of Americans say they believe they have free will—but they just assume it because they know they make choices all the time. We don't stop to ask ourselves whether *the choice* is itself free or determined.

It makes more sense to talk about free action than free will. Theologians who believed in predestination made this distinction long ago—something I read as apologetics until scientific advances pressed me to rethink the matter. I'm still among the 80% who affirm free will, but with significant constraints (and substantive doubt). Teachings within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam tried to convey that we can direct our lives in meaningful ways, but we don't control them. Acknowledging this limitation can be healthy. For theists, of course, yielding control of our lives to God may feel different than acknowledging the impersonal hand of physics, sociology, and biology.

It's interesting to read the scientists and philosophers who propose a less absolute equation than Crick's "astonishing hypothesis." They highlight gaps or counter-facts in the scientific evidence, and talk about "non-reductive materialism" or "compatibilism."[51] In some ways, these concepts echo the direction-but-not-control dialectic of religious thought. They guard against the dehumanization that might follow from a purely material conception of the human. They can embrace scientific learning without *scientism*, the thesis that science is the only path to truth.

Closing Thoughts

As I asserted in the first lecture: "What am I?" and "Who am I?" are not abstract queries; they inevitably lead us to ask, "How *ought* I to be in the world? And how ought I treat other human beings?"

Beyond that: What about non-human animals? What is our place in creation? How do we embody the religious concepts that we are both dust, and spirit or image of God? Can we strengthen a commitment to human dignity but reject the notion of human exceptionalism that drives our earth-destroying extractive economies?

What constitutes personhood? What fundamental rights does that entail? If we succeed in creating AI with human-like consciousness (and self-consciousness), what about *their*

personhood? How should we think about technologies of transhumanism—AI integration, genetic enhancement, and the like?[52]

Amidst the climate crisis, biodiversity collapse, and the AI revolution, these are urgent questions about what it means to be human. Questions that require the collective wisdom of science, religion, ethics, philosophy…. Every new challenge provides an opportunity to refine our understanding.

I promised I would leave you with more questions than answers. Rabbis like to do that. But I'll offer a few closing reflections on the role of religion in the public square. Because we live in a religiously plural society, this is an interreligious issue in itself.

In discussing theological anthropologies, we could have examined any of the questions I just named, and countless others. The three I selected simply captured my imagination. But in unpacking them, even without being able to nail down the role of religion in shaping our common life, we have sketched out a meaningful spectrum.

- *"Are we good?*" surfaced the possibility of *subconscious shaping* of policy, in this case the culture of punishment.
- *"Are we more than dust?"* led us to consider religious ideas imposed as law and inscribed as social norms in our discussion of abortion and sexuality. –Consciously, if not always explicitly.
- *"Are we free?"* suggested a fruitful dialogue in which religious ideas can profoundly enrich the public conversation.

These examples carve out some useful guideposts.

Religious values must be made visible*.*

Digging into exegesis is a valuable tool for this work; it reveals how sacred texts and their interpretations are influential even for people who don't read them. Scholars have identified a host of religious concepts that have been transferred into non-religious spaces of thought and practice. Karl Löwith, for example, argued that the passion for progress is a secularized version of Christian eschatology.[53] Lynn White, Jr. famously blamed religion for environmental destruction, claiming it still governs our thinking about the relationship of human life to nature.[54] Terence Keel argues that modern scientific theories of race are an extension of Christian intellectual history, palpable in the universality and authority that shape scientific thinking.[55]

Whether or not you embrace these claims, the ways in which our ancestors understood their world shape our present one.[56] We have inherited profound questions—questions that don't go away. As the heirs, even as we seek different answers, we are obliged to know again what was taught before.[57]

Comparative exegesis also surfaces alternative religious, spiritual, scientific, and ethical perspectives about who we are as human beings and how we ought to fashion our collective life—highlighting the range of possibilities before us. We learn through difference, both about each other and about ourselves.

The influence of religious ideas in public life must always be pluralistic.
This is obvious, yet Christian hegemony abides. Calendars and court rulings, language and legislation, art and activism all demonstrate the extent to which Christianity is woven into the fabric of American culture. Uncovering the religious dimensions of our discourse and policies ensures that Christian perspectives are not mistaken for universal ones. Religious pluralism stands over against religious hostility, and also over against disregard for differences that matter.

Respecting our mongrel epistemology is key in defending the space for difference.
(This one is less obvious, so we'll spend some time with it.)[58] We generally rely on the First Amendment to protect religious freedom, but translating its commitments to civic life remains a challenge. One difficulty we face is that protecting free exercise gets the government involved in what qualifies as religion—for exemption from taxation, for accommodation in prisons, for laws of butchering, for military chaplaincy, for water rights, and a host of other concerns.[59] This has repeatedly disadvantaged Indigenous peoples, new religious movements, and others whose traditions don't fit into the "world religions" paradigm.

We also struggle to balance individual liberties with institutional ones. Why do the religious convictions of a company, for example, matter more than those of its employees when it comes to contraceptive coverage in health insurance?[60] Does "official religion" matter more than a person's lived embodiment of their faith? What about the sanctuary of individual conscience?[61] Even within the limited focus of these talks, we have seen everyday theology or lived religion diverge from official teachings. And, as the diversities of spiritual lifestances multiply—including the rapidly growing number of "nones"—it is not enough to include just other "religions" in free exercise.

Consider a recent lawsuit in Indiana, where I live, which challenged the statewide abortion ban on religious freedom grounds. Expected to prove their religious bonafides, all the nontheistic plaintiff could offer was her moral conviction of human dignity and sense of universal consciousness. The Muslim and Jewish plaintiffs testified about their religious education, observing religious holidays and dietary restrictions, prayer, and such. They made claims about when human life begins according to their spiritual lifestance. But this is tricky territory for non-orthodox practitioners.

An amicus brief by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty argued that "there is powerful evidence that Plaintiffs' beliefs are not sincere." [repeat!] While acknowledging that sincerity "does not necessarily require strict doctrinal adherence to standards created by organized religious hierarchies," the Becket Fund claimed that plaintiffs were using religious freedom as a "cloak for their non-religious objections" to the abortion ban.[62]

David Schraub, a law professor, has examined this case. He argues, "The assumed merger of conservatism and religiosity makes liberal religious liberty claims inherently suspect."[63] Yet conservative religious claims are no more "purified" of political or other secular influences. Here we see that recognition of our mongrel epistemology is not a limitation but a safeguard. It

provides a strategy to protect religious liberty for all. The way we understand and embody our spiritual lifestance is shaped by the totality of who we are.

There is a place for religious ideas in the public square.

Some people believe that the establishment clause has made the public arena an *anti*-religious space, compromising their free exercise. They argue that religious expression "has been pushed to the margins, to a sort of cultural red-light district, along with other unfortunate frailties and vices to which we are liable."[64]

Yet American democracy creates broad space for spirituality to flourish. Keeping religion out of state affairs – and government control out of religion – fosters the vitality of religious life. It still allows people to vote for religious reasons and officials to act for religious reasons. At the same time, it protects minority beliefs from the tyranny or simple ignorance of the majority and allows freedom *from* religion as well.

I deeply appreciate Danièle Hervieu-Léger's definition of secularism. It is not the erasure of religion from the public square, but a context in which religious ideas productively engage with other ways of thinking and knowing, and no institution has a monopoly on meaning.[65] We bring everything we've got—science, history, philosophy, politics, ethics. We bring everything we are—our gender, race, age, nationality, and social class. Our life experience and the historical moment. We need all of it to approach the urgent questions of what it means to be human today—to resist the dehumanizing discourses of difference and find our way together.

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[1] Even as we live, we are in a process of dying. As the 9th-century Sufi Junayd taught, "One who is between the two vanishings is even now vanishing." Cited in the *tafsir* of al-Sulami; *Study Quran*, 817 (*ad.* 21:35, *Every soul shall taste death*).

[2] Levenson, commentary on Gen 2:7 in *The Jewish Study Bible*, eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 13.

[3] Used interchangeably or with varying details

[4] 1 Peter 2:11 states, "I urge you…to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul." See also Russell C. Bjork, "Artificial Intelligence and the Soul," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 60:2 (2008): 95–102.

[5] E.g., Tertullian, *De exhortatione castitatis*; Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate*; or John Chrysostom, *De virginitate*. Clement of Alexandria insisted that sex within marriage was permissible only if it were potentially procreative (Paedagogus 2.10.83). See Matthew Kuefler, "Desire and the Body in the Patristic Period," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 244, 247; doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199664153.013.015.

[6] See David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

[7] In Galatians 4, Paul presents an allegory of Hagar and Sarah, where the Jews embody the former, enslaved by the law, and the Christian community inherits the promise of the latter. Note also 2 Corinthians 3:6, "For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life."

[8] "We should look on all these outward observances as resembling the body and their inner meanings as resembling the soul. It follows that, exactly as we have to take thought for the body, because it is the abode of the

soul, so we must pay heed to the letter of the law." Philo, *The Migration of Abraham*, trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker (London: Loeb Classical Library Vol. 4, 1932) 185.

[9] Privileging the spiritual over the physical, the Church fathers attempted to "allegorize the reality of Israel quite out of corporeal existence." Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 6.

[10] They supported their claims in the way they read Hebrew Bible, interpreting the creation and "the fall" as historical but then bypassing God's involvement with the people of Israel as key to God's redemptive plan. To emphasize the salvific role of Jesus, passages were reinterpreted allegorically. Contemporary Christian theologian R. Kendall Soulen calls this way of reading Scripture "structural supersession." Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, 28-33.

[11] See, e.g., Joseph Priestly, *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit* (1777).

[12] See Fazlur Rahman, *Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition: Change and Identity* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1987), 21; *Major Themes in the Qur'an* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 17-36.

[13] Sufi tradition expands these levels to seven.

[14] Ahmed Alwisha, "On Ibn Sīnā's Floating Man Arguments," *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 9 (2013): 49-71; Maksood Aftab, "Is Islam Committed to Dualism in the Context of the Problem of Free Will?" *Journal of Cognition and Neuroethics* 3:1 (2015): 8.

[15] Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar* Vol. 58 (Beirut: al-Wafa Publications, 1983), 107; hubeali.com/books/English-Books/BiharAlAnwaar/BiharAlAnwaar_V58.pdf, pp. 243-44.

[16] Al-Ghazali, *Marvels of the Heart*, trans. Walter James Skellie (Louisville : Fons Vitae, 2010), 6.

[17] Mattson, "'The Believer is Never Impure'": Islam and Understanding the Embodied Person," in *Treating the Body in Medicine and Religion: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives*, eds. John J. Fitzgerald & Ashley J. Moyse (New York: Routledge, 2019), 65.

[18] Portions of this section are adapted from Rachel S. Mikva, "Abortion," *Encyclopaedia on Jewish-Christian Relations* (DeGruyter, 2022); doi.org/10.1515/ejcro.14121596.

[19] https://cases.justia.com/alabama/supreme-court/2024-sc-2022-0579.pdf?ts=1708115406.

[20] https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/19-1392_6j37.pdf

[21] https://www.prri.org/research/abortion-views-in-all-50-states-findings-from-prris-2023-american-values-atlas/; 60% of U.S. Muslims affirm that abortion should be legal is most or all circumstances. A 2014 survey of 48 Muslim-majority countries showed that 18 of them allow abortion only to save the life of the mother, 12 have no restrictions, and the rest are in between. The least restrictive are those in former Soviet countries, plus Tunisia and Turkey. Gilla K. Shapiro, "Abortion law in Muslim-majority countries: an overview of the Islamic discourse with policy implications," *Health Policy and Planning* 29:4 (July 2014): 483-94; doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czt040. See also Oren Asman, "Abortion in Islamic Countries: Legal and Religious Aspects," *Medicine and Law* 23:1 (February 2004): 73-89.

[22] Ignacio Castuera, "A Social History of Christian Thought on Abortion: Ambiguity vs. Certainty in Moral Debate," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 76:1 (2017) 172, 189. See also Paul Saurette and Kelly Gordon, "The AMA's Crusade Against Abortion," in *T & T Clark Reader in Abortion and Religion: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*, eds. Rebecca Todd Peters and Margaret D. Kamitsuka (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023), 170-76.

[23] Mark G. Toulouse, "Perspectives on Abortion in the Christian Community from the 1950s to the 1990s," *Encounter* 62:4 (2001) 338-39.

[24] Linda Greenhouse and Reva B. Siegel, "Before (and After) Roe v. Wade: New Questions About Backlash," *Yale Law Journal* 120 (2011) 2065-71. See also, Randall Balmer, "The Real Origins of the Religious Right," *Politico* (May 27, 2014); https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/05/religious-right-real-origins-107133/.

[25] The image of the seamless garment is attributed to Catholic activist Eileen Egan, an allusion to Jn

[26] Targum Onkolos, an early Aramaic translation, makes it more explicit—rendering "no other damage ensues" as "the woman does not die."

[27] See Daniel Schiff, *Abortion in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) for a range of perspectives.

[28] The Vulgate matches the Targum here—as long as the pregnant woman isn't otherwise harmed, the law of talion doesn't apply.

[29] Philosophical perspectives on fetal development may have influenced the Septuagint translation. Aristotle had maintained that a male embryo was formed as a human being after forty days of gestation and a female embryo after eighty to ninety days (*History of Animals VII:3, Politics VII:16*). Although rabbinic literature discusses fetal development, the focus remained on the pregnant woman. In the case of a miscarriage before 41 days of gestation, for example, she does not need to observe rituals of *niddah* (separation from marital relations related to vaginal bleeding—*bNid 30a*).

[30] Contemporary Christian pro-life activists like to cite Tertullian (3rd cent.) to demonstrate early religious objections to abortion, but his training as a rhetorician prompted him to choose the best argument for each work without concern for consistency among his writings. In challenging Platonist claims that the soul enters the body at its first breath, he wrote that body and soul are conceived simultaneously (*De Anima 26-27*). Ten chapters later, he adopted the Septuagint's concept of gradual formation and suggested that the unborn child takes on the image of God after seven months (*De Anima 37*). In arguing against Marcionite conceptions of Christ, he went further to emphasize the mystery of Divine self-humiliation as unanimated flesh in the womb (*Marc 4.21*).

[31] Barbara Pfeffer Billauer, "Abortion, Moral Law, and the First Amendment: The Conflict Between Fetal Rights and Freedom of Religion," *William and Mary Journal of Women and the Law* 23 (2017): 305.

[32] Fabrizio Amerini, *Aquinas on the Beginning and End of Human Life*, trans. Mark Henninger (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2013) 7-8, 111. The Reformation did not add substantively to these debates. Martin Luther did not discuss abortion. Calvin, in his commentary on Exodus, asserted that the law of talion applied for the death of the fetus—but he did not write much about it.

[33] See, e.g. "Declaration on Procured Abortion" (1974) and *Evangelium Vitae 61-62* (1995).

[34] Omar Suleiman, "Islam and the Abortion Debate," Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, https://yaqeeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Islam-and-the-Abortion-Debate.pdf.

[35] https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/state-policies-abortion-bans; https://www.texastribune.org/2024/05/31/texas-supreme-court-zurawski-abortion/; https://www.foxcarolina.com/2024/12/11/sc-lawmakers-refile-proposed-bill-make-abortions-punishable-homicides/ ; https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess126_2025-2026/bills/3537.htm

[36] Rebecca Todd Peters, *Trust Women: A Progressive Christian Argument for Reproductive Justice* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 3-7. She notes that almost three-quarters of abortions in the U.S. do not meet the criteria of the justification framework.

[37] Religious feminist works are too numerous to count. Religious voices also complicate the more recent debate around the number of genders. See, for example, Elliot Kukla, "A Created Being of Its Own: Toward a Jewish Liberation Theology for Men, Women, and Everyone Else," *TransTorah*, www.transtorah.org/PDFs/How_I_Met_the_Tumtum.pdf; Megan DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 64-85; Indira Falk Gesink, "Intersex Bodies in Premodern Islamic Discourse," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 14:2 (July 2018): 152-171.

[38] Simon Balle and Ulrik Nissen, "Responsive Bodies: Robots, AI, and the Question of Human Distinctiveness," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 58:2 (June 2023): 358; doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12888.

[39] Dennett, *Freedom Evolves* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 5.

[40] https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/12/07/spiritual-beliefs/

[41] Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul* (New York: Touchstone, 1994), 3.

[42] Before the claims of physics and biology, there was environmental determinism, beginning in Antiquity but gaining prominence in the early 1900s; it claimed that geography and climate shaped culture and individual psychology. Psychological determinism was advocated most strongly by "behaviorists" such as B.F. Skinner. Social determinism asserted that the institutions and systems in which we are embedded essentially control our destiny. Even our sense of self is constructed: thinkers from Martin Heidegger to Michel Foucault and beyond challenged the Enlightenment idea that we are free and autonomous subjects; rather, we are disciplined by social forces how to think about ourselves.

[43] Michael Kazin, "Review of Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 47:1 (Winter 2004): 152. From Samuel Morton, who measured skull sizes in the 1830s to argue that Europeans were the most intelligent, to Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve*, claiming (in 1994!) that whites are genetically more intelligent than Blacks—science has been put in the service of racism and other unjust power relationships.
[44] The longer version: Sociologists didn't buy it. They argued that virtually all of human behavior is transmitted by culture—in part a rebellion against the depraved applications of race science in the early 20th century. It was liberating in the ways it acknowledged systemic injustice and the importance of social location in shaping who we are. But sociological and anthropological lenses are not free from bias.
[45] See Nasr, *The Study Quran*, 1520; *b. Berakhot 33b*; Martin Sicker, *Between Man and God: Issues in Judaic Thought* (Bloomsbury, 2001), 97-114; Aku Visala, "Free Will," *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, ed. Brendan Wolfe, www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/FreeWill; Alexander Jensen, *Divine Providence and Human Agency: Trinity, Creation, and Freedom* (Routledge, 2014), 67-114.
[46] Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 27.
[47] Kendal Boyd, "Belief in Free Will is Beneficial," in *What's with Free Will? Ethics and Religion After Neuroscience*, eds. Phillip Clayton and James W. Walters (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2020), 38-49.
[48] Winslow, "Freedom for Neighbor Love," in *What's with Free Will?*, 67-81.
[49] Janet Metcalfe and Matthew Jason Greene, "Metacognition in Agency" (*Journal of Experimental Psychology* 136:2 (2007): 184-99.
[50] Anne Foerst, *God in the Machine: What Robots Teach Us About Humanity and God* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 62.
[51] Gaps include stochastic events or, in physics, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and quantum chaos.
[52] In January, the Vatican released an encyclical about AI, *Antiqua et Nova*, with dozens of ethical questions about its use—plus an overarching concern about the idolatrous implications of ceding power to a work of our own creation.
[53] Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).
[54] White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155:3767 (March 10, 1967): 1203-07.
[55] Keel, *Divine Variations*, 20-21.
[56] See Georgia Warnke's discussion in *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 39.
[57] See Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1983), 15. He argued that we need to disclaim the inheritance and seek out our own questions, ones that we are better equipped to answer.
[58] The First Amendment begins with two interdependent principles to protect the freedom of religion. An "establishment clause" prohibits the US government from instituting an official religion and has served as the foundation for separation of religion and state. A "free exercise clause" promises that individuals may practice their religion without legal impediment. Translating these commitments to civic life, however, is an ongoing challenge. While these guarantees initially applied only to the federal government –and many states had official religions – its protections were gradually extended to restrict state and local governmental action as well.
[59] See Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* (Princeton University Press, 2005).
[60] See the case study composed by Timothy Ewest *et al.*, "Faith and Work: Hobby Lobby and AutoZone," https://hbsp.harvard.edu/product/W14680-PDF-ENG.
[61] See Pope John Paul II, "Address to the United Nations" (October 5, 1995)
[62] https://becketnewsite.s3.amazonaws.com/20230118184008/Individual-Members-v.-Anonymous-Planitiff-Amicus-Brief.pdf, 11-14.
[63] Schraub, "Liberal Jews and Religious Liberty," *New York University Law Review* (November 2023): 1625. Yet conservative religious liberty claims similarly blend religious and secular interests—as seen in recent cases justifying discrimination against women, pregnant persons, and LGBTQIA individuals; and fighting for federal funds in adoption or other social services that discriminate against non-Christians or proselytize in their programs. [Can also add in Sullivan's reflection on the judgment against "purely personal preference" as illegitimate.]

[64] Wilfred M. McClay, "Two Concepts of Secularism," in *Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Policy in America*, ed. Hugh Heclo and Wilfred McClay (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 33.
[65] Hervieu-Léger, "'What Scripture Tells Me': Spontaneity and Regulation within the Catholic Charismatic Renewal," in *Lived Religion in America*, 27, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691218281-003.