

Religion after Naturalism

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ABSTRACT: Theistic religions are not the only religions in the West. Many nontheistic religions are religions of energy. This energy is ultimate, optimizing, impersonal, and natural. Although it cannot be worshiped, this energy can be aroused, directed, and shaped. Hence the energy religions involve tools and techniques for the therapeutic application of the ultimate energy to the self. They are technologies of the self. Attention is focused here on four new types of energy religion. These include the religions of consciousness (e.g. the New Stoicism, Westernized Buddhism); the religions of vision (involving the ethical use of entheogens); the religions of dance (e.g. religious raves); and the religions of beauty (e.g. Burning Man).

1. Nontheistic Religions

Most religions involve some objects of ultimate interest. As the term is used here, to say a religion is *theistic* means that its ultimate objects are *persons* who somehow transcend nature. Whatever the term *natural* may mean, these ultimate persons are not natural; on the contrary, they are *supernatural*. For example, the Abrahamic God is an ultimate person who transcends nature. Of course, the theistic religions raise many philosophical problems. *Protheistic philosophy* aims to resolve those problems in favor of theism. It focuses intensely on the defense of the Abrahamic God.

Although protheistic philosophy is currently a thriving enterprise, it has threats. One threat to protheistic philosophy appears to come from *naturalism*. As the term is used here, a *naturalist* rejects all supernatural objects (especially supernatural persons, such as the Abrahamic God). Plantinga even defines naturalism as the rejection of the theistic God (2011: *ix*). Thus naturalism motivates *antitheistic philosophy*, which aims to refute theism. The naturalistic attack on theism has been forcefully articulated by the New Atheists (Dawkins, 2008; Dennett, 2006; Harris, 2005; Hitchens, 2007). They argue that the theistic religions are not merely false, but cause real harm.

Assuming these definitions of theism and naturalism, many philosophers of religion will be familiar with the following *unsettling argument*: (1) Once the heliocentric theory of the solar system was known to be true, debates about the geocentric theory died out; once the oxygen theory of combustion was known to be true, debates about phlogiston died out; likewise, once naturalism is known to be true, debates about God will die out. (2) So, if naturalism is known to be true, then both protheistic and antitheistic philosophy will die out. (3) But if they die, then philosophy of religion dies. (4) Therefore, if naturalism is known to be true, then philosophy of religion is over. There is no

philosophy of religion after naturalism. Thus John Loftus has called for an end to the teaching of philosophy of religion in secular universities (2014). And Keith Parsons declared that he will no longer teach philosophy of religion (Galef, 2011).

Some may object to the first step of the unsettling argument. After all, some people still advocate geocentrism. But geocentrism no longer thrives; if it is discussed in the academy, it belongs to history. And some may wish to challenge the second step. They will insist that naturalism and theism can be rendered compatible. Perhaps they are right. Maybe the definition of theistic religion given here is too narrow. Maybe it can grow to include more naturalistic concepts of God. Many Americans say God is an impersonal force (Pew Forum, 2008: 5). Some *religious naturalists* argue that God is the creativity in nature (Peters, 2002; Stone, 2008). Maybe protheistic philosophy can expand to include pantheism (Harrison, 1999), panentheism (Johnston, 2009), or even the idea that God is an infinite quantum computer (Tipler, 1995). Still, it has been argued that these more naturalistic theories of God play almost no role in lived religious practice (Dawkins, 2008: ch. 1). So the second step may be stronger than it seems.

Others may object to the third step. Accordingly, even if debates about God die out, philosophy of religion will still flourish. Many surveys report that people no longer regard theism as the only religious option in the West (Lambert, 2006; Pew Forum, 2015). The *nontheistic religions* are growing. As defined here, a nontheistic religion does not involve any kind of God (Crosby, 2002). So, if some victorious naturalism were to wipe out theistic religion, then the philosophy of religion would focus on the nontheistic religions. But what if there are no philosophically interesting nontheistic religions? To defeat the third step, it is necessary to show that there are some philosophically interesting nontheistic religions. And these religions cannot be merely theoretical constructs. They must be *practiced* by living communities.

2. Some Older Energetic Religions

Many nontheistic religions regard *energy* as religiously ultimate. An *energetic religion* begins with some ultimate power or force. This ultimate power, this primal energy, is impersonal and non-mental. It is immanent and it flows through all things. All things are manifestations or expressions of the primal energy. All things participate in the primal energy, and therefore all things are interconnected and united. The primal energy cannot be worshiped. But the primal energy can be aroused, invoked, directed, and shaped. Thus energetic religions are also *technical religions*. They include tools and techniques for the application of the primal energy to the self.

Many older religions involve primal energy. In Taoism, the primal energy is *qi*. It is said that *qi* flows through certain channels in the body, known as *meridians*. When the flow of *qi* becomes blocked, the body becomes sick. To heal the body, small needles are inserted into the meridians to release the *qi*. This is the basis for *acupuncture*. Acupuncture is a technology for the regulation of primal energy in the self. Although Hinduism is highly theistic, involving many deities, it also has energetic aspects. In some

forms of Hinduism, the primal energy is *prana*. It flows through channels in the body known as *nadis*. The nadis pass through regulatory centers known as *chakras*. The chakras are kept in balance by the practice of *yoga*. Yoga is a technology for the regulation of the primal energy in the self.

The ancient Greek and Roman pagan religions involved primal energy. Although these religions were theistic, involving many gods and goddesses, they often based their theologies on Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas. The Platonic Form of the Good and the Neoplatonic One are impersonal powers. Many pagan theologians argued that these powers brought the deities into existence. For example, in his treatise *On the Gods and the World*, the Roman theologian Sallustius argued that the Olympic deities were brought into being by the primal energy of the impersonal One. He further argued that these deities were to be thought of as specialized powers of goodness, which were always trying to pour out their beneficence into human lives. By performing temple rituals, we made ourselves similar to those deities; by making ourselves similar, their powers would flow out more intensely into our lives. Thus we gain benefits.

More recently, the *New Thought* religions involve primal energy. These include the Unity Church (Cady, 1919) and Religious Science (Holmes, 1938). These New Thought religions regard God as an impersonal power in the depths of all things, including all humans. This conception of God has roots in both the immanent One of Neoplatonism and the cosmic fire of the Stoics. While this divine power perpetually tries to pour out its goodness into your life, its outflow can be blocked by erroneous thought-patterns, which harden into bad habits. So you need to open yourself to receive this power by purifying your thought. And you need to learn techniques for controlling this power-flux, so that you can channel it into the production of health and wealth. These techniques include denials, affirmations, self-hypnosis, visualizations, and meditations.

The beliefs and practices inspired by New Thought have been enormously popular and influential in American spirituality. New Thought produced best-sellers like Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich* and Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking*. New Thought stands behind the prosperity gospel and the Word of Faith movement. The energetic ideas in New Thought have inspired much New Age religion (Albanese, 1999). They have partly motivated the human potential movement and other self-help movements. They inspired the Silva Method, Erhard Seminars Training (est), and Neuro-Linguistic Programming. And the energetic ideas in New Thought are found in the magical practices of Neopagan religions like Wicca.

The religions of energy are gaining adherents in the West. According to a recent Pew Forum survey (2009), Eastern and New Age beliefs associated with energy are widespread in American religious life. One quarter of Americans affirm that spiritual energy flows through physical things (Pew, 2009: 3). Beliefs and practices involving energy are closely associated with the growing number of people who identify as spiritual but not religious (Ammerman, 2013). According to one recent survey (Kosmin & Keysar, 2013), one third of American college students reject both theism and secularism in favor of spirituality. Thus Peter Clarke, the editor of the *Encyclopedia of New*

Religious Movements, says he sees “emerging in the West a new cognitive style of being religious, which contrasts with theistic religions” (2005: x).

3. Towards Naturalistic Energy Religions

A naturalist demands evidence for claims about physical things in our universe, such as human bodies. There is no evidence for most of the claims made in the older energy religions. A naturalist will therefore correctly say that *qi* does not flow through your meridians and that *prana* does not flow through your *chakras*. There is no evidence for the energies behind the New Thought, New Age, or Neopagan religions. These older energy religions often display extreme irrationality. They distort science and pervert medicine. By offering ineffective cures, they cause real harm.

The older energetic religions violate scientific rationality. Since they violate scientific rationality, some naturalists may wish to declare that, like the theistic religions, the old energy religions are false and harmful. However, those religions are open to scientific improvement. Serious scientific and medical researchers study their practices. They are investigating acupuncture, yoga, and meditation. The old energy religions are like alchemy: just as alchemy pointed towards chemistry, so the old and nonnatural energy religions point towards newer and more natural energy religions. The old energy religions can be thought of as *proto-sciences* which support *proto-technologies*. Those proto-sciences and proto-technologies are open to further rational development. So, rejecting meridians and *qi*, you study the ways that acupuncture stimulates the release of neurologically and immunologically active molecules.

Energy religions can be naturalistic. At one extreme, the primal energy is just physical energy, released in the Big Bang. Nevertheless, naturalism does not require that the primal energy be physical. For Armstrong (1978), naturalism means that only our physical universe exists. But other versions of naturalism are possible (see Quine, 1990). Naturalism is hardly identical with materialism or physicalism; neither is it identical with positivism or scientism. Scientific rationality supports a vast ecosystem of divergent metaphysical systems (see Salmon, 1966). Naturalists can be mathematical, modal, and moral realists. And they can be religious. They can affirm that nature has axiological depths (Wildman, 2011: 262). They can study the “value structures and flows in the depths of nature” (Wildman, 2011: 248). These are the flows of an ultimate *natural primal power* which is deeper than physical. A naturalist can affirm that all physical and biological energies are local manifestations of that power.

And the older energy religions are becoming more naturalistic. They are turning into disciplines for the positive application of natural biological energies to the self. They are becoming *technologies of the self* (Foucault, 1988). As such they involve techniques for self-empowerment. These include psychological techniques for self-regulation. But they also include material techniques for self-enhancement (such as medical technologies). And they include material practices for self-definition, self-construction, self-expression, and self-transcendence. All these techniques are associated with ideas about ultimacy

which indicate that they are more than merely hedonistic. They are spiritual techniques, spiritual practices, spiritual disciplines. All natural biological energies are expressions of primal energy. But the advocates of these techniques are pragmatists. They are interested in scientifically verifiable effectiveness.

On the basis of these ideas, it is clear that naturalism does not bring philosophy of religion to an end. Philosophers of religion can study the naturalistic energy religions. To encourage such study, four naturalistic energy religions are briefly discussed here. They involve techniques and technologies for the application of power to the self. The first type includes the *religions of consciousness* (e.g. the New Stoicism, Westernized Buddhism). The second type includes the *religions of vision* (naturalized versions of religions which use entheogens). The third includes the *religions of dance* (e.g. religious raves). The fourth includes the *religions of beauty* (e.g. Burning Man). These religions are not merely theoretical; they are practiced by living communities.

4. Religions of Consciousness

At present there are two main religions of consciousness in the West. They emerge in the territory opened by New Thought. The first is the New Stoicism. Many old Stoic practices have found a modern following (Irvine, 2009). Hadot (1995) calls these ancient practices *spiritual exercises*. These tend to be divorced from old Stoic cosmology and theology. The second is Westernized Buddhism. It involves mindfulness meditation and related techniques (Flanagan, 2013; Harris, 2014). These are mostly divorced from old Buddhist cosmology and metaphysics. Both the New Stoics and Westernized Buddhists appear to treat religion as a kind of psycho-spiritual technology.

The religions of consciousness tend to be explicitly atheistic. And they show that the ideas of New Thought can be developed in nontheistic directions. It is not difficult to trace a line through Cady, Hill, and Peale to Harris. This line is progressively more naturalistic. The religions of consciousness tend to dismiss old religious metaphysics (e.g. mind-body dualism). They tend to regard human persons as strictly material. They aim to stay grounded in the empirical sciences (whose methods they apply to the self). Thus our universe is animated by ordinary physical energy; but this energy has naturally concentrated itself ever more intensely in increasingly complex forms. It has evolved here on earth to make human animals with self-conscious brains.

But human animals, conscious of their suffering, are consumed with existential anxiety and dread. As our minds have evolved the capacity for anxiety and dread, so they have also evolved the capacity for self-salvation. Since our brains are self-conscious, they can learn to act on themselves to save themselves from suffering. On this view, the human body contains both a *saving power* and the rational self-awareness to learn how to apply that power to itself. It can activate this power in itself through therapeutic exercises (through self-discipline, *askesis*). Salvation is the cleansing or clearing of the mind through meditation and related techniques. Of course, these ideas harken back to New Thought. But God is irrelevant; the saving power at work in the body is merely the

visceral expression of a power which is ultimate, optimizing, natural, and impersonal. So these ideas run back to the all-powerful goodness of Plotinus and Plato.

Once purified, the mind ceases to crave and suffer; it becomes free from its attachment to its own ego. You transcend yourself by rising from the particularity of your ego to the perspective of anonymous sentience, the enlightened perspective of the pure Buddha-mind. As you transcend your ego-bondage; you become *compassionate*; you care for all sentient beings. When you reach enlightenment, you become a *sage*. Ancient theories of the sage were developed by Epicureans, Stoics, and Neoplatonists. But those ancient theories are updated by these modern techniques. Finally, with sufficient practice, you can learn to face death mindfully. You can face it with serene acceptance.

Of course, ancient Buddhists affirmed both rebirth and karma. Theravadic Buddhism offered highly naturalistic theories of rebirth and karma (Rahula, 1974). Those old Theravadic theories can be naturalized (Steinhart 2014). The religious naturalist Jerome Stone writes that “since patterns of information can outlast their original physical substratum, just as music can outlive its composer, immortality is not definitively foreclosed in a naturalistic framework” (2008: 228). A naturalistic Buddhist can affirm that the great cosmic cycle generates a sequence of universes. Karmic laws transform the lives in each previous universe onto the lives in its next universe. So your earthly life will be reborn into your next life in the next cosmic cycle. Your life is like a series of notes in the cosmic symphony; it can be karmically transformed into a similar series of notes to be played in the next iteration of the cosmic symphony. There are many ideas here which cry out for further exploration, so that much new work in philosophy of religion can be inspired by the religions of consciousness.

5. Religions of Vision

An *entheogen* is a drug taken to induce a religious experience (Richards, 2014). As Wildman puts it, taking entheogens is a long-established “technology of religious and spiritual experience” (2011: 227). Several entheogenic religions currently exist (e.g. Santo Daime, Unaio de Vegetal, the Native American Church). But these suffer too much from old religious problems. New and naturalistic research programs have emerged which are studying the spiritual uses of entheogens. The religions of vision regard entheogens as tools for positive self-transformation.

Many new research programs are studying the religious and spiritual effects of psilocybin. Taking psilocybin produces religious experiences (Richards, 2008). These experiences can produce profound long-term personal transformations, so that those who take psilocybin seem to achieve the kind of enlightenment sought by meditators (Griffiths et al., 2011). Psilocybin has been administered to patients suffering from terminal cancer, and it appears to relieve anxiety concerning death (Grob et al., 2011). If the careful use of psilocybin can relieve fear of death, it may replace old-fashioned religious consolation. That could lead to a new psilocybin religion. Future spiritual technicians may use advanced neuroscience, including entheogens, to design religious experiences to

help people overcome the negativities of life (Wildman, 2011: ch. 7).

Many who take psilocybin report having a mystical experience of the connection and unity of all things (Griffiths et al., 2006). A naturalist can appeal to an evolutionary metaphysics to account for the content of this experience. At the beginning of all things, there exists an absolutely simple object. This initial object exists necessarily. But the initial object is not God. Dawkins says it is “the simple basis for a self-bootstrapping crane which eventually raised the world as we know it into its present complex existence” (2008: 184-5). By virtue of its simplicity, the initial object instantiates only the deepest universal, being-itself. But being-itself is an immanent universal; it is the power of being in the thing. Following the Neoplatonists, being-itself is the good; it is active goodness. As such, it drives the initial simple object to surpass itself.

The initial simple object surpasses itself by producing its *successors*, which are more complex versions of itself. During this production, the primal energy flows from the initial object into its successors. This logic now repeats, so that the successors of the initial object produce their own more complex successors. Energy flows from every thing into its successors. This iterated production of successors is a rhythmic and cyclical process. Through further iteration, there exists an endlessly ramified tree of ever more complex objects. Energy courses through all the branches of this tree. The growth of this tree is an evolutionary process. The nodes of this tree are universes. Each universe in the tree reflects the evolutionary logic of the tree itself. More complex universes contain more complex internal evolutionary processes. As universes beget their successors in the great cosmic cycle, they become progressively more finely-tuned for the evolution of life. They become optimized for the flourishing of rational moral agents.

The energy flows through every universe and every thing in every universe. All things are unified by their participation in the energy. It is the power of being, the deepest universal, being-itself, in each thing. All things in all universes are joined by their shared instantiation of being-itself. And all things are connected by their common descent from the initial simple object. Thus all things in all universes are ontological cousins. The class of descendents of the initial simple object forms a domain for modal quantification. To say that all things are unified does not imply that they are identical; on the contrary, it implies that all things are counterparts of the initial simple object.

On this metaphysics, when someone on psilocybin experiences the interconnection of all things, they see the descent of all things from their common ancestor, the initial simple object. They see that all things are ontological cousins. When they experience the unity of all things, they see that all things participate in being-itself. They experience the universal participation of all things in the primal energy. But that energy is pure goodness; it is positively oriented. Consequently, when properly managed, these mystical experiences can be radically therapeutic. The primal energy is trustworthy. You can believe in it and place your faith in it. This positive orientation is the basis for hope for the future and gratitude towards the past (Bishop, 2010).

The religions of vision include but extend the religions of consciousness. The religions

of vision agree that the mind contains a saving power which it can learn to apply to itself. However, many minds are too weak to directly apply it. They need to use tools to arouse this power, to amplify it, or to more precisely use it to solve their problems. Entheogenic molecules are tools for working with this power. Hence the religions of vision raise many issues which deserve further philosophical exploration.

6. Religions of Dance

The religions of dance include *raves*. A rave is a dance festival in which electronic music plays a central role. Raves also typically involve computer-generated imagery. These stimuli are scientifically designed to facilitate specific experiences. Some ravers also use entheogens such as MDMA or LSD. However, the self-administration of these drugs can be dangerous, unethical, and illegal (Parrott, 2004). Many raves have been explicitly organized as religious events, involving altars, opening and closing ceremonies, and so on (Sylvan, 2005; St. John, 2009). But most ravers have no interest in the old religions; raving is its own religion, which tends to be atheistic and technophilic. Ravers use electronic and molecular technologies for religious ends. Raving has inspired the techno cosmic mass (Shannon, 2001: 204-8) and yoga raves.

As they dance, ravers enter *hyper-arousal trances*, in which they often have intense spiritual or mystical experiences. During their ecstatic trances, ravers often experience a profound energy flowing through their bodies; their ego-boundaries dissolve; they see that all things are connected and unified; they feel that this same energy flows through all things (Sylvan, 2005: ch. 3). These experiences resemble the mystical experiences induced by psilocybin. They are interpreted here as experiences of the primal energy. They are experiences of the universal power of being-itself. But being-itself is the good. Hence it is not surprising that along with their experiences of unity and connection, ravers often report *pronoia*, the feeling that reality is out to help you. Arousing this universal energy produces positive personal changes. It is therapeutic (Hutson, 2000). It helps you overcome anxiety and depression. It helps you overcome destructive behaviors. It makes you compassionate. It gives you hope, confidence, and courage. Arousing this universal energy orients you towards positive social values, expressed in the rave ethic of PLUR (Peace Love Unity Respect). Arousing this universal energy thus motivates an ethics grounded in compassion.

The sounds and images used in raves are often algorithmically generated. The algorithms have spiritual significance. According to the evolutionary theory of nature, nature begins with an absolutely simple object, animated by the primal energy. At the initial object, the primal energy itself is simple. But the primal energy drives the initial object to surpass itself. It drives it to produce its successors, which are more complex. As those successors grow more complex, the primal energy itself grows more complex. As the primal energy evolves, it gives itself structure. It is self-complexifying and self-optimizing. It produces a *logos* within itself. Along any chain of successors, the growth of the primal energy resembles an evolving stream of musical chords. Each universe is like a symphony. Our universe is an extremely complex symphony. The complexity of the sounds and images

used in raves represents the aesthetic complexity of our universe. But this aesthetic complexity is highly mathematical; our universe is an algorithmic symphony.

The religions of dance include but extend the religions of consciousness and vision. The religions of dance agree with those religions that say the mind is rooted in a saving power which it can apply to itself. And they agree with the religions of vision that many minds are too weak to directly use that power. The religions of dance may include the use of molecular tools to arouse and focus that power. But dancing is an additional spiritual technique. And machines for producing sounds and images are additional systems of tools. So the religions of dance are technical religions. The religions of dance, like those of consciousness and vision, raise many philosophically interesting issues.

7. Religions of Beauty

At present the main religion of beauty involves a religious interpretation of the *Burning Man* festivals. The main Burning Man festival takes place in the Black Rock Desert in Nevada for a week at the end of August (Doherty, 2004). The Black Rock Desert is an extremely harsh environment; temperatures in August can vary from 120s (F) to 40s; the desert playa sees high winds and violent dust storms. Burning Man involves about 50,000 participants who build a temporary town, known as Black Rock City, in the desert wilderness. Living in Black Rock City requires the use of many technologies for survival as well as the Emersonian virtues of self-reliance.

Burning Man is an arts festival. During the year, burners construct individual or group art installations. But they also build the *Man* and the *Temple*. They take these out to the playa, where they are assembled. The Man is a large wooden structure which outlines an indefinite male figure. The Temple is an elaborate wooden structure, whose form is taken from sacred architecture world-wide. The Temple serves a special ceremonial purpose: burners decorate the Temple with inscriptions, texts, photos, or other mementos. These are expressions of grief, loss, or triumph over adversity (Pike, 2005). After a festival of many days, the arms of the Man are raised and he is lit on fire. Burning the Man is accompanied by shouting. On the last night of the festival, the Temple is lit on fire and burned in silence. Burners have built and burned Temples around the globe. They have been burned for peace and reconciliation in Derry, Ireland.

But Burning Man is not just an arts festival. It has clear religious interpretations (Pike, 2001; Gilmore, 2010). As a fire-festival, in which an effigy is burned, it has precedents in pagan events like Vinotok and the Wicker Man (Bell, 1978). And Burning Man can be thought of as a religion of energy. To see this, consider that Black Rock City is an oasis of art and beauty in a vast hostile landscape. It is analogous to the earth, a pale blue dot in endless inhospitable space. The beauty gathered in the desert is precious, fragile, and rare; it is like life itself, and human life especially. So the pilgrimage to the Black Rock resembles the evolutionary production of rare oases of sacred value in a vast desert of valuelessness. The Man is both personal and indefinite; he is faceless. He has no identity; he symbolizes the rationality inherent in nature; he is the *logos* made visible. He

is the full self-realization of the ultimate power of nature (or at least the fullest we can grasp). He is both human and transhuman; he is the anonymous god. He is the Hegelian Spirit, fully self-actualized, rendered concrete in the desert.

And Burning Man involves moral beauty as well as aesthetic beauty. Burning Man is founded on a *gift economy*. Gifting plays a central role in religions of energy (Steinhart, 2016). The Man has often been lit by a fire which is kindled from the sun. So the sun refers to the ultimate natural energy, to being-itself. And the sun *freely gives* this power away. This freely given power, in an endless process of self-surpassing, both creates value and destroys it. The Man is a Phoenix; he is a dying-and-rising god. But he has no face, and so is both all and none of the dying-and-rising gods of the past. When he burns, he dies; but he will be born again next year. When he burns, the Man's arms are raised in victory. He will be victorious over death; he will rise in the next annual cycle. The *wheel of the year*, in which the sun turns around the earth and the desert, symbolizes the vast cycle in which universes are created, destroyed, and recreated. It is the Buddhist cosmic cycle, the Stoic *ekpyrosis*, the universal rebirth.

The construction of the Man during the year symbolizes the evolutionary process in which holy power concentrates itself into sacred beauty. During this self-concentration, much value is destroyed; the emerging Man has accumulated many errors and sins; he has overcome many obstacles. These are recorded in the Temple. The Temple is burned after the Man. Thus his spirit is cleansed. But we all participate in this: the spirits of all burners are ritually cleansed. They are purified, to begin the cycle again.

The religion of beauty, illustrated by Burning Man, includes elements of the religions of consciousness. Burning Man involves many meditation events. And the entire festival involves self-purification. Burning Man includes elements of the religions of vision and dance. It has deep roots in rave culture. Black Rock City is a self-sufficient technological system and a work of fine art. But art itself can be thought of as technology set free from utilitarian constraints.

8. Conclusion

The energy religions suggest a new definition of religion itself: religions are technologies aimed at achieving ultimate human ends. If the old religions were proto-technologies based on proto-sciences, then these new religions aspire to be genuine technologies based on mature science. Once religions are thought of as technologies, that is, as rationally designed artifacts, philosophers can become actively involved in *designing* new religions. On this view, the philosophy of religion itself becomes a spiritual discipline. But philosophers can also remain actively involved in *critiquing* these religions. The new energy religions, after all, will raise problems of their own. So, after naturalism, there is still plenty of work for philosophers of religion to do.

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