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Freedom of Religion and Public Schooling



JAMES R. OTTESON

One may object to government support of education on various grounds. Here I consider two such grounds that have to do with moral consistency. First, state intervention in education, whether in the form of monetary subsidies, compulsory attendance laws, or national curriculum standards, entails violating a moral principle—freedom of conscience—that most people hold inviolable in another application, namely, in relation to religious practice. If one holds the moral principle in question to be inviolable in religious matters, then one should also hold it to be inviolable in educational matters, because the cases are analogous. Second, the same arguments typically raised against state intervention in religious practice can also be raised against state intervention in educational practice. I conclude that because, for moral argument, the cases of religion and education are essentially the same, consistency requires people who oppose state intervention in the one to oppose state intervention in the other.

Freedom of Conscience Covers Religion *and* Education

I suggest that the case of government support for education is analogous to the case of government support for religion, and therefore the moral acceptability of the one is the same as that of the other. My suggestion hinges on the claim that both cases fall under the rubric of freedom of conscience, and hence both should be protected on

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the moral principle that everyone's private conscience is inviolable and ought therefore to be safeguarded.

One of the central freedoms protected in the classical liberal scheme of rights is freedom of conscience; indeed, many of the other protections are means to the end of protecting freedom of conscience. Private property rights, for example, can be defended not by arguing that there is something inherently special about the things owned, but rather by arguing that allowing individuals to maintain personal jurisdiction over a specified domain of things (beginning usually with themselves¹) enables them to act on their beliefs about the good life without interference from others. Actions are, after all, the product of beliefs about the world, and so the liberal claim that *all* people should enjoy this liberty of action on private property is just an extension of the belief that people are alike in having action-guiding private beliefs. It can then be argued that the beliefs themselves should be protected because a person cannot live a truly human or truly happy life—however one ultimately fleshes out the details of such a life²—unless he is allowed to hold and act on his own beliefs. Because private property is necessary for maintaining and acting on one's private beliefs, it is protected as a necessary means to the end of protecting one's private conscience.³

A word is required about the connection between protecting one's freedom of conscience and the ability to lead a truly happy life. One might think, for example, that it is possible to be happy without exercising one's freedom of conscience: perhaps one merely accepts the beliefs of one's parents without examination, and is perfectly content to do so. Two things should be said in response. First, people who accept the beliefs of their parents, even if uncritically, are still enjoying freedom of conscience. One does not have to *examine* one's beliefs to be free to hold them, just as one does not have to cultivate one's land to enjoy private ownership of it. Having the freedom to uncritically hold one's parents' beliefs *is* having freedom of conscience, because one retains the freedom to believe something else if one should so choose. Second, the relation between freedom of conscience, on the one hand, and that freedom's being a necessary condition for leading a truly happy life, on the other, should be specified in this way: the latter is the bedrock *moral* principle, the former the bedrock *political* principle that rests on the moral principle. One cannot directly legislate that people lead a truly happy life, but one can indirectly legislate it by establishing certain protections that allow a person to develop and lead a truly

1. See, for example, Locke [1690] 1980, chap. 5, sec. 27.

2. For reasons that will become clear, not specifying in advance what constitutes a truly happy life for a person is part of the liberal political scheme. In any case, all that is required for the argument here is that protecting one's freedom of conscience is necessary for leading such a life, regardless of what that life entails.

3. This is, in outline, Herbert Spencer's argument for protecting a sphere of private liberty (and private property within it). See Spencer [1851] 1995, esp. part 2.

happy life on his own. The most fundamental such protection, I maintain, is the protection of one's freedom of conscience.

Several other political principles follow from the foundational protection of one's private conscience. Arguments for freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of association can all be plausibly construed as the claim that the private consciences of individuals must be protected and that these various freedoms are necessary for such protection. Even rights that go beyond these so-called negative rights are typically defended for the same reason. So, for example, state-provided universal health care has been defended not because even health itself is inherently good but because it is a necessary prerequisite to leading a happy, flourishing life.⁴ The connection between the two is thought to be that good health grants a person, first, the peace of mind to work out, adopt, and maintain private beliefs about the good life and, second, the soundness of body to act on those beliefs. Again, however, because the actions depend on the beliefs, the creation of a sanctuary for private beliefs is the ultimate end of supporting universal health care.

These examples license our drawing the general moral principle that most Westerners already hold dear: because of the crucial role one's private conscience plays in leading a truly happy life, it must be protected against interference; and the political structures necessary for its protection ought to be constructed. Although I subscribe to this principle, I shall not try to defend it here any more than I already have by suggesting its plausibility, but it is already widely accepted. It is explicitly at work, as previously noted, in the widespread belief in freedom of the press. Since Milton's first statement of the argument in his *Areopagitica* of 1644, the claim has been that ideas are crucially important to living a flourishing life and therefore freedom of the press must be protected as a necessary means of the expression of privately held beliefs.

More to the point here, the same moral principle undergirds the nearly universal belief in separating church and state: as a matter of private conscience, religious practice⁵ must be protected; and this protection entails disallowing state intervention in religious matters. Religious practice arises from deep-seated private beliefs that, like any other such beliefs, must be protected as a matter of private conscience. Indeed, one's religious beliefs, whatever they may be, are among one's most fundamental beliefs, setting parameters for many others, including in particular one's beliefs about how one should live and what constitutes the good life. Thus, even among already safeguarded beliefs, religious beliefs enjoy a privileged place. It is for this reason that

4. For a recent argument, see Fleischacker 1999, esp. chaps. 10 and 11.

5. I am construing "religious practice" broadly enough to include what we might call religious *non*practice, because atheism and agnosticism, for example, are still the products of religiously oriented beliefs. (The belief that there is no god is or entails a belief about religion.)

such beliefs are protected and that among those protections is the disallowance of government support or regulation of private religious practice.

Educational practice is analogous to religious practice: one's decisions about how to educate oneself and one's children also arise from deep-seated beliefs about how one should live and what constitutes the good life, beliefs that therefore fall under the scope of the moral principle enunciated earlier and hence should be safeguarded in the same way one's religious beliefs are. This protection disallows state intervention in educational practice, including subsidies drawn from taxes, compulsory attendance laws, and curriculum standards—just as, in the case of religion, it includes protection against religious subsidies drawn from taxes, compulsory church attendance, and state-prescribed religious ceremonies, rites, or doctrines. The same moral principle that debars the government from regulating or supporting any church or religious sect debars the government from regulating or supporting any school or other educational facility. Hence, what is now called “public schooling” should be abolished for the same reasons that state-enforced “public religion,” wherever it exists, should be abolished.

Arguments against Government Religion

Arguments one might be inclined to marshal in favor of government regulation or support of education must, because the cases are analogous, face the objections raised against government regulation or support of religion. By bringing out the objections to government religion, we challenge government schooling as well. A note before proceeding with the following arguments: I do not necessarily endorse any of them (though I might), nor do I claim that they all fit together into a single, coherent whole, or that any of them is ultimately persuasive, or that each of them is fully distinct from my own argument given previously. My aim here is rather to capture the most common arguments presented in opposition to state-supported religion and then to show that the same arguments can, without substantive alteration, be raised in opposition to state-supported education.

Objections to state intervention in religious matters fall chiefly under three heads:⁶ first, government support for religion leads to various bad consequences; second, religion is too important a matter to be left to politicians or to decisions made by political processes; third, government support for religion violates people's rights. Consider these in turn.

Government support for religion leads to bad consequences. This argument can be constructed in several ways. To begin, a religious believer might argue that true faith cannot be had by coercion: the strength of a person's faith is diminished if he is forced to believe, as opposed to choosing to believe on his own. Indeed, it may be impossible

6. Because I am pursuing a general moral principle here, I am excluding from consideration arguments based on the U.S. Constitution.

to force someone actually to hold a belief, as opposed to merely behaving as if he held the belief. This argument claims that human nature is such that a person is less likely to hold religious beliefs if he is forced against his will to act as though he believed them. A person must instead come to hold them on his own, to take responsibility for them himself. Hence, this argument concludes, government support of religion actually works against the religion by disinclining people to believe it.⁷ This argument is also construed in light of the effect on parents who are (or should be) passing on proper beliefs to their children: if the government takes over the responsibility of maintaining correct beliefs, then parents tend to relax their commitment to the important job of religious education of their children.

Now it is true that supporting a religion is not the same thing as coercing belief, so one might argue that a state policy of giving money to all religions, or generic vouchers for church donations, would not be affected by this consideration. But a proponent of this argument will respond as follows: one important element in coming to hold one's own beliefs is the initial decision of *whether* to believe. If the government indiscriminately takes money from everyone by general taxation and then specifically earmarks it for support of or donation to churches, this action in a significant way preempts everyone's decision of whether to believe. *That* decision has instead been made by the government, leaving the individual only to decide which religion to support. The believer may argue, however, that it is more difficult to come to bear the proper relation to such important beliefs if this initial decision was made by someone else, and hence the government must not make that decision. The conclusion remains, then, that the government should not support religion in any way.

A believer might also be concerned that the government could support the wrong religion(s). Even though he might believe that good consequences would flow from government support of his own religion, bad—perhaps disastrously bad—consequences would flow from government support of some other, false religion. Because there can be no guarantee that the government would choose correctly, he might therefore argue that the best policy is for the government to abstain from supporting religion altogether.

On the other side, nonbelievers have at least two clear reasons for thinking that government support of religion would lead to bad consequences. First, it might propagate beliefs that the nonbeliever holds to be false, which is undesirable in itself. Second, it might have the consequence of propagating not just false beliefs but perhaps dangerous or counterproductive attitudes. It might, for example, lead people to put less stock in improving life on earth, to be less concerned with “merely temporal”

7. This is Locke's argument in his 1685 “Letter Concerning Toleration,” wherein he concludes: “How great soever, in fine, may be the pretense of good will and charity, and concern for the salvation of men's souls, men cannot be forced to be saved whether they will or no. And therefore, when all is done, they must be left to their own consciences” (42). A dissenting voice is that of Pascal, who argues in *Pensées* that “anyone who grows accustomed to faith believes it” (153).

injustice, or to be more inclined to believe that whatever happens is God's will (and hence not to be inclined to try to change a situation that the nonbeliever thinks should be changed). Both of these arguments apply equally to governmental systems of vouchers, credits, or other types of support.

Religion is too important to be left to politics and politicians. This argument can be and often is supported by both the believer and the nonbeliever, and bears similarities to one raised previously. It generally claims that one's religious beliefs, whatever they may be, are a foundational element of one's worldview—perhaps even the single most important element, the one that fixes and orders all the others. As such they should bear an intensely personal relation to the person holding them. If the government played an active role in supporting religion, it would tend to drive a wedge between a person and his beliefs. More particularly, it would drive a politician or political bureaucrat between a person and his beliefs. Because of the supreme importance of those beliefs, however, we should be far more suspicious of political influence here than we might be in other, less important areas of our lives.

Often coupled with this argument is a claim about the general inefficiency, incompetence, or moral or religious failings of politicians and political bureaucrats. The idea is that even if government influence did *not* have the effect of dissociating people from beliefs to which they should be personally attached, the *last* people we should entrust with the care of matters as important as religion would be politicians and bureaucrats.⁸ Here one might marshal a public-choice-style argument that such people do not have the proper incentives to encourage them actually to work in the best interest of individual people and their religious beliefs; rather, their incentives might incline them only to create work for themselves, regardless of its effect on people and their beliefs. Alternatively, one might make a Hayekian argument that the maintenance of religious beliefs can be properly provided only by people who have close, personal knowledge of the people holding those beliefs. Thus one might conclude that priests, pastors, or other personal mentors are far better equipped to handle this task than any remote stranger, as a politician or bureaucrat would necessarily be. Finally, one might make an argument based on human diversity, claiming that even if politicians and bureaucrats could somehow have all the knowledge about people that is requisite for knowing how best to maintain proper religious beliefs, it would be impossible to establish a single set of rules, laws, or programs that would simultaneously help everyone: some simplification would necessarily be required, which would in turn either not help or even actively hurt some people.⁹

Government support for religion violates people's rights. Perhaps the most powerful and (in contemporary America, at least) the most widely held argument against

8. For an illustration of this worry about the moral character of politicians, see Nock [1927] 1991, 34–51.

9. For an example of this argument, see Resch 1974, 31–54.

government support for religion is that it would violate people's rights. The rights violation can be seen in at least two forms: a violation of the right to free speech and a violation of property rights.

First, it would infringe on a person's right to free speech to make him support beliefs he does not hold. As suggested previously, one can plausibly construe the practice of religion as an instance of expressing one's beliefs commonly held to fall within the scope of speech. Requiring a person to support a religion in which he does not believe can be seen as equivalent to requiring him to support any other position, institution, or view in which he does not believe: in both cases the person's right to hold whatever beliefs he wants is violated. Because freedom of speech is protected not as an end in itself but rather as a means to protecting one's private conscience, the close connection between religious practice and "speech" licenses bringing the protection of the former within the scope of the latter. By this chain of inferences, then, requiring a person to support a religion in which he does not believe violates his right to freedom of conscience, which, in this case, violates his right to free speech. If it is true, moreover, that one's religious beliefs are of central importance to one's life, then such a violation would be especially egregious.¹⁰

Government support of religion can also be seen as a violation of property rights insofar as that support takes the form of money obtained involuntarily by taxation. According to a Lockean view of property rights, for example, it is illegitimate to tax a person in order to support something he does not expressly or tacitly consent to support.¹¹ In this case the taxation would instead be involuntary because the other, voluntary alternative—relying on private contributions and donations—is precisely *not* what is pursued. Hence the argument is that taking a person's money to support a religion to which he otherwise would not give his money is violating his right to do with his property as he chooses. In the Lockean view this taking amounts to the government's overstepping its legitimate authority. Even if one did not believe in the absolute sanctity of private property rights, however—if, for example, one thought that private property rights were important but could in certain circumstances justifiably be abridged—one might nevertheless argue that matters of religion are of sufficient importance that a situation would scarcely ever arise in which compulsory support of another's religion would be justified. The person

10. This argument recalls Jefferson's famous claim in the preamble of his 1779 *Act for Establishing Religious Freedom in the State of Virginia* that he is "well aware . . . that to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical."

11. The notion of "tacit" consent is a tricky one, as Locke is aware. Locke ([1690] 1980) writes, "every man, that hath any possessions, or enjoyment, of any part of the dominions of any government, doth thereby give his *tacit consent*, and is as far forth obliged to obedience to the laws of that government, during such employment, as any one under it" (chap. 8, sec. 119; Locke's italics). It seems, however, that if a person did not enjoy the benefits of any religious institution—or, even more clearly, if he expressly renounced any such benefits—he would not in Locke's view have expressly or tacitly consented to be taxed to support it.

arguing in favor of such support would therefore face the difficult burden of proving that the case at hand was sufficiently exceptional and important as to warrant overriding private property rights.

Arguments against Government Education

The same three clusters of arguments that are brought against state intervention in religion can, without substantial alteration, be brought against government support of education: government support of education leads to various bad consequences; education is too important a matter to be left to politicians or decisions made by political processes; and government support for education violates people's rights.

Government support of education leads to bad consequences. Government support of education seems to lead to bad consequences analogous to those identified in discussing government support of religion. To be specific: first, people's personal commitment to education is weakened by the government's relieving them of the responsibility of educating themselves and their own children; second, the government runs a significant risk of supporting a bad system of education; and third, the government runs a significant risk of supporting a system of education that propagates dangerous or counterproductive attitudes. Each of these charges has been leveled against government-supported schools by recent critics, including some who otherwise support government schooling.

Articulating the first charge, Sheldon Richman (1995) has argued that true education requires above all else personal initiative and commitment, and government schooling tends to deaden personal commitment by depriving people of the responsibility of providing for their own (or their own children's) education. The result, Richman argues, is that the burden of educating children tends to fall on the shoulders of people without the proper incentives or requisite knowledge to do the job well—namely, political and bureaucratic strangers.

Regarding the second charge, Allan Bloom (1987) has argued that government-supported schools from the elementary through the college level operate under the guidance of badly flawed theories of knowledge and truth loosely based on the views of Nietzsche and Dewey. Bloom argues that these theories inform educational practices that lead students to adopt an unsophisticated moral and epistemological relativism, which severely impedes moral growth and scientific progress.

As for the third charge, Thomas Sowell (1993) has argued that public schools across the nation pursue educational policies that encourage in students the dangerous mix of high self-esteem, ignorance, and moral vacuity—which has led, quite predictably, to the amoral monsters we see increasingly often in public schools today.

My task here is not to decide whether the foregoing criticisms are justified. However, the fact that they have been raised and have received widespread, if not

unanimous, endorsement¹² suggests that a considerable number of people agree that government-supported schools lead to undesirable consequences, and those consequences are strikingly similar to those regarded as evidence against government support for religion.

Education is too important to be left to politics and politicians. It is commonly held that the education of children is one of the most important tasks facing parents and communities. Yet it would seem that the same problems that beset government support of religion also plague government support of education—namely, that such support has the effect of dissociating people from something to which they should have an intensely personal commitment, and that such support is unreliable because of the inefficiency, incompetence, or moral or religious deficiencies of politicians and government bureaucrats.

A common complaint of parents involved in the operations of the public school their children attend is that disappointingly few other parents are similarly involved. Low parental involvement in public education is a chronic and chronically lamented problem. Why are so few parents involved? One plausible explanation is that when the government takes on the responsibility of providing for the education of children, parents correspondingly, and understandably, stop concerning themselves with it. The present system of government schooling—with its compulsory monetary support by taxation, its compulsory attendance, and its compulsory curriculum—attempts to control almost every aspect over which parents themselves might otherwise have had control. Parents do not decide on their own how much they are willing to pay or to whom, whether their children should or should not continue to attend school, or what the curriculum is. Even if they send their children to private schools, they must nevertheless continue to pay for the government schools, and in most states private schools either receive government support, which entails various restrictions, or are otherwise regulated by the state in such matters as attendance and curriculum. In view of the limited scope for parental responsibility, it is not surprising that parents tend to dissociate themselves from what they might otherwise treat as a matter deserving great personal attention and commitment.

Plato was perhaps the first person to make a systematic case for the crucial importance of carefully designing the educational system for children, and he made sure not to leave this matter to the people we would call politicians—indeed, in his view, it could be properly handled only by the highest of human beings, the philosophers (*Republic*, books 4 and 5). But Plato by no means stands alone: a succession of thinkers down to the present day has maintained the great importance of education. Various reasons are given for its importance, but most revolve around the central

12. Bloom's book went on to become a number-one national bestseller.

consideration that education is necessary for a person to live a flourishing life.¹³ But exactly the same claim is made on the behalf of religion. If both religion and education are so critically important to the success of a person's life, then they should be treated in the same way. If the importance of religion warrants that decisions regarding it not be left to the devices of politicians and bureaucrats, the same conclusion should follow for matters of education.

Government support for education violates people's rights. Finally, and perhaps most straightforwardly, government support for education commits whatever rights violations that government support for religion does. First, to make a person support an educational system with which he disagrees is an infringement of his right to free speech. If a person has beliefs about morality or politics—about, say, homosexuality or democracy—that differ from what is being taught in the government-supported school system, to compel him to support that system (let alone require him to send his children there) violates his free-speech rights in the same way as requiring him to support a religion in which he does not believe. Moreover, if taxing a person to support a religion in which he does not believe is a property-rights violation, the same violation takes place in taxing him to support an educational system in which he does not believe. Educational policies and curricula are, as I have argued, ultimately dependent on our views about deeply important matters such as human nature, the good life, and proper community relations. Whatever rights a person has that would protect his beliefs about such things in matters of religion likewise protect those beliefs in matters of education. Indeed, a person's position on religion and his position on education might rest on precisely the same set of fundamental beliefs.

Belief in Freedom of Religion Is Inconsistent with Belief in Government Education

If my foregoing arguments are sound, the person who advocates government support and regulation of education but opposes those government actions in religion is taking an inconsistent position, because the two cases do not differ in any morally relevant way.¹⁴

One might raise the following objection. The two cases are in fact not analogous, because whereas everyone supports education, not everyone supports religion; and therefore government support for education enjoys a *prima facie* justification that government support for religion does not. I suspect, however,

13. Examples of important figures who have defended different educational programs on such grounds are Aristotle, Locke ([1693] 1947), and Rousseau ([1762] 1979).

14. I should perhaps point out that a person's opposition to government regulation of religion might commit him to opposing government regulation of other areas of life besides education. To pursue such possibilities would take us beyond the scope of this article, but I want to emphasize that my argument is not that education is necessarily unique in falling under the same protection as religion.

that the widespread endorsement of “education” is the joint product of vagueness and habit. Everyone supports “education” partly because the term is vague enough to have radically different meanings to different people. The support dissipates once the details of a specific educational program are specified. The endless and ongoing battles over public-school curricula seem to demonstrate that there is in fact exceedingly little agreement about “education.” In addition, since the nineteenth century an almost continuous succession of influential people, beginning with Horace Mann, Edward Ross, and John Dewey, has argued that “public schooling” is required to mold children into the kind of citizens a “modern democracy” needs (Richman 1995, chap. 3). By now most people are so thoroughly steeped in the habit of believing in the necessity of such schooling that the possibility of its abolition rarely, if ever, occurs to them. The combination of the vagueness of the term “education” and the long-standing, habitual acceptance of public schooling gives the impression of universal support for education, but that support is more apparent than genuine. I conclude that the analogy between the two cases survives this objection intact.

Another objection is that, whatever the merits of my argument, no self-respecting society should contemplate abolishing public schooling because of the disastrous effects that action would have on the poor. Public schooling gives the poor a chance; without it, only the children of the rich would get an education, and the poor would form a permanent underclass. A number of responses to this objection present themselves—entailing various ways of disputing that such bad consequences would ensue from the abolition of public schooling—but those responses require a consideration of empirical evidence that would take us too far afield. One response can be made, however, drawing strictly on the arguments made here. This objection disputes the analogy between the cases of religion and schooling in the following way: whatever may be the case with religion, schooling is simply too important to be left to the vagaries of the market, where class antagonisms, “old boy” networks, and exploitation of the disadvantaged rule. The state is therefore justified, on grounds of what might be called social justice, in intervening in educational matters.

But does the analogy really fail? After all, do not supporters of religion make precisely the same claims on behalf of religion? That is, they argue that holding correct religious beliefs is simply too important to be left to the hurly-burly processes of the market and must therefore be guaranteed by the state. What would block the religion-statist argument that would not simultaneously block the education-statist argument? Not the claim that everyone supports education but not religion, for the reasons discussed earlier. And not, importantly, the education-statist’s confidence that he is correct in his estimation of the importance of education whereas the religion-statist is incorrect in his estimation of the importance of religion—for such a claim would be hotly contested, to say the least, and in any case is not shown to be true by its mere

assertion. The burden of proof would be on the education-statist for holding a position that seems inconsistent and, in addition, for now claiming a certainty about human values that has yet to be justified by argument or evidence.

This last consideration leads, finally, to a more general objection, which is that I have not demonstrated that the cases of religion and education are analogous in all respects. There may be other factors that apply to one or the other that weaken the analogy sufficiently to allow a person to consistently maintain both that state regulation of one is unacceptable and that state regulation of the other is acceptable. Although I cannot think of what such considerations would be, in light of this possible objection I am willing to weaken my claim to a simple shifting of the burden of proof. That is, at the very least, the person who holds this *seemingly* inconsistent pair of views must now take it upon himself to show how they can be rendered consistent. I think such a person will fail in trying to reconcile the views, but, in any event, simply placing the burden of proof where it belongs amounts to a significant step toward breaking the habit of uncritical acceptance of state-run schooling. Until a sound argument reconciling the two views has been made, I am content to maintain the weaker thesis that state intervention in education requires, and as yet lacks, moral justification.

Religious Freedom and Education Freedom Stand or Fall Together

For centuries, kings and parliaments acted on their understanding that controlling *both* the state and the religion was the key to controlling the people. Compulsory government schooling was explicitly introduced for exactly the same reason. Indeed, modern public schooling has its roots in sixteenth-century attempts by Protestant church leaders to forcibly train people in correct religious beliefs (Katz 1976).¹⁵ As Edwin G. West (1994) has shown, controlling people—that is, instilling correct religious, moral, or political beliefs and behavior—has continued to be the driving, frequently explicit motivation behind public-school advocacy.

Now, many contemporary Americans might be inclined to agree that molding children in accordance with correct religious, moral, or political beliefs is a good idea, and hence they might be sympathetic to the motivation behind government schooling. But such sympathy no more establishes the moral acceptability of the practice than did the widespread acceptance of the king's official religion among those who happened already to believe in the king's religion. And it does not dispose of the objections I have raised to state intervention.

Here, in brief, is my claim: If it would be wrong for the government to adopt an official religion, then, for the same reasons, it would be wrong for the government to

15. Note that Plato's justification for the scheme of compulsory education laid out in the *Republic* was also to control all the nonphilosophers and give them correct—though not necessarily true—beliefs. See Plato's discussion of the "noble falsehood" that the philosophers must tell everyone else in his ideal city (*Republic*, book 3).

adopt official education policies. The moral case for freedom of religion stands or falls with that for freedom of education. A society that champions freedom of religion but at the same time countenances state regulation of education has a great deal of explaining to do.

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