

Certainty as Demonic in Religion, Science, and Society

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I. The Evolution of Certainty

Certainty is easily accessible
and is
impossible to achieve.

This paradoxical circumstance has nurtured demonic forces in human life, which, in turn, have found expression in violence, destruction, and death on a massive scale. The forces are within us and in our institutions. They must be transcended if we are to ensure the survival of our own species, as well as that of countless others.

Easily accessible certainty is rooted in need; the unreachable is based on knowledge of reality. Thus there is subjective certainty on one hand; and objective certainty on the other. Since subjective certainty emerges in response to need, it is always available in the amount required. (Wheelis 81) The deeper the need, the more intense the certainty that develops. All humans have a need for some degree of certainty in order to feel secure in a contingent existence.

What is the meaning of certainty arising from need? It means complete confidence in the truth of an opinion or belief and in its superiority to alternate propositions. What about demonic? The demonic is a component in the nature of an individual or an institution that generates forces of evil in the world. The possessed individuals are usually unaware that their actions are demonically driven. They act in righteousness.

The question of whether objective certainty is possible has been a problem in philosophy for over 2000 years, and even at this late date the issue is not entirely settled.

From the 4th to the 17th century, the Christian worldview provided secure certainty through its pattern of beliefs and its institutional structure. The Protestant Reformation in the 16th century undermined this stable situation; and when the alternate worldview of science developed in the 17th century, certainty was further eroded. Certainty did not disappear, but with choices available, a degree of uncertainty arose in many people.

Still, the need for certainty persisted. As a result, after science emerged, many found certainty in its new and promising worldview. This certainty lasted until, in the late 19th and early 20th century, Einstein developed an alternate scientific worldview; and at about the same time a third worldview in science emerged — quantum theory.

People in the learned world began to see that the earlier certainty about scientific knowledge was problematic. In addition, when thinkers were faced with the various worldviews that had become available in Western culture – Christianity’s, Newton’s, Einstein’s, and quantum physics – it began to be clear that more than one worldview was not only possible, but was actually necessary to enable the mind to gain some understanding of the complexity of the cosmos.

In the everyday world, Newton’s system was adequate; Einstein’s gave scientists more exact insight into the nature of the cosmos; and quantum theory enabled them to gain some understanding of the subatomic world. Religion was also necessary, Einstein observed, to define and promote significant values, goals, and ethics. Science shows us what is, he said; religion points us toward the good life.

II. A Glance at Philosophy

The issue of skepticism as opposed to certainty has persisted for centuries in academic philosophy. Though, of course, resolution of this perennial conflict is out of reach, I would like to make a brief excursion into the field. I discovered a glimmer of light in the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein. He gained fame in 20th century philosophy as an eccentric genius. His major contribution consisted of an original exploration of the relation between language, thought, and reality.

Wittgenstein contended that many of the unresolved problems in the history of philosophy were caused by flaws inherent in the structure of language and logic. As a result, philosophers, even after centuries of effort, have been unable to arrive at consensual conclusions in the case of issues such as free will and determinism, certainty and skepticism, the existence of God, the existence of a world outside our minds, and even of our own personal existence. It was this last issue that Descartes concluded he had resolved. I think, he said, therefore I must exist.

Wittgenstein created a concept, “the language game,” by which he meant to designate language and logic, the institutional framework in which they exist, as well as the

ambiguities inherent in the nature of the entire process. He agreed that while skepticism could not be disproved by conventional patterns of argument, when we set aside the language game, we may see that some propositions are exempt from doubt. (Stroll 27) He coined several phrases to designate these exemptions. The one he used most often was “that which stands fast for us and many others,” or, briefly, “that which stands fast.” (Stroll 188)

He asserted that what “stands fast” is outside the language game and needs no justification or proof. For example, there are no grounds for doubting the earth exists and is very old; that humanity exists and has a history on earth; and that earth is a small part of a vast cosmos; and so on. In short, Wittgenstein argues that certainty is often attainable, even in philosophy, when we transcend the language game with its baffling limitations.

However, the conflict in philosophy continues between the skeptics and those who hold for certainty. It may be Wittgenstein had it right, that the limitations of language and logic make it impossible to prove incontestably the truth of any proposition, even including that we ourselves actually exist. In any case, it is highly unlikely that we can untangle this centuries old problem in academic philosophy. Let’s set it aside, and allow philosophers to deal with the matter.

III. Uncertainty in Religion?

Let’s set to work in a realm in which we are more at home. Peter Berger is a Christian scholar committed to what he calls “epistemological modesty.” He is also a social scientist. His textbook on the sociology of religion, The Sacred Canopy, has been widely used; and his Social Construction of Reality, is a major contribution to an understanding of the process by which worldviews are created. Berger also wrote an article for *Christian Century* titled, “Protestantism and the Quest for Certainty.”

Berger contends that until the Protestant Reformation emerged early in the 16th century, certainty prevailed, but the pluralism that then developed began to erode the earlier absolute assurance. (Berger 782) Until the Reformation, there was general consensus on the nature of reality and the rules of life; since then certainty has become increasingly difficult to maintain. Pluralism offers people the opportunity to choose their religion, and this in turn produces uncertainty in many individuals – though not in all.

Social scientists have established that some individuals have a strong preference or need for certainty, while others find uncertainty not only bearable but also stimulating. As one scientist put it in a recent work, systems of belief or disbelief “serve two powerful and conflicting sets of motives at the same time: the need for a cognitive framework to know and to understand, and the need to ward off threatening aspects of reality.” Where the need to know is dominant, the individual is less likely to be threatened by uncertainty. (Sorrentino 16)

Berger goes on to ask, what does uncertainty mean for the conduct of religious life? How do we live with uncertainty? What we now must do, Berger contends, is accept with equanimity the fact that “religion... cannot be based on knowledge, only on belief” – or on faith. The emphasis on faith is, of course, one of the major elements in the Protestant Principle – “by faith alone” is a central theme. (Berger 794) We must, he said, now live in faith with “epistemological modesty... a mellow synthesis of skepticism and faith that, in principle, can be found in any religious tradition;” and we also must refuse “the various offers of certainty with which our situation abounds.” (Berger 785)

But is it possible to “build institutions on such a fragile basis – this permanent state of reflection? ... Don’t viable institutions require a strong foundation of taken-for-granted verities?” To be sure, institutions lacking certainty will be so-called “weak” institutions but weak religions survive in an era of pluralism. Indeed, they may be better equipped to survive in these circumstances. On the other hand, Berger asks, “How long can institutions based on an alleged certainty survive, in the pluralistic situation that constantly challenges that certainty? I think the answer must be that they too can survive – and perhaps for a long time, but with very great difficulty.” (Berger 794)

Berger admits that an uncertain “approach to religion can, with some justice, be called relativizing. But it is well armored against that extreme of relativization that falls over into nihilism, for it is founded on faith in God who is truth. We may not know what this truth is; we may only get glimpses of it here and there; but in that faith, we can never give up the notion of truth.... (Berger 793)

IV. Certainty, Religion, and Society

Human beings in every era have inflicted destruction and death on each other, moved often by certainty about ideas or beliefs that were at best transient if not actually

false. However, over the course of the 20th century, people the world over have been exposed to many different ways of life and worldviews, a diverse range of belief systems, ideas, customs, opinions, and bodies of knowledge.

The pluralism that now prevails in the West, and that has begun to permeate the rest of the world, has begun to foster an awareness that no belief system is absolute and eternal, that all evolve over time. Human beings created all of them, and humans are invariably imperfect, as are all systems of belief. Each of us is free now to choose from the banquet of belief systems now available to us.

In earlier times people grew up firmly convinced that the worldview, the religion they absorbed from their society was, if not the only valid one, surely the most valid of all. They took for granted their worldview was a certainty.

Fundamentalists continue to maintain this stance. Evidently feeling threatened by the prevailing pluralism, they insist there is only one way to salvation, and that they can lead us to it. These religious groups matter deeply to a substantial minority, and in the past 25 years especially have become a force of considerable influence in local, national, and international politics. They seek power with energy, ingenuity, and determination.

The demonic thrust of certainty in fundamentalism (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim alike) is wreaking havoc in many parts of the world. “Knowing absolutely what is right authorizes the attack on what is wrong.” (Wheelis 112) Certainty has driven fundamentalists to shoot down worshippers in a mosque, to kill nurses and doctors in abortion clinics, to assassinate political and religious leaders, to oust established governments, to train scores of suicide bombers to spread death and destruction among unbelievers. They act in righteousness, certain they are serving the will of God. They reject pluralism, democracy, tolerance, free speech, and the separation of church and state.

By the end of the 20th century, certainty in religion was still having a demonic impact on the course of history, not only in the US but also in many other areas of the world. It is this demonic force that empowered the men who piloted planes full of fuel into the Twin Towers in New York.

V. The Demonic in Science

The current mayhem perpetrated by Muslim, Christian, and Jewish fundamentalists in the world makes it easy to establish the demonic impact of certainty on religion

and society. The demonic claim to ultimate truth characteristic of fundamentalism was also typical of the religious tradition as a whole until relatively recently; and for centuries it too generated death and destruction. However, as Huston Smith observed: “Christian triumphalism is over, and there are very few, if any, in the mainline churches who believe that only Christians will be saved. In that sense, they’ve become universalists.” (Smith Sun 9)

Illustrating the demonic is more of a challenge in the case of science, because its worldview dominates the educational process in Western culture. Most people look to science as the most dependable source of knowledge.

However, science has striven intentionally to transcend feelings and values in order to achieve an objective understanding of reality. This stance has proved, on one hand, to be highly effective and rewarding.

On the other hand, many subjective faith statements also can be of extraordinary importance to the conduct of life. For example, consider the following faith statements: we hold it to be self-evident that all people are created equal; or, similarly, “we... covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person.” Or again, we agree to affirm and promote “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

Scientists do all they can to exclude subjectivity from their search for understanding of reality. The knowledge they acquire must be as objective as possible, must that is, be “observer independent.” (Wallace 22) However, we are now beginning to see “there is no way to justify the assumption that anything is purely objective or purely subjective. The world of human experience consists of a fusion of both elements.” (Wallace 64)

In our everyday lives, we are frequently obliged to make consequential decisions, to take action on matters for which no scientific evidence is available. We often find ourselves in situations in which we must make decisive choices with only subjective speculation, intuition, and feelings as a guide. We must often act in faith.

It should be noted that there are faith statements underlying science as well. For example, there is in scientists and the general public, a tacit belief that the continual expansion of scientific knowledge will consistently contribute to the well being of our species. Given the spectacular successes of science, it is likely that millions of people today

are confident of the truth of this faith statement. They take for granted it is a certainty, which, of course it is not and indeed cannot be. It is a faith statement. In reality, there are now grounds for considerable uncertainty about this tacit assumption.

For example, surveying the respective roles of religion and science, Einstein observed that science is highly effective at enabling us to know what is. However, he added, “Knowledge of what is does not open the door directly to what should be...the goal of human aspirations.... Mere thinking,” he went on, “cannot give us a sense of the ultimate and fundamental ends...” This is “the most important role which religion has to perform in the social life of humanity.” (Einstein 42)

How does humanity gain an awareness of fundamental ends? “They cannot be stated and justified merely by reason...” Einstein continued. “They come into being not through demonstration but through revelation, through the medium of powerful personalities” like Buddha and Jesus, and then become part of lasting traditions. (Einstein 42-3) The seven Unitarian Universalist Principles are just such a statement of ends, goals, and values. In this case agreed upon consensually by Unitarian Universalists; and they have taken a place of significance in our tradition.

Einstein went on to say “religion is concerned with humanity’s attitude toward nature at large, with establishing ideals for the individual and community life, and with mutual human relationship.” (Einstein 50) Science, on the other hand, strives for a precise understanding of reality, setting values and subjectivity aside. Both religion and science have significant roles to play in human life. Neither one supersedes the other.

“By painful experience,” Einstein continued, “we have learned that rational thinking does not suffice to solve the problems of social life.” Science has radically changed human life for the better in many ways, and, at the same time, “penetrating research and keen scientific work have often had tragic implications for humanity.” (Einstein 148) The science of chemistry, for example, produced many highly effective new compounds that, in turn, have polluted rivers, lakes, and even the oceans; chemists, biologists, and physicists have produced awesome weapons of mass destruction.

“Most catastrophic of all,” Einstein observed, scientists have developed massively destructive nuclear weapons, in this way actually “creating the means of our own mass destruction — a tragedy of overwhelming poignancy.” Our knowledge of the atom has

made it possible for us to cripple severely all life on the planet, including that of our own species. (Einstein 148)

Another item of faith underlying science is that, “It is better to know than not to know.” This is surely a widely held assumption, taken for granted. However, this proposition is a faith statement, not a fact. It is not a certainty. In deed, the history of the 20th century strongly suggests that the proposition is now doubtful at best. (Wheelis102) It is true that science has made an enormous body of knowledge available to humanity. This has in many ways enhanced and enriched the quality of our lives. At the same time, science has greatly amplified the power of the military as well as that of medicine: the power to save life and the power to destroy it.

Suppose a nuclear war breaks out and a number of hydrogen bombs are dropped, killing millions of people, polluting the entire earth, ocean, and atmosphere with dense, radioactive dust. “Such an event, if it were to occur, would depend on many things, but one of them certainly would be our very exact and penetrating knowledge of the atom. Were there then anyone left in the midst of that universal desolation to reflect upon what had happened, would they still be an adherent of knowing, or would they conclude that humanity in the twentieth century was like a child playing with a pistol, and that, all things considered, it would have been better not to know?

“Or would they perhaps say... that those who view the world with wonder and with love come to know it better than those who view it with analysis and logic?” (Wheelis 104-5)

There is one more tacit assumption about science held by many in Western culture: a deeply rooted conviction that there can be only one valid worldview, and science is the One. All other worldviews are seen as primitive and useless.

In this regard, it is interesting to consider the dictionary definition of bigotry: “intolerance of any creed, belief, or opinion that differs from one’s own.” It’s embarrassing but true. The conviction that science is the ultimate worldview is bigotry; and like all bigotry, it is immoral, inhumane, and a blight on human life. This form of certainty has crippled the cultural evolution of humanity. It is the old, persisting, ethnocentric view that “my way of understanding the world is the only right way.” It is demonic. Certainty

is demonic in science as in religion. Science also has generated violence, destruction, and death in our world.

Science, technology, and reason together have enabled the pollution of our air, water ways, and upper atmosphere; enabled us to kill members of our own species as well as others on a massive scale; to gravely degrade the quality of the environment on which our lives are utterly dependent.

One especially able contemporary physicist, however, made the encouraging observation in a recent work that “science has begun to set aside the blinders it has worn for the past 200 years to view the world in terms of complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty. If the material world appeared simpler in the past it was because we were looking at it through the perspective of classical physics.” (Peat 200)

VI. On Actual Tolerance

Muslim and Christian alike made (and many still make) claims of certainty for their worldview. In fact, however, there are many subjectively effective worldviews available to humans. In what sense are they effective? They orient people in the cosmos, give focus to consciousness, provide a set of values, an ethics, define goals, and generate the energy to pursue them. Every individual must find her/his way to just such a subjectively effective worldview — personally, inwardly effective.

Christianity is and always has been a valid worldview in this sense — as are Islam and science. Unfortunately, all have limitations as well; and all contain demonic elements. Though these systems of belief do not mix well, they are not mutually exclusive. An individual can make use of two of them alternately with no difficulty.

In fact, when we observe scientists and Christians in everyday life, it becomes apparent that most Christians also seek insight from science. Many scientists are also Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, etc. Most people draw on both religion and science in order to find their way in the world. This is not only acceptable; it is also commendable.

“Science and religion have both proven they are here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future. They may coexist in mutual ignorance of each other’s insights and power; each may try to suppress or eliminate the other; or they may finally learn that their worlds

inevitably intersect, and that such areas of common ground need not be seen as a threat but may be seen as an opportunity for greater understanding.” (Wallace 188)

VII. Einstein and Liberal Religion

Now, though I know it is damnably heretical, I want if possible to generate some uncertainty about the role of reason in religion, especially in liberal religion.

Unitarian Universalism is a product of the mindset of the 18th century Enlightenment. The dream of the Enlightenment was that “people could be improved and society bettered through knowledge and education.” They expressed “confidence in the power of reason and the value of progress.... With a well-educated and properly informed public, true democracy would be possible. This dream was based on a set of collectively held certainties...— the common good, maximum happiness, reason, free will, good government, and the rule of order.” (Peat 188) The 18th century also “saw the rise of science and an increased faith in the power of knowledge.” (Peat 189) It was generally agreed that humans were rational animals.

Liberal religion is rooted in this dream. However, human experience from 1914 to the present has cast a cloud over the radiance of the Enlightenment dream. At least sixty million people were killed in one worldwide war in mid-century, and millions more were maimed in the conflict. Young men died in great numbers in the world war that began in 1914. Since then there have been wars in Vietnam, Korea, Cambodia, China, Afghanistan, Ireland, India, Chile, Liberia, Nicaragua, Argentina, the nations of central Africa among others. There was war between Iran and Iraq, between the Arabs and Israelis. Our species is at once persistently belligerent and remarkably creative.

The 20th century has been a dark age, marked by worldwide, massive killing and destruction; by accelerating damage to the environment on which our lives are dependent; and both of these outcomes have been produced by our successes in science and technology. Reason, science and technology together have also facilitated a vast and rapid increase in world population, in spite of large-scale death-dealing. This trinity has, of course, been a major factor in bringing about the disasters of the 20th century; and here in the 21st century, we are continuing to proceed as we have in the past. The certainty that science will save us is demonic. “The mushroom cloud of the atom was the creation of human reason.” (Peat 197)

While reason has been strikingly effective in enabling the advance of science and technology, the history of the 20th century dark age obliges us to face the fact that reason has fallen far short of producing a harmonious social order. The Enlightenment worldview has become a dubious guide. The use of reason in religion and society is important, of course, but we must see and accept its limitations. Einstein observed that, given the dreadful experience of the 20th century, it is now painfully clear rational thinking is woefully ineffective at solving the problems of social life within society as well as between societies. "We have "not succeeded in building the kind of system which would eliminate the possibility of war and banish forever the murderous instruments of mass destruction." (Einstein 148)

For those of us committed to liberal religion, a reconsideration of the role of reason is in order. The idea that humanity is a rational animal now appears tenuous at best. We must also reconsider the assumption that reason, science, and technology will in time solve all the problems that emerge in human life.

William Ellery Channing's sermon in Baltimore in 1819, "Unitarian Christianity," is a powerful assertion of the central importance of reason in religion. It's a brilliant sermon, and proved to be highly creative. This enthusiasm for reason is without doubt a major component in the elusive tie that binds us together as a religious movement.

The heavy emphasis on reason that has characterized Unitarian Universalism has been both an asset and a liability. This emphasis has enabled us, it is true, to free ourselves from idolatry of traditional religious symbols and dogma, and to focus our attention instead on personal experience of the interdependent web – personal, intimate experience of reality, of God. *[The term reality is used here in this sense: the immense evolving whole out of which the galaxies, the sun, the earth, life, and humanity emerged].*

On the other hand, reason has become a liability because so many of our people appear to have concluded that achieving this freedom from worship of ancient religious symbols is the ultimate aim of our religion. It is essential to our future development that we work patiently and persistently to transcend this crippling limitation.

The certainty that freedom from idolatry is an end in itself is demonic in its impact on liberal religion. It is demonic in that it separates us from believers in the Judeo-

Christian tradition, and from the wisdom that the tradition contains. Worse still, the certainty that “my rational religion is superior to all others” is unabashed bigotry, and it separates us not only from other people but also from reality. We must accept the fact that our religion, like all others, is not based on knowledge but rather on faith. (Berger 794)

It has become clear over the course of the 20th century that reason, science, education, and knowledge – important as they are – are not enough to solve the problems of social and political life. What else is there?

Humanity, as has become distressingly apparent, is not governed exclusively by reason. There are significant non-rational components in our nature with which we must reckon — some of them demonic. Joseph Campbell used the poetic phrase, “our own most secret motivating depths,” to refer to the non-rational self. He was aware that myth was one way to reach into these crepuscular depths of ourselves. Christian mythology served our species effectively for centuries in this regard. The decline of mainline Protestantism suggests that the creativity of the ancient mythology has been losing its power to bring order to the inner life of individuals and their societies.

Einstein pointed to a significant supplement to reason; one especially appropriate for religious liberals. He used the phrase “cosmic religious feeling” to refer to a non-rational worldview that transcends science and rationality. At its best, it does not reject reason, and touches not only the mind but also the depths of the self.

Einstein noted that this cosmic religious feeling is difficult to explain in detail to anyone who has not known it; but he describes it abstractly yet concisely like this: “the experience of the universe as a single, significant whole;” or, in other words, the experience of all things as a meaningful unity. “The religious geniuses of all ages,” he said, “have been distinguished by this kind of religious feeling, which knows no dogma and no God conceived in humanity’s image.... It is the ... function of art and science to awaken this feeling and keep it alive in those who are receptive to it.” (Einstein 38)

An insight complementary to this transcendent worldview is found in another of Einstein’s observations, one that is of special importance to those committed to a lifelong search for truth and meaning. “For myself,” he said, “the struggle to gain more insight and understanding is one of those independent objectives without which a thinking indi-

vidual would find it impossible to have a conscious positive attitude toward life.” (Einstein 356-7) Notice that this is congruent with the fourth Unitarian Universalist Principle: “We... covenant to affirm and promote... a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.”

Or again, parallel to this observation (and also relevant) is another more widely known assertion by this renowned physicist: “The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of all true art and true science. Whoever does not know it is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed. It was the experience of mystery... that engendered religion.” (Einstein 11)

All of these insights from Einstein contribute to realization of the “cosmic religious feeling.” They move us toward the experience of all things as a meaningful unity. This experience is a significant dimension in world religions. Liberal religion would be greatly enriched by the addition of practices (like retreats, contemplation, meditation, and prayer) designed to foster cosmic religious feeling. It is an experience of the whole, of reality, of the interdependent web, of God, and of oneself an intimate part of the whole.

It is not that we must pursue cosmic religious feeling exclusively. If we are to understand the miracle of the cosmos and ourselves as an integral part of it, we will need to make use of at least six modes of knowing: empiricism, rationalism, science, intuition, mysticism, and emotional intelligence. In addition, it is important that each of us link ourselves to a community of seekers, whether institutional or otherwise, as we are incomplete in isolation.

VIII. The Need for a New Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was a transformational period in history. It was a “period in which the best minds of a generation looked critically at society and governance.” Philosophers in England, France and colonial America “thought deeply about systems of governance. A similar surge of creativity is needed today.” (Peat 212)

Over the course of the past 200 years, the impact of humanity on the natural world, advances in travel, communication and medicine, invention of new chemicals and materials – all this has radically changed the circumstances of life on earth – and “this impact continues at an accelerating rate. Now is the time to take stock. We need to look at our world, our different societies, and at ourselves and ask where we are going. To do

this during the first years of the new millennium seems particularly appropriate.” (Peat 212)

“The responsibility... falls upon the best minds of the planet, its philosophers, poets, artists, writers, politicians, and scientists. But it is also the responsibility of each one of us. For each of us intersects with this planet and its peoples in a wide variety of ways.... When walking in nature... or attending a place of worship we begin to think of the transcendent qualities of life and of all that is sacred... The combination of our impulses, thoughts, and new attitudes will create a new world.... We have left the dream of absolute certainty behind. In its place each of us must now take responsibility for the uncertain future.” (Peat 213)

Joseph Campbell thirty years ago expressed a similar thought: Today, he said, “we ask of adults something... more than that they should accept... the habits and inherited customs of the local social group. We ask... that they should develop... that faculty of the independently observant, freely thinking individual... criticizing and creating... becoming themselves an initiating center of the life process.” (Campbell 46-7)

Which, of course, is what Unitarian Universalism asks of its people: an informed, tentative, inquisitive, reflective, and active faith. It may be if we set our hearts, minds, and energies to the task, we may be able to make a significant contribution to the new and needed Enlightenment that must emerge in this age of uncertainty.

To achieve this, we will need to focus attention now, not only on rationality and science but also on development of the kingdom of subjectivity within us – each of us. Let learned ignorance, inquisitive innocence, metaphysical modesty, and permanent reflection on the nature of things be the order of the day — all of this bearing on active caring about the quality of life, our own and others.

We live today in a world not of certainties but of probabilities in which life, matter, the cosmos, and we ourselves evolve continuously; a world in which certainty is desired, demonic, and illusory; and in which love, truth, meaning, and community matter profoundly to our remarkable and troubled species.

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