

**Beyond the Flying Spaghetti Monster;  
finding a meta-ethic to save the human species**

(1200 wds., File: PPRI Spaghetti...4\_6\_17)

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A recent article in the Atlantic magazine (Nov. 2016, p.23) presents a brief review of a spoof religion based on a fanciful deity, the "Flying Spaghetti Monster", that caught on especially in Europe. While a spoof in some respects, the followers point out that nothing is inherently sacred and that sacredness is simply whatever a group of people choose to deem sacred.

Religion has traditionally been centered on belief in a powerful supernatural being which is turned to by believers for answers to difficult questions about the purpose of life and for support and good fortune in major endeavors, such as war. However, Christianity has been on the wane for decades in the U.S. and Europe ([religionnews.com/2014/01/27/great-deline-religion-united-states-one-graph/](http://religionnews.com/2014/01/27/great-deline-religion-united-states-one-graph/); [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds- ...](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-...)).

Theologian John Shelby Spong has challenged Christians, in order to revive their faith, to redefine God in non-theistic terms, not as a human-like being but as an abstract concept around which to focus one's life.

If citizens in the U.S. and Europe can't embrace a supernatural being as a source for united, cooperative behavior, we can hope they do better than making fun of life by pretending a "Flying Spaghetti Monster" is a good guide. But perhaps they *can* define an abstract principle of sacred value.

My research studies in the psychological traits that underlie political behavior reveal interesting information that implies avenues for humans to consider in managing their affairs as a species.

During the past decade I have also gathered data on human intelligence trends that is particularly sobering ([Politicalpsychologyresearch.com](http://Politicalpsychologyresearch.com), Publications

Page, Study # 44). Human intelligence appears to be waning at the rate of .81 I.Q. points per year. Review of literature suggests the cause is air pollution. In as few as 37 years the average I.Q. could drop from 100 to 70, the top of the mental retardation range. If that happens, humans won't be intelligent enough to maintain society as we know it.

So, it is critically important that we seek ways to inform and inspire citizens everywhere to unite in constructive, cooperative action to "clean up our act" as nations, governments and as a species. Perhaps the United States and Europe can lead this effort, as they have been world leaders in many ways.

Let me share a few highlights of my political psychology research and then offer a suggestion about how we might inspire citizens to proceed. The details are in research reports on my website, above. They are also available in "lay" language in my book, *Party Time, How you can create common good democracy right now*, available at Amazon Books: <http://amzn.to/1vLcQ8B>.

Human political attitudes differentiate liberals from conservatives on dozens of dimensions, from attitudes toward foreigners to gender attitudes, music preferences, civilian gun use, economics, preferred types of government and political leaders, and even types of religion. These differences are reflected in correlation coefficients. However, if you compare the mean scores of self-identified strong liberals with strong conservatives, these groups are rather close together on all of these same dimensions, and their mean group scores fall on the liberal side of issues, e.g. a peaceful foreign policy, preference for share economics, affordable housing and health care for all, and preference for government that serves citizens as members of the cooperative community overall rather than as members of competing special interest groups. 20% or fewer endorse the current U.S. form of democracy, special interest group democracy.

Related data from biology and genetics reveals that our political attitudes are grounded in our genes. Our genes guide us to choose current cultural ideas that support a preference for "conservative" ideas, "liberal" ideas or somewhere between. About 1/6 are programmed to be conservative, 1/6 liberal and 2/3 in between. Our political beliefs and attitudes fall into two clusters, defined by factor analysis (a statistical procedure). These correlate with what we term

“conservative” and “liberal” worldviews. The conservative worldview tends to attract authoritarian, militaristic-minded, disease phobic and xenophobic leaders. They and their followers can be valuable to communities in times of threat. The liberal worldview tends to attract kind, compassionate, peace-promoting leaders who trust foreigners. They and their followers can be valuable to communities in times of low threat, promoting trade in raw materials, finished goods, technologies and in genetic material that will help protect the in-group from disease pathogens in neighboring groups against which the in-group does not yet have immunity.

Religious beliefs are part of this picture, taking two forms, Fundamentalism and Kindly Religious Beliefs. About 6% endorse the former and 90% the latter. These forms are operationally defined by the questionnaire items that make them up. See the above references, which include a manual (Publication # 38) of scores of such questionnaire measures. These questionnaires are made of statements such as “There is only one true God”, and “Anyone who disagrees with this first belief is wrong” (Fundamentalism), and “We should do unto others as we want them to treat us”, and “It is inappropriate to be violent toward other human beings” (Kindly Religious Beliefs). Fundamentalism is associated with conservative political attitudes; Kindly Religious Beliefs with liberal attitudes.

Liberals more than conservatives tend to endorse the idea of a “meta religion”, a concept I thought up for research purposes. A meta-religion could appeal to persons of all religions with the intention of promoting cooperation across humans everywhere on earth. Participating groups would dedicate periodic religious services to emphasizing cooperation and understanding across all religions. They’d send representatives to periodic conventions for the same purpose.

Given this introduction, I suggest a meta-religion whose ultimate guiding principle is not a supernatural being but, as Spong urges, an abstract principle. Taking a page from the Flying Spaghetti Monster faith, the ultimate sacred principle chosen for this faith could be that the human species is sacred, served by serving the common good, much as the Christian Disciple Paul urged (I Corinthians, 12- 7).

To this end, nations would promote termination of all environmental pollutants, controlling population growth, reversing global warming to protect low-lying communities from extinction via rising sea levels, disease epidemic control, etc.

A psychology professor heads up the program at the U. of Oregon for managing undocumented students and faculty. The problems are very complicated and hard to resolve. If we created a new category, “citizen of the world”, into which all persons fall, then it might be easier to solve the problems of citizens who are displaced on every continent secondary to flooding, wars, poverty, starvation, etc. At least such persons could all be recognized by their kinder fellow human beings as having “inalienable” worth as citizens of the world, if not of the nation in which they find themselves at the moment. The new meta-religion could lead this effort.

We can't expect people to give up traditional forms of religion, so this new meta-religion should be packaged as a supplement to other traditional religions. To help assure buy-in it should be designed with contributions from all interested parties in all nations and from all traditional religions and even from non-religious and governmental groups. The United Nations might lead this effort. Our survival as a species may hang in the balance.