

What is the real religious issue?

The real religious issue, arguably, is the issue between true religion and superstition.

No doubt, from the standpoint of superstition, my theological position seems indistinguishable from atheism—even if a soft atheism. This is because it has so completely surrendered beliefs that superstition holds to be unsunderable as precisely—superstition. Thus superstition holds, for example, that belief in God essentially entails beliefs in God's special providential, miraculous, interventions; God's securing the indefinite continuation of our lives as active subjects beyond the putative limit of death (of the species as well as of individuals); and God's rewarding virtue and punishing vice, if not already in this life, then in the next.

From my standpoint, however, any position upholding such allegedly essential religious beliefs mistakenly assigns roles to God that have nothing whatever to do with true religion, the while ignoring, or suppressing, the role that does properly belong to God and that God alone can and does play, both by making anything that actually happens really possible and by making everything that happens ultimately significant.

As for how, or why, exactly, true religion and superstition are different, one of Wittgenstein's aphorisms clearly suggests the answer: *"Religiöser Glaube und Aberglaube sind ganz verschieden. Der eine entspringt aus Furcht und ist eine Art falscher Wissenschaft. Der andre ist ein Vertaun"* (*Vermischte Bemerkungen*: 136).

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