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No Hope For Rousseau in Tomorrowland: Limits of Civil Religion in E.L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel: A Novel* (1971)

By
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No Hope for Rousseau in Tomorrowland

“EVERY MAN IS THE ENEMY OF HIS OWN COUNTRY,” Daniel Isaacson, the main character and narrator of E.L. Doctorow’s (1931-2015) *The Book of Daniel*, writes as he laments the inescapability of his parents’ past executions on his present and future.¹ Being only a child during his parents Paul’s and Rochelle’s, who uncannily parallel Julius and Ethel Rosenberg,² executions, Daniel spends the years after the execution trying to grapple with his familial past. He even goes as far as to use his parents’ myths, trials, and executions as the basis for his doctoral dissertation. His research ultimately leads him to bleak views of America, her civil religion, and her role in his parents’ deaths.

Daniel’s dissertation forms the bulk content for the novel, which makes Daniel the primary narrator. His narration oscillates between his parents’ imagined past (1930s-1950s) to his present (1967) in order to capture historical myth, changing American culture, and cultural identity during the Cold War Era.² At the novel’s climax, Daniel flies to Disneyland to confront the man who accused his parents and ruined his childhood – Selig Mindish. This Disneyland scene offers a snapshot of Daniel’s interpretation of mid-century America, her civil religion, and her role in brainwashing the masses.

The Disneyland scene, as well as the rest of the novel, is most often studied for its commentary on historical narration, American politics, and postmodernism. Still, the scene and novel contain many other subtle topics as well. One such implicit topic is civil religion. Civil

¹ E.L. Doctorow. *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*. New York: Random House Trade Paperback, 2007. 72.

² Like the Isaacsons, the Rosenbergs were American citizens who were charged (1950) and executed (1953) for conspiracy to commit espionage based on a close friend’s, namely Ethel’s brother David Greenglass, faulty testimony. Many people debate the guiltiness of the Rosenbergs, and the couple has since become a symbol of contemporary martyrdom. Many historians have tried to uncover the truth behind their convictions and executions. Cotemporary evidence supports Julius’ guilt but not Ethel’s. (Brian Jarvis. “Reading the Rosenbergs: *The Public Burning* and *The Book of Daniel*.” In *Cruel and Unusual: Punishment in U.S. Culture*. Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2004. 55-77.)

religion is the religious, or quasi-religious, beliefs, symbols, and rituals that a nation's citizens hold about their nation.³ The term was coined by French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his 1762 treatise *The Social Contract*.⁴ Rousseau argued that political solidarity and freedom could only be maximized through the governmental wielding of civil religion. Many contemporary thinkers reject Rousseau's view of civil religion, however, because of its ability to inhibit freedom. Instead, many prominent sociologists take a transcendent universalist understanding of American civil religion. This view of civil religion holds that there is "a set of transcendent ideals by which the society is both integrated and judged."⁵ Daniel determines that Rousseau's vision for civil religion remains at the heart of the American government despite the modern preference for a transcendent universal interpretation of civil religion.

Overall, *The Book of Daniel* shows both Rousseau's vision for civil religion and the contemporary transcendent universal interpretation as existing in mid-20th century America. A close reading of Daniel's narrative even uncovers an implicit critique of Rousseau's civil religion; this implicit critique claims that Rousseau's vision creates a false dilemma between the labels of civil religious soldier and enemy. Daniel's criticism accurately presents the one-dimensional nature of Rousseau's vision for civil religion, but Daniel's vision falls short in how it would be impossible to implement on a societal or legal level. It falls short due to the ambiguous nature of Daniel's understanding of soldier and enemy.

³ Robert N. Bellah. "Civil Religion in America." *Daedalus* Vol. 96, No. 1 (1967). 1-21.

⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *The Social Contract*. London: Arcturus Holdings Limited, 2018 (1762). Originally published as *Du contrat social; ou Principes du droit politique*.

⁵ Gail Gehrig, "The American Civil Religion Debate: A Source for Theory Construction," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (March, 1981). 51-63. 53. Though this source is dated, Gehrig's piece remains a good source for commonly used definitions of civil religion. An example of a more contemporary source that falls within this definition is Philip Gorski. *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.

I will begin this paper by defining civil religion within the contexts of Rousseau and contemporary scholarship. Next, I will establish how and where these understandings of civil religion are represented in *The Book of Daniel*. I will then delineate Daniel's critique of Rousseau's civil religion and finish the paper by evaluating Daniel's implicit critique of Rousseau's civil religion.

Defining Civil Religion

Origins of Civil Religion in Rousseau

The origins of the phrase civil religion are found in the 18th-century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, although the concept of civil religion predates Rousseau. Rousseau was one of the most influential thinkers of the European Enlightenment, and his work influenced countless other philosophers such as Immanuel Kant.⁶ Rousseau coined the phrase civil religion in his treatise *The Social Contract* and used it to refer to “the religious dimension of polity.”⁷ The treatise sparked much controversy in France where Rousseau was working at the time and forced him to flee to Switzerland as a result. *The Social Contract* was debated at the time aimed to discover the best way to achieve political solidarity and community while still maintaining freedom.⁸

Rousseau argued that civil religion was the best way to ensure political solidarity since it would put a religious dimension back into the political sphere. This religious dimension, according to Rousseau, would ensure citizens' devotion to the State. This civil religion would promote freedom as well since the devotion would be willing, and citizens would be allowed to

⁶ James J. Delaney. “Rousseau, Jean-Jacques.” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. University of Tennessee, Martin. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/rousseau/#H4>.

⁷ Gehrig, “The American Civil Religion Debate: A Source for Theory Construction,” 51.

⁸ Delaney, “Rousseau, Jean-Jacques.”

think and act freely as long as their actions did not infringe on the civil religion. Thus, Rousseau argued in *The Social Contract* that civil religion would lead to political solidarity without infringing on freedom.⁹

Rousseau does not discuss civil religion until Book IV, chapter 8, of *The Social Contract*, however. This section is the final chapter before the conclusion of the treatise. Placing civil religion at the very end of the treatise highlights its significance within the text. Despite the importance of this chapter, it is incredibly brief. The chapter can be divided into three thematic sections,¹⁰ and only the last and shortest thematic section explicitly deals with the contents of civil religion.¹¹ Discussing civil religion only within the third thematic section of the final chapter once again reiterates its importance within the treatise.

The first thematic section of Book IV, chapter 8 begins with a historical argument for civil religion's basis or motivation.¹² Rousseau claims that political disharmony occurs when the State and religion are disunited and that political solidarity occurs when they are united. He does not cite any specific historical examples, though.¹³ He writes, "If it is asked how in pagan times, where each state had its cult and its gods, there were no wars of religion, I answer that it was precisely because each State, having its own cult as well as its own government, made no distinction between its gods and its laws."¹⁴ Rousseau feared that the contemporary and future governments would not have a faith with which to bind due to Enlightenment rationalism. The

⁹ Charles M. Sherover, "Rousseau's Civil Religion." In *From Kant and Royce to Heidegger: Essays in Modern Philosophy*. Edited by Gregory R. Johnson. Catholic University of America Press, 2003. 193-202. 193.

¹⁰ While this chapter is not broken into three labeled sections, scholars have noted three main thematic sections of the chapter.

¹¹ Diane Fourny, "Rousseau's Civil Religion Reconsidered," *The French Review* 60, No. 4 (March, 1987). 485-96. 486.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Rousseau even goes as far as to state that ancient societies knew no religious wars because the State and religion were unified. He fails to mention which specific societies knew no religious wars, though.

¹⁴ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 146-47.

lack of religious binding in the government was a significant issue for Rousseau since lacking a religious backing would lead to disunity within the State.

Rousseau continues his discussion of religion in the second thematic section, where he considers three forms¹⁵ of religion that could potentially solve the issue described in the first thematic section. The three forms of religion which he discusses are the Religion of Man, the Religion of Citizen, and the Religion of Priest. The first form of religion, the Religion of Man, is one's personal religious beliefs that are demonstrated through interior practice.¹⁶ Rousseau believed that this form was synonymous with 18th century Christianity, but he rejects it because it would not condone political violence even in the case of self-defense.¹⁷ The opposite form to the Religion of Man is the Religion of Citizen. This form includes publicly ritualized practices within a community and maintains that other religions are heretical.¹⁸ Rousseau argues that the Religion of Citizen is the oldest form of religion, but he concludes that it has deteriorated over time and is no longer fit to serve the State.¹⁹ The final form of religion, the Religion of Priest, focusses on religions that highlight seclusion from the world.²⁰ Rousseau views many traditional religions, such as Catholicism and Buddhism, as examples of this form.²¹ He finds this third form to be dangerous to political unity because it creates a two planed existence, spiritual and material, which Rousseau believes makes the practitioners anti-social and establishes two forms of government.²² Rousseau intentionally discredits all three forms of religion to segue to the

¹⁵ "Forms of religion" should not be confused with different religious traditions like Christianity or Hinduism. Under Rousseau's conception, religious traditions are viewed somewhat as sub-categories within the three main forms.

¹⁶ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 152.

¹⁷ Ibid., 153-4.

¹⁸ Ibid., 152.

¹⁹ Rousseau does not explain why or how it deteriorated. He only says that it is now "founded on lies and error." He never explains what those lies and errors are (Ibid., 153).

²⁰ Ibid., 152.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Fourny, "Rousseau's Civil Religion Reconsidered," 486.

third thematic section, which elaborates on civil religion and its role in ensuring political solidarity.

The third thematic section explicitly defines and explains civil religion but is, as I mentioned above, notably shorter than the other sections. The brevity of the section allows Rousseau to quickly delineate the facets of his civil religion without going into much depth or responding to possible criticisms. Rousseau's civil religion can henceforth be explained in three main points. Firstly, Rousseau views civil religion as a tool for achieving solidarity. Secondly, Rousseau's civil religion is theistic in that a Divine being serves as a moral backing for the civil religion. Thirdly, Rousseau writes civil religion as being created and implemented through the governmental and legal arenas. These three facets embody the most important aspects of Rousseau's conception of civil religion.

The first main point of Rousseau's civil religion is that he uses it as a tool for achieving political solidarity.²³ This idea of using civil religion as a tool can be seen in Rousseau's descriptive gloss of the concept. He writes:

The right which the social compact gives the Sovereign over the subjects does not, we have seen, exceed the limits of public expediency. The subjects then owe the Sovereign an account of their opinions only to such an extent as they matter to the community. Now, it matters very much to the community that each citizen should have a religion. That will make him love his duty; but the dogmas of that religion concern the State and its members only so far as they have reference to morality and to the duties which he who professes them is bound to do to others...There is therefore a purely civic profession of faith ... not exactly as religious dogmas, but as social sentiments without which a man cannot be a good citizen or a faithful subject."²⁴

Rousseau explains in this passage that civil religion ought to be a quasi-religion used to make men good citizens and to promote a healthy community. This gloss immediately asserts that civil

²³ Using civil religion as tool differs from most contemporary conceptions of civil religion that view civil religion as a phenomenon.

²⁴ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 156-7.

religion is used towards a purpose, namely solidarity.

The second key point of Rousseau's civil religion is that it is theistic. The theistic nature of civil religion can be seen in the civil religious dogmas which Rousseau referenced in his gloss. He writes, "The dogmas of civil religion ought to be few, simple and exactly worded, without explanation or commentary. The existence of a mighty, intelligent and beneficent Divinity, possessed of foresight and providence, the life to come, the happiness of the just, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctity of the social contract and the laws: these are its positive dogmas."²⁵ These positive dogmas mimic many theistic religions in that they attest to the existence of a God that rewards good and punishes bad either here or in the hereafter. These dogmas make Rousseau's civil religion theistic in nature. Rousseau's positive dogmas for civil religion stand alongside a single negative dogma, which Rousseau defines as intolerance. He writes, "Its negative dogmas I confine to one, intolerance ... tolerance should be given to all religions that tolerate others, so long as their dogmas contain nothing contrary to the duties of citizenship."²⁶ The purpose of this negative dogma was to accommodate diverse views.²⁷ Between the positive and negative dogmas, the positive dogmas are more important to Rousseau's conception because he spends much more time defining and addressing it.

The third aspect of Rousseau's civil religion is that it the government and law enjoy it. Rousseau explains, "There is therefore a purely civic profession of faith of which the Sovereign should fix the articles..."²⁸ This excerpt explicitly places the Sovereign in control of the tenets of civil religion. Rousseau even delineates punishments that the Sovereign ought to implement if a

²⁵ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 158.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 158-9.

²⁷ Mark Cladis explains the purpose of Rousseau's negative dogma well. He explains, "If liberalism is to accommodate diverse views, citizens must be trained to honor diversity." (Mark S. Cladis, *Public Vision, Private Lives: Rousseau, Religion, and 21st-century Democracy*. New York: Columbia University Press Books, 2003. 233.)

²⁸ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 157.

citizen does not abide by the tenets. He writes,

While [the purely civic profession of faith] can compel no one to believe them, it can banish from the State whoever does not believe them – it can banish him, not for impiety, but as an anti-social being, incapable of truly loving the laws and justice, and of sacrificing, at need, his life to his duty. If anyone, after publicly recognizing these dogmas, behaves as if he does not believe them let him be punished by death: he has committed the worst of all crimes, that of lying before the law.²⁹

Rousseau describes two forms of punishment in this excerpt: banishment and execution.

Banishment is used in the case that a citizen does not wish to participate in the civil religion, whereas execution is used if a citizen actively states he wants to participate in the civil religion but then acts in opposition to it. Rousseau’s legal backing of civil religion echoes the reformation idea of *cuius regio, eius religio*, or “Whose realm, his religion.”³⁰

In short, there are three essential aspects of Rousseau’s civil religion. It is used as a tool for achieving political solidarity, includes theistic backing, and legally is binding. Though there are other aspects of Rousseau’s civil religion, these three are by far the most important to understanding and defining Rousseau’s conception. Thus, Rousseau’s civil religion can be summarized as a theistic belief system that is upheld by the government in order to achieve political solidarity.

Defining American Civil Religion

Today, civil religion is almost exclusively looked at within the discipline of sociology, not political philosophy, and most sociological definitions of civil religion differ significantly from Rousseau’s conception. Sociologists often assume civil religion as being an inevitable sociological phenomenon that occurs within individual communities or nations. This assumptive

²⁹ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 157-8.

³⁰ “Cujus Regio, Ejus Religio.” *Merriam-Webster*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cujus-regio-ejus-religio>.

understanding of civil religion motivates nearly all contemporary scholarship on the topic.³¹

America is one nation that is frequently discussed in modern discourse about civil religion. Most scholars look at American civil religion as a transcendent universal religion of the nation.³²

Transcendent universalism is defined as “a set of transcendent ideals by which the society is both integrated and judged.”³³ This view of civil religion was popularized, though not invented, by American sociologist Robert Bellah (1927-2013) in his groundbreaking piece “Civil Religion in America.” Bellah explains there being “a whole religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere. This public religious dimension is expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals that [he calls] the American civil religion.”³⁴ In other words, Bellah describes American civil religion as a unifying system of beliefs, symbols, and rituals shared by a community. Bellah goes as far as to cite transcendent universal civil religion as having a prophetic role within the nation. This transcendent universal understanding of civil religion is the most popular among scholars, especially sociologists, today.

This understanding of American civil religion is the most popular because of its usefulness and productivity. Gail Gehrig explains in her 1981 essay “The American Civil Religion Debate: A Source for Theory Construction” that historian John F. Wilson evaluated the

³¹ One fantastic example of this understanding of civil religion is Raymond Haberski's "Reckoning with American Civil Religion." He finishes the article, "We cannot live without myths and the symbols that represent them. And we cannot function as a people without a way to talk about, believe in, and yes, critique those myths. Civil religion does not exist outside of the group that uses it. And while it is prone to manipulation, civil religion is also the only way to acknowledge that we still need to believe in something worthy of the sacrifices that have been and will continue to be made in the name of the nation." (Raymond Haberski. "Reckoning with American Civil Religion." In *God and War: American Civil Religion since 1945*. Rutgers University Press, 2012. 243-54. 254.) This is just one example of many that assume civil religion as being an inevitable phenomenon.

³² Gehrig, “The American Civil Religion Debate: A Source for Theory Construction,” 53.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Bellah, “Civil Religion in America.,” 3-4.

utility of various interpretations of civil religion.³⁵ Gehrig writes, “Wilson concluded that Bellah’s transcendent universal American civil religion was the most productive, based on its specificity in distinguishing the religious aspects of American civil symbolism and its inclusion of empirically productive sources of data such as the pronouncements of civil religious figures. The transcendent universal model is also the most comprehensive of the definitions...”³⁶ Because of the utility of the transcendent universal definition of American civil religion, scholars favor it over other understandings.

Thus, contemporary thinkers on American civil religion depart from Rousseau’s vision. They tend to view civil religion as having transcendent universal importance. This contemporary interpretation of civil religion differs from that of Rousseau’s in that it is not created and wielded by the governing officials. Instead, transcendent universal civil religion exists as phenomena within society. The fact that it is a societal phenomenon also rejects Rousseau’s theistic emphasis. Overall, scholars today emphasize the *phenomenon* of civil religion and not the tool of civil religion.

Civil Religion Within the Novel

The Book of Daniel portrays civil religion within the mid-20th century, Civil Rights era American context. Daniel includes examples of both the transcendent universal American civil religion and Rousseau’s civil religion. The Disneyland scene and use of holidays³⁷ especially show transcendent universalism. Daniel presents the transcendent universal understanding as being only the first layer of American civil religion, though. Throughout the novel, Daniel

³⁵ Other interpretations include folk religion, democratic faith, religious nationalism, and Protestant piety (Gehrig, “The American Civil Religion Debate: A Source for Theory Construction,” 52.)

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁷ Each chapter, except for chapter three, is named after a holiday: Memorial Day, Halloween, Starfish, and Christmas.

implies American civil religion as being deeply rooted in Rousseau's tradition. Both the transcendent universal and Rousseau conceptions of civil religion inform Daniel's understanding of the mid-20th century American civil religion.

Transcendent Universalism in the Novel

The most obvious example of transcendent universal American civil religion can be seen in the Disneyland Scene of Book Four.³⁸ Towards the end of the final chapter, Daniel travels to California to confront Selig Mindish. Mindish was initially a close friend of the Isaacsons, but he eventually accused and testified against Paul and Rochelle for conspiracy to commit espionage. Mindish's testimony sealed their fate, and he traded their lives for his. After serving time in prison, Mindish, his wife, and his daughter relocated to California, where they assumed new identities. In order to get to the truth of his parents' supposed guilt, Daniel felt compelled to interrogate this accuser.

After meeting with Mindish's daughter, Daniel agreed to meet Mindish and his family at Tomorrowland in Disneyland. Daniel comments on everything he sees around him before their meeting: the setup of the park, rides portraying cheap reenactments of literature, and the merging of mythic and historical figures.³⁹ Through Daniel's observations, the reader gets insight into the myths and beliefs of 1960s American civil religion.

The Disneyland scene demonstrates transcendent universal American civil religion because the park's themes and rides rely on the participants' understandings of American civil religious beliefs, symbols, and rituals. Daniel explains, "What Disneyland proposes is a technique of abbreviated shorthand culture for the masses, a mindless thrill, like an electric

³⁸ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 285-93.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

shock,⁴⁰ that insists at the same time on the recipient's rich psychic relation to his country's history and language and literature."⁴¹ Daniel interprets Disneyland as a cheat-sheet for American civil religion in that it provides mythic rituals and stories in an easily digestible way to the public. Carol Harter and James Thompson, two leading critics on Doctorow and *The Book of Daniel*, explain that "cultural annotations [can] most significantly [be seen through] the distorted but brilliant analysis of Disneyland's role in the making and maintaining of the American consciousness."⁴² For this reason, Disneyland demonstrates a transcendent universal American civil religion.

The shape of the park is one example of Disneyland's use of a transcendent universal American civil religion. Daniel begins his Disneyland musing by describing each "thematic aspect" of the park – Frontierland, Tomorrowland, Fantasyland, Adventureland, and Main Street U.S.A.⁴³ Each thematic aspect demonstrates a different myth of American civil religion: Frontierland represents westward expansion, Tomorrowland represents the technological future, Fantasyland represents the whimsical future, and Main Street U.S.A. represents a humble yet enjoyable life in small-town U.S.A.⁴⁴ Just from the layout of the park, Disneyland covers nearly all major myths of American civil religion.⁴⁵ Hence, the very layout of the park implies Disneyland as representing the various themes of civil religion.

The Book of Daniel as a whole demonstrates rituals and symbols of a transcendent universal American civil religion. The novel opens with a call to the ritual of Memorial Day.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Given that Daniel's parents were electrocuted, "electric shock" implies an unnerving and negative connotation about the effects of Disneyland.

⁴¹ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 289.

⁴² Carol C. Harter and James R. Thompson. "'The Contingency of Song': *The Book of Daniel*." In *E. L. Doctorow*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990. 24-48. 29.

⁴³ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 286.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Bellah, "Civil Religion in America."

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The novel opens, “On Memorial Day in 1967, Daniel Lewin thumbed his way from New York to Worcester...”⁴⁷ Doctorow’s choice to begin the novel “On Memorial Day” establishes the importance of civil religious ritual to the novel. The same section includes commentary about American civil religious symbols. When describing his trip to visit his sister, Daniel notes that “American flags were everywhere.”⁴⁸ Thus, *The Book of Daniel* includes transcendent universal American civil religious rituals and symbols.

The Book of Daniel also includes Bellah’s prophetic dimension of transcendent universal American civil religion through the novel’s overt allusion to the Biblical Daniel. The Biblical book of Daniel is a work of apocalyptic prose. Experts believe it to have been composed around 163 BCE, making it the latest composed book of the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁹ The Biblical book of Daniel describes various experiences of a character named Daniel. The character of Daniel is known from the *Aqhat Epic* found at Ugarit, where he is characterized as a hero of the past.⁵⁰ The Hebrew Scriptures use this portrayal of Daniel to make him a model for Jews living in exile.⁵¹ On the other hand, Christian interpreters view Daniel as a prophet who foresaw the birth of Jesus Christ.⁵² Daniel remains one of the most enigmatic books of the Hebrew Bible because of its evocative stories and obscure dreams.

Doctorow explicitly alludes to the Biblical Daniel, which provides opportunities for the prophetic dimension of transcendent universal civil religion to shine through. The most extensive discussion of Biblical Daniel occurs at the beginning of the novel. Daniel writes:

Daniel survives three reigns at considerable personal cost. Toward the end his insights become more diffuse, apocalyptic, hysterical. One night he suffers his own dream ... and

⁴⁷ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁹ “Daniel.” In *The Jewish Study Bible*. Tanakh Translation. Edited by Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael Fishbane. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. 1640-1665. 1640.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1642.

ironically he doesn't know what it means: 'I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit in me ... My cognitions much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me : but I kept the matter in my heart.' So much for Daniel, Beacon of Faith in a Time of Persecution... Five grown-up people are trying to recover one twenty-year-old girl from a public insane asylum on Memorial Day."⁵³

The phrase "but I kept the matter in my heart" becomes a motto for Daniel Isaacson.⁵⁴ When referring to himself, Daniel states, "But I, Daniel, was grieved, and ... I do not want to keep the matter in my heart."⁵⁵ He even closes the dissertation/novel with, "*But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book ... Go thy way Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.*"⁵⁶ This refrain creates a parallel between Biblical Daniel and Daniel Isaacson. It portrays Daniel Isaacson as having a vision, presumably about the nature of America and American civil religion, that he wants to get it out of his heart. Daniel does just that too through the completion of his dissertation. Given that Daniel's dissertation forms the bulk of *The Book of Daniel*, the novel literally becomes a prophetic text that interprets the past, present, and future of American civil religion.⁵⁷

Henceforth, Daniel describes mid-20th century American civil religion in transcendent universalist terms. He explicitly uses Disneyland as an example of the transcendent universalism. The thematic aspects of the park and various rituals and symbols throughout the novel also demonstrate transcendent universalism. The novel's clear allusions to biblical Daniel further reinforce the transcendent universal qualities of American civil religion. Together, these examples show transcendent universal American civil religion in *The Book of Daniel*.

⁵³ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 12.

⁵⁴ "But I kept the matter in my heart" alludes to Daniel 7:28.

⁵⁵ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 16.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 303.

⁵⁷ Alluding to Biblical Daniel also reinforces the important motifs of exile and persecution. More on this later.

Rousseau's Civil Religion in the Novel

Rousseau's vision for civil religion can also be seen in *The Book of Daniel*. Daniel includes many examples in which the American civil religion is used as a tool, viewed theistically, and enforced on the legal level, as Rousseau proposed. Some of the examples of Rousseau's vision parallel the examples of transcendent universal civil religion. By having both interpretations of civil religion, Daniel implies that the transcendent universal civil religion is just a masked version of Rousseau's civil religion.

While the Disneyland scene demonstrates examples of transcendent universal civil religion, Daniel insinuates that Disneyland uses civil religion as a tool for training the masses. Daniel notes at several points that Disneyland is a vessel for teaching and implanting the lessons of American civil religion into the heart of the viewer. He states, "In a forthcoming time of highly governed masses in an overpopulated world, this technique [of Disneyland being an interactive shorthand for American culture] may be extremely useful both as a substitute for education and, eventually, as a substitute for experience."⁵⁸ Daniel's understanding of Disneyland's purpose can be summarized as "the making and maintaining of the American consciousness."⁵⁹ This idea of Disneyland becoming a substitute for education and experience is clear in the following pages when Mindish is riding on Richfield Autopia in Tomorrowland. The scene is described as follows:

People wait to board the little gas cars of the Richfield Autopia, a tracked ride that offers the illusion of steering to the person behind the wheel. Little snarling Autopia convertibles pile up at the freeway stop, drivers jump out, and drivers waiting their turns at assigned and numbered places jump in.... There he is... In the toy car... Selig grips the wheel waiting for the new run to begin. His arms are bare, he wears an Hawaiiin shirt. He is incredibly old. His chin moves up and down, his lips flap against each other, his mouth opens and closes and there flashes across his face a moment of astonishment, a moment

⁵⁸ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 289.

⁵⁹ Harter and Thompson, "'The Contingency of Song': *The Book of Daniel*," 29.

of pugnacity, astonishment pugnacity, in alternating palsies of the nerve...”⁶⁰

In this passage, a Disneyland ride wields Mindish into believing that he is in control of the car.⁶¹ Mindish is clearly senile at this point, but his senility potentially shows the long-term effects of the Disneyland/American civil religious indoctrination. All around, the Disneyland scene demonstrates Rousseau’s civil religion in that the civil religion is being used as a tool for educating the people.

Rousseau’s theistic emphasis can also be seen in Daniel’s God-like interpretation of America. In Book One, Daniel describes God “as a character in the Bible.”⁶² He goes on to describe this character as someone who “seems almost concerned with the idea of his recognition by mankind.”⁶³ Daniel likens the American government to this interpretation of the Biblical God by presenting the government as killing his parents due to their refusal to worship it. Daniel implies that the Constitution actualizes this God-like view of America by its listing treason as an act against the country and not an individual. He writes, “TREASON the only crime defined by the Constitution... Under [the founding fathers’] formulation it became possible to be guilty of treason only against the nation, the individual ruler or party.”⁶⁴ By defining treason as an act against America, the country becomes a super-entity above individuals within the nation. This actualization of the God-America is then ritualized in things like Disneyland. Daniel explains in

⁶⁰ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 291.

⁶¹ This passage, and the Disneyland scene as a whole, foreshadows Baudrillard’s third-order simulation as described in his 1983 book *Simulations* (I use the word “foreshadow” because most scholars describe the novel as an example of intellectual foreshadowing. I am not convinced, however, that Baudrillard did not base his third-order simulation on Doctorow’s Disneyland scene because Baudrillard’s phrasing and examples are uncannily similar to the novel which was published 12-years prior). Baudrillard describes third-order simulation as follows: “Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the ‘real’ country, all of ‘real’ America, which *is* Disneyland... Disneyland is presented as images in order to make us believe that the rest is real.” This understanding of the Disneyland scene further shows that the Rousseauian conception of civil religion is being masked by the transcendent universal understanding. (Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulations*. Translated by Phil Beitchman, Paul Foss, and Paul Patton. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.)

⁶² Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 10.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 176.

the Disneyland scene that the park encourages the people “to participate in mythic rituals of the culture.”⁶⁵ Thus, the concept of America becomes a theistic entity that wields power.

The Book of Daniel retains the governmental and legal emphasis of Rousseau’s civil religion as well. The novel overtly shows that America punishes those in opposition to her in the legal terms of banishment and execution. The novel opens with the banishment of Susan, Daniel’s younger sister, and closes with the finalized banishments of both Susan and Mindish. Similarly, the novel’s narrative bulk deals with the executions of Paul and Rochelle. The banishments and executions all stem from governmental punishment against some person, as a result of the punishee’s rejection of some aspect of civil religion.

Daniel thus implicitly interprets America as banishing those who choose not to participate in American civil religion. By looking at both Susan Isaacson and Selig Mindish, Rousseau’s proposed banishment clearly shines through. Interestingly though, *The Book of Daniel* goes a step further than Rousseau and demonstrates both psychological and physical banishment as a result of rejecting American civil religion.

Susan Isaacson, Daniel’s younger sister, is one victim of American banishment. The novel opens with her attempted suicide and closes at her funeral. Despite providing the bookends for the novel, Susan is notably absent from the narrative and only speaks one line.⁶⁶ All the reader knows about Susan is that she is unable to escape the legacy of her parents and is placed in a sanitarium as a result. Susan’s supposed insanity, however, is a result of her parents’ executions and her unrewarded attempts to clear their names – both of which are a fault of the State. Given that the actions of the State have driven Susan to madness, Daniel understands that the State forced his sister into emotional isolation and psychological banishment. Additionally,

⁶⁵ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 286.

⁶⁶ Susan alludes the Apocryphal text of Susanna.

by putting her in a sanitarium, the State further punishes Susan by enforcing physical banishment in addition to the psychological banishment. Oddly enough, Susan's only line in the present is, "They're still fucking us ... Good-bye, Daniel. You get the picture."⁶⁷ It is unclear exactly what Susan is talking about or who "they" refers to; she simply said this line to Daniel without any provocation. Even without knowing for certain who Susan is referring to, this ambiguous line shows that Susan understands someone is intentionally punishing and banishing her.

Similarly, the State physically and psychologically banishes Mindish. Although not executed like Paul and Rochelle, Mindish was sentenced to ten years in prison after the trials. His imprisonment physically banishes him behind bars. Upon his release, Mindish and his family relocate to California where they assume new identities and thus become psychologically banished from their previous selves. As a result, Mindish loses his identity until nothing remains except his senility described in the Disneyland scene. Daniel even goes as far as to connect Mindish's senility to the electrocutions of his parents. Daniel writes, "His chin moves up and down, his lips flap against each other, his mouth opens and closes and there flashes across his face a moment of astonishment, a moment of pugnacity, astonishment, pugnacity, in alternating palsies of the nerve."⁶⁸ Daniel's description of Mindish matches the imagery of an electrocution perfectly. By describing Mindish in this way, Daniel implies Mindish's senility as being a punishment which is enforced by the State and comparable to that of Paul and Rochelle. Thus, Mindish also demonstrates Rousseau's banishment in the novel.

Additionally, *The Book of Daniel* depicts the deployment of execution for those who live in opposition to the civil religion. Under Rousseau's stipulations for execution, a person must

⁶⁷ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 291.

attest to believing the tenets of civil religion while *acting* in opposition to those claims.⁶⁹ The constitution also describes treason as being an *act* against the State. According to Article III, Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution, treason is defined as the following: “Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying war against them, or in adhering to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort.”⁷⁰ The similarities between Rousseau’s stipulations and the U.S. constitution allows for the American government to charge people for acting against the civil religion.

Rousseau’s execution claim is easily seen through the executions of Paul and Rochelle Isaacson specifically.⁷¹ The executions of Paul and Rochelle, who represent conflict with America, speak greatly about the idea of treason in the context of Cold War Era civil religion.⁷² Although Paul and Rochelle are charged on conspiracy to commit espionage, they are sentenced for treason. Daniel imagines Rochelle as thinking, “It is clear that although she and Paul will be guilty of conspiracy to commit espionage, it is for the crime of treason they will be sentenced.”⁷³ Daniel explains here that they were sentenced for supposed actions against the State. Although the novel offers no proof for either the couple’s guilt or innocence, Daniel posits that the State uses the punishment of execution for those who might live in opposition.

The novel’s allusions to Biblical Daniel reinforces Rousseau’s ideas of banishment and execution in the novel as well. Doctorow’s allusion to the Biblical text creates a parallel between the culture described in the Biblical book of Daniel and the culture described in Doctorow’s *The Book of Daniel*. The similarity between the cultures is that the main characters live in exile and

⁶⁹ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 157-8.

⁷⁰ U.S. Constitution. Article III, § 3. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/articleiii>

⁷¹ Doctorow uses their executions to delegitimize civil religion, whereas Rousseau uses it to legitimate civil religion.

⁷² Paul Levine. "The Conspiracy of History: E. L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel*." In *E.L. Doctorow: Essays and Conversations*. Edited by Richard Trenner. Princeton, NJ: Ontario Review Press, 1983. 182-95. 186.

⁷³ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 202.

experience radical persecution. In the novel, Daniel and his family experience exile and persecution because of their political and religious beliefs. The politically motivated persecutions and exile can be seen through the examples described above. The religiously motivated persecutions, however, can be seen in how Daniel views his Jewish heritage as a factor for the relentless persecution. He describes Paul as writing, “My darling have you noticed how many of the characters in this capitalistic drama are Jewish?... We are putting on this little passion play for our Christian masters.”⁷⁴ Doctorow’s use of the Biblical Daniel creates a clear argument for the existence of banishment and execution in modern America.

Thus, *The Book of Daniel* presents Rousseau’s civil religion as motivating many of the actions and scenes in the novel. Daniel specifically uses the Disneyland scene, a God-like interpretation of the American State, and the treatment of Susan, Mindish, Paul, and Rochelle to show the three most important aspects of Rousseau’s civil religion. Many of these examples of Rousseau’s civil religion lie behind examples of transcendent universalism. The fact that transcendent universalism masks Rousseau’s civil religion implies that American civil religion is mostly motivated by Rousseau’s conception.

Daniel’s Critique of Rousseau’s Vision for Civil Religion

Daniel provides various implicit critiques against Rousseau’s vision of civil religion, even though he does not explicitly mention Rousseau. Daniel’s critiques can mostly be seen in his diatribes about the governmental systems of both past and present. He cites standard critiques against Rousseau, namely how Rousseau’s conception leads to the logical issues of governmental abuse. He also implicitly offers a unique critique. This critique holds that Rousseau’s conception creates a false dilemma between soldier and enemy. Together, these two

⁷⁴ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 197.

points formulate Daniel's critiques against Rousseau's civil religion.⁷⁵

Traditional Critique

Daniel's most obvious critique of Rousseau's civil religion is that it leads to gross injustices. Daniel directly links American civil religion to his parents' executions. In the novel, no information is ever given to confirm their guilt or innocence, and the novel remains very ambiguous on the matter. Daniel, the extremely unreliable narrator, often implies his parents as being innocent despite lacking evidence to prove this stance. Because of his untrustworthy assumption about the innocence of his parents, Daniel views Rousseau's civil religion as causing their unjust executions. He states, "All Governments stand ready to commit their citizens to death in the interest of their government."⁷⁶ This sentence highlights the abusive tendencies that come out of Rousseau's vision for civil religion since it gives governments the power to commit their citizens to death. The overarching plot of the novel, namely Paul's and Rochelle's trials and executions, serves as an example of gross injustices that come from civil religion. Earlier in the same section, Daniel writes, "I live in constant and degrading relationship to the society that has destroyed my mother and father."⁷⁷ The word "destroyed" implies the wrongfulness of their executions, which were motivated by their supposed disregard of the civil religion. Thus, the novel charges Rousseau's vision for civil religion as leading to governmental abuse.

This critique is one that is shared by many philosophers. Diane Fourny is one thinker who cites Rousseau's civil religion as leading to governmental abuse. She writes, "Rousseau's civil religion reveals itself the political 'solution' to deal with division, violence and social order. It is the solution that resorts to the use or reciprocation of violence and has been given legal and

⁷⁵ The novel does not have a favorable outlook on civil religion.

⁷⁶ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 72.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

sacred justifications. It is purified of the blood it will forcibly shed. Civil religion confers the sacred dimension upon the State violence masking its real nature.”⁷⁸ Fourny explains in this excerpt that Rousseau’s civil religion masks but induces violence and abuse within the State. Overall, many philosophers conclude alongside Daniel that Rousseau’s civil religion logically can lead to political violence and abuse.

Soldier versus Enemy

Another and more original critique Daniel offers is that Rousseau’s conception creates a false dilemma between the titles of soldier and enemy. This rhetoric of soldier versus enemy can be seen numerous times throughout the novel. Daniel often labels people as either enemies or soldiers or some other synonym. One explicit example of Daniel labeling people according to their supposed role in society is when his parents take him and some friends to see the activist Paul Robeson. Daniel writes, “The patriots have zeroed in on their target,” with the targets being himself and everyone else on the bus with him.⁷⁹ The word “patriot” explicitly places the people who are protesting Paul Robeson on the ethical high grounds and separates them from Robeson’s fans. Another instance that Daniel uses an opposing understanding of enemy and soldier is when he imagines how his father felt while in prison. Daniel writes his father as thinking, “I am to be presented as an enemy of this flag.”⁸⁰ This sentence both reaffirms a stark difference between enemy and soldier by presenting Paul as being in complete opposition to the flag. Interestingly, the sentence also implies the falseness of their stark difference through the phrase “to be presented.” The separation between soldier and enemy can be summed up through the song “Which Side Are You On” that is sung in the novel. Daniel reiterates the lyrics, “They say in

⁷⁸ Fourny, “Rousseau’s Civil Religion Reconsidered,” 494.

⁷⁹ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 51.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 187.

Harlan County / There are no neutrals there / You either are a union man / Or a thug for J. H. Blair.”⁸¹ Thus, Daniel presents civil religion as causing there to be a dichotomic understanding of soldier and enemy.

Daniel implies that this dilemma is incorrect, though. The falseness of the dilemma stems from two reasons. Firstly, Daniel notes that the dilemma between soldier and enemy might be false because he believes no government treats a citizen as being exclusively soldier or enemy. In Book One, Daniel clearly states that every citizen is an enemy of his or her own State. This interpretation can be seen when Daniel writes, “Every man is the enemy of his own country. EVERY MAN IS THE ENEMY OF HIS OWN COUNTRY.”⁸² Oddly though, Daniel continues in the same paragraph to state that everyone is also a soldier to the State. He writes, “All citizens are soldiers. All Governments stand ready to commit their citizens to death in the interest of their government.”⁸³ This passage can be taken literally in how citizens may be required to fight on behalf of their country in war, but it can also be taken nonliterally. Citizens are soldiers either by explicitly promoting civil religion or by becoming symbols of what happens when you do not promote the civil religion. Paul and Rochelle, for instance, were made into examples of what happens when you fight against the civil religion. Susan’s friend Baby tells Daniel that Susan believed her parents to be “martyrs,” for example.⁸⁴ What they were martyrs for may be up for debate, but the parents were used as soldiers for the State, nonetheless. Daniel argues that states treat their citizens as both soldier and enemy, which proves the dichotomic division between soldier and enemy to be false.

⁸¹ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 154.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 71-2.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

Daniel offers exceptions to this understanding, though. He cites two people in the novel who could be classified as fully soldier: the Inertia Kid and Mindish. The first example of a full soldier is the Inertia Kid, an autistic child whom Daniel met while he and Susan were at the orphanage. John G. Parks, the author of a literary biography of Doctorow, explains, “The Inertia Kid may symbolize, in extreme form, the kind of mindless cultural conformity.”⁸⁵ This interpretation of the Inertia Kid would explain Daniel’s statement that he became “a priest” when he imitated the Inertia Kid.⁸⁶ Another exception to Daniel’s interpretation is the senile Mindish. He was completely enveloped in the Autopia ride and unable to realize that the ride was a simulation. Mindish is slightly different from the Inertia Kid though in how he was once treated as both soldier and enemy; it is only at the end of his life that he is senile and thus treated as fully soldier. These two figures serve as complete soldiers because they have compromised mental states, and Daniel implicitly classifies them as exceptions as a result.

Daniel also disbelieves the dichotomic understanding of soldier and enemy because he notes that most people have qualities of both. In other words, Daniel views people as having ideals that the State would classify as belonging to soldiers and belonging to enemies. This view could be considered a more intersectional reading of people. The idea of people being both soldier and enemy repeatedly occurs throughout the novel. Jack Fein, the reporter Daniel speaks to about the Isaacson Foundation, specifically voices this stance about Paul and Rochelle. He tells Daniel, “Your folks were framed, but that doesn’t mean they were innocent babes.”⁸⁷ Here, Fein explains that the Isaacsons were partially, though not fully, guilty, which reverberates the idea that there is a gray area between soldier and enemy. This view argues that people’s

⁸⁵ John G. Parks. *E.L. Doctorow (Literature and Life)*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1991. 48.

⁸⁶ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 170.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 213.

identities are not fully soldier or fully enemy; to label people as such would be too simplistic of an understanding. Daniel uses this discussion to further his idea that people are neither soldier nor enemy exclusively.

Paul Isaacson is one example of a character that Daniel views as being both soldier and enemy. Paul explicitly states things against the nation that would be classified as enemy-talk. Daniel remembers him saying, for example, “The battle is not finished,” when discussing his fight against capitalist America.⁸⁸ Paul also holds onto American ideals despite being classified as an enemy of America. Even after his charge, Paul still holds onto American ideals. He tells Daniel and Susan during their prison visit, “You cannot put innocent people to death in this country.”⁸⁹ Interestingly, Daniel describes his father as being so soldier-like that he becomes a revolutionary. Daniel writes early in the book, “...the implication of all the things [Paul] used to flagellate himself was that American democracy wasn’t democratic enough. He continued to be astonished, insulted, outraged, that it wasn’t purer, freer, finer, more ideal.”⁹⁰ Hence, Daniel presents Paul as being both soldier and enemy in how he held onto American beliefs so strongly that he used them to critique America.

In summary, Daniel argues that Rousseau’s civil religion creates a false dilemma between soldier and enemy. That false dilemma spurs from the understanding that citizens must believe in the civil religion as a whole in order to be seen as a soldier. Daniel believes that this dilemma is false in practice though, because States do not classify citizens as being fully one or the other unless a citizen has severe mental limitations. Daniel also argues that the dilemma is false because people will have qualities of both soldier and enemy. All around, Daniel poses a unique

⁸⁸ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: A Novel*, 35.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

critique against Rousseau's civil religion in that it creates a false dilemma between soldier and enemy.

Evaluating Daniel's Critique

Although Daniel is a fictional character, scholars could cite similar critiques against Rousseau. We must evaluate Daniel's critiques as a result. I will not address Daniel's critique concerning potential abuses because there is already a wide array of information within the philosophical literature.⁹¹ Instead, I will analyze Daniel's critique that Rousseau's civil religion leads to a false dilemma between civil religious soldier and enemy. In short, Daniel's stance posits a more accurate and pluralistic view of people, but it would be impossible to implement on a legal or practical level.

Assumptions

Daniel's interpretation of the dilemma between soldier and enemy is rooted in several assumptions. Because of the fictional nature of the critique, discussing assumptions embedded in the argument must be approached with caution: Daniel has no assumptions since he is a character, and he is not positing a formal argument. These precautions mean that I will only address assumptions that directly affect the validity of Daniel's claim and must be shared by scholars who posit this critique against Rousseau. With these precautions, there lies three main assumptions: the government's intentional and malicious use of its citizens, the fact that people can have conflicting ideologies, and that civil religion specifically creates the dilemma.

The first assumption within Daniel's critique is that the government maliciously uses its citizens, whether as soldier or enemy, to fulfill a governmental agenda. This assumption most

⁹¹ Fourny, "Rousseau's Civil Religion Reconsidered."

clearly comes out as Daniel cites the government as using citizens as both enemies and soldiers.⁹² He writes,

EVERY MAN IS THE ENEMY OF HIS OWN COUNTRY. Every country is the enemy of its own citizens... In war the soldier's destruction is accomplished by his own Commanders. It is the government which places a rifle in his hands, puts him up on the front, and tells him his mission is to survive. All citizens are soldiers. All Governments stand ready to commit their citizens to death in the interest of their government.⁹³

This passage explains how all citizens are soldiers of the State and that the State sentences their soldiers to death; the State intentionally and maliciously uses citizens for its own purposes. This malicious look at the government allows Daniel to conclude that citizens are both enemies and soldiers of the State. If proven that the State does not use its citizens for its own agenda, then Daniel's argument would lose some traction because then the State would not wield citizens as soldiers and enemies. Thus, Daniel assumes that the State intentionally uses citizens as soldiers and enemies.

This assumption holds some grounding, but Daniel perhaps over approximates the extent of the State's use of its citizens. The government obviously uses citizens to fulfill its own purposes, i.e., the military. The extent of how the State uses citizens can be up for debate, though. For example, Daniel implies his parents as being martyrs and that the State used them to further their own capitalistic agenda. Some citizens, however, would argue that they needed to be executed for the protection of the State. Daniel even explains that some people believed that the Isaacsons had fair charges and trials. He writes, "I have before me on this table six books written about my parents' trial. Two support the verdict and the sentence, two support the verdict but not the sentence, which they find harsh, and two deny the justice either of the sentence or the

⁹² Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel*, 72-3.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 73.

verdict.”⁹⁴ Henceforth, Daniel’s assumption may be partially true in that the State does use its citizens at times, but some people would argue that Daniel exaggerates the State’s usage of its citizens.

The second assumption that Daniel makes is that people can have both soldier-like and enemy-like, or conflicting ideologies. This assumption clearly comes out when discussing his father Paul. Paul both owns his own business and protests American capitalism. Daniel’s argument would fall apart if this assumption was proven false. If people could not have conflicting beliefs, they could only be classified as soldier or enemy, and there would be no issue to posit on Rousseau’s civil religion.⁹⁵ This second assumption is crucial to Daniel’s critique.

Luckily for Daniel’s sake, most scholars would agree that this assumption is correct. Many scholars cite the importance of intersectionality. One such thinker is French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1917).⁹⁶ Although he does not use the phrase “intersectionality,” Durkheim demonstrates the importance of a pluralistic or intersectional view of human nature. He writes, “...both society as a whole and each particular social grouping determine the ideal that education realizes ... without a certain diversity all cooperation would be impossible; education ensures that persistence of this necessary diversity by being itself diversified in specialized.”⁹⁷ Modern psychologists also affirm contradictory beliefs in humans.⁹⁸ Daniel’s

⁹⁴ Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel: The Novel*, 227.

⁹⁵ Of course, a citizen’s title of enemy or soldier could change if the State’s standards change.

⁹⁶ Durkheim is another key thinker on the topic of civil religion. Durkheim’s civil religion differs greatly from Rousseau. (See Ruth A. Wallace, "Emile Durkheim and the Civil Religion Concept." *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 18, No. 3. (1977). 287-90.)

⁹⁷ Emile Durkheim, *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972. 203.

⁹⁸ Art Markman. “How Your Brain Makes You Hold Contradictory Beliefs.” *Fast Company*, January 24, 2017. <https://www.fastcompany.com/3067169/how-your-brain-makes-you-hold-contradictory-beliefs>.

second assumption seems accurate.

The third assumption within Daniel's critique is that civil religion creates the dilemma. In other words, the dilemma stems from Rousseau's conception and not from another source. This assumption can be seen specifically in the government's use of Rousseau's punishment of execution. The government feels that it must execute Paul and Rochelle for their enemy-behavior. If proven false, Daniel's entire critique would fall apart since Rousseau's civil religion could not be cited for causing the dilemma.

This assumption is difficult to prove correct or incorrect because of the interconnectedness of American civil religion and American culture; the influence of civil religion can be difficult to separate from other similar influences. It seems fair to assume that civil religion has some effect on the language used to describe soldiers and enemies. The extent to which civil religion creates the dilemma could be up for debate, though.

Strengths

The primary strength of Daniel's argument lies in its pluralistic framework, as discussed with the second assumption. Many thinkers cite Rousseau's civil religion as leading to totalitarian control despite his intentions.⁹⁹ Daniel's understanding of the false dilemma allows for people to be more intersectional and accounts for human psychology. This pluralism can be seen in how Daniel views people as being able to have ideologies of both soldier and enemy. By blurring the stark line between enemy and soldier, citizens have the opportunity to be a part of an enemy-soldier spectrum as opposed to being forced in one camp over the other. This pluralistic view is more accurate to how people behave, think, and identify.

⁹⁹ Fourny, "Rousseau's Civil Religion Reconsidered."

Limitations

The main limitation of Daniel's critique is that it is meaningless in practice and implementation. A pluralistic understanding of the soldier-enemy spectrum allows for people to be theoretically both enemy and soldier, but this dual-identity is meaningless in practice. It is meaningless because people could not be prosecuted for enemy-behavior even in the case that the citizen broke the law. To put it differently, rejecting the enemy-soldier dichotomy only works on citizens who do not break laws. Citizens must be one or the other in order to be prosecuted. This fact makes Daniel's criticism impossible to implement on the legal level.

Assume, for instance, a terrorist murders several government officials. The terrorist claims upon arrest that he assassinated the officials because of financial injustice within the governmental system; he wanted to kill the people who denied equal opportunity to certain demographics. Following Daniel's logic, this person acted as a soldier since he was motivated by the soldier-ideal that America is the land of equal opportunity. What should be done about this terrorist now that he is both soldier and enemy for the State?

This example serves to show the difficulty in erasing the line between soldier and enemy. Daniel's critique holds true in theory, but it falls short in practical implementation. Without the ability to be implemented on a policy scale, the critique has no lasting impact on American society and government.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *The Book of Daniel* demonstrates how Rousseau's civil religion is present in American society, is masked by a transcendent universal interpretation, and creates a false dilemma between civil religious soldier and enemy. Daniel's implicit critique of this false

dilemma accurately charges Rousseau's civil religion as lacking an intersectional understanding. On the other hand, implementing Daniel's view would be impossible on a governmental or legal scale due to its ambiguous definitions.

Despite the critique's ambiguity and unclear definitions, the critique itself is one that ought to be considered carefully. The current state of the nation includes much animosity and discord. Further separation between people is not what is needed for our society. If Rousseau's civil religion creates a false dilemma between civil religious enemy and soldier and thus pits citizen against citizen or citizen against nation, then the conception ought to be altered. At the very least, the conception must be acknowledged for its faults.

Given Daniel's pessimistic view of American civil religion, one question resides: should civil religion remain? Sociologists prove that civil religion will remain whether it's wanted or not. With civil religion's inevitableness in mind, the final question changes from *should* it remain to *how* should it remain. How can civil religion remain without creating injustices and furthering the divide within the country?

In "Civil Religion and National Identity," Andrew Manis proposes a Holy-Eightfold Path to American civil religion as a way to guide people on how to more morally utilize civil religion. Of the eight steps, "Right Identity" and "Right Seriousness" offer the most relevant recommendations for a more moral use of civil religion. Right Identity holds that we must become more welcoming of people as plurality increases.¹⁰⁰ As the world becomes more globalized, America must accept the realities of other philosophies and civil religions. In addition, Right Seriousness argues that we must handle civil religion with utmost seriousness

¹⁰⁰ Andrew M. Manis. "Civil Religion and National Identity." *The Columbia Guide to Religion in American History*. Edited by Paul Harvey *et al.*, Columbia University Press, 2012. 97-99.

since it can determine the status of a person's life.¹⁰¹ Manis ends his piece, "[Civil religion] can be a matter of life and death."¹⁰² If Daniel's portrayal of America is correct, American civil religion truly is a matter of life and death and, thus, must be treated with the utmost care and concern.

¹⁰¹ Manis, "Civil Religion and National Identity," 102.

¹⁰² Ibid.

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