are suddenly a lot of women with mustaches?) And when those 43 percent of sexually indifferent women get a libido boost, husbands will stop fleeing intimacy or watching sports all weekend, and those "little things" of shared domestic life will no longer grate. Trust between the sexes will finally prevail. Men and women will discover that they're really more alike than different. Or that they're more different than alike, but that's OK—*vive la différénce!* And when everyone's more maritally fulfilled, opposition to gay marriage will evaporate too. After all, shouldn't everyone share the joy?

That old relationship snafu, lack of self-knowledge, will be a thing of the past as well. A saturation of talk-show therapeutics and self-help bestsellers finally will have solved that little problem. Your own motives will no longer be a mystery to you! Goodbye to "acting out" (though it was fun while it lasted, if less so for those on the receiving end). Other people will be transparent, too, because we will all be so much more psychologically *astute*. You will know absolutely where the other person stands. The mystery will be gone—but so will the terrifying uncertainty of romance.

So that's one possible future for love: Between Big Pharma and pop therapeutics, we can finally overcome the human condition. It was always so annoying, wasn't it? On the other hand, we might find ourselves muddling along much as we do at the moment: inelegantly. Unions will be formed, and dumb luck will have a lot to do with the outcome. And when unions fail . . . it will still always be the other person's fault.

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Will Religion Still Seem an Illusion?

By WILFRED M. MCCLAY

A century ago, western intellectuals were sure they knew the eventual fate of religion. "The more the fruits of knowledge become accessible to men," Sigmund Freud averred in his confidently titled book *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), "the more widespread is the decline of religious belief." Religion was a psychological disorder, a "neurotic relic," a collective fantasy built upon unfulfillable infantile desires. Its presence should not be regarded as a lasting state. Instead, religion should be seen as an evolutionary way station, a condition that was, as Freud further elaborated it in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), "parallel to the neurosis which the civilized individual must pass through on his way from childhood to maturity." Its days were numbered.

Today, such words look rather different. It is not so much that Freud has been discredited. It is, rather, that the secularist vision he so compellingly presented now appears to be just another mythos, another master narrative, another hubristic projection of human desire and ignorance into our vast, mysterious universe. Call it the mood of the postmodern, if you like. But what once seemed the ultimate in master narratives, the prospect of triumphant secular rationality endorsed by Freud, now seems a far more limited mythos than the ones it sought to replace. Its appeal is limited to a very small and demographically shrinking group, the university-bred elites of Western Europe and the United States. More importantly, it is a mythos that cannot provide the overarching meaning without which human existence becomes empty and directionless. Science is a magnificent human achievement. But it cannot tell us how to live, or what we should live for. The need for that kind of meaning is, for us humans, as deep and relentless as the need for food or water. It cannot be denied for long.

As we begin the 21st century, the secularism whose triumph once seemed as inevitable as the arrival of spring now seems a fading flower, while religion, in both traditional and novel forms, is in renewed bloom, and even making a play for full-scale reentry into public life. There is much more to this story than the worldwide resurgence of Islam. Writers such as Philip Jenkins of Pennsylvania State University, author of *The Next Christendom: The Rise of Global Christianity* (2002), have detailed the explosive growth of Christianity in the non-Western world. Many observers have even argued that the United States is experiencing a religious "awakening" today.

The story is equally about secularism's lost élan. Even in such bastions of public secularism as France and Turkey, the airtight proscription of religious expression in public life is being reconsidered, while the more permeable American model is being looked at afresh. And who holds the moral high ground in China, the brutal

secularist government or the scandalously persecuted Christians? For better or worse, the older dream of a fully privatized religious faith and a fully secularized public realm seems to be losing its hold.

Some will find this development refreshing, some frightening. Most will see a very mixed bag. But one should not underestimate its complexity. The fact that a strongly religious American president has committed the United States to the building of a largely secular state in the Middle East as a bulwark against religious terrorism, and is doing so over the objections of largely secular elites in Europe and America, only begins to hint at the intricacy of the matter. Like it or not, religion will remain a major player in shaping world events, and those who want to will it away are indulging in illusions of their own. John Lennon's song "Imagine" will not be a reliable guide to the 21st century. That illusion has no future. The sooner we realize it, the better.

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Will English Become the Universal Language?

By BARBARA WALLRAFF

SOME AMERICANS HOPE THAT 30 YEARS FROM NOW English will be the universal language. It won't. True, the United States is today a net exporter of English, and nearly all countries whose most common first language is something else are net importers. People in those countries value English because it is the language of innovation and prosperity and globalism and pop culture.

If we first-language English speakers lose our reputation for being forward-looking, obviously that will be bad news in its own right. But a corollary is that English will lose its competitive edge. Look what's happened to Russian. Now that schoolchildren in the former Soviet republics are no longer required to learn it, they don't bother. They're learning English instead. Why? Because English is the language of innovation, etc.

True, too, even if people don't admire us, they might value English if it were a global lingua franca. But the varieties of English in use are diverging. After the United States and the United Kingdom, the country with the third-largest number of English speakers is Nigeria—assuming you count Nigerian pidgin as English, as most but not all linguists do. (Sorry, Canada and Australia—your populations just aren't large enough to put you ahead.) The country with the fourth-largest number of English speakers is thought to be India. Hardly anyone in either Nigeria or India, however, speaks English as a first language. In those countries, English is typically shot through with words and sentence patterns imported from local languages.

Not only that, but the world may soon have little use for a lingua franca. Software developers and linguists are inventing gizmos that will let people who lack a full command of English write it fluently. Others are at work on technologies that will turn writing into speech, and vice versa. Once solutions to those problems are found, we'll be within easy reach of getting instantaneous translations out of machines. At that point, who will need to learn English—or any second language?

Note that there's no hope whatsoever that English will become a universal first language. About three times as many people are native Chinese speakers as are native English speakers. The number of people who speak Hindi-Urdu, Spanish, or Arabic at home is in the same ballpark as the number of native English speakers. Those populations of native speakers of other languages are all growing faster than the population of native English speakers. Much the same is true within the United States. According to the 2000 census, about 18 percent of Americans speak languages other than English at home, and 4,361,638 households contain no one over the age of 14 who speaks only English or speaks it "very well."

The diversity of languages that immigrants bring us would be good news if the immigrants and their children would not only learn English (as nearly all of them do within a generation or two) but also retain their first languages. Among people involved in the world beyond their own communities, what's really on its way to being universal is the ability to speak more than one language. Of course, we should resist any erosion of the cultural factors that help keep English strong. But instead of hoping that English will remain in demand no matter what, we'd do better to welcome the