secularism

definition of secularism, and not some spurious "dechristianization" of Western demo-
cracy which amounts to "believers' exemption from certain civil laws" and the "proposed admission of Muslim schools into the state-
subsidized voluntary-aided sector in Britain".

The subtext running beneath Keane's analysis of the proposed culls for "secularism" is, I suggest, very much bound up with issues of power and amour propre in the modern world as mediated by culture and religion. It is perhaps inevitable that in a modern world the question of sincerity, or insecurity, as tolerance is of an essential strength and self-confidence. Keane refers to the tolerance of the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire towards religious minorities, without recogniz-
ing that for many centuries the Turks rivallled Europe as a great power both militarily and cul-

trarily; indeed, until the end of the seventeenth century, Europe was almost constantly in fear of being overrun by her powerful neighbour. The Turks had no such reciprocal fear, Christian or "secular" intolerance towards Islam, and Turkish tolerance or indifference towards Christianity, become more comprehensible in the light of this historical background. Of course, the deep-seated modern world is very different; militant Islamic fundamentalism has an irreparable relation to the perceived threat of Western military, political, economic and cul-

tral hegemony over the Islamic world, and is relatively new by the latter's view. That this sort of hegemony was largely gained, as John Keane rightly points out, by means of the cul-
tural repression and economic exploitation of the non-Muslim Europeans (and therefore non-Christian) peoples was not a modern development. Given the present geopolitical balance of power, the Islamic world's intolerance towards the concept of lib-
cratic-democratic secularism, if not to be excused on these grounds, is perhaps only to be expected.

MARTIN WATTS
10 Cassandra Court, 36 Station Parade,
London NW2.

which explains how decisions can be actions themselves. Then (b) it tries to explain the role of free decisions in free agency in a way that distinguishes modern world from the traditional one. It seems to provide a new theory of the relation between the rationality of deciding to do A and the rationality of doing A - an account that pre-

erves intuitive connections between the two, while working with consistent with the idea that decisions are actions. Timothy O'Connor only reports - fairly sketchily - some of what I say in relation to (b). He ignores my discussion of (a) and (c) entirely. He reproduces only the book's repetition of its central themes tedium. Given his review's blank omission of most of the book's central themes, and the consequent misrepresentation of the book as a rather thin contribution to the metaphysics of free will, I don't regret not to have been tempted to write a review.

THOMAS PINK
Department of Philosophy, King's College

More joys of Pi
Sir, - The English cryptographer John Walls discovered a remarkable equation", Alexander Masters writes in his review of The Joy of Pi by David Blatner (December 12):

\[
\pi = 2 \times 2 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 8 \times 9 \times 10 \times 10 \times \ldots \\
2 \times 3 \times 5 \times 5 \times 7 \times 7 \times 9 \times 9 \times 11 \times 11 \times \ldots 
\]

Remarkable indeed, since a moment's thought reveals it cannot possibly be correct. n/2 is greater than one. However, n/2 is less than one, as are 3/4, 6/7, etc. and since the product of pos-
tive numbers less than one is also less than one, there is no contradiction. A few moments with the sort of spreadsheet program provided on most desktop computers shows, for fairly obvi-
ous reasons, that the series doesn't even con-
 verge - as more terms are added so the series con-
 verges to a right-hand side asymptotically be-
coming zero. The correct formula, which I hesitate to let anywhere near your type-
setters and proof-readers, is:

\[
\pi = \frac{2 \times 4 \times 6 \times 8 \times 10 \times 12 \times \ldots}{3 \times 5 \times 7 \times 9 \times 11 \times 13 \times \ldots} 
\]

Here alternate values are greater and less than one (2/3 and 4/5 and 6/7 and 8/9, etc), and the series appears to be tending to the limit of less than one. Convergence is, however, very slow, requiring thirty-five terms to be stable to one decimal place, nearly 1,000 to be stable to two, about 4,000 to be stable to three, and over 40,000 to be stable to four. This would be a useful technique, however beautiful. Working scientists are used to scientific bowers being common-
place in any quality newspaper or non-scientific weekly, despite problems such as this one being attributable to the author of the essay for mathematics requiring no more than addition, multiplication and divi-
sion. Perhaps it is not surprising that the Sokal hoax was so readily perpetrated.

CHRIS McMANUS
Department of Psychology, University College
London, Gower Street, London WC1.

Elegy for William Peter
Sir, - Brian Vickers reports (Letters, January 2) that Donald Foster, in his Elegy by W. S., does not "have anything new to say" in his "Fames Memoriali". However, Foster does mention this poem, and suggests that one of the commend-
atory verses attaches itself to the volume in which it appears, and is by Thomas Petre, who was William Sackville's chaplain. This would seem to be useful evidence for Professor Vickers, who wishes to forward the claims of Ford as the author of the Elegy for Peter.

One of the chief problems in identifying Ford with the author is that William Peter is that Ford's initials are not W.S., the initials of the author given quite clearly on the title-page. If Foster's account of the printing is correct, the elegy was privately printed by George Eld, and appeared under the name of John Ford. In this case, Thomas Thorpe acted more as broker or literary agent than as publisher. One would think that Thorpe would insist that Eld print the correct ini-
tials on the title-page, especially if the author was funding the bill. There is, as far as I know, no evidence that the title-page was cancelled or that the initials were corrected by pen.

Katherine Duncan-Jones identifies William Sackville as the author of Ford's A Masque (Shakespeare Studies, XXV). She claims to have got this idea while looking through the "Bodleian Library's pre-1920 catalogue on CD-ROM". She does not seem to realize that Foster himself lists Sackville as an appendix of authors whose credentials seem too weak for extended consid-
eration. Apparently, on this point, Foster and Vickers agree. To conclude, I would like to praise Harry Hill's dramatic reading of this elegy, a recording that changed my impression of the poem's quality. Unfortunately, this impression may tell us more about the actor than the poem.

W. L. GODDSHALL
Department of English, University of Cincinnati,
Cincinnati, Ohio 45229.