

# Religion as a system of knowledge

Religion is a very widespread area in the world. If you ask what religion is, you must not necessarily not get the same answer in India, Germany, China, South America or Sweden. Because of this, religion also becomes a very hard subject to evaluate as one.

In this essay we have wanted to index religion into 4 major areas, namely:

- 1 personal God, monotheism.
- 1 impersonal God or force.
- Many Gods, polytheism.
- No God/s, atheism.

However, as a result of insufficient knowledge, we have been forced to choose two of these areas, monotheism and force. We are going to use Christianity and New Age as examples of these two areas. To give a perspective we compare with science, and when our knowledge covers, also other religions, such as Hinduism.

Why do religions exist? What function do they fulfill? These are some questions that we are going to try to give some kind of answer to during this essay.

First, what is the aim or point with religion?

If you look at the question from a Social Anthropological way, religion is meant to give safety and explanation to the world's, and life's mysteries. This explanation covers most religions on this earth, but however, the goal with the religion differs from religion to religion.

In Christianity the goal is to rejoin with the God who has created the earth.

New Age says that after death, the soul will reincarnate into another creature, not necessarily on this earth. An interesting parallel here is with Hinduism, which also believes in reincarnation. In New Age one sees the reincarnation as a reward rather than a painful punishment as the Hinduism does.

Science means that there is a perfectly logical and rational explanation to the rising of universe, earth, and man. Many scientists believe in some kind of natural haphazard selection, which has resulted in mankind arising.

All religions have a clear teaching on life, humans, God, and the rising of the universe. (Note that some sects try to hide their teaching from those who join, however, these are often very small and can actually be neglected). In most religions God is good, and man is a product of him. However, mankind is easily influenced by the world. Divergences exist.

What kind of knowledge are the different religions based on? And what kind of knowledge is used in the life of a Christian, New Age-er, etc?

A general statement is that religion is meta-physical, and we agree that, at least all religions we know of, are in one way or another, meta-physical, however, it's wrong to cut it off there and say that religion is only based on meta-physics.

Christianity is based rationally on the Bible. The Bible, however, is classified as meta-physical Christianity condemn value judgment in one's religious life, and to say that the Bible is based on value judgment is false as well. The Bible is written in three different languages, over a time-period of 1000 years. It has 40 different writers, who all come from different social backgrounds and with occupations from kings to fishermen. Therefore one cannot say that Christianity is founded on value judgment.

New Age, however, is building on personal experience, and value judgment. You should experience as much as possible, and adapt all things that feel right.

For comparison, science is building its knowledge on rational statements that can be expressed empirically. Notice that most things that religion explains meta-physically, science doesn't explain at all.

In some religions, knowledge is created. New Age, as an example, is based on values, and new knowledge is created daily, and it's personal. However, if no one follows an idea, then it will die out on its own.

The Bible tells about something called prophecies. That is when God speaks through a person to tell something that is going to happen, as a warning or a tip. In this way one could say that new knowledge is created. However, prophecies must correspond to the Bible. If it doesn't it must be neglected.

In science new knowledge is created through testing, and performing experiments. Everything must be proved empirically.

How do the religions justify their beliefs? Or do they just say, we are right believe it or not?

Well, Christianity is to the greatest part justified on trust, but also on prophecies actually happening. 700 BC a prophet named Ezekiel proclaimed that Jerusalem were going to burn if the people didn't better. 586 BC, it burnt down to the ground.

New Age is justified very personal. If someone doesn't agree to a part of New Age, he can justify his beliefs by just saying "I don't belong to that part of New Age." New Age in itself is very hard to justify, but every aspect of it is justified in its own way.

Does religion have any relation to any other topics? Well there are a lot of relations to a lot of topics.

Ethics for example is a great part of many religions. One of the main ideas of many religions is how one is supposed to live. And in religions where it might not be a main idea, it plays a great part anyway.

Natural Science tries, like religion, to explain the nature and its origin, but in different ways.

War is politics. During history many wars have started due to religious matters. The Old Testament, as the Koran tells about many wars in the name of the Lord. Religion has also been used to cover another intention with war. The war between "Protestants" and "Catholics" in Northern Ireland is by many people caught to be a religious war. However, both Protestants and Catholics have their belief in the Bible, and the New Testament says that you should live in peace and not fight.

Many political parties have religious ties as well.

History is very connected with religion. Many historical events are due to religion, and are told of in history books.

What about human sciences? Well, even if many human sciences have been developed autonomously, they are frequently used to study man and religion. E.g. Psychology, and Social Anthropology.

Arts are frequently used in religion as well. We can see lots of paintings in cathedrals, mosques, Hindu temples, etc. The Buddha figure is a creation of art as well.

So, why does religion exist?

Does it have any status in modern society, full with information technology, machines, at all?

Well, many people will probably answer no on the last question. Religion is redundant.

However, we mean otherwise. We mean that there exists a spiritual need.

If you look at the people, that lives on this earth today. Some people are seekers; they keep an open mind to religion, and believe that there might be something out there.

The rest of the people all depend on religion. They believe in something, either it's a God, a force, Mother Nature, or if you believe in a political ideology or science so hard that it becomes a religion.

In China and the Soviet Union, communism has tried to "kill" religion, as it beliefs it being a drug for the people. They failed. Finally the only way they could take the people's eyes off religion was to create a new one, where the state was the "God", and people should praise it. The only way they could kill religion was to create one.

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