

Non-violence essay

Nutrition



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Non-violence is the ideal that all religions hold dear.

A goal that we all understand and aim for. The manner in which the religions advocate themselves may vary, but the paths converge at this point. In this essay we will not only study the philosophy of non-violence among the eastern religions, but also divine the differences between the Taoist and Buddhist non-violence philosophies. Finally, we will analyze how sacred activities conceive non-violence while profane activities propagate them, through Huston Smith's writings. Smith fears that science, being profane in nature, while banqueting us with technological gains, is starving our souls by eclipsing the Transcendent. Defiant in the face of such nihilism, Smith has for decades communicated that this is not the way things are – life is not pointless, meaningless, purposeless.

He has cultivated “mystical empiricism” by compiling encounters with the Divine that saints, sages, and seers in every era have reported, a collection of sacred activities that makes a strong case for religion being the fundamental humanizing force in history. (The Way Things Are: Conversations with Huston Smith on the Spiritual Life, Phil Cousineau – editor, Huston Smith – author, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 2003.) There are four problem areas in human life that have to be dealt with.

These are violence, wealth, the spoken word, and sex. In lower forms of life these problem areas are monitored quite adequately by instinct.

For us, this is where religion comes in to help without which these problems can get out of hand. (p.

206) A fascinating feature of East Asia is the way it configures its religions as partners rather than rivals. This way there would be no call for violence. It regards them as strands of a single rope, so to speak. Traditionally, all Chinese were Confucian in their ethics. Taoist priests would be summoned when people fell ill, and Buddhist priests presided over funerals.

(p. 78). Taoism's greatest input was its concept of wu wei (nonaction) that succeeds because it generates minimum friction. (p.

79). While Buddhism is a total civilization, one that blueprints an entire way of life. (p. 132). Using chi (spiritual energy) to designate the Tao as it courses through human beings, philosophical Taoism aims at efficient, effective deployment of chi primarily by spending in the mode of wu wei. Energizing Taoism, a term covering the Taoism's that work with nutrition, yogic exercises, and meditation, seeks for its part to increase the supply of chi, while religious Taoism aspires to vicarious chi, a chi whose power can be made available to others.

(p. 87) Buddhism is the oldest institution surviving on our planet, twenty-five hundred years and still intact with just the – Four Noble Truths – the basic teachings of the Buddha, still making the impact. It is one of the three great missionary religions, in the sense of seeing itself as universalistic in its relevance to humankind. (p.

64). Original Buddhism was founded on the tripod of monarchy, monks, and the laity. Each of these had obligations to the other, and also was entitled to benefits from the others. Southern Buddhism has adhered to that ideal. This makes the monks more important, for they are one of the three legs on which society rests. (p. 132).

Buddhism also has the distinction of not having been in war for the creed, when compared to the other religions. (130) East Asians weren't strong on metaphysics or psychology. (p. 132). Just an predominance toward non-violence and an esoteric belief in the absolute.

Three poisons are identified – hatred, greed, delusion and religion helps to keep all three at bay. All the eastern religions insist that first of all, one has to be compassionate and generous and therefore non-violence is the commandment that is understood. (p. 68). The society as a whole will never be remade to rival paradise.

If one becomes more abstract, life is like a tapestry that we view from the wrong side. We see all the strands and knots, and it makes no sense from the back. But there is a different view of the whole thing to which we are assured some day we will be privy. In the meanwhile, there are all these knots we have to deal with existentially; the path has been charted – compassion and justice – imbued by vision.

(p. 73). In most of the eastern religions the art of non-violence is taught quite early. The Hindu's had a particular guru-shishya (teacher-student) tradition, which basically, is a special case of having a role

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model – someone you look up to and try to imitate. “ Children cannot grow up the right way, if they are not surrounded by people who have mastered life’s basics and can show them the way.” (p. 75).

The Shinto tradition, the Japanese miracle, has an affinity with nature and its simplicity is very compelling.

(p. 88). This philosophy is grounded by its interaction with nature and in keeping the sacred rites simple and accessible. Both the Hindus and Buddhists say that something gets accomplished in this same world in the new bodies into which they reincarnate. (p. 28). Karma, as they call it, is where you pay for violence and other sins during the reincarnation.

People are advised to resist the urge toward violence so that they have a better karmic balance the next time round. The primary work of religion occurs in the depths of the human heart: that’s where the switches of aspiration and hope are flipped. But it’s impossible to look into someone else’s heart, much less photograph what’s there. (p. 162).

At the same time, they nurture the transcendent urge that has compassion as its wake. (p. 201).

Smith says that the great religions of the world unanimously affirm Transcendence as the goal of the human quest. It is a journey that begins in ordinary knowledge, but when it is seriously pursued it crests in “ an intuitive awareness of things, a discernment of the way things are.” (p. 15). Even if we consider the drawbacks that exist today, religion has an idealism that is unquenchable, as is their hope which <https://assignbuster.com/non-violence-essay/>

in the long run promotes non-violence as opposed to actions supported by scientism which brings forth violence. (p.

16) Sacred rituals in all the religions are meant to bring people together to the source of power. The basic principles of the religion are stressed which helps center people. Each religion has its own optimum time to say the prayers. In Islam the prescribed times for prayer – on awakening, at noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and on retiring – frame the day nicely. Five times a day, distractions are suspended, and one's attention is drawn to the infinite. The rituals of yoga, meditation and chanting of the mantra, practiced by the Hindus help a person get in touch with their higher consciousness, help concentrate on what is really important and promote calm disposition. As do the breathing techniques and meditation forms advocated by Buddhism and Taoism. All religions come with a set of sacred rituals which helps the followers on to the right path.

In a materialistic and pluralistic world driven with sacred and profane passions, religion grounds us to the basic frame work of living. “ My persuasion is that what really breeds violence is political differences. But because religion serves as the soul of community, it gets drawn into the fracas and turns up the heat. But that's not the way it works. That's a confusion of cause and effect.” (p.

93). Smith has chronicled the progressive encroachment of what he has called “ modernity, ” a mind-set framed by the Newtonian worldview, which virtually reduces reality to that which is perceivable.

Smith has upheld with exceptional rigor the minority view that the methodology of science, which relies upon prediction and control, is both misleading and destructive when applied to metaphysics. “The hunt for knowledge, analytic and objective to its core, has violence built into it. For to know analytically is to reduce the object of knowledge, however vital, however complex, to precisely this: an object.” Science, operating out of its place, he asserts, turns demonic, like an angel that has fallen.

“It presumes to control too much and to disclose more of reality than, in fact, it does. To approach existence as if it were purely or even primarily physical and mathematical is to falsify it. The approach could end in smashing our planet, for if a hammer is the only tool one learns to use, it is tempting to regard everything as if it were a nail.” (p.

164). Science has become for many the “sacral mode of knowing,” which it is for the material world, but not the immaterial one. It is a mistake, to “think we can prove spiritual truths by science, because science can’t speak to the things that concern religion.” The beauty of religion, for Smith, is the way it provides human beings with the means of relating to an invisible realm that is both powerful and good. His call for a reconciliation between the two modes of knowing is reminiscent of author Karen Armstrong’s description of our natural capacity for “binocular vision,” the ability to see and know both logically and intuitively. (p. 102)ReferencesSmith Houston, The Way Things

Are: Conversations with Huston Smith on the Spiritual Life, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 2003.