

The philosophy of
god and religion
theology religion
essay



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Beings and Human Beings are born in nature. Religion and caste are the creations of men. The need of the millennium is human integration across religions, races and countries by the pursuit of right knowledge about Man, Nature and Society.

Religion is the derivative of ancient myths and beliefs passed on from one generation to the other(another) thereby being elucidated into faiths, rituals and traditions.”

Around 2000-2200 million people believe in Christianity, making it by far the single largest religion in the world. Around 1300-1650 million people believe in Islam, making it the second most followed religion in the world. Around 828-1000 million people follow Hinduism. Around 1000 million people do not have any religion or notion of ‘ God’, also referred to as atheists. 400 million people follow Buddhism.

Irrespective of what these people follow or what ‘ notion they hold of ‘ God’. Religion is something, which was created for the betterment of human society as a whole. But In the 21st century religion has more or less become an instrument of war creating unrest amongst countries and people. Many of the major problems in the present millennia can be attributed to these religious conflicts.

These conflicts between major world religions can become a detrimental recipe for disaster wherein they can threaten the very existence of the dominant species on this planet i. e. Homo sapiens sapiens .

The reason why I lay emphasis on the genus and sub-genus is that, across the population people may differ on the basis of colour, caste, race, height, weight, gender and religion but what unites them is the sense of belonging to one species i. e. Homo sapiens.

My father, a philosopher cum visionary would always say that:

“ Beings and Human Beings are born out of the same bowl called nature. Religion and caste are the creations of man. The need of the millennium is to bridge this void and bring about human integration across religions, races and countries by the pursuit of true knowledge about Man, Nature and Society.”

Conflict Resolution-

“ Conflict Resolution” is the need of the hour and should therefore be given extensive thought and time, following which it should be implemented at a Micro as well as a Macro Level. Envisioning and bringing forth a society whereby individuals and communities work and make decisions for the greater good of mankind on the basis of facts rather than on myths and beliefs. “ Conflict Resolution” amongst world religions in its literary sense cannot be achieved, nonetheless a difference in perception exists about the notion of ‘ God/Gods’ amongst the believers. Human beings should rise against these odds towards greater enlightenment forging ahead a new era of peace and progress.

On the flip side, one should also be aware of the origin and fate of the vast expanse known as the universe comprising of millions of galaxies, stars,

planets and what is the energy which is keeping all of this intact and that too in a predetermined and fixed path.

One should also be aware of the conscious and subconscious state of mind through which we possess this knowledge about each and everything.

If the above mentioned points were made clear, all the mere believers in this world will become true rationalists.

If one Global Religion were to be followed, it would be on the basis of scientific thinking rather than on blind beliefs. All actions and texts of this religion would be based upon the scientific knowledge and literature available at the time. The theory would be self-evolving in nature to the advancements in science and technology.

People should come to an understanding that all Human Beings are created as equals. Nature does not discriminate while nurturing. So as human beings we cannot be discriminative towards the way we look, approach and act towards others belonging to different castes, religions, races, colours etc.

I strongly believe “ Knowledge is a driving force.” Knowledge possessed by a certain individual is detrimental towards the way he/she acts in a certain manner. Therefore it becomes imperative to inculcate the right knowledge and values. Being ignorant of the world around is far better than being misinformed. ‘ Terrorism’ is also the outgrowth of this misinformation and the misconceptions about ‘ God’ and his preaching. This is where we need to play a role whereby we expel all the misinformation and bring about a sense of belonging.

Human Beings are said to be the building blocks of societies. The kind of knowledge an individual possesses has a direct impact on the way he/she acts or behaves. The way one behaves thereby has an impact on the society as a whole. Knowledge and Behaviour play in tandem and therefore it becomes imperative “ to give the right Knowledge and eliminate wrong Knowledge.”

To do this, there are certain prerequisites,

Firstly, one should know how to judge between the right knowledge and the wrong knowledge. To do this one should be aware of philosophy and its constituents especially the branch of philosophy which deals with epistemology, logic and origin of the Universe and its existence.

But in this world, which has so far existed, every great society has had its fair share of myths ranging from the creation of the world to how it will eventually end. Tales of wonder and imagination abound wherein each myth is filled with magic, mystery, heroism, treachery, courage and faith. These myths are so widely accepted that they have even managed to permeate in the 21st century. Hence it is our responsibility to differentiate between a myth and a tenet.

Somehow or the other the terms like ‘ god’ and ‘ religion’ are attributed to philosophy ‘ philosophy’; Hence we will now discuss regarding the philosophy and what is the origin and fate of the god and religion.

Different questions in philosophy which made a strong emphasis for the existence of God and religion:-

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We each exist but for a very short time.

The actions that we do during the tenure of our life and the fruits which we bear from them is considered as life.

My father used to tell me , ‘ Life is real, simple and short’.

Humans, being a curious species explore and question everything, we develop theories, we seek answers , we think, we justify things, we have the ability to communicate all these things which in turn makes us the most dominant species on planet earth.

After coming through different perceptions of the universe from the earlier times to today, we might have a multitude of questions -:

How can we understand the world in which we find ourselves?

How does universe behave?

What is the nature of reality?

Where did all this come from?

Did the universe need a creator?

What are the different ways of obtaining knowledge ?

How many types of matter exist in the universe?

What is philosophy?

What are the qualities of the different things in the universe?

What is reality?

What is the ultimate goal of human beings?

What are beliefs?

What are atoms?

How do we know things?

What is a cause?

How to explain the properties of a thing?

What is space and time?

What is justice?

What is the truth?

What is goodness?

How language came in to existence and what is language?

What are the reasons behind different things?

What is beauty and art?

What is perception, inference, verbal testimony?

What is mind?

What is the origin of religion?

Who invented the first god?

And countless others.....

Traditionally these are the prime questions of 'Philosophy'. Many Indian and Western schools of philosophy which gave appropriate answers to many of the above questions and near appropriate answers to some of the questions since ancient times, due to lack of availability of means and scope, like instruments and science and technology, but these days however, these questions are answered by the other schools like different branches of Physical sciences and chemical sciences. But during the earlier times these questions were answered by various religions in many different ways.

Opinions of Some major Philosophers and Scientists –

Western Schools of Philosophy:-

When it comes to religion, there are six major figures who have done extensive research on Religions and gods, Namely

1. Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) – He is often called the father of the comparative religion, Friedrich Max Müller was the son of a German Romantic poet. He studied in Leipzig and in Paris, where he began his first major work, a monumental edition of the Sanskrit text of the Rig Veda, published in four volumes between 1849 and 1862. He settled in England in 1846 and spent most of the remainder of his life in Oxford, becoming Professor of Comparative Philology in 1868. A prolific writer, his later books included Comparative Mythology (1856), Introduction to the Science of Religion (1873) India, What can it teach us? (1883), and many other works, including <https://assignbuster.com/the-philosophy-of-god-and-religion-theology-religion-essay/>

three series of Gifford Lectures and two volumes of personal reminiscences. He was also responsible for editing the fifty-volume series of Sacred Books of the East-still an invaluable source for the study of religion.

Max Muller brought the religions of the world for the first time to the notice of the English-speaking public, interpreted to the West the ancient and modern religions of India, in a vital, if sometimes idiosyncratic, way. His theories that religion arose through the personification of natural phenomena have, on the other hand, been wholly superseded.

2. Edward Burnett Taylor (1832-1917)

In its early years, the study of comparative religion was much concerned with the origin and evolution of religion as a universal human phenomenon. E. B. Tylor, who in 1896 became Britain's first professor of anthropology, in the 1860s coined the term 'animism' to describe what he believed to be the earliest stage in this evolutionary process, a simple 'belief in spiritual beings'. Tylor studied in Mexico; this visit resulted in his first book, *Anahuac* (1861). He subsequently published *Researches into the Early History of Mankind* (1865), and his most important work, *Primitive Culture* (1871), in which the 'animism' theory is clearly stated. Briefly, it is that early man's experiences of dream and trance that led him first to a belief in a separate 'soul' (anima) in himself, and later to postulate the existence of surviving souls (ghosts), and of many such 'souls' in animals, plants, the atmosphere, etc. Out of this belief in souls or spirits, there eventually developed belief in gods.

As an evolutionary theory, this is of very little value, but it does represent accurately the way in which primal (and other) peoples (people) look on the unseen world. Tylor's example, provided for the first time a way of understanding religion at a basic level, served to point anthropology along a path which it still to some extent follows.

WILLIAM JAMES (1842-1910)

William James, the brother of the celebrated American novelist Henry James, was chiefly responsible, in the years around the turn of the century, for popularizing the new subject of the psychology of religion. His book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) is a classic, and widely read even today. Trained in medicine, he taught both physiology and psychology at Harvard as early as the 1870s, and in 1890 published a celebrated textbook, *The Principles of Psychology*. Most of his other books, including *The Will to Believe* (1896), *Pragmatism* (1907) and *Human Immortality* (1908), were originally courses of lectures.

In his *Varieties* he drew many valuable distinctions between types of religious experience, the best known being that between the optimistic 'religion of healthy mindedness' (typified by Christian Science) and the pessimistic 'religion of the sick soul' (traditional Calvinism). He also had much to say on mysticism, and discussed 'altered states of consciousness' many years before the subject became fashionable. He came from a Swedenborgian background, and his own religion was an indistinct theism, far removed from orthodox Christianity. Although he is still worth reading; his approach was too individualistic, and he had little to say about the corporate

aspects of religion. His methods, too, were seriously called in question by the depth psychologists (Freud, Jung and their followers), and are hardly applicable today.

WILLIAM ROBERTSON SMITH (1846-1894)

Robertson Smith, best known for his magisterial book - Lectures on the Religion of the Semites (1889), was a minister of the Free Church of Scotland. In 1870 he became Professor of Old Testament Studies at the Free Church College in Aberdeen. In the early 1880s he was dismissed from his chair for 'unscriptural' teaching, and in 1883 was elected Professor of Arabic at Cambridge. A liberal evangelical, he was responsible for bringing together traditional philological study of the Bible and the new insights of anthropology.

He first visited North Africa in 1879, and was impressed by the existence of 'totemism' among the Sinai Bedouin: this resulted in his first major work, Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia (1885). In his later Lectures, he concentrated on the concept of sacrifice, which he saw less as a legal transaction than as a practical means of establishing communion with deity. He also recognized that in religion, customs and rituals are often more significant than systems of belief, and that it is vitally important that the student be an accurate and sympathetic observer of the practical side of religion. His influence was widespread: he inspired J. G. Frazer to study 'totemism', and was a forerunner of the sociological study of religion - for which reason he, almost alone among his contemporaries, is still respected

among sociologists and anthropologists. Despite his brush with ecclesiastical authority, he remained warmly evangelical in his personal beliefs.

NATHAN SODERBLOM (1866-1931)

The link between comparative religion and Christian theology was firmly established in the early part of the twentieth century by a group of scholars of whom Nathan Soderblom was perhaps the most outstanding.

Born the son of a Lutheran country minister in Sweden, from 1894 to 1901 he was Swedish legation pastor in Paris; in 1901 he became Professor of Comparative Religion in Uppsala in 1914, a post he occupied until his death in 1931. His scholarly work spanned many fields, among them are Iranian studies, Luther studies, mysticism, and General comparative religion.

Though few of his many books were translated into English, his Gifford Lectures *The Living God* (published posthumously in 1931) were widely read in those days. He endeavored to locate historical Protestantism within Christianity, and Christianity within the religions of the world. He drew valuable distinctions between mystical and 'revealed' forms of religion, and later between two forms of mysticism, 'mysticism of personality (Paul, Luther) and 'mysticism of the infinite' (Indian religion). As well as this academic work, Soderblom made an invaluable contribution to twentieth-century Christianity as one of the fathers of the 'ecumenical movement'.

RUDOLF OTTO (1869-1937)

Educated at Erlangen and Göttingen, most of Otto's career was spent in teaching posts at Göttingen, Breslau and Marburg. After early work in Luther
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studies, he turned his attention to the philosophy of religion, and after 1911 to the philosophy of religion, and after 1911 to the study of Indian religions. His best known and most important work, *The Idea of the Holy*, first appeared in German in 1917, and in English in 1923. In it, he attempted to show that religion begins with 'the sense of the numinous', that is, of a mysteriously 'other' deity both fearsome and fascinating (numen= deity). This book became a religious classic.

His later Indian studies included *Mysticism East and West* (1932) and *India's Religion of Grace* (1930), and a critical edition of the *Bhagavad Gita* (*The Original Gita*, 1939). In 1921, convinced of the importance of living, inter-religious dialogue, he inaugurated the Inter-Religious League, which was not a success. In his last years his internationalism caused him to fall foul of the Nazi government in Germany, and he died in 1937.

Otto's most lasting contribution to the study of religion lay in his insistence on the importance of immediate, non-rational experience to any estimate of the nature of religion. Although *The Idea of the Holy* was not always well understood, it spoke directly to the mind of the twentieth century, and helped lay the foundations for much later work in the area of personal religious experience and of mysticism.

Williams James(1842-1910), William Robertson Smith(1846-94), Nathan Soderblom(1866-1931, Rudolf Otto)1869-1937), When ever we speak regarding religions these people should be remebered by the world. Thier works are really needed for the mankind. They have done a major research in the field of god and religion.

At the same time some scientists cum philosophers have also given their valuable opinions on God and religion. Now we shall discuss some of the valuable opinions and some misconceptions.

Many people didn't develop theories on practical basis (Quantitative Predictions) . Aristotle and others, made the principles that appealed to him intellectually, most people suppressed the facts that they found unappealing. No matter how severely their theories deviated from reality ; they used to alter and never removed the concept.

For example -The Greek Christian successors rejected the idea that the universe is governed by indifferent natural law.

Some religious dogmas like Epicurus (341Bc-270Bc) opposed atomism on the grounds that it is “ Better to follow the myths about God than to become a slave to the destiny of natural Philosophers”.

Aristotle too rejected the concept of atoms because he could not accept that human beings were composed of soulless inanimate objects. But the Indian Philosophers considered Atoms as a kind of matter and there are many concepts and theories developed by ' Kannada' on atoms ; but even the concept of atoms has been curbed in India by Adi Shankara. It is not the context of this essay to discuss more on atoms.(remove the last sentence)

Most of the theories developed in the Great India with clear cut concepts of Atoms, Body, Matter, Space (were destroyed with time and circumstances)what not everything, were just went into wrong hands, either.

They were changed and some still lay. Unapproachable to the humans as they were destroyed. (remove everything after circumstances)

The Christian philosopher Thomas Aquinas said, " It is clear that inanimate bodies reach their end not by chance but by intention"-There is therefore an intelligent personal being whom everything in nature is ordered to its end" and that intelligent person is nothing but god.

Even as late as in the 16th century the great German astronomer Johannes Kepler believed that planets had sense perception and consciously followed laws of movement that were grasped by their ' mind'.

Indeed in 1277 Bishop of Temple of Paris, acting on the instructions of Pope John XXI published a list of 219 errors or heresies that were to be condemned. Among the heresies was the idea that nature follows laws. Because this conflicts with the gods omnipotence, unfortunately Pope John was killed by the effect of the law of gravity a few months later when the roof of his place fell on him due to the gravitations pull of earth.

According to Descartes- ' God could at will alter the truth or falsity of ethical proposition or mathematical theorems but not nature. He believed that God ordained the laws of nature but had no choice in the laws; rather he picked them because the laws we experience are the only possible laws. Moreover Descartes felt - once God set the world going , he left it entirely alone.

If nature is governed by laws , then we all have a set of questions like :-

1-From where did these laws were originate?

2-How can you understand these laws?

3-Do these laws need a creator?

4-Are these laws final ?

5-Can there be exceptions to these laws?

These important questions have been addressed by different philosophers , scientists and visionaries in many different ways.

The answer to the first question has been given by the great scientists like Kepler, Galileo, Descartes and Newton. It is that the laws were Designed by God. However, this is no more than a definition of god as the embodiment of the laws of nature ; unless one endows God with some other attributes such as being the god of the old testament .

If we consider god as the answer to the first question then the real crunch comes in the fifth question-Are there any exceptions to the laws?

Opinions about the answer to the fifth question is quite interesting .

Aristotle, the great Greek philosopher clearly mentioned that there can be no exepctions to the laws. But according to the Bibilical view God not only created the laws but also has the power to make changes to those laws , which contradicts Aristotle. In opposition to the views of Decscartes, according to Bible -by praying one can heal the terminally ill, an enormous cyclone can be just stopped by his signs, premature ends to droughts.

In opposition to the views of Decscartes; God has the ability to do any thing in the universe. Even Newton believed in miracles of a sort, he thought that god must be resetting the orbits to avoid the falling of planets into Sun!

But there was a rationalist during the time of Napoleon. A scientific law is not a scientific law if it holds when some super natural being decides not to intervene. Here Napoleon asked Laplace- How god will fit in to this picture?

Laplace replied that- " I have not needed that hypothesis". In the same way we also do not need the hypothesis of god and religion; but today religion is made a major point in the hypothesis of the human beings.

We can clearly sense that Laplace is a kind of rationalist., even Albert Einstein is a rationalist, he said that:

" I believe in Spinoza's god, who reveals himself in the lawful harmony of the world, not in a god who concerns himself with the fate and doings of mankind."

Indian schools of philosophy:-

India sub -continent is having a catholic theories on the God and religion and Above mentioned concepts.(remove this sentence)

Different schools of Indian Philsophy deal the above questions in many different ways. The six orthodox schools of the Indian Philsophy are :- 1. Nyaya, 2. Vaishesika, 3. Purva mimamasa, 4. Uttaara mimasa or vedanta5. Sankahya,&6. Yoga were altered in many ways in Ancient India. We do not yet know whether these schools are orthodox or rational; However the

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concepts which they taught are undoubtedly rational but the crunch comes when these laws are altered in order to protect the religion and god.

By the advent of new laws from Kannada, Gautama and many other Philosophers and with the renewed belief in the laws, there were attempts to reconcile these laws along with God.

The path of the true philosophy was bifurcated by many religious dogmas in Ancient India and even in the western world. The countries which were the bearer's of the torch of discovery, invention, & innovation had become calm. The religious dogmas diverted the path of true philosophy and used it for their own selfishness.

The quest for knowledge in Ancient India was put off by the religious dogmas from there on great text's literature which are essential for mankind for it's progress and development were interpreted in many Unscientific ways.

The Great theories like Nyaya-Vaishesika, Astronomy, Mathematics & Philosophy, which were developed in India in a course of time were held in very high esteem. If it were allowed to follow it's original course unimpeded by the religious dogmas then there might have been a lot of development

In India all the theories are somehow or the other attributed to the god's and vedas.

But by the advent of the Buddhists, Charvaka, Jain the heterodox schools of the India Philosophy; there was a big change in the human society but it was again curbed by some religious dogmas in ancient India. Most of the people

believe that Nyaya and vaishesika are also the heterodox schools of the indian philosophy.

All the orthodox schools of the Indian Philosophy believe in god and Veda's, while Heterodox schools have a rational tendency towards the things.

Hence it is clear that each philosopher, scientist, revolutionary, and guru has had a strong craving to change the society of the time to a better one. They have always had a deep insight on the days to come but due to lack of scope many misconceptions have crept into their theories.

Now we shall discuss the role of god and religion

Role Of God and religion-

Day by day we are getting knowledge and we are getting enriched because of it . In the same way each and every text may it be religious or of any other subject should stick totally to recent discoveries and inventions.

We know that we get knowledge through our sensory organs. The nerves impulses are carried from each sensory organ to the brain and it is getting processed in our brains. The brain interprets the input from our sensory organs and by that we develop our concepts and develop our own theories (religions). But there may be difference in which one could perceive the same physical situation, with each employing different fundamental elements and concepts.

If all the religions which are developed are totally dependent on the truths , we are free to follow whichever religion that is most convenient. But this is

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not happening-different religions teach different things and are based on different concepts. In this sequence of the history of mankind we had found better and better theories(religions). There were gods of love and war, Sun, Earth, Sky, Oceans, Rivers, Rain, Thunder Storms even Earth Quakes and Volcanoes. Ignorance of the people in Ancient time made them to invent gods to seek answers as told before. As we are a curious species, wherever the answer was not found or finding an answer was difficult a new god was invented and it became as if god came into every aspect of Human life.

When the gods were pleased, mankind was treated to good weather, peace and freedom from natural disaster and disease and on the flip side when they are displeased there came drought, war, pestilence and epidemics since the relativity between cause and effect in nature was not in their perception(is beyond their perceptions). The gods became superior and our species was self dragged into the mercy of gods. Hence gods became inscrutable but with Kannada, Gautama and by the thoughts of Buddha about 2600 years ago. The idea arose that nature follows a set of laws and laws and epistemology and the theories of atomicity had come into practice. They developed their system of thought, matter, ways we acquire knowledge, atoms etc.

Here it is clear that from the beginning of the mankind till now there have been a number of definitions of god and so many concepts and beliefs were have been developed on god by different scientists philosophers and priests. Some people of the Ancient times didn't develop scientific inquiry in their theories and hence invented false gods and wrong concept based religions.

Hence in the 21st century, we the Universal citizens who belong to the same species Homo Sapiens must enact by assuring the dignity of the Individual and Unity and Integrity of the Universe.

Unless and until an(replace an with a)universal Religion and God are established, there cannot be peace in the this universe. I would like to mention one more thing - The need of this millennium is human integration with right knowledge about man nature and society.

As said by my father All the people on this planet earth should have a Healthy , Happy , Purposeful long life. This is only possible through synchronisation of global religions.