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The Effect Of Science On Religion

Over the last two centuries, religious association has experienced a steep decline, this decline started with the Enlightenment and has been accelerated by the growth of science and technology. Religion has been around for a long time and still continues to exist. It has undergone tremendous change in the last few centuries. What used to govern and be at the center of people's lives is now viewed as an irrational, arbitrary thought, not for all, but for a growing majority of agnostics and atheists.

Ever since humanity has been around, so has belief. Humanity's beliefs centred around omnipotent entities that rule over the stars and all men. Unlike today, religion did not start out as a belief that an individual chose, but rather as the indisputable truth of the universe; these mystical beliefs were viewed as common knowledge. For example, people didn't really dispute whether sacrifices would have certain outcomes, but it was a certainty. Some examples are the Incans and Mayans. This cultural phenomenon would later evolve into more complex elements, which would take people's experiences and views on the world and combine them into a system, a system that anyone could use to come to an understanding of what their purpose was, or a system that people could use for control. People could use this common ground of understanding for anything they wanted, such as: leaders could control the masses, families could be brought together, violence could be justified, paranormal encounters had meaning, evil acts could be brought to justice, laws could be established, and the unexplainable could be explained. As the years pass, nations form, with official religions

and laws and rules pertaining to the designated religion. Nations were conquered, and the conquerors would establish their religion there. For a long time, religion as an institution was the salvation and oppression for many; in some places today, it still oppresses many. The religious institutions were the law, and failure to comply with them would have dire consequences. During the 17th and 18th centuries, people's perceptions of the world underwent a major change. An uprising of reason and the scientific method, as well as an almost complete abolishment of monarchies and the church as authorities. This period was known as the Enlightenment, and one of its trademarks is the re-examination of religious thinking, specifically the grand decline of the role it played in people's lives. This period could be considered the death of a strong, unified belief in religion. The final nail in the coffin for this *unified religion* would be '*On the Origin of Species*' by Charles Darwin. Although Darwin's theories were about science, '*On the Origin of Species*' left a lasting impression on the cultural and theological landscape. A byproduct of this period and '*On the Origin of Species*' would be the increase of what George H. Smith calls 'explicit atheism'. Contrary to 'implicit atheism', 'explicit atheism' is a conscious rejection of theism.

As stated before, the Enlightenment brought many changes to the world and people's perceptions of it. Two of the many key figures during this time are John Locke and David Hume. John Locke, although a religious man, advocated for freedom of religion in "*An Essay Concerning Toleration*." He argued that the state's purpose was not to punish people for their beliefs but to preserve the peaceful livelihood of people, and that the wellbeing of people's souls was of not one else's concern but their own. You cannot compel someone to religion by threats or violence, so it is useless to do so. Also, doing such things creates far more disorder than is necessary, so it is better to allow diversity of religion.

It is not committed unto him, I say, by

God; because it appears not that God has ever given any such authority to one man over another as to compel anyone to his religion. Nor can any such power be vested in the magistrate by the consent of the people, because no man can so far abandon the care of his own salvation as blindly to leave to the choice of any other, whether prince or subject, to prescribe to him what faith or worship he shall embrace. For no man can, if he would, conform his faith to the dictates of another. (Locke, 7)

Locke's ideas greatly influenced America's founding fathers, and they wrote the Constitution based on his ideas. Hume regarded that believing in God was illogical or irrational, and many people started to adopt this mindset. Religion in people's eyes started to die and be replaced by an empiricist mindset, much like Hume. Since religion toleration was now widely accepted, there was a shift in mindset towards science, specifically, science vs. religion. This perspective on science and religion still endures to this day, as there are more debates and arguments on both sides and radicalists on both sides. Yet out of this, a new perspective has also taken shape, namely that science and mathematics are the language of God. At first thought, this might seem a bit contradictory. How can something logical and rational coincide with the metaphysical, which is regarded as irrational, spiritual, and mystical? Well, some people—believers, non-believers, diests, agnostics, and the like—have observed that science seems to explain everything in the universe, all its weird physics, and what used to be unexplainable divine phenomena. For example, concepts such as the big bang are very well respected by scientists and religious people due to the theory's basis in science and its religious significance, not to mention that this theory was first proposed by Georges Lemaître, a Roman Catholic priest and physicist.

Religion used to be a formidable characteristic of the human experience, a unique trait that no other creature has, a wide-scale belief that essentially everyone had in common; however, that trait is now waning. According to Ryan T. Cragun (a professor of sociology), belief in religion has been declining all around the globe in countries that are modernising and have freedom of religion. The decline in religious belief has been declining drastically since the mid-90s; an exception was the United States. In the United States before the 2000's, belief in religion was increasing quite a bit. However, Cragun claims that this is due to the Cold War, nationalism was linked to religiosity, and it was a war in the United States against the 'godless communists' of the Soviet Union. A similar occurrence is seen in certain countries, where not believing in the state religion means that you can be put to death. This is known as 'artificial religiosity.' Although the world in general has grown more tolerant of different religious beliefs, in some places, extreme violence is justified by religion, for example, the Israel-Hamas war. It's important to note, though, that this war is about more than just religion. Today, religion is used much like before; it's used to justify violence, inspire people to do good, bring families together, or separate them. For example, a group of people may be inspired by Jesus Christ to take care of the poor and feed the people in need, while another group decides to kick out a family member due to not believing, the former being more common in Christians and the latter in Jehovah's witnesses. It's also important to mention that a lot of religious people do not take elements of their religion so literally anymore but more metaphorically. Secularism has increased a lot more in general, but so has the diversity of religions, which is accelerated due to people being able to access information instantly.

Religion has undergone many changes in the last few centuries. Starting with the enlightenment, the age of light, the age of science. As modernization and technology continue to rapidly advance, so does the decline of religion. There is a growing hostility towards

religiosity, a hatred towards what used to be the epitome of culture. However, out of the dying body of religion, new views on religion emerge. Some people see science as the language of God; others see religion as cultural cancer; and some see it as the dying light of salvation. Most likely, religiosity will continue to die out; however, religiosity completely dying out will most likely never happen.

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