

# Religion

I was once in a room where we everyone was asked whether or not they supported a burkha ban. Most people in said room objected to this. Everyone was then asked whether there should be a burkha ban in passport photos. Most people did not object to this. Many people have a similar position on religion – they accept it and often embrace it, but believe that certain restrictions should be placed upon its role in public life.

Do people have a choice in their religion?

| YES (conditions necessary for this to happen) | NO  |
|---|---|
| Democracy                                     | The state may be a religious one  |
| Secular upbringing                            | The religion itself may try to stop you from leaving "You leave religion" => "you go to hell" |
| Lack of external pressure                     | External pressures from community/family exist  |

## Universal truth

Religions generally claim a monopoly on truth – i.e. that they are the correct religion and other religions are wrong.

## Pascal's wager

$\$ \$ \Pr(\text{God exists}) = \text{small } \$ \$$  - BUT the punishment for not believing in God (hell) is really painful so it makes sense to pray as praying does not take much effort - BUT this may not work as believing only to escape hell invalidates the belief

# The harm principle

Governments can ban things if they cause lots of harm to many people.

Based on this a ban on some elements of religion can be justified.

## Is religion good?

| GOOD   | BAD   |
|--|---|
| Religion provides moral principles and a strong incentive to follow them       | Religions oppresses minority groups and women (e.g. LGBT people). |
| Religion builds a community – it often provides trust in business transactions | Religion stops scientific progress (e.g. Galileo, contraception)  |
| Religion is often important to people's culture                                | Religion is used to justify conflicts                             |
| Religion can provide a sense of national unity                                 |   |
| Religion provides people with a sense of purpose                               |   |

## Proselytising

Religious organisations generally try to recruit more people to their religion.

Often they do this by providing aid to those in need, but only to those of the same religion as them which encourages people to convert to their religion.