

Debating Religion

🕒 Created	@October 4, 2021 12:35 PM
👤 Created By	
🕒 Last Edited Time	@November 26, 2021 11:09 PM
🔗 Link	
👥 Participants	
▼ Type	

What is Religion?

Religion is a term of art like sport. Sporting involves badminton relatively non-violent vs thug boxing which quite violent. But still they come under the category of sport. The same is true with religion.

Diversity of religious faiths. Jainism v/s Aggressive Right Religion

- A lot of diversity. so always a religion.
- Huge diversity within each religion

Motions: Does belief in untrue things then is it good or bad? Scientific agenda is finding the most true things

Truth of religion

1. What does truth mean?
 - a. Correspondence reality of truth. SOMething is true if it corresponds to reality of physical world.
 - b. Belief based theory. Anything that you truly belief to be true is true. Ex: Your parents are not getting a divorce. Tomorrow you will be alive. Such things cannot be proved.
 - c. Pragmatist Theory of truth: Whatever is true is whatever is better to be true. Not publishing that muslims are genetically dumb. Don't publish it as truth even if it is true. Hence not true. Completely utilitarian

2. How religion justifies truth?

- a. Primary mechanism : Ever expanding tautology. Adam n Eve v/s science. God is smarter than we think. God created the big bang. Religious truth bucket is ever expanding. Whatever science discovers is made by God. Religion is flexible

3. Cognitive Dissonance

- a. Cognitive Dissonance means holding two contradictory beliefs at the same time. Ex: Support animal rights and still eat meat everyday.
- b. Religion is similar. Ex: Religious scientists believe in divine god, miracles etc. They are really good scientists as well. They have different personalities in church and labs. Both of them can exist because both aspose different truths. Because they apply to different spaces.

4. Compared to other beliefs

- a. What is diff bw religion and capitalism or nationalism: You can say three things
 - i. Where does the belief stem from? Communism or modern marx, source is Karl marx different from divine god. Nationalism is also tethered to human beings. they are humanly ordained they are easier to question. It is difficult to punish when you detract from national belief.
 - ii. Idea of falsifiability: There are facts which can update your belief. Ex america is best. If economy down you can lose your belief. You can also question methods. Ex other ways to make america great. Religion is one dimensional. Ex: 10 things to be a good muslim. Marx says there will be proliterate revolution in 100 years. It can be measured. Not true with religion.
 - iii. Codification of beliefs: There is a lot of things that can be reinterpreted. Many time verses could be reinterpreted to prove certain things like justification of violence during war or reasons for upliftment of women. However, there are certain things which cannot be reinterpreted by religion like treatment of homosexuals. One of the reasons why america has failed to change legally: Reverence for codified constitution. More codified harder to update.

These are the reasons why religion is different from other sources of belief

Last Comment: In north korea there is a religion why Kim Jong Un, is called President and not Chairman because he believes that his grandfather is still alive and will always be alive. These are also religious irrespective of what they are labelled as.

Is Religion a choice?

Restricting religious freedom. restricting the right to wear burka in public

Two strategies

- Wearing of this symbol causes harm. Intersection of religion and something terrible like FGM.
- Choice of religion: You chose to be a part of religion and should be respected in this way. THis is not true
 - Cost of community: You could not just leave religion by saying Im done. Best case dissapointment from family in worst criminal offence. It is difficult to leave. Unique cultural and economic advantages of living in a community. You forgo these benefits. On a superficial level it is a choice. The cons are heavy stacked.
 - Cost of Identity:
 - On a spiritual level you believe in hell. You are also giving up the benefit of heaven when you leave religion. It takes immense effort to leave religion, because you have to wrestle against these hard wired beliefs which are very closely linked to your self identity.
 - Apart from benefits and harms, religion has become a part of your life. There will be void left in your life when you stop religion. No confessions to priest, no social interactions. Both costs are most important in case of children. When you adopt a religion has a child, these are the problems when you have to get out of it.

To wash this,

- If you detract from nationalism there are still costs. The same identity costs also exists in nationalism. These costs also exists.

Does Religion change?

Pope's non-negative comments about LGBT. How religion becomes more progressivus?

1. Incentives for change

- Religious faiths wants to attract followers. True because
 - Because religion is puritanical ie value comes from converting other people
- You always want more followers. If you neighbour is going to hell, you want to help him. Like train crashing into his house.
- Economic and political reforms: More power. Even if not in governemnt, your power of protest increases.
- Legitimization tactic, to prove that your religion is universal.
- Curse of ham: people of certain descent have a curse of ham. Used to justify slavery of african people. Churches dropped that belief because of above 4 reasons.

2. Capacity for change

- Point to how much change has occured: It is true to say that christianity and islam have changed over the years, especially over last 3 centuries. How do they change?
 - Have a lot diversity? Ex: Protestant Reformation. Sin tax was not okay to him. More ideological reformation. Incentive to change.
- Christianity has several denominations and subdenominations. It is no longer a monolith. Sunni-Shiya splits. Futher sunni split has further wahabi interpretation or others are like deobandi interpretation of islam. Huge capacity of change due to fissures

- Gaps in the documents. There are always things that they could not have possibly covered. What is islam's attitude towards rugby etc. It is possible to change because it did not exist.
- Even if it is referred. Often, the meaning is vague. There is always a possibility of making a reasonable case as to why women should be employed in the workplace. Sermon on the mount. Islam attitude towards research is progressive
- Always a capacity to forget. Religion is based on collective memory and doctrine. Not many people have read the old and the new testament. Realistically people's collective memory describes religion. There is a chance of collective forgetting. Some verses are not a part of the collective memory.

Who changes the religion and what sort of change is made?

- There are always minorities within minorities. Like LGBTQ within Muslims. The problem occurs when reinterpretation is done by the majority groups. Likely males in positions of power, influential. These people will make changes only when they benefit themselves and not their communities. Only influential Pope can reinterpret the religion.
- Even if the religion can be reinterpreted, it can be done only by these people. The feminists etc movements might be seen as outsiders.

What sort of changes?

- Direction of changes: New atheism. Atheists have got to be anti-theists. Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens. Often when religion is pushed to far it can push back. Religion is delicate tight rope act, may lead to entrenching of beliefs.
- Magnitude of change

Is religion beneficial?

Debates are won or lost on the impacts of having or not having certain beliefs. 5 categories

Religious debate arguments have a risk of being washed away due to lack of exclusivity. It is hard to define religion.

Follow 1 golden rule: Religion is exclusively causing something

- Moral
 - Idea that religious faith has an impact on human behaviour.
 - Incentives for having or not having moral or immoral behaviour
 - Catholic church: Reason: probably access heaven or avoid hell
 - Doctors without borders: Reason: because it's the right thing to do. Inherently senseless.

both provide immense help but reasons are different. Ethical clash goes to non religious. Ethically being selfish leads to heaven and hence is wrong. Religious morality is tethered to morality.

But people would not participate in Doctor without borders, very few people. Religious morality is selfish but people have buy-in. People do good things, and hence consequentially better. One the results matter and intentions don't. Ex: If you by mistake help someone when you were trying to help yourself, the reason or intention you had is not important for the person who is being helped.

- Religious morals clash with the other moral duties that one might have
 - being within military. religion can be operated on a cognitive dissonance level with other things at as well. Perfectly possible to have scientific and unscientific attitudes at different times. Ex: When you sit in an airplane all you hope is that the pilot is skilled and not religious
 - The state should compel you not to make any choices that might restrict your agency in future. The state needs to compel people to get these necessary services done because it is only then that these people can

maximize their agency in the future. Agency can exist only if you are healthy and happy. Context of drugs: Why should you take away choice from people to access drugs?

- Idea of duties. Most religious are puritanical. If you genuinely think that someone will burn in hell, then you are morally obliged to help that person. Ex: Abortion.
- Political
 - Religions are very important support networks in the gaps left by the state. Muslim charities house and feed millions of kids in South East. Same with Catholic churches. Good think.

On flip side, these people are open to exploitation. You are now vulnerable. Then it becomes easy to tread on the path of religion. There is community that has saved your life in the absence of your state.
 - Massive State Complacency. When someone has to do it, state is made responsible. It is often that state won't do something rather than state cannot do something.
 - Religious charities aid the communities that are
 - a. Part of the community or
 - b. Could be part of a faith

Hence, they go to communities specifically with the intention of converting people

Impacts:

- Trauma of having to leave your community
- To leave your personal spiritual
- General exploitation

Crowd out secular charities:

- Religious right have an incentive to keep secular charities out
- Polio eradicated in 90s exist now in Pakistan
- Religious charities have strangled these secular charities like red cross.

- Even if religious charities provide more money than secular ones, these charities are dispersed in ways which are really unequal. Chances of a muslim charity giving money to lgbtq is null. Even if more money, less impact only bread winners get it. Minorities would suffer. Catholics will never give money to Protestants.
- Intermeshing bw religious elites and political elites
 - Russia is influenced by orthodox church or religious right in pakistan. States are not monoliths. Especially powerful in countries with huge sway.
 - Religion can have a deep and profound impact on political life. Because religious beliefs are given more credibility. Anything that a religious leader says is something that is more impactful than a political pundit. Making a decision on the basis of merits rather its totalitarian. In IR debates, most non secular countries religious right have a huge powerful impact
- Conservative force for change. Can religion lead to political change?
 - Liberation Theology: Radical left interpretation of catholic. Ex: where religion is trying to actively bring about a political change.
 - Religious precepts can be redefined.
 - Even if there is not a direct precept, pyschologically justified. Intuition is to believe that my god would not want me to be in such a miserable state. Incentive to bring about a change.
 - Protesting and changing the status quo has high cost. Even though religious institutions challenge in a narrow set of cases, where they do they are much more fearless. If its god's plan, then you don't think govt crackdown wont stop you.
 - Cost of dying is dilluted when religion is on your side.

Complecency:

- You think that suffering has a meaning. It brings about complecency
- Poor conditions are considered as a test. Being poor is considered as a virtue not an bug or error. Complecency is brought about.

- To break this clash, talk about how you don't have social, political or economic capital to tackle this problem or make it visible. So people are poor on both sides, at least you feel better on one side.
- Social
 - Think about minorities within minorities.
 - "Religion was never a freedom, because the choice of it was never a free choice" or "The increase in the freedom of religion is correlated with the decrease in the freedom of others." If you religious schools, they might be closed for women. More agency given to religious communities less power to minorities. Within every group there is a minority.
 - Narratives: Simulation v/s not simulation. The deeper debate is about whether your religion can intersect with the majority religion.
 - General Tolerance for freedom
 - Faiths are universal qualifiers
 - There are scriptural commonalities
 - Colonial Religions: How do religions intersect with the local communities which are in minority. Religion often serve as tools of international influence.
- Economic
 - Are religions are effective in the collective action problem
 - Religion solves the collective action problem because it bridges that lack of trust.
 - It instantly think of the other person as a fellow Christian, Hindu etc
 - It provides a concentration mechanism. All the money is deposited at the local church or mosque. Religion can also intersects with the collective action problem
- Religious

Other things can be washed away. This one is exclusive.

Religion does 2 things that is exclusive

- It gives meaning to experiences in a way that nothing else can in the physical world. Reasons that a loved one is in a better place now. The causal relationships are not easy to comprehend. These reasons are psychologically more consoling to us. Religion clearly wins where rational explanation can't. Whenever there are deep questions of meaning or meaninglessness, religion can step in and fill those shoes and give consolation and relief where other consolation systems cannot.
- It provides you a sense of never being alone. You can be in a terrible situation and still be cheerful because God is always there. In the best case it provides a lot of hope. But even in the worst case, you know that there is at least someone there.

These benefits are exclusive to religion.