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A Comparative Study of Religion: The Mother of All Subjects

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About Article

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ABSTRACT

Although it is frequently marginalised in contemporary academic discourse, religion is actually the origin of many fundamental topics that influence modern civilisation. This essay compares and contrasts various academic fields, such as philosophy, science, art, law, ethics, and education, in order to examine religion's function as the "mother of all subjects." The study, which draws from a variety of religious traditions and academic viewpoints, reframes religion as the foundation for intellectual inquiry rather than as a holdover from the past. It illustrates how religious thought gave rise to systemic frameworks of knowledge and continues to influence modern human understanding through a multidisciplinary approach.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Humans looked to religion for meaning long before formal academic disciplines emerged. Existence, cosmology, morality, and communal life were all explained by religious structures. The assertion that religion is the “mother of all subjects” is factual rather than merely rhetorical. Religious organisations have taught, preserved, and disseminated knowledge since the time of the ancient temple schools, mediaeval monasteries, and early Islamic madrasas. This article examines how religion shaped important academic fields and makes the case that, rather than being incompatible with contemporary education, religion created the framework for education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over time, scholarly opinions on how important religion is in forming academic fields have changed. According to Eliade (1959), religious consciousness serves as the cornerstone around which civilisations build their knowledge, rituals, and meaning. In a similar vein, Nasr (1968) highlighted that metaphysical principles were always a part of Islamic and Christian traditional sciences. According to Prothero (2010), religious literacy is essential for comprehending politics, history, and culture in modern scholarship.

Foucault (1970) traced the epistemological development from sacred to secular paradigms, offering a genealogical analysis of knowledge systems. His work shows how even secular knowledge inherits structural features from religious models, even though it is not explicitly theistic. Habermas (2006), on the other hand, argues that religion is an essential component of public discourse, especially in post-secular societies where moral reasoning necessitates foundations that go beyond instrumental rationality.

A thorough economic history connecting religious doctrines to the development of banking, credit, and commerce was presented by Nelson (1969). In his well-known connection between Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism, Weber (1930) persuasively argued that religious convictions have a lasting impact on economic conduct. Therefore, a substantial amount of writing indicates that religion not only precedes but also influences all contemporary fields.

2.1. The Primordial Nexus of Religion and Philosophy

Religious reflection is closely linked to the history of philosophy. Religious mythology served as the basis for metaphysical speculation in ancient civilisations like Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, China, and Greece.

Classical Indian philosophical systems like Vedanta, Samkhya, and Yoga were made possible by the Upanishads (c. 800–500 BCE), which explored existence, consciousness, and ultimate reality in the Indian subcontinent (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1957). Comparably, in ancient China, Confucianism and Daoism developed into complete philosophical systems that addressed cosmology, ethics, and governance in addition to being spiritual traditions (Ames & Hall, 2001).

Early Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras and Plato were greatly influenced by religious ideas in the West. Aristotle’s idea of the Unmoved Mover reflects theological conceptions of divinity, while Plato’s theory of forms reflects Pythagorean

mysticism (Kenny, 2005). Thus, philosophy developed from religion as a refinement of its metaphysical questions rather than as a rival to it.

2.2. Science and Religion: Unity before the Divide

In contrast to popular conflict narratives, religious motivations frequently influenced the early development of science. Scholars like Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham), Avicenna (Ibn Sina), and Al-Biruni pursued scientific research during the Islamic Golden Age (8th–14th centuries) specifically because they believed in God’s rational, ordered universe (Nasr, 2006).

Similar functions were performed by Christian monasticism in mediaeval Europe, where Benedictine monasteries copied and preserved ancient scientific literature. The foundation for empirical methods and natural philosophy was laid by the Scholastic movement, especially Thomas Aquinas’s work, which combined Christian theology and Aristotelian science (Grant, 2007).

One of the pioneers of modern physics, Isaac Newton, even though, his research was demonstrating the divine order of creation (Westfall, 1980). It was only during the Enlightenment that science and religion began to diverge, frequently for ideological rather than scientific reasons.

2.3. Law and Religion: The Underpinnings of Justice

Religious codes are the source of legal systems all over the world. Beginning with a divine invocation, the Code of Hammurabi (c. 1754 BCE) attributes justice to the will of the gods. Civil legislation in their respective societies was influenced by Islamic law (Shari’a), Christian canon law, and Jewish law (Halakha) (Berman, 1983).

Under the tenets of Hinduism, the Manusmriti established social and legal standards in India. Similarly, East Asian governance was shaped for centuries by Confucian legal philosophy (Ebrey, 1993).

Judeo-Christian moral presumptions are reflected in modern jurisprudence, particularly in Western contexts; concepts of justice, human dignity, and the sanctity of life have theological roots (Neuhaus, 1984). Therefore, religion established the moral compass for civil societies in addition to being the first legislator.

2.4. Ethics and Religion: The Moral Builder

Religious teachings gave rise to ethics as a formal discipline. Christian ethics placed a strong emphasis on humility, forgiveness, and love (agape), whereas Aristotelian ethics drew its concept of virtue from Greek religion.

A balance between reason and revelation was emphasised in Islamic ethical philosophy, as expressed by thinkers such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawayh (Hourani, 1985). Buddhist and Jain ethics, which are ingrained in their spiritual worldviews, placed a strong emphasis on compassion, detachment from desire, and nonviolence (ahimsa).

Religiously influenced value systems continue to serve as the foundation for moral discussions, whether they are about environmental responsibility, social justice, or bioethics. The moral universality and transcendence of ethical inquiry would be absent if religion did not play a fundamental role.



2.5. Religion and Art: Imagination-Sparking

The main inspiration for human artistic expression has been religion. Whether it is the Hindu temples of Khajuraho, the Islamic mosques of Andalusia, or the Gothic cathedrals of Europe, sacred architecture shows how aesthetic paradigms were shaped by religious vision.

Literature, art, sculpture, and music were all influenced by religious tales, symbols, and rituals. Religious sentiment raised art to the sublime, as seen in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, Rumi's mystical poetry, and Gregorian chant (Eliade, 1987).

Incorporating mythology, cosmology, and ritual performance, artistic traditions in Africa, the Americas, and Oceania are also profoundly spiritual (Beyer, 2001). Thus, religion created art rather than just influencing it.

2.6. Education and Religion: The earliest universities

Religious institutions are where formal education got its start. Ancient temple schools served as hubs for literary and theological education in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and India. Cathedral schools gave rise to universities in mediaeval Europe, including Oxford, Bologna, and Paris. The trivium and quadrivium, which comprised their core curriculum, were designed to prepare students for study of theology (Leff, 1992). Beginning in the tenth century, Islamic madrasas provided religious instruction in astronomy, law, medicine, and philosophy. Monks in Buddhist monasteries received instruction in debate, grammar, and logic.

Thus, the first and most persistent sponsor of organised education throughout history was religion.

2.7. Psychology and Religion: The Internal Terrain

Religious traditions provided deep insights into the nature of the human mind and behaviour long before clinical psychology and contemporary psychiatry were developed. In addition to being moral categories, ideas like sin, guilt, redemption, virtue, and liberation were also profoundly psychological. The search for inner peace, existential dread, trauma, and anxiety were all topics covered in religious texts and rituals.

Meditation and mindfulness techniques (such as Dhyana and Vipassana) have long been used in Buddhism and Hinduism as a means of self-realization and mental cleansing (Goleman, 2003). In support of his claim that the collective unconscious was organised around archetypes derived from religious imagery, Carl Jung, one of the founders of analytical psychology, regularly referenced religious myths and symbols (Jung, 1964). Christianity's Confession and Eucharist have psychological components, offering communal healing, catharsis, and reconciliation. Sufi spirituality and Islamic dhikr (remembrance) practices both provide frameworks for attaining emotional control and inner balance (Sells, 1996).

Religious knowledge is still incorporated into the psychological sciences, especially in the areas of spiritual counseling, trauma therapy, and positive psychology. Thus, religion has always served as a guide for mental health and still does.

2.8. Politics and Religion: The Sacred in the Civic

Throughout history, the relationship between religion and politics has been both positive and controversial. In ancient

societies, divine approval was nearly always required for political authority to be legitimate. Examples of how religious doctrine supported political power include the Caliphate in Islam, the divine kingship of Israel, the Mandate of Heaven in China, and the Pharaohs of Egypt.

The foundation for a Christian political theology that impacted Europe for more than a thousand years was established in the West by Augustine's City of God (5th century CE) (Markus, 1970). By combining politics, ethics, and theology, the Islamic concept of Ummah offered a vision of community governance founded on divine law.

Religious moral principles are still present in even secular democracies today; ideas like the social contract, justice, stewardship, and individual dignity have theological roots. Christian thought had a significant influence on the ideas of thinkers like John Locke, who developed liberal democratic theory (Locke, 1689/2002).

Even though it is a relatively new and Western concept, the modern separation of church and state has religious roots, especially Protestant ideas of individual liberty and conscience. Therefore, it is impossible to comprehend politics without considering its religious roots.

2.9. Religion and Economics: The Ethical Foundation of Trade

Religious paradigms have also influenced the evolution of economic systems. Religious organisations oversaw land, trade, and taxes in the ancient world. Temples served as centres of commerce in Mesopotamia and India, redistributing goods, collecting offerings, and extending credit (Snell, 1997).

Economic behaviour was influenced by religious ethics. Religion imposed moral restrictions on market activity, which are reflected in Christian teachings on charity, Islamic prohibitions on *riba* (usury), and Jewish Sabbath laws. The mediaeval Church opposed usury to preserve human dignity from exploitative practices, not because it was anti-economic (Nelson, 1969).

Max Weber (1930) argues that the Protestant Reformation sparked modern capitalism by attributing success, thrift, and hard work to divine favour. This argument, though contentious, emphasises the connection between religious beliefs and economic behaviour.

The moral principles that were first expressed by religious systems are still echoed in ethical finance, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable economics today.

2.10. Language and Religion: Living Tongues and Sacred Words

Religion has a significant influence on language as a cognitive tool and cultural medium. Sumerian hymns, Vedic chants, Hebrew psalms, and Egyptian funerary prayers are among the oldest religious writings. These writings influenced syntax, vocabulary, and narrative structures in addition to documenting beliefs.

Writing systems were frequently developed in response to religious needs. Religious contexts influenced the development of the Hebrew script, Arabic calligraphy, Sanskrit Devanagari, and even the Cyrillic alphabet, which was created for Slavic



liturgy. National languages and literacy were significantly impacted by the translation of sacred texts, including Luther's German Bible, the Vulgate, and the Septuagint (Noss & Grangaard, 2011).

Furthermore, religious traditions imbue language with moral and metaphysical meanings. The sacredness attached to language itself is emphasised by phrases like "the Word became flesh" and Om, which is considered the primordial sound in Hinduism. Therefore, religion expanded and sanctified language in addition to using it.

2.11. Reflections on Epistemology: Religion as Proto-Episteme

If we take a step back and look at the historical development of disciplines, we can see that religion was the proto-episteme, or the first framework that people used to organize their knowledge. The term "episteme" was coined by Michel Foucault (1970) to characterize the fundamental circumstances that influence the nature of knowledge in a particular era. That fundamental episteme was religious in ancient and mediaeval societies.

Religious anthropology characterized the human being, religious cosmologies framed the cosmos, and religious teleology directed history. Religion gave people direction a sense of who we are, where we are, and what we should become in addition to information.

Although it was beneficial in many ways, modernity's move away from religion and towards reason also led to division. Knowledge became instrumentalised, ethics became relativized, and disciplines became isolated in the absence of a unified metaphysical vision.

This break from religion, the mother that once held all intellectual endeavors in cohesive unity, may be a contributing factor in the postmodern crisis in the humanities, which is characterized by epistemic skepticism and a loss of meaning.

2.12. The Discipline Fragmentation Crisis

Hyper-specialization and fragmentation are hallmarks of the modern academic environment. Scholars are becoming more and more restricted to specific fields, frequently employing methods and vocabularies that are incomprehensible to those in related fields. Although it promotes depth, this atomization of knowledge has weakened holistic understanding.

The end effect is a paradox: despite having more data than ever before, humans find it difficult to interpret it. As famously posed by T.S. Eliot, "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the information that we lost? (Eliot, 1934).

In contrast, religion has traditionally served as a unifying factor. Its stories, beliefs, and customs linked law to ritual, cosmology to ethics, and individual significance to social order. It provided a comprehensive view of reality that is difficult for contemporary academia to imitate.

It is not necessary to subordinate all other disciplines to theology in order to return to such integrative thinking. Instead, it calls for the restoration of religion's holistic approach, which acknowledges the interconnectedness of all fields of knowledge within a larger context of ultimate meaning.

2.13. Religion's Place in Post-Secular Societies

Religion is making a comeback in the twenty-first century, but not in the sense of strict dogma, but rather as a force influencing politics, culture, identity, and even science. Once a strong supporter of secular rationalism, philosopher Jürgen Habermas (2006) now describes this period as a "post-secular age" in which religious reasoning needs to rejoin secular thought in public discourse.

The secular myth that modernity would cause religion to fade away has been shown to be untrue. Religion continues to be a potent source of individual and societal identity, from global Islam to evangelical Christianity, Hindu nationalism to Buddhist social activism. This return is reflected in the growing interest in religious pluralism, interfaith dialogue, and spiritual well-being in business and healthcare.

The academy cannot afford to ignore religion if it continues to have an impact on world events and human behavior. Rather, it needs to reclaim religion as a partner in creating well-rounded global citizens rather than as a competing epistemology.

2.14. Education-Related Pedagogical Implications

Today's educational institutions have the enormous task of developing not only highly qualified professionals but also morally upright, introspective, and globally minded people. It is essential to reintroduce religion into the curriculum as civilizational literacy rather than indoctrination.

Religious literacy is crucial for global competency, according to Prothero (2010). Pupils should comprehend how religious worldviews have influenced all aspects of knowledge in addition to the facts about religions. The erroneous division between the sacred and the secular can be broken down with the aid of interdisciplinary programs in theology, philosophy, ethics, and cultural studies. Furthermore, students in disciplines like law, business, medicine, and environmental studies can have their moral imaginations revitalized by religion-based ethics. Technocrats rather than intelligent stewards of society are the result of education that lacks spiritual or metaphysical contemplation.

2.15. Moving Towards an Integrated Knowledge Framework

It is not a romanticisation of the past to affirm religion as the mother of all subjects; rather, it is a vision of a future in which integration will triumph over fragmentation. Such a vision necessitates:

- Understanding that no one field or approach has a monopoly on truth is known as epistemic humility.
- Promoting communication between the humanities, sciences, technology, and theology is known as transdisciplinarity.
- Moral imagination: establishing principles in research and education that go beyond profit and utility.
- Adopting religious knowledge as a tool to address issues like conflict, inequality, and climate change is known as public spirituality.

According to this integrative framework, religion is the thread that ties the human search for understanding together. It is not just a matter of personal belief; rather, it is a link between the known and the unknown, the visible and the invisible.



2.16. Religion as a Spiritual and Intellectual Legacy

The premise of this article was straightforward: religion is the mother of all subjects. We have shown via philosophical, historical, and comparative analysis that this assertion is a scholarly reality rather than just a metaphor. Religion gave rise to our first ideas about the cosmos, influenced our moral standards, established our educational system, and influenced our creativity, language, and imagination.

Ignoring the fundamental role of religion is like cutting off our own intellectual roots. We reconnect rather than regress when we rediscover the maternal wisdom of religion. We rekindle the innate human desire to look for purpose, pose important queries, and focus our lives on what is lasting and ultimate.

The ancient yet timeless voice of religion calls us back to the center in an era of data without wisdom, efficiency without ethics, and connectivity without community. To the core of what it means to be human, not the core of doctrine. Religion is the midwife of civilization, not merely the mother of all subjects.

2.17. Synthesis in Comparison

Comparatively speaking, the evidence is unmistakable: religion sparked the growth of every significant area of human study. Its influence transcends doctrinal differences and crosses historical and geographic boundaries. The framework of contemporary disciplines still reflects the influence of their religious heritage, despite the fact that specialization and secularization have obscured these beginnings.

Religion is the matrix of reason, creativity, and progress, not the opposite of them. Intellectual honesty, not doctrinal agreement, is necessary to acknowledge this.

3. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative comparative approach is used in this study. A systematic review of primary and secondary literature was conducted in the fields of philosophy, science, economics, law, art, and pedagogy. Texts that show the formative influence of religion in each domain, either explicitly or implicitly, were the focus of the selection criteria.

Thematic relationships, historical continuities, and epistemological overlaps between religious frameworks and secular disciplines were traced using content analysis. Hermeneutical techniques based on philosophical and theological interpretation were also used to uncover hidden meanings in canonical religious texts, especially those pertaining to civic, ethical, and educational issues.

By combining textual exegesis with historical and conceptual mapping, this methodological triangulation enables a thorough and comprehensive investigation of religion's role across the academic spectrum.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Several important insights were uncovered by the comparative analysis:

i) Historical Genesis: Religious contexts gave rise to all of the major disciplines, including philosophy, science, medicine, law, economics, and the arts. For instance, early hospitals were continuations of religious charity, and Greek philosophy

developed from mythic-religious thought.

ii) Ethical Foundations: Religious traditions serve as the basis for ethical concepts that underpin fields such as law and medicine. For example, religious ideals of healing and compassion influenced the Hippocratic Oath.

iii) Epistemological Unity: Historically, religion provided a cohesive epistemology that combined ethics, meaning, and facts. This cohesiveness is lacking in contemporary disciplinary fragmentation, which causes cognitive dissonance.

iv) Contemporary Relevance: Religion resurfaces in post-secular contexts as a crucial source of moral reasoning, civic duty, and existential meaning rather than as dogma. It provides new insights to tackle issues in ethics, education, and the environment.

v) Pedagogical Implications: Students lose the comprehensive knowledge required for moral leadership and interdisciplinary integration when religion is ignored in the classroom.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Calling religion the mother of all subjects is a historical and philosophical fact, not just a metaphor. A fresh understanding of religion's fundamental role may provide not only perspective but also integration as humanity struggles with existential threats, moral dilemmas, and epistemic fragmentation. Religion must be re-examined by contemporary scholars as the source from which our most profound questions originated, rather than being written off as outdated.

This comparative study confirms that religion is the original matrix from which all other subjects sprang, not just one of many. No matter what field we study—philosophy, science, law, psychology, politics, economics, or the arts—we can always find its roots in religion.

Recognizing religion as the mother of all subjects does not advocate dogmatism; rather, it calls for greater integration. Religion must be re-engaged as a source of timeless wisdom and intellectual vitality rather than being dismissed as outdated by a mature academic worldview.

Religion provides a vision of synthesis in a world split by ideological conflicts and disciplinary silos. It serves as a reminder that the pursuit of knowledge is ultimately a search for meaning, and the sacred has always been the place where meaning is found at its deepest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Integrative Curriculum Design:* For the sake of civilizational literacy rather than proselytization, educational institutions ought to make religion a central part of the liberal arts, ethics, and global studies curricula.

- *Trans-disciplinary Dialogue:* Promote cooperative studies and instruction that bring ethicists, scientists, theologians, and artists into common intellectual arenas.

- *Public Discourse:* To strengthen democratic and moral reasoning, encourage responsible religious participation in public discussions of science, culture, and policy.

- *Global Competency:* Improve intercultural communication, religious literacy in international relations, and global development initiatives.

- *Additional Research:* Empirical studies should be conducted



to determine the effects of religiously informed pedagogy on civic engagement, academic achievement, and ethical behaviour.

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