

The Psychological Origins of Religion and Religion's Influence on Society

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ABSTRACT

Religion is undoubtedly an ambiguous yet powerful phenomenon when it comes to societal development, actions, and behavior. Understanding religion and its origins could provide insight into how civilization functions. This investigation aims to discover the psychological reasons behind the origins of religion and how religion has influenced society. It was concluded that religion utilizes fear to maintain social cooperation and evolved according to civilizations' growth, directly influences behavior positively, and could provide peace to the world. The origins of religion were found to be a cognitive by product; humans are cognitively wired to believe in religious themes, and as a state of mind expanded, religion evolved to be more complex.

Introduction

Incidents directly related to religious motivation have no rarity in this world. Abortion clinics swarmed with protesters because their faith prohibited the procedure, inter-religious conflicts breaking out, or dismissal and inferiority placed on individuals in the name of faith is not something uncommon to be displayed in news headlines. Lethal wars have been pointlessly fought over religion, most famously the Crusades and there is no doubt that religion is one of the most powerful motivators in the present day and history; however, why? How, in the first place, does such an ambiguous phenomenon come to be? Every ancient civilization possessed a higher being or beings to worship and pray to, but why? This investigation aims to explain how and why religion was conceived and to inform how religion influenced the masses. This investigation is significant because religion is, and will be, a monumental force and presence throughout civilization. Religion is vital in today's world and has actively influenced history on nearly every page. Discovering the origins of such an all-powerful and ancient institution could provide a deeper understanding of how it evolved and led society from its origins to the present day. In addition, analyzing how religion has fostered societies at such a large scale could aid humanity in understanding how the collective mind functions and provide reasons behind society's social interworking. Religion is looked upon in its presence and influence in history, yet how have humans been affected?

Research Question

What are the psychological reasons for the origins of religion and how has religion influenced society?

Review of Literature

The Evolutionary Origins of Religion

Similar to all things, religion has an origin and evolutionary period. The study's objective is to bring forth a hypothesis on how the origins of religion within pre-human anthropoids and primitive human cultures came to be. There is a direct correlation between humanity's cognitive evolution and religious practices and depth; as one evolves, so does the other. The following part of the hypothesis also states that as humanity's ability to survive and overcome life-threatening stress increases the capacity to appreciate and worship survival and life, which correlates to the participation, complexity, and divinity of religion and religious practices. The final part of the hypothesis states that humans often worship their god/gods when they acquire a helpful skill, complete a goal, or find the availability of resources and, in contrast, worship and pray to their god/gods for such completion and mercy. The following source can indicate that:

[...] Anthropoids begin with a maximum of undifferentiated metanoesis which gradually evolve fractionally into technologies, religious capacities, and epistemology (our premise). [...] As the span of knowledge increases, humankind eventually emerges with an enlarged repertoire of epistemology, religion and technology, and, in turn, a reduced proportion of metanoesis. [...] At this point, we will advance the further conjecture (2) that if the ability to overcome stress achieves survival value to the proto-human species, the consequent attitudes (i.e., both spiritual and behavioral artifacts) could lead to the foundation of particular religions. [...] As the evolution of overcoming life-threatening stress with its emerging reward capacity grows throughout halfmillion+ year cycles, an innovative reward capacity (religious phenomena?) of the useful, widely observed practice of conjecture generation gradually becomes observable, or at least suggestible. [...] Again, a further conjecture: Rewarded performances of successful, skillful acts become promptly assimilated into one's repertoire. [...] Worshippers are thankful for the availability of useful accomplishments and pertinent skills. But on the other hand they may be acutely aware of the deficit of things they would like to have accomplished or be able to accomplish. (Meyer & Matthews, 2005)

The source is essential to this investigation due to the hypothesized explanation for how religion transpired. Once again, the hypothesis comprises three parts, two further advancing one part of the investigation. The first conjecture states that with the advances and expansion in human cognition, the depth, complexity, and understanding of religion advanced with us; this is evident in the fact that more advanced ancient empires and cultures have historically had more complex and intricate religions than more primitive civilizations. The second states that advancements in technology and medicine ultimately lessen the threat to human survival. Consequently, the time to stop and devote oneself to religion became more available and eventually routine. Religious practices became more time-consuming and complex as the threat of something intruding and killing someone became less of an issue. These two neurological and psychological explanations answer the question of the psychological reason religion was conceived.

The Psychological State of Mind Contributing to the Formations of Religion

Religion originates from the mind, and the advancement of the state of mind could affect the development of religion. The source states how levels of intentionality play a part in humans merely comprehending and forming religious beliefs. For example, someone believing they know what god wants for them requires second order-intentionality, or the ability to know the wants of a being other than themselves. Someone saying they believe that god wants us to do this requires third-order intentionality, for they are emotionally intuitive enough to know what one being wants and is convincing the other they want the same, yet this does not bind the third party to anything; this evolves into fifth-order intentionality, where one person states, "I want you to know we both believe god wants us to do something," which explicitly says you have the same views as them and know what god wants of you, which is known as communal religion. The following article elucidates this argument by indicating that:

[...] what kind of mind is required to hold religious beliefs? Take the statement: "I believe that god wants..." To grasp this an individual needs theory of mind — the capacity to understand that another individual (in this case, god) has a mind of his own. Philosophers call this "second-order intentionality" because such statements contain two notions of intent: I believe and god wants. [...] Third-order intentionality allows me to state: I believe that god wants us to act with righteous intent. [...] At this level, I have personal religion. But if I am to persuade you to join me in

this view, I have to add your mind state: I want you to believe that god wants us to act righteously. That's fourth-order intentionality, and it gives us social religion. But add a fifth level (I want you to know that we both believe that god wants us to act righteously) and now, if you accept the validity of my claim, you also implicitly accept that you believe it too. [...] If you look at the brains of humans and other animals you find that the level of intentionality they can achieve scales linearly with the volume of grey matter in their frontal lobes (a particularly important part of the brain's processing units). (New Scientist, 2006)

This source is vital to the investigation by providing another neuroscientific and psychological answer to why religion occurred. According to the source, the main reason the concept of religion is possible for humans to understand is due to levels of intentionality. It claims there is a correlation between the amount of gray matter in the brain and a being's level of intentionality. For religion to remain possible and actively practiced, organisms must have the mental capacity to understand its magnitude and deeply empathize with others. Comprehending one's emotions, desires, and goals requires a high level of intentionality and aligning one's own goals. With communal religion only being achieved with fifth-order intentionality and the evidence of our ancestors' fossils possessing the capacity for the required gray matter, the article hypothesized that the conception of religion began nearly 200,000 years ago. This information helps advance the investigation by providing more insight into how religious beliefs could be conceived in a neuroscientific and psychological sense.

The Effects of Religion and Religious Development Towards Humanity

As religion developed, the institution impacted humanity by its development. The study states that throughout history, religion has played a role in social cooperation. The source identified that after only complex and large societies generally exceeded 1 million, they began to adopt large-scale religious beliefs instead of those fostering the society. These beliefs were said to be a highly effective form of social cohesion and moral obligation since the threat of being condemned to hell and how God is omniscient has brought forth mass social cooperation. The source has also stated that the idea of one God ruling everything had evolved from human sacrifice as human sacrifice in small societies commanded social cooperation. A study conducted in 2019 was able to state the following:

[...] For most of prehistory, humans lived in small groups whose members all knew each other. [...] Other researchers, including me, have examined the role that sacred rituals might have as social glue. [...] Today's small-scale societies tend to favor infrequent but traumatic rituals that promote intense social cohesion – the kind that is necessary if people are to risk life and limb hunting dangerous animals together. However, with the advent of farming, such rituals were no longer fit for purpose. [...] As societies grew by means of agricultural innovation, the infrequent, traumatic rituals that had kept people together as small foraging bands gave way to frequent, painless ones. [...] These [...] painless practices like prayer and meeting in holy places [...] could be performed frequently and collectively, allowing them to be duplicated across entire states or empires. [...] The societies that expanded to a million or more were those that found a new way to build cooperation – Big Gods [...] deities who demand that their moral code be observed by all, and who have supernatural powers of surveillance and enforcement. (Whitehouse, 2019)

This source is crucial to answering the second half of the investigation on how religion was used to control the masses. No society has ever effectively flourished or ruled without mass cooperation because the population would be volatile and expected to fall without it; this is where religion has played a vital role throughout civilization since it effectively brings forth mass cooperation and everyone being condemned to one moral code. Early and small ancient societies, closer to hunter-gatherer groups, used human sacrifice as a form of social cohesion and believed to aid survival. As populations grew, the act of such an intense ritual practice lost its effectiveness since agriculture substantially raised the chance of survival, and the population became too large for everyone to witness the act and take the reminder for moral cooperation to heart; this is how religion evolved to one omniscient god said to be watching everyone, king or peasant, and demanded the masses to follow one moral code. This information advances the investigation into how religion controlled societies, albeit mainly by fear.

The Cognitive Malfunction Responsible for Religion

The origins of religion could be clearer, and an evolutionary mishap may have affected the formation and understanding of religion. The article states that the universal themes of religion are essentially an accident, a by-product of the evolution of human cognition; this is because humans can understand two mindsets, how events function in the physical world and how they function in the psychological in addition to obtaining a clear distinction between the two. This dualism was concluded to be a pre-programmed cognitive function when viewing the results of several experiments with infants and children. The article then explains how the previous two systems stray in a way that allows religion to be possible. In the physical world, if one were to see a dead body, they would know that individual is not alive anymore, but in the psychological world, they would know the person's soul left, yet where did it go? The article then explains how the psychological system overshoots in a way where it is natural, almost compelling, for humans to see intention and purposeful design where none is there. The following source goes into detail by stating:

[...] religion emerged not to serve a purpose but by accident. Babies have two systems that work in a cold-bloodedly rational way to help them anticipate and understand [...] physical and social entities. In other words, both these systems are biological adaptations [...]. But these systems go awry in two important ways that are the foundations of religion. First, we perceive the world of objects as essentially separate from the world of minds, making it possible for us to envision soulless bodies and bodiless souls. This helps explain why we believe in gods and an afterlife. Second, as we will see, our system of social understanding overshoots, inferring goals and desires where none exist. This makes us animists and creationists. [...] Four-year-olds insist that everything has a purpose [...]. When asked to explain why a bunch of rocks are pointy, adults prefer a physical explanation, while children choose a functional one, such as "so that animals could scratch on them when they get itchy." And when asked about the origin of animals and people, children tend to prefer explanations that involve an intentional creator, even if the adults raising them do not. Creationism — and belief in God — is bred in the bone. [...] the universal themes of religion are not learned. They are part of human nature. (Bloom, 2005)

The source's pertinence to the investigation is due to its scientific and psychological explanation of the existence of the foundations of religion. The "religion is an accident theory" explains how humans are natural-born dualists since, in an experiment with infants and small children, they found that at an extremely young age, people knew the difference between the physical world and the mental world. Seeing this distinction between body and soul, one could imagine a soul without its body. When they see the body destroyed, they can wonder where the soul has gone, eventually concluding in an afterlife. Accordingly, our brain's mental system had overcompensated to the point where humans saw design, intention, and purpose where there was none. For example, when people ask a child why clouds exist, with no prior scientific explanation, the child would usually respond with "for raining" or "to water the plants," indicating that at a young age, we see everything to have a purpose, an intention. This theory advances the investigation by directly explaining the psychological reasons why religion exists.

The Development and Societal Purpose of Religion

Religion has always possessed a purpose in conjunction with maintaining society, a purpose that has changed and developed over the centuries. The article discusses how the evolution of society and religion began as follows: Once the capacity for religious beliefs came from our cognitive evolutionary by-product, small hunter-gatherer groups utilized religion as a form of cooperation, cooperation that was the key to survival in primitive times. These cultures tended to have an absence of human morality since everyone interacted with everyone, and any neglect would be immediately noticed and prosecuted as it undermined the whole group. However, as groups grew, anonymity became more present; therefore, more people began to freeload. From there, religions began to adopt the belief of an omniscient god, effectively bringing forth mass cooperation once again. When these societies grew even more, they spread their religion to others. Now, since religion was arguably the sole factor in social glue and the success of civilization,

atheists are seen as people who are directly uncooperative and, therefore, need to be taught otherwise or punished. An investigation conducted in 2012 showcases the following:

[...] Some early cultural variants of religion presumably promoted prosocial behaviors such as cooperation, trust and self-sacrifice while encouraging displays of religious devotion, such as fasts, food taboos, extravagant rituals and other "hard-to-fake" behaviors which reliably transmitted believers' sincere faith (Evolution and Human Behavior, vol 30, p 244), and signaled their intention to cooperate (Evolutionary Anthropology, vol 12, p 264). Religion thus forged anonymous strangers into moral communities tied together with sacred bonds under a common supernatural jurisdiction. In turn, such groups would have been larger and more cooperative, and hence more successful in competition for resources and habitats. [...] the gods of the smallest hunter-gatherer groups [...] are unconcerned with human morality. In these transparent societies where face-to-face interaction is the norm [...]. Kin altruism and reciprocity are sufficient to maintain social bonds. However, as groups expand in size, anonymity invades relationships and cooperation breaks down. [...] While atheists think of their disbelief as a private matter of conscience, believers treat their absence of belief in supernatural surveillance as a threat to cooperation and honesty. (Norenzayan, 2012)

This source is critical to the investigation because of its clear theoretical layout of the evolution of religion within human societies and the information about how religion influences people's behavior today. The article advances the investigation by explaining how religion has influenced society and people's behavior. As previously stated, the source had stated that religion had demanded cooperation among social groups, and within this cooperation came the notion that anyone who disobeyed or refused to pull their weight, essentially denying religion, should be ostracized and punished. When the punishing force for rebellion became an omniscient god, the idea that something was watching every individual became the driving force for good behavior and kindness. The mere idea of any surveillance, such as a drawing of an eye or the presence of a camera, already encourages an individual to watch their own every move because an unjust act will result in punishment, "Watched people are nice people." Accordingly, the article found an experiment where person A was given a sum of money and told they could give any amount to person B; if person A were reminded of God or told religious prompts, they would give away more money than if told nothing; this shows how religion influences people's behavior into being more kind, generous, and essentially moral, which explains why atheists are often the subject of hatred since they deny the existence of the very being that keeps societies together.

The Beginnings of Religious Reasoning in the Beginnings of Human Cognition

If the origins of religion resided in the cognitive mind, then the beginnings of human cognition would contain the beginnings of religion. The source theorizes that humans naturally believe in religious and agent-based explanations of the world at birth. The article states that an experiment with babies under a year old could tell the difference between physical objects and agents, such as knowing something must push or move a ball in some way for it to move while people or animals move of their own volition; however, to babies, agents must not necessarily have a resemblance to people or animals at all in order for them to view a situation with agent-based reasoning. This inherent ability to seek agent-based explanations paved the road toward invisible god-causing events. Children also find purpose-based explanations for the world much more reasonable than explanations of random chance. For example, an experiment found that 5-year-olds preferred to think that tigers were "made for eating, drinking, and being seen at the zoo" rather than being told they were not and existed to exist. Finally, the article articulated that children assume that any unseen being possesses supernatural abilities until told otherwise. The cited source can state the following:

[...] My contention is that these various features of developing minds - an attraction to agent-based explanations, a tendency to explain the natural world in terms of design and purpose, an assumption that others have superpowers - makes children naturally receptive to the idea that there may be one or more god which helps account for the world around them. It is important to note that this concept of religion deviates from theological beliefs. Children are born believers not of Christianity, Islam or any other theology but of what I call "natural religion". They have strong natural tendencies toward religion, but these tendencies do not inevitably propel them towards any one religious belief.

Instead, the way our minds solve problems generates a god-shaped conceptual space waiting to be filled by the details of the culture into which they are born. Out of the minds of babes and infants comes the idea of god. (Barret, 2012)

This source is essential within the investigation since it provides three in-depth reasons for theorizing that humans are cognitively wired to hold religious beliefs. The first states how babies, at only nine months, can already distinguish between physical objects and “agents” (subjects that can move on their own volition) while demonstrating agent-based reasoning toward subjects that do not resemble people or animals. In addition, they know that agents have goals and do not necessarily have to be visible. The second states how small children tend to favor purpose-based explanations of the world, like the mouse was made to eat cheese, as opposed to the mouse existing because it had evolved. The article briefly claims that due to our social nature, we are more firmly attached to an explanation in terms of agents instead of random chance, as the latter does not satisfy us. Finally, the article states that children automatically assume any higher being contains supernatural powers until otherwise; for example, in an experiment, researchers told children to guess what was inside a gourd, and when they answered wrong, the researchers asked if some divine beings would know what was in the gourd including a forest god that would only know what occurs in the forest, and with no further prompting the children said the forest being would know what was in the gourd along with all the other gods. Overall, this information further advances the investigation in answering the psychological influences in the origins of religion.

Religious Thinking in the Foundations of Human Cognition

Religion is a cognitive aspect, so the development of human cognition directly impacts religious thinking. The article mainly cites and discusses three factors in the basics of human cognition that could be the basis of religion. The first is cited from Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin, who state that humans possess a primitive survival trait coined an “agency detector,” where we account for and detect the presence of another being, primarily a predator. Secondly, according to Nassim Nicholas Taleb, ancient humans created a “narrative fallacy” where they used stories or the will of God to explain unknown events around them that, at the time, could not be explained any other way. In addition, God’s omnipotence could be utilized to explain virtually anything, easing the worry about the unknown. Finally, humans possess the innate ability to have a “theory of mind” or the ability to guess the intentions and goals of others, which eventually allowed primitive social groups to comprehend the intentions of God. In this regard, the following investigation can state the following:

[...] Evolutionary biologists Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin of Harvard University proposed that religious thinking is a side effect of tendencies that more concretely help humans to thrive. Perhaps the most primitive is our "agency detector," the ability to infer the presence of others. If the grass rustles in the distance, our first instinct is that someone or something may be lurking. [...] humans instinctually construct narratives to make sense of what may be a disconnected jumble of events. Nassim Nicholas Taleb [...] calls this the "narrative fallacy"--we invent cause-and-effect stories to explain the world around us even if chance has dictated our circumstances. Gods, empowered with omnipotence and shielded from natural inquiry, can be used to explain any mysterious event. Finally, humans can imagine the thoughts and intentions of others and imagine that they are different from our own, a trait known as theory of mind. [...] It is a small step from imagining the mind of another person--even if you have no direct access to it--to imagining the mind of a deity. (Moyer, 2009)

The article adds further information to the theory that the foundations for religion have been hardwired in our basic human cognition, which benefits the investigation. Specifically, it adds the concept of agency detectors and a narrative fallacy. Agency detectors have a primitive function where humans can sense another presence with them; in ancient times, this presence was primarily predators. However, as the threat of such declines, our agency detector eventually leads us to ponder the existence of God's presence. Ancient humans also created a narrative fallacy to explain unknown events around them. When catastrophic events such as floods or earthquakes occur, rather than the survivors succumbing to fear and worry, they turn to God to explain such things since his omnipotence knows all.

This information further advances the investigation by providing additional information to the theory of religion originating from humanity's basic cognition.

The Influence of Religion on Employee Behavior

Religion provides many moral and ethical standards and has been recorded to impact work ethic. The source investigates the effect of religiosity on organizational citizenship behavior or OCB, which is a form of behavior that describes the willingness, sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, organizational compliance, and initiative an employee possesses for their place of employment. In previous studies, OCB was discovered to be affected by variables such as age, gender, and working period, so in order to study the influence of religiosity, this investigation included such variables as moderator variables and utilized a quantitative approach utilizing an OCB scale, religiosity scale, and a questionnaire. The results concluded that religiosity positively affected organizational citizenship behavior, and variables such as age, gender, and working period were deemed to have no effect on religiosity influencing OCB. The following excerpt will further discuss this by indicating:

[...] This quantitative research uses simple linear regression analysis techniques and interaction tests, often called Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA). Respondents in this study were lecturers and educational personnel of Institute Injil Indonesia with a total of 78 people, and the sample of 57 people, consisted of 21 lecturers and 37 education personnel. Data from this study were collected using two scales, including the scale of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) of Podsakoff. Religiosity scale developed from the Bible, specifically from Philippians 1:9-11. [...] OCB is simply a willingness to do work voluntarily as well as a desire to do work that is not his responsibility. The results showed: (1). There is a positive and significant effect of religiosity on organizational citizenship behavior; (2). The Variables (gender), (age), and (working period) did not moderate the effect of religiosity on organizational citizenship behavior. [...] The increased religiosity will affect the increase in OCB, and the increase in OCB will affect the effectiveness of educational organizations (colleges), such as enhancing the productivity of co-workers, intensifying managerial productivity, Efficient in the use of organizational resource for productive purposes. (International Journal of Research, 2019)

The importance of this study within the investigation is its connection to religiosity positively influencing organizational citizenship behavior. Concerning advancing the investigation, the second half of the investigation is researching how religion has influenced the masses in many aspects, one potentially being work ethic. The article explains how organizational citizenship behavior is essentially a form of behavior describing an employee's willingness to perform high-quality work for their employment, loyalty to the employment, sportsmanship, compliance, initiative, or any quality that reflects a high work ethic. In confirming that religion does influence and positively increase OCB, the study proves that religion influences society by bettering one's work ethic, therefore improving one's place of employment. The study also proved that other variables such as age, gender, and working period virtually harbor no effect on OCB; this proves that religiosity was the direct factor in the OCB quantitative results. Overall, the study provides information on how religiosity can positively influence society by increasing work ethic and potentially improving a place of employment while simultaneously answering the second half of this investigation.

How Religion Influences Behavior Towards Ethnic Tolerance

Religion has been shown to influence societal behavior towards societal differences, such as ethnic tolerance. This source explains the role and effect of religion on ethnic tolerance within Malaysia through the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and the rational choice theory (RCT). It also explains both theories and what they entail for ethnic tolerance. The source explains how, within the RCT, an individual acts on a consideration of gain and loss with the influence of religion; this is mirrored in the belief that ethnic tolerance will be rewarded by each religion's deities and holy texts preaching for peace and love. According to the TPB perspective, behavior is directly influenced by intention, which is influenced by the perception of behavioral control, social norms, and attitude towards the behavior, which

are all affected by environmental factors such as wealth, health, values, age, and sex. In the context of religion, religion directly influences attitude, social norms, and perception, which in turn influences intention. It is concluded that religion is a crucial factor in behavior toward ethnic tolerance. According to the information, the source concluded that religion positively affects ethnic tolerance. The following source showcases the following:

[...] The rational choice theory indicates that human behavior is motivated by rational judgment. Rational judgment is the perceived benefits of exchanges and interactions between autonomous players who are assumed to select specific production strategies in order to achieve their objectives (Lynn & Hill, 2001). For example, the benefits from such exchange include profit and loss resulting from the performed action (Smith, Simpson, and Huang, 2006). [...] The theory of planned behavior suggests that behavior is “a decision determined by the attitude towards the behavior or the perception on its surrounding factors such as the profit and loss caused by the behavior, social pressures that either support or against it, and the accessibility or difficulty experienced in performing the behavior” (Maracti, Guido, & Peluso, 2008, p. 1580) [...] Figure 1 shows that behavior is influenced by intention directly. Intention, in turn is influenced by attitude, social norm, and the perception towards control on behavior. From the rational choice theory perspective, it was found that ethnic tolerance can be influenced by one’s religious belief if those who practice it are reciprocated with the promise of retributions from God. The theory of planned behavior on the other hand suggests that religion can affect behavior, subjective norms and perception on how one deal with ethnic tolerance. (International Education Studies, 2016)

This source’s pertinence to the investigation is studying how religion factors in two sociological, behavioral theories. By deduction, it provides information on how religion affects behavior, specifically in terms of ethnic tolerance. In the rational choice theory, humans act upon what actions will provide profit or loss. In religion, holy texts describe how peaceful actions will be rewarded in various forms, such as heaven and karma. The theory of planned behavior suggests that environmental factors and values lead to the perspective of social norms, attitude toward the behavior, and perception of the behavior, which influence the intention behind the behavior. Religion was discovered to impact all three significantly and, therefore, significantly impact behavior as a whole. This information explicitly states that both theories conclude that religion heavily influences behavior in addition to how. In Malaysia, the issue of ethnic segregation is not that of religion; on the contrary, religion provides a positive benefit to ethical inculcation as no religion preaches ethical segregation but acceptance. Overall, this article further advances the investigation of how religion influences society in means of behavior and has explicitly a positive influence on ethnic tolerance.

Religion's Ability to Provide Peace

Religion provides many ideas and moral standards for peace, such as preaching for acceptance and forgiveness. This article discusses how religion is used as a powerful motive for war and then counters by explaining how religion may be the institution society needs for true peace. The article states how religion often conceives a "we-they" feeling; followers of one religion believe they are correct in their faith and that everyone else is not only wrong but inferior, leading them to attack one another with viciousness and peace of mind comfortably. However, the article elaborates on how no lasting peace would exist without religion. Today's world is filled with autonomous societal structures built upon the value that human reason alone is the ultimate justifier, but such structures have failed. All religion preaches peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, morals, and the common good and discourages inter-religious conflicts, albeit each in their terms, the very values mere human reason has failed to provide. Religion recognizes that no human is perfect, so they all encourage forgiveness and reconciliation. No religion truly speaks of violence but of justice, and if society can blend the religious freedom of societal structures but retain religious values, then civilization can attain true peace. To exemplify this further, the following source stated the following:

[...] Religions do promote a "we-they" feeling. People who belong to a particular religion feel that they are the chosen ones, with a special revelation or relationship to the divine. From this point of view, the others are not merely different, but inferior. But when the others are seen not merely as different but as opponents or competitors in the economic, social, political or religious spheres, the religious difference can be used as a tool for demonization.

[...] But if religion is such an ambiguous phenomenon, can it be a factor in peacemaking? I think that the answer is yes, there cannot be any lasting peace without religion(s). [...] Religion-free economic and political orders [...] posited that human reason is the ultimate mentor of everything. In this worldview every sector of society is seen as autonomous. [...] But free trade has led to a world that is polarized between the rich and the poor, both internationally and locally. [...] And the balancing of political interests is not a realistic goal in a world that is dominated by one superpower. At most, it is a balancing act between a few powerful nations that ignores the interests of the other nations in the globe: freedom and prosperity for us, the rest be damned. [...] For true peace we need a sense of human, moral and spiritual values; recognition, respect and acceptance of the dignity of persons-in-community and their cultural and religious identities; and an appreciation and quest for the common good, local and universal, leading to justice and equality. [...] No religion actually preaches violence, and religions alone speak of forgiveness and reconciliation. [...] It is not that we need to establish "theocratic" states. Economics and politics should retain their autonomy. But their autonomy will not be absolute. Both will have to be responsive to moral values and principles and dialogue with religions. (Amaladoss, 2001)

This source provides two arguments of information about the investigation, one showcasing the negative effect of religion on people and how it can be a motive for war, and two, the positive effect religion could have and how only religion, when appropriately integrated with society, can bring forth true peace. Both arguments provide the investigation with information on how religion can affect society and how society interacts with one another. It is concluded that religion conceives a "we-they" feeling, which leads followers to look at other religions and people as "evil" since their religion is correct. They are the "chosen ones." This sense of superiority and unity not only encourages a group to attack others since they believe their actions are righteous within themselves but also does so free of guilt since why would one be guilty of defeating "evil"? The article then states how the following presents itself not only in war but also in destruction or harm to others in the name of religion, which is commonplace.

On the other hand, the article explains how religion is one of the only forces that can attain true peace for humanity since it brings forth the values of morality, spirituality, respect, acceptance, and a united strive for justice. Which common human reason has failed to provide. Institutions and structures within a society have been built upon the value of sole human reason and have failed and created injustices. The economy structured to be free of religious values has evolved a stark rich and poor class difference, and the political structure has become a few popular parties balancing with each other while the others are cast aside. While the article did clarify that the world should not be built upon a theocratic society, civilization must blend autonomous structures with religious values, leading society to treat one another with respect and peace as religion's values preach to do so.

Methods

A computer with an internet connection was utilized alongside the internet browser Google Chrome for this investigation. In order to find the sources required for this investigation, the EBSCO Host search engine was paramount for pinpointing the necessary sources to elucidate the research question. Although the internet connection was unstable at times, it proved sufficient to conduct all the required constituents of this investigation. All of the sources were peer-reviewed or approved by the investigation mentor. All these components working in tandem created the optimal conditions for the consummation of this project.

This investigation was completed utilizing a documentary analysis design. To populate this research, it was necessary to specify the purpose of each of the ten sources used. Furthermore, it was essential to recognize the source's design and approach, indicate the target audience, highlight their limitations, and determine the recommendations and findings in each. An analytical component outlining the significance of the data presented in the inquiry was generated, so a descriptive content analysis methodology had to be utilized for this investigation.

Results

The utilized search engine Ebsco Host proved most beneficial for the selected sources of this investigation. The first and fourth sources were not recent since they were published in 2005. Respectively, they dealt with the evolutionary origins of religion and the cognitive malfunction responsible for religion. The second source was not recent (2006). It discussed information regarding the psychological state of mind contributing to the formation of religion. The third and eighth sources were recent (2019), indicating the effects of religion and religious development on humanity and the influence of religion on employee behavior. The fifth and sixth sources were not as recent as they were published in (2012). Accordingly, they delved into the beginnings of religious reasoning in the beginnings of human cognition and religious thinking in religion's development and societal purpose. The seventh source was not recent (2009), and it validated that religious thinking is the foundation of human cognition. The ninth source was not recent (2016), and it illustrated how religion influences behavior toward ethnic tolerance. Finally, the tenth source needed to be more recent (2001), clarifying that religion can provide peace.

Discussion & Conclusion

The presented sources were able to elucidate the hypothesis on how the origins of religion within pre-human anthropoids and primitive human cultures evolved into fruition, how levels of intentionality play a part in humans merely comprehending and forming religious beliefs and religious mindsets, how religion has played a vital role in social cooperation, the religion was the an-accident theory, how religion developed by societal growth and maintained cohesion, how babies have shown that the human brain is cognitively wired to believe in universal religious themes, additional information on narrative fallacy and agency-detectors, the influence of religion on organizational citizenship behavior, the effect of religion on ethnic tolerance, and the possibility of religion providing true peace. The source revealed a direct correlation between humanity's cognitive evolution and religious depth, then stated that as humanity evolves in agriculture and technology or the capability to survive, the capacity to appreciate life becomes of utmost importance, which correlates to participation, complexity, and divinity of religion. The final part of the hypothesis states that humans often worship their god/gods when they acquire a skill essential to survival or discover the availability of resources and, in contrast, worship and pray to their god/gods for such skills and mercy. The following source then presented levels of intentionality. When humans reached a fifth level of intentionality, religious movements came into being, in addition to reaching fifth-order intentionality 200,000 years ago, with evidence of the capacity for a certain amount of brain matter in fossil skulls.

Additionally, evidence was provided that throughout history, religion has played a vital role in social cooperation as it brought mass social cohesion under the omniscient eye of "Big Gods," which evolved to achieve the same social effect of human sacrifice but on a large scale. Accordingly, another source elaborated on the essential information showcasing how, in small groups, group rituals were sufficient to keep order, yet as society grew to prevent free-loaders, the idea of an omniscient god evolved to maintain social cohesion and defiance of this God or the institution was an active sign of noncompliance with society and in primitive times not complying with the group would affect the survivability of everyone. Therefore, the fifth source theorizes that atheists are shunned since they defy the very existence of the institution that maintains social order. Furthermore, an additional source provided evidence of the possibility that religion was the by-product of humanity's cognitive evolutionary development; this is deduced from the fact that in an experiment conducted with infants, the babies showcased the ability to comprehend the physical world from the psychological. This dualism is responsible for humans understanding that when there is a dead body, that being is no longer alive; however, their soul is separate from their body, leading to the question of where that soul goes. Moreover, the source explained how the psychological function overcompensated, allowing humans to initially think that everything has a purpose, such as children preferring that clouds were made for rain.

Continuing on the argument that religion was conceived from cognitive development gone awry, the succeeding sources described nearly the same concept: children understand the physical world yet can distinguish it between agent-based reasoning and prefer answers of world mechanics existing for a purpose rather than exist; however additionally bring forth narrative fallacy which is when humans utilize the existence of God to explain incomprehensible events around them, and the will of God virtually explains everything alleviating the fear of the unknown. The following source then describes how religion influences employee behavior or organizational citizenship behavior, concluding that religiosity has a positive impact on OCB and, therefore, a positive impact on society if it is people whose jobs are in charge of contributing to society. Religion provides the motive to excel. Furthermore, religion is deduced to have a positive effect on ethnic tolerance when holy texts encourage followers to be accepting of one another as well as indicating from the rational choice theory perspective that people are seen to be rewarded if they conduct ethnic tolerance, and from the theory of planned behavior perspective, religion influences religious attitude, social norms, and perception, thus directly influencing behavior. Finally, the final source describes religion as the only phenomenon that can bring true peace, depicting how societal structures built upon human reason have failed. If we blend those structures with the values of religion, the world can be at peace with itself and one another. Recommendations for further research include a phenomenology design with descriptive content analysis, participant observation, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions, focused workshops, and conversations with participants.

Limitations

For the investigation to come to fruition, the scope of the research question had to be more encompassing to find more information on the subject, which permitted the optimal conditions to answer the research question. If the original research question had not been changed, the essay would not have been written as well, given that the research question would have been challenging to complete. Additional internal threats had to be mitigated to preserve the investigation's internal validity, such as changing various sources that did not meet the quality threshold to elucidate the problem surrounding the conducted research correctly. Moreover, multiple external threats had to be addressed to preserve the inquiry's external validity, such as the institution's Internet connection instability, a limited database, slow computers on occasion, and lost methodological resources. While vital in providing information for the investigation, no source could provide all the reasons why religion originated and how it affects behavior and bring a concrete answer to religion's origins.

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