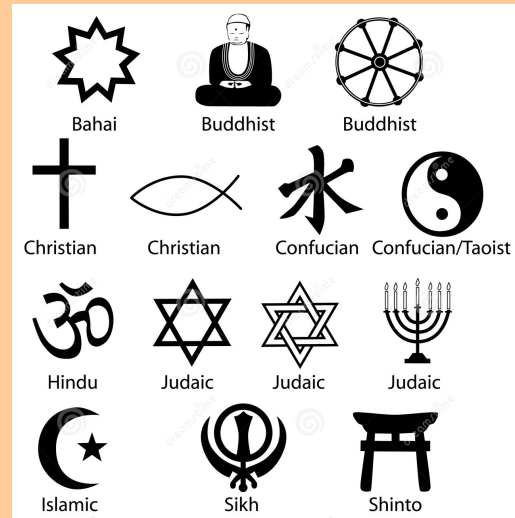


Some of the Origins, History and Future of Religion

Why Religion Evolved

- All animal species need to deal with two important issues: **survival** (to ensure they live, take care of young) and **reproduction** (to ensure the species continues).
- Many animals deal with this through group **cooperation** and **coherence** at the expense of individuality. For example, animals that hunt in groups are more likely to catch sufficient food for all (cf. wolves).
- As we will see, religion in humans enhances group cooperation and coherence and so allows for better survival and reproduction. But it took millions of evolution before this was possible.
- Religion is believed to exist only in *Homo sapiens* (us!), the human species that evolved about 500 million years ago.
- Religion is about **relationships** - humans to each other, to the physical world around them, and to a supernatural world with these supernatural agents mediating between people and affecting their world view. Religion makes us human and non-relational religion, if it is religion at all, is hollow.
- Religion-bonded groups were more cohesive and cooperative than secular ones and so had a survival advantage.



Defining 'religion'

This is difficult to do. One meaning of the word *religion* (just one of many!) is 'to bind/connect' as in connecting people to people (and to gods). Based on this, religion is an extension of human social life/relationships/connections into the supernatural, that is, it is the 'supernaturalising' of social life.

Instead of a definition, some people think it is better to list features of religions. These would include:

- Belief in supernatural entities or forces with powers that can intervene in or affect human affairs.
- Ritual acts and feelings (awe, sense of mystery, sense of guilt, adoration) aroused in the presence of sacred objects or during rituals.
- A moral code.
- A view of the world and one's place in it. This view/picture contains a purpose of the world and how the individual fits into it.
- An organisation of one's life based on the world view.
- A social group bound by the above.

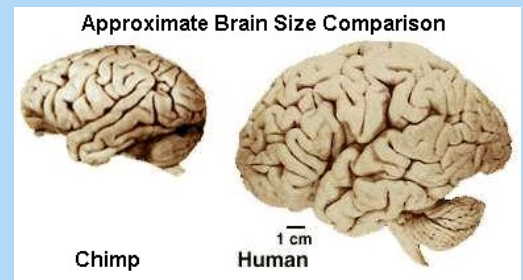
Note: Objective religion (beliefs, rituals, institutions, etc) are different from subjective religion (internal experiences).

Prerequisites for religion/religious beliefs in humans

The development of religion required the following:

Brain size:

- The size of the neocortex is proportional to level of social complexity in the great apes (such as chimpanzees) and humans; a large neocortex seems to enable group cooperation and coherence ('social solidarity' theories).
- A larger brain is also necessary for the development of [language](#) (see below).
- A larger brain size probably also enabled reflection on personal mortality.



Causal beliefs:

- It has been suggested that cause-effect is needed in order to make and use tools and to explain things (and is also needed in religious belief).
- Belief in the supernatural eventually emerged to explain natural phenomena that could not be explained otherwise, e.g. illness, thunder, storms, movement of the sun.

Morality:

- This possibly evolved from social rules and later, as group size increased, was used as a means of social control, conflict resolution and group solidarity. Religion developed after morality, and built upon it.

Understanding of symbols:

- Understanding of [symbols](#), especially [language](#) and art is required. Language is needed to transmit *individual* religious ideas to others, which led to a *collective* religious belief. Language would not be needed for individual religious belief, which probably evolved before collective religion.

Some History of the Evolution of Humans and Religious

Time-line

Humans and their religions evolved over time. Here is a time-line for this evolution in the discussion that follows. Most of this evolution took place in a relatively short time.



[Note](#): mya = million years ago; kya = thousand years ago (k = kilo- = 1000).

Summary: Stages in evolution of religion

Stage 1. Evolution of the supernatural in individuals, prior to development of language (Middle Palaeolithic Age ~150 kya)

Stage 2. Evolution of language and group religion and its use for social control (~70 kya)

Stage 3. Evolution of organised/formal religion for justification of central authority (Neolithic period ~11 kya)

~5 mya

Hominids

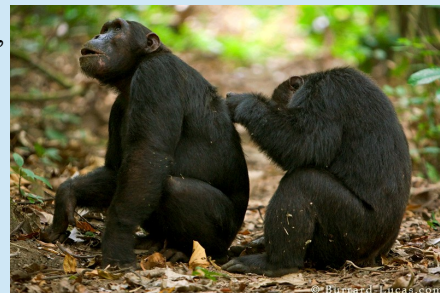
- Hominids are the biological family that includes our species (*Homo sapiens*), Neanderthals and other

forerunners of today's humans (such as *Homo erectus*).

- The great apes (e.g. gorillas, chimpanzees, orang-utans) are our common primate ancestors. Hominids split from them about 5 million years ago.
- Today's human beings are the only surviving hominids.

Characteristics of (present-day) great apes

- As humans evolved from the great apes, present-day apes may give clues as to what our very early ancestors were like.
- Modern apes are not religious, but have traits needed for religion. These includes intelligence, understanding of symbols, self-awareness, social world/behaviour and an understanding of the continuity of life.
- The great apes show **ritual** behaviour, e.g. **grooming** (pictured), kissing, which help with social bonding. Rituals help to maintain a complicated social world. Rituals are also an important part of religion. Hence, the foundations of religion and religious behaviour were possibly laid deep in the primate brain and social life prior to the onset of hominid evolution.
- The great apes also have **pre-moral** traits, e.g. cooperation, empathy, sympathy, conflict resolution and especially **social rules**.
- Social rules restrain/alter individual behaviour to give groups that are more cooperative and coherent. (And as mentioned above, cooperative group living helps with **survival** and **reproduction**). The apes have hierarchical societies and dominant member(s) to enforce the rules.
- Humans too are social creatures. Our hominid ancestors, like present-day great apes, were predisposed toward the formation of strong social bonds. Social living, however, requires mechanisms (such as social rules) for binding individuals to each other and for tempering harmful individualism.



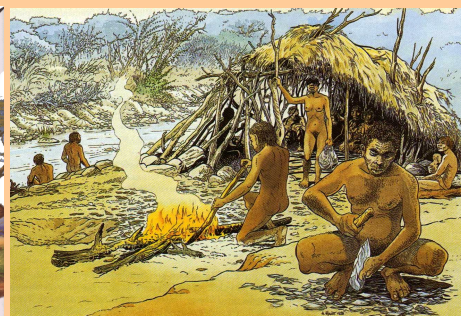
~2.6 mya

The Palaeolithic Age begins:

- (paleo- = old/ancient; -lithic = stone) So, the Palaeolithic age is also called the (old) Stone age. The first of the palaeolithic age stages is known as the 'lower' or 'early' palaeolithic age.
- The first evidence of craft and use of stone tools by hominids appears at this time.
- Hominids lived in small groups, perhaps in the 10s, of mainly kin (related), (cf. modern chimpanzee groups which are ~50).

~1.8 mya

- *Homo erectus* (an early human predecessor) leaves Africa for many parts of the old world (Europe, Middle East, Asia) and after some time, as far as China.
- Possible beginnings of formation of larger hominid groups to include non-kin, as



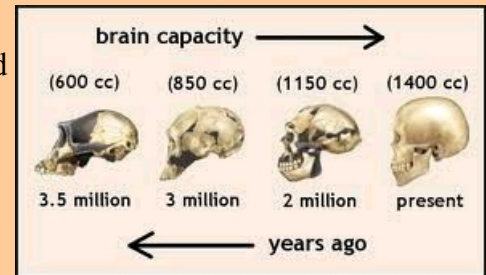
competition for resources between hominids increases. (With non-kin, more cooperation is needed in order to live together without killing each other; this is a precursor for the evolution of religion).

~500 kya

- Archaic (primitive) *Homo sapiens* (a primitive version of us!) evolved from other hominids. (Look back at the time-line to see how relatively recent this was.)

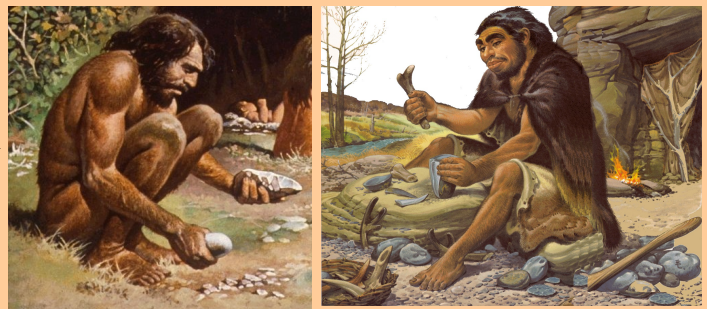
- **Brain size** (neocortex) in humans peaks at this time. This allowed for complex phenomena such as language and later, religious development.

- By at least this time, our hominid ancestors had the physical ability to engage in coordinated group **rituals** of social **bonding** - in other words, they could **sing, chant and dance together in rhythm**. These group-based rituals had powerful consciousness-altering and social bonding effects. Performance of rituals may foster social group stability.



~400 kya

- The Neanderthal hominid species (*Homo neanderthalensis*) splits from other hominids in Europe (and became extinct about 30 kya).



~300 kya

The 'Middle' Palaeolithic Age begins:

- First (but disputed) evidence of intentional **burial** of the dead; burial could represent awareness of life and death and possible belief in an afterlife.

Rituals for social bonding are present at this time. (As we will see, rituals are also an important part of religion and derive from social rituals.)

- A 'proto-religion' existed at this time but was restricted to rituals used for social bonding without an overarching supernatural framework, which comes later.

~200 - 130 kya

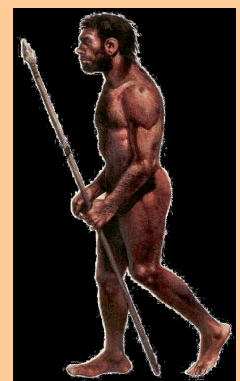
- *Homo sapiens* evolved in East Africa and gradually spread throughout Africa. (All subsequent discussion is for *Homo sapiens*).

- Some evidence of *primitive behavioural modernity* appears, i.e. characteristics that distinguish *Homo sapiens* (us!) from their recent ancestors.

- Possible time for the development of cause-effect to give explanations for observations of observed phenomena.

- *Individual* belief in **supernatural** agents (such as spirits, ancestors) may have evolved about this time to understand and explain events (though not expressible with words as language had not yet evolved).

- **130 kya** - earliest *undisputed* evidence for intentional **burial**; Neanderthals buried their dead at a site in Croatia.



- Possible healing rituals at this time constituted a bridging step from Middle Palaeolithic religion to Upper Palaeolithic religion (below).

Mechanism for the development of religious/supernatural beliefs/explanations:

One possible mechanism is that they resulted as a *spandrel*, that is, a by-product of a mental adaptation. This mental adaptation was **agent detection**, i.e. there are purposeful agents, such as animals, people, the wind, behind many observations. Consider the sound of a snapping twig in a forest, which could be from an animal or from another person; for survival, humans adapt and respond; if not, they may be eaten or killed! A by-product of this adaptation could be the idea of an invisible purposeful *supernatural* agent such as an ancestor, a spirit or a deity which caused the twig to snap. This would have evolved in individuals, but without language, the ideas could not be communicated to others.

~120 - 100 kya

- This was an important period for the evolution of *group religious beliefs* (though not yet true religion) because of the development of **language**. (Note: This happened before *Homo sapiens* left Africa).
- Group/collective religious beliefs became possible when belief in the **supernatural** was used to explain things and which could be shared using language.

Out of Africa:

~115 kya A group of *Homo sapiens* migrated to the Levant (and maybe further) (the Levant stretches from Sinai, up the coast through Israel and Lebanon to Syria). See map. The humans interacted with Neanderthals who were already living there.



- The size of human bands/groups at this time was in the 10s - 100s, most of whom would be related.
- **100 kya** - the earliest known **burial** of *humans* - in Israel.

- Red ochre pigment was in use at this time, *possibly* **symbolically** in **ritual** behaviour. Symbolism is common in religion (see **art** below under ~30 kya).

~90 - 80 kya

- This was an important period in human social and religious evolution.
- *Homo sapiens* retreated from the Levant back to East Africa. This was most likely due to the climate becoming colder, and not because of interaction with Neanderthals. The latter were much better adapted for life in cold climates.
- About 80 kya, it is possible (though archaeologists do not agree) that another group of *Homo sapiens* crossed from East Africa to Arabia and spread all the way along the coasts to Southern and South-east Asia and to China, displacing *Homo erectus* from these places.
- The next 20 000 ~ 30 000 years was an extremely **crucial** period in human **social** transformation in *Africa*, including evolution of religion (see next).

~80 - 60 kya

Humans close to extinction:

- The human population (and many other animal species) on Earth was almost wiped out; possibly down to just ~2000 breeding couples in North Africa (and perhaps ~10 000 in total worldwide).
- This reduction was possibly due to climate change and depleting resources, but also to ash and climate cooling due to the massive eruption of Mount Toba (in Indonesia ~74 000 ya) that affected the whole planet for about six years.



Increase in human sophistication:

- The *Homo sapiens* in East Africa that survived started to become more socially (not physically or individually) sophisticated at this time:
 - Extensive trading networks (among local African populations) were developed (perhaps to get sufficient resources).
 - More complex social groups with enhanced group coherence and cooperation developed leading to better group survival, helped by the development of collective **religion**. This more complicated social world was held together by **ritual**.
 - Now there is *undisputed* evidence of behavioural modernity, including 'modern' state of language and *collective* religion. Religious behaviour is one of the hallmarks of behavioural modernity.
 - Other advances at this time included: more cooperative and effective hunting strategies, more sophisticated tool and cultural production, and dramatic increases in group size, social complexity, and political organisation. Groups that were bonded by religion were more cohesive and cooperative than secular ones and so survived better.

Stage 2 in religious evolution - **group/collective** religion:

- Note: *Collective* religion needs language, though the more primitive *individual* religious beliefs that existed much earlier do not.
- Religion provided divine authority for social norms and was an extension of the human social world and people's social relationships beyond the confines of purely human society and into the supernatural.
- Coincident with the social advance is the first evidence for the religious practices of shamanism, animism, and ancestor worship.
- The supernatural world became well established at this time. This was an evolutionary winner; groups with it overwhelmed those who didn't.
- Collective religious belief possibly also identified supernatural agents as gods that could also be used to standardise *explanations* of natural phenomena.
- The social component of ritual in religion served to regulate societies. Rituals also tend to encourage the rote storage of a common set of actions, stories, and teachings (e.g., Holy Communion, in Christianity where the story of Jesus' last meal is re-enacted and his message of sacrifice is revisited). It has been suggested that religion helped to make us human!

How this collective religion might have developed:

Morality arises out of social life. Human imagination built on morality by adding a 'layer' of supernatural agents to their social world. Thus there is a connection between religion and morality, which was filled with ever-vigilant gods, spirits and ancestors, who monitored their people and provided an effective strategy for group control and behaviour and strict adherence to tradition ('the gods are watching your behaviour!') resulting in strongly cohesive and formidably competitive social groups, which would have enhanced group cooperation and survival. Social scrutiny is an effective means of engendering pro-social behaviour in humans (even now!). By supernaturalising social life, with ancestors, gods, and spirits as ever-vigilant and responsive social players, our ancestors were forced to be more cooperative and socially responsible than what they otherwise would have been.

~60 kya

'Upper' (or 'Later') Palaeolithic Age begins (and lasts until the Neolithic age ~11 kya)

Out of Africa again:

- Starting around 60,000 years ago, this more socially sophisticated *Homo sapiens*, now collectively more fit and with well-developed religious beliefs humans, broke out of Africa once again and began a worldwide expansion to the far corners of the globe. In the process, they displaced all other hominids and eventually became the earth's sole hominid species. Wherever they went, they took with them their religion - their supernatural attachments - which probably explains why all societies worldwide have some form of religion.
- Genetic evidence from mitochondrial DNA also suggests that all modern humans originated from this post-Mt Toba humans that migrated from Africa at this time.
- Upper Paleolithic (and also Neolithic) burials at this time provide some of the first credible evidence of ancestor worship.

~30 kya

Art:

- Art has always been important in religions. Abstract ideas about gods/supernatural beings are difficult for people to grasp so images are created to represent these. Thus, a physical 'god' that looks like us is easier for uneducated hunter-gatherers (and us too!) to imagine and communicate with.
- **Cave paintings** of animals and one that is half-human (woman), half-animal (bison) (left picture) were found in Chauvet, France. This is believed to be unambiguous evidence of religious thought. Animal or ancestral spirits who monitor people's actions for moral integrity and punish those who offend (often through acts of nature) are common motifs in this art.
- Creation of "Venus" (female) **figurines** also appear at this time; they are thought to represent fertility goddesses. The picture on the right is one from ~30 kya in Austria.



~11 kya

Neolithic Age begins (at least in the Middle East) and ends when metal tools became widespread in the Copper Age (chalcolithic) about 5000 BC.

- The neolithic revolution involved a change from hunter-gatherers to living in settlements and the development of agriculture.
- People now lived in tribes of 100s to 1000s, each with a central authority.
- Large group size now means that many unrelated individuals are living together (among whom some writers claim murder was a leading cause of death).



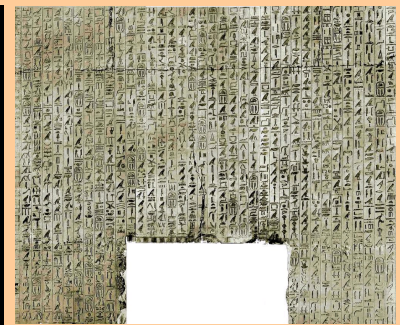
Stage 3 in religious evolution - **organised** religion:

- For living in larger groups in settlements, **organised/formal religion emerged**, which provided a bond between these unrelated individuals to increase cooperation between individuals. This was also used by tribal leaders to enhance large-group survival by the further use of moralising gods observing individual behaviour (so you had better behave or else!) and also to justify a **central authority**. (All subsequent kings/rulers of states and empires have claimed the divine right to rule.)
- As tribes increased to become states and states to nations and then empires, more specialised forms of religion developed. States born of the neolithic revolution, e.g, Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, were theocracies, with leaders being both political and religious leaders, with many being gods themselves.

~5 kya

Invention of writing:

- Writing was used soon after to record religious myths. This marks the beginning of religious history. The Egyptian *Pyramid Texts* from about 2300 BC, written on walls of *early* pyramids, are one of oldest religious texts. Pictures (right) show part of these texts.



- The earliest medical texts (from Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilisations) closely connect healing with religious ritual, suggesting that such religious healing rituals would appear to necessitate ideas of supernatural agency.
- Writing also helped to make human knowledge more objective and so to sift out acceptable from unacceptable ideas.

Evolution of Religion over Time

- Religions are an extension of the variety of social life in different groups, hence there evolved a variety of gods. some good, others revolting (e.g. Egyptian god Anubis).
- As religions evolve and change, ideas of supernatural beings having an interest in and monitoring of human behaviour are conserved. For example, while monotheism (a more recent religious innovation)

disposes with the idea of watchful *animal* or *ancestral spirits*, it strongly embraces the idea of an omniscient (knowing everything), omnipresent (present everywhere at the same time) God.

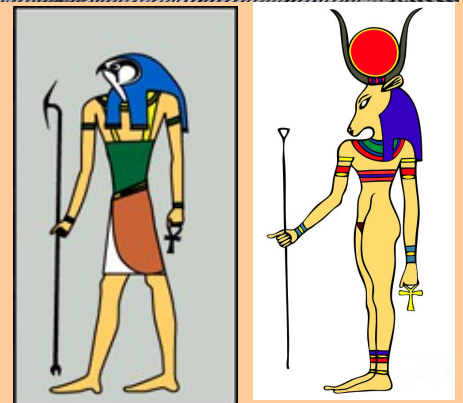
- As religion comes from social cooperation, groups bounded by religion tend to be more stable and cohesive than comparable secular groups.

Example of an ancient religion: **Egypt** (from Neolithic times to formation of a single nation)

- The Neolithic period came late to Egypt **~5000 BC**.
- Semi-nomadic groups of people along the Nile lived in villages and later, in towns. They started to cultivate grain and domesticate animals. By about 3500 BC, they no longer needed to hunt for food. Burial grounds have been found on the outskirts of these villages.



- The religion was animal worship, with each village or town having its own **spirit** in the form of an animal, bird, reptile, tree, plant or object. The spirit played a prominent part in the life of the people of that locality. The spirits fell into two groups - friendly and helpful, such as cattle, or menacing and powerful such as the crocodile or snakes. In both cases, the favour of a spirit had to be solicited with rituals and offerings. Images of each animal deity were used, e.g., the falcon (pictured), symbol of the sun god Ra, and the cow (or cow's horns), symbol of the love goddess Hathor (pictured with both cow's head and horns).



- The rulers named themselves after animals to identify with the divinity found in the animals. Rulers became the personification of the animal-god.
- Spirits became **gods**. They were used to explain the creation of the world and natural phenomena. Plagues, famines or other disasters were caused by the gods (because their needs were not being met).
- The growth of Egyptian religion resulted in many gods. As details of religious belief changed over time, the importance of particular gods rose and declined.
- [About 3100 BC, Egypt became a unified nation, with one supreme ruler - the Pharaoh - and a national religion. For a brief period (~1350 - 1330 BC), a single god, the Aten, replaced the traditional pantheon; this is often seen as the first instance of true monotheism in history.]

Today

- In the past, religion was the repository of all knowledge. For example, with its healing rituals (medicine), myths on the creation of world, and explanations for natural phenomena ('science'), as well as morality and wisdom (philosophy).
- Later, as civilisations developed, branches of knowledge split into the purely religious and the secular subjects we have today, such as science, medicine and philosophy which do not include the supernatural as an agent.
- Even recently, in the Middle Ages in the West, the (Catholic) church still tended to be a repository of knowledge and attracted scholars who studied many branches of knowledge. Gradually, and especially during renaissance times, these branches of knowledge developed independently of the church.

Is there a True Religion?

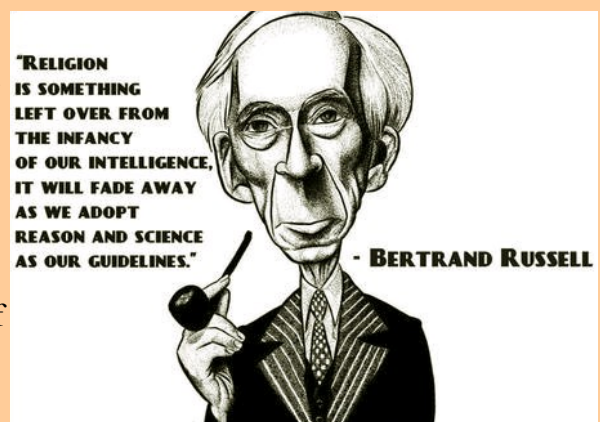
- This is a complex question. Even though religious ideas of the supernatural evolved from human thought and imagination, this does not mean that the ideas are false - or true. (Scientific ideas also developed from thought and imagination.)

Evolution of many religions

- As our early ancestors spread from Africa around the world, religion went with them; as they diversified and changed, so too would their religion. From neolithic times, as tribes became states, which in turn became empires, religions evolved becoming more and more sophisticated and different from each other. Initially, there was a pantheon of gods (cf. again Egypt); later, monotheism evolved (in the present world's three main religions- Judaism, Christianity, Islam).
- Clearly, all these religions are not the same. Can they all be true? Is there a true religion?

In this scientific age, is this still a question at all?

- In the modern age, atheists claim there is no supernatural/god(s). In which case, all religions are false.
- However - and this is **important** - the existence/absence of the supernatural/god(s) cannot be proved or disproved - by philosophy or by science. In science, nothing cannot ever be proved; scientists accept their conclusions/theories on faith. Religious people accept the existence of the supernatural on faith; atheists accept the absence of the supernatural on faith.



- [Note: In science however, ideas/hypotheses/theories, by the use of experiments, can be disproved. After an idea is shown to be false, a better idea is proposed and also tested by experiment. Cf the famous quote by Einstein? "No amount of experimentation can ever prove me right; a single experiment can prove me wrong". This is a fundamental approach to gaining knowledge in science. However, no one has been able to devise an experiment to disprove the idea of the supernatural/god(s).
- All contemporary tribes around the world have a belief in the transcendent. Atheism is a recent view, and a minority one at that!
- If one is in doubt, it is more intellectually honest to be agnostic (i.e. not knowing) than to be an atheist.

Criteria for assessing if a religion is true

- As there will be truth and untruth present in all religions, the question could be rephrased as "How can we distinguish between the true and the false, the valuable and the valueless in a religion?" One modern scholar/theologian (Hans Kung) has proposed the use of three criteria to decide, namely:



1. **General ethical criterion.**
2. **General religious criterion.**
3. **Specific religious criterion.**

Criteria 1 and 2 are used when looking when assessing a religion from the outside (e.g. as a historian, a scholar, as a 'neutral' observer); criterion 3 is also used when assessing it from the the inside, i.e. as a believer.

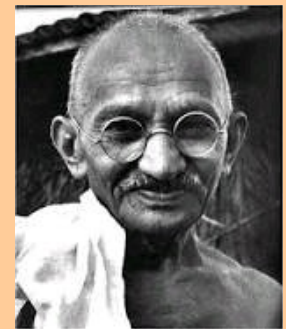
Criterion 1: Does the religion contribute to the genuinely human?

- If a religion protects and fosters the welfare of human beings, **it is a true and good religion.**

- Examples include freedom, human dignity, justice, peace, human rights.
- Religions have always been most persuasive/believable when they succeed in this. As the secular and the religious have gradually separated, the 'human' values that are part of religious have become codified into the secular laws of countries and so have attained acceptance/validity. They have also become codified into the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) (though Islam especially is at odds with this, e.g. women's and children's rights).
- Note: What is good for human beings has changed over time. In neolithic times, it was mainly concerned with survival and security services, e.g, food, protection, peace. In more modern times, it came to include the abolition of slavery, torture Religions must continue to reflect on this to ensure they meet this criterion in a changing world.

Criterion 2: Is a religion true to its origins, that is, its scriptures and the teachings of its founder/authoritative figures?

- If a religion remains true to its 'essence', **it is a true and good religion.**
- A religion will be measured against its scriptures and teachings. Cf Gandhi: “I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”
- Religions continually need to reflect on what is their essence, what is correct and what is not, what is enduring and essential and what is not and adhere to this. This has led to many reform movements in religions.

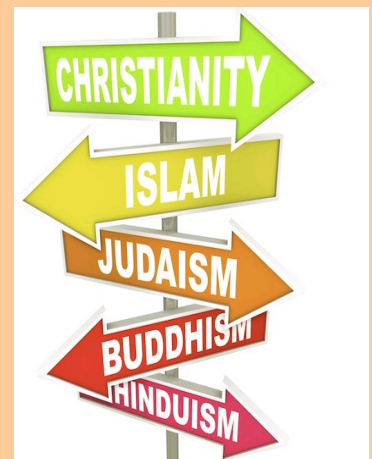


Note: Although the actual written text of a religion cannot change, the way it is *interpreted* can, particularly as times change.

- From criteria 1 and 2 - the external view of a neutral observer, there are various true religions. Cf Gandhi again (1928): “I came to the conclusion long ago ... that all religions were true and also that all had some error in them, and whilst I hold by my own, I should hold others as dear as Hinduism. So we can only pray, if we are Hindus, not that a Christian should become a Hindu ... But our innermost prayer should be a Hindu should be a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim, a Christian a better Christian.“

Criterion 3: How are specific religions true?

- From the 'inside', from the view of a person who accepts its beliefs and teachings, a religion demands that the person follows and lives by these; only in this way can a person understand the religion in all its depth. For such a person, this religion becomes the only one **true religion**. (Of course, because it is a religion, the person also has to accept the idea of god(s)/the supernatural!)



- An example: The teachings from the 'Sermon on the Mount' in Christianity. Living this from the 'inside' (criterion 3) is in agreement with criterion 2 (being true to its origins) and with criterion 1 (to bring about a true humanity).

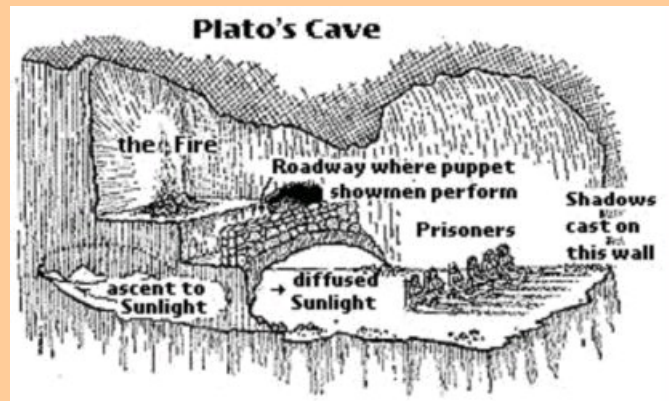
- At the same time, other religions, which are the true religions for millions of others, are the true religions for them. They have truth of their own but also truth in common with other religions. There

will never be any 'absolute' true religion.

- Seen from within, there can be for each person only one true religion, as it is impossible to follow all ways at the same time.
- Cf again the Gandhi quote above that all religions are true.

Notes:

- Respect for human dignity (criterion 1) is a minimum demand made on every religion for it to be true. And vice versa, religion is the fulfilment of true humanity.
- No religion has the whole truth (and we could add science doesn't either!). But elements from other religions can correct and enrich other religions.
- We do not have answers to all the questions/problems in life. We all “see through a glass darkly” (St. Paul. Also Plato's Allegory of the Cave.) This is true of science too; current scientific theories only give us a partial glimpse of the real truth about the physical world but as the theories improve, they get closer to the truth and the glass becomes less dark.
- The three criteria above are valid not only for *religion*. Consider an international lawyer comparing the constitutions of various countries, including his own country. As a neutral scholar, he compares them 'from outside'. As a loyal citizen of his country, he views his national constitution 'from inside' and is bound to this constitution and no other.
- There is not one true religion in which all all religions are part of.



The Future of Religion

- Religions have evolved and will continue to do so. How this will happen we cannot predict.
- Some points to consider:

The supernatural:

- Do we need the supernatural? Are we better off with or without supernatural relationships?
- As was noted above, the issue of God/gods/the supernatural cannot be resolved/proved, and it is irrational to debate irresolvable issues, so religious belief is valid.
- If religion results in lives of greater compassion, service, and healthy self-restraint, it is probably worthwhile. If it produces only self-righteous arrogance, ignorance, and intolerance, then a divorce is preferable.
- William James (father of American psychology) was of a similar view: if an individual believes in and performs religious activities, and those actions happen to work, then that practice appears the proper choice for the individual. If not, it should be discontinued.

Motivation:

- God (or the idea of God) motivates people to act, and these actions have real consequences for individuals and for society. Compared to science, another social movement, religion is more efficient because it **motivates people more effectively**. Only when science begins to capture the same religious fervour, and promotes the welfare of all segments of society, will the two be more equal in people's eyes.

- In the May 27th. 2013 edition of TIME, in an article on relief work following the destruction caused by the tornado in Oklahoma, the writer commented: “... consisted of relief workers, local first-responders, exhausted but still humping it a week after the storm, church groups from all over the country - funny how you don’t see organized groups of secular humanists giving out hot meals -” Church groups, in contrast to their secular counterparts, seem to be more motivated.

Wisdom:

- Religion is one of the **major repositories of wisdom**, representing a huge body of recollections from humanity's past in various stages of its development, which can be used to learn about oneself and one's surroundings (e.g. society, nature). (Science and philosophy are other repositories of knowledge and wisdom.)

What are options for the future? Some possibilities:

1. Religious naturalism/secularisation

- This view holds that science and technology will take the place of religion. There is a lot of emphasis on science and nature.
- Secularisation supports the separation of religion from politics, ethics, and psychology. It is also free of the supernatural.
- This approach is valid, as the supernatural issue cannot be resolved/proved.
- See above for the comments on motivation. To many, this alternative may seem too cold - and too academic.



2. Religious transformation:

- (a) General trends towards more individualism and social disintegration (especially in the West) may produce changes in religion, making religious practice more individualised and spiritually focused. The supernatural may or may not be a part of this.
- (b) [This is *my* idea; I have not seen it mentioned in the literature.] Perhaps a current religion can be modified to remove the supernatural, though whether or not this is feasible I do not yet know. Consider Christianity, the only religion that I am very familiar with. This was created by people who believed in the (idea) of a God and then inferred how this God would want people to live, etc. Perhaps the same inferences could be made without - or just by imagining - a God. However, ideas such as the resurrection will have to go. Miracles too will go, but could be rewritten/explained using modern medical and scientific knowledge.

Note:

Religion evolved to fill the human need for survival and security among groups/societies. The development of *secular/state* social and economic security in Western societies together with the codification of morality and rules of behaviour (especially from Christianity) into their legal systems perhaps explains a lack of need for religion. However, in poor 'third-world' countries, the need for security, food, etc., still exists, so one might expect religions to survive in these parts of the world.

So, how will religions look in 100 years - who knows?
