

About science and religion

- where will it end?

Since the beginning of reason people have asked the questions "why" and "how". Why do we exist? How did we come to be here? Why do I have to suffer? How can I make my life worthwhile? Man's inquisitive nature makes the asking of these questions natural, but that does not necessarily mean that there are answers for each of these questions. The inquisitive nature of man is also combined with a need of knowledge, based on a need of safety. In order to feel safe and secure, man needs to find a way to answer every question that challenges reason. Trial and error combined with simple logic can be termed the "scientific" way of finding these answers, while traditions based on experience of humanity can be termed the "religious answers". Both of these are products of experience and reasoning, but in different aspects. Religion concentrates on the needs of people which are always different between individuals, while science requires answers that can be termed as "facts" because they apply to each and every individual alike.

Traditionally religion has had the answers that cannot be found in science. When science is confronted with the question of origin and purpose it says that we may be the offspring of bacteria without any other purpose than to promote life, but we cannot know for sure neither origin nor purpose. Religion on the other hand comes with solid answers like "God created you" and can often times even tell us why we were created, thereby providing us with some sort of purpose with life. Religion provides answers that are easy to accept, because they can never be proven and are not supposed to be tried with reason. The only argument religion will ever need is "Because God said so". As science progress it will, however, be able to supply humanity with meaningful answers to even complex questions like how we came to be and why we should continue our existence. Therefore, religion has seen a decreased importance for people in enlightened and well educated societies. In Sweden, for example, the Christian church is on its way to transform into something more similar to a charity organization than a religious institution.

When I grew up I was raised to adhere to every word in the Christian Bible as fundamental truth. The way I see it, most of the teachings that I was subjected to served a good purpose, formed from hundreds of years of experience of human behavior, even though I have ultimately found them to be lacking the fundamentals that I always assumed they had (i.e. "there is a god"). A small selection of the ten commandments are sufficient to make any society work without too much problems. Religious traditions has played a very important role in the formations of most countries' laws and regulations. Many religions also provide a good frame for healthy upbringing of children and formation of family values. For centuries religion has been a major backbone of every successful society. In the future, however, we should learn to cope without religion. As science advances religion will play out it's role as comforter and provider of convenient answers. Instead, human rights movements will take on the role of humanity protectors and upholders of justice. This requires - and will be a result of - major changes in upbringing and social behavior. What is important to think about here is that I am definitely not saying that religion is bad, only that it is obsolete. God is, indeed, dead and has probably been so since long before Nietzsche uttered those words.

Even in the most enlightened societies there are those that oppose scientific and rational ways of explaining things, refusing to accept anything but the traditional ways of belief. These people will sometimes resort to extremes like terrorist acts to force everyone else to follow their example. In these cases the people justifying the fanatic persecutions of certain groups of people are most likely driven by an urge to do good, which supersedes the emphatic respect that should be the right of each individual. Sometimes science has become a new religion with fanatics who refuse anyone the right to question the scientific results they provide. When forming the new backbone of society it is important to realize that science has been presenting erroneous results many times, just like religion. Finding absolute truth is no easy task, and few should have the right to claim it.

That said, it will be very interesting to see where science will lead us. How far are we willing to stray from our habits and the patterns that has formed within our heads from the day we are born? I wonder for instance if the word "family" will even be known to future humanoids, and if it is not (or if it will come to mean something entirely different) - is that a bad thing?