The Sociophysics of Theopolitics

Nature, Culture & Human Suffering

I can sympathize with everything, except suffering!
Oscar Wilde

ABSTRACT

      This presentation discusses the interactive role that religion and politics play in certain aspects of the human condition. The question in this context is what happens in society when religious factors enter politics and politics uses religion to attain its ends. History records a plethora of cases where the combination of these two human activities had significant influence the course of events. Has this influence made things better or worse? Is *theopolitics* an inflammable mixture, contributing to an increase or decrease human suffering?

      If we can make a diagnosis or prognosis, is there a proper therapy for our post-modern era. Are present institutional religions outdated, and newer or older beliefs more appropriate for our present needs? What ideological or philosophical principles can challenge man's inhumanity to man? Is the answer for politics to become more humanized and religion more naturalized? This is the central hypothesis examined here.

      Our methodology is based on the theory of *sociophysics*, juxtaposing natural and cultural factors to explain a multifaceted reality of the human condition. Accordingly, we analyze the natural causes (physiology & biology) of cultural effects (religion & politics) to determine how they affect social behavior. Eventually, by improving our philosophical understanding of these relationships, we may be in a better position to handle them in practice.

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THE SOCIOPHYSICS OF THEOPOLITICS

Nature & Culture in Human Suffering

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INTRODUCTION

It is often asked why a benevolent God permits a world full of inequity and misery. If by God we mean an eternal-ubiquitous, omnipotent-omniscient supernatural being, which created and controls everything, then such injustice and intemperance seem incomprehensible. So much so that many people deny the existence of a deity that allows such things to happen. Others cling to the belief that God works in mysterious ways that man cannot understand and must not judge.

Throughout the ages, most people hold to the belief in some divine ethical force, despite much evidence to the contrary. So much so that it seems that such religious feelings are innate in human nature. In that case, is this instinct functional? Has it helped the only species that possesses it survive better in this Darwinian nature? If religion is functional, it must make a difference in improving the capacity of the species to preserve and propagate itself.

In this paper, we contemplate the impact of religion on society. Our question is to what extent religion helped people handle their interpersonal problems. More specifically, for the purpose of this symposium, religion helped or hindered man's inhumanity to man?

In order to answer that, we must find out whether the degree of religious belief creates less suffering. If that is so, do religious differences matter? That is to say, do people of different religions behave differently? There are about 100,000 religions in the world today. Of them, the biggest five to which belong over half the world are: Christianity (25%), Islam (15%), Hinduism (10%), Buddhism (5%), Judaism (0.5%). Are the followers of certain ones better than others? That is what we mean by the question: does religion matter?

The ultimate question of what is the meaning of existence in general and human life in particular will be only discussed in passing, because we focus here in the political aspects of religion, rather than the philosophical or theological ones.

Politics and religion, as part of culture, are unique traits that characterize humanity and distinguish our species from all others. As a sacred ideology, religion is relative to politics and economics. It is a system of ideas about life and death, good and evil, true and false. Religion is supposed to help us deal with our personal and social problems of which we have plenty. This paper need hardly enumerate the plethora of social problems that have always plagued humanity, so we assume that they are widely recognized and appreciated.

On this basis, we attempt to find the causes of these problems and the effect of religion upon them. As these problems change in quality and quantity throughout history, the role of religion also changes. In the present historical juncture, our global problematic seems overwhelming because in addition to the perennial problems, we now have much more widespread people and concentrated power to content with. Human technical and political power for good or evil has increased tremendously, as have the number of people affected by that power. Therefore, if religion can help channel such power in a more benevolent direction, it can certainly be worth its while.

1.   Theoretical Perspectives

1.1. Sociophysics

     In order to understand the relation between politics and religion,
we must place them in the context of their conceptual environment. It
is our fundamental thesis here that this is best captured by the
paradigm of Sociophysics, which combines both cultural and natural
science. This interdisciplinary approach encapsulates a global
perspective that sees our universe of discourse as three concentric
spheres.
     The innermost content of this model is the egosphere, representing
and recognizing the personal and subjective inner world of every self-
conscious being. Surrounding this anthropocentric focus is the outer
world of the sociosphere, as the inter-subjective and inter-personal
arena, where all humans live and act. Finally, enveloping society is the
ecosphere, as the all-inclusive natural context, where everything exists
and extends.
     As a spiritual reality of the egosphere, religion is part of our
mental make-up, along with emotion and reason. Politics, on the other
hand, together with economics and ethnics, belongs to the sociosphere.
As we contend here, both these realms are contained within the
environmental ecosphere of matter, energy, and form.
     This model recognizes implicitly the possibility of an innermost
subconscious and an outermost supernatural level, but considers them as
externalities, above and beyond the scope of this inquiry. This means
that we are not concerned here of the question about the external
existence of God, independently of human conjectures. Consequently, we
regard both politics and religion as manifestations within the first two
spheres of our model. More specifically, we concentrate on the middle
sphere where one can find politics and economics as well as religion, as
exemplary social activities.
     Our thesis here is that behind social phenomena is a natural
predisposition that drives them. Rooted in the egosphere, all relevant
human traits may be represented as three aspects of a single reality, by
adding the "group" to the Cartesian dualism of "mind-body", thereby
getting our trilism of "person-polis-physis."
     This classification applies well to the traditional trichotomy of
physiology, psychology, and sociology. Accordingly, sociophysics
attempts to combine the physical, spiritual, and social aspect of human
nature in an interdisciplinary unity. From that perspective, we look
at politics and religion as two sides of the same coin. Together and
separately, they affect and are affected by encompassing reality.
     From this brief summary of our anthropocentric model may be
concluded that the basic human needs are physiological, psychological,
and sociological. Their fulfillment thus requires natural, cultural,
and spiritual values. Based on an all-inclusive natural
infrastructure, we therefore build upon the intermediacy of the social
structure to culminate with the unique spiritual superstructure of
humanity. This scheme explains in generic terms the causes of human
behavior and thus locates intentional conduct in both its deterministic
and stochastic context.

1.2. Ideologics

Translated into collective terms, these three aspects of individual reality become political ideologies and social activities. As collective mentalities, ideologies guide group actions. Thus, individual ideals transform into mass ideologies, of which religion is a particularly important type. Finally, these ideologies may be implemented by physical actions to affect external reality.

This interpretation recognizes the classical dichotomy between matter and mind as the basic internal-external duality of human life. To these antithetical states, we postulate a conjunction of "will" that makes possible any purposeful action. Human intentionality translates thoughts into acts, thus converting internal desires into external behaviors.

The thoughts and actions of men, however, are constrained by the exigencies of nature. Human volition is not enough to shape events. Natural determinism follows its own course regardless of human intervention. Natural laws must also be taken into account in describing and explaining social phenomena. Human needs and wants can only be fulfilled within the narrow bounds of the all-encompassing natural necessity.

Based on the central dogma of social psychology that behavior depends on both personal and situational variables, Habermas attempted to reconcile exegetic and hermeneutic thinking by critical theory. Similarly, we try to resolve the apparent contradictions between physical and spiritual realms by mediation of social systems. Thus, natural determinism accommodates with human voluntarism to allow for free will and its consequent personal responsibility.

Nevertheless, in addition to free will and bound need, the element of chance should not be overlooked. Whether chance is merely a name for our ignorance or a random reality, it plays a significant part in the scheme of things. Quantum indeterminacy has recently been added to classical determinism, thus rescuing free will as a scientific concept. Chaos should therefore be added to order, thus completing our etiology.

Although these three causalities may seem incompatible, they have been combined by Dennett's compatibilism for a more complete explanation of human behavior. Different proportions of these can account for particular actions in all situations, thereby accepting both mystery and necessity, as the background to free will.

Searching for the relation of politics and religion to the human condition, however, we must distinguish between causes and effects. Both the satisfying and suffering of humanity, may be either the cause or effect of religion. Similarly, politics may provoke or prevent war and peace, as well as recur or result from it.

The different value priorities of people ensure a multitude of ideologies and theologies that try to account for puzzling events. Since all values cannot be maximized together, the interplay among human ideals is a zero-sum game. The gain of one is the loss of another, resulting in conflicting positions and suffering conditions of humanity.

However, since both politics and religion are unique and innate human traits, whether one likes it or not, we have to live with them both. The only question then is to what extent we can contain and control them. If yes, should they be maximized or minimized, could they be amended or ameliorated. These are some of the things we can always discuss, even if we cannot often decide.

1.3. Dialectics

A good way of understanding complex subjects is given by systems analysis. As a set of various components, whose content exists within a certain context, a system may be either real (material) or ideal (mental). This dichotomy distinguishes concrete from abstract types, although they are interrelated and interacting. Obviously, physical reality affects spiritual mentality. Conversely, human ideals, when applied in practice affect the real world.

Ideologies and religions arise in a particular time and place, so they reflect the ideas and realities of that period and region. Although there is always a gap between ideological positions and existential conditions, the two are causally related. Ideas reflect facts, at the same time as they create and destroy them. The feedback between facts and values produces a dynamic spiral alternating back and forth, and shaping both in the image of each other.

Accordingly, certain religions are more probable for certain eras or areas. Logical consistency and practical exigency make some religions feasible or tenable in some places under some conditions. Great religions are known for the intent and extent of their scope in time and place. Obviously, the greater they are, the larger their extension and longer their duration, since such transcendence of time and space raises them above localism and relativism to approach universality and eternity.

Religion is a particular type of ideology, defined as any mental system of normative perspectives, involving values and beliefs that describe reality, inscribes man's place in it, and prescribes proper human behavior. Ideologies are an innate feature of human mentality because they interpret reality and guide reaction to it. Accordingly, religion is a theological ideology, as distinguished from sociological ones. This classical dichotomy between the sacred and secular, distinguishes religious from political ideals and differentiates between their equivalent institutions and implementations.

Strictly speaking, politics is a human activity that attempts to resolve social conflicts by dialectical means. Comparatively, religion creates a mental state that resolves spiritual conflicts by a belief in supernatural means. Whereas politics depends in negotiated compromise, religion demands non-negotiable faith. In this sense, these two concepts are clearly distinct, if not completely antithetical.

What is important for our purposes here is to emphasize that every ideology or religion generates its opposite, as every value has a counter-value. For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction, so for every position there is an opposition. Human minds and social systems create such contradictions and fluctuations. These contradictions among facts, wants and values, gives ideologies their controversial character and infuses history with its cyclic progression

The extremes of these theses and antitheses may be eventually mediated and modified by their political combination into an eclectic and synthetic value position. This dialectical process is the general principle that determines ideological and sociological resolution and evolution, as it does psychological and physiological processes. Since dialectics is in the core of politics, compromise is a general method of resolving natural and cultural confrontations. This symbiotic relationship ties political means with religious ends in what we call theopolitics.

2.REASONS: Necessary Evil: Explanation of Religious Factors

2.1. From Biology to Ethology: Normal Need & Egoistic Greed.

Whether one believes in God or not, feelings of faith and belief are innate in humanity. Holding some consistent opinions about the world beyond facts, interpreting phenomena is essential to human mentality. As Frankl put it, "Man's Search for Meaning" is an unavoidable activity of the human brain. His logotherapy uses the unique human reaction to the world by words. In this sense, one's personality may be defined by its internal responses to external challenges

It is a questionable gift of nature to saddle man with the self-consciousness of his own ineluctable life and inevitable death. As Jaynes hypothesizes on the origins of consciousness and the breakdown of the bicameral mind, the right temporal lobe of the brain seems responsible for activating the limbic system to conceptualize God. The more sensitive that lobe is, the more likely it is to experience spiritual emotions or religious feelings. That is why females are more prone to religiosity than males.

The brain is so structured as to make the potential of religious experience hard-wired into it. Thus, we are programmed to spiritualism as well as to realism. Moreover, human behavior stems also from chemical hormones, such as adrenaline, and compounds, such as endorphins. They are often responsible for many altruistic as well as egoistic acts. Religion buttresses these aggressive-retentive instincts, resulting in the fight-flight option.

Beyond biology, ethology forces us to conclude that much of human behavior is primarily governed by basic animal urges. Group cohesion and recognition form Ardrey's "territorial imperative" and Trotter's "herd instinct," thus determining Morris's "gregariousness" and Lorenz's "we-they" dichotomy. As Lorenz noticed, aggression is socially functional by distinguishing friend from foe. The instincts of self-preservation, nutrition and reproduction account for most animal and human behavior.

Beyond them, geographic and demographic factors, such as location scarcity and population density explain a lot of animal and human behavior. As these increase, so does aggression. If the natural state for humans is over fifteen square kilometers per person, our species now averages a hundred thousand times that. Accordingly, instead of six billion, the carrying capacity of the world could only sustain sixty thousand humans at their natural state.

Science and technology are responsible for this multifold increase of population. More important, the unequal production, distribution and consumption of goods and services increased the size and suffering of the masses in the overpopulated regions of the underdeveloped countries.

In this critical social evolution, religion and politics have played a crucial role, both positively and negatively. The former by providing succor to human suffering and the latter by helping resolve public conflicts. On the other hand, religion can exacerbate political conflicts and vice versa. The combination of biology and ethology thus make for a flammable mixture of natural and cultural factors that are more potent together than separately.

2.2. From Psychology to Theology: Spiritual Beliefs & Fanatic Deeds

       Religion, like superstition, tries to explain the inexplicable,
thus overcoming the limitations of human intelligence. That is why,
prayer is a unique psychological activity, providing deep spiritual
solace. Whether anybody is listening to it or not, prayer gives a
definite mental satisfaction to the supplicant.
       Belief is a consistent conceptualization of subjective opinions,
above, beyond, or even contrary to objective facts. Humans have a
basic need to ponder everything and a deep urge to believe in
something. Instinctively, we make sense of the world by devising
connections, causes or movers, and in doing so, seek to find a meaning
for life. The search for causality eases the fear of death and
existential anxiety by explaining perplexity and finding the reason
why. As William James put it: Fear made God.
       In its core, religion provides a sense of the sacred, a feeling
for something mysterious above and beyond the mundane experience of
ordinary life. Behind the perceptual and palpable phenomena of the
trite world, there is a sublime reality, arousing emotions of awe and
reverence. This reality may be a being, force, or law, giving meaning
and purpose to human life, without which it would be a tale told by an
idiot, signifying nothing.
       Primitive animists imbued consciousness and intelligence to
everything. Religion began with the personification and prioritization
of primitive beliefs in amorphous spirits. Man's innate spirituality
to worship something or someone led to the creation of charismatic
heroes and eventually Gods. Carlyle in his Hero Worship was right on
the mark by categorizing and hierarchizing the whole gamut of heroes,
from prophets and priests to monarchs and kings, as conquerors of evil
and saviors of the faithful. Thus, he implied mankind's forlorn hope
and deep longing to be rescued from life's perils by a deus *ex macina*.
       The origin of religion may be psychological, sociological, or
theological. As was aptly put: mythology is psychology masquerading as
biography and cosmogony. Whether it is innate in humanity, devised by
society or revealed by God, religion denies chance or accident as
causes of events. Rather it proposes a deeper design to account for
whatever happens, thus assigning a cosmic order to all things. Since
human logic and power are limited, religion accounts for ultimate
reason and control by greater mysterious forces, which humans must
recognize and respect.
       Every religion is a creature of the culture that gave it birth.
It does not arise *ex nihilo*. As it is logically or scientifically
impossible to prove the existence of God, it is the subjective belief,
rather than the objective presence that is socially significant.
Religion explains why the world and the human condition are what they
are, thus justifying social values and structures. It prescribes and
proscribes human thought and behavior by assessing values and setting
norms. To do so, it centers on objects of worship and reverence, the
supreme of which may be a natural or supernatural God.
       For theists, then, religion fulfills a primordial human need by
three fundamental tenets:
 God willed, created, and controls the universe;
 God's plan has natural laws for the cosmos and ethical rules for humans;
 God rewards or punishes human behavior during or after their life.
(It was only at the end of the 20th Century that the Pope admitted that
Hell as a mental state and not an actual place).

2.3. From Sociology to Politology

The effect of translating belief into behavior is palpable. Religion functions as a coping strategy for people. As Voltaire said if God did not exist, we would have to invent Him, to cope with the vagaries of life and the dread of death. Similarly competing and contradictory ideals of freedom, justice, love, security and equality, are psychological desires of wish fulfillment translated into sociological concepts of mutual necessity.

The human species evolved as part of nature and so it remains to some extent. With the emergence of self-consciousness in the hardware of the human brain also emerged self-conscience and the software of religion to provide the operating system for human conscience to function. Within that, the most socially crucial function of religion is promoting moral conduct by defining right and wrong, as well as ultimately rewarding good and punishing evil beyond this life.

Based on the herd instinct, gregarious animals, like people, tend to think and act collectively. Religion provides the first and politics the second requirement of social action. In traditional communities, the two aspects of human condition were joined together in church-state institutions, regulating thought and behavior, thus increasing cohesion of their members. Modern societies dichotomized these aspects by rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God, the things that are God's.

Since religion is a mental state related to the right temporal lobes, it modulates or amplifies primal urges. Religious people are prone to engage in otherwise forbidden acts that are encouraged by their deity. Thus, they are prepared to die or, even worse, kill for it. A significant number (10%) of even western educated religious people admitted that they would kill in the name of God.

Although religion provided some admirable incentives for love, harmony, and creativity, it also served as an excuse for hate, ignominy and cruelty. Belief in God need not necessarily and inevitable lead to strife, but that is precisely what happens. Since the beginning of history, religion has been used to justify violence. Men have killed and tortured each other in the name of a loving and tolerant God. Although many differences of secular opinion are acceptable, religious ones are more likely to escalate to lethal conflict. History has not recorded any wars due to scientific disputes, but a plethora of religious ones.

Although wars may be driven by economic and political factors, group dynamics are strongly determined by manipulation of religious beliefs. Violent conflicts, like wars, develop by a cascade of biological-psychological-theological-sociological factors. For the sake of good ends, men willingly use bad means. Violence perpetrated in the name of God is thus commonplace: Crusades, Inquisitions, Jihads, hecatombs and Holocausts are only the tip of the iceberg.

Demonizing an enemy permits and justifies many abhorrent acts, otherwise forbidden. Similarly doing certain things collectively is acceptable, whereas individually would be unthinkable. Unlike political motivations, religious reasons add extraterrestrial and postmortem rewards or punishments to human actions here and now. It is much easier to justify something as the will or order of God than that of self or state. Thus, the combination of biological instincts and theological beliefs make for a volatile mixture of sociological traditions including aggression and violence.

3.SOLUTIONS: Classic Wisdom: Prescriptive Therapy of Ideological Wisdom

3.1. Ecology: Holistic Naturalism & Environmental Conservatism

As science tells us, life fights entropy by trying to proceed
from chaos to cosmos and darkness to light, thus delaying eventual
death. Religion accepts such inevitable death for material things
only, but goes further to soften the ultimately inescapable death, by
offering humans the possibility of spiritual immortality. The relation
and transition between life and death has many variations in different
cultures. Since theopolitics, arose in ancient Greece, we look in that
civilization to see what it can offer us in this matter.

For the Greeks, theology was, as all the other sciences, part of
philosophy studied rationally. Hence, it had no given dogma or credo. A
religious person was not a believer in God or a member of a Church, but
had an evolving personal respect and adoration for divinity. Unlike
super-naturalistic religions, classical religion had no original sin,
therefore did not need a savior.

Greek mythology consists of the symbolic theology of ancient
mysteries, revealing by its symbols and allegories the perennial truths
in physical and spiritual laws. Earth is mother and Sun father of all.
E*irene* is the daughter of *Themis*, sister of *Eunomia* and Dike, as well
as mother of *Plutos*. This genealogy meant that there can be no peace
or plenty without law and justice; no politics or economics, without
rule and order. Thus, nature and culture were tightly bonded.

Since classical civilization was based on naturalism (*physiolatria*),
it promoted paidia for civilized patriotism (*philopatria*), esthetic
moralism (*philocalia*), and wise rationalism (*philosophia*): i.e. value
participation in political citizenship, build mental and physical beauty,
as well as search for scientific truth. Thus, was opposed to bureaucracy,
technocracy, autocracy, and theocracy. Monotheism tends to autocracy if not
theocracy because it draws values from up high and transmits them down
below. This is the antithesis of egalitarian democracy and natural
egalitarianism, where all the member-parts play their necessary role.

Classical religion was not idolatric but ideolatric, because it
revered mental and material reality, trying to adapt humanity to the
universal rhythm of natural law, cosmic order and divine perfection.
For this reason, there was no prayer for special favors that override
natural laws. Instead, people praised gods and purified themselves by
cathartic deeds to help them towards perfection.

In this sense, polytheism idealizes decentralized democracy, as
monotheism does absolute monarchy. In the former, man evolves
collectively and cooperatively as a citizen by perfecting the civic
virtues of the community. As classical religion has no single bible as
its dogma, nor central authority to translate this, it is more tolerant
of other religions and ideologies. It emphasizes measure and justice,
and decries fanatic extremism and hubris.

Unlike the God of monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianism,
Islamism), the Gods of polytheism are creatures and subjects of the
supreme Law of Nature. Evil is thus whatever goes against the eternal
nature of things and not the arbitrary teachings of a prophet. Classical
education leads towards the self-knowledge of self-limitation, which is
true spiritual happiness of the golden mean. From Xenophanes of Colophon
to Phyros of Elea, classical philosophy introduced rational skepticism to
emotional absolutism. It never pretended to be a revealed truth by God,
but only a search for knowledge by combining logic and instinct, hoping
it was the right way to fuse theory and practice into holistic sophia.

3.2. Philosophy: Conditional Skepticism & Tolerant Stoicism

Classical Greek science focuses in understanding nature, whereas modern Baconian science aims at controlling it. This difference stems from the ancient belief that all nature is alive and conscious, therefore to be respected and adored; unlike the modern notion that it is man's servant to be managed, if not slave to be exploited. In contradistinction to this modern technological mechanism, the post-modern equivalent of classical religion is deep ecologism.

The Greeks believed that the battle between cosmic ectropy and chaotic entropy is a continuous struggle of opposites that make up universal reality. The Pythagorean Triad (*arche-mese-telos*) and the Socratic Dialectic (thesis-antithesis-synthesis) lead from discord to accord. Their advice 'know thyself' (gnothe s'auton) is a conscious recognition and constructive delusion of one's emotions.

Such empathetic responses in social interactions involve increased introspection by refocusing mental activity in the emergent conscious neocortex rather than the primitive autonomic limbic lobe. For negative or destructive emotions, this means explaining rather than exhibiting them. Clearly, the experience of deep emotions, as appreciation of life or beauty is not the exclusive prerogative of theists. Neither is the perpetration of crimes and the predilection to evil the monopoly of atheists.

The question is would human behavior be better with a belief in God or not? On the contrary, could it be better if humans assumed the God did not exist and it was up to them to accept full responsibility for their actions? Would it be better to believe that the source of that indefinable and ineffable essence that defines and guides you is to be found inside or outside the self.

It is our hypothesis that external believers may be more likely to engage in great deeds and less likely to commit gross acts than internal ones. But regardless of what one believes, the world would be a better place if we behaved as if we were solely responsible for our life on earth and therefore had to solve our problems on our own, here and now.

The civilizing process is the movement from automatic self-centeredness to autonomic self-restraint. People become civilized when they realize that it is more efficient and effective to live by mutually acceptable rules than by unilateral brute force. A healthy civilization combines individualism and collectivism as a harmonious balance of polymorphism. In such system, opposites can coexist, as yin and yang are both necessary and desirable components of an integrated whole. As Empedocles and Heraclitos put it: "*ek panton en kai ex enos polla*" (from many one and from one many). There is therefore no false opposition between the individual and the community.

It was only later when unlike the Sophists who proclaimed man as the measure of all things, Platonists claimed that God was the measure: "*Theos metron olon.*" This shift took the onus off the conscience of individuals and placed it to the exigency of deities. Man was thus only responsible in translating and executing the will of God through a caste of self-appointed diviners. This platonic interpretation opposed egalitarian democracy and strengthened social hierarchy by its dichotomy of "*oi aristoi kai oi polloi*."

3.3. Ethology: Ethical Humanism & Moral Liberalism

A central tenet of ethics is that to be moral involves consideration of others and concern for the consequences of one's actions. People who are aware of consequences are more likely to be considerate. Since life becomes more fractious and fragile, as society becomes dense and complex, greater care is necessary for civilized and moral human behavior.

We are a gregarious and aggressive, cooperating and conflicting species that succeeded in colonizing this planet far too well. Since our religious beliefs are sources of intellectual fuel stoking the biological fires of our instinctive aggresivity, they must be controlled and curtailed. It does not matter what one believes, but how one behaves, so it is not thought but action that we should and could do something about. In politics, it is by your acts, not ideas, that you are judged and remembered. It need not be the reality of soul or God, but the effect that one has on the world that determines one's impact in life and ultimately his immortality beyond it.

However, the long history of religion and the continuing demand for spirituality suggests that no society will ever be able to do entirely without some form of religiosity. Most people believe in some external deity, although the degree of this belief varies enormously in place and time.

To attain and maintain the allegiance of his followers, a God must wield power to act on behalf of his flock. Unfortunately, God is no longer believed to exercise such power to intervene in world affairs, controlled as they are by other earthly forces. Where traditionally events were felt to lie in God's domain, in the modern world they were transferred to the secular state.

In the post-modern world religion is no longer a matter for church or state, but a private affair left to the choice of each person. Agnosticism, individualism and capitalism combine to place ultimate responsibility on personality and not on deity, nor society. This makes it a much harsher world of naked apes who cannot depend nor blame God or state for their lives, successes or failures.

The conditions that sprang major religious movements in the past are here again. The growth of mega-structures, the weakening of the family, the confusion of moral standards, the spread of urbanization, the rapidity of mobility, all these produce anxiety and anomie, alienation and disorientation that cry for some psychological security. Science and technology have made the world comforting materially but confusing spiritually.

Since both facts and fictions, acts and values are responsible for human reality, religion has a role to play in it. The question then is which religion can play that role more effectively. The changing realities of each historical era and geographical location, made each successful religion optimal in its time or place. Historically, however, new religions were established by the support of political regimes, something that is rare today because modern states are secular. This separation of church and state thus make the future of religion more difficult to predict.

CONCLUSION

    In his Moral Discourses, Epictetus wrote that reaction to
challenges show who we are. If the meaning of life is what you make of
it under stress, we should investigate whether religion makes a
difference in that reaction, thus determining human identity. In the
present investigation, we provided more pertinent questions than
answers, which made it unabashedly philosophical. Even so, from the
foregoing discussion, we suspect that an objective report card for the
role of religion in human affairs has to add up to a final score of C.
This is to say that religion provided humanity with some good, but also
a lot a bad advice.
    On the plus side, religion brought a measure of order in society
by impressing upon its believers the need to uphold some fundamental
principles. By bringing forth certain revealed truths, religions
enshrined codes socially acceptable behavior which benefited collective
life. So-called God-given commandments were very valuable in promoting
uniformity and conformity and reducing arbitrary and antisocial
behavior. In this sense, religion is part of the civilizing process.
    On the minus side, religion has divided the world precisely
because it has created another layer of differentiation and united each
one of them by distinguishing it from the others. Therefore, it is
difficult to determine whether religions prevented more conflicts, wars
and ultimately misery than they caused.
    Be that as it may, if as we have seen, religion is inevitable,
the central question is which religion is the lesser evil or the higher
good in the present and foreseeable circumstances. In the present
complex global system physical, biological, social and psychological
problems and solutions are interrelated and cannot be dealt with in
isolation. Now, it is the first time in history that people can
consciously choose their religion individually with impunity, as well
as engage in a social dialogue about it.
    In joining this dialogue, we submit the case for the classical
Hellenic religion as the best candidate for this role. The
adaptability, tolerance and naturalness of classical Hellenic religion
is the main reasons for its contemporary application because they
militate against fanaticism, consumerism and fundamentalism. The high
value Greeks placed on citizen rather than subject, on doubt rather
than certainty, creation rather than conservation, fits post-modernity
better than traditional dogmas.
    As an undogmatic religion, Olympianism emphasizes dynamic,
flexible and active lives which are more fitting for contemporary life
never had a religious dogma, nor an institutional church. Its priests
as a class, never held political power.
    Classical religion can help modern life by emphasizing: civic
virtue (cooperative citizenship, participatory democracy, political
tolerance); civilized culture (well-rounded person, sophisticated
values, esthetic simplicity); central nature (healthy mind in healthy
body, respect and protect environment); right reason (free thought,
scientific research, logical discourse, liberal education; and creative
action (constructive work, artistic discovery, sexual equality).
    Given the problems of modern life, classical theology is much
more suitable as a solution. The classical gods are part of a value
system based on respect for nature, combining body and spirit. Its
fusion of matter and mind, reverts the rigid Cartesian rational dualism
into a flexible Aristotelian natural polymorphism.

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