

Discussion of the nature and direction of philosophy, religion and ethics and their relationship within the wider range of humanities (2000 words)

Philosophy is the study of many key aspects of our lives and the world in which we live, including the nature of reality, morality and knowledge and the relationship of the mind. (Author Not Mentioned, Oxford References). Religion as a study is to understand the various aspects of religion through the use of other intellectual ideas. The growth of various other disciplines throughout history have given a more analytical approach in which religion can be studied and viewed. Disciplines such as psychology mix well with religion as many religions have doctrines, rituals and social interactions which allows something like the study of psychology to analyse how this works (Robert Segal And Ninian Smart, The Britannica). Ethics is the study of moral principles that help to define aspects of humanity such as what is right and wrong and what is the right way to live. It also somewhat controls how a person chooses actions. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that concerns itself with finding the difference in issues such as good and evil and gives a framework on decisions in different contexts from something like personal dilemmas to a more professional dilemma which could also be based on potential consequences of the action in its context (author Not Mentioned, BBC Introduction to Ethics).

Philosophy is the pursuit for truth and to understand vital aspects of not only human life, but also for the greater universe, truths such as our very existence through the examination of methods and meanings of all aspects of society such as politics, religion and morality. The very nature of philosophy is to find clarity and reasons for our thoughts and actions (American Philosophers Committee, American Philosophical Association, Edits between 1976-2017). The academic study of religion is essentially about the study of people and their behaviours, beliefs and practises. Religion however has no set description, many believe it to be believing in a deity or deities, following scriptures and practises. Hinduism for example however, to the western world, Hinduism is seen as a religion for many reasons but Hindu's would say it is not a religion and is what they call 'sanatana dharma' which means their obligation is to follow what they are taught as part of their belief. Even Latin, a language in which many religions are translated from in one way or another, has no direct translation for the word 'religion'. The closest term to 'religion' in Latin by its more commonly known use are the terms 'religare' and 'religere' which in their respective contexts mean 'to bind something tightly together' and 'to pay close attention'. This leaves us with many questions to investigate, questions such as if a culture doesn't have the concept or translation for the word 'religion' as we know it, then can it truly be studied as a religion? (Russell T. McCutcheon, Department Of Religious Studies, The University Of Alabama) As part of the ethics section of the discipline, different moral theories such as utilitarianism which promotes actions which produce the most good and minimizes suffering (Stanford Encyclopedia Of Philosophy, Julia Driver, March 27, 2009, revised July 31 2025), deontology which is the morality of an action is then based on if it follows a set of rules rather than based on the consequences (National Library Of Medicine, Jennifer M Barrow and Paras B Khandhar, August 8 2023) and virtue ethics with the focus on the character of the individual rather than on rules or consequences to find what is 'right' (Ethics Guide - Virtue Ethics, author not listed, 2014) are studied in order to help develop knowledge on how different ethical views

can be seen through the world and how to apply these ethical views into real world issues. For example, the nature of moral judgement through the eyes of different moral theories.

Philosophy's direction in the future is headed towards a more interdisciplinary and broadening scope as philosophy often crosses boundaries, such as metaphysics and ethics, which will lead to more in depth issues about modern dilemmas such as politics, science, the environment, sex and gender. This is seen as courses which focus on philosophy as part of the discipline now engage more in topics involving climate ethics and how philosophy of language and oppression has changed. Its direction is further changed as secular philosophy isn't as prominent anymore with the emergence of growing interest in how religious themes, language and metaphysical questions show in a post-secular meaning. A study note by Shahadat Hoshen says "religious thought is increasingly recognized as a vital element in rethinking ethics, politics and metaphysics" which highlights how religion is becoming more vital for how philosophy is re-thought (Shahadat Hoshen, RSIS International Journal, October 3rd 2025). The direction religion is headed however is worrying for believers of religion in the way that pluralism in many previously religious areas is becoming much more common in the world. While the traditionally prominent religions are still strong in many areas, the rise in secularism, spirituality, and inter-faith alongside many religious believers engaging with science to help explain aspects of sacred texts and ethics which we see as many religious societies no longer follow aspects of their texts which may be seen as old fashioned or not co-operative with modern society, these show a sense of how religion is moving away from a dominated area across the world with strict rules, and towards a more lenient area. Rather than just being a doctrine, religion is being more seen by scholars as an influence to ethics, identity, social justice and community, with the study of religion being more on how people choose to live their lives either religiously or secularly, and how religious traditions have adapted and will further adapt to the new perspectives of the world. (Author Not Mentioned, Britannica) The direction in which ethics is headed is towards how ethical many debates are and how we can morally perceive them. The moral code expansion (Founded By W.E.H Lecky, 1869) is the concept in which humans slowly become more morally concerned with other beings. Lecky found that over time people came to include more individuals in their "circle of benevolent affections". This evolving idea bases its argument on two key claims. The first is that all sentient beings matter since they can feel both suffering and pleasure including animals alongside people, the second being that despite this, many humans still currently exclude many sentient beings such as non-humane animals despite scientific proof of them being sentient. This argument is still being fought and is compatible with ethical theories such as consequentialism, but can also be argued it also shows a sense of immoral hierarchical views as they decide which lives they deem matter more than others (Jacy Reese Anthis, The Science Direct, June 2021). A further direction in which ethics as a topic is headed is that ethical debates are being applied to more real world issues such as climate change, the ethics of using AI, bioethics with the use of genetics and end of life decisions such as euthanasia (University Of Sheffield).

The relationship between philosophy and history is deeply connected. Philosophy as a connection to history looks at the theoretical foundations of historical practices, how they are or were applied and the social consequences of history and its subjects such as historiography. The philosophy of history utilizes theories in some of the main branches of philosophy such as metaphysics through exploring questions about reality, causation and the nature of existence as their application to historical events, and epistemology through how

someone can analyze how past events and knowledge can be understood considering previously known knowledge along with historical biases such as social and gender roles of time periods. These two philosophical theories can be applied to look at questions about the nature of the past, its events and how we can understand them better and also how to look at evidence, relics and artifacts to see how the past may have shaped to look. As is also the case with other areas of studies linked to the humanities, the philosophy of history looks at the uniqueness of its subject area such as less of a focus on what things are but why they are there and why they are there (Anthony K Jensen, Internet Encyclopedia Of Philosophy). The relationship between philosophy and theology however can be seen as quite difficult due to christian doctrines and what they often raise. For example, christians say they are a monotheistic faith while also identifying that god is made of the holy trinity. From a philosophical point of view, it's difficult to see how a singular god of worship can also be made up of 3 separate figures to worship. However, in some of the earliest recorded years of christianity, christian thinkers drew on philosophical thinking to help defying orthodox doctrines for the catholic church as it faced many challenges. Due to this, these thinkers known as Patristic thinkers may not have had any distinction between a philosopher and a theologian at all during this time (William Wood, Stanford Encyclopedia Of Philosophy, October 15th 2021). Religion and history are very close in terms of their relationship as the foundation of religion was vital for almost every aspect of human civilization, politics and societal structures and norms while also playing a role in shaping historical events. Its relationship also goes the other way as we cannot think of religion without also thinking of the religions history which is often told through scriptures, texts, practises and word of mouth passage. The meanings of religion also changed throughout historical periods. How the universe was seen, how the afterlife was treated, how life itself was treated, all these are examples of how religion allowed for thinking to evolve throughout history. There are also many questions about religion which religious historians wonder about. Have different religions influenced one another, and if so, then how? Why did religion emerge? Is it to promote communities within society? Is it to feel a sense of worth within the world? These are all examples of what religious historians often ask and often teach others to think about (Author Not Mentioned, Yale University Department Of History). The discipline of ethics is known to have a very good relationship with the subject of law while also remaining distinct from each other. A main distinction between the two is that law has set rules and regulations that rule society to keep an order within society. Ethics on the other hand is often subjective about what someone deems to be ethically and morally right or wrong based on internal principles. Both ethics and the law however are designed to regulate human behaviours, just in different ways which can make situations quite complex. For example, a situation such as stealing bread to feed your family would lawfully be illegal but would ethically may be seen as just. But actions such as lying to someone would not be seen as illegal, but would be seen as morally wrong (Lauren A. Ferrari, The Ethics Institute At Kent Place School).

Therefore to conclude, we can see that the nature of philosophy is to not only understand and question vital aspects of human life but also for the universe. The nature of religion is to study human behaviours, their beliefs and also their practises and to further understand them and their religions alongside their belief in their faith. The nature of ethics is to determine morality which can be done through actions by looking at the consequences, known as consequentialism, of the actions but also how much suffering or pleasure, utilitarianism, it brings.

Philosophy's direction is headed towards a broader scope as we can see a further emphasis on modern issues such as politics, science and the environment through philosophical theories such as metaphysics. The direction that religion is going is trending away from secularism and towards pluralism which can be seen as worrying for the future of religions through traditions, practises and word of mouth ways of keeping the faith alive will slowly start to fade. The more prominent religions however are still strong in many areas across the world, but lesser known faiths are at an increased risk of pluralism. The way ethics as a subject is headed is towards how ethical many modern debates are and how we can morally perceive them. A debate that has become more modernised for example is the debate of animal safety due to their sentience.

The relationship between philosophy and other humanities subjects is that with history for example, the connection comes from theoretical foundations of historical practices. The relationship that religion has with other history as a humanities subject is quite very close as religion built the foundations of which societies, politics and much of historic moments is built off of. The relationship between ethics and law is good while also being distinct as how they handle many ethical and lawful decisions can often clash, but much of the laws made is made of ethical decisions.

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