

An insight into the world of Religion, Philosophy and Ethics

The humanities are written throughout the world, every step you take can be linked to a subject of the humanities. In this sense, the world is full of Religion, Philosophy, and ethics, which has heavily impacted both the past and present.

Religion is a vital influence on modern day, as the future becomes today religions grasp on humanity thrives and becomes a driving force between the mindset of many individuals. There are six main world religions which are Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Sikhism, each of these religions have their own God, beliefs and worship practices that have made them so popular in this day and age. According to [worldatlas.com](https://www.worldatlas.com) '30% of the global population' are Christian, 'Roughly 1.8 billion' are Muslim, '1.1 billion' are Hindu, '500 million' are Buddhist, '25 million' are Sikh and 'Roughly 14 million' are Jewish. ([Price, C. \(2022\) The 10 largest religions in the world](#)). Despite these faiths all seeming separate they are all interconnected, they all share a core set of beliefs which include up to or all of 'belief in a higher power, respect for others, and a sense of community.' ([Melana, D.E. \(2022\) What all religions have in common: A look at the core beliefs of world's major faiths](#)). These core beliefs then therefore unite the religions, allowing the followers to connect with people from all walks of life.

This is why interfaith dialogue is so pivotal in modern day religion. Interfaith dialogue could be carried out in a number of ways 'It could be young people of different faiths having casual discussions about their beliefs and religious practices. Religious leaders of different faiths might gather to discuss their responses to a specific issue, such as the treatment of refugees or climate change, and they may all campaign together as one united voice.' However, with the age of technology 'discussions often happen on social media. There are many online forums that enable people from different faith communities across the world to discuss matters of belief, religious practice, and to share their perspectives on many different issues.' ([What does it mean to live in multi-faith society? - KS3 Religious Studies - BBC Bitesize - BBC Bitesize \(2024\)](#)). By having communal spaces that people of all ages and religions can communicate with one another in about their religions, which then furthers the knowledge about religions in other communities.

However, Interfaith dialogue and knowledge of other religions does not always bring people together, as extremists can take religion to far. One of the main examples of extremism between religions is the Holocaust. Adolf Hitler was responsible for the worlds biggest genocide throughout the entirety of history, which resulted in the deaths of roughly six million people many of which were Jewish. 'In 1933 Germany had approximately forty-five million Protestant Christians, twenty-two million Catholic Christians, 500,000 Jews and 25,000 Jehovah's Witnesses. Religion was a huge part of people's everyday life and culture... the Nazis saw religion as a threat to their total power. Jews and Jehovah's Witnesses were the major religious minorities in Germany in the 1930s. Hitler and the Nazis oppressed and persecuted all Jews. Jehovah's Witnesses faced similar persecution and oppression for their disobedience to the regime. As the majority religion, the Nazis approached the complex 'problem' of Christianity differently. Whilst the Nazis believed that Christianity and Nazism were ideologically incompatible, they were not initially openly hostile to the Protestant and Catholic Churches.' ([Religion - The Holocaust Explained: Designed for schools \(1933\)](#)). This is noticeably one of the largest extremist acts that occurred because of religion, it can also be argued that the

holocaust inspired those who are on the egotistical side of their religions to begin their own acts of extremism. Another example of this is 9/11. The event of 9/11 was a tragic event that caused 2,977 people to lose their lives, the event occurred when the terrorist group Led by Osama Bin Laden, called al-Qaeda hijacked a plane and crashed into the twin towers 'Al-Qaeda blamed the US and its allies for conflicts in the Muslim world.' ([Jackson, P. \(2024\) September 11 attacks: What happened on 9/11?](#)). If interfaith dialogue were used in the way it is intended, these tragic events throughout history would most likely of never of happened, as religious believers would be able to express their religion in a safe and respected environment. But this will never happen because there will always be a power-hungry authority that will pray on those minorities, we can hope for a better future where all religions can coexist peacefully however this is extremely unlikely.

Philosophy is defined as 'the study of the nature and meaning of the universe and of human life' by the oxford dictionary, and the primary role of philosophers is to observe and question the world around them. When philosophy first originated it was in close cohorts with science and classical antiquity, to the extent that philosophy and science were used interchangeably within the English language, in recent centuries the terms have now been separated but since the link between the origins stood firm many scientists still refer to philosophy in their writing.

This even includes some of the great scientists of the twenty first century have included philosophy or philosophy of religions within their research. For instance, during Stephen Hawking's research into the big bang theory he referred to God on multiple occasions. 'At the big bang and other singularities, all the laws would have broken down, so God would still have had complete freedom to choose what happened and how the universe began' (Hawking, S.W. (1988) *A brief history of time: from the Big Bang to black holes*). This is not to say that Stephen Hawking was saying that the big bang theory was caused by God, but he was looking at the causation of the universe from multiple different perspectives. In the same way that philosophers must view the world, for if we look at the world from just one perspective, we run the risk of being blind or biased to moral and immoral acts alike.

The philosophy of religion is argued amongst scholars and everyday people alike. For when an individual questions their faith and whether there actually is a God, they are delving into the world of philosophy. Philosophers who focus on religion or see the world from a perspective of religion i.e. Christianity, will often ask the question '*Is there a God?*' this question can then be further extended to fit certain situations or dilemmas for example 'if there is an *omnibenevolent* God, then *why* is there suffering?'. There are three main arguments that argue for God's existence, and these are, the cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments. The cosmological argument investigates causation, the idea that all things in the world must have a cause, hence this cause must be God. The Teleological argument is known as the design argument, which states that the world is too complicated to have to have been just brought into existence, therefore there must be a designer. This argument also investigates the idea that all objects and beings (humanity) have a '*telos*' (purpose) that only can be fulfilled by the guidance of a contingent being (God). Whereas the ontological argument argues that God is that than which nothing greater can possibly be perceived, this idea means that human minds cannot conceive or imagine anything greater than God, since he is omnipotent, omnibenevolent, omnipresent, and omniscient. All three of these arguments have been countered and

argued tirelessly back and forth amongst philosophers and scholars alike and are key examples of philosophy of religion debates.

The oxford dictionary defines ethics as ‘moral principles that *control or influence* a person’s behaviour.’ From a religious perspective, the moral principles would be their religion, which therefore controls or influences the individual’s behaviour. For example, if a woman were to steal from a shop it would be ethically wrong, however if the woman were stealing a bottle of baby formula for her newborn baby, then ethics comes into question. Many ethicists would say that we would have to consider the woman’s circumstances and what other factors would have caused her to shoplift. For instance, the woman could be homeless and is only shoplifting as a last resort, in this case we can now look at this from a religious perspective, more specifically that of Christianity. Those who follow the Old Testament would more than likely say that stealing is wrong full stop as in Leviticus it states, ‘Do not steal.’ (Leviticus 19:11). Whereas those who follow the New Testament would choose to forgive the woman ‘For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.’ (Matthew 6:14). This works in the same way with ethical arguments, John Finnis’ adaptation of St Thomas Aquinas’ Natural Law would have the woman prosecuted for her actions as stealing is wrong under all circumstances. Whereas Bernard Hoose would argue that via proportionalism we must consider the woman’s situation before prosecution, therefore since the woman stole to ensure her infant baby would be able to eat her actions are justified as she was acting in an attempt to save and nourish her baby.

Ethics is vital in society as it allows us to decipher whether something is right or wrong. This can be applied to modern day dilemmas such as animal testing. Many ethicists would argue that animal testing can never be justified as it brings harm onto living creatures, however what if the harm of one creature could save the lives of hundreds upon thousands of humans. For example, the covid vaccine. When creating the covid vaccine testing on animals was pivotal to determine that the vaccine would in fact work rather than worsen the disease. Despite the animal suffering many would argue that the lives of the animals are lesser than those of humans, especially from the perspective of Christianity as majority of Christians believe that animals do not have souls which therefore makes their lives less important to that of humans. Since the covid-19 vaccine could save billions of lives the suffering of some animals could be justified.

In the same way Religion, Philosophy and Ethics are all interconnected, they are also interconnected with the rest of the humanities as philosophy is writhe throughout all subjects, since asking the big questions about anything within the world can be linked back to philosophy. Even ethics can be linked throughout the humanities, for instance when looking back at World War II in history many scholars would question the holocaust and how unethical the acts of Hitler were. In the same sense religion is brought up within everyday discussion and has impacted all subjects, take archaeology many artifacts and ruins of buildings will have some element of religion within their design as religion has almost always had some type of impact upon all of history.

Furthermore, Religion, Philosophy and Ethics have impacted the world we currently live in immensely, either through past horrific events such as the holocaust or by developments in science, such as the big bang theory and Stephen Hawkings

acknowledgment to Philosophy of religion throughout his book *A brief history of time: from the Big Bang to black holes*. It is evident that Philosophy, Religion and Ethics have been pivotal throughout the past and will likely continue to be throughout the future.

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