

PAPER : PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

TOPIC : NATURE OF RELIGION

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The word RELIGION derived from the Latin word religare (“to tie” or “to bind”) and religio (“conscientiousness,” “respect,” “awe,” or “sanctity”). The idea is that the soul Is bound to God. Religion has been defined as everything from the immediate awareness of identity with the absolute, to the passionate striving for the transcendent, to the psychological projection of the idealized human self onto The infinite, to the consciousness of the highest social values. For German theologian Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher , religion is the feeling of utter dependence; for Danish philosopher Harald Höffding the individual’s desire to conserve value; for Kant, the recognition of moral duties as divine commands; for Dutch American anthropologist Annemarie de Waal Malefijt , any system of actions and interactions based on culturally shared beliefs in sacred supernatural powers; for Müller, the intuitive faculty of apprehending the infinite; for British historian Arthur Darby Noc, the human refusal to accept helplessness; for ancient Greek philosopher Plato, the science of begging and getting gifts from the Gods; and for German socialist philosopher Karl Marx, the opiate of the people. For Søren

Kierkegaard, the father of existentialism, religion is a matter of individual subjective passion and is a “leap” involving also “dread and fear”.

Thus, religion is an attitude, or a sum of attitudes, constituting a way of life. Religion may thus be the total of an individual’s sincere attitudes and predispositions toward that which serves as the final expression of his or her particular primary interest or goal. The various institutions of religion would arise only after a group shares certain attitudes that were first felt by an individual, and as a result of this sharing.

Perhaps the most accurate definition, according to Luft combines the ideas of two German Americans, liberal theologian Paul Tillich and psychologist Erich Fromm “any system of thought, feeling, and action, typically shared by a group, which gives the individual a frame of orientation, a meaning of life, and an object of devotion, which is regarded as a matter of ultimate concern.”

There is also the idea of salvation or liberation which is common to all religions, though it may be understood very differently.

Finally, all religions are communitarian expressions. Indeed, ‘religions emerge when people come together, share their experiences and, somehow or the other, arrive at certain helpful structures which bind them to each other and facilitate the expression and celebration of their common vision. Thus religions, as communitarian expressions of shared Convictions, become structured or institutionalized. But this is what

makes many serious-minded and sincerely religious people suspicious of religion, or to put it more precisely, at the highly organised and formal religious set-ups (or structures) that they are confronted with.

THE THREE ‘C’S OF ORGANIZED RELIGION

The three ‘C’ that is Creed, Code, Cult found in any organized religion.

Creed is a kind of summary list of the particular doctrines to which all would be followers of a specific religion are required to give their unqualified assent.

In a very tightly organized religion, failure to do so would invite unpleasant repercussions.

Code comprises all those moral rules and derived customs that followers of a particular organized religion are supposed to live by, day to day. These may include styles of dress, dietary prescriptions, allotted “holy days” for worship, “Penitential times” for fasting and as on. Most religion seems to agree on basic moral principles as respect for elders, no stealing and the like. There is a difference of opinion, however, as regards certain issues on sex, such as birth control and some other areas, as the use of violence, even in times of war and so on.

Cult refers to the various rubrics that govern how Official (individual or communitarian) worship of a particular religion is to be carried out. This may include a host of minutiae, such as ‘who is authorized to conduct the form of Prayer, what vestments the priests or officials are supposed to wear, what precise words and gestures are to be when,

which symbolic objects are to be employed in what way and at what precise moment in the vent, and so on.

The degree of meticulousness with which these are to be observed varies from religion to religion. Quite frequently it is required that the service be conducted in the same ancient language that was current when the religion first saw the light of day - even if the language's -a dead one, -a foreign tongue, in most cases, unknown to the vast majority of the devotees. Invariably the ritual is considered "invalid" and inefficacious if some item of these de-tails has not been scrupulously observed.