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An empirical analysis of the correlation between philosophical perspectives and atheism

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Abstract: Our main objective in this research is to affirm that philosophy, in its true essence and depth, has never been inherently opposed to religion. Rather, the turn toward atheism within philosophy represents isolated, personal stances, often reactionary in nature, and not rooted in genuine intellectual reflection, which the Qur'an encourages and calls people to adhere to. Our endeavor is to show that the call to atheism is foreign to reason, understood as a sound faculty or a sense linked to the pursuit of truth, as previously demonstrated by Descartes in his focus on the principles and methods of philosophical inquiry. To facilitate the achievement of these goals, we have employed several methodologies, primarily the structural method, which helps us analyze selected texts, this methodology enables the understanding of the elements within the studied positions, the relationships that link them, and the underlying implications upon which they are based. We will apply this method practically when analyzing conceptions that reject religion, uncovering the framework underpinning each conception. This approach facilitates comprehension by examining the rational foundations that support each interpretation of religion and later pave the way for its denial or transcendence. The historical method, which allows us to trace the development and dissemination of atheism, this approach is based on the premise that every sensory or intellectual phenomenon has an origin defined by time and place, evolving through transformations and additions over time. By employing this method, we can trace the development of various interpretations of religion and understand the intellectual accumulations shaped by successive historical periods, and the deconstructionist method, through which we identify the contradictions and flawed principles underlying atheistic arguments, this method allows for in-depth critique of the foundations, developmental trajectories, and final outcomes of phenomena. It also provides a means to establish new perspectives—whether by modifying the existing model, recontextualizing it, or replacing it with an entirely new framework. The importance of re-examining the relationship between philosophy and atheism stems from the profound influence of certain philosophical positions and their negative views on religion within various atheistic currents, especially contemporary ones. Contemporary atheism today poses a threat to religion as a symbolic human system, rich in a value-laden framework that upholds the essence of humanity in an era dominated by materialism and the absence of values. The central question of this research is: Can the human being truly achieve existence independently? Or can one live in this world isolated from all influential forces, including the creative and divine force?

Keywords: atheism; philosophy; reason; humanity; faith; truth

1. Introduction

Philosophy is commonly defined as the “love of wisdom”, but this love often escapes its intellectual and moral boundaries, transforming into a form of destructive thought. This shift targets people’s established beliefs, judgments, and faith, under the pretext that philosophizing is, above all, a process of reflection that requires complete

freedom from rules, constraints, and definitions. Such a conviction has turned philosophical discourse into opposition or confrontation with religion, claiming that religion represents an obstacle to free thought and drives humans toward illusions and fantasies rather than the pursuit of truth and a connection with reality.

Philosophy is a concept used universally to signify a mode of thought characterized by intellectual reflection, grounded in dialectics and the construction of positions based on resumption, initiation, and transcendence. It aspires to surpass the prevailing, conventional, and fixed norms. Generally, philosophy does not exist as an absolute system but manifests in the act of philosophizing itself, rendering it diverse, multifaceted, and often conflicting in its systems and orientations.

Since the time of the Greeks, philosophical currents advocating atheism have emerged, rejecting the acknowledgment of a supreme power that created this world and provided humanity with a guiding model in the realms of knowledge, values, and relationships with others and the world. This tradition of opposition to religion extended through the Enlightenment and persists in the modern era. Criticism of spiritual and religious frameworks has become a central concern of philosophy, as seen with thinkers like Nietzsche, Marx, and Sartre—leading figures in philosophical schools known for their skepticism, doubt, and reinterpretation of humanity as both a free agent and a tool or goal of history. Furthermore, contemporary philosophy has emphasized the importance of desires, passions, and emotions, advocating for the removal of all restrictions on them, including those imposed by religion and ethics.

Given this context, it has become essential to revisit the works of contemporary philosophers to expose the dangerous implications of their ideas, which may target faith and belief as fundamental aspects of human nature and inherent disposition. For Islamic thought in particular, it is vital to engage in a deep dialogue with these philosophies, first to reveal their errors, which stem from a reductive understanding of religion—often limited to Christianity or a few other religions—and second to highlight the rationality, freedom, and encouragement of human flourishing that Islam offers as a religion, belief system, and intellectual tradition.

Today, the question of the relationship between religion and various forms of human thought has resurfaced, particularly in philosophical, scientific, and political spheres. This resurgence is especially evident after religion has been linked to several events and actions that shaped the past century and the beginning of the new one. This renewed interest has sparked debates about the emergence of religiosity, its connection to human thought, and the necessity or relevance of religion—especially given the remarkable progress humanity has made in scientific research, particularly in physics and biology, which has answered many perplexing human questions. Additionally, technological revolutions have enabled humans to gain control over the world, leading to the emergence of an intellectual dilemma: questioning the need for religion or belief, now that the reasons for seeking a reference point, support, or protection seem to have diminished.

This struggle over religion is not a new phenomenon; rather, it is a debate that stretches back to the very beginnings of human existence in this world. There have always been those who defended the necessity of the sacred and the importance of maintaining a connection with it, while others have advocated for a non-religious stance, promoting the idea of a human being who derives all of their strength from

within and acts in the world based on their free will. The question of religion has always been linked to the purpose of this experience and its relationship to humanity. Those who have supported religiosity have pointed out that humans continue to experience the bitterness of existence and the misery of life due to the inherent weakness of human beings and their inability to overcome all the challenges they face.

For example, Pascal (1972) believed that humans remain miserable without God, and this misery is primarily connected to the fear and pain that accompany their existence, with no one to help them escape it. He considered belief in God as a source of strength that enables humans to move toward happiness. Following him, Leibniz (1983) emphasized the importance of relying on the religious model, which frees humans from injustice and establishes a human condition based on justice. He asserted that without God, humans are incapable of achieving this stage (Leibniz, 1983). More recently, Caillois (2010) highlighted the continuing presence of the sacred in human life due to religion's profound ability to influence humans and motivate them to act.

On the other hand, those who opposed the value of religion justified their intellectual stance by arguing that humans, having reached a state of mental maturity, no longer require external support. Consequently, myths and superstitions have been rejected, and there is growing skepticism about the efficacy and utility of any connection between humans and what Ludwig Feuerbach called the "illusory heaven". They believe that humans determine their own fate through their free will, which shapes their human world. Thus, they completely reject the promises made by tyrants who exploited human ignorance and kept them confined in contexts that separated them from their true nature and reality. These critics argue that the time has come for the birth of a non-religious human being, one armed with the tools of reason—especially philosophy, science, and technology.

Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, argued that true human liberation and the unleashing of human action can only occur when humanity rejects religion and its authority. He believed that religion is the foundation of nihilism and a tool for reactive forces that bind us to an illusory happiness, tied to the suppression of pleasure, instinct, and power. From this perspective, atheism emerged not merely as a theoretical objection but as a methodology and way of life that restores vitality to existence and frees individuals from convictions that cause them to sacrifice the present for the future.

This line of thinking has deep historical roots, as Nietzsche referred to the "philosophers of the surface"—thinkers who, despite appearing superficial, delved deeply into history, resisting deception and falsehood. These philosophers sought to elevate the status of humanity, which religions, according to Nietzsche, had sought to bury by exalting God, who had become an oppressive force that suppresses and controls under the guise of triumphing over the animalistic nature within humans. Among these thinkers was Lucretius, who mocked humanity's engagement in religious rituals, attributing them to fear of nature and the search for protection, which they found only in transcendent beings that offered them comfort and security, albeit in an imaginary or illusory manner.

In our modern era, the opposition to religion has intensified, with some linking religion to acts of violence and using it to defend what they call the "sacred truth". This has led to the expansion of divisive thinking and the rise of radical otherness,

which has eradicated all forms of reconciliation, tolerance, and peace. As a result, atheism is seen as a necessity to create a new image of the world, one that escapes the grip of the sacred and moves toward horizons of relativity, historicity, and communication.

Given this context, it is now critically important to re-examine all these calls to either explicitly or implicitly marginalize or avoid religion, or to uproot it from human thought within atheistic movements. We must seek to understand atheism as it understands itself, focusing on the roots of this belief and its early expressions. We should also examine the foundations of atheism in certain philosophical currents, particularly contemporary ones, which some refer to as “the philosophy of suspicion.” This philosophy claims it can construct the image of a new human, one who has full agency in shaping history without relying on previous illusions, with religious experience at the forefront of these illusions.

Our primary aim in this research is to expose the weaknesses of these positions, which are built on numerous fallacies, errors, and internal contradictions. We seek to demonstrate that humanity’s connection with the sacred is deeply ingrained in human consciousness and is closely linked to the emotional dimension of human existence, one of its most defining characteristics. As Emmanuel Kant stated in his *Logic* when addressing the fundamental questions of philosophy, this connection is an essential part of what it means to be human. (In his book *Logic*, Kant explained that humans have three intellectual concerns: the first is the cognitive concern regarding the limits and capacities of reason, posed through the question, “What can I know?”; the second is the practical and ethical concern with the question, “What ought I to do?”; and the third relates to hopes and the future, answered aptly by religion, centered around the question, “What may I hope for?”)

2. The roots of atheism and its influence on philosophy

Atheism refers to any stance that rejects religion, viewing it as a discourse based on illusion, falsehood, and fabrication. This position lacks a specific historical origin or point of inception, as it has been expressed through anti-transcendental ideas in ancient civilizations as well as in our contemporary culture. These positions, despite their differing foundations and diverse aspirations, are unified by the conviction that humans are masters of themselves, authors of their own laws, and active agents in history.

When we look back at various classical anthropological studies, we find that they emphasize the human being’s unique ability to continuously reimagine the world through a set of ideas and representations that have been expressed throughout the history of human intellect. These have manifested in what anthropologists call “cultural expressions”, such as myth, magic, and religion, which have, to some extent, served as the windows or perspectives through which humans have expressed their thoughts, dreams, and beliefs (Hegel, 2007).

Conversely, ancient poetry and epics, especially those of the Greeks, highlight the possibility of humans freeing themselves from any external authority and relying on themselves to create their existence. For instance, when we return to the Epic of Gilgamesh, we encounter themes of shaping one’s own existence through persistence,

action, and adventure, as well as forms of defiance aimed at breaking free from the authority of the sacred and the dominance of the gods. In this epic, faith and divine providence are replaced by human autonomy over both objects and the self. Gilgamesh becomes a symbol of the rebellious human being who ties his fate to his own efforts and perseverance, prioritizing human action over the assistance traditionally sought from the gods. This suggests an early emphasis on the idea that religion and myth were seen as negative or obstructive influences, and that human history could only begin once there was a belief in humanity as the ultimate end and means by which glory and freedom are achieved (Al-Sawwah, 1987).

Furthermore, mythology itself has served as a source for this idea, especially when certain myths emphasized that humans could carve out a path for themselves, becoming neither passive nor influenced by external forces but rather active agents capable of changing their destinies and even rivaling the gods. The myth of Prometheus, for example, illustrates this concept by recounting how this hero dared to steal fire and use it for human purposes, transforming it from a privilege monopolized by divine powers into something humans could control to expand their potential. This myth marks the beginning of rebellion against the authority of the sacred and the emergence of a new belief system that sought to replace religious faith or at least attempt to do so, as a crucial step in human self-awareness and the overcoming of the subjugation imposed by intense belief systems (Eliade, 1997).

In this way, we can trace the origins of atheism to the very beginning of human existence on Earth. What is today known as opposition to or criticism of the sacred, or the call to rid humanity of it, did not occur by chance or solely as a result of the enlightenment and the rise of science, as positivists like Herbert Spencer and Lévy-Bruhl assert. Instead, atheism has deep roots that can be uncovered by examining the writings, carvings, or symbolic artifacts of ancient civilizations. This foundation confirms that the challenge to the sacred did not arrive in philosophy by accident but is the result of accumulated cultural developments, which can be glimpsed in ancient poetry, epics, and myths.

Indeed, an examination of early philosophical texts, particularly those from ancient Greece, reveals that some of their atheistic propositions were drawn from the rich intellectual traditions we have already discussed. For example, if we turn to Lucretius and the fragments of his work that remain, we find clear indications that he rejected religious rituals, considering them a waste of time. He advocated for replacing faith and religious customs with critical thinking and questioning. In his view, reason is the tool that can answer all of humanity's questions, provide certainty, and help individuals overcome anxiety and confusion. His writings often mock those who diligently worship idols or engage in rituals and incantations, believing that these practices will bring them salvation from suffering.

When examining the early philosophers, we can identify the origins of atheism in their efforts to trace the world back to its fundamental elements. They attributed all natural phenomena to material causes such as water, air, fire, and earth, as evidenced in the works of Anaximander, Thales, and others whom Aristotle mentions in his *Metaphysics*. Aristotle notes that these thinkers were astonished by the world and sought to offer explanations that would enable humans to understand its phenomena. Their reflections led them to deny the power of the gods, as they attributed natural

phenomena to material or physical causes. These early philosophers had a significant influence on the spread of materialist tendencies in the 5th and 6th centuries BCE, and they can be considered the first to propose a new worldview—one in which events in the world are not attributed to a divine force but are instead the result of material interactions.

Many historians of philosophy have also argued that the seeds of atheism can be found in Aristotle's philosophy, which had a profound impact on all currents of philosophy in the Middle Ages. Aristotle is credited with introducing the idea of the eternity of the world, which contradicted the religious belief in the eternality of God and his precedence over all other beings. This idea influenced many philosophers, including Muslims who were impacted by Aristotle's teachings, leading to considerable confusion when trying to explain the origin of the universe. Some even argued for the existence of events without a beginning or end.

It is clear, then, that the discussion of atheism and its relationship with philosophy necessitates an examination of its roots, which are not found solely within philosophy itself but also in earlier forms of thought and knowledge. However, the emergence of materialist tendencies solidified these atheistic ideas, giving them intellectual foundations and assumptions. This is evident in the development of a new intellectual model linked to various philosophical movements that made atheism the basis for presenting an alternative understanding of humanity and the world. This shift is particularly clear in the philosophies of Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, all of whom agreed on the necessity of rejecting religion. They viewed religion as the primary force limiting human will, constraining human action, and binding individuals to illusions and superstitions. As a result, they advocated for completely transcending religion and judging it negatively without any nuance or deeper analysis that could help uncover the positive elements within religion, elements that aid humans in understanding themselves and shaping their relationships with others and the world.

3. Examples of contemporary philosophical calls for atheism: (The trinity of doubt and suspicion: Marx, Nietzsche, Freud)

Paul Ricœur famously considered that Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud collectively triggered what he called a "hermeneutics of suspicion", a shock to human consciousness that involved re-examining its boundaries and uncovering its role in producing deception and falsehood. This "trinity" can also be viewed as a foundation for promoting atheism within the contexts of contemporary philosophy. Despite their differences and divergent viewpoints, these thinkers converged on the notion that religion is a form of illusion or superstition, a kind of sickness that afflicts civilization and history. From this perspective, religion becomes a nihilistic force that causes humans to flee from reality, pleasure, and life, instead living within the confines of reactive forces that promote weakness, surrender, and repression. The 20th century was heavily influenced by the ideas of these three figures, and many thinkers and philosophers followed in their footsteps, adopting an aggressive stance against religion and religiosity.

3.1. Marxism: Religion as opium to be liberated from

Before we talk about the concepts of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud about religion, we must first provide a brief and simple definition of religion, religion represents one of humanity's worldviews, based on a mode of interpretation that connects the visible with the invisible, attributing all occurrences in history and reality to a sacred and transcendent will. It links the tangible to the intangible and has manifested in various and diverse religious experiences, encompassing the early stages of human existence and continuing throughout its historical trajectory to the present day.

Karl Marx was one of the most prominent thinkers to revisit the religious experience, analyzing its origins and revealing its dangerous ideological roles rooted in deception, concealment, and illusion. Marx famously declared that religion is “the opium of the people”, arguing that it serves as the spirit of a soulless world and the heart of a heartless world. This view was rooted in a sweeping generalization, as Marx did not differentiate between religions; he saw all religious experiences throughout history as forms of escapism into fantasy and illusion. He focused heavily on how religion induces frustration, suppresses revolutionary energy, and kills the drive for human liberation.

Marx, in his writings, speaks about religion: “Religious misery is, on the one hand, the expression of real misery, and, on the other hand, the protest against real misery. Religion is the sigh of the creature overwhelmed by misfortune, the soul of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless age. It is the opium of the people.” (Marx, 1895).

Marx linked humanity's historical progress to the disappearance of all forms of belief, which he described as the “misery” that stems in part from what he saw as absurd religious interpretations. These interpretations, in his view, restrain human action, prevent true awareness, and impede the eradication of exploitation and tyranny. Religion, according to Marx, promises humanity a better world and fosters within it a spirit of surrender. The wealthy and powerful exploit these religious illusions to perpetuate their interests, effectively “sedating” the masses to maintain the status quo. Therefore, building a harmonious society and progressing toward mastery over nature and overcoming all forms of alienation requires the abandonment of religious belief—and even active resistance against it (Marx, 2010; Marx and Engels, 2008).

Given this perspective, Marxism can be understood as part of the broader atheistic current, viewing religious experience solely in a negative light. Religion is seen as one of the primary obstacles to liberation—whether from human domination over humans or from nature's dominance over humanity. Marxists, both in thought and practice, have followed this same path. The Soviet state, for example, was founded on a philosophy that sought to diminish religious practices. The early legislation of the proletarian state included rejections of the sacred and calls for people to abandon all the illusions and superstitions inherent in religious experiences. Marxists believed that only through human action and will could humanity achieve its aspirations and move steadily toward creating a just and happy society, one free of conflict, where wealth and power are shared equitably. In such a society, religious preachers and missionaries would have no place or function.

From this perspective, Marxism positioned itself as an adversary of religion,

encouraging all efforts to expose the errors of religious experience or reveal its flaws. Consequently, Marxists considered it essential to embrace science in all its forms and to rely on technology as the true foundation through which humanity could reclaim the strength that myths and religions had taken away. This stance permeated Marxist thought, greatly influenced by the works of Ludwig Feuerbach, who criticized Christianity and, by extension, all religions. Feuerbach inspired Marx and all Marxists with the belief that abandoning religious faith was necessary if humanity were to truly master the world and history.

3.2. Nietzsche: From nihilism to freedom—the necessity of transcending religious belief

What distinguishes Nietzsche's philosophy is what he calls the "method of audacity," which involves extensive critique and deconstruction of previous arguments, exposing the illusions, harms, and nihilism embedded within them (Nietzsche, 2013). Nietzsche presents himself as the "physician of civilization", diagnosing the ailments of the modern age and prescribing the necessary remedy to enable humanity to achieve the image of the superior being, free from religious interpretations that portray humans as weak and domesticated. Nietzsche's critique of religion was broad, deconstructing Christian doctrines, whether they related to the Bible itself, the letters of Saint Paul, or the writings of church reformers like Martin Luther.

Nietzsche, in his book "Beyond Good and Evil", clarifies his stance on religious faith, stating: "Each time, it was not faith that stirred the slaves against their masters and incited them to revolt, but rather the renunciation of faith" (Nietzsche, 2003). In another section of the same book, he describes religious belief as a neurosis that negates the will, saying: "Wherever religious neurosis has appeared on earth thus far, we see it accompanied by three practices dangerous to health: isolation, fasting, and chastity. Among the most consistent symptoms of this neurosis is the most intense and depraved desire, which soon turns into a fit of repentance and into a negation of the world and the will." (Ibid, 2003).

Nietzsche regarded religiosity as an ancient phenomenon rooted in ignorance and weakness. Christianity, in particular, reinforced this negative outlook by asserting that life has no value or meaning without the existence of God. In his analysis of Christian faith, Nietzsche highlights its dangers, arguing that it creates a world in which humans lack will, strength, and the pursuit of pleasure and desire. For Nietzsche, religion is a force that opposes the human desire to be both strong and open to life.

In his view, Christianity established an ascetic model that reduced humanity to mere priests who despise the body and detach themselves from earthly concerns, deluding themselves into thinking they are achieving perfection. This, in Nietzsche's eyes, makes religious experience a foundational element of what he calls nihilism (Nietzsche, 2003). Religion, according to Nietzsche, strips individuals of all will, preventing them from engaging in free thought, denying their right to be different, and calling them to repent for every "sin" associated with actions necessary for the continuation of life. In his book "Beyond Good and Evil", Nietzsche (2003) argues that religion is a process that "deforms humanity", as it shackles people and lowers

them into inferior states. It prevents them from living in the present by encouraging them to accept deprivation and repression in exchange for the promise of complete happiness in the future (Nietzsche, 2003).

Based on the above, we can consider Nietzsche as one of the philosophers who explicitly called for the dismantling of belief in God and the rejection of belief in the afterlife. He viewed such beliefs as impediments to the project of building a superior human being, characterized by self-reliance and the ability to derive all values, ideas, and directions in life solely from oneself. Nietzsche argued that religions, in general, had entrapped humans in weakness and nihilism, transforming them into submissive beings hiding behind illusions and beliefs. He also contended that the values promoted by religions were inherently “vile”, as they encourage the abandonment of freedom, the will to power, and the expression of personal opinions, instead advocating for surrender, forgiveness, and love—qualities that Nietzsche believed only create a mediocre existence devoid of strong, assertive individuals.

While some have attempted to interpret Nietzsche’s atheistic discourse as a call for human will and dignity, which, they argue, does not necessarily conflict with the teachings of various religions, particularly the Abrahamic faiths, such interpretations have failed to distance Nietzsche’s philosophy from atheism as both a concept and a course of action (Nietzsche, 2007).

What is important in revisiting Nietzsche’s philosophy is the emphasis that it absolutely rejects religion, viewing it as a negative force that threatens free will and prevents its realization. Therefore, Nietzsche argued for the elimination of religion to open the way for all the active forces capable of creating an empowered existence, closing the door to nihilism and passivity. By emphasizing the will to power, the affirmation of life, and his advocacy for the superior human who derives all meanings of existence from themselves, Nietzsche effectively shut down any room for belief or human connection with the sacred. He laid the groundwork for a new status for humanity in the world, based on absolute freedom and complete release from all rules and constraints.

3.3. Freud: Religion as a delusion that humanity enjoys remembering

When Freud began presenting his concept of humanity in its “new form”, he found it necessary to confront a significant part of the Western philosophical and theological tradition. In our view, this compelled him to deconstruct religious phenomena, examine their causes, and situate them within the broader context of human thought development. In his book “The Future of an Illusion”, Freud (1973) discusses what religious ideas represent, framing them not only as expressions of wish fulfillment but also as a collection of fantasies or memories rooted in history. This suggests that religion does not convey truth or reality but instead relies on myths inherited from our earliest origins and shaped by the social environments in which people live. According to Freud, religion is a collection of erroneous beliefs that are not connected to reason but are deeply embedded in memory through learning and imitation. This implies that as human consciousness advances and reason develops, people will outgrow this legacy, which will eventually lose its relevance (Cyril, 1985).

Freud (1973), in his book “The Future of an Illusion”, speaks about religion,

stating: Religion would be “the universal obsessive neurosis of humanity”.

For Freud, the religious individual, when confronted with the inability to understand their surroundings, turns immediately to religious interpretations, thus retreating from reality and choosing to immerse themselves in superstition. This leads Freud to compare religion to obsessive-compulsive neurosis. In this sense, according to Freud (1973), religion is entirely disconnected from reality. Instead, it represents an imaginary space that people turn to when they lack the ability to comprehend or explain the challenges and difficulties they face. In such moments, they escape into a fantastical world that brings them comfort, provides a sense of satisfaction and security, and prevents anxiety and doubt from taking root in their minds—especially when confronted with existential questions related to eternity and the timeless. From this perspective, Freud (1973) declares that religion is an expression of a neurotic disorder, always manifesting as an escape from unsatisfactory reality into realms of memory, daydreams, and fantasy.

Thus, Freud consistently emphasizes that religious belief does not exist in moments when human culture witnesses’ significant development. In an age dominated by science and technology, the value of religion diminishes, leaving behind only what Freud considers remnants of a mythical past that clung to the naivety of human consciousness. As civilization advances, religion is reduced to mere memories of a people’s early stages. This suggests that people today no longer need religious interpretations, which have become relics of an illusory, mythical world—a world that humanity created during its times of weakness, ignorance, and lack of ability to resist nature or change the world.

According to this view, religion has no future, especially as human awareness awakens and sheds the veil of ignorance. Freud, therefore, sees a strong link between religious explanations and the lack of a robust foundation for rational ideas and opinions. The religious experience persists where human thought fails to produce clear certainty. No matter how powerful religions may seem, they ultimately present themselves as a substitute for absent truth. This leads Freud to conclude that religiosity is a pathological condition that must be eradicated to restore what he calls “normal behavior”, which counters the obsessive-compulsive disorder that, as mentioned earlier, strips individuals of their will to confront reality and compels them to live by returning to past eras or archaic forms. This mentality, Freud argues, characterizes Western rationality, particularly when religion is seen as a possible solution to transcend existential challenges.

In general, we can regard Freud as an advocate for atheism, as he draws a clear connection between religious belief and the spread of illusions, superstitions, and the expansion of escapism from reality. He underscores the necessity of caution toward religiosity and advocates for abandoning its rituals, which, in his view, are not only ineffective but also exacerbate humanity’s crises and close off paths for progress.

4. Exposing the weakness of the philosophical argument for atheism

If philosophy is based on the foundations of construction and creation, it also rests on criticism, revision, and setting limits, as seen in the work of Emmanuel Kant, particularly through his critical trilogy (*Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical*

Reason, and Critique of Judgment). Philosophy is also grounded in principles of suspension of judgment and re-examining previous assertions, as Merleau-Ponty (1995) discusses in his work “In Praise of Philosophy”, where he emphasizes the need to reconsider matters anew.

This critical and skeptical spirit is the path through which we engage with the great philosophers who advocate for atheism and deny the value and importance of religion. Our attempt is fraught with risks and challenges, the foremost being: Who are we to question the words of great thinkers or claim that their arguments are weak or flawed? Nonetheless, this is a worthy endeavor as long as we have the evidence to reveal some of the inconsistencies, contradictions, or misjudgments in their arguments.

We do not see atheism as an idea that has reached its conclusion. Rather, we view it as a movement that is now in decline, with many reconsidering religious beliefs from a new perspective that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of human beings and their emphasis on spiritual dimensions, not limited to material aspects alone. Many philosophical and anthropological stances have shifted toward a deeper understanding of religion, viewing it as one of the most significant human experiences, closely tied to reason. Religion is no longer seen as mere fantasy or superstition, nor is it regarded as a realm of irrationality. Instead, it is now viewed as one of the manifestations of human thought, a perspective strongly supported by Mircea Eliade in his extensive research on the nature of religion and its relationship to humanity, history, and meaning. For Eliade, religious faith persists with intensity, despite the tremendous advancements humanity has experienced.

This indicates that the claims made by positivist schools and later by Marxist interpretations are no longer of significance or value. It was once expected that atheism would expand, and religious belief would decline, but the reality contradicts this expectation. Religion today has a significant presence, with people increasingly reconnecting with the sacred. This resurgence of religious belief challenges the perspectives that advocate abandoning religious faith or view it as a form of fantasy, neurosis, or delusion. In fact, people today are becoming more connected to spiritual and religious beliefs, and religion is gradually being transformed into a guiding framework that people use to shape their lives and their relationships with themselves and the world.

In our view, Freud was mistaken when he claimed that religion is an illusion that arises and flourishes when reason and intelligence retreat. This stance finds no solid support, either in reality or logic, especially when we observe that every time there is progress in science, knowledge, philosophy, or technology, it strengthens human certainty and religious belief (Bucaille, 1983; Eliade, 1995; Garaudy, 1998)

The defense of religion as a symbolic human system has emerged through what can be termed philosophical theology. For instance, the French psychoanalyst Meyer attacked these atheistic conceptions, particularly those of Marx and Freud, in his book “The Spiritual Dimension in Psychotherapy”. He explicitly states: “Religion was never, as Marx imagined, the opium of the people, nor, as Freud claimed, a collective neurosis, ... They failed to acknowledge the will of individuals or society to develop the spiritual function” (Mayer, 1997).

Fromm (1989) demonstrated that the need for religion persists throughout the ages and that humans remain connected to goals that are not necessarily material or

practical. He revealed that the religious experience is deeply embedded in the personality of both individuals and communities.

Some philosophies and many scientific studies support the idea that behind this world, there is a transcendent force capable of organizing and directing it, ensuring all the guarantees that provide humanity with peace of mind and help overcome existential anxiety. Moreover, many today acknowledge that religion remains the most capable system of addressing human anxiety and confusion, offering answers and explanations for the ultimate situations that neither philosophy nor science has been able to fully resolve with certainty.

The decline and weakness of atheism can also be observed through the growing presence of religious rituals worldwide, as they have become a global phenomenon. Governments are increasingly respecting and protecting these rituals because they represent the deep-rooted beliefs of the people, now considered among the most fundamental human rights that societies strive to preserve. Legislative and legal changes are moving towards allowing everyone freedom of belief and ensuring religious practices are not restricted within society. This confirms the decline of positions advocating for secularism or encouraging it, as religious belief continues to play a pivotal role in shaping human existence today (Eliade, 2007).

The French philosopher Granger (1984) revealed that religion will endure, remaining tied to the human need for the absolute—a need that humanity cannot forgo. This desire to connect with the absolute, according to Granger, does not conflict with reason.

Thus, we observe that the epistemology of religious philosophers and others does not regard religion as inherently opposed to reason. On the contrary, it often views religion as a significant source of knowledge, particularly because it provides precise and important answers to various existential questions—answers that cannot be found in other symbolic systems.

In conclusion, just as atheistic arguments have expanded and built upon a set of argumentative foundations that highlight the perceived futility and negative aspects of religious experience, this perspective is evident in some earlier works of positivists such as Lévy-Bruhl and Spencer, who argued that the emergence of science and the expansion of technological domains had eliminated any need for religiosity or reliance on God or transcendent forces. It also appears in Sartre's existentialist philosophy, which called for humans to connect solely with themselves and reject anything that hinders their freedom—the foremost of these obstacles, in his view, being the experience of religious commitment.

Critiques of these propositions have revealed their weaknesses. These critiques have pointed out the reductionist and superficial nature of atheistic claims, showing how they are often shaped by ideological biases. Moreover, they overlook the significant civilizational and humanitarian roles that religion can play, especially when analyzed through new readings that emphasize objectivity, nuance, and the avoidance of overgeneralization.

Religious belief, in all its forms, remains deeply embedded in the human consciousness today, unshaken by the skepticism of doubters or the overconfidence of extreme rationalists. The sacred continues to be a fundamental aspect of human existence, despite the challenges posed by secularism and scientific rationalism. This

is also evident in Roger Garaudy's appeals and objections to atheistic currents, which seek to sever the connection between humanity and the sacred.

It is now crucial for Arab and Muslim scholars to actively engage in this dialogue about religion, its value, and its relationship with humanity. This discussion should acknowledge religion as a domain that can enrich and support human action through its capacity for diversity and contribution to human development.

5. Conclusion

We have seen that the idea of atheism did not emerge in a vacuum; rather, it spread as a result of particular philosophical perspectives and intellectual approaches that linked the decline of human agency and free will to religious beliefs. For some, religion was seen as an obstacle and a constraint, preventing the mind from acting freely. The philosophers who rejected religion approached it as a form of authority or influence that restrained human will, undermining the power of humans to transcend their conditions. They considered the human condition outside of the restrictive frameworks imposed by religious belief, which they associated with either the naivety of consciousness or the interests of those who wished to maintain their power by distracting people from their true concerns, thus fostering a sense of alienation and loss.

In this paper, we attempted to uncover the underlying assumptions, foundations, and true motivations of these atheistic claims. We also highlighted the superficiality and reductionism that often characterized these arguments, leading to significant errors, contradictions, and an oversimplified view of religion. This, in turn, led to calls for the rejection of religion without careful and reasoned consideration of its importance to humanity in intellectual, psychological, and social contexts. The following key conclusions emerged from our exploration:

There is significant divergence in perspectives regarding the nature of religious experience and its impact on humanity, reason, and history. This divide manifested in two distinct directions: one argued that freedom, rationality, and progress require the rejection of religion, viewing it as a remnant of a dark past that humanity must abandon; the other viewed religion as a vital component of human consciousness, reflecting the multifaceted nature of humanity, which must be understood as having multiple dimensions and aspects.

Those advocating for atheism often rely on a hasty interpretation of religion, particularly based on the distortions of Christianity that became entrenched in Europe and served as an undeniable support for political projects of dominance and exploitation (as seen in Marx). Alternatively, they reduce humans to a single dimension, the physical, leading to the pursuit of pleasure and absolute freedom outside of any moral or organizational frameworks (as in Nietzsche). Or they see humans as being trapped by various constraints that render their will fragile, driving them to escape into illusions and fantasies as a way to flee from an unsatisfactory reality (as in Freud).

We confirmed that modern Western rationality is beginning to reconsider its early judgments about humanity, its fundamental activities, and its place in the world. This shift has led to new perspectives that view religion as a key factor in producing a

balanced life and as a framework that fills the gaps left by philosophical and scientific inquiries that are unable to provide deep answers to fundamental questions about origins, destiny, and values (as seen in the works of Mircea Eliade and Roger Garaudy).

- We emphasized the need for contemporary Islamic thought to engage in the ongoing debate about religion by offering a more balanced and objective perspective that explains the human need for belief and the importance of sustaining religious faith. Religion is a vital necessity for modern humans, who are surrounded by various pressures and forms of anxiety and despair, and it plays a crucial role in offering hope and guidance.
- We emphasize that our exploration of the relationship between philosophy, atheism, and religion can lead us to another area of inquiry: the relationship between religion and humanity. In other words, it opens up the discussion of the humanistic and ethical dimensions within religious discourse, regardless of the nature of that discourse.

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