

Religion: Divine Revelation or Human Construction? An Analytic Philosophical Inquiry

The question of whether religion originates from divine revelation or from human and cultural construction remains a fundamental issue in the philosophy of religion. Religious traditions frequently present themselves as sources of revealed truth, while historical, sociological, psychological, and philosophical approaches have offered alternative explanations of religious belief and practice. This paper examines the philosophical basis of these competing explanations without presupposing either a divine or a purely human origin of religion.

The central question is whether philosophical reasoning can provide sufficient grounds for distinguishing religion as divine revelation from religion as a human construction. The analysis considers three interconnected issues. First, it examines the epistemic status of claims to divine revelation, including the role of religious experience, testimony, and philosophical arguments concerning the possibility of revealed knowledge. Second, it considers whether the development and diversity of religious beliefs can be adequately explained through human cognitive, cultural, and historical processes. Third, it examines the philosophical significance of religious diversity, particularly the existence of competing and sometimes incompatible claims to revelation.

Rather than attempting to establish in advance that religion is either divinely revealed or humanly constructed, the paper evaluates the epistemic and explanatory criteria by which these two possibilities might be assessed. It argues that the distinction between divine revelation and human construction involves both questions about the justification of religious knowledge and questions about the explanatory power of naturalistic accounts of religion. The paper concludes by considering whether a philosophically adequate account of religion can remain open to transcendence while also taking seriously the evidence provided by human history, culture, and religious diversity.