

Religion is an important part of the lives of young people today.' Consider whether this is true in your society.

Introduction

In our modern society, the hustle and bustle of our everyday life has threatened to erode a part of our reality. Especially to the nimble minds of youths, the modern culture has radically shaped their beliefs, values and identity. Liberal youngsters would assert that religion is not an important part of their lives today due to an increasingly scientific, individualistic and instant-gratification worldview. However, loyal conservatives argue that religion still plays an important part in granting them a sense of value orientation during their developing years. In view of such contrasting views, this essay argues that in my society, religion has unfortunately played a diminished part in the lives of young people today.

Main body

Loyal conservatives would argue that religion plays an important part in the lives of young people today as it provided them with proper value orientation in their formative years. For young people especially, there are in their developmental years where they are most nimble-minded and impressionable. As they are coming to terms with their values, beliefs and identity, the plethora of influences from their external reality serve to confound, confuse and denigrate their perceptions. With religion, there is a crucial pillar that provides much needed stability, direction and purpose in their lives. According to the Today Youth survey conducted in 2020, more than half of those young people with religious affiliations indicated that religion is an important factor when making life decisions. Therefore, with the crucial role of religion in the provision of direction and orientation, it is an important part of the lives of young people today.

However, such a view holds a modicum of truth as there are other sources and avenues that provide authoritative direction and purpose. As such, it can be argued that religion plays a diminished part in the lives of young people today. The above view assumes that religion is a crucial cog in the nurturing of values in young people today. In fact, social units such as the family and school play an ever more important role in the lives of young people today. In Singapore, youth spend a large part of their early lives entrenched in the secular education system. In schools, they are inculcated with proper values via theory and practical means in a rules-based setting. For example, students have to attend compulsory Values in Action programmes as part of their holistic curriculum and serve the community within their own means such as food donation. Through such activities, students learn the spirit

of hard work and gratitude. Therefore, with an extensive role of schools in their lives, reli

Moreover, it can be argued that religion no longer plays an important part in the lives of young people today due to the onset of individualistic cultures that serve to emphasise the wellbeing of the individual rather than the group. A religious orientation would imply some level of commitment to a larger group or organisation. This would incur a belonging to a group which also meant adhering to their beliefs and practises which is increasingly difficult in a cultural environment that favours personal choice and individual freedom. As such, this inherent tension and incompatibility would force youths to conform to their newfound social values and abandon the loyal devotion to a greater authority. In Milieu's survey on Singaporeans, roughly 17% of respondents aged 16 to 29 indicated that they were either somewhat unsatisfied, unsatisfied, or very unsatisfied with their quality of life at the moment. They attributed this to tight finances where phrases such as "no money" and "high cost of living" regularly popped up. In this example, it can be clearly seen that young people in Singapore prioritise their materialistic individualistic lifestyle, with a keen focus on their personal wellbeing.

In addition, it can be argued that religion is not an important part of the lives of young people today as they have ease of access to other socio-cultural avenues that adequately substitute their need for meaning and purpose in life. Frederick Nietzsche famously proclaimed in the twilight of the 19th Century that "God is Dead! And we the bloodiest of murderers have killed him." Moving forward with this brave new worldview, he vehemently argued that some entity would replace religion as a new source of meaning orientation. In today's modern society, there are a diversity of possibilities. Drugs, Internet, Entertainment. All spearheaded by the workings of addiction by activating our reward circuits and giving us positive feelings. The relative ease of access, convenience and availability of these means whilst providing us with instant relief from our worldly pains meant that they would inevitably play a more important part in our lives as compared to religion today.

Lastly, religion is not an important part of the lives of young people today due to the clash of values brought upon by the scientific and objective worldview of things. In modern society today, the encroaching influence of science and technology remains understated. It not only influences our cultures and lives but also our values, beliefs and perceptions about things. In the religious age, there is firm belief of a greater world outside of our human reality be it hell or heaven. At that time, myths, superstition and faith were flourishing. Flash forward to today, the scientific and technological landscape that young adults live in and witness first hand has greatly improved our standards of living and moulded a much optimistic view of

reality. Consequently, there is greater focus on the now and emphasis on the benefits that science and technology gives us. Inevitably, our mindsets are narrowed, believing and living in the here and the now, abandoning the incompatible religious viewpoint of the past. According to a 3M Survey conducted on Singaporeans, 92% of participants agreed that science gives them hope for the future. This rising sentiment would correlate to a decreasing religious outlook on life as explained. Therefore, religion is no longer an important part of the lives of young people today.

Conclusion

In conclusion, religion is not an important part of the lives of young people today. Admittingly, the socio-cultural shifts and influence on our conscious reality has reinvented how we perceive religion, moral, social and psychological compass. It can truly be said that in our modern society, religion has been substituted. Namely by Science, Pleasure and ourselves.