

OBJECTIONS TO SAM HARRIS' CRITIQUE OF RELIGION

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Abstract

Some thinkers of the modern period have reached the general opinion that the social appearance and social dynamics of religion have increased, and therefore, religion is on the rise. However, the historical and theological tensions between religions that sometimes lead to conflicts and the increase in disagreements between various sects of the same religion have led to an increase in criticism of religion as a whole in certain circles. Sam Harris is one of the important representatives of the new atheism, which is among the schools of thought that make these criticisms. In this study, I will discuss Harris' criticism of religion in which he argues that religious belief has many harmful and negative aspects. Therefore, he defends the view that it is necessary to fight against religion and to completely remove the

Ilahiyat Studies

Volume 14 Number 2 Summer/Fall 2023

Article Type: Research Article

p-ISSN: 1309-1786 / e-ISSN: 1309-1719

DOI: 10.12730/is.1257476

Received: February 28, 2023 | *Accepted:* August 8, 2023 | *Published:* December 31, 2023.

To cite this article: Gündoğan, Saim. "Objections to Sam Harris' Critic of Religion". *Ilahiyat Studies* 14/2 (2023): 439-467. <https://doi.org/10.12730/is.1257476>

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phenomenon of religion from people's lives. This and other of Harris' basic claims, grounds, evidence, and views on the subject will be discussed, the persuasiveness and philosophical value of his basic approach will be examined through comparisons with rational and philosophical evaluations, and prominent dilemmas, if any, will be identified. The consistency of Harris' criticism of religious beliefs and the accuracy of these criticisms constitute the problematic of the study. The aim of this study is to examine the author's views through criticism, consider comparisons of this subject, and create a synthesis based on different approaches to the subject. To present this synthesis, the basic framework of this study is an examination of his *The End of Faith: The Separation of Religion and Reason, Morality without God: A Guide for Spirituality without Religion*, and *The Harms of Religion: Conflicting Truth Claims of Religions*.

Keywords: Philosophy of religion, religion, God, new atheism, Sam Harris

Introduction

An atheist school called the new atheism (scientific atheism/militant atheism),¹ which is against God, religion, and all values of religion, has emerged in the 21st century. This school was shaped by the claims of Richard Dawkins' (b.1941) thesis of "The God Delusion",² Sam Harris' (b. 1967) idea that "believing without proof is worthless and dangerous", Daniel C. Dennett's (b. 1942) "understanding of the need to break the magic of taboos", Christopher Hitchens' (d. 2011) argument that "religion is dangerous and harmful", and Victor J. Stenger's (d. 2014) suggestion that "science has proven the non-existence of God".³ The new atheism is based on approaches that defend atheism as a way of life, wage war against the belief in God, generalize anti-religion, or reduce religious feelings and tendencies to psychological, sociological, and anthropological phenomena that are

¹ Barbara Bradley Hagerty, "A Bitter Rift Divides Atheists", *NPR* (October 19, 2009).

² Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam Press, 2006).

³ Victor J. Stenger, *The New Atheism: Taking a Stand for Science and Reason* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2009), 41; Kemal Batak, *Naturalizm Çıkmazı: Dennett'ten Dawkins'e Yeni Ateizm'in Felsefî Temelleri ve Teistik Eleştirisi* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2011), 16; Mehmet Şükrü Özkan, *Rasyonel Teoloji Yeni Ateizm ve Tanrı: Tanrı'nın Varlığı veya Yokluğu Kanıtlanabilir mi?* (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2019), 15.

fed by approaches that deny the existence of God and mock believers, metaphysical elements, religious-based morality, and moral values. The new atheism is explained as a belief system that claims that reason and science are the only reference sources.⁴ According to this argument, believing anything that cannot be proven is absurd, the existence of any God is a complete fallacy, religion and religious people are enemies that must be destroyed, and belief in God, religion, and religious people is the source of evil on earth. The reason for these ideas is that all these harm human beings and cast a shadow on the illuminating power of science. Therefore, according to this belief, the only legitimate information we can trust is scientific information.⁵

The point emphasized in the new atheism is that it is necessary to rely on the power of scientific knowledge that is obtained objectively from the field of science and data and to stay away from all kinds of religious and metaphysical arguments by developing a belief in science. Therefore, it is stated within the framework of this approach that rational justification should be presented in relation to scientific methods rather than philosophical methods regarding God or a religious belief.⁶ Therefore, the new atheism, which is based on scientific knowledge, assigns an ideological position to science and, in this case, claims that everything, including God and religion, should be examined scientifically.⁷

The new atheists are intensely critical of belief in God and religion, claiming that the only logical view of our time is atheism. Their approach, which constitutes the general framework of the new atheism, is as follows: According to Stenger, one of the leading advocates of the new atheism, science has proven that God does not

⁴ Alan G. Nixon, *New Atheism as a Case of Competitive Postsecular Worldviews* (Sydney: The University of Western Sydney, School of Social Sciences and Psychology, Ph.D. Diss., 2014), 1-4; Fatma Aygün, "Ateizme Yol Açan Faktörlerden Biri Olarak Fanatizm ve Dışlayıcılık", *İslâm Düşüncesinde Ateizm Eleştirisi*, ed. Cemalettin Erdemci et al. (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2019), 67-95, 72-73.

⁵ Stenger, *The New Atheism*, 16-19; Andrew Johnson, "An Apology for the New Atheism", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 1/73 (2013), 5-28; Mehmet Şükrü Özkan, "Yeni Ateizmde Din", *Akademik Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 7/89 (March 2019), 130-131.

⁶ Edward Feser, *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2008), 18; Özkan, "Yeni Ateizmde Din Eleştirisi", 131.

⁷ Alper Bilgili, *Bilim Ne Değildir? Yeni-Ateist Bilim Anlayışının Felsefi ve Sosyolojik Analizi* (İstanbul: Doğu Kitabevi, 2018), 19.

exist. According to Hitchens, religion harms everything. Dennett believes it is necessary to eliminate the magic of taboos. Dawkins says, “Belief in God is a mere delusion”, and according to Harris, religion is the source of all evil.⁸ In this study, in contrast to the aforementioned approaches, we will discuss Harris’ criticisms and the views he proposes in discussions on the axis of religion.

Samuel Benjamin Harris,⁹ the American author, thinker, neuroscientist, and podcast speaker, has produced studies on many subjects, such as religion, God, morality, reason, free will, philosophy of mind, psychedelics,¹⁰ politics, terrorism, artificial intelligence, and politics, but his views on religion have come to the fore.¹¹ Known for his radical criticisms of Islam in particular, the following statements by Harris in his study titled “Getting Stuck in a Religious War”, published in *The Washington Times*, summarize his views on the subject:

It is time to admit that we are not fighting terrorism. We are at war with Islam. This does not mean that we are at war with all Muslims, but we are definitely at war with the way of life commanded in the Qur’ān to all Muslims. Muslim fundamentalism is a threat only because the origins of Islam are a threat to us. Every American should see the Qur’ān ruthlessly defame and marginalize non-Muslims. The idea that Islam is a peaceful religion taken over by extremists is a dangerous fantasy.¹²

In this study, I will investigate how the new atheists base their claims on belief in God and religion in the context of Harris’ approach, which draws attention to the inevitable imperative to fight against religion in general and Islam in particular, and critically interpret the opposing arguments they propose in the relationship between religion

⁸ Stenger, *The New Atheism*, 41.

⁹ *Dbpedia*, “About: Sam Harris” (January 25, 2022).

¹⁰ Psychedelics are powerful psychoactive substances that directly affect perception, mood, and cognitive processing. Substances such as MDMA and LSD are examples of psychedelic substances. See David E. Nichols, “Psychedelics”, *Pharmacological Reviews* 68/2 (February 2016), 264-356.

¹¹ Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004); id., *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality without Religion* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2014); id., *Islam and the Future of Tolerance - A Dialogue Sam Harris Maajid Nawaz* (London: Harvard University Press, 2015); id., *Lying*, ed. Annaka Harris (London: Four Elephants Press, 2013).

¹² Phil Torres, “Sam Harris and Donald Trump: They’re Completely Different... Yet Very Much Alike”, *Salon* (26 January 2022); Sam Harris, “Mired in a Religious War”, *The Washington Times* (26 January 2022); id., “Bombing Our Illusions”, *Huffpost* (26 January 2022).

and morality. I will also investigate the logical consistency of the proposed arguments to reveal the philosophical and theological value of the arguments referenced in their criticism of religion and to determine how the new atheism school perceives religion through Harris' views and whether its criticisms are justified and appropriate. In this context, it has been concluded that religion and science are incompatible, religion is harmful and dangerous, religion and religious beliefs are worthless, and a moral theory independent of religion and God can be developed, and these have been evaluated in relevant places.

1. The End of Faith: The Separation of Religion and Reason

The new school of atheism is one of the schools that works against religion. The new atheists start their studies with the claim that belief in God, which is the fundamental basis of religion, is dangerous and harmful. They state that religious belief is a poison and that this poison causes evil to people,¹³ and they express the views that "This world could be the best of all possible worlds, if there was no religion in it"¹⁴ and "Religion is bad! We can live in peace when religion is expelled from the world."¹⁵ On the other hand are Harris' equation of the religion of Islam with terrorism, Dawkins' statement that even the moderate side of religion cannot be tolerated, and his view of Islam as the root of evil and identification of it with violence despite never having read the Qur'ān. Dennett likens religion to a lion, and his idea that "religion should also be caged" constitutes the basic logic of new atheists' view of religion.¹⁶ In this context, after 2004, a number of related books that complemented each other were discussed. The common point of these books is to equate God and religious belief, moral values, and human sensitivity with nonreligious, anti-human, and immoral behaviors arising from apparently religious individuals or communities. The first of the books that holds an important place in the birth of this understanding and the new atheism is Harris' *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason*. In this work, Harris

¹³ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 67.

¹⁴ Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 43.

¹⁵ Alister E. McGrath - Joanna Collicutt McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine* (Illinois: IVP Books, 2007), 91-92.

¹⁶ Bilgili, *Bilim Ne Değildir?*, 39-40.

emphasizes that all religions in the world produce all evil and destruction, such as religious wars, child abuse, rape, torture, murder, and genocide. According to him, religion and religious belief do not give or add anything to humans.¹⁷

After Harris, Dawkins wrote *The God Delusion* in 2006. In this work, Dawkins conveyed his thoughts in a way that reflects the basic features of the new atheism, such as the origin of religion, its negative effects, religions' perception of God, belief in any divine being, and all kinds of supernatural explanations. He expressed his thoughts in a wide range, from evidence in favor of the existence of God to evidence of his absence.¹⁸

After Dawkins, Dennett wrote *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* in 2006. In this work, a proposal is presented to break the magic of religion, which is a spell that impresses people. At the heart of this proposal lies the idea of breaking the magic by virtually declaring war on religion that influences all believers.¹⁹

Immediately after Dennett, C. Hitchens wrote *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* in 2007. In this work, Hitchens takes an aggressive attitude toward God and religion, sees God as a mistake, and states that religion causes all evils and is responsible for the ongoing wars, massacres, genocides, and tortures throughout human history.²⁰

We can clearly see that in the new atheism, religion is identified with evil, torture, terror, violence, immorality, and war. The origin of this understanding is the effort to show religion as a discriminating feature that may cause belief problems or gaps. In Harris' view, belief is expressed as an understanding that is "not justified in any way in terms of propositions that promise the existence of a functional system that protects human life from the destructive influence of time and death".²¹ In addition, religion involves "believ[ing] in certain historical

¹⁷ Harris, *The End of Faith*; See Amir D. Aczel, *Why Science Does Not Disprove God* (New York: Harper Collins, 2014), 10-30; Metin Yasa, *Varoluşsal İnanç Sorunları* (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2018), 84.

¹⁸ Dawkins, *The God Delusion*.

¹⁹ Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking The Spell: Religion as a Naturel Phenomenon* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

²⁰ Christopher Hitchens, *God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (Toronto: Warner Books, 2007).

²¹ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 65.

and supernatural propositions and living accordingly".²² Belief is expressed as the act of knowing without evidence. It is pointed out that religion is not rational, that the claims of religion are incompatible with science, and that religions are dangerous and harmful to humanity. Furthermore, it is emphasized that belief in God and all religious belief propositions have no basis. It is unreasonable to believe in something, i.e., religion, that cannot be proved in everyday life or by scientific observations. As beliefs about the world, religious beliefs need to be as evidence-based like any other belief. Insofar as religious propositions claim to provide information about the real state of the world, they must be linked to the world and other beliefs about it. For example, propositions such as "God hears prayers" and "bad consequences occur when God's name is used in bad deeds" influence the thinking and behavior that follow them. As long as a person accepts that his or her beliefs represent the true state of the world, that person must also believe that his or her beliefs are a result of the state of the world. In this case, the person in question becomes open to new evidence. If there were no rational changes in the world that would cause a person to question his or her religious beliefs, it would be proof that that person formed those beliefs without considering any situation in the world.²³

According to Harris, areas that cannot be examined by observation and experimentation cannot be considered a value. Harris suggests that religious beliefs and values cannot be considered within the field of value because they cannot be justified. He believes that the understanding of strict rationality comes into play at this point. That is, for a religious belief to be considered rational, the correctness of the belief system can be accepted. According to him, religious belief systems cannot achieve this because there is no region in the human brain devoted to religious belief.²⁴

There are wars or conflicts between Jews and Muslims in Palestine, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats or Orthodox Serbs and Bosnians and Albanian Muslims in the Balkans, Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir, Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, Orthodox Russians and Chechen Muslims in the

²² Harris, *The End of Faith*, 65.

²³ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 63-65

²⁴ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 65.

Caucasus and Muslim Azeris and Catholic and Orthodox Armenians. In these places, religion has been the direct cause of death for millions of people in recent years. If people are presented with different, incompatible, and untestable concepts of what happens after death and then forced to live with limited resources, the situation described here arises. In other words, an endless cycle of massacres, wars, and ceasefires occurs. If, according to Harris, there is any truth that history has revealed, it is that when we ignore what the evidence says, we become worse people than we normally are. When weapons of mass destruction are added to this systemic setup, it is a recipe for the destruction of civilization. One of the best examples of this is the death of more than a million people in the religious wars that took place during the separation of India and Pakistan. The main disagreement between the two countries is the adoption of illogical myths. In other words, the basic mentality in these countries, which are trying to destroy each other with nuclear weapons, is that they are so agitated that they can put their lives on the line without any evidence. The basis of this agitation is differences in belief. Islam and Hindu beliefs cannot coexist peacefully. On the other hand, the most motivating thing for the people who follow these religions is their thoughts about the afterlife or their vision of Paradise. These thoughts obscure the murder of mothers in front of their children during the war, the robbery, rape and burning of women, the cutting of the belly of a pregnant woman and lifting of her baby into the air on the tip of a sword because these thoughts are not based on any evidence.²⁵

Harris draws attention to the link between belief and action and considers this very dangerous because of the effect of religious belief that motivates believers. According to him, religious beliefs make believers obsessive, so they are not open to criticism and peaceful negotiations. Harris is right both in this approach and in his determination that the wars that have broken out due to differences in belief and the destruction they caused should be criticized. However, the link between belief and behavior adds significantly to the seriousness of the matter. He believes that some propositions can be so dangerous that they even kill people who believe them because they believe them to be ethically correct. In fact, there is no way to talk

²⁵ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 25-29.

to some people. Again, according to Harris, such people should be detained; otherwise, their killing in self-defense by people who are perfectly tolerant under normal circumstances may be justified. Although Harris' thoughts are not consistent within themselves, they are much more dangerous than the religious beliefs that he contends are dangerous. He justifies the military and political approaches of the United States and some European states toward the Middle East and Afghanistan on the grounds in question. According to him, these states are kind, tolerant, and respectful of all countries in the world, so they have to enter countries they deem dangerous in the name of global peace, even if it comes at a heavy cost to both their own citizens and the citizens of those countries.²⁶ This approach is a kind of explanation of Harris' war against religion. If he had studied religions in detail, as befits a philosopher and a scientist, he would not see religion itself as harmful or dangerous because of those who commit crimes in the name of any religion. However, even if it is possible to agree with the criticism that there are setbacks in the historical process within the changing theological structure in some religions,²⁷ we can say that the problem is not in the religion itself. However, Harris' comment shows that he is not objective in his approach to religion and tries to produce ideas with generalized judgments.

Among the main drawbacks of religion, for Harris, are absolutism and bigotry. According to him, nothing a Christian or a Muslim might say to one another makes their faith open to mutual discussion because the basic principles of their faith prevent them from converting. Therefore, they have turned their backs on rationality by believing without proof. It is the nature of religions to forbid believers from questioning.²⁸

According to Harris, as Dawkins points out,²⁹ another main drawback of religion is discrimination based on gender and the backlash against differences in sexual orientation. The view of women in Islam is an example of this. For example, more than two hundred people died in an incident in Nigeria at the 2002 Miss World Pageant

²⁶ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 25-29, 52.

²⁷ In this regard, see Aynur Çınar, "Tarihte Kaybolmuş Bir Medeniyet: Etrüskler ve Etrüsk Dini", *Belleten* 84/299 (April 2020), 51-61.

²⁸ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 44.

²⁹ Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 286-291.

due to women's clothing. In the same year, adolescent girls trapped in a burning building in Mecca were not saved in time because of their clothing; fifteen girls were killed, and fifty girls were injured.³⁰ Harris points out the drawbacks of religions: they cause wars; absolutism and bigotry dominate in religion; and religions create gender differences and cause the mental, physical, and sexual abuse of children. These comments suggest that religion is an objectionable structure in many ways, including sociological, philosophical, moral, and environmental aspects. However, there are also claims that the wars that have been experienced in almost every period since the existence of humanity arise only from religions and that all religious people act according to the principles ordered by religion throughout their lives. The fiction that is proposed by expressing it as a religious phenomenon and basing the abuse of children and women, which is seen even in the most civilized societies, on religion can be described as a simple anecdote rather than a philosophical and convincing basis. Of course, the influence of religion on society cannot be denied. It would not be an objective assessment to make a prediction or reach a decision without a detailed examination of how this effect is shaped in society. For example, while it is possible to abuse part of society through the abuse of religion, the beneficial effect of religion can be manifested in social integrity, togetherness, and ethical consistency. Therefore, Harris and the new atheists, who struggle to see religion as a system shaped by certain stereotypical behaviors or negative attitudes in human actions, have such a shallow perspective that they cannot explain their beliefs and belief states philosophically. Therefore, regarding religions and religious people, Harris says, "People who use their logic do not agree on everything, of course, but people who do not use their logic will definitely split up according to their dogma."³¹ Even if he is right in these criticisms, his thoughts, which consist of biased and incomplete information about religion that is not based on the principles of logic and philosophical grounds, are neither philosophically consistent, sociologically convincing, nor scientifically provable since sociological research has not been conducted in the context of the subject and lacks scientific data and bases. Therefore, his determinations about religion will not serve to obtain an accurate and

³⁰ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 44-45.

³¹ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 48.

precise result, because of their position they cannot be told that the idea of faith can only be explained scientifically as they try to understand it.³² Based on the belief-faith issue, Harris states that belief in God and all religious belief propositions are not justified and that faith, which essentially includes the feeling of trust, is the next step of belief that is free from the factors of plausibility, internal consistency, kindness, and impartiality.³³ The point he emphasizes is that believing something that cannot be proved in daily life or by scientific findings is equivalent to ignorance. However, believing or not believing is a matter of choice, and after making this choice, the stage of rational inquiry begins. In fact, as Harris points out, it is not entirely up to the individual to believe or to determine which belief he or she will hold. However, it is possible to escape the current state of belief or disbelief with certain investigations. It is possible to realize this situation, but the objectivity of the justification of belief is a utopian discourse. Therefore, Harris emphasizes that a rational attitude toward belief is important and valuable. In his view, the moral system that should be defended together with the value and role of reason is also extremely important.

2. Morality without God: A Guide to Religionless Spirituality

Religion has been an important source of morality for centuries.³⁴ Christians, Muslims, and members of other religions have taken religious sources as the basis, although they are inspired by philosophical tradition to create a moral system for the individual, family, society, and the whole universe. However, during the Enlightenment, when empirical science based on the human mind began to dominate instead of metaphysical elements, the idea that science was the determinant of the moral values of religion became widespread. In the following centuries, the necessity of religion for human morality was questioned. Naturalist and evolutionary moral theories emerged because of this inquiry. Most of these theories typically adopted moral relativism, which denies the existence of

³² Feser, *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism*, 20; Aliye Çınar, *Tanrı Yanılıgısı Üzerine: İnanmak ya da İnanmamak* (İstanbul: Profil Yayıncılık, 2009), 174; Özkan, "Criticism of Religion in the New Atheism", 139.

³³ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 65.

³⁴ Recep Kılıç, *Ablakın Dinî Temeli* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2016), 81-114.

objective moral values and responsibilities.³⁵ In this respect, Harris also takes a moral view. Harris' moral understanding, which he calls a moral landscape, is based on the fact that science is the basis of morality and objective moral values; therefore, morality does not need religion.³⁶ He makes the following basic claims in this regard: "Meaning, values, morality, and the good life must be related to facts about the well-being of conscious beings and must be legally bound up with events in the world and states of the human brain. Rational, genuine inquiry has always been a source of genuine insight into such processes. If belief is true about anything, it is true by chance."³⁷

Harris emphasizes that science cannot be in the background of moral issues. It challenges the understanding that moral truths cannot be found in the realities of the natural world and suggests a way forward. The way he proposes is to see what science can do. According to him, science, in principle, helps humans determine what they should and should not do. For example, just as questions have right and wrong answers in physics, moral questions also have right and wrong answers. In this respect, there should be a science of ethics.³⁸ Harris claims that moral questions have objective answers and that sciences such as neurology can help answer them while criticizing those who adhere to moral relativism or who think that religion should answer moral questions. According to Harris, morality is about maximizing the happiness of conscious beings. There are natural facts involving brain states in conscious experience that maximize well-being. These facts can be determined by science. Therefore, the determinant of morality itself is science. In this case, religion becomes redundant, and the traditional distinction between fact (what is) and value (what should be) is just an illusion. Based on the functional neuroimaging system, Harris argues that beliefs about facts (e.g., the sun is a star) and beliefs about values (e.g., persecution is false)

³⁵ Enoch Charles, "Sam Harris's Science of Morality: A Philosophical, Historiographical, and Theological Critique", *Researchgate* (February 2, 2022).

³⁶ For detailed information, see Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape How Science Can Determine Human Values* (New York, Free Press, 2010); Nathan W. Johnson, *Conveying Controversial Science: Sam Harris's The Moral Landscape and Popular Science Communication* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, Ph.D. Diss., 2013), 1-44.

³⁷ Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, 6.

³⁸ Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, 28.

originate from similar brain processes. The Christian philosopher William Lane Craig (b. 1949) argued that they are not the same. According to him, the origin of a belief should not be confused with the content of the belief. The emergence of two different beliefs from similar brain processes does not mean they have the same meaning or information content. Whatever their origins, beliefs about what the situation is and what should (or should not) be are not the same. One belief may be true, and another may be false. For this reason, Harris' view lacks the basis for objective moral responsibility. In fact, Harris' observations on the brain "do not identify facts and values any more than a brain scan that lights up the same way during addition and multiplication."³⁹

At this point, some questions come to mind that should be directed to Harris. For example, can morality be interpreted as maximizing happiness? Is it ethical to aim for pure happiness at the highest level? Is a world where happiness/well-being is maximized a good world? What should be said about the basic values such as justice, kindness, compassion, human dignity, honor, and dignity, which should be observed and protected even if sometimes at the expense of maximizing the level in question? To answer these questions, reference can be made to Aristotle's (d. 322 BC) thoughts on happiness. According to him, happiness is the most valuable and basic goal of humans.⁴⁰ Aristotle believed that being virtuous requires exhibiting behaviors in accordance with virtue; happiness is virtue itself, and therefore, it is the most valuable goal for humans. All behaviors should aim to be in the middle between excess and understatement. This opens the door to happiness. For this reason, a person should find the middle way and strive to reach the goal in question.⁴¹

In fact, societies pay a great price to preserve and rebuild these values at the expense of human happiness or well-being. For this reason, Harris' comment on morality contains a nature devoid of philosophical and sociological foundations and explanations. In this regard, the philosophers Russell Blackford (b. 1954) and Craig criticize Harris' morality. According to them, the impact of science on human

³⁹ Charles, "Sam Harris's Science of Morality", 1-6.

⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 12.

⁴¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 20.

development is not new. For this reason, Harris' claims are characterized as wordplay and juggling.⁴² In addition, with regard to Harris' morality, the objective distinction between the good life and the bad life, guided by science and asserted at the highest level of goodness, is also criticized.⁴³ Craig says, "Harris' distinction is not morally equivalent to a good life and a bad life". For him, Harris' concept of a good and a bad life is rather a distinction between a happy (pleasure) life and a painful (misery) life. Harris did not make an explicit connection between moral worth (right/wrong) and moods (stimulation/misery). This critique shows that natural facts and brain states alone cannot help to distinguish the moral quality of a good life and a bad life. Harris' understanding of the good and bad life differs mainly at the level of suffering but not necessarily on the basis of moral value or quality.⁴⁴

Harris also opens the door to an evolutionary view of morality. He says that the common notion that religion is the source of our deepest moral intuitions is absurd. For example, vices such as cruelty are not learned only from the Bible. Anyone who does not have the simple idea that cruelty is wrong is unlikely to learn it by reading. Therefore, the precursors of moral actions must be found in the natural world. According to him, the fact that the origin of moral actions is biological reveals that the effort to base morality on religious concepts such as moral duty is wrong. For example, saving a drowning child is no more a moral task than understanding comparison is a logical task. In this respect, it can be said that religious ideas do not need to lead people to live moral lives because religion is a constraint of moral identity. In addition, religions cannot produce more satisfying answers to morality than science. Biological realities are not suitable for a designer God and for the explanation of moral principles proposed because of God. In this respect, explanations of evolution are more logical than moral principles presented within the framework of belief in God. According to Harris, the negativities in the world brought about by a just, benevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent God are more complex than

⁴² Craig Hovey, *What Makes Us Moral? Science, Religion and the Shaping of the Moral Landscape: A Christian Response to Sam Harris* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 43; Charles, "Sam Harris's Science of Morality", 6.

⁴³ Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, 8.

⁴⁴ Charles, "Sam Harris's Science of Morality", 6-7.

the explanations in evolutionary theory.⁴⁵ He explains this in his own words:

The grumpy miracle of evolution is this: “those mechanisms that create the incredible beauty and diversity of the living world guarantee brutality and death”. Children born without limbs, blind flies, endangered species, all this is the product of Mother Nature’s way of kneading the soil. No perfect God can sustain such inconsistencies. If God created the world and everything in it, it is helpful to remember that he also created smallpox, plague, and worms. Any man who deliberately instilled such fears into the earth would be rotting in prison for his crimes.⁴⁶

Harris says that religion is winged ignorance.⁴⁷ According to him, religion produces moral principles based on the selfish wishes and desires of people. For example, a person desires to be more loving and compassionate for selfish reasons.⁴⁸ Religion takes it upon itself. However, with reference to Dawkins, Harris points out that this is not so. For example, societies that carry related genes must cooperate to maintain the existence of their own genes. In other words, it can be said that every individual is selfish, that there is no such thing as goodness, and that selfish thoughts underlie behaviors that are qualified as good. According to Dawkins, there are four basic Darwinian reasons why individuals are generous and moral toward each other. The first of these is kinship relationships. The second is to do good with the expectation of return. The third is the fame that will result from good deeds done. The fourth is the benefits that will be brought to the individual by the state of superior courage revealed in the field of morality.⁴⁹ These views open the door to the evolutionary moral view.

Harris’ evolutionary view of morality is shaped around the theory of morality without God. His godless moral theory states that the existence of a just, all-creating, and omnipotent God is incompatible

⁴⁵ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 170-171.

⁴⁶ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 170.

⁴⁷ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 175.

⁴⁸ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 191.

⁴⁹ Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 220-221; Saim Gündoğan, “Richard Dawkins’in Tanrı’nın Varlığına Yönelik Eleştirisinin Çıkmazları (The Deadlocks of Richard Dawkins’s Critique of God’s Existence)”, *İhya Uluslararası İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi (İhya International Journal of Islamic Studies)*, 8/2 (Autumn 2022): 840.

with the evils in the universe. The existence of an absolute, eternally transcendent God is not in question; therefore, it is not possible for him to intervene in the events that take place in the universe over time. This is based on arguments that morality is not accepted as based on religion. Although Harris' approach is similar to Walter Sinnott Armstrong's (b. 1955) godless moral theory,⁵⁰ there is great substance and value in reinterpreting concepts such as spirituality in grounding these ideas.

Harris received a negative reaction from the atheist community for using the concept of spirituality but continued to use this concept. What Harris means by spirituality is continuously breaking through the illusion of self with the deepening of understanding that allows for a clearer understanding of the way things are from both a scientific and a philosophical point of view.⁵¹ In this respect, according to him, the deepest aim of spirituality is to be free from the illusion of the self, and to seek freedom as a future state that must be achieved through effort is to strengthen the chains of one's ever-present apparent bondage.⁵² Discussing classical spiritual phenomena, concepts, and practices in the context of the modern understanding of the human mind, Harris states unequivocally that nothing needs to be affirmed by faith because its core arguments are observable and scientific in a way that can be experienced by all followers.⁵³ His main arguments about spirituality can be expressed as follows: spirituality should be strictly separated from religion. Spirituality, like morality, is based on science. Religion is not obligatory for spirituality. Traditional self-perception is an illusion. The most useful thing for spirituality is meditation. Harris proposed these theses about spirituality as a result of the narcotic substance use he experienced in his youth. According to him, St. Jesus, Buddha, Lao Tzu, scholars and mystics in history all experienced a kind of spiritual depth as he did. Therefore, they were not epileptic, schizophrenic, or dishonest because of their spiritual experiences. Even if the religious beliefs or religions they advocated are intellectual

⁵⁰ Walter Sinnott Armstrong, *Morality Without God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Mehmet Evkuran, "Yeni Ateist Akımın Din Eleştirisi Üzerine", *Dini Araştırmalar ve Küresel Bakış* (Konya: Türkiye İmam Hatipliler Vakfı Yayınları, 2016), 1/311-329.

⁵¹ Harris, *Waking Up*, 9.

⁵² Harris, *Waking Up*, 123-124.

⁵³ Harris, *Waking Up*, 6-8.

ruins, the spiritual depths they experienced are psychological realities. Therefore, according to him, since the secular world and science cannot explain this deep spiritual state that people experience, it is necessary to warn people about this issue.⁵⁴ For this, one must discover the facts oneself without accepting the contemplative understandings⁵⁵ and metaphysical ideas created by the people of the past.⁵⁶

Harris believes that the most plausible method for the aforementioned discovery is meditation, which he defines as follows: "Meditation is the practice of finding this freedom directly, by ending self-identification with thoughts, and allowing the duration of pleasant and unpleasant experience to be as it is."⁵⁷ With this definition, Harris states that he took meditation and its techniques, which he refers to as a method of developing scientific spirituality, from Buddhism. According to him, Buddhism is scientific because it is essentially an empirical religion that does not depend on creeds and contains logical discourses about the nature of mind. In this respect, Buddhism, which is in a more advantageous position compared to other religions, is instrumental in that the meditation technique is a scientific situation. Meditation is a healthy focusing and awakening method that can be applied without losing any of its functions, even if it is cleansed of religious elements. The point that Harris tries to emphasize by *awakening* is that it takes place at the conscious level by getting rid of the self that corresponds to the name of Buddha, which means the awakened one.⁵⁸ The goal of meditation is "to reach a state of well-being that is not impaired or is easily regained even if it is broken"⁵⁹, i.e., to reveal a kind of well-being that is inherent in the mind from the very beginning. That is why temporary experiences must be accessible in the context of ordinary sights, sounds, sensations, and even thoughts. According to Harris, peak experiences are beautiful, but true freedom must coincide with the normal life in which we are awake.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Harris, *Waking Up*, 5-9.

⁵⁵ Contemplation (inner gaze) is a term used in the sense of focusing on one's own self, completely isolating oneself from the outside world and diving into deep contemplation. Namık Çankı, *Büyük Felsefe Lügatı* (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1954), 1/166.

⁵⁶ Harris, *Waking Up*, 33.

⁵⁷ Harris, *Waking Up*, 140.

⁵⁸ Harris, *Waking Up*, 29-32.

⁵⁹ Harris, *Waking Up*, 44-45.

⁶⁰ Harris, *Waking Up*, 123-124.

Based on Harris' meditation, he is justified in his approach in the context of spiritual seekers' failure to fully accept their present situation and that all efforts are destined to fail because the urge to seek the experience of transcending oneself or any other mystical experience is rejected. Meditation, which is free from metaphysical elements, will open the door to a scientific spirituality and continued searching.

Up to this point, I have briefly mentioned Harris' views on morality. I have attempted to question the accuracy and the philosophical and theological justification of the claims put forward in the context of these views within the scope of the study. The views in question consist of the rejection of relative moral theories, taking a stand against all kinds of beliefs and religious beliefs, science as the basis of morality, and the necessity of understanding and internalizing spirituality and meditation in their modern sense. Accordingly, emphasis is placed on a science of ethics. This depends on removing religion from the field of morality by making science the ultimate arbiter of moral values. The moral theory that emerges as an outcome of these and other of Harris' claims is philosophically and theologically unsuccessful. A philosophy-based moral system that focuses on a moral formation or the moral vision of a divinely sourced religion seems more reasonable than the purely scientific-based moral value advocated by Harris. It is more systematic in itself, and it clearly protects objective moral values and responsibilities. This casts doubt on the persuasiveness of a godless moral understanding. For example, it seems possible to develop an interdisciplinary Islamic moral theology in light of contemporary developments in neurology, evolutionary biology, psychology, anthropology, phenomenology, and philosophy as well as the history of Islamic moral thought. On the other hand, the basic arguments and boundaries of a godless, religion-defying, and purely science-based morality remain too limited to be universal.

3. The Harms of Religion: Conflicting Claims of Truth by Religions

As clearly seen above, Harris stresses the need to destroy religions. In fact, since religion is a fabricated phenomenon, he believes that there must be a constant war against religion because religion is a harmful, destructive phenomenon for humanity. In this respect, Harris sees the problem of religious diversity as a fundamental problem and

claims that intolerance is dominant in the nature of religion. According to him, religion contains dogmatism, intolerance, absurdity, absoluteness, monism, and truth claims. Harris suggests that these qualities are barriers to any consultation that will curb religious conflict.⁶¹

Harris reinforces this approach with social examples and considers it taboo to criticize the religious approach in society. He states that believers engage in negative behaviors as required by their religion and that attitudes toward people who belong to other religions contain elements that threaten human life. He argues that all of these are caused by both extreme and moderate religious people because moderate religious people also have religious dogmas and have the potential to drag humankind into the abyss.⁶² From this perspective, we can say that Harris is correct that there are some expressions that suggest an exclusivist attitude in the nature of every religion, but it would be unfair to ignore the fact that religions also include religious tolerance. Harris is biased here and puts religious exclusion and tolerance on the same level. In fact, according to Harris, the evils committed in the name of religion are not in the nature of religion but arise from human nature. So, it is not a logical explanation that the most effective way to restrain them is through religion.⁶³ However, it is difficult to say that the exclusivist understanding proposed in theory is realized in practice, as Harris understands it.

Harris believes that the most moderate religionists are committed to the requirements of pluralistic understanding. They argue that all beliefs are equally valid, but in doing so, they ignore each religion's incurable demand to monopolize truth. For example, it is not possible for a Christian to respect the beliefs of others as long as he or she thinks that only his or her baptized brothers and sisters are saved on the Day of Judgment. After all, the Christian knows that the fire of Hell itself is fueled by these ideas and that even now, it awaits its defenders. Jews and Muslims generally adopt the same approach to their own religions

⁶¹ Thomas Zenk, *New Atheism*, ed. S. Bullivant - M. Ruse (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 773-774.

⁶² Harris, *The End of Faith*, 13-14.

⁶³ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 14-15.

and have emphasized the mistakes of other religions for thousands of years.⁶⁴

The moderate religion approach presented by Harris is not rooted in religion itself but rather is a result of the postmodern era. Based on the strictly exclusivist expressions in the holy books, he claims that people in contemporary societies gave up reading these books because of their skeptical attitudes toward religion. Harris says that moderate religious people ignore the attitudes of fundamentalists and act with logic. According to Harris, moderates say that fundamentalists are individuals who betray both their faith and reason. The problem here lies in the meaning that Harris ascribes to the notion of moderate. What Harris wants to understand as a moderate religious person is “a person who has become alienated from his faith, who questions religious truths or who completely breaks away from religion.” However, the existence of religious people who seem strict and who think that violence and all kinds of actions that harm human life are not the solution proves that the strict-moderate distinction is not applicable.⁶⁵

Harris states that the positive aspects of religions should not indicate that religions are beneficial. He also argues that practices beneficial to humanity should be considered positive effects of people within the religious tradition. For example, while European Christians were enjoying an endlessly dark period, Islamic scholars found algebra, translated Ancient Greek works, and made important contributions to various sciences that were still new. All this was instrumental in planting the seeds of the Renaissance in Western Europe. According to Harris, in every religion, there have been activities that have positively affected human history, and some valuable things in the world have even been discovered by people of religious belief, but this does not mean that religious belief is good or beneficial. In other words, religion does not have a beneficial effect on the development of humanity, and the scientific and philosophical achievements of a person in a religious tradition originate from the person himself or herself. In addition, the contribution to the progress of humanity of a person who belongs to any religion and, therefore, the appearance that religious belief leaves a positive mark on civilization should be evaluated as an argument

⁶⁴ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 14-15.

⁶⁵ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 21-22.

against religious belief.⁶⁶ Harris faces a paradox here. On the one hand, he argues that negative actions and practices that do not provide any benefit to humanity are the product of religious belief rather than individuals. On the other hand, he states that even if every element that contributes to the development of humanity emerges under the influence of a religious person who has assimilated the religious tradition, it is necessary to make inferences against religion. This understanding, which Harris sees as the harms of religion, is nothing but a prejudice because in the ideas in question, *everything useful is the work of humans, and everything harmful is the work of religion.*

One of the useful qualities of religion is that it socializes people, and Harris accepts this as a historical fact. However, in the modern world, the integration of people from different societies due to economic, environmental, political, and medical needs is why there is no need for this characteristic of religion. Therefore, religion, like many things that were considered sacred in the past, does not need to carry the sacredness of the past to the present because Harris believes that the effects of religion on the new world are dangerous. Such dangers cannot be eliminated with the abovementioned factors in the contemporary world.⁶⁷ According to him, millions of people have lost their lives because of religion in recent years, which we can easily see in large and small wars waged in the name of religion. According to Harris, the main and real reason is irrational religious beliefs, even if the cause of conflicts and wars between societies of different religious beliefs is understood in political and economic contexts. In this respect, the harmfulness of religion is not a coincidence but a necessity due to its origins in faith.⁶⁸ For example, the conflict between India and Pakistan stems from the diplomatic incompetence of the two countries according to advocates of religious pluralism. In reality, however, the cause of conflict is irrational religious beliefs. Because of religious differences, millions of people died during the separation of India and Pakistan, and both countries had nuclear weapons. The only reason why India and Pakistan are different countries is that the Islamic and Hindu faiths cannot coexist peacefully.⁶⁹ We can say that Harris'

⁶⁶ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 108-109.

⁶⁷ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 23-25.

⁶⁸ Zenk, *New Atheism*, 773.

⁶⁹ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 25-29.

statements mentioned here bear some truth. For example, in the Islamic world, there are different groups that adhere to the same belief. There is constant conflict between these groups, which act as if they are the sole proprietors of religion and have the sole right to speak on behalf of God. Harris interprets this as the understanding between strict and moderate religious people who are not different from each other. Despite all of this, we cannot say that religion is harmful; therefore, it is necessary to take a stand against it. Instead, we can imagine that the problem is not in religion but in the understanding of religion, and we can try to solve the problem. In other words, for Harris, it is necessary to express that those who speak and act in the name of religion do not make real explanations of religion and are not the sole proprietors of religion. Although Harris researched all the evaluations, he did not give up his view that the main culprit was belief itself. The inability to see religion as a source of peace, unity, and solutions to existential problems indicates that Harris ignores the facts and is prejudiced.⁷⁰

Harris says that there is no serious difference between those who carried out the 9/11 event and those who turned the White House into a monastery with prayer groups and Bible study groups that roamed from room to room in the US White House. He believes that because of what these two opposing groups propose in theory and practice, humankind has embarked on a worrisome path. In fact, these groups, which think that they have been involved in a holy war since the Middle Ages, have also prepared the foundations that will bring the end of humanity in the future. Harris thinks that the main reason for this is that religion is superior to rational thought. The solution to this situation is for people to eliminate the dogmas of religions and othering structures such as bigotry and exclusion produced by religion.⁷¹ The strange thing is that Harris includes paradoxical expressions in his thoughts. While talking about the relationship between belief and action, as stated previously, he argues that some people who cannot be persuaded by any peaceful method can be killed in self-defense. Harris exemplifies the military and political attack or understanding of the United States and some European states

⁷⁰ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 85-86.

⁷¹ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 46-49.

against the Middle East and Afghanistan.⁷² What Harris argues here is the positioning of the West against the East and justifications for the West in every case. First, if the new atheists have enough power, they can try to eliminate religion or religious people by organizing acts such as people harming each other by forming religious or political groups. Second, wherever there are sociologically different masses of people, there may be polarization, although the cause is not the same. As a result, an act or discourse that one group sees as terrorism may be seen by the other group as defensive. For example, Harris states that there will not be any transformations such as the reforms in Christianity in the Islamic world; for this reason, he characterizes Islam as terroristic and pro-violence, while he characterizes Christianity as moderate and pro-peace. However, just as all Christians did not approve of the Inquisition in the Christian world, the acts of violence committed by some groups in the Islamic world are not approved by all Muslims. This demonstrates that a Muslim can be peace-loving rather than intolerant. On the other hand, according to Harris, Muslims can build a better future if they abandon a large part of their religious beliefs and traditions as Christians did previously. Although his statements are subjective, they provide the opportunity to express that although the Christian world is far from real religious and spiritual values, it cannot propose more positive actions and discourses than all other religious societies in today's world. However, in today's world, it would be more understandable to investigate the political and religious reasons for global problems with objective and philosophical evaluations. This approach does not prevent us from realizing that ignorant and incorrect perceptions of religion that have no relation to the essential elements of the Islamic religion do great harm to some groups in the Islamic world. However, we can characterize this situation as an internal problem that the religious tradition must consider. It is essential that Harris and other new atheists abandon the mythicization of the Christian world with the discourses of democracy and freedom and the identification of the Islamic world with the concepts of jihad and radical Islam because we cannot deny that some religious foundations are a reality for global prosperity. The readings and determinations made by Harris about religious people that ignore this

⁷² Harris, *The End of Faith*, 25-29, 52.

reality are biased, prejudiced, and subjective. In fact, even if Harris sees the fundamental problem in belief based on the thesis of *The Clash of Civilizations*⁷³ of Samuel P. Huntington (d. 2008), he says that if there is a conflict in which religion is involved, the West must win the conflict.⁷⁴ Harris argues that even though Islam has survived periods that enlightened humanity in the past, Islam poses a great danger for the present and the future. His rhetoric and approach here almost resemble an evangelical attitude. He maintains this attitude by saying that Western societies are superior to Eastern societies in many respects. He adds that the seemingly negative result of every action performed by the superior is better than the dangerous situation that would be caused if it did not perform that action.⁷⁵

At this stage, Harris' main problem can be expressed as his approach to believing or not believing as well as not acting as a human being and acting with the psychology of superiority because his critique of religion and understanding of an atheist society led by science means that he is the messiah of an evangelical Christian. Let us say that there is a possibility that inhuman acts of power and those who have power will be carried out in the future in a similar way by different groups. In this case, as Harris says, it can be claimed that the actions taken by the United States in the Middle East were carried out by radical religious people.⁷⁶ Therefore, Harris believes that he has deepened his comments on the new atheism, which started with philosophical arguments and grounds, from a sociological perspective and concludes that the primary problem is religious life in Islamic geography. From this perspective, the greatest danger that must be addressed and destroyed is the religion of Islam, and then it is necessary to confront other beliefs. As a result of his statements, although he is progressively hostile to religion, Harris does not act impartially while revealing this stance. By referring to the fact that the violent activities that he criticizes are necessary in some cases for the peaceful society he wants in the future, he opens the door to inconsistency and contradiction of the ideas, grounds, and arguments

⁷³ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations", *Foreign Affairs* 72/3 (Summer 1993), 3-28.

⁷⁴ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 130-131.

⁷⁵ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 142-147.

⁷⁶ Harris, *The End of Faith*, 153.

of the new atheism. When we refer to the criticisms of Quentin Smith (d. 2020), an atheist thinker, regarding these determinations and criticisms of Harris, Smith's reason for these criticisms is that he tries to defend atheism by caricaturing only a certain religion or a group of religious people without giving serious attention to the claims made by Harris.⁷⁷ Therefore, while trying to reveal the foundations of the new atheism, Harris refers to the negative historical and social reflections of religion. In other words, Harris tries to justify atheism through his criticism of religion and religious people without discussing the philosophical basis, arguments, and explanations of concepts such as theism, deism, and atheism in detail.

Conclusion

Harris claims that religion or religious belief is not based on evidence, is not rational, and does not comply with science; therefore, he equates religion with problems such as war, terror, violence, and evil and states that religion is harmful and dangerous. His happy rejection of the lack of a rational basis in religion and his discourses in this direction may be due to his efforts to show religion as unsuccessful in every area, but Harris envisions religions as far from the natural development of philosophy. For this reason, what Harris needs to do is to identify and reveal the practical or theoretical parts of religion that can be criticized rather than interpreting the religious historical process with his own naturalistic approach according to his disbelief. On the other hand, Harris puts his objective point of view aside and acts with prejudice in regard to religion. According to him, religion or religious beliefs are not considered valuable because they do not fall into the field of experimentation and observation on their own because religion is an absolutist, bigoted structure that creates gender differences and does not accept differences in people's free choices. It is quite understandable for an atheist to claim that religion conflicts with science and philosophy with these discourses on religion. However, Harris, who does not objectively reveal the true nature, purpose, aim, and effects of religion, claims that the working mechanisms of religion and science are not different, which clearly shows that he has prejudices about religion. In other words, this

⁷⁷ Feser, *A Refutation of the New Atheism*, 22.

functioning mechanism of religion is characterized as functioning on the axis of happiness together with the activity of making sense of all existence beyond the universe. Science is expressed as a field that operates according to the principle of causality and has an act of knowing at its source. In this case, how can the argument that religion conflicts with science be put forward without being involved in religious life? If religion is seen as limited only to its external qualities, that is, to traditions that have emerged as a result of a certain process, then it can be claimed that religions or beliefs conflict with science. However, this does not constitute evidence that adopting and defending the basic values of a religion and scientific knowledge conflict. Therefore, claiming that religion lacks all rational elements, that religion is harmful and dangerous, and that belief conflicts with science can only be the product of a biased, prejudiced, or ideological view.

Harris attempts to develop a moral theory independent of religion and God based on grounds such as the conflict between science and religion and the harmful and dangerous nature of religion. Furthermore, he aims to contribute to the radical change in moral theory that has been emptied of its metaphysical essence. For this reason, he proposes morality as a social system that comprehends the individual deeply, helps to keep the social structure alive, and contributes to the functioning of other social institutions rather than being a structure that meets the metaphysical needs of individuals. Thus, he concentrates on the fact that it is easier, simpler, and more comfortable to live a life without religion and God. As a result, he tries to develop an atheist moral theory with the slogan of morality without God, pointing to the concept of human common sense. This effort by Harris is meant to serve the thought that wants to remove the concept of morality from religion along with the philosophy, sociology, psychology, literature, art, and education that religion has embraced. This outcome can be expressed as a contribution to the effort to maintain the existence of ideas similar to his ideas of the West, on the one hand, and to rebuild himself, on the other.

The theoretical approach and the practical reflections that Harris proposes on the criticism of religion are far from objective evaluations. Based on the social conflicts, events, and separations in today's world, Harris tries to ground the new atheism and criticize religion, starting

from a scientific view that accepts only natural sciences as the only criterion. This attitude, which is far from a philosophical basis, sociological studies, and scientific data, is shallow and not convincing because it consists of limited evaluations.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

FUNDING

The author received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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