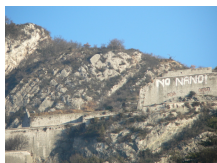


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By: Tudor Vieru, Science Editor



French protest against nanotechnology, at Bastille Fortress in Grenoble.
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Some Religious Groups Don't See Nanotechnology as Morally Acceptable

In some parts of the world, the two don't get along so well

The potential that nanotechnology has on our daily lives is largely unnoticed by people in the United States and in some European countries, such as Austria, Italy and Ireland, where religion plays a larger role in society. The benefits of such a revolutionary way of looking at things are shadowed by millennia of religious dogmas that have little to no appliance in today's world. And the heads of the churches, Christian or otherwise, struggle to maintain this view, and to keep people afraid of nanoparticles.

"The level of 'religiosity' in a particular country is one of the strongest predictors of whether or not people see nanotechnology as morally acceptable. Religion was the strongest influence over everything," argues University of Wisconsin-Madison professor of life sciences communication, Dietram Scheufele, who is also the lead author of the new study.

"What we captured is nanospecific, but it is also representative of a larger attitude toward science and technology. It raises a big question: What's really going on in our public discourse where science and religion often clash?" the scientist asks.

According to data in the new study, technology takes a turn for the "dark side," if looked at through religious filters. This trend was recorded on several other studies as well, but now, when the question was applied to a single specific issue, that of nanotechnology, the answers became clear. The respondents that weren't too religious said that they felt nanotechnology was a contribution to the development of mankind, whereas those who went to church regularly said that people didn't need it, and that faith was all they needed.

"It's estimated that nanotechnology will be a \$3.1 trillion global industry by 2015. Nanotechnology is one of those areas that is starting to touch nearly every part of our lives. But we found that religion is still one of the strongest predictors of whether or not nanotechnology is morally acceptable and whether or not it is perceived to be useful for society. There is absolutely no change in what people know about nanotechnology between 2004 and 2007. And nanotechnology has not had that catalytic moment, that key event that draws public attention to the issue," the researcher concludes.