Inherited Religion

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Inherited Religion

Across the globe, humanity's beliefs span a vast and fascinating spectrum:

- Over a billion Hindus find deep spiritual connection through stone idols.
- Approximately two-and-a-half billion Christians believe in the divine birth of God's Son through a virgin.
- One billion atheists firmly hold the conviction that no deity exists.
- Among the two billion Muslims, whose holy book emphasizes justice, freedom, honesty, humanity, and peace, it is rare to find individuals practicing these principles with complete conviction.
- The remaining global population, equally diverse in thought, holds an array of beliefs and philosophies.

> In numerical terms, one billion equals 1,000,000,000 - a humbling reminder of the scale of our world. No matter your alignment with any particular -ism or non-ism, your beliefs will place you in a minority relative to the planet's population, which is estimated to be more than 8 billions in 2024._

For instance, if you are Muslim, non-Muslims outnumber you by a ratio of nearly 3 to 1. Similarly, Christians find themselves in a comparable minority. Yet, these numbers carry no intrinsic validation or refutation of any belief system. Truth is not determined by majority rule.

An affinity with a religion, ethnicity, or place of origin does not determine one's capacity to distinguish right from a wrong. History is witness to the fact that individuals from all walks of life have made profound contributions to science, knowledge, and intellectual discourse. While people from all walks of life make irrational decisions quite frequently.

Inherited Beliefs and Unquestioned Traditions

Most individuals inherit their beliefs from their families and communities, seldom pausing to critically evaluate them. Take Christians, for example: their faith is often shaped by upbringing rather than a conscious, rational choice. Children are introduced to religious practices—attending church, listening to clergy, and absorbing teachings that eventually become internalized as personal truths.

Those who dare to question these handed-down beliefs are frequently labeled heretics or non-believers, a pattern not unique to Christianity but common across religions and traditions.

This phenomenon extends beyond religion. Many cling to inherited ideologies, rarely subjecting them to scrutiny. The result is a form of intellectual stagnation, where critical thinking is sidelined by blind adherence.

Self-Interest and Belief

When individuals deviate from inherited beliefs, it often occurs subconsciously and is influenced by personal desires. Atheists, for instance, may reject religion due to perceived irrationalities but might not fully explore alternative perspectives. The decision to abandon religion can be driven by a desire to escape certain restrictions, yet this may come at the cost of overlooking valuable insights.

Beliefs, whether religious or secular, often serve self-serving interests. Even when science debunks misconceptions, it cannot definitively disprove the existence of a higher power, leaving room for an unbiased interpretation regarding a higher being. Yet, some reject - the notion of a higher being - driven by their personal desires alone.

Herd Mentality: A Barrier to Independent Thought

Herd mentality - the tendency to adopt the beliefs and customs of one's surroundings without critical examination - pervades human behavior. This mindset stifles individualism and discourages personal reflection.

For example, consider Michael, a devout Christian, grappling with religious dogma that contradicts his reasoning:

Michael Perspective:

> "*How can my parents, priests, and countless Christians, including scholars and intellectuals, all be wrong? Surely, someone among them has verified the truth of our beliefs ... right?*"

Diana's Perspective: Michael's younger sister, Diana, shares similar doubts but she resolves them differently:

> "*My doubts must stem from my own misunderstandings and intellectual limitations. How could my family and the multitude of Christians worldwide be mistaken?*"

Michael and Diana's Parents Perspective: Their parents echo this sentiment, relying on the sheer number of believers across generations as validation of their faith.

> "How could such a vast multitude of believers, spanning across different generations and diverse backgrounds, be mistaken? It seems implausible for so many individuals to coalesce around a single belief system that is fundamentally flawed or entirely fictional!"

This pattern of thinking, whereby individuals rely on the beliefs and opinions of those around them instead of engaging in personal reflection and evaluation, epitomizes the essence of herd mentality.

Breaking free requires courage and introspection but rewards individuals with clarity, independence, and the ability to make informed choices.

Note: *The choice of using Christian characters is arbitrary, which can be replaced with the choice of selecting any other religion.*

The Role of Religious Scholars:

Even religious scholars, regarded as authorities, are not immune to this phenomenon. They often defer to the conclusions of past scholars, assuming their infallibility while acknowledging that current thinkers can err. Faith, they admit, sometimes requires a leap beyond intellectual reasoning — a reliance on blind faith.

The blind followers say:

> … Indeed, we found our (pious) fathers upon a religion and indeed we are in their footsteps (rightly) guided! [Quran 43:22]

> … they say, "Good enough for us is that upon which we found our fathers.." [Quran 5:104]

While God says:

> … "(such blind followers are) deaf, dumb, and blind, so they do not use their intellect." [Quran 2:171]

Conclusion

Herd mentality can ensnare even the most earnest individuals, discouraging critical thinking and personal exploration of deeply held beliefs. To transcend this, we must embrace courage, question inherited traditions, and strive for personal truths. In doing so, we liberate ourselves from the constraints of collective conformity and pave the way for genuine understanding and informed decision-making.