

Class
Set!

Culture Shapes Religious Belief: Implications of Culture for Religious Fundamentalism and Pluralism

It is hardly rocket science that virtually all human beliefs and values are largely shaped by culture. If you grow up in the U.S., chances are you won't become a diehard rugby fan. If you grow up in Germany, you probably won't end up caring about American Football. Sports is obviously just one example of this.

Even within a culture, your beliefs and values are highly shaped by which segment of society (your family, friends) you happen to have been exposed to. A lot of this happens when you are a child and you basically have no choice in the matter.

Point being, we wind up believing in and supporting to a large extent what we are pretty much told to believe and value by culture, and our sub sectional membership within that culture.

Of course we don't always know how much we are basically told what to believe; a lot of it occurs implicitly. Some scholars have argued that if this did not occur implicitly, people would rebel against it, which would defeat the whole purpose of forming groups for survival and belonging needs. The society, and the sanity of the individual within the society, hinges on the following of these rules and values without the person largely being aware of it.

That was rather long winded to get to my main question. If culture and society shape all of our beliefs, then from a religious perspective, what does this suggest?

If you are born in Iran, you will probably be Moslem. If you are born in a Christian home in the U.S., you will probably be Christian. If your parents are atheists, you will probably be an atheist.

So, if the (probably) greatest predictor of religious affiliation is geography (which it probably is), how can anyone religion claim exclusive truth? The reality is that followers of this religion would believe largely different things if they were born in a different country. To claim that your religion is exclusively true and valid, is (I think) to deny this realization.

I am not out to get religion here at all. My argument isn't that religion is false, but that I do not get how any one religion can claim to be true at the expense of all the other religions.

Even assuming one religion is true (who knows?) then the follower of this religion would have no way of knowing this, because (among other reasons) they would probably believe something way different if they were born into a different country or house or whatever.

It seems odd that a higher power or powers would hold what you believe about them against you, when this is based on pretty much where you were born. They would have to be pretty unreasonable, or pretty bad social psychologists.

Source: "Culture Shapes Religious Belief." *Psychology Today*. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 Dec. 2016. <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-big-questions/201107/culture-shapes-religious-belief>>.