

## Conditioning

Everybody at heart knows that conditioning is easily done and can happen without you realising you have been conditioned. Knowing that gives great advantage to religious and political leaders.

Conditioning means that your freedom is taken away to cause an addiction to some degree to ideas and feelings and beliefs.

A belief that is conditioned into you may look like a belief and act like one but it is not a belief at all. It may sound rational but it is fundamentally independent of the rational. To argue that the evidence shows Jesus claimed to be God's Son sounds rational but if you are arguing it not because of the evidence but because of your programming or conditioning then you are still not being rational. You are parroting not thinking.

You can be conditioned to believe in a religion. Conditioning to believe sends the message, "It does not matter if we are not using open and transparent ways to help you have faith. Faith in faith matters." Thus the conditioning will be to blame if instead of the person believing sincerely the person believes as a response to conditioning that it is good to believe in playing along if you cannot or will not believe. If conditioning to believe is unsuccessful the conditioning has to work somehow so it will condition you to believe that pretending to follow the religion is fine.

Because the conditioning is at heart non-rational or even irrational it will often backfire. That is why you cannot point to a pope who converts to Islam as being evidence that the conditioning he got into Catholicism failed. It is still there but the irrationality it nourishes has come to the surface. It can backfire in dangerous ways too. That is why if a religion of peace is thriving on how it conditions people it is still to blame if their conditioning warps their heads and they end up being religious terrorists.

Conditioning happens because we are programmable creatures. It is going to happen whether we want it to or not. Those who would not condition us and don't want to actually do it. Everybody influences others.

The conditioning process is helped along by our desire to want our own version of truth.

Conditioning is more effective with vulnerable people and with children.

People only find the motivation to change their views and behavior radically when on the brink of calamity. Even then, many delay. Conditioning is to blame for that. It is a serious matter and you never realise how bad it is until some calamity happens.

Disapproving authority figures damage people's self-esteem forever and the damage is deeper and more lasting and harder to determine and to fix when one thinks that authority represents God and is given by him. The feeling and belief that God is all good makes it worse.

We all feel from the way our own minds work and how we are marked by the hurt done to us as children that the hurt done to a child marks her or him forever. Swiss psychologist, Alice Miller, is convinced that if a child is abused then in some way that child is permanently damaged and the brain cannot rectify it. Conditioning especially religious conditioning is an act of violence against the child and explains why so many religious people show signs of mental disturbance. The act of conditioning a child religiously is violent and the content of the conditioning can be additionally violent. For example, making a child feel her friend's death might have been her fault for she did not pray for him.

Religion likes to get giving children a religious "education". The real plan is to take advantage of a child's vulnerable state. A baby is not born having any beliefs. The baby is born with the faculty to develop the capacity to believe things. Religion conditions children. A lot of that conditioning will disappear. You would expect the scariest of it to remain. Religion retorts that a non-religious or atheist or secular upbringing conditions the child too. But the child will be exposed to secular conditioning anyway. Two conditionings are not better than one. Two is worse. All the non-religious parent is doing is dropping an extra conditioning for her or his child to be exposed to.

Religion unlike everything else is a catalyst for the conditioning. It not only exploits our vulnerability towards being programmed but worsens it. It tells you its teaching is from God. Obviously if God is smarter than you and he talks to you then there is no point in thinking about it for the thinking has been done by God. The child should see no point at all in questioning God's revelation.

The evangelism in schools is a serious issue. Christians say that secular activities and religious overlap. For a Christian, a secular activity such as playing a game has to manifest faith in God. So there is no such thing as secular in a Christian school. What looks non-religious is religious and permeated by the religious Catholic ethos. That is quite a lot of

indoctrination. It is not just about the religion classes.

Nobody doubts that even if a religion is true, most members believe in it because they are conditioned. Should religion be taught then not as true but as a matter of choice? Some say there is no point in caring if a religion is true for we are so conditioned we will never know anyway. Others say that to give people a choice they must be helped overcome the power of the conditioning.

Strictly speaking though one may seem to believe because one is conditioned this is not real belief. If you are hypnotised to believe something you act like you believe but you are not fully yourself. To believe in something you have to be yourself.

The doubting believer will experience for himself or herself how powerful the conditioning is. Catholics trying to become atheist and who suspect religion is harmful will still be unable to break from it and it will take a long time to get out. The danger is that seeing the power your religion has over you and how exploitive this power is will turn you against believers and doubters in other religious traditions. It is easier to hate people of other faiths more than your own. And especially when you see them as conditioned and as maintaining the conditioning in themselves and others and as a threat to the ideology you are familiar with. The conditioned believer may hate atheists and others who she or he sees as being free. It's jealousy. And if you are a fraud you don't want to be exposed.

Do not underestimate how easy it is to condition. Most people imagine conditioning as you being surrounded by people who command you to believe something or hypnotising you. Most conditioning is mundane. We are conditioned daily by the media. The one essential if you want to condition a person is to tell them that something is credible or true often enough and in time they will believe it. They will accept it if you inspire them to misinterpret the evidence that it is not credible. Conditioning is very easy if the person is already open to believing. She has no proof or reasons to think that what you are saying is wrong. Conditioning is especially easy when it is a child,

Being irrational rewards you in the sense that it makes you feel that you can control your view of reality so that you disempower reality. Religion seeks this reward. Irrationality feeds on irrationality. Errors lead to more errors as a matter of course but they also make new errors more attractive. Wanting to be irrational is a powerful incentive to letting yourself be conditioned.

Unbelieving parents may be raising an adopted child and the best way for the child to integrate into the community is by attending Church. So they are unbelievers and take the child to church. They expose the child to deep religious faith - to faith in a serious way. It appears that they do right though it is incompatible with their broader goal to help the child in unbelief. Some say that what they are doing is more than permissible - its admirable. They know that if they encouraged unbelief now it would undermine the child's membership in the community. But do they know? What kind of community would reject a child for not going to Church or not believing?

What about the suggestion that families are not just for having children and feeding them or for making them ambitious but for producing grown-ups who have a sense of responsibility and who accept each others differences and tastes? If you take that view then treating the family as a crucible where you produce adults with your religious or social or political ideas and prejudices is surpassing your rights as a parents. Somebody is always degraded when rights are dealt with wrongly - in this case the child is wronged.

Parents who support a child who wishes to enter the slavery of the religious life or priesthood or Islamic state or some religious vocation are letting that child take major steps based on the conditioning he or she has been afflicted with. Conditioning though bad and unavoidable should never be allowed to go that far. It is the principle. The other problem is the person could be wasting their life on lies.

If we are all conditioned and brainwashed then religion is adding to this problem and has to go. Manipulating or brainwashing people to believe or think they believe in geography is bad but at least they know geography. At least they can still adapt to reality.

The Psychology of Religious Doubt by Philip M. Helfaer 1974