

*Religion is cognitive dissonance at work*

Cognitive dissonance is when you are attached to beliefs or values so that you start lying to yourself and going into denial when you encounter evidence that your attachment is gravely misplaced. It is a way of protecting yourself from the pain of discarding the beliefs or being shown wrong. It only happens if the beliefs somehow trap you.

Religion is the main manifestation of cognitive dissonance so religion then is founded on a tendency to hurt yourself if your faith or religious identity gets a challenge - especially a good one! You violate your right to peace by stressing yourself and blaming the evidence. You hurt yourself as a weapon to silence the critic and the evidence. Violence breeds violence. It helps explain why religion is so potent when it comes to generating hate and division and violence. Dissonance leads to dissonance so the religious end up in denial about how dangerous their faith and they are.

Religion and belief in the supernatural are the worst for creating cognitive dissonance and to see that all you need to do is look. Thinking God is guiding or inspiring you is the biggest and fastest short-cut to cognitive dissonance. Why? Because it is easier to believe a lie if you think you are wrong to see it as a lie. You can tell yourself that God is revealing it to you as true and that overrides evidence that it in fact is false. You see it as a case where what is true seems to be a lie. Also, there is God and Satan to influence you so if you find disproof of God's existence it may be fake and down to Satan tampering with evidence. Also, there is how God can suspend natural law and maybe does undetectable miracles such as working in your heart. Maybe he does miracles only you can be aware of for they are internal. All these things have no reality check.

Religious cognitive dissonance will create more fear and hatred of anything that may challenge the dissonance than any other form for it is strongest and hardest to cure and also because it turns your interpretation of God and religious stuff into practically God. Your ideas of God become God to you and thus you must be better than God when you can create this God! Dissonance that deals with things you consider of absolute and infinite and ultimate purpose and value naturally has to be the most intransigent and the biggest dissonance time bomb.

Festinger in the book *Doubting Jesus' Resurrection*: Suppose an individual believes something with his whole heart; suppose further that he has a commitment to this belief, that he has taken irrevocable actions because of it; finally, suppose that he is presented with evidence, unequivocal and undeniable evidence, that his belief is wrong: what will happen? The individual will frequently emerge, not only unshaken, but even more convinced of the truth of his beliefs than ever before....The dissonance [conflict between belief and reality] would be largely eliminated if they discarded the belief that had been disconfirmed....Indeed this pattern sometimes occurs....But frequently the behavioral commitment to the belief system is so strong that almost any other course of action is preferable....Believers may try to find reasonable explanations and very often they find ingenious ones....For rationalization to be fully effective, support from others is needed to make the explanation or the revision seem correct. Fortunately, the disappointed believer can usually turn to others in the same movement, who have the same dissonance and the same pressures to reduce it. Support for the new explanation is, hence, forthcoming. From *Doubting Jesus' Resurrection* by Kris Komarnitsky.

With religions of love, the believers go to worship and hail vindictive scriptures and Messiahs and Gods. This has to be some kind of Attention Deficit Disorder - a self-inflicted one! It is certain that the most devoted believers do have some kind of disorder.

People engage in cognitive dissonance as a placebo. What makes the problem worse is being part of a group that practices the dissonance and this gives it the appearance of validity. If you are part of a superstitious crazy group, you will soon start to think like the people in it. It is harder to doubt that the cow down the road is the creator of the universe if your neighbours think it is and keep showing their devotion. Needing to be part of the group is enough to pressure you and start you off exercising cognitive dissonance. That is why if religion is wrong or man-made we need to find the exit door and use it.

One problem with cognitive dissonance is that if you know it is present, you cannot know exactly what the disconnect from reality is. For example, if a religion claims that all women are really aliens and not human at all it would seem that those who support the doctrine are disconnected from the truth about women. But what if the dissonance is not that at all. Maybe through cognitive dissonance they think they believe what they do not believe at all for it is too silly?

Most people these days in a religion will disagree with many of its main and required teachings. Though they are not philosophers or theologians they will consider those doctrines to be irrational and silly. They are virtually telling us that the dogs in the street know that the philosophical and theological giants and academics are wrong. It seems arrogant for the layperson to contradict the experts. But is it? Are they not suggesting that those people want to be fooled and fool others with nonsense? They are admitting the power of cognitive dissonance and yet they are staying in a religion and passing it on to their kids that they believe is just the creation of dissonance.

Some cherry-pickers of a religion are engaging in cognitive dissonance which takes the form of the critics greatly esteeming the philosophers and theologians of their religion while trying to turn off the part of their brain that calls them charlatans and liars.

Cognitive dissonance reminds us that if you call a religious person sincere though he spouts absurdities beyond belief that you could mean the part of them that believes the nonsense is sincere and the other part of them that knows it is drivel is insincere.

A religion of self-deception is more dangerous and worse than a religion that is a con. Its the worst nightmare - collective cognitive dissonance! Its child abuse to make a child religious or to try to.