

Superstition-it is toxic stupidity and toxic religiosity

SHORT ESSAY

Superstition is apparent when people feel afraid about an outcome or when the uncertainty scares them they may try to magically control that outcome or magically control how they will feel if it happens so that they will be okay. That is where superstition comes in. Not everything that is superstitious is obviously superstitious. Superstition assumes there is a cause and effect relationship when that assumption makes no logical sense. For example, unmarried mothers may be accused of causing the plague to come by incurring some supernatural curse. Or a bride wearing black may be thought to be a sure-fire way to become a widow in record time. Because it is not logical, superstitious people are never consistent - what is bad luck one year is good luck the next. The nastier superstitions that make threats are more popular and better known than the "nicer" ones. It is not a good sign when people want to believe such spiteful rubbish and trying to handle fear the wrong way only fuels it.

LONGER ESSAY

Superstition is four things:

1 A belief or practice that assumes the supernatural is real

2 An irrational belief or practice - i.e. there is little or no sensible evidence for it being possibly true and there are plenty of people who know a superstition is nonsense and STILL believe in it! Religious belief without evidence is superstition. Religious belief that ignores evidence is super-superstition. Religious belief that is against evidence or in its face is mega-superstition.

3 Attempting to control life and the universe through supernatural forces: superstition is a form of OCD which reasons that if I do this ritual something good will happen.

4 An indication of fear of the unknown or ignorance or both. It can be deliberate fear.

All of those imply disrespect for your own mind and the wellbeing of others. All four endorse stupidity and there is enough of that in the world to do harm and take up our time. 3 is a sign of a manipulative person. A manipulative nature starts off small and becomes very toxic. The person who casts salt over his shoulder can easily progress to trying out magical rites to control people. 4 which is about ignorance and fear of the unknown indicates a problem with trust in yourself and others. This is interesting. It says that superstition is not really about belief or faith but about feeling that you have diverted any dangers that lurk in the unknown. People play on superstition to scare and control others. Those who promote superstition bully people by playing on their fears. They encourage belief in some random superstition. Superstitious people always disagree exactly on what brings bad luck and what does not which shows that their devotion is more about bigotry and prejudice than belief. If you really believe strongly in superstitions you will not cherry-pick what ones to believe in. A superstition always goes with an implied or sometimes blatant threat.

Superstition starts with the spiritual or magical or miraculous conclusion you want to believe and then you work back to the evidence picking and choosing and reinterpreting. Then you proceed to trick others into thinking you really care about evidence. Superstition broadly speaking can be that kind of attitude.

Superstition is always caused by a desire to give ourselves a feeling of control over what cannot be controlled. Its about arrogance and deception. The superstitious are trying to use the supernatural in a sneaky way to benefit themselves at the expense of others.

The crave for superstition starts off with a person realising their life is terrible. Things do not improve. They ask why things are not getting any better. To relieve this helplessness, they wonder if they can do anything magical about it. Then they start getting superstitious. You can express helplessness through and in prayer. Helplessness can be experienced through prayer. Even for a person who is not agnostic, prayer can feel agnostic. Such prayer is painful for many and they start to prefer superstition and magic and getting false hope. Prayer that is intended to influence God is really a form of superstition. A perfect God cannot be influenced and his mind cannot be changed by anybody but himself. Praying to a God to influence him will only add the risk of disappointment to your troubles. It will certainly increase the fear.

Some superstitions are against different religions. Its unlucky for a Hindu to assist the member of the lowest caste. A

Protestant may think there is evil spirits in the relic of a Catholic saint or in the communion wafer. The Jew may see Jesus Christ as a Son of Satan and consider the Christian to be cursed by God. The Mormon may see the Jew as cursed for not accepting Jesus as the Son of God. The born-again Christian sees homosexual sex as an abomination - something so detestable by God that it has to bring great evil on the participants and therefore on anybody who tolerates their sin.

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It is a mistake to see a superstition as amusing or as no big deal. No superstition is as harmless as it may look. It reflects an attitude and that is bad.

Some people reason that a superstition or a magic amulet may not help your problem or hinder you further so one might as well try it.

Others say that lots of things people do are not rational such as football or marriage so they argue that we might as well have superstition. Marriage is irrational but it cannot make a man and woman a couple. Only a commitment can do that and it will exist regardless of a marriage ceremony. It is really commitment people want out of marriage rather than marriage itself. Marriage is superstition for if it takes commitment to make a couple then the real reason for the marriage is to get good luck. Our lives would be duller without sport so its not irrational.

Perhaps the reason some people carry things around for luck is not really for luck but for the sake of feeling that they could be lucky. Its about reassurance rather than magic. Perhaps the holy medal worn around the neck is special because the person who gave it to you cares for you. You might see it as a symbol of the love another has for you. That is not superstition.

Athletes are the top fans of superstition. They thank God for their protective headgear - that is an insult to the men and women that made it. They use charms and do things to get good luck. Perhaps they feel more vulnerable and less confident unless they have their little superstitions?

Jesus advocated and encouraged superstition. Jesus' disciples one time complained to him that they knew of a man who was not in their group or a disciple who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. Jesus said that he must not be forbidden because he who does a miracle in his name can't speak ill of him and whoever is not against him is for him (Mark 9:38-40). Clearly Jesus approved of any Tom and Dick and Harry people acting as exorcists. The Church, which lies that it obeys him, doesn't agree with him though it won't admit it. It says that exorcists need a lot of training in case they convince some person merely suffering from bipolar disorder or some other form of mental illness that they have a demon! Exorcism will only make them worse.

The people of Jesus' day were not stupid but just superstitious and they didn't have much time for the thought that nature has its regularities. For example, unlike us they did not assume the sun would arise tomorrow. They feared it would not. Jesus fuelled putrid supernaturalism in many things.

Christians say that modern people are just as bad. They say that we take the testimonies of reputable but superstitious people today as true and so we should believe in those who testified to the Christian miracles that are outlined in gospels. They say we do not dismiss the discoveries made by religious or superstitious scientists.

Catholicism is an example of a religion that claims that superstition is sinful. Religion claims that if a supernatural claim is untrue then it is superstition.

Superstition implies an unworthy view of God and by embracing it one takes a stand against truth. Thus by implication, when one gives any support to the superstition it implies God has done something he has not done. For example, say its a prolonged miracle that anybody putting salt over their shoulder will get good luck. That is saying the superstition is true. The problem with it is its saying God has done what he hasn't done. So it follows that if you say God inspired a Bible or cured little Charlie of cancer it is no better in principle. The only way to tell a superstition apart from a non-superstition is if God did it and you cannot show or prove that he did. The risk is so high of imputing superstition to God when you say something is a miracle that it is impossible to believe that a God who wants our respect would ask us to take the risk.

Others urge that superstition is only a minor thing and superstition then should not be condemned.

But whether its major or minor superstition, the attitude is the same. The attitude is that we can try to use magic to manipulate. Its always more serious than it looks.

It gives bad example.

Superstition makes some people, perhaps depressive people, suffer greatly through fear and worry.

Superstition encourages the fear it seems to deal with. For example, if your community is suffering and nothing seems to get any better, you will feel that there has to be a supernatural cause. Perhaps some higher power is angry because girls have been having babies outside of marriage or because morning prayers are not being said. This can lead to the girls being expelled from the community and people being forced to pray.

Piles of small superstitions can mount up and be as bad as one big bad one such as human sacrifice.

And if something is bad it should be condemned whether it is minor or not. What is bad is by definition to be condemned.

Why say nothing when it can be politely and inoffensively challenged?

Superstition arises from some desire or fear. If we have this inclination, then we should channel it into helping it bolster our rationality. Its not a great thing to think you should be rational for its good luck, but its not the worst thing you could do. Better that than maybe facing a hard time and ending up going to a priest for blessings or a fortune-teller to get direction.

Superstition is always based on fear of the unknown. It leads more naturally to fortune-telling than anything else. Fortune-telling claims to tell what is unknown about the future in particular. To promote superstition at all - even by silence - is to sow the seed of attraction to the clutches of the conniving and greedy fortune-teller. It is giving unspoken permission.

Not walking under a ladder is trying to help yourself to see that you have ensured good luck in the future. Its fortune-telling in that sense.

Always gently but firmly try to encourage the other person to see through their superstitions. If you do not politely but firmly rebut them it can give the naive the impression that they cannot be rebutted. It is encouraging them. They cannot think its none of your business because it is your business that you don't encourage fear and magic and superstition. And your freedom of expression is your business.

A good way to handle the problem is by a humorous anecdote, "I walked under a ladder and met my lovely wife!" That kind of thing!

Religion will soon die if superstition dies. They are one and the same.