

# **Belief and Mind**

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Religions tend to work hard to convince their followers that no one has the knowledge, wisdom or power of God, therefore, all people must rely on God to guide them throughout life, particularly when they are faced with difficult decisions to make. As a consequence, believers feel usually more secure and comfortable relying on God's wisdom rather than on their brains and science and the human experience, and this often leads them to ignore their minds in favor of their feelings and religious teachings. But the more the mind is ignored, the lazier it becomes and the less experience it gains, which cause it to get older without having the wisdom of the old or the knowledge of the young or the curiosity of the educated. To understand the conflict that characteries the relationship between religion and mind, we need to know when and why religion was created, and how it became a sacred social order. This is what this short paper will try to do.

As life conditions change and values and traditions are transformed, religious teachings become less relevant and less able to guide believers and help them deal with the ever increasing complexity of life and its challenges. As a consequence, believers' choices become limited to relying on a set of old and largely irrelevant religious teachings and edicts, or on largely immature minds that have little experience and almost no scientific knowledge to deal with the challenges of life. This is why most conservative religious believers have difficulty navigating the turbulent seas of life, even in societies that continue to create new jobs and investment opportunities and prosper.

Since there is no science in religion and no religion in science, for science to advance and flourish it should stay away from religion, and for religion to spread and flourish it should stay away from science. As a result, conservative religious believers find themselves often lost between faith and science; faith that has no answers to the challenges of life, and science that refuses to abide by religious teachings and edicts, especially since they are characterized by rigidity and old age. Therefore, the misery and poverty and marginalization that most religious communities suffer must be seen as the price they have to pay for their failure to train their minds to think rationally and recognize the power of science and the wisdom of the mind in dealing with life affairs. Conservative religious people, Muslims and Christians and Jews, tend to take their decisions on the bases of their inherited religious

teachings and belief in God's wisdom and guidance; an attitude that often causes the decision-making process to defy reality, ignore rational thinking, and discount the power of both science and mind.

Religion appeared around the middle of the agricultural age or about six thousand years ago, because by then the feudal system had begun to control small farmers and slaves and determine their living conditions. The cruelty of the feudal system prompted some good people to invent religion as a social order to ameliorate the treatment of farmers and slaves and create a sense of community among the oppressed people. And this led the men of religion to ask the feudal lords to be kind to their slaves and farmers because God will punish those who treat their subjects unfairly. Consequently, the poor agricultural people felt comfortable and secure believing in religion and following its men's instructions instead of using their minds. Religious men, seeing themselves being respected and sometimes loved by the slaves and the masters, claimed that religion was created by a mighty God who conveyed specific instructions to his prophets to spread the faith among all people. Believers were asked to obey God's orders which included doing certain things and avoiding others. This is how religion was created and became a sacred social order that continues to influence people's thoughts, conduct, and decisions until today. In the meantime, religious communities were formed to tie believers together and create spaces for like-minded people to interact and function as programmed machines, leaving their minds to sink deeper in ignorance.

On the other hand, the religious establishment was able to convince its followers that their destiny is determined by God at birth; so whatever happens to them, and their farms and animals reflects God's will and desire. People were asked to thank God in good and bad times and be always patient and look for God's help. In good times, God rewards those who believe in him for their obedience and moral conduct, and in bad times God test the strength of his believers faith in him. Therefore, God must be thanked at all times. Since everyone's fate is predetermined by God, there was no need for the brain to think deeply and try to manage the ups and downs of life affairs, causing the brains of the overwhelming majority of believers to remain underdeveloped until they die.

I believe that not less than 90% of all believers in the developing countries have immature brains that cannot think rationally, and more than 25% of all believers in the scientifically and technologically developed countries have immature brains that also cannot think rationally. In fact, weak scientists who belong to the developing countries of the world feel often obligated to falsify the results of their

research when the results contradict the claims of their religions. Scientists who believe in both science and religious claims usually report the true results of their research but try hard to reinterpret some of the religious texts to confirm the results of their research findings; they resort to this trick in order to avoid being ostracized by the scientific community to which they belong and upon which they depend for validation and support. So scientists who are strong religious believers try either to falsify the results of their scientific research or alter the meaning of certain texts of their holy books to confirm their scientific findings.

Since more people live in the developing countries than in the developed ones, we can conclude that about 60% of the world's population have immature brains that cannot function normally and deal with the complicated challenges of our times. And since immature brains in the heads of mature persons are ignorant brains that cannot differentiate between good and bad, moral and immoral behavior, we witness today widespread discrimination, racism, violence, conflict, civil wars, and lack of progress in many parts of the world. In fact, there is no deeply religious society or community, being Jewish or Christian or Moslem, that is developed scientifically and technologically and economically, and live in peace with its neighbors. All ideologies, religious and secular, work hard to close the brains of their followers to secure their obedience and submission.

In 1987, we decided to send our son who was then about 7 years old, to a Sunday school run by the Arabic-Islamic community to learn some Arabic, but the school concentrated its efforts on teaching the Qur'an, Islam's holy book, rather than the Arabic language. After 3 or 4 weeks, I noticed that my son had difficulty sleeping on Sundays and wakes up in the next morning tired unable to go to his regular school. So after picking him up from the Sunday school the following week and having dinner with the rest of the family at home, I went to his room and asked him what he learned that day and how he felt about the school. After some hesitation, he told me that the teacher talked about God and told us that God punishes people who do not pray severely and burn them with fire. I looked at the book used by the school and realized the ignorance and cruelty of the schools management. So I told my son that he is not required to attend the Sunday school after that day; when you go to college, I told him, you will have an opportunity to study Arabic there, which he did with enthusiasm. Had I not discovered what bothered my son that day I would probably have lost him because the demagogues were trying to close his mind and ruin his future.

Ideologies, religious and secular alike, are the arch enemies of the human brain; they are chains to handcuff the minds of the young and the largely ignorant people, confiscate their freedom, and destroy their abilities to think rationally and freely. Minds that are prevented from thinking cannot learn from history and the human experience, discover the secrets of nature, identify their strengths, develop their capacities to think, and succeed in life. Therefore, the mind should not be subordinated to faith, and faith should not be allowed to close any mind. When the mind matures, it will choose a path for itself to follow, and build its life as it wishes. This way we guarantee raising a generation after generation that thinks rationally, cares about the environment, believes in science, seeks peace, and respects other people's cultures, faiths, and their rights to choose whatever path to follow.

*Since my motto is, "Knowledge not shared is Knowledge wasted, and the more we share, the more we gain people of knowledge" I ask all readers to recommend every article and book they like because it will help inform others. We all share the responsibility to make our world more hospitable to peace, social justice, and freedom; a lofty goal we cannot reach without spreading knowledge and awareness in every corner of our mother earth.*

**Prof. Rabie** is a distinguished professor of International Political Economy; he attended 5 universities and taught at 11 others on four continents. He has published 61 books, about 200 scholarly papers, and over 2000 newspaper articles. Books are 16 in English, one in Albanian, and the rest are in Arabic. English Books include *Saving Capitalism and Democracy*; *Global Economic and Cultural Transformation*; *A Theory of Sustainable Sociocultural and Economic Development*; *The Global Debt Crisis and its Socioeconomic Implications*. (Palgrave Macmillan 2013-2017) One of the English books, "History of Racism", was translated and published in six other languages: German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish. Arabic Books include 3 poetry collections, 3 novels, and a story; the rest is mostly academic books and collections of ideas and reflections. Prof. Rabie is president of the Arab Thought Council in Washington, DC, a member of the Arab Thought Forum, and a fellow of the Alexander Von Humboldt Foundation since 1992. Grants and scholarships financed his education from high school to receiving his Ph.D. in 1970 from the University of Houston; grants covered studies in Jordan, Egypt, Germany, and America. He is the winner of the State of Palestine Lifetime Achievement Award for scholarly publications and other awards. His writings and positions reflect a strong commitment to peace, social justice, freedom, human development, and social, cultural, economic, and environmental sustainability.

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