

“Religion is a cognitive parasite!”

I knew that she was right at the exact moment I heard her saying it. As I have become older having seen the next generation being lured into it, I am even more sure that she was right. I also knew how difficult it would be to convince those that is in a religious environment. The realization of such a complex truth about something that is regarded a common thing can take many years and might need someone from the outside to express clearly, scientifically. She is a neuroscientist. I have met individuals that have the skills for influencing others in a way you could describe as a cognitive parasite. I see it as a simple psychology, a simple exchange, a simple “mechanism of the mind” that anyone can be a victim of.

- But religion is a safe haven where you can find peace in leaving responsibility to someone else for what you feel is too much for you.

If you become used to that mental state and dependent on it, the price for peace of mind can be high. You can become insecure about making decisions, trusting you own opinions, fearful of democratic debates, open discussions and free speech. Even small changes around you can become triggers of anxiety and for some violence will be the only option. So, be careful what you are agreeing to.

- But religion can be a community strengthening a good cause for a better future for everyone included in democratic societies and including democratic processes.

I thought it would be like that for me. But it wasn't. It was a dubious organization hiding inside a democratic society keeping its processes and problems internal and out of the public eye. The general perception of it seemed more important than how for instance an employee was treated. The gap between being an employee and the ordinary members grew larger and larger. My experiences from the inside became more and more compromising for the organization I represented and, as it seemed, impossible to explain to anyone close or to outsiders. I couldn't continue living in that blind spot pretending to be honest when I didn't have much more to be honest about than with what I was dissatisfied.

- Religion was like a pile of old stuff that someone had left in front of my house when I wasn't looking, and I didn't know how to get rid of it.

- What was it?

- Homophobia, misogyny, gender stereotype, non-democratic communication, suppression of free speech, ignorance, and maybe autocracy was lurking around waiting for its chance.

- That sounds terrible. What did you do?

- I had to work for a while for the organization that put it there to get rid of it and move out of the house into a better place.

- Like mafia?

- In a way. "Work for us and we won't bother you. You need the money." When I didn't need the money any longer, I moved out.