

Superstition Still Plagues Humanity

I hope that I'm not too far out of bounds in the following analysis, on semantic grounds. When I think of behaviors or convictions from the past now considered superstitious, I can't help but find many modern analogs. It's not difficult when we define superstition as follows:

superstition: a belief in something in spite of the absence of supporting facts or evidence.

Past behaviors and convictions that qualify under this definition include, but are in no way limited to, dancing in a certain way to cause rainfall, uttering certain words and shaking noisemakers over sick people to cure their ailments, and viewing the earth as the center of the universe.

What these sorts of behaviors and convictions have in common was their existence and persistence in the absence of supporting facts and evidence. Sooner or later, facts and evidence supporting their opposites were verified on scientific grounds to demonstrate their superstitious nature.

With this in mind, I think each of us can identify the many superstitions that plague humanity today.

Here are some that I have identified:

- The beneficial nature of punishing children (spanking and the like) toward human development.
- The detrimental nature of respecting the expression of emotions in childhood toward human development.
- The beneficial nature of compulsory forms of education (schooling and the like) toward human development.
- The detrimental nature of respecting academic autonomy in childhood toward human development.
- The beneficial nature of initiating aggression against peaceful people toward the building of a peaceful and prosperous society.
- The detrimental nature of allowing certain nonviolent behaviors (drug use, prostitution, homosexuality, market competition, and the like) toward the building of a peaceful and prosperous society.
- The beneficial nature of government-based regulations toward the safety and security of participants in the market.
- The detrimental nature of "cutthroat competition," "sweatshops," "child labor," "price

gouging,” “discrimination,” *et cetera*, toward the safety and security of participants in the market.

- The beneficial nature of government welfare measures toward the safety and security of incapable members of society.
- The detrimental nature of so-called wealth inequality toward the so-called have-nots of society.
- The existence of an institution in society with legitimate authority to use violence against members of that society as it sees fit.
- The existence of applicable laws toward members of society.
- The existence of citizenship in a nation by members of society.
- The ability to identify the future using the random distribution of tarot cards.

I could go on, but I think you get the picture.

To the best of my very thoughtful and diligent consideration to date, each of these superstitions are identified as such because there are either no or very limited verified facts or evidence to support them, and in each case facts and evidence overwhelmingly exist in support of their opposite. Hence I identify as a **voluntaryist** and advocate for **free markets**, **peaceful parenting**, and **radical unschooling**.

Many similar superstitions of the past, such as the beneficial nature of human chattel slavery or the detrimental nature of the scientific method, have nearly disappeared in this day and age. I am hopeful that all of the above will eventually be identified for what they are by most of my fellow humans.

Is that hope rational? I think so, considering the progress humanity has made over the thousands upon thousands of years of our existence. (On that note I recommend reading Matt Ridley’s *The Rational Optimist*, but beware that he is not as well-versed in Austrian economics as I would have liked.)

I should add in closing that I do not go about my day and life without the aide and comfort of superstition. I think that humanity will always have superstition, but it doesn’t have to be dangerous and its consequences so disastrous, as is the case with everything listed above. I take no issue with benign superstitions. They are harmless at worst and sometimes a little helpful at best. Some I might even cherish and cling to until the day that I die. *Oh well.*