

Why does society need social rituals?

Religion



In chapter one, *The Nonrational Foundations of Rationality*, Collins explains that humans in society act on more than rational thinking. Being considered as a superior race, human beings pride themselves on their capacity to use reason in order to problem solve and create new science and technology. However, if this was a completely rational world, Collins argues, no social contracts would exist and thus, society would not exist at all, the world would just be composed of isolated individuals. It is not rational to trust that other people's actions will benefit the individual. Collins alludes to people having their self-interest as their main concern. So how does a society form or stick together as a cohesive unit? To help explain this, Collins use the free bus example, in which he concluded the rational thing for an individual to do is to expect or encourage everyone else to be to contribute to the fund of the bus, while the individual just rides on for free. The system could work if people felt a sense of duty or were filled with enthusiastic response to attempting a way to create something free and beneficial to society. If everyone was unselfish and contributed voluntary, the free bus system would work. But for that to happen, emotional attachment and moral feelings would have to be the force involved-and not rational calculations. Moral feelings bind people together in a group. But what inspires morals to be created as opposed to our natural, rational thinking? Collins argues that social rituals produce these moral feelings. By doing this, the people partaking in the unifying rituals, which creates group solidarity. Their shared experiences allowed them to achieve accomplishments in a contractual society such as creation of businesses, and citizen's rule abiding tendencies. Social rituals allow people to feel like they belong among other members of society. When people believe that they are members of something, then

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they do their best to make that society or organization functional.

Furthermore, social rituals create moral ideas, and symbolic symbols which Collins says is the basis of religion. That being said, religion is the link to social solidarity. Religious beliefs are important, not because of what they claim but the fact that people can be brought together underneath them. Rituals are very strictly determined behaviors, the form of how they are being performed counts. Saying prayers, marching in a procession, making a sign of the cross are all examples. In these, the action must be performed in the right way. These uniform actions caused people to feel that they are doing something right, merely because the rest of their religious group does the exact same thing. It equals the playing field between members. Religions have in common, Collins argues, two things; certain beliefs held by all supporters and certain rituals that the believers collectively perform. The people who participate in these procedures consider rituals sacred. Durkheim gave priority to rituals over beliefs. Society is formed from the collection of practices; whatever ideas rituals promote are going to influence what institutions we inhabit, our form of family life, economy, or politics. Durkheim concludes that God is a symbol of society. Social communication creates our basic collection of thoughts and ideas. These thoughts and ideas influence our actions and thus our own minds are infused in society. This is what us stops us from killing and stealing, not because of our rational thinking but because we should be the citizens of society we are expected to be. Conversation can be an example of simple rituals that affect how a person sees their place in a society. Collins refers to this as the cult of ego. Your self is an idea that you hold, and an idea that other people hold about you, too. Thus, each new level of individual is created by a new way of relating to

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other people. Religion and social rituals cause a person to believe that they are benefiting themselves in their society, while at the same time creating a feeling of solidarity within their society.