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[Subject]

[Date]

Zeitgeist

 Religion has been a matter of great importance in the lives of human beings since the very beginning. It shapes up the overall personality and character of a person and gives direction to his or her life so that they can follow a right and ethical path. Religion also a sense of justice and a way of living and defines that how a person should lead their life so that they can prove to be most beneficial for themselves and their surroundings, including the society and the people around them (Wach).

Where religion has brought a lot of positivity in the world, some people have also misused it and used for their own nasty purposes. Human history has seen numerous conflicts, quarrels and even wars on the basis of religion (Bénabou). And when religion is mixed with politics, the results are even disastrous. There are a number of movies, documentaries and television series that have been made on the subject. Some of them have become immensely popular and caught the attention of the general public. One of such documentaries is “Zeitgeist”.

Zeitgeist is a series of three documentary films that had been periodically released from 2007 to 2011. These movies are based on a number of conspiracy theories and also presents suggestions for the improvement of the world in terms of social and economic terms. I’m pretty sure I’ve watched Zeitgeist twice, but now I can’t really remember what’s in it and had to look at Wikipedia to remind myself. It’s all blended into one in my mind with the many other conspiracy films I’ve watched and enjoyed.

As a matter of fact, Zeitgeist covers several topics where it’s possible to make a plausible-sounding case for something if you either don’t know very much about it or else have only taken the time to learn things that confirm a paranoid point of view (Stewart). So there are facts in there, and it is an interesting film, but the facts are woven together with fancy in a way that doesn’t really make a huge amount of sense if you take a hard and detailed look at it. When it comes to things like the economic system and religion, or the actions of governments in general, there are several levels of knowledge that you could go through, which films like Zeitgeist could be a part of.

Firstly there’s the level of most people, who are too busy to bother themselves with these subjects but probably watch the news. You’d have to call that naive, in the literal sense of “naive”. Then there’s the level where you’ve maybe watched Zeitgeist and you realize there’s more to it than you originally thought. Then you continue to expand your knowledge with actual details and various contrary points of view, and you realize that Zeitgeist has misled you; maybe it was better than being naive, or then again maybe not because it made you paranoid and told you lots of slightly silly things.

This is kind of what I went through with many other similar movies. I started from not knowing anything about economics, then I watched Zeitgeist along with several others. In February 2007 I buttonholed a local councilor who came to my door to solicit votes and started ranting about how the economic system was madness, crashes were built into it and he had to watch this great YouTube film. Then I began to actually study the subject a bit and to read criticisms of the movie*.*Now I think these films are basically paranoid and miss the deeper picture.

One really disturbing aspect of conspiracy theories is that they can lead to very nasty forms of political change, especially in difficult times. Hitler was very inspired by these types of theories, lapping them up from the mouth of Gottfried Feder. When he took office, he realized he had to change his ideas about economics, because they were more paranoid than realistic. But he retained the anti-Semitic flavor of those theories. Trust me, we do not want leaders who believe the world is controlled by a small cabal of bankers. They would do far more harm than good.

Works Cited

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Bénabou, Roland, Davide Ticchi, and Andrea Vindigni. "Religion and innovation." *American Economic Review* 105.5 (2015): 346-51.

Stewart, Marilyn, and Robert Stewart. "Zeitgeist: The Movie." *Profile Notebook, Watchman Fellowship, Inc.(Arlington, Texas: 1997-2015). A complete Profile Notebook (over 450 pages) is available at http://www. watchman. org/profiles*.