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"Are we hard-wired for belief in God?"

Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer

Why not flip this conundrum on its head and ask instead: "Or are we hard-wired to question a belief in God?" In fact, for hundreds of millions of people, secularity – and with it, skepticism and critical thinking – are at the core of their basic existence. For us, faith and belief in a deity are not innate but are actually mind-baffling concepts.

A 2005 Eurobarometer study found that one-third of the French and around a quarter of the Dutch, Belgians, Germans and British do not believe in God or any sort of spirit or life force. Those figures go up dramatically in Korea and Japan and China. Among Americans over-all, depending on the survey you read, anywhere from 12-20% are atheists or agnostics. When you narrow down on just Jews, that figure soars to around 50%.

Many of us may have been raised with traditional teachings, but they were not instinctual. As soon as we could grapple critically with these concepts, we raised questions and challenges that eventually led to discarding these beliefs.

We didn't choose to be secularists any more than someone chooses to be lesbian or gay. We're just hard-wired that way. And that's fine with us.