Religion and Individualism: 2 Problems

[1] The Problem with Religions

The problem with religions is that they indoctrinate people, usually starting at a young and vulnerable age, into believing things that are not factually true. Even as the young mind learns to think rationally in other areas, necessary to deal with reality in daily life, it remains open to irrational ideas from those claiming religious or political authority.

They can be more easily convinced to believe or act in ways that are not only irrational, but often in conflict with the original teachings of the religion. This has been used to promote the divine right of monarchs, the acceptability of slavery, war, torture, and even genocide.

The original teachings of religions tend to be admirable prescriptions for behavior that, if followed, would likely result in a harmonious and peaceful society. Such teachings could be followed without the irrational beliefs in supernatural invisible beings, and the vulnerability to irrational thinking that results might be mostly avoided.

Though I can advise that everyone should stop indoctrinating their children with superstitious fictions, and realize themselves that they ARE fiction, there is no quick solution to making this happen, and attempts to ban religion, or discriminate against believers of any or all of them, have failed in the past and caused resentment and conflict.

The fact that people resist being told what to think is a good thing overall, even when it means they may hold on to bad ideas. Our best hope is to teach people HOW to think-- reason and logic that they can use to evaluate what they see and hear.

[2] The Problem with Individualism

I've noticed occasionally an argument that essentially says "Don't worry-- you aren't the target." I'm not a Muslim, a refugee, or an immigrant. I'm not a woman. I'm not gay or transgender. I don't have brown or black skin. I'm not unemployed, or homeless, or in prison. I am, at the moment, quite healthy, and at least I have Medicare if I need it.

So, yes, I have it pretty good. There are dozens of things I don't have to worry about because of who I'm NOT. I could relax and not worry. What's wrong with thinking that way? In my opinion, EVERYTHING.

The concept of individualism came about, ironically, because our social, cooperative, interdependent nature worked so well that could develop a relatively safe existence in which we were not constantly having to defend ourselves from natural dangers.

It was easy for some to believe and proclaim that they didn't need to be part of everyone else, contribute to the general well-being of the group, or even cooperate. This notion appeared to work much of the time, but it was the beginning of divisiveness and inequality.

And, when there are threats that we once would all come together to overcome, we now have people and groups saying "That doesn't affect me-- it's YOUR problem."

Humanity is not a number of separate independent individuals. We are a part of a species that needs to cooperate, help and protect one another. If we stop caring about ALL of us, we become something less than human.

--Cosmic Rat June 19 2017