

Society, Religion & the Collective Ego

It all comes down to two options.

Universally, people differ on the following moral fundamental choices:

1 Do I just look after my family and close friends?

2 Do I see my job as looking after all people who are and have been and will be?

In Christian terms, love means looking after and is not about feelings.

It is obvious that both of them can do and do give rise to serious harm.

Most people at whim shift all the time from one to the other. It may be dishonest and self-serving but that is what they do. It is hard, impossible if you like, to believe that those who say they love the human race globally are really trying to. It is more natural to only care about those who are close to you and who help you and who are related to you.

Jesus was clear that doing good to be seen means that being seen is the reward you want and get. Not everybody who wants to be seen doing good is going to benefit much from doing so. But why do they do it? Because being seen makes them look good if nothing else. Belief in this God who sees all, and even into the heart, proves that believers cannot be truly altruistic or have the right to ask us to accept them as altruistic. A clean life and a cleaner heart in order to be seen by God is just making you no better than the person who does things to impress other people. People say God cannot be fooled but that again is something they don't really act like they believe.

We can only love so much and that changes from day to day. To say you must love everybody conditionally or worse unconditionally is saying you have a limited resource and are going to risk wasting it. This is one reason why to say you love all people is just a self-promoting smug boast. Putting love in the wrong direction means the person who should get it does not. To say you love everybody is to pretend and lie that you have an unlimited supply of love and an amazing godlike ability to love. It degrades yourself for what happens when you realise you in fact are just human and not this godlike powerhouse of unlimited love?

Unconditional love is harder and runs out faster than conditional. Trying to love everybody that way simply leads to burnout and failure and even hate. Hate is a distortion of love and thus can even think it is love!

Those who proclaim themselves as apostles of unconditional love are liars for human nature if capable of unconditional love is doubtlessly and obviously very adept at conditional love. We see it universally in every person.

If you think of your love as a sort of unlimited godlike force you are channelling then you think you are a God. What about when you do normal love such as loving your child or girlfriend or boyfriend? You think your love is exceptional in its value and quality and so your love is just pride.

We are talking about individuals here but religions are collections of individuals and religions carry on the same way as individuals pretending to love everybody and feigning surprise when religious related violence erupts.

“Toynbee...admitted that there is a strain of egoism and pride within every religion, an egoism that is all the more insidious in that it camouflages itself under the cloak of the first person plural. The discomfort I might feel in placing myself before all others is much less noticeable when I rank not myself but my family, my people, my religion first. All religions, indeed all groups, tend to do this. For Toynbee, however, the main offenders were the three Western religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Of the three, it seemed to him Christianity had the worst record of intolerance and arrogance.” Page 41, No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions. Paul F Knitter. SCM Press Ltd. London, 1985.

A person can be selfish as a person. There is such a thing as collective selfishness. That is when the person is in union with a group and they are form a selfish unity.

With religion there is a crowd effect. If you suspect your beliefs are misguided or nonsense you will be able to put that suspicion aside if you get others to believe. Then you seem to think,

"Okay it must be true when others believe it too." Many think that way but it shows no concern for logic or truth but only about fitting in.

A religion like Christianity which signs up to doctrines such as St Paul's that the Christians are the only thing the human race can boast about (1 Corinthians 1) is certainly not a necessary evil but just an evil for it is a system based on collective egotism.

It is hard for the selfish individual to be selfish and she or he gets sick of it or frightened. So she or he joins a group and this becomes a group that is out mainly or solely for itself. This strengthens her or his selfishness. The individual is in cahoots with people who are as selfish as they are and they enjoy this group selfishness and find it more fun than individualistic selfishness. They need to be right so they insist they have the true beliefs. They need enemies to make themselves feel superior and to enjoy plotting against. The enemies are often simply groups or people who have different beliefs and moral standards to theirs. It is harder to be dangerous to others on your own. It is easier and more enjoyable and therefore more selfish if you are in a group that is dangerous to others.

It is thought that genuine altruism happens easily when the person you help is part of your group. But how altruistic are you when you help them mainly not because it is right to but because they are in your group? It is said that altruism outside the group is situational. If you do not help the poor outside your group unless you bump into them that is situational.

Prejudiced people when they associate together and build up some sort of friendship or sense of community become far more prejudiced. That is because they agree with each other and feel supported and through conversation and social interaction may learn new reasons to be prejudiced. No wonder religious people become freethinkers once they start mixing with outsiders and stop going to Church so much.

People can be part of a group that makes them miserable. If those people are free to go but don't, then they actually want to be unhappy. This desire is fed by their negative thoughts and feelings and experiences and they often like to draw others into this unhappiness too. Don't think that just because somebody lives a grim and austere life that they must be unselfish! They enjoy their misery.

A good person helps others.

A moral person holds that certain actions are bad and should have bad consequences. The sinner deserves the results of his deed and deserves to be punished. A morality without punishment and without intolerance of moral and criminal lawbreaking cannot be taken seriously. Its not a morality.

People do not like moralisers. We are all reluctant to moralise - and we prefer doing it about people behind their backs. Imagine computer technician John puts pirated software on computers that customers want improved. He will fume if you say, "What you are doing is a form of theft." And also if you say, "The customers would be very upset if they found out and its not fair on them." A parallel would be saying to a single mother who has lots of boyfriends, "What you are doing is cheapening yourself and even those men" and "Its not fair on your children to have strange men about the house and its upsetting for them." The person with no religion could say those things just as much as the religious person could. You can imagine and dread the reaction you would get! Morality implies a right to say such things regardless of the reaction.

Morality that is not communicated will soon die. And as morality is legalistic in its own way, it follows that immorality must not be tolerated. It must be spoken out against and then fought if possible. Religion is based on the concept of a supernatural and magical morality and the ties forged by this system. How can people truly want to belong to religion when they have such aversion even to non-supernatural and non-religious morality?

The hatred of moralising proves we have a collective ego.

The collective ego is so religion - it is what the religions are for. That is what religions are based on.