



A NON-PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE ON INDIVIDUALISM

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Individualism is a kind of ideology that places emphasis on the total development of the self, as opposed to more communion-based principles and concepts such as statism and totalitarianism. It stresses the significance of the individual as against others, even society in general. It can not, however, be equated with egoism no matter how seemingly similar they may be. It is concerned with the upholding of individual goals and desires as separate from those of other individuals. On this basis, a society is considered a group of individuals entitled to their own thoughts, their own objectives and their own gains.

Individualistic thought should not completely espouse lawlessness, however. Although individuals are free to express their feelings and articulate their thoughts, individualists are well advised to avoid aberrant behavior, as this may only trigger chaos. Although individualists favor social unconventionality, society itself will not hold up with overly libertarian concepts; society might even crumble under such forces. Although the principle of individualism embraces uniqueness in every individual, no human being can ever exist alone and totally disjointed from the society he belongs to. We are free to be what we want to be, but never to the detriment of our fellow individuals.

Individualism assumes that all individuals are capable of independent thought, that self-governance is possible. Yes, as individuals, we are indeed endowed with individualistic capabilities that enable us to exist independently from each other. We do not need to be controlled or watched over from time to time, because those whose jobs it is to control or monitor us are also prone to committing their own foibles, subject to their own weaknesses. Why should anybody be allowed to rule our lives? Precisely because with total absence of control, society will infinitely fail and crumble. Too many cooks spoil the broth, leaving all things messy and without considerable organization in the long run.

Who would want to live in a world where everyone plays by their own rules? There are those who suppose that they are now able to do that, but such people also are subject to certain areas of non-self-governance, whether at work or on the domestic front. It's wonderful to be given complete freedom, but who monitors everything in the process? Wouldn't that all result to complete anarchy?

Declaring that everything has to be your own choice may be a proud moment, a sterling achievement. But without others to guide you, tell you what must be done and what can't be done, where's the order in that? We can be individualists up to a point, but having others beside us to prompt us or remind us of the limits of self-freedom will still prove greatly beneficial in some events.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Is absolute individualism beneficial? Why or why not?
2. How can we avoid the possible pitfalls of individualism?
3. Do you believe that people can really exist apart from each other? Why or why not?
4. How does individualism encourage anarchy?
5. Why do individualists need to subject themselves ultimately to the rules of society? Is social unconventionality always a solution to everything?