

Realism Deserves a Religious Identity

I - Marc Perkel - First One of the Church of Reality - came up with the idea of the Church of Reality on November 7th 1998 and registered the domain name "churchofreality.org" the next day. The idea came from discussions about atheism and agnosticism and the idea that there were a lot of people, including myself, that these terms failed to really apply to. Yes, I am an atheist, but that's not a religious affiliation. I was not a member of "The Atheist Church". Atheism spoke about what I didn't believe, not what I did believe. I could be identified as a "scientist" but that was more of a job title than a world view.

If not for Reality, I wouldn't be here.

Would my religious affiliation then be "nothing" or no religion? Perhaps that was closer, yet it didn't really express what it was that I did believe. I believe that the universe was created some 15 billion years ago in something that we describe as "The Big Bang" and that the earth is a speck of dust in the universe and that life evolved here into what we are now. I also believe in society, right and wrong, codes of ethical behavior, the concept of morality and wisdom, and that these concepts can exist in the absence of an omnipotent father figure who supposedly produced a "holy book".

Among all the thousands of religious choices, shouldn't reality be included?

Therefore - the concept of "no religion" implied that religion was something that I didn't care about; as if the realm of belief wasn't important to me. Nothing could be further from the truth. Yet there was no religion that was remotely close to what I did believe, leaving me and people who think like me in a state of limbo. We believe strongly in reality and want to understand reality the way it really is - but there is currently no religious identity associated with that - and it occurred to me to start the Church of Reality as a way to give Realists an identity and an organization dedicated to the pursuit of Realism.

As I wrote web pages for the Church of Reality web site, a lot of ideas came together. At first I wasn't sure that it would ever be a "real" religion because - like most people - I had the idea that in order to be a religion, you had to believe in things that aren't real. I had the idea that there would have to be rituals involved or that I would have to define reality and then later learn I was wrong. I thought that I would be severely limited in terms of a religious identity in that I could only incorporate undisputed universal truths into the belief system. But that's not the way it is. As I continued to write and explore, the ideas crystallized and I realized that a Church that believes in Reality not only can be as complete and full as any other religion, but even fuller - because after all - it doesn't get any more real than reality.