

The Infinite Regress of the Victim Mentality

I recently watched a rather painful video from Stefan Molyneux entitled “But It Wasn’t Real Communism!” In it, a caller tried to (rather pitifully) make the claim that property isn’t a real thing, and that his example of injustice illustrates this fact. The claim was “If I stole a painting from you (Stefan Molyneux), and when I died, I passed it on to my son, who does the painting belong to? You, or my son?” For communists, or general proponents of the idea that property doesn’t exist, this is a slam dunk argument... I guess? The answer is quite simple, and it is “No. If Stefan is still alive, he can claim his property back. But if Stefan is dead, then we might have a different story. If generations have passed, and none have tried to reclaim it, then ultimately it is not Stefan’s anymore. But while Stefan was claiming it, and you aggressed against him, and he is still alive, the painting still belongs to him.” Simple. Just a few sentences, and even that can be condensed. I just wanted to be clear. But the caller’s “point” was that land “taken” by “whites” doesn’t actually belong to them; it belongs to the people they stole it from, and they should give it back. Of course, this all presupposes the whole concept of property in the first place, but let’s continue with the primary point for now.

We’ve all likely heard the claim before. White people owe black people reparations – usually in the form of money – for the injustice of slavery. Men owe women for the injustices of sexism and patriarchy. When conservatives make claims regarding borders, national security, and illegal aliens, some leftist, predictably, brings up the idea that Native Americans were here first, so “white” Americans should leave, or go back to Europe, or something.

Now aside from the fact that nobody living today has gone through the injustices of their ancestors, nor has anybody alive today perpetrated those injustices on any living or deceased person today, and therefore, they do not owe any so called “victim” anything, there is another problem with this line of victim based ideology. Namely, there is always another victim further back, to which a claim can be made for “justice.”

This isn’t to say, of course, that great injustices haven’t been wrought against various peoples the world over for one reason or another. In fact, it is to say *precisely* that. Human beings, throughout history, if nothing else, have shown within themselves the capacity to enact great harm on each other. And for little reason, no less. Whether it’s something as small as “personal offense” or “dishonor,” or for want of power, human beings, as seems to be our collective history, have perpetrated amazing amounts of injustice on other people. And so to claim that because one injustice in the distant past occurred, future and completely innocent people should pay for it is absurd.

For instance, take the argument that modern “white” Americans have no claim to the land

on which they reside, because it was “stolen” from so-called “native” Americans. As it turns out, Native Americans aren’t so “native” at all. In fact, there are two theories that argue that a Proto-European group first came to the Americas 25 thousand years ago (one theory says it was by boat off the coast of Spain, and another says it was by the Bering Strait land-bridge and its associated islands), a good 10 thousand years before the Bering Strait land-bridge migration of the ancestors of the native Americans. That group is believed to be an ancient Asian group, perhaps Chinese, which would later evolve into the Native Americans we know today. But what happened to those Proto-Europeans, those people that claimed these lands first? According to one theory, they either assimilated, or were “physically obliterated.” They may have also died out due to stiff competition for natural resources, from these newcomers.

In other words, the so-called “native” Americans massacred them, stole their resources, and bred with the true native’s women, and bred them out of existence. In fact, there are some genetic markers left in modern Native Americans that support this, as well.

So what’s the point of this brief bio-archeological lesson? No, it isn’t to create some new race debates of who did what first, or anything stupid and pointless like that. But it serves to illustrate one very simple thing – this is what humans do, historically. We fight over resources, land, or whatever is needed for survival. And then property itself falls into new hands. And if we want to claim that modern people need some sort of reparation for the sins of our fathers, then we can always go back to even more distant victims of injustice, and just claim “Well, I’ll pay you once you pay me for the injustices *my* ancestors went through from *your further* ancestors!” There’s always a more distant victim that we, as humanity, can claim.

At some point, we have to the bigger person, and only charge that true injustice happens on the individual level. Did I attack, beat, and lynch you? No? Then I don’t owe you anything. Were you the victim of something that I actively inflicted upon you? No? Then you aren’t a victim of mine. I am not going to sit here and tell you that you owe me something because something happened to my ancestor by some ancestor of yours. That’s preposterous. You are an individual, and so am I. You did me no harm, and therefore, I am not your victim. If you yourself tried to steal my property, then we have an issue. But if your ancestor stole something from my ancestor, you don’t owe me a thing. Victimhood isn’t inheritable. Neither is sin.

If that is the claim, then we must admit an infinite regress in the logic, as there is always another distant victim, whose injustices must be addressed. And at that point, then we are just trading one injustice and set of reparations for another, *ad infinitum*. And it is utterly pointless, and just a waste of time.

Tl:dr – Did it happen to YOU? No? Then you are not a victim. You are not owed anything.

Are YOU the perpetrator? No? Then you are not an oppressor. You owe nobody anything.

It's that simple. And to suggest otherwise is to indicate that you are terrible at forming a coherent thought, and should be ignored.