

There is Only One Way to Save Our City

MORPHEUS: Commander we need a presence inside the matrix to await contact from the Oracle.

*LOCK: I don't want to hear that s***. I don't care about Oracles or prophecies or Messiahs. I care about one thing... stopping that army from destroying this city and to do that, I need soldiers to obey my orders.*

MORPHEUS: With all due respect commander, there is only one way to save our city.

LOCK: How?

MORPHEUS: Neo.

*LOCK: G*dd*mmit Morpheus, not everyone believes what you believe.*

MORPHEUS: My beliefs do not require them to.

-The Matrix Reloaded

When free markets succeed, people bet against the unknown by saying “Well, sure, that one situation worked out okay, but we can’t be absolutely certain that the free market will successfully handle every possible situation. So don’t jump to any optimistic conclusions.” When government fails, people gamble on the unknown by saying “Well, sure, that one incident turned out very poorly, but we can’t be absolutely certain that better politicians won’t come along and make everything better in the future. So don’t jump to any overly pessimistic conclusions.”

When it comes to free markets, people encourage relentless skepticism and unyielding caution.

When it comes to politics, people encourage relentless faith and unyielding loyalty.

No matter how much good the free market produces, we’ll always need to see more

evidence before we place faith in it.

No matter how much evil or inefficiency is produced by politics, however, we'll always find a way to keep placing more and more faith in it.

When it comes to free markets, we wait to believe.

When it comes to politics, we refuse to doubt.

"Don't lose faith in politicians just yet," they say. "Reform is on the way."

Ah, yes, "reform."

I'm beginning to fear that when people use the word "reform", all they really mean is something like "no matter how many times the existing system fails, I will continue to assume that everything will be okay as long as we can get an honest man to pull the lever."

Will a great man or great woman actually come along and save us?

Yes, but that great man or great woman has to be you, me, and everyone else. We can't afford to keep placing our faith in a worldview that says "Just wait until we get the right person or the least evil person in a position of power." We need to understand power in terms of voluntarism and individualism.

While many of my friends and colleagues wait in hope of "reform", I'll continue my quest to change the world by investing my voice and my votes in an entrepreneurial theory of social change. While the world at large insists on celebrating and fearing great leaders, I will celebrate the power of the individual as expressed through innovation and voluntary interaction in the marketplace. While political commentators debate over which system of coercion is best, I'll devote myself to spreading faith in the power of creativity.

The majority of people will probably never come around to believing that free markets are more ethical and efficient than authoritarian interventionism, but that's the beauty of the entrepreneurial theory of social change. In politics, you don't get to be powerful unless you can get the majority of people to think like you. In the marketplace, however, you can alter individual lives and entire incentive structures simply by creating value regardless of what people claim to believe.

If you're still placing unshakeable place in politics, have fun. Have fun being angry at all the people who vote differently from you. Have fun trying to change the minds of thousands of people that you can't control. Have fun knowing that no matter how much you seem to be winning at the present moment, that you will still have a moment in the future when you're forced to acknowledge someone you despise as your overlord.

If you're interested in another way, however, try the free market. Instead of living as if the fate of the world relies on your one tiny little vote that you get to place on election day, vote with your dollars and deeds multiple times every single day for the rest of your life. In the free market, you can create products, services, and experiences that allow people to gain more enjoyment from their already existing freedoms. In the free market, you can create tools and technologies that allow people to fight for new freedoms in ways that are more accessible, efficient, or creative than their previously existing options.

Instead of spending all your energy trying to change the way people see the world, use your creativity to change the world that people see.

I truly believe that this is "the only way to save our city." Perhaps you do not believe as I do. Very well. Fortunately, my beliefs do not require you to. That's why I'm going to keep creating regardless of how much people trouble themselves over politics. While I may never alter people's beliefs about the world, I at least have some hope of altering the world that people form beliefs about.

In spite of traditional schooling's emphasis on the myth of the great man as the key to societal change, I'm free enough from the matrix to realize that revolutions have always been the result of small remnants who subverted outdated systems through innovation while the confident majority lulled itself to sleep through the same old tired debates about who should get to control the existing system.