

Oppression: Symptoms and Causes

There are a lot of organizations that exist for the purpose of pointing out government corruption, abuse, waste, conspiracy, oppression and brutality. And that is a very valuable service: showing people all the nasty things that those in power are up to. However, while there have been people screaming “Look how bad this is!” for centuries, righteously condemning various misdeeds of “the powers that be,” most of those people have focused on the *symptoms* of authoritarian power, instead of on the underlying *causes*.

By analogy, imagine going to a doctor, and having him tell you that you are “really, really messed up.” You then ask exactly *how* and *why* you are “messed up.” What is the cause? And what can be done about it? He doesn’t really know, but he’s very eager to keep telling you how doomed you are. Yes, it’s good to know how bad the situation is, but at some point merely telling you how unhealthy you are doesn’t really help all that much. But when you ask him what to *do* about it, he just says, “I don’t know, maybe take an aspirin or something.”

It doesn’t take any great perceptiveness or astute powers of observation to notice that a lot is wrong with the world today. But if those loudly reporting the “wrongness” aren’t also aware of the root causes, and what can be done to actually change things, then mostly the message just becomes frustrating and depressing to listen to. And if people continually express righteous anger and indignation at the injustice they see, only to then propose pointless, worthless solutions—or no solutions at all—that doesn’t really help. Often you will see a completely justified expression of outrage over yet another example of police brutality, followed by some vague, impotent call for “accountability.” Or you will see yet another example of political corruption, followed by a plea for people to vote harder. Or you will hear of the latest fascist legislation being proposed, followed by a suggestion that people “write their congressman.” All of these are fine examples of how simply knowing that *something is wrong* is not the same as knowing *what* is wrong, or having any idea what might actually stop it.

Henry David Thoreau was so right when he said that “*There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root.*” Does anyone really believe that getting one sadistic cop fired is going to somehow reverse the many-decades-long trend of the country stampeding towards totalitarianism? Does anyone really believe that voting a particular scumbag out of office will make the rest suddenly become angelic and noble? Does anyone really think that holding another “protest,” where people loudly complain at professional liars, thugs and thieves, is going to make the politicians suddenly acquire a conscience?

When I say such things, often “activists” will object, saying that at least they’re “doing something,” by voting, petitioning, campaigning, complaining, etc. But if you’re doing something that has no record of success, and no chance of success, what’s the point? If it’s just to feel better about yourself, while accomplishing nothing, have fun with that. But the most frustrating part is when all the good people who recognize and criticize the *results* of authoritarianism and statism then turn around and make excuses in *support* of authoritarianism and statism.

Statist: “*Look at how they are abusing their power again!*”

Anarchist: “*No one should have that power.*”

Statist: “*What?!? That would lead to chaos and mayhem!!*”

This is why I call it “battered citizenry syndrome”: so many people object to the inevitable results of having a ruling class, but when faced with the idea of not having a political master at all, they get even *more* agitated and alarmed in the other direction. They start talking about how, yeah, we need “reform,” and need to petition and vote differently, but if someone suggests that maybe we should **get away from the abuser entirely**, they suddenly go into terminal Stockholm Syndrome mode.

“I know it’s been nasty and violent, but it can get better! Deep down I know it cares about me, and wants what’s best for me! It can change! And in a way it’s my fault. And I can’t possibly live without it!”

So let me be blunt to the point of being rude: if you zealously condemn the misdeeds of the powers that be, while continuing to argue that “government” is legitimate and necessary, you are an enabler of tyranny. If you keep talking as if people have to seek reform through the channels *created by the ruling class*, then you are ridiculously gullible and will accomplish nothing. If you **bitch about the symptoms** of authoritarian injustice, while still **advocating the cause** of that injustice, you are still part of the problem.

The way to end police abuse is to end “government” police. The way to end political corruption is to end the political system. When it comes to other types of violent, immoral aggression, people know this. Do good people advocate “reforming” and “limiting” murder, theft and assault? Or do they advocate *ending* those things? For the same reason, the violent domination and enslavement that is “government” should not be tinkered with, rearranged, reformed or amended. It should be **ended**. And that starts with people recognizing the fact that calling extortion and thuggery “law” doesn’t make it right, and calling a gang of violent parasites “government” doesn’t make their actions legitimate. Until all the statist protestors and activists realize this, they will be little more than slaves begging their owners to please whip them a little less often.