

The State is an Illusion, Ignore It



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"The Self Owner" is an original column appearing every Wednesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Spencer W. Morgan. Spencer is a husband and father, and has studied History and Philosophy at the University of Utah. Archived columns can be found [here](#). OVP-only RSS feed available [here](#).

Why should we ignore the government? Because ignoring is the proper way to avoid perpetuating a perception. As we have identified in earlier columns, the power of the state ultimately lies in a mere perception. A passage I read recently in George R. R. Martin's popular "A Song of Ice and Fire" series illustrates this very well:

"If it is the swordsmen who rule us in truth, why do we pretend our kings hold the power? Why should a strong man with a sword ever obey a child king like Joffrey, or a wine-sodden oaf like his father?"

"Because these child kings and drunken oafs can call other strong men, with other swords."

"Then these other swordsmen have the true power. Or do they? Whence came their swords? Why do they obey?"

Varys smiled. "Some say knowledge is power. Some tell us that all power comes from the gods. Others say it derives from law. Yet that day on the steps of Baelor's Sept, our godly High Septon and the lawful Queen Regent and your ever-so-knowledgeable servant were as powerless as any cobbler or cooper in the crowd. Who truly killed Eddard Stark, do you think? Joffrey, who gave the command? Ser Ilyn Payne, who swung the sword? Or . . . another?"

Tyryon cocked his head sideways. "Did you mean to answer your

damned riddle, or only to make my headache worse?"

Varys smiled. "Here, then. Power resides where men believe it resides. No more and no less."

"So power is a mummer's trick?"

"A shadow on the wall," Varys murmured, "yet shadows can kill. And ofttimes a very small man can cast a very large shadow."

My point here is not that we should ignore any aspect of reality, or act based on an unrealistic assessment of potential dangers. My point is that we need to be devoted and stubborn about ignoring what does not, in fact, exist... the contradictory conceptual umbrella under which all "government" action is taken. This conceptual characterization which is applied by most people to what are really just individual actions, invokes the application of a moral double standard based on nothing more than a widespread fictional conception.

Another very illustrative illustration of this is in the movie "Labyrinth" with David Bowie and Jennifer Connelly. Jennifer Connelly's character gets sucked into a trap of trying to navigate a labyrinth to recover her baby brother from the Goblin King by midnight, otherwise the baby would belong to him forever. In the end, she realizes that all she needed to do was to say "you have no power over me" and he didn't. His power was all an illusion, and lost all viability once she no longer acknowledged it. This is a perfect analogy to our "relationship" with the state. We give it viability, credibility and ultimately operating power by the very presumption of the validity we convey in our efforts such as voting and political activism.

What is the answer then? One brilliant gem from Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged*, the application of which it seems even she failed to fully comprehend, is a piece of strategic advice given by Francisco D'Anconia to Hank Rearden;

"If you want to defeat any kind of vicious fraud—comply with it literally, adding nothing of your own to disguise its nature."

Since this battle ultimately is about a perception, we can be most effective by participating in the battle for or against that perception, instead of taking steps that presume its validity in the hopes of reducing the acts of violence it facilitates.