

Beyond Politics

by

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on

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The sheer absurdity of the spectacle of the modern electoral process is nowhere more apparent than in the American presidential race.

Just like the Olympic games, every four years the presidential election comes around to distract and entertain the masses, and, just like the Olympic games, the proceedings are accompanied by much pomp, ceremony and pageantry and almost nothing at all of substance. The three-ring circus that is the race for the White House plays itself out with a tawdry predictability: the primaries energize the party base and introduce the key themes for the election cycle. Immediately, these are reduced in media coverage of the debates to memes, vague concepts and one-word appeals to the lowest common intellectual denominator: economy, jobs, defense, welfare. By the time the left-right farce



of the two-way debates gets underway, any pretence that there are actual issues at stake have been brushed aside. It is no longer about politics, but vacuous slogans: "Hope and Change" vs. "Country First". "Forward" vs. "Believe in America". It might as well be red vs. blue, Coke vs. Pepsi, or fork vs. spoon.

Remarkably, no one even notices the sleight of hand by which the political class and the media manage to transform the contest for the Oval Office into a meaningless contest of party slogans and political platitudes.

Romney is the opposite of everything conservatives profess to hold dear: When governor of Massachusetts, he argued for the individual health care mandate he later pretended to oppose. In 2004, Governor Romney signed one of the toughest gun control laws in the country. In 2005 he advocated a cap-and-tax to combat anthropogenic global warming.

Obama, too, is the precise opposite of his supporters' ideal: He supported the bailout of the "too big to fails" in the 2008 financial crisis. He campaigned on getting lobbyists out of Washington, and then appointed lobbyist after lobbyist to his administration. He expanded Bush's war on terror into Pakistan and Yemen and Somalia, mainlined the use of drone strikes and enshrined in Libya the doctrine that the President no longer even needs Congress' rubber stamp to start a war.

In his time in office he has started a presidential kill list that includes American citizens, and signed the NDAA, allowing the US military to arrest anyone, including Americans, anywhere, including on American soil, for any reason, and to detain them indefinitely without recourse to so much as a trial.

None of this matters to the vast majority of voters. They will lap it all up, mindless spectacle and all, following every move in the horse race, cheering when their erstwhile leader says something that sounds acceptable and jeering when the other team's captain takes to the field. And when questioned on their own party's platform, hardly one in ten will be able to accurately articulate it.

For those who can see past the facade to the empty, vacuous charade that is at the heart of this process, there are the easy explanations and trite solutions. It is a lack of education, they will argue. We need to invest more in civics education in the school system. It is a failure of the media, they will say. We need to strengthen media regulation to ensure fair and accurate reporting. It is a breakdown of the system itself, they will opine. We need electoral reform laws to fix the problem.

All of these so-called solutions rest on the same flawed premises: that the democratic process is fundamentally sound, but our implementation of that process is faulty. Quite the contrary. The system is not broken. It is functioning exactly as it was designed to.

This is a bitter pill for many to swallow. Surely there must be a political leader who conforms to our view of the way society should be run, at least most of the time, on most of the issues. All we have to do is convince enough people to vote for this saviour and our societal redemption will be assured. In this worldview, salvation always comes from on high in Washington, D.C., and the entirety of the population keeps waiting for that political messiah who never arrives, making do with the closest approximation they can find between the candidates that Team Republicrat and Team Democan field each election cycle.

But why is it that we—all of us in our so-called developed Western democracies—put all of our political energies—to the extent we care at all anymore about these rigged political contests—into these elections that the vast majority of the voting public believe at best to be a necessary civic duty? Why do voters hold their collective noses once every four years and to pull the lever (or, better yet, touch the screen) for the lesser of two evils in order to "keep the other guy out?"

Does anyone really believe that this process will ever achieve anything other than what it already has over the preceding centuries? Does anyone believe that our modern electoral system is the best, sanest, noblest or most ethical way of finding accord with those around us? Does anyone believe that the corruption, waste, fraud, abuse and rampant criminality of our political class is anything

other than the inevitable end result of this centuries-old democratic experiment?

These are not rhetorical questions. They are real questions, with a real answer. And that answer is "no".

The reason that so few are willing to answer so plainly is because they are afraid of the implication of that answer: that politics itself is not the answer. Because if the answer is not to be found in voting in meaningless political pageants once every four years, then that begs the question: how is society to be organized?

This is where we discover the heart of the fraud. The question itself implies that we need some centralized authority to make the judgements for our society. It implies, at base, that we are but children, and that without mommy or daddy government to come in and organize our society, nothing would function. It implies that the answer is the precise opposite of what we have been told we need; not government, but freedom.

There will be those whose ideological blinders are so securely in place that a society without government will seem as unlivable to them as an atmosphere without oxygen. Having existed in the spacesuit bubble of statism their entire lives, they will be so deathly afraid of removing themselves from that cocoon that they will mock the mere suggestion that we take off our helmets and breathe the open air of a stateless society. "Surely you jest", they will say. "How can we live without government?"

These are the same people who will ask how our children will be educated in the absence of a government-run school system without bothering to ask how children were educated for the millennia of human history before government-run education.

These are the same people who will ask how we will care for the sick and the unemployed without asking how charity and basic human decency functioned before it became a government-imposed monopoly.

These are the same people who will ask how we will keep unscrupulous businessmen in line without government regulators without bothering to notice that not a single banker has gone to jail for the worst economic crimes in the history of humanity under the most extensive governmental regulatory regimes in the history of humanity.

These are the same people who will happily vote for whichever candidate promises to supply the most benefits for the country without admitting that every single benefit that the government can bestow has been either stolen from the wallet of the taxpayer or, worse yet, created through debt-based money printing that puts the noose of mathematically unextinguishable debt around the necks of children yet unborn.

These are the same people who will teach their children that it is always wrong for us to initiate the use of force on others and to take things against their will, but will see no contradiction in supporting a system called "government" that is made up of individuals whom they grant the authority to do precisely that.

In short, these are the people who will neither be honest with themselves nor look objectively at the system around them. They have not entered the plane of moral argument, and will forever be wedded to a system they have never even bothered to understand. They will cast their votes happily in the next election, patting themselves on the back for having done their civic duty, and will go back to their lives,

wondering why our society is falling apart and what the next political candidate will promise to do about it.

For the rest of us, there is the realization that the political system itself is just another form of enslavement. An enslavement that is all the more insidious, because it asks us to buy into it. All



we have to do is push a button or pull a lever or touch a screen once every four years and we are now absolved of our moral responsibility.

Ironically, this realization is in itself liberating and puts the world into focus with crystal clarity. We are not cogs in some machine called "society" to be dictated to by some nebulous entity we have been taught to call "the government" or "the authorities". We are free individuals freely interacting with those around us, bound by the moral injunction not to initiate force against others or take things from others against their will. We are responsible for our actions and their consequences, both positive and negative. We are responsible for what we do or don't do to help those in our community, and to make this world better or leave it to rot. There is no political messiah that will descend from the heavens to tell us what to do or to protect us from the bad men. All we have is our self and our choices.

We vote every day, not in some meaningless election, but in who we choose to associate with, what we choose to spend our money on, what we choose to invest our time and energy doing. This is the essence of freedom.

For us, it is painful to watch our brothers and sisters getting swept up in the election cycle hype. We watch the sad spectacle not with a sense of scorn or derision, but with sadness for those who have not yet woken up to the reality of their mental enslavement. That sadness, however, is tempered by hope: hope that one day, those poor voters who are trudging off to that booth to pull that lever will realize that all they are really doing is voting for which slavemaster they will allow to put the chains around their neck.