

# The Individual vs. Tyranny



## The Power of the Individual

- "Art is individualism, and individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force. There lies its immense value. For what it seeks is to disturb monotony of type, slavery of custom, tyranny of habit, and the reduction of man to the level of a machine." (Oscar Wilde)
- "The community stagnates without the impulse of the individual. The impulse dies away with the sympathy of the community." (William James)
- "The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself." (Nietzsche)
- ". . .the man who knows what freedom means will find a way to be free." (F.A. Harper)
- "A slave is one who waits for someone to come and free him." (Ezra Pound)
- "It is the business of the future to be dangerous. . .The major advances in civilization are processes that all but wrecked the societies in which they occur." (Alfred North Whitehead)
- "The great events of world are, at bottom, profoundly unimportant. In the last analysis the essential thing is the life of the individual. This alone makes history, here alone do the great transformations first take place, and the whole future, the whole history of the world, ultimately spring as a gigantic summation from these hidden sources in individuals. **In our most private and most subjective lives we are not only the passive witnesses of our age, and its sufferers, but also its makers. We make our own epoch.**" (Carl Jung)
- "The essence of an individual's freedom is the opportunity to deviate from traditional ways of thinking and of doing things." (Ludwig von Mises)

## **Importance of the Individual in Generating Change**

- “In my most evil moments I was convinced that I was doing good, and I was well supplied with systematic arguments. And it was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. **Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, not between classes, not between political parties either - but right through every human heart - and through all human hearts.** This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains. . . an un-uprooted small corner of evil. . . And since that time I have come to understand **the falsehood of all the revolutions in history: They destroy only those carriers of evil contemporary with them** (and also fail, out of haste, to discriminate the carriers of good as well). And they then take to themselves as their heritage the actual evil itself, magnified still more.” (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn)
- Who can believe that **it is the little choices we make, every day, between good and evil, that turn the world to waste and hope to despair?** But it is the case. We see our immense capacity for evil, constantly realized before us, in great things and in small, but can never seem to realize our infinite capacity for good. **Who can argue with a Solzhenitsyn when he states: “One man who stops lying can bring down a tyranny”?** (Jordan Peterson)
- Our tyrannical tendencies and moral decadences generally find their expression limited by our narrow domains of personal power. We cannot doom millions to death, at a whim, because we do not have the resources to do so. We satisfy ourselves, in absence of such power, with riding roughshod over those near to us - and congratulate ourselves on our moral virtue. We use aggression and strength to bend dependent others to our will - or, in the absence of strength, use sickness

and weakness to harness the force of empathy, and deceive our way to dominance, underground. (Jordan Peterson)

- “. . .an even more fundamental problem than the belief in any particular state, is the belief in statism in general. **Delegitimizing, and thereby overthrowing, a particular state, even a tyrannical one, does not necessarily do any good. If statism still reigns in the hearts of men, a revolution is likely to make things even worse.** Immediately after the tyrant falls, people afflicted with statism will look for a new yoke and a new master, and will not be wanting for candidates. Moreover, **the new yoke will likely be heavier than the one just thrown off, because the upheavals of revolution are frightening, and when people are frightened, they are more prone to give masters (even new ones) vast emergency powers. Revolutions almost always install tyrannies worse than the ones they replace.**” (Dan Sanchez)
- **“We will not become “free” by attacking or overthrowing the authorities in our lives, but only by taking back what, in fact, we were never truly able to give up: the responsibility for our thinking and actions.** Likewise, recommitting ourselves to political or religious systems is but to perpetuate the illusion that others are in control of our lives, and that we must content ourselves with obsequious efforts to influence their policies in our favor. To live as both free and responsible men and women is to be self-controlling, not obedient. Such a condition can arise only from a fundamental change in our thinking, and will find expression only within a system in which each of us exercises an unrestrained authority over what is ours to control.” (Butler Shaffer)
- **“You and I can bring civilization back into order neither by seizing political power, nor by attacking it, but by moving away from it, by diverting our focus from marbled temples and legislative halls to the conduct of our daily lives.** The “order” of a creative civilization will emerge in much the same way that order manifests itself through the rest of nature: not from those who fashion themselves leaders of others, but from the inter-connectedness of individuals pursuing their respective self-interests.” (Butler Shaffer)

## The Dangers of Collectivism

- “Collectivism is a doctrine of war, intolerance, and persecution. If any of the collectivist creeds should succeed in its endeavors, all people but the great dictator would be deprived of their essential human quality. They would become mere soulless pawns in the hands of a monster.” (Ludwig von Mises)
- “. . .the basic idea of collectivism cannot result in anything but social disintegration and the perpetuation of armed conflict. It is true that every variety of collectivism promises eternal peace starting with the day of its own decisive victory in the final overthrow and extermination of all other ideologies and their supporters. However, the realization of these plans is conditioned upon a radical transformation in mankind. **Man must be divided into two classes: the omnipotent godlike dictator on the one hand and the masses which must surrender volition and reasoning in order to become mere chessmen in the plans of the dictator.** The masses must be dehumanized in order to make one man their godlike master...There is no need to point out that such designs are unrealizable. The chiliastic empires of dictators are doomed to failure. . .” (Ludwig von Mises)
- “**Political institutions thrive by encouraging the development of various group identities.** Insisting upon maintaining the clear distinctions of our collective boundary lines, they help to foment conflicts among such groups and then offer to mediate the very differences it has been in the states interests to foster!” (Butler Shaffer)
- “Somewhere there are still peoples and herds, but not where we live, my brothers: here there are states. State? What is that? **Well then, open your ears to me, for now I shall speak to you about the death of peoples. . .State is the name of the coldest of all cold monsters.** Coldly it tells lies too; and this lie crawls out of its mouth: “I, the state, am the people.” That is a lie!” (Nietzsche)
- “The masses have never thirsted after truth. Whoever can supply them with illusions is easily their master; whoever attempts to destroy their illusions is always their victim.” (Gustave Le Bon)