

Tyranny of Deception

Truth has always been a challenging pursuit, often resulting in the persecution of its pursuers. But the modern era offers a special challenge as lies are now the mass-manufactured product of an industry that relentlessly serves the interests of the powerful, as Phil Rockstroh writes.

By Phil Rockstroh

Throughout the course of human affairs, scheming elitists – let's call them the Plundering Class – have devoted their days conceiving strategies and executing agendas that serve to enrich the fortunes of a ruthless few (namely themselves) by an exploitation of the harried and hapless multitudes.

They scheme, hire silver-tongued flacks and muster soldiers to do their bidding, while, all too often, the rest of us squander the fleeting days of our finite lives in their service. They plot while we hope. They hoard the bounty of the world while we hoard resentments (generally misplaced upon those equally as power-bereft as we are).

“The best people possess a feeling for beauty, the courage to take risks, the discipline to tell the truth, the capacity for sacrifice. Ironically, their virtues make them vulnerable; they are often wounded, sometimes destroyed.” – Ernest Hemingway

Yet we vulnerable nobodies are free to stumble upon the truth, while self-impressed schemers merely lie. We can live artfully, while they have enclosed themselves in prisons of artifice.

They wage wars of choice to gain power, acquire plunder, and leave a wasteland of rubble and ashes in their wake. They pursue economic agendas that exploit the things of the world (and that includes rendering the inner landscapes of all concerned a psychological wasteland and, yes, that includes their own).

This is the meaning of the overused (yet terrifying in its implications) term losing one's soul i.e., the dismal state of affairs of having a soulless agenda – but not a life. The soul – being an ever persisting, always dying multi-verse of living images – cannot be reduced to a PowerPoint presentation.

You cannot conceive and execute a scheme that will suffuse the hours of your life with resonance, depth and meaning, but you can scheme (as is the mode of mind and the modus operandi of the Plundering Class) your way into creating a hell on earth. In this way, the elites of our soul-decimated age have been successful beyond their most self-deceiving expectations.

Is not the relentless shallowness of the corporate/consumer culture a type of a lie – and a pernicious one at that? Not even taking into account the effects of being plied and pummeled by the relentless legerdemain of a nearly all-enveloping commercial media, a stultifying social milieu has evolved in which the individual is coerced, by means, both overt and subliminal, to construct a false self, a cipher persona, in order to adapt to the demeaning demands of corporate authoritarianism.

A tyranny of the reasonable is in place under corporate hegemony, in which the unique and unruly nature of human character is deemed inappropriate to a workplace environment – an outright affront to the “team player” *esprit de corps* of the corporate state.

Thus, those adapted to embodying the lie inherent to living a superficial life are considered a company asset (until, of course, perennial rounds of downsizing begin) while truth-tellers carry qualities of the chronically unemployable, and whistleblowers become objects for federal prosecution.

Yet, there is a place, an indomitable domain within you that allows you to live with truth that allows you to live so deeply within your authentic nature that you can live beyond yourself. Finding this place is crucial: For if you cannot bear what is true (often uncomfortably so) about yourself, it is impossible to discern the true nature of others.

Consequently, life is reduced to a series of provisional deceptions. The ability to love becomes atrophied. The world becomes a prison constructed of petrified longing and misapplied aggression. One falls easy prey to peddlers of false hope and propagandists who promote wars based on lies.

In contrast, it is essential to maintain a sanctuary within where shame cannot trespass – where your luminous (but inhuman) daimon is allowed rendezvous with transitory, mortal longing – where the daimon’s outrageous demands cross-pollinate with grim, earth-shackled realities, thus allowing for not only the bloom of radiant possibility but the ability to apprehend a self-serving lie and nip it in the bud.

This is the place where love is born and abides. It stands before us, every moment of every passing hour. It takes an acquired, all too common myopia, to lose sight of it.

Not all truths are created equal. At times, true statements can be launched with malevolent intent. Such declarations of fact should be avoided for the sake of all concerned (e.g., “Your child was served with a large dollop of the ugly gene distributed so generously in your family”).

In contrast, calling out an insidious lie told in the pursuit of a selfish agenda serves the benefit of all, but the promulgator of the self-serving fiction, e.g., a lie such as: “Evidence indicates that the despotic ruler of (fill in the blank of a resource rich or strategically located nation) has become a threat to life and to the liberty of the world at large; therefore, we have no choice but to invade with the full force of our military might and establish the democracy that decent people everywhere yearn for.”

The same applies to convictions borne of convenient self-deception, e.g., “I support the troops deployed (in the aforementioned invasion) or else people might accuse me of supporting the terrorists.”

For an individual, by far, the biggest danger in trafficking in transactional lies arises from losing awareness of the demarcation point between where the lie starts and you begin – your existence reduced to a fixed smile (and a clutch of hidden resentments) that announces the presence of a counterfeit life. By losing the recognition that you are lying, your life becomes a lie.

Often, a comforting lie can be as insidious as an outright prevarication. Building a worldview based on comforting lies translates into a habitual muting of the senses – a white noise of the mind takes hold drowning out the unique music that forms the core of one’s consciousness obliterating, the quality Kabir averred is: “The flute of interior time [that] is played whether we hear it or not. What we know as ‘love’ is its sound coming in.”

“Where else,” the poet asks, “have you heard a sound like this?”

Sometimes, in art, one must lie – create artifice – to trudge in the direction of truth. Yet when governments lie, and those lies, in time, are regarded as historical fact, the lies may become fixed in place, as obdurate as marble monuments in the collective mind of the populace, even as the culture that was created by those lies comes apart by the wisdom-bereft actions of an ignorant public.

Through it all – and despite the efforts of even the most relentless prevaricators – the mysterious nature of life – its unfathomable vastness, its endless intricacies, ambiguities, gradations of truths and variability of outcomes – provides life with a redemptive quality.

The phenomenon allows us, although not often enough, to avoid the hubris of claiming we are privy to all-encompassing, monolithic truth, for, as history reveals, that way lies oppression, stagnation of imagination, murder and madness.

Few things mitigate a compulsion to lie as does admitting bafflement and

committing to a sustained attempt to learn to live within the unfolding mystery inherent to earthly life. Said mode of being should not be confused with the unfortunate fate of drifting through life as a wishy-washy cipher. Conversely, the approach allows one to remain open to, thus be enriched by, a wide range of life-enhancing, certainty-shattering, wisdom-garnering experiences.

Moreover, a tenacious angel resides in states of absence. To remain connected to the heart of existence, we must continue to love those things that have been irretrievably lost to us. Accepting one will never be privy to omniscience allows seeds of possibility to take root in the cracks and fissures of the soul that have been wrought by heartbreak.

Antithetical to the overreach of empire and the dynamic of addiction inherent to the consumer state, limits allow us to love the things of the world that stand before us. A kind of deliverance is achieved by arriving at the demarcation point yawning between What Is Gone Forever and Things That Can Never Be.

This is one of the locations of the soul where grace approaches us – a junction where we have been waylaid by circumstance and pierced by grief. Consequently, we are held in place long enough to not habitually rush past beauty.

The individual who finds an implicate order within – who keeps hold of the golden thread of his true nature as he wends through the baffling labyrinth of social convention and official deceit – will make an ally of fate. His true name will be emblazoned upon his heart and will ring across the devouring abyss of a conformist age.

In bleak contrast, how can a people whose consciousness and concomitant mode of being was forged in a furnace of cultural perfidy be capable of building anything of enduring worth? The facile fades, even as the lie that gave rise to millions of deceitful heirs lives on, e.g., The citizenry of the U.S. who have shunted from consciousness and expunged from memory the millions of slaughtered human beings (from Central America to Central Asia, from Southeast Asia to the Persian Gulf) resultant from the imperial ambitions of the nation's ruling elites.

We claim we know who we are. We believe the fictions we spin regarding our identity and our interactions with the world. But, to a large degree, we are composed of the very things we are unaware of about ourselves – the things that we find too uncomfortable to admit inform our actions and form the foundation of our fate.

Propagandists, corporate and political, know this: They know how to manipulate those resistant to self-awareness, by plying them with flattering lies and

pummeling them with contrived fears. These overpaid, professional liars know how to trap us in cages constructed of our cherished convictions. This is why, as a general rule, human beings prove so easy to control.

If you find what you have been habitually avoiding, you might blunder upon who you are.

Antithetical to the process of self-awareness: The quintessence of duplicity we know as corporate man is not interested in connection nor exploration; he craves control. He is not moved by mystery; he has an agenda. He does not know life; he possesses a facile contrivance of being.

But the currents of time will erode his counterfeit world. He will be left with nothing because, in the long run, he will only possess his own emptiness.

Yet, you cannot force truth upon the deceived. If a deluded soul is fortunate enough to stumble upon it, he will have found it beneath the rubble of his collapsed convictions. His most treasured, now shattered, verities will glint like shards in moonlight, as irascible circumstance has forced him to question all he insisted was true.

This is the means by which wars are avoided. Here is located the point of departure where a subversion of a corrupt order begins.

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