

CHARITY

Those who minister to poverty and disease are accomplices to the two worst of all the crimes. George Bernard Shaw

He who gives money he has not earned is generous with other people's labor. George Bernard Shaw

Hell is paved with good intentions, not with bad ones. George Bernard Shaw

You're not a man, you're a machine. George Bernard Shaw

Charity is akin to giving aspirin for a headache caused by a malignant brain tumor. In the short term the symptoms may be alleviated but the cancer progressively worsens. Jack Basuk

It is justice, not charity, that is wanting in the world. Mary Wollstonecraft

Charity degrades those who receive it and hardens those who dispense it. George Sand

I do not know what to make of our situation. It appears to be prevalent, not only in our nation but in all the so-called advanced countries of our world. It is most disturbing because the malaise that affects us has come upon us without any advanced signs or warnings. This state of affairs, if allowed to continue, can and probably will destroy us.

Our world used to consist of two classes, the Haves and the Have-nots. It wasn't as bad as it sounds. The Haves numbered very few and for the most part we never really knew who they were. They had complete control of everything. They were the de facto government. The rest of us depended completely upon their largesse. This occurred because we lived in a society in which human labor no longer existed. It had become totally unnecessary. Robots and computers provided any and all goods and services both necessary and superfluous. The robotic technology and all it produced were in the possession of the oligarchy of Haves. The old dream of Artificial Intelligence deliberately remained a dream. The Haves hoarded the expertise to program the computers and control the robots. All the rest of us were the recipients of what they provided. Whatever we received was not in the form of a guaranteed income. Simply put, we received what those in control deemed appropriate. This turned out to be an unpredictable variable leaving us all in a state of constant apprehensive suspense.

We were made to appreciate that nothing belonged to us and that in essence we were charity cases. After all, we were all getting something for nothing. For most of us that was more than sufficient. Our world was stable and our politics reflected that state of affairs. Any overt or covert criticism was severely restricted and anyone caught in such activity was found guilty of treason and ruthlessly punished. Of course, the media was used to brain-wash us and it succeeded quite well. Travel and electronic communications were rationed with the latter being carefully monitored. We were supposed to be content and satisfied with our lot and openly we were.

Yet there was something that nagged some of us subconsciously. It may be that part of the human condition is never to be totally content with any state of affairs. There may be an intrinsic need to bemoan our situations no matter how beneficial they appear to be. On the other hand, we were adults with minds of our own, or so we thought, and at some level resented being spoon-fed not only our material needs but also our intellectual pursuits.

Despite some reservations about the conditions under which we existed no one appeared ready or capable of changing them. Then I encountered Karl. I had known him from my childhood days. He was a natural born rebel who questioned everything and never was content with the sedate and dull answers usually proffered. He was openly contemptuous of the established order of things. How he managed to survive remains a mystery. Probably he was protected by others of like mind although I never discovered who they were. At first it seemed that our meeting was by happenstance. He quickly dispelled me of that notion.

"Frederick! I have been looking for you for quite awhile. I desperately need to use your brains and acumen. I have long known that amongst us you were by far the smartest. I never understood why you have never taken an active role in revolting against the autocracy that controls everything."

"Karl, I am quite flattered by your compliments but I don't believe them for a second. You are right about my reservations about those in power. They have immeasurable muscle. I have racked my brains as to how the deplorable conditions can be altered. For the life of me I do not see what can be done. Now, I am sure that you want something. Please tell me what it is and I will provide any assistance I reasonably can."

"I am absolutely correct in my assessment of you. You are a great thinker. Like many great thinkers you are not a doer. You remind me of a phrase from a famous Shakespearean play, namely Hamlet.

'Thus Conscience does make cowards of us all;
And the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.'

A similar but more modern and less prosaic statement that sums you up rather neatly is that you are often guilty of 'Paralysis by Analysis'."

"Karl, I am astonished by your accurate description of my character. We have not seen each other for quite a few years yet you are right on. We are all flawed. I have always been content to be a passive and critical observer of the passing scene and never a participant. Perhaps it is because it is a much easier position to take. In any case, that is neither here nor there. It is a serious failing which I will probably never overcome. However, I am now resolved to pay closer attention to your views. Until now I had severely underestimated your acumen."

Karl continued.

"First before I ask anything of you I would like to provide you with my fundamental rationale for engaging in a war against those who control everything. Their currency is not money. We live in a cashless society. That might be the only beneficial aspect of what is transpiring. Instead, they have unlimited power over all of us and over all the technologies responsible for producing all goods and services. We are completely at their mercy. It is most frustrating to have everything I need provided by their whims. We are the ultimate charity cases.

I wish to work. I wish to earn my keep. It appears that there are two forms of labor. The first which was prevalent in the past was employment by some person, institution or corporate entity. Most of the populace was engaged in this sort of activity. The trouble was that it was a form of coercion, because of the need to provide for oneself and one's family. Another way of putting it is that it was a facet of prostitution. Minds and bodies were being sold or offered to the highest bidder. This was a most unsatisfactory means of attaining economic well being. It is true that some jobs were pleasurable especially those in the Arts, Sciences, Entertainment, Sports and Academia. It is also true that there were employers who treated their employees fairly and tried to make the workplace an arena that was agreeable. Unfortunately the majority of workers did not reap such benefits and were subject to no job security, poor earnings and undesirable working conditions.

The second form of labor was not coerced. It consisted of activities that the self-employed person had chosen because of love for it. However, very few succeeded at these types of endeavors because the competition was quite keen. While hobbies were allowed they too were carefully monitored and major associations of so-called artists were forbidden since they represented a potential network for discontents. In any case, leisure pursuits of whatever sort ended up by being unsatisfactory exercises in self-indulgence.

We now live in a world in which work, either coerced or chosen, simply does not exist. Perhaps and for purposes of clarity a distinction should be drawn between 'work' and 'working'. The latter can mean any activity which requires an obligatory effort either physical or mental, for reasons other than survival. Work or labor can be construed to mean an activity engaged in solely for economic reasons.

An old adage that was totally and horribly misconstrued should be revived. It is: 'Work makes you free.' It certainly makes one freer than our current conditions do. We wander aimlessly through life always seeking something but not knowing what. We have become frenetic pleasure-seeking narcissists. We are nothing more than slaves to our biology. We resemble the Zombies that the practitioners of Voodoo believed were the ghost-like entities of the dead. Something must be done. That is the reason I have turned to you. I want, no, I need your thoughts."

"Karl, I completely agree with your depiction of our current situation. At first glance I am not sure whether anything can be done. All I can ascertain is that a very subtle form of violence is being used to keep us in our place. Fighting fire with fire is probably the only realistic way to change things. The Haves control all the essential technologies. These must either be wrested from them or the technologies must be eliminated. Failing that, those who control the technologies must be eradicated. To accomplish this, the first thing that must be done is to identify and then assassinate all the Haves. I abhor violence but I see no other way since I am sure that they will not readily relinquish their

control and their power over all of us. If such drastic measures are used we must be sure that the benefits will outweigh the inevitable costs, which for the most part cannot be foreseen.”

“Frederick, it appears that we are of like mind. I, too, am convinced that this autocracy must be done away with. It is a decision that was reached a number of years ago but it is one that definitely needed a second opinion. Without any prompting on my part, you have provided what was required. It is not that we did not try to reason with our despots. Not only did they not listen but they killed all who approached them.

We have been preparing for this revolution for quite some time. We have identified our foes. We know where they are and we have learned that they have become lackadaisical about their security. We can now destroy them. Unfortunately there will be innocent lives taken. We will be accused of instigating a reign of terror similar to many of the past. Yet we simply have no choice.”

With hindsight what transpired was quite predictable. Karl’s forecast that there would be carnage was correct. Two factors emerged that no one had foreseen. First that there would be vicious disputes between the newly ordained powerful. This resulted in a further loss of life leaving a large void in the ruling structure. Karl managed to retain some control but a flimsy one at best. However, much worse was that there was absolutely no expertise available not only to run and control the computers and robots but also for anything else. That is the current situation. We rely totally on technology to provide us with the necessities. We are literally at its mercy. The computers and robots are our benefactors. We are still the recipients of charity. What if something goes wrong with them? What will happen to us? After all they are still nothing more than machines.

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May 31, 2006
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