

Are we crazy?

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Of course we are not, though we sometimes feel that way.

The world, the United States, every other country, earth, humans, are in crisis, have been in crisis for most of their history. The history of the human race is a history of horrors, a history of outrages, a history of the unspeakable, a history of the insane, the mad, the psychopathic, the unbelievable.

This is also true today. The experience of the present is also an experience of horrors, an experience of outrages, an experience of the unspeakable, an experience of the insane, the mad, the psychopathic, the unbelievable. And we live in the twenty-first century. Information technology spans the globe, and at least, we in the industrialised, developed, rich parts of the world can know the horrors that proceed around us, instantaneously.

If one assumes that human beings are rational and moral beings, then one might argue that, given the facts of our world, and the fact that we live in parts of the world where major decisions are made, and moreover, — at least in a formal sense — made democratically, that such horrors should come to a swift close immediately; or should have, decades ago.

Yet they do not, have not. Why? This is a crucial question, and one we must understand.

Part of the issue is apathy and — in a certain sense, although a different sense — the insanity of much of the population. It is hard to explain apathetic behaviour, based on the objective circumstances and the fact that they are intelligent beings. Is this merely explained by situational psychology? Is it explained by the fact that they don't really know what's going on? Is it explained by the fact that they do know what's going on, but feel they can't do anything about it? Is it explained by economic circumstances? Is it explained by the propaganda of the mainstream media? Is it explained by history? Are people naturally evil? Are people naturally obedient? Are people naturally deferent and afraid? Are people naturally more interested in distractions like shopping and sports than in anything meaningful? Do social forces push them to be that way? Are these questions just patronising? Awesome, difficult questions. It is tempting to pass it off as insanity. But on the other hand, of course we understand it — it is the most natural thing for us to understand, since we see it everywhere every day.

Another part of the issue is why governmental institutions — supposedly operating by democratic means — do not step up and immediately desist from the outrageous policies and actions by which they proceed everyday. Are they so completely captured by corporate interests — and why do such corporate interests continue to exist? Are government institutions too far removed from the life of the people? Are they simply ignorant? Do they believe their own propaganda? Are they cowed by external propaganda, manipulation, and jingoism? Do they simply proceed under their own institutional momentum? Another set of awesome and difficult questions.

But our issue is the life of individuals, the life of actual people, the psychology of everyday people, individual psychology.

Conscience exists, we know it exists. In a generalised sense, everybody knows the government today is evil. In a generalised sense, everybody knows that the world is governed by horrible, horrible forces. In a generalised sense, everybody knows that there are wars fought for oil, that democracies uphold dictators, that the officially good are usually truthfully bad. In a generalised sense, people know that everything is upside down, people know what is going on. Yet they do not do anything about it. Why?

We see this all the time. There are people who are cool, who think nothing worse than to care about anything. There are people who like the sound of their own voice, who don't care what they say as long as they say something with a nice melody. There are those who play devil's advocate, even though they know the truth, they enjoy the sport and the adventure, the malicious pleasure of pretending to be evil. There are those who are naive and ignorant, who take pains not to understand anything meaningful or interesting. There are those who are raised within certain systems to understand everything wrong, emotionally manipulated, trained to understand oppression as freedom, inequality as liberty, equality as oppression, and responsibility as outrageous imposition. There are those who, naive and ignorant, hear arguments to justify the status quo — amplified and broadcast by various powerful social institutions — and believe them uncritically, emotionally manipulated, foolish, or otherwise.

There are many distractions, sidelines, sophists, and idiocies to distract people from any moral purpose. There are many storms in teacups and petty celebrity controversies, and far more banal matters which provoke the interest of millions somehow, in this world. But human beings all know, intuitively, that that is not all. There is something called conscience: we do not know exactly what it is — perhaps buried in evolutionary psychology to preserve the race, perhaps an innate moral sense, perhaps a sophisticated form of self-preservation, perhaps simply the basis of understanding other sentient beings. In any case, we claim, and we know, that it is there.

We know that conscience is there; we know that the facts are there; we know that the truth is there. The point is to activate that conscience. The point is to rip people away from all the distractions, from all the mindless nonsense, from all the social pressures not to care, not to believe that a better world is possible. It is self-fulfilling. If enough people believe that the world is a nonsense, that the world is insane, that the world is crazy, that the world cannot be tolerated,

and that something else needs to be built in its place — a world that makes sense, a world that operates for the benefit of the entire human race, a world that does not exploit, oppress or destroy — if enough people believe this, it will happen in the blink of an eye. And after it has happened, we shall wonder why on earth we were doing anything different; and the entire history of war, genocide, tyrants, petty clashes, idiotic justifications, pettiness, banality and the hair's breadth of apocalypse will seem as exotic and as unthinkable as today we think of slavery, of kings, of the various attributes of the stone age and the evolution of the human race through them.

In any case, if we do not do anything, we make sure that this situation will continue. We are not crazy. Others are not crazy either; it is simply a matter of understanding. Wrong beliefs, insanity, ignorance are not our worst problems; silence, coolness, pleasantries, consumerism, commodity fetishism, and mindless obedience are far, far worse. But that is what education and activism are all about.

As Martin Luther King Jr said:

Cowardice asks the question — is it safe? Expediency asks the question — is it politic? Vanity asks the question — is it popular? But conscience asks the question — is it right? And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular; but one must take it because it is right.

The massed conscience of the human race is there; it just lies asleep. If it is roused, it is the most powerful force imaginable; it will win a new world overnight; it will inaugurate utopia. Conscience will bring the hammer of justice to bear on the world; conscience will purge our everyday horrors; conscience will not rest until justice and freedom — not illegitimate systems of power, domination and control — are the operating systems this world. Then the world will be sane; then our craziness will have become recognised as the obvious common sense that it is.