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Saving the World through Saving Yourself

Per Bylund

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Libertarians generally find themselves puzzled at how to bring about the free society they envision. It seems almost impossible to bring down the State to its “minimalist state” form, and even harder to abolish it altogether and secure a state of anarchy. How do we do it? What should our strategy be? Where should we start in our campaign to de-program, de-brainwash, enlighten, and empower the masses?

Have you ever been asking yourself these questions of “how” over and over, only to find doubt and disillusionment? I know I have. The extent of saving the world is overwhelming, if at all possible. Perhaps there is something wrong with the fundamental libertarian idea—the non-aggression principle—since it fails to attract people and liberate them from the chains of ignorance? No, there is not. The problem is all in your head—in your choice of mission.

You are so pigheadedly staying with this vision of yours that you fail to realize you are utterly mistaken. The reason you cannot seem to find the way forward, is that you have taken one step too many in the wrong direction. As a matter of fact, you are suffering

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from the Savior Complex. Why attempt to save the world if you can't even save yourself?

Let's see to the facts: there is no Holy Grail. Another way to put it is to say there is no such thing as "the world" or "society." There are only people; only individuals choosing to interact or associate with other individuals in couples, families, teams, fraternities, labor unions, religious cults and churches, and so on...

This is a matter of course to libertarians. We are, at least, familiar with the wording, but most libertarians fail to realize the meaning of these words. What does it mean, there are only individuals? Well, it means people are fundamentally *not* the same. They can share values, possessions, and neighborhoods, but they are not the same. It means they can have different values, different possessions, and live in different neighborhoods. We realize this, but we do not generally realize this also means there can be no single argument making all other arguments worthless. It is not possible to convince all people of the greatness of the libertarian principles; there are always people willing to sacrifice freedom for something else.

Let's see if we understand the implication of all this correctly through stating the same thing, but from another angle: It is not possible to *make* the world libertarian. One cannot force freedom on others; it would not be freedom but force. One cannot strengthen or empower others through forcing them to make choices; it would be to subject them to *your* will (that they must choose) rather than someone else's. One cannot abolish or lessen power through claiming it for oneself; politics is not a means to achieve freedom from politics.

So you see the devil is not in the details, but in the aim itself. If you sincerely believe there are only individuals, then why do you put so much time and effort into saving "society"? If you believe in the non-aggression principle and that people are entitled to their own opinion, why do you go on and on for hours trying to convince

people *your view* is right? Obviously, you haven't understood the words you so eagerly preach to others.

Sure, it would be nice to live in a "society" that is dedicated to libertarian ideals. But there is no such thing, and in a world of unfriendly States, it wouldn't survive long. Or is your aim *world* salvation? Then you are way out of your depth, my friend. Do you really think you can take on six billion people and hundreds of States? (If you can, then what are you waiting for? Go for it!)

I for one am not able to do it. And seriously, I'm not the least interested. I live for myself first and foremost, and then come my family and friends. I do not care to save the world if I can find freedom for myself and the ones I love without doing it. Why should I? I'm nobody's slave; I do as I please simply because *I* want to. It would be nice to live in a free world, but I don't think it is worth the trouble. I'd rather be free now, on my own, than break free along with millions of strangers 40 or 50 years from now.

Isn't this what individualism is all about? One has to make one's own choices, for oneself and the ones willing to follow. If they do not want the freedom I want, then why the hell should I spend my time and money on making them share my ideals and go with me? I'm no selfless Samaritan or a slave of the peoples; I'm my own.

As libertarians, we need to break free from the collectivist worldview of this Savior Complex. There is no reason to work day and night to liberate people you don't know, never will know, and who sincerely do not appreciate what you are trying to do for them. Why cling to the notion of a homogeneously free society when deep down you do not believe in it?

Think about it, do you really need to escape *every* law and *every* rule that comes with the State package? There are laws that we can support in principle as libertarians, such as prohibiting murder, theft, and other rights-violating actions. There are also laws we can accept even though we do not think them necessary in a freer society, such as making everybody drive on the same side of the road. Why repeal such laws if they do you no harm?

Finding freedom does not necessarily mean abolishing government, but staying out of its reach. If government does not kill or imprison you, steal your property, or forcefully change your behavior—are you then oppressed in real terms? Not really. The most effective way to “break free” is thus to simply avoid those parts of government that you find oppressive. Saving and investing your money offshore is a good start. If you have a constant flow of money never taxed, then you have won back a big part of your life and liberty. Register your car and property with your own offshore foundation in Panama or Costa Rica . Start your own network in the black market to avoid sales tax and regulations—trade with your friends, relatives, neighbors, friends’ friends, etc. Put your business online, registering the site in another name to avoid getting caught. There are many simple tricks to avoid irritating regulations. *Freedom through avoidance.*

It is in your interest to put your time and money where you benefit the most, not somebody else. That usually means you also stop feeding the beast; if so, then it surely must be the right thing to do. And while you’re securing your freedom and future, you inspire others to do the same. If there are many to follow your example, it could eventually bring the State to its knees. But don’t make the State abolishing campaign your main field of work; make it a hobby rather than a priority. Remember, you’re doing this for yourself, not for everybody else.