

Advice from the Trenches: Enemy of the people

Dear C and Dr. B:

The world has really changed since I graduated from high school back in 2018. First, it was the 2016 election, then COVID-19, now the war in Ukraine and the threat of conflict on every side. We have all faced losses - we lost our social freedom to COVID-19, some lost their homes, jobs, or loved ones and we all lost our sense of security and trust when the nation went to war over COVID-19 restrictions.

What I lost was my belief in the inherent good within people. All the insane conspiracy theories on social media and one mass shooting after another in the news - it seems the trend is to hate people we've never met, turn on each other, then grab whatever we can to save ourselves when supplies run short.

I've come to believe we are all a bunch of assholes and it doesn't leave me much hope for the future. Do you see any?

- Hopeless Harry

Dr. B says:

Humans learn through role modeling. People aren't the enemy. People are only the poor saps whose lives are destroyed by divisive politics. The colonialism philosophy that founded this country and is still active today is the real enemy. That "in the name of god, gold and glory" camp crossed the border a long time ago. Look at any country anywhere in the world and you can see how these things led to the conditions that cause people to treat each other poorly and forces them to live in terror for their lives.

They say the arc of justice always swings toward the positive, but I don't see this in evidence. History just keeps repeating.

C says:

What a load of hooey! You know why history keeps repeating, Dr. B? It's because of people. Ideas and philosophical tenets are not the enemy. Colonialism philosophy and the divisive politics that destroy the so-called "poor saps," are all made up of and by people. These things weren't discovered under a rock. They were all generated by people, and the flaw lies in people themselves.

Human nature, all on its own, is capable of corrupting any ideal which is placed in its hands. The struggle for pecking order, territorial control, power... that all comes from people. Look at what happened in the book *Lord Of The Flies* - a group of school boys become isolated together and without the influence of either politics or capitalism, their own nature plays out in a frightening way.

If we can't admit that we are the problem, and stop blaming these huge abstract concepts for our own self-serving behavior, history will indeed keep repeating itself. Sure, let's blame the government for everything, blame the pharmaceutical companies, blame the terrorists - it's a lot easier than blaming ourselves. We are content to gather facts that support our own theories and spar with clever words and theories, but seriously - it's all just blowing hot air.

If there were about 7 billion fewer people on this planet, there'd be 7 billion fewer problems.

The world is too big. Period. And there's too many people in it, with too many different ideas and no way to please everyone. These "vast formless things that shift the scenery to and fro" are there because people can't be trusted to govern themselves. Unfortunately, absolute power corrupts absolutely and we can't trust the people in power either, but it always starts with a person - one whose greed and ego contorts the ideals that launched their own campaign. The bloody cartels and political parties are not run by robots. Russia did not declare war on Ukraine. Vladimir Putin did.

But I am not nearly as pessimistic as Dr. B. Don't lose hope, Harry! The solution also lies with people, and the person it should start with is you. Here's what I suggest - stop living through the news and magazine articles, the podcasts and media messages, and get involved with other people. Do things that you feel good about. You will probably draw like-minded people who want to do some good as well.

Get out of your bloody computer, your news feeds and your second-hand information! Get out in the world. There are still a lot of giving, sharing people out there. Hint: most of them avoid publicity like the plague it is. They have no ambition to become famous or entertain others with their intellect. Every influencer who is influencing you has a thirst for the spotlight or they wouldn't be in it. Think about it.

- Cathren Housley

You can visit Dr. B's blog at drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com