

Serious Play

The Occupy Movement and the Twin Horns of Oppression & Revolution

By Jason Horsley, 2011

For this piece, collected together from recent comments I have made at Reality Sandwich, Facebook, and in dialogue with a protesting pal, I'd like to address what I see as the delusional aspect of the Occupy Movement, and how all social activism only strengthens the structures that are being challenged. This is not necessarily a bad thing, however, except insofar as people set about with specific purpose and results in mind, and so become frustrated and disillusioned. It's the delusional aspect which I perceive as the negative, and not the activism *per se*, which is as valid a way to pass the time as any other (for some people at least). There's a growing belief that the "global revolution" is evidence of a collective shift in consciousness and—taking it to the next "logical" deduction—that it is actually the means *to* it. In my opinion nothing could be further from the truth, for reasons which I will outline as best as I can.

Anonymous is interesting to me in this regard, because Anonymous exists in a shadow realm between the paradigms without obviously belonging to either of them. Actually I would suggest there are three paradigms relevant to this present discussion: 1) the ruling paradigm of money, power, etc. 2) the opposing paradigm of rebellion, resistance, community values and individual expression. 3) the paradigm which I will attempt to describe in this article, a paradigm which perceives the first two paradigms as merely mirror images of one another and therefore as equally obsolete. In my estimation, Anonymous, which exists somewhere between the second and third paradigms, is not causing change, social or otherwise, but merely a surface manifestation of a change that is already happening. Like their inspirational character Guy Fawkes/V, Anonymous works with fireworks, creating a dazzling play of light and shadows that is of no actual consequence, finally. To my mind that inconsequentiality is what makes it all the more pure.

While speaking to Ramsey Dukes about the subject, Ramsey commented on the difference between art and magik: magik is trying to bring about desired results/change, while art is simply creative release of energies, followed by getting to see how those energies bring about change, independent of our will. (In Ramsey's fourfold model of Magik-Art-Religion-Science, magik evolves into art.) The Occupy Movement (at best magik) overlaps with Anonymous (at best art), because some protestors wear masks, and Anonymous encourages and even plans protests. And like Anonymous, the Occupy Movement is a manifestation of change, rather than a catalyst for it. The primary difference is that, unlike Anonymous, my impression is that many or most of the OM participants believe that they are bringing about change, or at least aspiring to do so.

This is a key difference. It is the difference between letting a *zeitgeist* (spirit) move through one (without needing to understand it) and trying to move things oneself towards a desired end. For example, I might be writing this piece in order to persuade others of my point of view. On the other hand, I might simply be using words as a means to see what's moving around inside, and coming through me, without any specific result in mind. In reality, it is a bit of both—how effective this piece is will be the only real determinant of how much my ego is preventing real "play" (and hence communication) from occurring.

Another difference is that between recognizing tyranny, oppression, etc., for what they, without making a value judgment about them, and having a personal issue with them. Ditto writing this piece: if I

recognize the delusional aspect of the Occupy Movement, can I do so without feeling superior to it or seeing it as a “problem” that needs to be fixed? For Anonymous and all those who wish to approach life (including tyranny and oppression) in a similar spirit of play, the global control system is not a problem to be fixed but a worthy opponent in a great game of cosmic ping pong. The difference between the two opponents is that one side knows it's all a game, while the other view it with deadly seriousness. When activists take their “revolution” seriously, I would argue that they are unwittingly joining the side they are opposing, because they are sharing in the same “spirit” with it.

Revolution and tyranny are twin horns of the same demon, and the proof is that, just as physical law demands, resistance makes stronger. Based on the indications of “history” (i.e., prior experience), opposing power structures only reinforces and strengthens those same structures in the long run. As exhibit A for this argument, I present “9/11” and the resulting “war on terror,” the Patriot Act, and the myriad ways in which the US (and global) government used an act of resistance to consolidate its political power, and extend the apparatus of tyranny, the same tyranny which the attack on the twin towers was (allegedly) intended to undermine.

As I see it (and admittedly having no direct experience of the protests or encampments), the Occupy Movement has two purposes. Firstly it is an opportunity for people to get together and connect in a “fun” way that beats getting fucked up on drugs and alcohol. Secondly, it is serving to widen the gulf between the socio-political power structures (and the supposed “elite” behind them, the 1%) and “the people” (the 99%) who are both subject to those structures and, paradoxically, who support them by relying upon them. As evidenced by the recent police backlash, the Occupy Movement acts to further energize the old “us and them” polarity, in both the collective and individual psyche. This is all “positive” enough in terms of enacting the Christian psychodrama of Armageddon. But is that what's really desired here?

It seems to me that the Occupiers actually want to improve their lot, and the lot of the alleged “oppressed,” and here, perhaps, is the problem. I would argue that all of us are equally oppressed regardless of our social conditions, and that to try and improve those conditions by resisting governmental corruption is like rearranging the furniture in a house that is on fire. In which case, my guess is that the children of the revolution are going to be sorely disappointed when they see that the Occupation Movement— by energizing the “enemy”— leads to the exact opposite result to that expected, i.e., to *the concretization of tyranny*.

I would also guess that many of the more conscious participants—on both sides—know this, though I may be wrong about that, since nothing blinds people to the truth so much as do ideals. It does strike me as interesting that, despite how well-versed in esoteric concepts many of the OM-ers are, they appearing to be operating under a relatively naïve, or shallow, interpretation of social change, just as if it were ordinary political structures and corrupt human beings that were running the show, rather than millennia-long collective, ancestral patterns (a.k.a. “demons”) of denial. To resort to a whopping great cliché—no change can occur externally unless it come about as a ripple-down effect of an *internal* shift. Occupying cities is a great diversion from the oppression of our lives, but that makes it more likely to postpone such an internal psychic shift, or “revolution” than bring it about.

To be clear: I am not opposed to the Occupy Movement, or to defying the “system.” It is a collective ego trip, in my opinion, but that isn't meant as a value judgment, because a collective ego trip may be just

what we need right now, as a species. The only thing I am opposed to is delusion, and since I have my hands full getting past my own delusions, the reader may well ask me why I am wasting my time challenging other people's delusions. I would have no good answer to that, except to say that I enjoy challenging other people's delusions. My comments about the Occupy Movement and all the rest are no more meaningful or important than the movement itself. They are also, to a degree, exhortations of my ego, with something deeper and more real moving around underneath them. I will say this: those who believe the Occupy Movement is part of a collective shift do not need to defend it from my "heretical" ideas, because, if they are right, nothing I say will make any difference.

But from my point of view, the whole movement is about improving conditions for individuals (and groups of them), which implies that it's sourced in separative, ego consciousness?, and that those involved are trying to enact a shift externally. As a kind of cathartic theater, it might be (somewhat) effective, but that would depend on recognizing it *as* theater, geared not towards reforming outer structures but towards an internal change in *the participants themselves*. The Occupy Movement is all part of a larger process, for sure, but so is the tyranny, and so is everything else. I'm mostly concerned that a lot of people are going to have their hopes dashed (as previously with Obama) when they realize that the nature of tyranny is that it does not give into pressure. Or at least, it never has before. At the same time, I think it points at much larger delusion. The idea of "human rights" is assumed by the liberal mind-set to be a progressive one. It is a given. But the idea leads inevitably onto criminal rights, animal rights, insect rights, and so on. So where does the concept of rights end? Virus rights? Bacteria rights? Disease rights? Isn't the idea of rights a human/ego-centric concept, one with social and political significance but no wider meaning, because no equivalent in the natural order of existence? Isn't it just another imposition of the human ego on what already is? I would argue that none of us have rights because none of us need rights.

The idea of rights being ego-centric doesn't mean it can be dismissed, however, any more than a symptom of a disease should be dismissed. My point, if any, is that the idea of human rights is part of the problem and not the solution. It stems from a very deeply-embedded idea we have in the West, the idea of entitlement, the idea that *we deserve better*. The only way to argue that we deserve better, however, is to argue that God/the Universe has made a balls up of things because we aren't getting what we want. Most of us feel that way (I know I do); but to turn it into a philosophy and a rationale for social activism is to take it from mere childish pouting into the realm of *hubris*. There's an argument for *hubris*, too, of course, so once again, no value judgment is implied.... But again, if people are protesting because they believe they deserve better, that's a sense of entitlement. According to what logic do we deserve better? The answer is, according to human (egocentric) logic, a logic based on the illusion of being separate from the system, both the little system of government, commerce, and social oppression, and the greater system of life as a whole. To oppose the little system is also to oppose the greater system, to defy the gods, as it were. If we were to free our minds first, mightn't we find that the system of oppression we exist under is exactly the way it is supposed to be, along with everything else? Unless our idea of God is the rather antiquated notion of an outside intelligence lording it over things, then the buck must always stop with divine—the greater intelligence of the whole system—and not at any point before that. To try and blame a system or group or individual for the way things are is tantamount to saying that they/it are separate from the divine, and so they can, and even must, be eliminated for the good of all! To fight for one's personal sovereignty or impose one's idea of what constitutes a good or proper life on to another person or group of people = egotism. To fight for other peoples' right to personal sovereignty = egotism + arrogance? It is true that people seem to be suffering

everywhere, and that it seems like an unnecessary result of a few psychopathic scumbags abusing their power. But a seeming isn't necessarily a reality. If we see someone dying in a gutter, rather than rushing over to help them, isn't it wisest to ask them first if they *want* to be helped? They might be doing a Diogenes and consider our "help" an intrusion. The Occupy Movement is based on value judgments about what constitutes a good society, a positive direction for humans to move in, and at least partially on the assumption that "one utopia fits all." At the same time, the idea of what we need seems to stem largely from a reaction-response to the way things are, i.e., from resistance to an existing way of life deemed to be "unjust" and undesirable. All these occupiers may get along fabulously as long as they have a common foe to oppose and can agree, more or less, on the way things ought to be. But what would happen if that enemy (those old outworn structures) were suddenly gone? If there is a shared need to identify and oppose "the other" (corporate oppression, government corruption, etc.) which is bringing these people together, then if victory did occur, wouldn't they need to find someone or something else to oppose? And wouldn't they be forced to find it within their own ranks?

Once again, I am open to the idea that getting involved in protests may have a liberating effect on the participants (or at least some of them), just as playing a good game of soccer or participating in a theatrical or musical performance can be liberating (and empowering). The obvious question then is, would that still be the case if the participants accepted that the Occupy Movement was futile, in terms of bringing about social change—or even that it was eventually going to have the opposite effect to the one desired? Would the participants still be willing to engage just for the hell of it—for "lulz"? Because that spirit of play—serious play— is the spirit of real change.

As mentioned earlier, some people believe that the Occupy Movement and its other manifestations is an expression of a "collective shift" pertaining to the coming Age of Aquarius, the sign that rules the collective. However, the shadow of Aquarius is (its opposite sign) Leo, which signifies individual sovereignty and self-expression. This is would support my description of the Occupy Movement as a collective ego trip, as an expression of Leo *disguised* as an Aquarian movement. The shadow (delusion) heralds the coming of an objective reality, however, so it is only right if things unfold in this way. What would be a mistake would be to take the shadow for the substance, the hope/illusion for reality. My sense is strong that, if and when a collective shift comes, we won't have anything to do with it, and most of us probably won't even know what hits us. It might be suggested that the Occupy Movement is laying the foundation for such a shift, but I would argue that there is no foundation either possible or needed for such a shift. What there is, perhaps, is a clearing the ground, a razing, not for some utopian edifice to be constructed but for an unknown new life to burst forth, over time, from that charred land. In the meantime, a lot of people are getting their hopes up around the movement, just as they did recently with Obama (OM baa). I would wager it is many of the same people, too. It's well and good for people to get out and engage with each other, and again, it makes a nice change from watching TV or bowling. It's also perhaps a natural expression of "the masses" to revolt, so by all means let them incur the wrath of the powers-that-be and so people can see the iron fist in action and start to understand *the nature of the Beast*. The trouble starts when people begin to take their activism too seriously and invest, both emotionally and psychologically, in some imagined, desired (and desirable) end result. Then they are setting themselves up, not only for disappointment, but for levels of bitterness and rage which they may not be able to deal with (or express constructively, much less creatively). Ironically it is probably such bitterness and (out)rage that got many people out there in the first place; but in the end, I predict it's that same energy which will lead many people to unwittingly join the demon-forces which they are so passionately set against. They will be swallowed by the beast, even as it devours itself.

While Rome burns, people may as well fiddle. All change is good. But what is oppressing us, in my opinion, is not any external structures but rather our own self-importance, our sense of entitlement in the face of a shitty world and a bleak future. It is up to us, as individuals, to let go of that pride so as not to choke on it first. I am fairly sure that, if people managed to let go of their self-importance, they wouldn't *need* to protest or to do anything else besides take care of themselves and those closest to them. And if everyone did that, there'd be no need for mass movements. We might then start to see that our conditions are only and exactly what we need, collectively, that the shift, if it is to come, will happen *via* such conditions and not despite them, and that all any of us needs to do to change our lives is simply *let go*. That's all that any of us *can* do, anyway, and no matter what conditions we are living under—let go and learn to *play*.