

Holden M. Green, From California

(reply to Holden's comment on Prison Hokey Pokey, e6aw
Reply ID)

Hi Holden! I don't know whether this will post as a new blog post or as a comment reply, but I wanted to single you out for your particular comments. I hope you'll see this.

California is a liberal state, but liberals are still statist, and statist are authoritarian by definition, I'd say. If you accept that much, then it's a short step to realize that authoritarians ultimately favor prisons, in one form or another, no matter how "liberal" they are. Reform is a liberal agenda, generally (it's almost semantically incompatible with "conservatism", right?), and while it's nice to try to "make things better," some things just don't need improvement, they need removal — like cancer, toxic waste, and human caging (prisons). Reform implies value and potential, but prison has neither.

You asked my view on European systems. Well, I'm certainly no expert, and I also hate to seem too critical of some of the far more humane systems, but... well, really, what is a "humane" system of imprisonment as punishment? It's a bit like smiling and shaking hands with some great, humanitarian engineer of torture devices... "oh, so you're the one who ensured the wrist and ankle cuffs on the Rack were lined with padding to prevent "unnecessary" trauma, eh? Kudos!" The "unnecessary" suffering of prison implies some "necessary" suffering. And... no. Until groups of people, whether nations or smaller communities, are calling for and implementing non-punitive approaches to harm, we're not likely to see families and schools and all the various interpersonal relationships that people have valuing and modelling and ~~thinking in terms of~~ ^{thinking in terms of} non-punitive modes of living. We won't see personal responsibility for oneself and others on any significant scale until we reject the simple-minded expedient of punishment as a price tag for harmful behavior, and until we recognize that obedience ~~from~~ ^{from} fear of power is not the same as prosocial conscious, empathy, and good will.

As I've mentioned in other recent posts, the mailroom here is out of control and routinely delivers mail weeks and months late. If you'd like to write me directly, that would at least cut the extra 2-3 weeks from the BTB comment process (and we could get lucky, as sometimes mail is actually delivered properly). I'll write as soon as I receive anything, so you aren't left waiting and wondering any longer than necessary. I'd love to hear more of your thoughts!

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