

## **The Betrayal of the Innocent**

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If you want to see something funny (but not in a happy way) ask your dentist or your physician the cost of some procedure they are recommending you do. The gyrations they will go through are amusing – from a certain vantage point that is. They will squirm a bit, make some funny faces, use deprecating body language and say something like, “Oh, that’s up to the girls in the front office, they’re in charge of that. They always get upset if I get involved in that part of things.” But, of course, they do know exactly what the charges will be, for this is the source of their income. They just don’t want to take responsibility for it in front of you. They don’t want to see the look on your face, the impact that their exorbitant charges will make on you. And if you ask the “girls” at the front desk about it, they, of course, will also displace responsibility someplace else. For we live in times in which no one is responsible for what is happening to us.

This is, of course, just the tip of the iceberg. It reveals the true face of the physician/hospital/pharmaceutical industrial complex. It points to the inescapable truth that, as Timothy Snyder commented in his article *What Ails America*: “We would like to think we have health care that incidentally involves some wealth transfer; what we actually have is wealth transfer that incidentally involves some health care.”

These kinds of things often come to my mind. Not only because of my own experiences (current and past) but also because of the volume of emails I receive every week of every month of every year. The emails come because I have written books on the non-pharmaceutical treatment

of the Lyme-complex of infections and of antibiotic resistant infections (and now, Covid-19). I have talked about these things, and a great many more, in articles and interviews, and so people write asking for help. They do so almost always after they have been damaged by their treatment or once their illness has been continually dismissed by the medical system as “all in their heads” or as “anxiety” or “stress.”

The stories I hear are enough to break the heart – every day. They are enough to break the spirit after all these years of hearing them. The woman who was misdiagnosed until the cancer was too far advanced to treat (she told them she was pretty sure it was cancer, they dismissed her concerns because what could she know, and prescribed antiacids). The man who suffered disabling side effects from all the medications he was given (with each new side effect his physicians just prescribed another drug to treat them). The Lyme patient who went bankrupt from her treatment at the Mayo Clinic (which did not help her). The parents whose child was permanently disabled by reaction to a vaccine (which they had been assured was safe). And all the rest of them, year after year after year. All that pain is out there, increasing in intensity each year, in millions and millions of people. And the medical system refuses to see it, refuses to hear it, refuses to see how bad it is, just how many there are who have been harmed and just how enraged they are by what has happened to them.

It is the betrayal of the innocent. And they have a right to be enraged.

Physicians and the hospital industrial complex continually betray the vulnerability that occurs when someone, by reason of severe illness,

entrusts themselves to the care of a stranger. That betrayal, by its nature, breaks the contract that the physician/hospital/pharmaceutical industrial complex has so carefully inculcated in the general population of the United States. Egregiously, the contract has never been true but only when it is broken do people begin to understand that. Only then do they begin to understand that it is and has always been about money, about keeping total control over health care in the United States. For most, trust in medical professionals is never restored. The man behind the curtain stands revealed as what he has always been: a charlatan. (But unlike *The Wizard of Oz* this charlatan has no desire or willingness to take us back to the country of our innocence and thus make up, to some extent, for the betrayal.)

Nearly all physicians refuse to recognize this. They do not realize that because they are part of a group that has engaged in systematic betrayal of the most vulnerable part of millions of human beings that they themselves are complicit in that betrayal. They partake of and gain benefit from a social and monetary structure that is based on a manipulated attachment, a bonding, of the small child in each of us to an outside parental figure who tells us that they will take care of us when we are at our most vulnerable. No matter how well-meaning they are, no matter how well they do their job, this fact does not and cannot change.

So, it should come as no surprise that when a physician does show the kind of caring that the entire profession says it does, but does not, provide that a great deal of repressed anger rises to the surface. There is something that we need from that caring physician. And it is an essential part of our healing. Those of us who have been hurt, damaged,

denigrated, disabled, or bankrupted by the system need, and in fact deserve, for our pain to be heard, to be received, by someone who will actually hear us, by someone who really does care. Because, *physician hear this*: It is *your* colleagues and the system of which you are a part that has made this wound in us. And the wound is not only in our bodies but also in our spirits. It is deep in our hearts, in the deepest and most vulnerable parts of us. *You* are responsible for your colleagues behavior and for the system itself. No matter how you wish to disavow it, you are the face of that system and *you gain* from being part of it, from being the face of it, every day of your life. But you cannot gain from it without also being called to account for its transgressions, without also being responsible for what it has done. And if you refuse to understand this, you *are* the problem no matter how kind or nice you think yourself to be.

I do not know what it will take for medical care in the United States to change. But I do know that it doesn't work the way it is. In the half century that I have watched all these things unfold, the betrayal has only gotten worse, the pain more widespread. Change from the inside (as so many insist is possible) has not, does not, and will not work. There is simply too much money and power involved. Too much social prestige.

Eventually, the pain, the damage, this extortion of the innocent will reach the same proportions that it has in other areas and we the people will finally have had enough. Some breaking point will be reached and payment will come due. Until then, all any of us can do is simply what we can do. I will write my books and my articles and answer emails as best I can as my health and time permits. And as those of us who are activists continue on, as we mature, as we age we develop more fully a

capacity we did not know in our youth – how to sit in the midst of the suffering of the world, of our people, of those who come to us in need without losing ourself.

But that doesn't mean that some days we don't weep, that some weeks our hearts don't break, that some years we don't, every day, feel the rage or the helplessness or the pain that those we do our best to speak for also feel. But we do learn, if we are wise, to step outside the drama triangle, to no longer be ruled by the conceptual grouping of victim, persecutor, and rescuer as the sole descriptive of power relations in life. The misuse of power, the damage it causes to the less powerful is, simply, the way life is. The way it has always been in all times and cultures. We learn, if we are wise, that we do this work solely because it is in us to do it. Nothing more. There is no utopianistic end point that will be reached. No heaven on Earth where there is no more pain or suffering. Nevertheless, it can be lessened.

There are times in every culture that is or has been when there is more kindness, when there is more honorability, when a person's or group's word means something, when it, they, can be trusted. There are times that are better, times when the people of a country find common humanity between themselves, when they actually become one people working together for the common good. Times when they reign in the rich and powerful and the monopolistic. Times when they believe in service to something outside the self. It is for those times that I work and in which I believe. And what is true, even now, is that there are millions of us who work for the better times.

We, as Edward Abbey once put it so well, act as we do because it is within us to: hate injustice, defy the powerful, and speak for the voiceless. And no, we're not going to stop. We're like weeds, you see, no matter what you do, you just can't fucking get rid of us.