

Laughing at Times to Come

The last year has taught me that pretty much whenever I see a news item that Twitter sees fit to fact check, the truth is likely to be the exact opposite of what they say it is. The same is probably true of many other news sources. Just like a garbage dump in the heat and humidity of the summer, the smell of the propaganda is detectable from a mile away.

Another one of these news items was trending on Twitter today. And I laughed.

Don't get me wrong. The tendency to worry or groan or pull my hair out about such lies and propaganda is there—very much so. Like many of you, I find it easy to despair or get discouraged, wondering how to discern truth and where to even find a tiny grain of it in a world that seems overrun with lies.

But the fact that I involuntarily laughed over the latest news bulletin from our American *Pravda* gave me hope, for it is a sign that I am not fearfully dwelling in the clutches of the state.

Anthony Esolen [explains the concept beautifully](#) in the March/April edition of *Chronicles Magazine*. The state, Esolen asserts, does not grant peace and liberty to individuals. Instead, it seeks to stir people up and keep them in a constant state of dependence and fear, for such a mindset is the life-giving blood of the state.

“Spiritual liberty, the inner peace of man with God and his creation, is not in the state's interest,” Esolen writes, “for the state grows by sickness.” Those of us who live in this ever-ballooning state are the patients, kept “in a constant simmering unease, tossing and turning in vain to relieve the sores.” Simmering unease ... like wondering what to believe, or worrying about the latest crisis—whether that be COVID, or

elections, or wars and rumors of wars.

Heaven forbid that in such times of unease we call on God or the structures of family, church, and community that He has established to help us through uncertainties. No, “we call upon the state,” Esolen writes. “We thereby become state-infected and state-infested. Hence do we sick people become our own quacks.”

Esolen fleshes out what this sick state looks like and how it affects us:

The phenomenon works in many and mystifying ways, its wonders to perform. We worry obsessively about elections—following them and shoveling money into them and thereby lending a national stage to the most ambitious and treacherous and aggressively stupid among us. Do we have cause to worry? Of course we do. The state makes sure of it. The progressives make sure of it. All interminably unsettled people make sure of it.

But the worry is all to the engrossment of the state. Whether our side wins or loses, our worry is the blood of the state’s heart. So what if the state’s diagnoses are full of lies and contradictions? All the more to worry you, my dear, to jigger our minds by controlling the language we try to think with.

There are many good people in this world trying to live upright lives who also have a major flaw: they worry. They tell themselves that they care deeply about the problems in the world and that they want to see those problems turn around and change for the better. I know, because I am often one of the worriers. But sometimes I laugh instead, effortlessly free of the web of fear, thanks to certain silly Twitter trends. And thanks to Esolen’s essay, I see now that worry is simply a trap, sucking us more deeply into the ever-growing vortex of the state.

If we truly want to make a difference in our culture, then we will stop worrying. We will [“laugh at the days to come,”](#)

focusing not on the troubles in the world and how they could consume us but on “the inner peace that comes from man with God and his creation.” That peace, as Esolen implies, is untouchable by the state. And it vanquishes worry.

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