

Corruption and Capture (as Symptoms of Collapse)

by Bill Herbst

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The collapse of civilization now underway is often difficult to recognize. We may have the disconcerting but vague feeling that it's happening, but understanding exactly how is elusive. Sometimes, our observations are blunt and worrisome. For instance, empty shelves in the grocery store are an indication of disruptions in the retail supply chain. Still, many other manifestations of civilizational collapse are not nearly as obvious. Some are shrouded in mystery.

One such indicator is the changing nature of corruption and capture. In more ordinary times (meaning times of relative stability and better social health), corruption is a manifestation that occurs in only a small minority of situations and is limited in scope. That sort of fraud falls within the category of "one bad apple can spoil the entire barrel." Discovered early on and removed in time, that one rotting apple won't spoil the entire stock of good, ripe apples. Undiscovered, however, the rot will spread and quickly ruin the whole barrel, basket, or bag.

Damage to the entire stock of something caused by the corruption of a small number of its elements is called *capture*. In economic terms, this is often used in the compound phrase "regulatory capture." The meaning is that government is set up to provide regulation that maintains the public good in the face of divergent corporate self-interest. Lobbying is, generally speaking, the act of trying to influence the government to move away from the greater common good in the direction of favoring whatever specific business or industry is represented by the lobbyist. Too often, this becomes the fox guarding the hen house. When the lobbying goes beyond one particular bill and gets generalized to undercut an entire regulatory institution, that's called regulatory capture. For instance, when the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) fails time and again to do its job of keeping the stock market on the up-and-up, that's regulatory capture. When the FDA does the bidding of Big Pharma again and again, that's regulatory capture.

In the culture and society we now live in, regulatory capture is commonplace, so much so that it has become the norm. This means that corruption is no longer a minority event. Rather than one rotten apple spoiling the barrel, now an entire barrel of rotten apples are routinely sold to the public as normal and healthy.

What follows regulatory capture in the widening circle of malfeasance is the corruption of many associated institutions that may technically have little or nothing to do with a specific industry, but play a role in shaping public opinion about those industries. A serious example of this expanding corruption is the mainstream media complicity in supporting false narratives and discouraging truer narratives from consideration by disparaging even their discussion. In the past (meaning the 20th century), major newspapers such as the New York Times or Washington Post and radio/television media such as National Public Radio (NPR), MSNBC, and CNN could be counted on to provide relatively balanced coverage. Not any more. These and many other mainstream media companies that purport to provide "journalism" are now effectively lobbyists for specific narratives that are too often fraudulent and utterly biased in favor of whatever privileged, pre-existing elite is currently in power.

An example of this is the "Russiagate" scandal that dominated coverage of MSNBC during the Trump administration, yet which turned out to be totally false, simply a manufactured narrative. This emerged out of Trump Derangement Syndrome, a disorder that remains epidemic among Democratic Party "liberals" to this day. Is Trump an asshole? Of course he is. Is Trump the sole or even main source of all our troubles? Hardly. And yet, Trump Derangement Syndrome plays right into the now general corruption of all our American institutions by supporting the belief that Trump must be taken down and punished regardless of how we do it and at whatever cost to our future. If we have to lie to get Trump, then so be it, and if taking Trump down utterly destroys any hope for reuniting the American public, well, too bad. It's worth that just to see Trump suffer.

Another example of Corruption and Capture has been the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic. Right from the start in early 2020, the "official" narratives put forth were damn near hysterical in their fear-mongering: "*Be afraid. Be VERY afraid.*" On top of that red flag, the government-backed media narrative embraced the bizarre notion of the mRNA vaccines as the ONLY permitted remedy, which is precisely what Big Pharma wanted. Why? Because billions of dollars in profits were at up for grabs. Rather than going through the lengthy and exhaustive process of testing these new and radical vaccines for safety and effectiveness, they were rushed to market via the legal maneuver of Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).

A precondition for granting an EUA was that the vaccines be the *only* viable solution. So, existing and inexpensive drugs, such as Hydroxychloroquine and Ivermectin, which might have been used to minimize COVID's lethality were not merely denied, but excoriated. Ivermectin was declared loudly to be "horse dewormer," implying that anyone who supported its use for treating COVID was a fool and an idiot. This nonsense aligned perfectly with the greedy profit motives of Big Pharma. To increase pressure on the public to submit to mass vaccination, deaths from COVID were dramatically overcounted. Also, those who remained unvaccinated for one reason or another were vilified ruthlessly, accused of everything from selfishness to lack of patriotism.

The wider Corruption and Capture occurred with the assent of “authorities” from every associated discipline, organization, and institution. Those “experts” all chimed in willingly in strong agreement with the approved narrative. Think back to 2020 and 2021. How many scientists, doctors, or bureaucrats stepped up to the plate courageously to say, *“Wait a minute. We need to slow down and investigate this whole pandemic before we go off half-cocked, put billions of dollars into a few people’s pockets, and run yet another mass experiment on the American public.”* Damned few. No, the fix was in right from the get-go. To publicly defy the massively corrupt scheme quickly became tantamount to asking for serious damage to one’s reputation, along with possible career ruin as well as probable loss of income.

Yet another example is the War in Ukraine. This war has been painted in the U.S. narrative as straightforward. It was simple Russian aggression from that devil Putin against poor little Ukraine. In response, “We support Ukraine” banners sprung up like mushrooms, proliferating throughout America. And Congress went right to work providing huge sums of money. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, we’ve sent Ukraine (so far) \$3.9 billion in humanitarian aid, \$26.4 billion in financial aid, and a whopping \$46.6 billion in military aid. That military aid covers a staggeringly broad range of services and supplies — infantry arms/equipment, air defenses (including air-to-ground missiles, manned aircraft, and explosive or surveillance drones), coastal defenses, communications/radar, satellite services, artillery, tanks/armored carriers, and ground support vehicles. Wow. All told our aid comes to a whopping \$77 billion.

I’m reminded of the apocryphal quote that was attributed (probably incorrectly) to Republican Senator Everett Dirksen from way back when in the late-1950s: *“A billion here, a billion there. Pretty soon it starts to add up to real money.”* Whether or not the quote is true, it’s a good joke.

You may or may not agree with the examples I’ve presented here. My point is that, however we slice it, we’re no longer living in “normal” times. Collapse is underway and getting fairly advanced. And part of what indicates that is the expansion of corruption from a limited occurrence into a general condition of institutional life in America. We might generalize that assumption all the way down to individuals being more corrupt than ever before, but I’ll refrain from trying to make that case. I’d like to think that a majority of Americans are probably still well-meaning individuals who try to live an honest life. I can’t be certain that’s true, but I hope so.

Our institutions, however, are clearly fucked. They’ve been heading down that road for a long time, at least 40 years and perhaps much longer, and now they’ve arrived at their destination — corrupted, uncaring, and screwed. I’m pretty sure that what I’m about to close with will sound harsh to some readers,

but here it is: *Anyone who doesn't know this is either part of the corruption of living in a deluded fantasy.*

So, we have old truisms dying hard deaths. Here's one: "*Trust the experts.*" Oh yeah? Sorry. Too many of the experts have succumbed to the wave of self-serving corruption. Here's another: "*Follow the science.*" OK, that's all well and good, as long as "science" doesn't mean some false consensus of acceptable belief. Science is about falsifying theories, which requires ongoing challenge and open debate, but the way that phrase — "follow the science" — is typically used is as simply another way of saying "trust the experts," with the additional covert instruction to "shut the fuck up" thrown in for good measure.

The old adage to evaluate anything you see or hear by "considering the source" has never been truer, more applicable, or more crucial to practice every day. Be damned sure that whichever authorities you seek out, listen to, and believe have their heads screwed on straight. Be especially careful that those authorities haven't been corrupted by the tsunami-like wave of collapse that's making a mockery of everything society once held dear.