

Why not Trump?

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If one blows all the smoke away, one is left with the obvious question: *Why not Trump?*

Trump's claim to the Presidency is two-fold: that he's a successful billionaire businessman; and that he's a political outsider. His political opponents must dispute both these claims. But Trump is as much a billionaire and as much a successful businessman and as much a political outsider as anyone else.

Trump says he's fighting against a "rigged system." No one can deny that the system is rigged.

Trump is opposed by virtually the entire mainstream political establishment, Republican and Democrat, and by the entire mainstream news media, conservative and liberal alike. And yet he could win. That says something. It says that there is something there.

Trump has successfully run against and seeks to overthrow the established Republican 1980s-era "Reagan Revolution" coalition of neoliberals, neoconservatives, Strict Construction Constitutionalist conservatives and evangelical Christian fundamentalists — against their (always uneasy) alliance as well as against all of its component parts.

It is especially remarkable that such vociferous opposition is mounted against such a moderate political figure as Trump, who until not long ago was a Centrist moderate-conservative Democrat, and is now a Centrist moderate-conservative Republican — running against a moderate-conservative Democrat.

Trump claims that he is the "last chance" for change. This may be true.

Indeed, it is useful to treat all of Trump's claims as true — and all of those by his adversaries as false. For when Trump lies, still, his lies tell the truth.

When Trump's opponents tell the truth they still lie.

When Trump appears ignorant of the ways of the world, he expresses a wisdom about the status quo. The apparent "wisdom" of the status quo by contrast is the most pernicious form of ignorance.

For example, Trump says that the official current unemployment rate of 5% is a lie: there are more than 20% out of work, most of whom have stopped seeking employment altogether. It is a permanent and not fluctuating condition. Trump points out that this is unacceptable. Mainstream economists say that Trump's comments about this are not false but "unhelpful" because nothing can be done about it.

The neoliberal combination of capitalist austerity with post-1960s identity politics of "race, gender and sexuality" that is the corporate status quo means allowing greater profits — necessitated by lower capitalist growth overall since the 1970s — while including more minorities and women in the workforce and management. Trump is attacking this not out of "racism" or "misogyny" but against the lowered expectations of the "new normal."

When Trump says that he will provide jobs for "all Americans" this is not a lie but *bourgeois ideology*, which is different.

The mendacity of the status quo is the deeper problem.²

For instance, his catch-phrase, "Make America Great Again!" has the virtue of straightforward meaning. It is the opposite of Obama's "Change You Can Believe In" or Hillary's "Stronger Together."

These have the quality of the old McDonald's slogan, "What you want is what you get" — which meant that you will like it just as they give it to you — replaced by today's simpler "I'm loving it!" But what if we're not loving it? What if we don't accept what Hillary says against Trump, "America is great already"?

When Trump says "I'm with you!" this is in opposition to Hillary's "We're with her!" — Hillary is better for that gendered pronoun?

Trump promises to govern "for everyone" and proudly claims that he will be "boring" as President. There is no reason not to believe him.

Everything Trump calls for exists already. There is already surveillance and increased scrutiny of Muslim immigrants in the "War on Terror." There is

¹ See my June 22, 2016 "P.P.S. on Trump and the crisis in the Republican Party," amendment to my "The Sandernistas: Postscript on the March 15 primaries," *Platypus Review* 85 (April 2016), available on-line at: <<http://platypus1917.org/2016/03/30/the-sandernistas/#pps>>.

² See Hannah Arendt, "Lying in Politics," *Crises of the Republic* (New York, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1969): "A characteristic of human action is that it always begins something new. . . . In order to make room for one's own action, something that was there before must be removed or destroyed. . . . Such change would be impossible if we could not mentally remove ourselves. . . . and *imagine* that things might as well be different from what they actually are. . . . [T]he deliberate denial of factual truth — the ability to lie — and the capacity to change facts — the ability to act — are interconnected; they owe their existence to the same source: imagination."

already a war against ISIS. There is already a wall on the border with Mexico; there are already mass deportations of “illegal” immigrants. There are already proposals that will be implemented anyway for a super-exploited guest-worker immigration program. International trade is heavily regulated with many protections favoring U.S. companies already in place. Hillary will not change any of this. Given the current crisis of global capitalism, international trade is bound to be reconfigured anyway.

One change unlikely under Hillary that Trump advocates, shifting from supporting Saudi Arabia to détente with Russia, for instance in Syria — would this be a bad thing?

But everything is open to compromise: Trump says only that he thinks he can get a “better deal for America.” He campaigns to be “not a dictator” but the “negotiator-in-chief.” To do essentially what’s already being done, but “smarter” and more effectively. *This* is shocking the system?

When he’s called a “narcissist who cares only for himself” — for instance by “Pocahontas” Senator Elizabeth Warren — this is by those who are part of an elaborate political machine for maintaining the status quo who are evidently resentful that he doesn’t need to play by their rules.

This includes the ostensible “Left,” which has a vested interest in continuing to do things as they have been done for a very long time already. The “Left” is thus nothing of the sort. They don’t believe change is possible. Or they find any potential change undesirable: too challenging. If change is difficult and messy, that doesn’t make it evil. But what one fears tends to be regarded as evil.

Their scare-mongering is self-serving — self-interested. It is they who care only for themselves, their way of doing things, their positions. But, as true narcissists, they confuse this as caring for others. These others are only extensions of themselves.

Trump says that he “doesn’t need this” and that he’s running to “serve the country.” This is true.

Trump’s appeal is not at all extreme — but it is indeed extreme to claim that anyone who listens to him is beyond the boundaries of acceptable politics. The election results in November whatever their outcome will show just how many people are counted out by the political status quo. The silent majority will speak. The only question is how resoundingly they do so. Will they be discouraged?

Many who voted for Obama will now vote for Trump. Enough so he could win.

This leads to the inescapable conclusion: Anti-Trump-ism is the problem and obstacle, not Trump.

The status quo thinks that change is only incremental and gradual. Anything else is either impossible or undesirable. But really the only changes they are willing to accept prove to be no changes at all.

This recalls the character in Voltaire’s novel *Candide*, Professor Pangloss, who said that we live in “The best of all possible worlds.” No one on the avowed “Left” should think such a thing — and yet they evidently do.

There is significant ambivalence on the “far Left” about opposing Trump and supporting Hillary. A more or less secret wish for Trump that is either kept quiet or else psychologically denied to oneself functions here. There is a desire to punish the Democrats for nominating such an openly conservative candidate, for instance, voting for the Greens’ Jill Stein, which would help Trump win.

The recent Brexit vote shows that when people are given the opportunity they reject the status quo. The status-quo response has been that they should not have been given the opportunity.

Finding Trump acceptable is not outrageous. But the outrageous anti-Trump-ism — the relentless spinning and lying of the status quo defending itself — is actually not acceptable. Not if any political change whatsoever is desired.

In all the nervous hyperventilation of the complacent status quo under threat, there is the obvious question that is avoided but must be asked by anyone not too frightened to think — by anyone trying to think seriously about politics, especially possibilities for change:

Why not Trump?

For which the only answer is: To preserve the status quo.

Not against “worse” — that might be beyond any U.S. President’s control anyway — but simply for things as they already are.

We should not accept that.

So: *Why not Trump?* | **P**

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