

CANCER CAPITALISM: Humanity's Evolution or Destruction. Regaining Social Control Over the "Real Economy"

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REGAINING THE REAL ECONOMY FROM THE CANCER SYSTEM:

THE CHOICE SPACE FOR HUMANITY'S EVOLUTION OR DESTRUCTION

by John McMurtry

In Nature, rights and obligations do not exist. The right is to the stronger, and no obligations confine what is seized or destroyed. Yet what is not seen by those affirming the 'right of the stronger' is that *few or no beings survive in Nature whose functions do not contribute to their wider life-host*.

Scientific ecology has made this clear over many years, but it is a theme of understanding that goes back to the *Tao-te Ching* over 2500 years ago. It provides a natural basis for understanding human rights and obligations – a life-grounded *ecology of justice* at the human level. To put the matter boldly, the same logic of the italicised law can be applied to the human level in rights terms.

Rights and obligations are yoked as self survival and function for the life-host are yoked in Nature – but at a higher level where rules regulate instead of natural laws of blind evolution. At the conscious level of evolved social justice, the peck-order, leave-to-die and predation system of Nature are superseded. Even in Nature, the young are protected, fed and taught around the clock by the lives of their mothers in mammalian and bird species – a still instinctual anticipation of the human ascension to morality and justice.

In classical and neo-classical market philosophy, not even pre-human obligation to be human exists. As Adam Smith says in a little-known overview of the market's supply-demand system, "among the inferior ranks of people the scantiness of subsistence can set limits to the further multiplication of the human species; and it can so in no other way than by destroying a great part of the children which their fruitful marriages produce".^[11] The savagery of the brutes is surpassed by a ruling mechanism without natural beauty or fighting chance. Masses are entrapped within the blindly turning wheels of an indifferently homicidal system. This is why market-capitalist ideology has been so long bent on assimilating the system to natural laws. It drapes the monstrous mechanism in a macro alibi of 'natural struggle for existence.'

Evolution of Humanity by Rules of Life-Enabling Economy and Justice

Notwithstanding the homicidal logic of the ruling market system and doctrine, the human order supersedes the natural system. This is why even with the unprecedented capitalist order of pecuniary selfishness without limit as good for all, the irrepressible impulse to identify beyond one's skin never dies in the face of human life being broken. This is the inner message of Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* and Marx's inner inspiration. He cannot bear the capitalist system's oppression, and argues it must fall by raising its worker victims to inevitable and successful revolution

In any case, all social order ultimately consists in the rules or rule-systems societies live by. For life-value understanding, in turn, rights for individuals depend on obligations fulfilled to the life-hosts that sustain them at social and natural levels. Just social rules systems can thus replace absolute rights of market property and trade structured to mass human sacrifice. But the issue is not determined by laws, as Marx thought in unwitting abdication to scientism. Societies in one way or another decide how they live by the rule-structures they raise and enforce, and the range of possibility given by natural laws within which they must function to survive allows for vastly different and opposed outcomes. Think of economic-system rules in the 1970's compared to now and how much they have changed. It is nonsense to claim something other than human beings made the changes.

The rights-obligations structure of society is life-blind until it is ordered to enable the lives of all its members by the greatest possible provision of universal life goods each requires to flourish as human. This is the *life-value ecology of rights* which civil commons development has long been governed by beneath principled attention and understanding – precisely what the globalising private money-value disorder predatorily attacks. Wherever this system is not subordinated to civil authority as an instrumental mechanism of life goods provision (e.g., as efficient machine manufacturing and price mechanism within life-coherent constraints), it reverts to this predatory throwback rule. Without social recognition and regulation of this predatory logic, this system can – and typically does – blindly destroy and despoil human and natural life support systems to maximise the private returns of its money-sequence system as an end-in-itself. When in opposition to this life-blind growth, for example, the Council of Canadians or the Right to Food movement of India stands instead for universal provision of these life goods on the basis of a prior public establishment of a National Health Act and Public Distribution System – the latter struggling against private-take norms at all levels to achieve a “universal public distribution of food as a life-saver for half of India's children suffering from malnutrition” – we observe the civil commons in action in both institutional and active-citizen forms.

Progressive or Regressive Meta Pattern of History?

If we revisit the universal life goods defined in this study, we will be able to further find long-term movements of this instituted and advancing kind operating beneath theoretical connection of them, but recognised by life-value theory as a meta pattern of history not yet conscious of its ultimate meaning. Because conceptions of human well-being and justice have long been decoupled from life-ground requirements – from the biophysical world itself, from human needs and their criterion, and from the organizing principles of providing the life means without any of which people are oppressed – no theory of right or justice or common interest has yet grounded in this ultimate common life interest and foundation. While opposed on the surface, “conservative”, “libertarian”, “liberal” and “communitarian” schools of theory share these blinkers in different ways. Each glimpses some dimension of the civil commons, but never its organising idea and unifying life substance. Thus the very

vocation of human evolution is missed.

When the world's richest men like Bill Gates and Warren Buffett today try to organise their number to give away most of their wealth to social causes where human life is clearly at risk and in need of intervention – for example, malaria in the majority world where there is little market demand to generate private investment for maximal profit – we can see this human vocation peeking through the ruling disorder. Yes, we may be rightly be concerned about their tax write-offs and private-foundation powers, as well as the token nature of this enterprise affecting a tiny segment of the deadly global injustice in isolated spheres. Life-value analysis at the system level recognises that only civil commons formations backed by public funding and universal life-need programs can work at a social level and in the long term. Yet it also recognises an important shift occurring – that those best at the private money-sequence game realise that something is wrong and must be responded to. This is the human vocation expressed even by them.

Beneath such positive symptoms, nonetheless, life-value understanding insists on the deep-structure issue – that society's regulation to secure and provide life goods otherwise in short supply, *or* its system failure to do so, is what ultimately matters. The rules by which people live decide whether a society is well or ill, and whether it rises or falls in the long run. It recognises that the rules by which its members govern themselves form the moving line between healthy societies and diseased ones: between the well-being and the ill-being of societies and communities across time, place and cultures. Life-and-death implications are thus always built into governing rule systems. They determine whether the human vocation and civil commons are repressed or enabled to develop. Herein lies the ultimate choice-space of universal life-value versus private money-value – the ultimate value issue of the human race's evolution.

Beneath endless diversions within the private price and commodity system, the turn of human society one way or the other has in fact already occurred. The predatory money-sequence system grows in nano-global self-multiplication to threaten all life-systems and values masked as prosperity and freedom. The deciding line of rights-obligation structure is a choice path between these two. It can continue to be mounting econo-ecological disaster by money-sequence self-multiplications in which the supreme right is private profit with no accountability of its invasive growths to life requirements at any level. *Or* it can re-set the rules towards a life-valuing order of provision of universal life necessities for all and accountability to social and ecological life support systems as the regulating logic of human development. From this life-grounded choice follow the turning points required for a recovered economy – a public credit and banking system and life-protective rules written into trade treaties.

The Corporate-State War Against Human Evolution

At the present the choice space itself is so closed at the U.S. and E.U. levels as to appear a terminal cancer of economic organisation – as I explain in my forthcoming second edition of *The Cancer Stage of Capitalism*. Whatever the results are in fact, however, they will be a man-made construction at every moment of repressed and conscious choice path.

It is not as if we do not know life-value logic and measure in our own lives. Yet the system has run far beyond society's control and knowledge of its workings. It destroys the life-world by its nature. Its ruling global corporate conglomerates are, in fact, lavishly subsidized and armed-force defended by states to pollute the world at every level, draw down its non-

renewable resources, competitively disemploy and underpay workers across cultures, systematically shirk public tax obligations and run down public infrastructures, destroy the habitat of species, and so on. There is no mystery as to why, although no-one says it in public. *Every* vector of global life-system depredation is corporately driven by roaming money-profit “investors” whose rights are the sole rights recognised in trade and investment treaties, and which governments are now structured to ensure even if they produce nothing – as with the ruling big banks which governments endlessly save at the rising life costs of their peoples.

Such cancerous behavior is not what any sane individual would or could do in person. Not even corporations acknowledge this is what they do, but insist in every ad on the opposite of their serving people’s lives. The human vocation comes out one way or another. But the corporate-person system in fact regulates against life by corporate rights which *compel* private money-sequencing as their sole obligation.¹² Its meta program over the last 30 years in particular has been counter-revolution against the life-enabling regimes developed since the Depression and the Nazi machine. While “economic efficiency and growth” are always the justification of the now ruling system, the justification is absurd since it wastes many times more life goods than all previous systems put together and increasingly grows only ruling money sequences. It is in fact the greatest dis-economy in history, but requires life-value diagnosis to reveal it.

Recovering the Real Economy in Principle and Fact

Whether a rules system produces and stewards universal life goods with non-waste or depredates them for private profit and commodities is what matters for sustainability – but life-value standards alone re-ground reason to the life coherent framework of meaning and value required.

Goods mean life goods, not any priced commodity which may be bad for ecological and human life. *Necessity* means what is needed by the lives of human persons, not the demand of what those with money want to buy from corporate persons. *Supply* is not excluded to priced commodities for profit, but provision of human life goods by all means – civil commons, ecosystem services and womens’ unpaid work included. *Productivity* is not measured by ever more manufacture, transport and sale of profitable commodities by loot-and-pollute methods at lower money costs, but productive gains in life goods produced and secured for citizens and peoples through time.

The human vocation of life-value understanding and furtherance recognizes all this as self-evident. It is what conscious and life-conscious human beings already do in their personal lives as the inner logic of their right-obligation code – the life value code of growing life thought, felt being and action into more coherently inclusive ranges of life across time. At the macro level, it is what the civil commons infrastructures of societies evolve through generational time. All legitimate rights are ultimately to the goods that protect and enable human life, the true logic of economic demand at the same time. These rights, in turn, are the only legitimate basis of obligation – to contribute to them consistently with their provision, the true logic of economic supply. This is the human vocation in its defining principles of social justice and economic organisation at once within a unifying life-value frame.

Critical economic and social-justice theory begins to comprehend this logic of real economy and life-value right and obligation, but does not yet have the life-good criteria to ground

soundly underneath the measure of private money demand created and controlled by private debt issue and private price-for-profit. Meanwhile growing corporate-person commodities, profit and bank-debt repayment have become the ruling goal of global governments. In these ways, global corporate-state and banking axes have blindly led the world to economic as well as human-rights reversal – *steeply shorter rather than greater supply of human life goods for the great majority, more life-value inefficiency/waste and life-capital loss than ever before, longer hours of toil and more life insecurity than before, and more throughput and sink loads than can be biophysically carried by the terrestrial life system through generational time.*

On the ecological plane of species survival by species contribution to the natural life host, on the social justice plane of right-obligation due to provide for a human life for each, and on the economic plane of productive efficiency and non-waste, it is catastrophically deranged in objective fact, and must be re-ordered to life coherence. The problem has been that a pervasive system of misrepresentation – propaganda or public relations – has been fatally successful in blocking human recognition of the disorder. It is instructive in this condition to consider the world of life itself as in a global war in which the enemy has not yet been recognised.

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