



The body of economic theory known as 'social credit' was studied across the world in the inter-war years of the 1920s and 1930s, as ordinary men and women struggled to understand how it was that the world could afford the waste and horror of war. The Social Credit movement was supported by leading figures in the arts, sciences, the church, politics and social activism, all of whom presented the case for peace based upon social justice and environmental sustainability.

What is physically possible  
and socially desirable  
must be financially possible

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*The Social Artist* is a quarterly journal dedicated to breaking the boundaries between Christian Social teaching, Anthroposophical Social Renewal, and the institutional analysis of money as presented by the Social Credit movement.

# The Social Artist

Sufficiency

Commons

Home

Autumn 2017

# The SOCIAL ARTIST

(incorporating The SOCIAL CREDITER)

## THE JOURNAL OF THE SOCIAL CREDIT SECRETARIAT

Quarterly Review for Economic Democracy

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### Contents

Editorial		41
Silence is a Commons	Ivan Illich	43
Capitalist Dynamics	Martin Parker	47
The Contemporary Relevance of Clifford Hugh Douglas	Frances Hutchinson and Brian Burkitt	51
Manifesto of the Irish Social Credit Party		53
Why the rise of the robots could allow humans to flourish again	Giles Fraser	55
Making a House a Home	Mercedes Jaureguibeitia	56
Reviews		57

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Social Credit literature currently available in print or online.

Over the century (virtually) since Clifford Hugh Douglas first put pen to paper, a vast literature on the subject of Social Credit has appeared in print. Douglas' own works were translated into many languages, and most of his books can still be bought over the internet.

*The Political Economy of Social Credit and Guild Socialism*  
 Frances Hutchinson and Brian Burkitt, (2005)  
 £12.99

*Social Credit: Some Questions Answered*  
 Frances Hutchinson £3

*The Grip of Death: A study of modern money, debt slavery and destructive economics*  
 Michael Rowbotham £18

*Understanding the Financial System: Social Credit Rediscovered*  
 Frances Hutchinson (2010) £15

*What Everybody REALLY Wants to Know About Money*  
 Frances Hutchinson £12

*Asses in Clover* (Fictional dystopia)  
 Eimar O'Duffy (2003) £11

*This Age of Plenty A new conception of economics: Social Credit*  
 Louis Even (Pilgrims of Saint Michael)

### The Social Artist

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being is the main protagonist in a tale of horrors which begins with the promise of perpetual growth and ends, well, we know not exactly where but it doesn't look good. Raworth's suggestion? Change the narrative; tell a different story to see whether it can lead us to a different reality.

As the title indicates Raworth's counter-narrative unfolds in the form of seven proposals. The first captures perfectly the extent to which the eminently reasonable has become the radical in today's economics: what if, instead of starting with theories, economists took 'humanity's long-term goals' as their basis and then worked out how best to achieve them? Could we let go of our obsession with raising GDP for its own sake, and strive toward balance where the ultimate aim is sufficiency for every human being within the means of the natural world? Could we cure our market tunnel vision and allow for natural resources, unpaid work in the household, human rights and human relationships to re-emerge as central factors in economic life? Could we shatter the myth that inequality is inevitable and place just distribution of wealth at the heart of our economic design? To these and many more provoking questions Raworth's answer is a resounding yes; what can be imagined can be accomplished. Raworth is keen to emphasise that pictures are as powerful as stories when it comes to shaping our understanding of the world. Hence the image of 'the doughnut' to portray her core vision. One circle represents the outer 'ecological

ceiling' beyond which we risk critical planetary degradation, and a second concentric circle represents the inner 'social foundation of wellbeing' which, should we fall into the middle, entails critical human deprivation. Living somewhere between these limits – learning to thrive without growth – thus ought to be the goal of 21<sup>st</sup>-century economics.

Raworth uses imagery, storytelling and theatre as well as facts and figures to get her point across, making her book a highly accessible and stimulating introduction to some very important economic ideas. Perhaps its most valuable message is that the psychology of economics must be tackled head on, that it is impossible to practically and technically transform economics to suit the 21<sup>st</sup>-century without first transforming our thinking. As an 'establishment' academic (working for Oxford University, Oxfam and the United Nations) Raworth's effort to bring some heart and some sense to a discipline that has lost both is commendable. The book provides a set of practical tools with which to address the crucial social and ecological issues of the day.

Maria Lyons

Maria Lyons is founder of the Camphill Research Network, which collates, disseminates and promotes research related to Camphill and other intentional communities. For more details or to join the network please visit [www.camphillresearch.com](http://www.camphillresearch.com) or contact [maria.lyons@camphillresearch.com](mailto:maria.lyons@camphillresearch.com).

<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Threefolding: A Social Alternative*. Translated by Rudolf Lissau. London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1980.

# Editorial

It's a gamble! With the baby due on the first day of the school year, Mum returns to her teaching post so that her 'maternity leave' will extend over the school holidays next year. She will have a whole, glorious year to enjoy being with baby before economic reality sets in and she must return to work to pay the bills. Currently, the care of infants and young children, during those vital first years, is determined according to the dictates of finance upon their parents. Infants are moved from place to place and person to person – dad, grandparents, child minders and professional nurseries – according to considerations other than the intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual needs of the child.

From very early on in the lives of infants today, the money system dictates priorities. Although all concerned do the best they can to cater for the child's needs under the circumstances, this is not a healthy state of affairs. The emotional needs of child and parents are placed second to financial considerations. Moreover, the affective needs of carers may often be out of synchronisation with the needs of the child when the time comes to part or to meet again. The infant requires a certain type of consistency in care that cannot be supplied piecemeal, according to the dictates of the clock. Here we have yet another elephant in

the room – (the world is full of them at the moment). From the birth of their first child onwards, the vast majority of parents find themselves caught up in a series of impossible choices about where they want to be and how they will spend their time.

The priority is the need for money, to pay the mortgage or rent necessary to keep a roof over the family, to buy food, clothing and fuel, to afford meals out and holidays to wind down. A further necessity has become the car to get to work to earn the money to keep a roof over the head ... And so it goes on. Before they know what's hit them, many a family faces meltdown, with unpayable debts and emotional turmoil. In short, children need more than mums – working or not working. They need a whole village. And parents need a great deal more than parental 'leave' from service to the money economy on terms dictated by finance. ...

Parents are trained to work *for money* to pay for a home and the rest of the *material necessities* of life that will enable them to turn up at the workplace ready for work. But these are all secondary to human existence. What it is to be human is to be members of a family, with good friends, good health and above all a purpose in life – a passion

for music, gardening, literature, art, poetry, caring, craft, travel or teaching. Some sense of responsibility to the wider community of people and the natural world is essential for life to have meaning. But the system is so weighted against choice that the vast majority find themselves taking the best job they can – just for now, hoping to muddle through somehow. As the strains on the very fabric of society and ecological sustainability of the planet become daily more obvious, it would seem good to reorganise our priorities. Change will not come from the power elite at the top of the pyramid. It can only come from below. But that requires a political will, a general awareness of what the real issues are, as opposed to the nonsense served up as political economy in the schools and colleges of the world. There could be no better starting point than a book published in 1998, but as relevant today as when first published twenty years ago. The debt slavery, destructive economics scenario is explored and explained by Michael Rowbotham in *The Grip of Death*.

### **THE GRIP OF DEATH:**

**A study of modern money, debt slavery and destructive economics**

Michael Rowbotham

This lucid and original account of where our money comes from explains why most households and businesses are so heavily in debt. Exploding more myths than any other book to date, it is all about subjects very close to home: mortgages, building societies and banks, food and farming, transport, worldwide poverty and what's on the supermarket shelf. It

explains:

**why** virtually all the money in the world economy has been created as debt: why only 3% of UK money exists as 'legal tender'; and why in a world reliant on money created as debt, we are kept perpetually short of it.

**how and why** mortgages are responsible for almost two-thirds of the total money stock in the UK and 80% in the US.

**why** consumers can't get quality products.

**why** business and corporate debt is at its highest level ever.

**why** debt means that a small farm can be very efficient, but financially 'not viable'.

**why** national debts can never be paid off – without monetary reform.

**how** debt fuels the need to 'grow', thereby revolutionising national and global transport strategies, destroying local markets and producers and increasing waste, pollution and exacerbating resource consumption.

**how** 'Third World debt' is a mechanism used by the developed nations to inject ever-increasing amounts of money into their own economies, and why debtor nations can never repay the debts.

**why** politicians who rely on the banks to create money can't fund public services.

**why** 'debt-money' is fundamentally undemocratic and a threat to human rights.

The author proposes a new mechanism for the supply of money, creating a supportive financial environment and a decreasing reliance on debt.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** As we see also in the article by Ivan Illich, and elsewhere in this issue, alarm bells have been ringing for decades. Technological

in fact communicate in ways we are only now beginning to understand. The latest scientific research may indeed be taking us full circle, to the time when our ancestors perceived a spirit in the forests and the mountains.

Kingsnorth also wants to reclaim the idea of 'parochialism' as a way of being attached to a place, a small locality, which gives us roots and nurtures a connection to our environment. He is very concerned with England and the idea of Englishness, which he feels has been neglected in favour of Britishness, multiculturalism, or more widely, internationalism. He believes we need to find a way of expressing and celebrating Englishness without xenophobia and aggressive nationalism. In this vein I particularly enjoyed reading *The Old Yoke*, an essay on the Green Man, and the author's theory that it was a symbol of resistance to the brutal Norman invasion.

### **Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Economist**

*Kate Raworth*

Random House Business Books

ISBN: 9781847941374

The 18<sup>th</sup> century German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe observed that in modern scientific thinking there is a tendency for experience to be replaced by hypotheses, words are then substituted for these hypotheses, and the words become the subject of hypotheses as if they were the objects themselves. *Things* are thus replaced with *signs*. Educationalist Rudolf Steiner<sup>1</sup> described the same phenomenon in the social science of the

If you are looking for answers to the problems Earth now faces, and a confirmation of your long-held beliefs, this may not be the book for you. However, if you are looking for a searingly honest statement of our current plight, incisive analysis, and a mind-expanding guide to the kind of difficult questions we need to be asking ourselves, I would highly recommend it. The book is provocative, stimulating, thought-provoking. It is confessional in its honesty, as the author does not shy away from revealing thoughts which he knows may leave him open to criticism: but it could also be described as conversational, as the reader engages with a lively and stimulating mind.

Bernadette Meaden has written about religious, political and social issues for some years, and is strongly influenced by Christian Socialism, liberation theology and the Catholic Worker movement. She is a regular contributor to Ekklesia.

1920s, claiming that what was generally referred to as 'theorising' in his day did more to 'kill reality' than to express it. In her book *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Economist* Kate Raworth clearly shows how this tendency has been taken to extremes in mainstream economics, with devastating results for humanity and our planet. We have been living with an economic narrative which has written out human experience, in all its complexity, and replaced it with a caricature, a 'solitary figure poised with money in his hand, calculator in his head, nature at his feet and an insatiable appetite in his heart.' This grotesque

cultural, scientific or economic, they are all stories we tell ourselves and which shape our world.

The book is a collection of essays which have been published in various places previously. Bringing them together in this volume makes clear the impressive depth of the author's knowledge and the wide sweep of his thinking.

The book is divided into three sections: Collapse, Withdrawal, and Connection. In the first section Kingsnorth describes how, having spent decades as an active environmental campaigner, he became disillusioned and is now quite critical of the current movement. It has, he feels, no spiritual or emotional attachment to Earth and nature, offering only a sort of utilitarian environmentalism. In an attempt to persuade the rich and powerful to do the right thing by the planet, campaigners have adopted economic arguments and viewpoints, placing financial values on forests and rivers. Although his criticisms seem largely valid, for me they did occasionally jar. He is quite dismissive, for instance, of the fact that Green politics now tend to incorporate a strong social justice element. In a country where foodbanks proliferate and destitution is becoming ever more common, respect for all living things should surely incorporate a desire to see people living a dignified and decent life.

Kingsnorth also writes persuasively and almost despairingly of ecocide, and the 'progress trap' mankind now finds itself in, with faith in technology so unshakeable that every problem caused by technological progress can be solved

by yet more progress, which inevitably brings a new set of problems, and takes us ever further away from a connection with nature. The attempt to produce robot bees is just one alarming example of this.

There is also a critique of sustainability, and the current fixation on carbon emissions. Kingsnorth believes that the kind of sustainability now being sought is in itself a threat, as maintaining our current way of life in a zero-carbon way will require yet more destruction of the earth's wild places. He summarises this as, "Destruction minus carbon equals sustainability".

In the Withdrawal section of the book, the author suggests that the only course left to us now is to retreat as far as is possible from the techno-industrial culture which dehumanizes us and separates us from nature. It's not about defeat, or surrender, he says, but about finding the breathing space to be human again. We must insist that nature has a value beyond utility, and protect all non-human life forms as far as we possibly can. We all need to find our own ways of doing this. He has launched the Dark Mountain project, 'a global network of writers, artists and thinkers in search of new stories for a world on the brink.'

The final section of the book, Connection, contains some beautifully lyrical writing about the relationship of humans to the earth, from prehistoric times to the present day. For centuries we have dismissed the beliefs of people we saw as 'primitive' that not just animals but plants and trees may have some form of consciousness, and do

'progress' dictates how we live and work together. As we communicate through machines, we find that our very thoughts are determined by factors beyond our understanding or control.

**SEE ALSO:** Michael Rowbotham, Five talks on *The Disaster of Debt-based Economics* <http://positivemoney.org/2012/06/the-disaster-of-debt-based-economics/>

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# Silence is a Commons

## Ivan Illich

"The Computer-Managed Society" sounds an alarm. Clearly, machines which ape people are tending to encroach on every aspect of people's lives, and such machines force people to behave like machines. The new electronic devices do indeed have the power to force people to "communicate" with them and with each other on the terms of the machine. Whatever structurally does not fit the logic of the machine is effectively filtered from a culture dominated by their use.

The machine-like behaviour of people chained to electronics constitutes a degradation of their well-being and of their dignity which, for most people in the long run, becomes intolerable. Observations of the sickening effects of programmed environments show that people in them become indolent, impotent, narcissistic and apolitical. The political process breaks down, because people cease to be able to *govern* themselves; they demand to be *managed*.

Electronic management as a political issue can be approached in several ways.

I propose to approach the issue as one of political ecology. Ecology, during the last [four decades] has acquired a new meaning. It is still the name for a branch of professional biology, but the term now increasingly serves as the label under which a broad, politically organised general public analyzes and influences technical decisions. I want to focus on the new electronic management devices as a technical change of the human environment which, to be benign, must remain under political (and not exclusively expert) control.

I propose to clarify a distinction that I consider fundamental to political ecology. I shall distinguish the environment as commons from the environment as resource. On our ability to make this particular distinction depends not only the construction of a sound theoretical ecology, but also - and more importantly - effective ecological jurisprudence.

People called commons those parts of the environment for which customary law exacted specific forms of community

respect. People called commons that part of the environment which lay beyond their own thresholds and outside of their own possessions, to which, however, they had recognised claims of usage, not to produce commodities but to provide for the subsistence of their households. The customary law which humanized the environment by establishing the commons was usually unwritten. It was unwritten law not only because people did not care to write it down, but because what it protected was a reality much too complex to fit into paragraphs. The law of the commons regulates the right of way, the right to fish and to hunt, to graze and collect wood or medicinal plants in the forest.

An oak tree might be in the commons. Its shade in summer is reserved for the shepherd and his flock. Its acorns are reserved for the pigs of the neighbouring peasants; its dry branches serve as fuel; some of its fresh twigs in springtime are cut as ornaments for the church – and at sunset it might be the place for the village assembly. When people spoke about commons, they designated an aspect of the environment that was limited, that was necessary for the community's survival, that was necessary for different groups in different ways, but which, in a strictly economic sense, *was not perceived as scarce*.

When today, with university students, I use the term 'commons' (in German *Almende* or *Gemeinheit*, in Italian *gli usi civici*) my listeners immediately think of the eighteenth century. They think of those pastures in England on which villagers each kept a few sheep,

and they think of the "enclosure of the pastures" which transformed the grassland into a resource on which commercial flocks could be raised. Primarily, however, my students think of the innovation of poverty which came with enclosure: of the absolute impoverishment of the peasants, who were driven from the land and into wage labour, and they think of the commercial enrichment of the lords.

In their immediate reaction, my students think of the rise of a new capitalist order. Facing that painful newness, they forget that enclosure also stands for something more basic. The enclosure of the commons also inaugurated a *new ecological order*. Enclosure did not just physically transfer the control over grasslands from the peasants to the lord. Enclosure marked a radical change in the attitudes of society towards the environment. Before, in any juridical system, most of the environment had been considered as commons from which most people could draw most of their sustenance without needing to take recourse to the market. After enclosure, the environment became primarily a resource at the service of "enterprises" which, by organising wage-labour, transformed nature into the goods and services on which the satisfaction of basic needs **by consumers** depends. This transformation is in the blind spot of political economy.

This change of attitudes can be illustrated better if we think about roads rather than about grasslands. What a difference there was between the new and the old parts of Mexico city only 20 years ago [1960s]. In

necessary to develop as a person.

No matter where in the world you live, every culture appreciates that the home is the most important place for everyone. However, when surveyed, very few people truly acknowledge the work that's required in creating a home. Men and women alike, when asked about the home, fail to value the work that goes into caring for the home, giving far more relevance to work done outside the home, while recognising that work commitments lead to neglecting time which should be dedicated to home and family life.

This contradiction is invariably caused by the economic and social changes in today's society that have so much influenced family organisation. We may think one way but we invariably act another. Since the organisation of the home determines the way it operates on a daily basis and greatly affects its occupants, a smooth running home requires a business-like approach to its management.

In the first report of the Global Home

## Reviews

### **Confessions of a Recovering Environmentalist**

*Paul Kingsnorth.*

Faber and Faber (2017)

304pp £14.99

ISBN: 978-0571329694

This book is a very engaging, thought-

Index, where more than 9,000 people were surveyed from 94 different countries across 5 continents, we see that society views domestic work as tedious, boring and not very challenging. However, taking care of people's basic needs is vital and the work required to build a home is of incalculable importance as it's directed towards what a person most cherishes - the care of their loved ones. For this reason, society is faced with a major challenge - to make the invisible visible and ensure that the work of the home has greater social recognition because it has immeasurable value. The Global Home Index study highlights the fact that although men have increased the numbers of hours they allocate to the home, it is still overwhelmingly women who dedicate the most time to the day-to-day running of the home.

The full report of the survey, which is still open to participants, can be accessed on the website using the following link: <http://www.globalhomeindex.org/>

*Mercedes Jaureguibeitia is Executive Director of The Home Renaissance Foundation,*

provoking, and at times provocative read. In his introduction the author says simply, "I have done my best to try to be clear-headed and clear-eyed", and in this he has certainly succeeded. He is an original and independent thinker, unafraid to challenge the accepted stories we tell ourselves - be they political,

for basic material welfare. There is no bonus for more bums on pews. There is not a quota for souls saved. Being a priest is not really a proper job – it’s not something that can be measured in terms of task. The stuff I absolutely have to do, task-wise, is pretty minimal. Even so, the church gives me a place to live and pays me every month.

When first ordained, I couldn’t figure out if I was incredibly lazy or fast becoming a workaholic. And that’s because the stipend system erases the dividing line between what is work and what is not work. I feel constantly busy, but I don’t always know under what category I would file much of my activity. As many clergy will attest, it is in this curious intermediate overlap between work and not work that the most important stuff often happens. The random conversations, the time given over to just sitting with people, the hands that have been held and the books that have been read.

This could be the future for many of us. Under capitalism, many find it hard to establish a sense of self-worth without

paid employment. The possibility of a citizen’s income hints at a return to pre-capitalist sources of value. Less about money, and more about things that are distinctively human – things that robots cannot do.

The idealistic best-case scenario for a post-work future is that the economic growth of the robotic/AI revolution will enable many of us to work in ways that capitalism has typically undervalued. But if that doesn’t happen, and the robots take our jobs and offer nothing in return, then our future is bleak indeed. Think John Connor in Terminator, leading a neo-luddite revolution.

A citizen’s income is not a free handout for the undeserving – though it would erase that much-abused distinction between the deserving and the undeserving. After all, who can possibly be described as undeserving of having enough to live on? A citizen’s income would be a way for the wealth that is generated by a society to be shared within that society. And the Protestant work ethic would become a thing of the past.

when we return to our parents’ home we are often flooded with fond memories, because the home is a human being’s first point of contact with other humans. It is the first place where people feel they belong and interact with others and where they receive the care and education

the old parts of the city the streets were true commons. Some people sat on the streets to sell vegetables and charcoal. Others put their chairs on the road to drink coffee or tequila. Others held their meetings on the road to decide on the new headman for the neighbourhood or to determine the price of a donkey. Others drove their donkeys through the crowd, walking next to the heavily-loaded beast of burden; others sat in the saddle. Children played in the gutter, and still people walking could use the road to get from one place to another.

Such roads were not built for people. Like any true commons, the street itself was the result of people living there and making that space liveable. The dwellings that lined the roads were not private homes in the modern sense – garages for the overnight deposit of workers. The threshold still separated two living spaces, one intimate and the other common. But neither homes in this intimate sense nor streets as commons survived economic development.

In the new sections of Mexico City, streets are no more for people. They are now roadways for automobiles, for buses, for taxis, cars, and trucks. People are barely tolerated on the streets unless they are on their way to a bus stop. If people now sat down or stopped on the street, they would become obstacles to traffic and traffic would be dangerous to them. The road has been degraded from a commons to a simple resource for the circulation of vehicles. People can circulate no more on their own. Traffic has displaced their mobility. They can circulate only when they are strapped

down and are moved.

The appropriation of the grassland by the lords was challenged, but the more *fundamental transformation* of grassland (or of roads) from commons to resource has happened, until recently, without being subjected to criticism. The appropriation of the environment by the few was clearly recognized as an intolerable abuse. By contrast, the even more degrading transformation of people into members of an industrial *labour force and into consumers* was taken, until recently, for granted. For almost a hundred years the majority of political parties has challenged the accumulation of environmental resources in private hands. However, the issue was argued in terms of the private utilization of these resources, not the distinction of commons. Thus anticapitalist politics so far have bolstered the legitimacy of transforming commons into resources.

Only recently, at the base of society, a new type of “popular intellectual” is beginning to recognise what has been happening. Enclosure has denied the people the right to that kind of environment on which – throughout all of history – the *moral economy of survival* had been based. Enclosure, once accepted, redefines community. Enclosure undermines the local autonomy of community. Enclosure of the commons is thus as much in the interests of professionals and state bureaucrats as it is in the interest of capitalists. Enclosure allows the bureaucrat to define local community as impotent to provide for its own survival. People become economic individuals that depend for their survival

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# Making a House a Home

## Mercedes Jaureguibeitia

*On making the invisible work of making a house a home into something that is both visible and valued.*

Home sweet home! The expression that’s repeated time and again after a tiring journey or a difficult day at work. And

on commodities that are produced for them. Fundamentally, most citizens' movements represent a rebellion against this environmentally induced redefinition of people as consumers.

This man who speaks to you was born 55 years ago in Venice. One month after his birth he was put on a train and then on a ship and brought to the island of Brac. Here, in a village on the Dalmation coast, his grandfather wanted to bless him. My grandfather lived in the house in which his family had lived since the time when Muromachi ruled in Kyoto. Since then on the Dalmation coast many rulers had come and gone ... But these changes in the uniform and language of the governors had changed little in daily life ... My grandfather had received news twice a month. The news now arrived by steamer in three days. When I was born, for the people who lived off the main routes, history still flowed slowly, imperceptibly. Most of the environment was still in the commons. People lived in houses they had built; moved on streets that had been trampled by the feet of their animals; were autonomous in the procurement and disposal of their water; could depend on their own voices when they wanted to speak up. All this changed with my arrival in Brac.

On the same boat on which I arrived in 1926, the first loudspeaker was landed on the island. Few people there had ever heard of such a thing. Up to that day all men and women had spoken with more or less equally powerful voices. Henceforth this would change. Henceforth the access to the microphone would determine whose voice would be

magnified. Silence now ceased to be in the commons; it became a resource for which loudspeakers compete. Language itself was transformed thereby from a local commons to a national resource for communication. As enclosure by the lords increased national productivity by denying the individual peasant the right to keep a few sheep, so the encroachment of the loudspeaker has destroyed that silence which so far had given each man and woman his or her proper and equal voice. Unless you have access to a loudspeaker you are now silenced.

I hope that the parallel now becomes clear. Just as the commons of space are vulnerable, and can be destroyed by the motorization of traffic, so the commons of speech are vulnerable, and can easily be destroyed by the encroachment of modern means of communications.

The issue should therefore be clear; how to counter the encroachment of new, electronic devices and systems upon commons that are more subtle and more intimate to our being than either grassland or roads – commons that are at least as valuable as silence. Silence, according to western and eastern tradition alike, is necessary for the emergence of persons. It is taken from us by machines that ape people. We could easily be made increasingly dependent on machines for speaking and for thinking, as we are already dependent on machines for moving.

Such a transformation of the environment from a commons to a productive resource constitutes the most fundamental form of environmental degradation. This

# Why the rise of the robots could allow humans to flourish again

*Giles Fraser*

*Nobody's job is safe. But a citizen's income in a post-work world could see us avoid the Terminator scenario and return to pre-capitalist sources of value*

Semi-automated truck convoys are soon to be tested on UK roads. Perhaps, one day, human beings won't be allowed to drive. Perhaps it will be considered too risky to put an easily distractible human being in charge of a ton or more of fast-moving metal. Future generations may think of driving as terrifyingly retro. It's yet another example of a pressing existential question, as well as an economic one. When clever robots have taken most of our jobs, how will we live and what will we live on? For these Meccano scabs are not only going after the repetitive tasks of the long-distance lorry driver or factory workers. Once they pass the Turing test and can successfully fob themselves off as human beings, jobs that used to require a university degree will be just as much at risk. Human beings are fast heading for obsolescence. Optimists argue that new jobs will be created, just like they were during the Industrial Revolution and the computer

revolution. After all, if no one has a paid job, who will be buying all the stuff that the robots are busy making? Others suggest that with all this robot-led productivity, societies will become rich enough to pay their populations a citizen's income – that is, provide everyone with an unconditional sum of money to live on, irrespective of whether they work or not. This is an idea that may be approaching as fast as the driverless car. From the Trump-supporting tech CEO Elon Musk to the lefty Greek politician Yanis Varoufakis, the idea of a basic citizen's income draws support from across the political spectrum. Now, I am not an economist, and I don't know whether the sums will ever add up to make it work. But I do know a little about how it might feel to live on a citizen's income because the nearest real-life comparison I can think of is my own situation. I am not paid a salary by the church. I am paid a stipend. And the crucial difference is that a stipend is not supposed to be a payment received for services rendered. Rather, it is a way for the church to support its clergy so that they can do their thing without a concern



neglected, and to obtain a NATIONAL DEMAND that unnecessary poverty shall forthwith be abolished by payment of a NATIONAL DIVIDEND in addition to any payments by way of wage, dividend, grant, aid, pension or otherwise to which individuals are now entitled, in such a manner that payment of such NATIONAL DIVIDEND:

- a) Shall not increase prices of National indebtedness.
  - b) Shall be accompanied by a substantial reduction in National and local taxation.
  - c) Shall not interfere with the rights of private property.
3. That the power of money creation and control, which is a Sovereign Prerogative, shall be vested solely and exclusively in Trustees of the Nation, to be operated by them, under strict Constitutional rules, for the public benefit.

#### THE PARTY'S PLAN OF ACTION.

The Party intends to present to *An Dail* the National Demand as a manifestation of the Will of the People, and, if acceptance is refused, will undertake the duty and responsibility of carrying out the command of the Irish People, and will nominate candidates pledged to this duty.

THE PARTY CLAIMS: That its programme will make it possible:-

1. To abolish unnecessary poverty and trade stagnation by payment of a National Dividend which will provide a market for Irish produce at home.

“I am afraid the ordinary citizen will not like to be told that the banks or the Bank of England can create or destroy money... We do not like to hear that some private institution can create it at pleasure. It conjures up a picture of an autocratic and irresponsible body which by some black art of its own contriving can increase or diminish wealth and presumably make a great deal of profit in the process.” – *Rt. Hon. Reginald McKenna, Chairman Midland Bank Ltd, Jan.1925.*

2. To abolish unemployment by making it possible to undertake the vast amount of necessary National Construction now neglected on account of the alleged “cost.”
3. To develop the resources and social services of the Nation to the fullest extent.
4. To attain full National and individual freedom by abolishing the fear of economic consequences.
5. To set the stage for the voluntary abolition of the Boundary by building up such a condition of affairs which will be irresistible to the people of the North.
6. To make possible, by the removal of poverty and economic insecurity the full spiritual and cultural development of the people.

The Irish Social Credit Party submits its proposals, programme, and method to the Irish people and claims that it is entitled to their full support.

FUNDS ARE URGENTLY REQUIRED AND THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE CONFIDENTLY APPEALS FOR AID IN THIS, THE CROWNING STRUGGLE FOR LIBERTY.

Seamus Dobbyn  
Michael J. Keating  
Seamus Walshe  
Sean Tallon

Taken from *Irish Independent* 1905-current, 03.01.1936, page 5.

degradation has a long history, which coincides with the history of capitalism but can in no way just be reduced to it. Unfortunately the importance of this transformation has been overlooked or belittled by political ecology so far. It needs to be recognised if we are to organize defence movements of what remains of the commons. This defence constitutes the crucial public task for political action during the eighties [and remains so to this day]. The task must be undertaken urgently because commons can exist without police, but resources cannot. Just as traffic does, computers call for police, and for ever more of them, and in ever more subtle forms.

By definition, resources [i.e., private property] call for defence by police. Once they are defended, their recovery as commons becomes increasingly difficult. This is a special reason for urgency.

This article, originally written about 1980, was reprinted in *Fourth World Review*, 1985, Number 6.

# Capitalist Dynamics

Martin Parker

## Capitalist dynamics

The three principles of capitalism taken together – i.e. the search for profitable investment in a competitive market through hiring waged labour – have certain implications for the conduct of economic activities and point to particular dynamics of capital accumulation.

**COMMENT:** A little academic, perhaps but, I think, well worth struggling to grasp what Illich is saying here. Like all academic thinkers, he fails to note the tasks of mothering which lie behind generation after generation of people's ability to communicate through the spoken – and written – word.

The sentence “Before, in any juridical system, most of the environment had been considered as commons from which most people could draw most of their sustenance without needing to take recourse to the market” brings home a vital fact of our times. Under the present capitalist system, most people must take their labour time to the market to secure subsistence. Such a market is not “free”. On the contrary, the ever-growing Precariat is powerless in the face of the power of financial institutions to determine how we work together, our terms of contracts, and the means of communication available. What is the alternative? The future lies in the cradle. The way we raise the current generation of infants will determine their future and ours.

We remain grateful to John Papworth for keeping alive the flame of the *Fourth World Review* from which this article is taken.

## Efficiency

Since profits cannot (always) be obtained by simply charging more money for things, they depend on producing more efficiently: on producing more (things, value) for less (inputs), or maximising the output to input ratio. Capitalist firms will try to squeeze as much surplus value out of labour and other resources

as possible, through (for example) work intensification or cost reduction. As Weber noted, this makes some forms of means/ends calculation and rational accounting systems essential to capitalist enterprise and the pursuit of profit.

Management knowledge and practice has developed around this question of rationalisation, and includes many efficiency-increasing technologies and innovations designed to reduce the cost of labour and increase its productivity. Among the most notable of these rationalising technologies was Taylor's 'scientific management' and the subsequent development of the assembly line by Henry Ford. Through careful observation and measurement, a particular task can be divided into various components, timed, formalised and standardised. As a result, jobs can be designed so as to require less skill and to maximise productivity.

In contemporary capitalism, this process of rationalisation, or means/ends calculation, is not confined to the assembly line and the production of things but has been extended to knowledge or immaterial work. The figure of the call centre worker is emblematic here of how the delivery or 'knowledge' work can be divided up, measured and controlled. And a similar process of quantification and control has occurred with professional labour. Doctors, teachers, probation officers find their labour increasingly subject to performance measures, standardisation and audit.

**The deregulation and flexibilisation of labour markets has also provided more cost effective ways of hiring, firing and deploying labour** according to needs. Another strategy for reducing

labour cost is delocalisation. Over the last couple of decades at least, many Western organisations have delocalised production to developing countries offering cheaper labour; China has become the 'workshop of the world' and India the 'office of the world' on the grounds of their cheap labour and low levels of taxation and regulation. For example, much of the labour used in the publishing industry to format, proofread, print, market or distribute books and journals is increasingly outsourced to low-cost economies.

#### **Market expansion and growth**

Another obvious way to increase profit is to sell more things. Finding new markets has been central to capitalist expansion. As local or national markets get saturated, capitalist firms have to expand further afield. So, for example, nineteenth-century cotton mill owners in Manchester sold their fabric to India, US farmers sell corn to Mexico, Nestlé sells its infant formula in developing countries and so on.

But selling more things is not just about finding new markets for a particular product, first because the market might eventually become saturated, and second because a profitable market will attract competitors which in turn will make the rate of profit fall. It also requires constantly inventing or finding more things to sell. This may be through making improvements in existing products (producing safer, faster or greener cars, healthier burgers . . .), inventing new products (televisions, phones, anti-depressants, e-book readers . . .), or selling things that previously were **not for sale but were common property (e.g. drinking water, health, education, genes . . .)**. In its search for more and more things that can be

# MANIFESTO of the Irish Social Credit Party

Published in the *Irish Independent* 3 January 1936

Adopting as a foundation that we are the creatures of a beneficent God, and that all the world's wealth of field and forest, mine and river, has been bestowed upon us to satisfy our needs; that man is entitled by reason of his Christian humanity to the fullness of life by right and not on sufferance, miscalled "charity," and that by reason of this abundance and his Cultural Inheritance, it is possible for him to enjoy this right; that the restoration of the Irish Nation, free and unfettered, one and indivisible, is the earnest wish of every right-thinking Irishman and Irishwoman, and believing, in addition, in the principles of Democratic Government, which is government in accordance with the Will of the People.

#### THE PARTY CONTENDS:

1. That whatever progress has been made in the direction of National freedom is illusory so long as control of their own credit and currency is denied to the Irish people.
2. That the minting of Free State coins and the issue of Currency Commission notes is calculated to deceive the Irish people into believing that they have a currency of their own, whereas they have not.

3. That while existing Irish money is synonymous with British Sterling, and is being invested by Irish Banks in British Government stocks, it will not be used for National development.
- 4.5. That the present financial system, depending largely for its existence on usury, internationally controlled by interests always alien and frequently hostile to our people, is devoid of Justice and repugnant to Christian morality.
6. That it is not the will of the Irish people that thousands should starve or live in fear of starvation in the midst of the greatest abundance the world has ever known.
7. That the cause of starvation and want is not shortage of commodities, but lack of individual incomes to acquire them.
8. That since money is admittedly created by the Banking system "at their own good pleasure," poverty or the inability to undertake necessary, National constructive work cannot be explained away by mere shortage of money.

#### THE PARTY SEEKS:

1. To achieve the complete political and economic freedom of the Irish Nation.
2. To stir up the National conscience to a realisation of the fact that its Christian duty to its "lesser brethren" is now being

property as such ... No confiscation is implied, nor any violent supersession of existing industrial control ... Nor are men expected, as a condition of the practicality of the scheme, to be better than they are.' However, the Fabians were already committed to endorsing, and merely reinterpreting, neoclassical orthodoxy through three decades of intellectual development, crystallised in their sponsorship of the London School of Economics. Pressures from within the Labour party to consider alternative ideas were therefore ignored, so that the 'scheme' was perfunctorily dismissed in a brief report entitled *Labour and Social Credit* (1922). The report concluded that the Douglas-*New Age* Scheme was 'out of harmony with the trend of Labour thought, and ... indeed fundamentally opposed to the principles for which the Labour Party stands' .....

*The New Age* created a 'rumpus in the Socialist and Labour camps' when it first suggested that individual work is not a *just prior condition of individual income*. By virtue of the common inheritance of past invention and labour, combined with current labour, the community as a whole is 'the ultimate legitimate owner' of the whole productive mechanism.

"... by coming together to revive community life we, the heroes of this story, can break the vicious circle. Through invoking our capacity for togetherness and belonging, we can rediscover the central facts of our humanity: our altruism and mutual aid. By reviving community, built around the places in which we live, and by anchoring ourselves, our politics and parts of our economy in the life of this community, we can restore the best aspects of our nature.

George Monbiot, *The Guardian* 9 September 2017

Every individual should be ready to work if called upon from necessity to do so. However, it was logically absurd to require that in order to obtain an income every individual should work, whether or not there was a demand for their services, and whatever their state of health or capacity for employment might be. 'Our simple little proposal to put everybody upon an "unearned income" ' was attacked from all quarters in the labour movement. It did not accord with the programme of 'Labour officials and class-Socialists' who were building their careers on attacks on unearned incomes. Still less did it appeal to the 'puritanic' Webbs [founders of The London School of Economics - see *The Social Artist* Autumn 2016] to give every citizen their birthright of an annual share of communal production, making further social reform unnecessary. Nor was it attractive to George Bernard Shaw, with his 'workhouse scheme of a universal dividend in return for a universal industrial service'.

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exchanged on the market for profit, capitalism has managed to transform goods that were outside market relations into commodities that can be sold for a profit, a point we will explore later.

**The relentless innovation of capitalist firms in designing and selling new products goes hand in hand with relentless consumption. It has become a truism to claim that we live in an increasingly commodified world, that more and more of our lives is mediated by the market. An increasing proportion of the goods and services we rely on for survival or pleasure (e.g. food, water, child care, sports and leisure, and so on) are acquired on the market for a price, rather than through self-provisioning or a mutual network of exchange with friends or family.**

In order to pay our way through all this consumption, we are increasingly reliant on waged labour, and debt. If mass consumption is essential to capital accumulation, so is the provision of credit to sustain consumption. Indeed, **there is a whole credit industry which since the 1980s** has been able to develop with fewer and fewer regulatory restrictions to provide consumer credit for everything from cars to education, toys, houses or holidays, including to poorer and poorer sections of society as we saw recently with subprime mortgages. The provision of credit is not only essential to underwrite consumption, it also provides another avenue for profitable capital investment as capital invests in capital itself.

In short, capitalism and its quest for accumulation rests on producing, selling and consuming ever more. It relies on and requires endless growth. The centrality of growth to capitalist economies is

evident both at firm and national levels. Growth in GDP is considered as the holy grail of economic policy by most national governments and international institutions from the World Bank to the European Central Bank. Growth has become the fetish of capitalism and is supposed not only to deliver increased profit for capitalist firms, but also jobs, prosperity and better lives for all.

The growth imperative is also evident at the level of firms where the profit motive encourages expansion. The continuous need to accumulate capital means that capitalist firms have a tendency to grow larger and larger, both through internal growth and through acquisition. For example, through the sorts of mergers and acquisitions *Infirma* has engaged in, the global market for academic publishing has become dominated by just a few key players. More generally, the history of capitalism since the nineteenth century has been the history of the increasing concentration of capital around a decreasing number of multinational corporations that have acquired enormous power not only within their particular industries but also over governments. Some corporations have become so large that their sales far exceed the GDP of some countries. Of the 100 largest economies in the world in 2000, 51 were corporations and 49 were countries (based on comparison of corporate sales and countries' GDPs).

**Producing capitalist subjects**  
Capitalism not only signals a great transformation in the mode of production, but also in individuals' subjectivity: the way people understand themselves, and relate to each other. **Capitalism requires and produces certain types of human beings:** 'free' autonomous agents maximising their own utility through

both work and consumption, *or homo economicus*. Indeed, the two figures of the freely choosing consumer and the self-investing flexible worker are central motifs of contemporary capitalism.

As mentioned earlier, increased labour flexibility is an important cost-reduction strategy for contemporary organisations. Individual workers may be redeployed across different jobs or functions of an organisation, across different locations, or simply dismissed. Demand for ever-increasing flexibility in the labour market means that individual workers constantly have to restyle, retrain themselves, and invest in themselves to remain employable. These investment decisions do not take place solely in the workplace or even in education, but embrace all of social life. For example, Grey illustrates how accountants invest in their appearance or in building appropriate social networks in order to advance their career. Similarly, students may take on extra-curricular activities to build their CV. The self becomes an enterprise, a project to be managed in order to maximise returns (in terms of salary, career prospects and so on).

In short, modern capitalism constitutes subjects as free autonomous, rational, utility maximising agents in at least two ways: as consumers freely choosing on the market, and as workers personally

managing their employment prospects. Both contribute to the individualisation of selves living more and more isolated from each other. As Margaret Thatcher famously proclaimed, ‘there is no such thing as society’, only free individuals responsible for their own success and failures.

And indeed, who wouldn’t like to think of themselves as ‘free’, as able to do what they wanted free of interference from government, bureaucracy, trade unions, God, or the force of tradition? The market leaves us free to choose between all sorts of products and services to consume, job opportunities to apply for, or even better, free to set up our own business, to become the next Mark Zuckerberg or Richard Branson. This freedom to become what we want constitutes one of the greatest appeals of capitalism. The strength of market capitalism is not only its supposed economic superiority or ‘efficiency’, but also as Hayek, Friedman or Nozick have argued (albeit in different ways) its close association with individual freedom, at least a certain kind of freedom. But efficiency, growth and freedom, the hallmarks of capitalism, are all contested ideas.

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#### OUR WEBSITE - [www.douglassocialcredit.com](http://www.douglassocialcredit.com)

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## *Extracts from* The Contemporary Relevance of Clifford Hugh Douglas

### *Frances Hutchinson and Brian Burkitt*

As consulting electrical engineer to Westinghouse in India and to the Post Office in London before the First World War (he designed the fully automated unmanned Post Office Tube), Douglas noted that financial restrictions inhibited the introduction of new technologies. However, such constraints on government activities were overcome with the outbreak of war in 1914. His observations, when working on the accounts at Farnborough in 1916, of an imbalance between wages paid out and costs generated within a given period, gave rise to his widely-debated ‘A+B theorem’. While Assistant Superintendent of Farnborough aircraft factory Douglas acquired the rank of major. Subsequently, between 1918 and 1922, he consolidated his theories with the assistance of A. R. Orage, the guild socialist editor of *The New Age*.

By developing the implications of his observations, Douglas became convinced that economic decisions were made by default. Although money was essential to the maintenance of a modern economy, decisions concerning its creation and circulation occurred within banking circles.

These were not democratically accountable to the community. Naively, Douglas the practical engineer believed that the mere publication of his findings would enable the community at large to exercise conscious control over the monetary mechanisms which ultimately determine the nature and quantity of production and the distribution of commodities to consumers. In his view, money could become a ‘ticket system’ for the allocation of the community’s goods and services rather than a system of speculation operated by and for the financial benefit of a small section of society. His writings were the subject of extensive public debate throughout the UK in the 1920s and 1930s.....

The abolition of capitalism and its (peaceful) replacement by a guild socialist political economy, as advocated in the Douglas texts, could have proved appealing to the rank and file of the Labour party. As Orage explained in *The Labour Party and Social Credit*, co-authored with Douglas in 1922, such a programme would present ‘immediate social relief’ with a ‘minimum disturbance of existing social arrangements. No attack is made upon