

The Social Artist



patenting

enclosure

power

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Editorial

Discussing the age of William Krehm, the economist, we checked on the Internet. Yes! There he was! The fact that he fought in the Spanish Civil War confirmed we had the right person. For the present generation of young people, access to the Internet can be taken for granted. It is as essential to them as the subsistence requirements of food, shelter and clothing. This is not surprising, since the mothers who brought them up often spent time on mobile phones, so that, even if physically present, they were emotionally absent. Presently, at long last, the full significance of the omnipresence of the Internet is attracting attention. It is up to each one of us to make time and space to consider the most urgent question of our times. Are we controlling the Internet, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the new technologies? Or is the Machine, with its supporting technologies, beginning to control us?

In the current edition of the Royal Society of Arts journal, writer Mustafa Suleyman suggests that AI could be useful in solving social problems, “but only if technology companies are held to the highest ethical standards”. Presently, this would seem to be easier said than done. Democracy, says Canon Peter Challen, “the art of thinking independently together” is dependent upon far more than the right to protest or voice an opinion. A democratic society

requires open and public space where people can meet and learn from one another, adjusting their personal views in the light of what others are experiencing, and coming to common convictions. This space no longer exists. The Internet is driven by, and is a tool of, the financial system. The spaces in the virtual world of the Internet are determined by strict economic laws based upon maximising profits. Ethical considerations can be tacked on, as it were. But, as is becoming increasingly apparent, the system can operate perfectly well without them.

Behind the scenes of Twitter, Facebook and Google algorithms operate to present us with the news and information that, they have detected from our past searches, we most probably want to see. Thus those with similar world views find themselves communicating with others of similar views, creating eerie bubbles of consensus. As Gerald Häfner notes in *Free, Equal and Mutual* (see review in this issue) “the egocentric Internet undermines a democracy orientated towards the ‘you’”: it is all about ‘me’, what *I* want, what *I* demand. And demand, as the economists tell us, means demand *backed by money*.

Voices of deep concern at the power of the Internet, and the AIs that are driving it, are at last being raised and heard by a wide spectrum of individuals. Behind the growth of the Internet lies

the power of money to demand what it wants by forcing all into the service of a vast world-wide bureaucracy. In order to secure the necessities of life, and a little more if possible, professionals and politicians are prepared to condemn others to homelessness, to destitution, to exclusion from medical care, to expulsion from the country and to prison, by playing an unquestioning role in an increasingly faceless bureaucracy.

Häfner calls for “a new, transformed understanding of money and the enormous forces that lie within it”. This is exactly what *The Social Crediter* has called for since it was first published in 1938, and for which *The Social Artist* continues to campaign. Change must come from the families – the mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, neighbours and local communities as a whole – who are currently rearing their infants to become the next generation of servants, the producers and consumers, that the Internet and the money system require. How we bring up our children is crucially important in determining the future of humanity.

The language and emotional communication skills acquired in infancy and early childhood stay with every one of us throughout the rest of our lives. Following the social crediters of old, and in support of Mothers At Home Matter (www.mothersathomematter.co.uk) and others, we call for urgent reform of provision for child care in the early years and throughout childhood. Provision of child and society-friendly lifestyles will not come to us from the vast bureaucracy that supports the present financial system. It is only concerned with drawing in

young people and natural resources in order to spew them out as waste.

The Internet does not demand the mothering services of mothers or carers. On the contrary, household responsibilities in general must be fitted around the obligation to maintain the financial system by working (taking paid employment) in order to earn and spend money. To that end, tens of £million are spent on advertising, that is, in persuading people to make, design, consume and destroy goods they don't really need or want, so that they don't fall through the net into homelessness and destitution.

Our child rearing practices lie at the root of the problems facing the world today. In the developed world we have ceased to teach our children how to farm, how to care for the land and how to care for others. Our education system is financed by the financial system. Hence it does not even teach our young people to study and think for themselves. It merely prepares them to serve the Golden Calf of the money system.

Many young adults of today would struggle to explain the term ‘Spanish Civil War’ because they are not required to study history, or to acquire a broad understanding of our common cultural heritage, in order to work for money. Yet, as has truly been said, “language is the scaffolding upon which we build our thoughts, attitudes, values and behaviour”. And language, like all forms of communication, is taught at the mother's knee.

The Commons

David Bollier

David Bollier is a leading figure in the international commons movement. In this interview with Jane Clark, he explains how our humanity is being restricted by the increasing commodification not only of land but of social and intellectual space, and how ‘commoning’, based upon values of sharing, connection and cooperation, presents a feasible alternative.

David: The idea of ‘the commons’ refers to more than just land. It can mean digital spaces; it can mean urban spaces; it can mean social spaces. It refers to a regime of self-government and management of shared resources. A commons is not the resource alone, as many economists seem to think; it is not just ‘un-owned resources’: it is the resource plus the community that governs it, plus a set of rules or protocols which regulate its use. The English enclosure movement is definitely an important touchstone, an inspiration for talk about the commons today. But the idea has now been adapted and developed to become, as you say, a kind of ‘grand narrative’. It is attractive to me because it both allows a critique of our present system – of which enclosures are a major part – and provides a platform for constructing alternatives

Jane: So what is meant exactly by ‘enclosure’?

David: Enclosure is the commodification and privatisation of our shared wealth. It means that things that were

previously free for the taking, or collectively managed, pass into the hands of individuals or, in collusion with governments, are privatised and made available for market exchange. This process is cast as ‘progress’ by the capitalist system, and put forward as the way that human development happens – the way that wealth is generated. But in fact, it is often just a radical dispossession of people. It removes things from their organic context, be that a community or an ecosystem, so that they can be sold. So the commons is a story that helps us talk about what I think of as the great unacknowledged scandal of our times, which is the enclosure of the wealth that belongs to all of us.

Jane: We are going to go on to talk about how this is happening with things like intellectual property and the internet. But I was surprised to learn that even in terms of the literal enclosure of land, there are still two billion people in the world today – that is, more than a quarter of the global population – who are dependent on collectively managed natural resources.

David: It is fascinating that modern economic theory **does not regard subsistence economies as meaningful.** That’s because there is no cash exchanged and no formal markets, even though people’s needs are being met. Subsistence commons are seen as potential or proto-markets that need to be developed in a western consumer sense. So in places like Africa, Asia

and Latin America, we are currently seeing sovereign investment funds, hedge funds and speculators colluding with governments to take over lands which have historically been managed as commons – and actually, in many cases, managed very well. This land grab is going to cause the same kind of problems that the English enclosure system caused – the pauperisation of people, ecological exploitation, the cultural decimation of indigenous people. I call it ‘the tragedy of the market’.

Jane: You are making a reference, I believe, to the phrase ‘the tragedy of the commons’ which is still one of the first things that come up when you google ‘the commons’. Is this the idea that common ownership of resources necessarily leads to them being over-exploited

David: Yes. The term ‘tragedy of the commons’ derives from an article written by biologist Garrett Hardin in 1968... Hardin talked about the commons as if it were a free-for-all regime where people could do whatever they wanted. But this is not what a commons is. A commons is a social system that manages resources sustainably, and which has regulations and boundaries that its members can enforce, through penalties if necessary, to make sure that the resources do not get over used. So a commons has ways of dealing with people who want to appropriate them for their own gain, or free-loaders who want to use them without playing a part in their upkeep...

Jane: Can you give us some examples of successful commons projects?

David: In New Mexico, there is a system of community-managed water control known as *acequias*. These water systems, which derive from the ways in which indigenous Americans managed water,

have been sustainable in a very arid region. What is remarkable is that the commons has been able to steward the water in ways that do not over deplete it. It has statutory recognition by the state government, so this is a rare example of a state-sanctioned commons. Its success stands in stark contrast to the suburban and urban areas around it, which are grossly over-using the water relative to what the ecosystem can replenish.

There are many similar examples around the world of sustainable stewardship of shared resources. Elinor Ostrom in her landmark book, *Governing the Commons*, mentioned a great many – from the *zanjeras* in the Philippines to the communal tenure systems in the high mountain meadows in Switzerland, and the *huerta* irrigation institutions in Spain. All these have been successfully running for a long time – in many cases, for centuries.

Until Ostrom came along, these social systems had been understudied by conventional economics with its focus on the atomistic individual, *homo economicus*. **The ontology of economics cannot really understand collective action because the presumption is that individuals matter more than groups, and every individual is supposedly rational and calculating in advancing his or her material self-interest.** This is in contrast to the empirically obvious fact that people in many communities can and do negotiate their way to collectively managing their wealth.

The Second Age of Enclosure

Jane: It seems ironic that at the same time as these examples are becoming known, we seem to be going through an intensification of the process of privatisation. Some people have gone so far as to call this ‘the second age of enclosure’.

David: Yes, indeed: there has been an enormous extension of the scope of property rights over the last few decades. Enclosures have been moving into areas that are often intangible – such as knowledge, business models, sounds, and even smells – which are more subtle than enclosures of land.

Let me go through a few examples. One area is the term of copyright on materials produced by writers and artists. In the USA this has now been extended to the life of an author, plus 70 years. This means that I can scribble something on a piece of paper and it will be copyrighted to about the year 2200, which is just absurd. This is supposedly needed as an incentive for me to create. There are attempts to marketise the internet; the whole net-neutrality debate in the USA concerns whether companies will have proprietary control over what is happening online.

Twenty percent of the human genome is now patented for private purposes, which is discouraging a lot of research into medical treatments and biological functions. In urban regions developers and absentee investors are controlling how cities are developing; they are taking over public spaces and acquiring a lot of infrastructure. There are many roads which used to be publicly managed that are now private toll roads.

The list goes on and on. We have privatisation of public information, public lands, the airwaves that are used for broadcasting, and federal drug research. In the United States, the publishers of court decisions can now claim copyright over the official publications even although the decisions are funded by taxpayers. Companies are patenting nano-matter, and algorithms embedded in software can be copyrighted. President Trump has even expressed the hope that private companies will go to the moon

and lay claim to resources there.

Jane: I know that all this is leading to some extraordinary restrictions. For instance, in some places where genetically modified crops have been introduced, it has become illegal for people to gather and share seeds. This means that indigenous peoples are prevented from growing the crops that they have relied on for centuries, or even millennia.

David: Yes, even in Europe there are efforts now to criminalise the sharing of seeds. The problem is that the law – state law – is often employed in the service of enclosure. However, there are also some instances where the law has been used to protect the commons. These amount to what you might call ‘legal hacks’. An example is the Creative Commons licenses, which allow authors to retain copyright over their works, and be acknowledged for it, whilst still making them freely available for others to copy, share and modify. The General Public License for free and open software does the same thing for software code. The point of legal hacks is to use the existing legal system against its intended purposes in order to protect the rights of commoners to share.

Jane: Why do you think that enclosure is becoming so much more pervasive in our present time?

David: Because the political system has bought into the economics of capitalism and we have what I call a ‘market–state alliance’. Enclosure is so prevalent that there has not really been much public discourse about what is happening. It is just seen as inevitable, and even desirable. So there is a lot of debate about whether resources like water,

power or transport should be managed by the state or by private enterprise, but really, this is a specious choice. The larger debate, which has not been joined at all, is whether these things should be self-managed as commons, outside of the direct control of government or markets. Part of the point of the commons is to provide a language for naming this process of privatisation and state control, and to point out that there are feasible alternatives...

Cooperation and Flourishing

Jane: I can see how the enclosure of land could be wealth-generating from a certain perspective. But in other cases, it seems that enclosure must be directly counter-productive. You talk a lot about what is happening within academia, where openness and sharing is surely a necessity for successful work.

David: Well, enclosure clearly does not support the historic goals of academia or the aims of science. But it is very consistent with the goal of corporations who want to use academia's research for their proprietary benefit at minimal or no cost. Nowadays, there are lots of corporate partnerships with academic departments which allow these companies to appropriate the resulting research, and deny it to their competitors or to other academics and the public. My feeling is that university administrators have not shown the kind of leadership or vision that is needed to reclaim control of the very resources that they (or often, we as taxpayers) are financing. Why do they allow their researchers to publish their papers in commercial journals, which then copyright them and sell them back to university libraries at exorbitant subscription rates? There are many alternative ways of sharing knowledge within a discipline or to the public, such

as open-access publishing or, more broadly, open educational resources such as open text-books or open data commons... It is just so enormously more efficient and innovative to share knowledge than to lock it up.

Jane: This aspect of greater efficiency and productivity seems to be one of the most important features of the new conception of the commons. And also the idea of flourishing in its widest sense: human flourishing – meaning the flourishing of our humanity. Why do you think that commons are more conducive to this than a market-driven economy?

David: A key idea of the commons is 'inalienability'. This means that something is not for sale. Market categories of control and management are becoming so pervasive in human life... – and it is profoundly dehumanising. This is now going on in so many parts of the world that the managers of big data, like *Google* and *Facebook*, are superimposing these values on us as they seek to monetise our personal data.

So it is important that we begin to assert that there are some parts of our life which are inalienable and not governed by market norms. The commons is about carving out protected spaces for a different kind of humanity to emerge. This is both a personal, existential necessity, and a challenge to create new types of institutions.

Jane: So how would you define this different kind of humanity?

David: It is one that is developed in relationship with others. We are not self-made in the way that the market presumes that we should be; we are not *homo economicus*. Identity and human flourishing come about through having a connection, a relationship with others, including non-human life and

the earth itself. A commons is a vehicle for discovering our common purposes together in an organic, place-based context. This general scenario is quite different from a market culture where each of us is seen as a fungible unit of humanity that can be deployed here, there or anywhere on the planet. Meaning arises out of relationships, and the market as a vehicle for impersonal transactions does not provide that; it provides commodities through which we can, at best, buy a kind of identity.

Jane: You have talked about new research which is showing the importance of this cooperative side of human nature in our evolution. Neo-liberal economics, by contrast, goes hand-in-hand with a more Darwinian idea of progress.

David: ... many contemporary evolutionary scientists are pointing out that cooperation is far more pervasive in the history of the human species than the brutal competitiveness of neo-Darwinism, and that it has been essential to our survival.

Jane: There is a very interesting quote from Martin Nowak, Professor of Biology and Mathematics at Harvard University: “Perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of evolution is its ability to generate cooperation in a competitive world”.

David: Yes... while predatory, self-serving individuals may succeed within groups, a group committed to collective action that cooperates within its own members, beats selfish groups in terms of evolution. So there is some fascinating historical evidence which shows that cooperation is really our fate, as opposed to the two-hundred-year epiphenomenon of homo economicus. Of course, a larger question is the purpose to which

cooperation is put – whether to advance the usual capitalist accumulation or to develop new types of social cooperation and institutions.

Jane: Anyone who has ever attempted any kind of communal action will know only too well that there are a whole host of difficulties which arise between people when they try to work together. It is not generally easy to reach agreement, to work out the protocols for actions, etc. So you have made it clear that the commons is not a utopian vision: it does not pretend to have all the answers.

David: Absolutely. The idea of the commons is not a magic pixie-dust for solving all our problems. However, what it does do – unlike a lot of large-scale structures of politics – is to provide a serious vehicle for deliberation and taking account of other people’s views in order to come to a common purpose. This can work especially well at a smaller scale, but it can also apply to larger organisations.

One of the criticisms levelled at the commons is that it can’t scale up, meaning that it is stuck with operating only at a very local level. It is true that it won’t scale in the way that we are used to, in a hierarchical way to create a single, large organisation. But what can happen is emulation and federation. Lots of smaller scale commons can be in communication with one another and build on each other’s innovations, as we see in many digital spaces where countless open-source communities are collaborating with each other.

In this way, we can have both meaningful self-governance and production through commons, but, also operate on a larger scale. The term that has been used to describe this is ‘cosmo-local’ production. This means global collaboration of knowledge and design through the

internet in an open-source way, but local production using inexpensive, modular and locally sourceable materials without large transport costs. This is a different logic, a different pattern of behaviour, from the 20th-century industrial model of how you build and scale something. I think this is definitely the future. There is a quote that I love from the Belgian designer Thomas Lommée: “The next big thing will be a lot of small things”. This is what we are struggling to invent right now: how can a lot of small things interconnect and nourish each other without having large centralised bureaucracies directing them?

Jane: We do have some examples of commons that work on a large scale, for example, Wikipedia. This seems to me to illustrate very well the importance of protocols, because it has very strict procedures for editing articles, and it is policed to prevent the information becoming corrupted.

David: Yes, it is remarkable that an organisation of such a size manages to operate as an open-access site. It has some governance issues, however: it is a very male dominated – younger male dominated – community, and there are also philosophical debates about whether its content should be inclusivist – meaning that virtually all

content, however seemingly trivial, should be allowed – or whether it should be something that is more curated and editorially controlled. Wikipedia is still fairly young, so many problems of large-scale commons are novel and not yet fully resolved...

The Deeper Philosophy of the Commons

Jane: So would you say that the idea of the commons is most useful because it helps us to articulate things which had previously been rather invisible?

David: Absolutely. It helps to make many phenomena which until now have been radically disconnected or isolated culturally legible. The fact that seed-sharing in order to prevent proprietary control of the seed stock, can be seen as similar to code-sharing is an example. People can see that they share an identity as commoners who are fighting over-marketisation, and that they have a common aim in wanting self-determination and control over the resources upon which they depend. This phenomenon is going on in countless different realms. The idea of the commons helps to provide a cultural framework, an historical context and a coherent philosophy for protecting the things that matter to them.

OUR WEBSITE - www.douglassocialcredit.com

If you find *The Social Artist* interesting, thought-provoking, inspiring, with signposts to a better and more sustainable way of using our human resources (and the knowledge and skills left to us by our forbears) and those of the natural world, in such a small journal – just think what our website can offer. Its treasures include all you need to know about Social Credit, its meaning and its history, back numbers of its journals dating back to the early 1930s, access to its library, countless articles, both contemporary and from past decades, and significant books available both electronically and for purchase.

Power: The Central Issue

The Ecologist Collective

Enclosure forces us to confront the issue of power, of who controls resources and decision-making, of how power is exercised, by whom and for whose benefit. If the beneficiaries of enclosure have been able to maintain their power, it is not because those who have been disadvantaged by the process are compliant — on the contrary, resistance to enclosure is a constant everyday phenomenon — but because enclosers have built up structures of social control that enable them to maintain their power and influence despite resistance from the commons.

Understanding these structures — how they work and who the major players are — is vital to the struggle to reclaim the commons. For it is such structures, rather than “lack of political will” or “insufficient knowledge”, which are the major barriers to reclaiming the commons.

Today, economic and political power is entrenched in a network of interest groups whose influence on policy lies in the scope and intricacy of the mutually-beneficial, though often uneasy, alliances that hold them together. Such alliances now bind industrialists to government officials, politicians to individual companies, companies to the military, the military to the state, the state to aid agencies, aid agencies to corporations, corporations to academia, academia to regulatory agencies, and regulatory agencies to industry. Although the alliances may be unequal, all the partners have something to gain from joining

forces. The result is a web of interlocking interests that effectively ensures that what is deemed “good” for those interests is deemed “good” for society at large. Transnational Corporations (TNCs) epitomize the logic of enclosure. Disembedded from any one culture and any one environment, they owe no loyalty to any community, any government or any people anywhere in the world. They are the most blatant example of what the anthropologist Roy Rappaport has called the “special purpose institution”. Such institutions — from the military to government departments and international agencies — are driven by the desire to promote their own interests, to perpetuate themselves and to increase their power and influence. Decisions are not made because they are of benefit to the community or on environmental grounds but because they serve the institution’s particular vested interest. Employees are similarly disembedded from the real world. When acting for the organization, company loyalty takes precedence over the moral and cultural restraints that mediate the rest of their lives. Dennis Levine, a Wall Street high-flyer who was imprisoned for insider trading, captures the detached world in which much corporate decision-making takes place: “We had a phenomenal enterprise going on Wall Street, and it was easy to forget that the billions of dollars we threw around had any material impact upon the jobs and, thus, the daily lives of millions of Americans. All too often the Street

seemed to be a giant Monopoly board and this game-like attitude was clearly evident in our terminology. When a company was identified as an acquisition target, we declared that it was 'in play'. We designated the playing pieces and strategies in whimsical terms: white knight, target, shark repellent, the Pac-Man defence, poison pill, greenmail, the golden parachute. Keeping a scorecard was easy — the winner was the one who finalized the most deals and took home the most money.”

The power wielded by these organizations is greater than that of many, if not all, governments and makes a mockery of certain countries' claims to democracy. With the world as their gaming-table, TNCs are beholden neither to local communities nor to national

electorates, but can dictate policy through their control of markets and the economic havoc they can cause by withdrawing support from a government. As such, they are the chief obstacle to the resolution of our environmental and social problems. If incalculably more money has been spent in the last 40 years on nuclear power rather than solar energy, for example, this is not because communities or electorates have favoured nuclear over solar; it is because TNCs, acting in alliance with state corporations, stand to benefit more from nuclear energy, whereas solar power has a potential to put control of energy back into the hands of the community.

This material was first published in *The Ecologist*, Vol.22, No.4, July/August 1992

Subsistence, not crisis: we can't eat money! (continued)

Veronica Bennholdt-Thomsen

Five elements in particular impede perception of subsistence today:

Disregard for women's work in the modern sexual division of labor

With industrialization, regard for women's work did not increase, but decreased. This was systematized by the model of the male breadwinner and female housewife. Women's crucially important care-taking is not recognized as work and is thus seen as having no economic value. The negative evaluation of women's subsistence work has put

its cultural mark on all of women's activities. That is the reason why also for wage work, women are on average paid less than men, and why they seem predestined for temporary and short-term employment. We have called this phenomenon the “housewife-ization” of wage labor. It is one of the primary ways that the miserable conditions of wage labor – for both women and men – could proliferate unhampered during this crisis.

Disregard for peasant farming

For decades it has been difficult to

integrate peasant farming, as opposed to the landed nobility and colonial plantations, into the maximization economy. Defense mechanisms against industrialization and profit orientation come from the relative frugality of peasant farmers, their attachment to the land and their communities, as well as their concept of growth in line with nature. In the opinion of the non-peasant majority, this outlook was and is still considered as uneconomic, as peasant farming has reputedly no value for the overall economy. The dominantly negative connotations still associated with the concept of subsistence stem from this discussion. Namely that economic activity for life's *necessities* -- instead of for *profit* -- is backward, in fact not an economic activity at all and thus must be overcome. This subsistence-destroying viewpoint has shaped both the World Bank's policies and the European Union's agricultural policies.

Disregard for nature

Since the modern era, Western thought has regarded nature as something to be freely used and exploited, apparently without consequence. Nature has value only when it becomes private property, thus acquiring monetary exchange value. The concept of "the commons," commonly shared access to nature's bounty, is fast disappearing. The modern concept of nature is ultimately the background against which women's work, colonial and neo-colonial regions, and peasant production are considered economically irrelevant, if not completely invisible.

Colonialist looting

The colonies were seen as both a seemingly inexhaustible reservoir of natural resources and of indigenous labor. Both were appropriated by force,

in fact plundered. In the 20th century, the economics of colonial rule were maintained through development policies, now continued with the policies of globalization.

Fear of scarcity

The collective and neurotic fear of scarcity prevents us from recognizing the substance or physical reality of subsistence.

The real riches -- healthy food, protective homes and social ties — can no longer be seen through the money-centric, greedy glasses of the bourgeoisie. For them, only money and commodities are real. The subsistence economy of caring work without money, as in the family, and the appropriation of natural goods without money, as in the peasant commons economy, are de-economized and delegitimated. With all that is life-sustaining defined away, subsistence can now be withheld without moralistic or legal doubts. This creates a modern paradox: scarcity leads to growth and growth leads to scarcity.

Supplying ourselves and doing manual labor are much more than the mere production of necessary goods. They are in themselves processes of understanding. We discover that we have skills, we experience ourselves empowered and able to give something of ourselves. We learn once again to make room for feelings of closeness with our natural environment.

With a subsistence perspective, empowerment of the individual against the 'diabolic' power of the 'system' becomes tangible. Feelings of powerlessness against the authorities over us are unnecessary. Rather we must stop seeing ourselves as victims. And this is possible because we ourselves are taking charge of our lives. The call to

the individual and the civil society (as a term for associated individuals instead of class, people, or nation) to campaign for an ecologically and socially just world, as raised today by a broad spectrum of movements, arises from this view from below.

What matters now is that we -- all sovereign individuals capable of acting responsibly -- withdraw from the forced maximization economy by refusing to participate. The individualization through the globalized commodity economy, along with the isolation it creates, is probably the biggest problem of our time. But it is also our biggest opportunity. Because the need for our own subsistence necessities is the source for political, social and economic empowerment of the individual.

One of the most important insights of subsistence theory is the widely researched fact that subsistence production did not disappear in the 20th century and will not disappear in the 21st, even under the conditions of the generalized wage/money/ commodity society. But it changes its appearance. While the appreciation of subsistence

production and work declines, direct and self-sufficient caring activity is not disappearing and cannot disappear. For without nurturing and being nurtured, without caring and being cared for, without giving and receiving gifts, we could not exist. Empathy and caring attention cannot be turned into commodities.

For caring is physical and tangible: providing good food, a warm blanket and those vegetables passed over the garden fence. The existential requirements and needs for subsistence remain out of reach for *homo oeconomicus*, mister money. The culture of subsistence, the subsistence knowledge that still exists, do-it-yourself and self-sufficiency, are the basis for a civil society of liberation from the straightjacket of the growth economy. While money separates individuals from each other, the immediacy of subsistence brings us together.

This extract is taken from "Money or Life: What makes us Really Rich" English translation of the German original "Geld oder Leben: Was uns wirklich reich macht" (oekom press, Munich, 2010)

Secularism

Peter Maurin

When religion has nothing to do with education,
education is only information,
plenty of facts
and no understanding.

When religion has nothing to do with politics,
politics is only factionalism--
"Let's turn the rascals out
so our good friends can get in."

When religion has nothing to do with business
business is only commercialism.
And when religion has nothing to do with either education, politics or business,
you have the religion of business taking the place of the business of religion.

Extract from Peter Maurin *Easy Essays*, available at <http://www.easyessays.org/>

Community

Church Was Supposed to Be an Alternative Society

Richard Rohr

Living in community means living in such a way that others can access me and influence my life and that I can get “out of myself” and serve the lives of others. Community is a world where brotherliness and sisterliness are possible. By community, I don’t mean primarily a special kind of structure, but a network of relationships. On the whole, we live in a society that’s built not on community and cooperation but on individuality, greed, and competition—often resulting in oppressive economic systems, unnecessary suffering, and environmental devastation.

God will always bring yet more life and wholeness out of seeming chaos and death. It seems to be the very job description—and full time occupation—of God (see Romans 4:17). In the words of Timothy Gorringer and Rosie Beckham, “Faith in the resurrection is the ground on which Christians hope for a different future, a transition to a society less destructive, more peaceful and more whole. Living in this hope grounds the Christian ethic of resistance and calls ekklesia [the church] to live as a ‘contrast community’ to society.”¹

Building such communities in contrast to the surrounding society of emperor-worship was precisely Paul’s missionary strategy. Small communities of Jesus’ followers would make the message believable: Jesus is Lord (rather than

Caesar is Lord); sharing abundance and living in simplicity (rather than hoarding wealth); nonviolence and suffering (rather than aligning with power). Paul was not just a mystic, but also very practical.

Paul seems to think, and I agree with him, that corporate evil can only be confronted or overcome with corporate good.

He knows that the love-transformed individual can do little against what he calls “the powers and the principalities” (see Ephesians 6:12). Today we might call powers and principalities our collective cultural moods, mass consciousness, or any institutions considered “too big to fail.” These are our idols. We are mostly oblivious to this because we take all our institutions as normal civilization and absolutely inevitable. It is the “absolutely” that makes us blind and allows us to make passing structures into complete idols. Because we partly profit from these frequently collective evils, it doesn’t look like evil at all—but something good and necessary. For instance, I’ve never once heard a sermon against the tenth commandment, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods,” because in our culture that’s the only game in town. It is called capitalism, and we live comfortably because of it. It is only our unwillingness to question such powers and principalities, or in

any way limit them (which is worship), which makes them into a false god. “The angels of darkness must always disguise themselves as angels of light” (see 2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

The individual is largely helpless and harmless standing against the system of disguise and illusion. Thankfully, we’re seeing many people, religious and secular, from all around the world,

coming together to form alternative communities for sharing resources, living simply, and imagining a sustainable and nonviolent future. It is hard to imagine there will be a future without them.

Adapted from Richard Rohr: *Essential Teachings on Love*, ed. Joelle Chase and Judy Traeger (Orbis Books: 2018)

¹ Timothy Gorrige and Rose Beckham, *Transition Movement for Churches* (Canterbury Press: 2013), 79.

On War and Peace in the Middle East

Ibrahim Abouleish

In 1972 I was asked, as an Egyptian, to give a lecture about the Israel- Egyptian conflict, which people were deeply shocked about. I was happy to oblige. During the lecture I tried to illuminate my inner thoughts on this subject, which I had also talked about at the Egyptian conference in Alexandria with Nasser and Sadat years previously. I said something like: ‘Without thinking, people let themselves, their wives and their children be roused and sacrificed for emotions like national pride, dogmatism and territorial claims. But a justification for fighting can only be seen from a higher point of view, from the ability to think about and overview complex connections. I do not believe most of my contemporaries or politicians in the Near East have this thinking ability. The problems underlying the conflict cannot be solved by a war, only through education. People need

to be educated to understand that their lives do not depend on material objects or on whether they own this or that piece of land. They need to learn to advance themselves and give their children the chance to do so too. If humans are not able to think, who is going to think for them? The devil riding them! Neither Nasser nor the Israelis are acting out of an overview of higher ideas, but out of their emotions. But people err as long as they are acting following their emotions alone. They listen to devilish inspirations, which lead them to war and destruction. If you ask me what I would do instead I would say: put all the energy, all the money into schools, into establishing the infrastructure and creating jobs. Discuss questions of cultural exchange and research and not themes that can only divide the people. I would like to shout out loud: stop, do not act until you are

mature enough to be able to decide!’

Extract from *Sekem: A Sustainable Community in the Egyptian Desert*

The organization **SEKEM** (Ancient Egyptian: ‘vitality from the sun’) was founded in 1977 by the Egyptian pharmacologist and social entrepreneur Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish in order to bring about cultural renewal in Egypt on a sustainable basis. SEKEM’s goals are to “restore and maintain the vitality of the soil and food as well as the biodiversity of nature”

through sustainable, organic agriculture and to support social and cultural development in Egypt. Revenue from the trading companies grew from 37 million Egyptian pounds in 2000 to 100 million in 2003. By 2005, the organization had established a network of more than 2,000 farmers and numerous partner organizations in Egypt, and began increasingly to seek to extend its “experience and acquired knowledge” to other countries, including India, Palestine, Senegal, Turkey, and - in partnership with the Fountain Foundation - South Africa.

Book Reviews

Free, Equal and Mutual: Rebalancing Society for the Common Good

Martin Large and Steve Briault (editors)

Hawthorne Press 2018

ISBN: 978 1-907359-94-1

Pb. 280pp. £20

Twenty chapters by thirteen individual authors presenting their views on practical implementation of Rudolf Steiner’s societal vision present the reviewer with a daunting task. The subtitle - “Rebalancing Society for the Common Good” - promises much. A glance at the cover suggests that answers to the FAQs of today are to be found within the text. As is apparent to any student of society today, ordinary men and women “feel precarious and angry, and afraid for their jobs, homes, children, health, wellbeing, identity and lifeways.” The neoliberal consensus has undoubtedly justified “the brutal implementation of market

fundamentalism” resulting in massive human insecurity and inequality. *Free, Equal and Mutual* is worth buying for several key chapters which require to be considered in depth by all who are seriously concerned about the future of humanity on this planet. Each chapter stands alone, each telling a different story from a different perspective.

Gerald Häfner describes the great longing to put the clock back and be ‘great again’, a longing which takes the form of “an ever louder derogatory whistling in an increasingly dark forest”. By inventing the money system and the internet, we have created tools with uncontrollable power, so that, like Goethe’s apprentice magician, “our way of thinking about economics, money and also democracy has arrived at a dead end”. Häfner speaks with the authority of years of experience in practical politics. Founder member of the Green Party in Bavaria, he has served as a Member of the German Parliament

for ten years, as an MEP (2009-2014) and has set up several foundations for education and training. He calls for all to develop a deeper understanding of the forces underlying economics. Through the money and price system we are all interconnected by a complex network of supply chains. These need to be studied and understood if we are to “build an economic order based on brotherhood” on a world scale. Such a world must be founded upon democratic principles. However, democracy requires an open and public space where people can meet and have exchanges with one another, so that we can learn to appreciate another’s point of view and adjust our views. This space no longer exists, for the Internet has taken its place. As we use the Internet, unknown to us, algorithms work in the background, so that what comes to us is aligned with our past searches and preferences. Different world views and life intentions are totally excluded. We don’t notice, or even know of, 99% of what is being said, because it is not highlighted and brought to our attention by the algorithms. Brief ‘teasers’ test out what people want to see. Hence the Internet inculcates shrillness, obscenity, brutality, lasciviousness, arrogance and a lack of tact or respect. For Häfner, the urgent task is for each of us to study our own role in the economic order. Every purchase links us with the lives of individuals across the world, through established supply chains determined by powers currently beyond our comprehension. The task is to examine our assumptions about the legitimacy of the power by which these chains are constructed. Through this process we can cooperate in establishing principles of social threefolding as mapped out by Rudolf Steiner a century ago.

Throughout the history of capitalism

farmers have produced food by working with the forces of Nature. And mothers have devoted their unpaid time and labour to the rearing of every one of us citizens. Without the free gifts of Nature, and the freely-gifted unpaid time of all our mothers, there would *be* no society, balanced or unbalanced. Thus the “new kind of gift economy”, the development of Community Supported Agriculture as summarised by Robert Karp, paves the way for individuals, in their households and communities, to take the best from the new technologies whilst taking the best also from the wisdom teachings of ancient texts. See, *e.g.*, Galatians 5: 16-25. The self-less love of a mother for her infant, and of the farmer for the land, remains eternally central to what it is to be human.

In the chapter entitled “Images of the Human Being and Their Effect on Humanity’s Relationship to Power” Andrew Scott presents individual students and study groups with an essential resource for exploring the hidden assumptions behind public and private policy decisions. Drawing upon a study published by the Center for the Study of Social Policy at Stamford University in 1982, he outlines the five “noisy images of human being”, the firmly held beliefs that lie behind the seemingly intractable problems currently faced by humanity and the Earth.

1. Humans as Separate from God and Nature.
2. Humankind over Things
3. Economic Man
4. Humankind as Beast
5. Human as Mechanism. The purpose of the chapter is, in the words of its author, “to help the reader to make the connection between their individual self and social threefolding, with the aim of providing new insights and new drive to

make a difference”.

Free, Equal and Mutual requires study time, but that time is well worth

The Violence of Austerity

Vickie Cooper and David Whyte (Editors)

Pluto Press (May 2017)

ISBN: 978-0745399485

pb £13.76 256pp

“Austerity is a class project that disproportionately targets and affects working class households and communities and, in so doing, protects concentrations of elite wealth and power.”

– *The Violence of Austerity*.

“Austerity is not necessary. Today’s debt crisis is a political result of relinquishing regulatory and tax power to the financial sector. Its lobbyists are now trying to use this crisis, (The Great Financial Crisis), to their advantage, as an opportunity to lock in their gains and rewrite the social contract. Governments henceforth are to serve high finance not labour and industry.”

– *Finance Capitalism and Its Discontents*,
Michael Hudson.

In their excellent introduction to this anthology, its editors – Vickie Cooper and David Whyte – trace a wide spectrum of social ills such as ruthless evictions and community violence, to cuts in public sector funding. Their primary goal is to show how the consequences of the politics of austerity, “[have] left none but the most privileged in the UK untouched,” and how that is, “simply part of the price that has been paid to maintain the basic structure of social inequality, whether measured by politicians as ‘collateral damage’ or by economists as ‘externalities’”. They define austerity as, “a period of fiscal discipline in which governments make significant cuts to public expenditure as a means of reducing public debt”. They soundly

spending. An ideal book to order for your local library. And thereby hangs another tale!

Frances Hutchinson

refute, “three deceptions that have led to the ‘logic’ of austerity that legitimizes fiscal consolidation”:

1. The public sector is to blame for the Global Financial Crisis (GFC);
2. Austerity is necessary;
3. We’re all in this together.

They argue that, “If one fact stands above all others as an indication that austerity is not all it claims to be, it is that the UK’s national debt has risen by at least 50 percent since the austerity programme began in 2010. It is this fact that demonstrates most clearly that the politics of austerity is less concerned with reducing the deficit than it is with preserving the wealth of those at the top.” They point out that this is not new, and quote John McMurtry, (*The Cancer Stage of Capitalism*), who noted – a decade before the GFC – that cuts to public services were attacking the “life-serving systems of social bodies” in order to ensure public resources are “re-channelled to the expansion of money-to-more money circuits with no commitment to life function.” “The pattern of redistributing sources from public to private hands is so aggressive, he argued, that the signifiers of its agents do not disguise the underlying violence of the appropriation – ‘axing social programs, slashing public services, subjecting societies to shock treatments’”. They go on to quote geographer, David Harvey, “who introduced the widely cited concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’. Harvey claims that the transfer of state assets to private ownership always implies a process of dispossession and general loss of rights. Thus, aspects of neoliberal reform that we are all now familiar with – privatization,

commodification, financialisation and the recalibration of people's entitlement to state services and funds – result in the redistribution and accumulation of wealth for some, while ensuring the loss of rights for others. Harvey claims that accumulation by dispossession is the driving force of contemporary capitalism, and that this process of capital accumulation has become more predatory and violent under austerity programmes” (David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

They then quote economist Paul Krugman: “The austerity drive in Britain isn’t really about debt and deficits at all; it’s about using deficit panic as an excuse to dismantle social programs...the drive for austerity was about [using] the crisis, not [solving] it”. They identify as “the standout beneficiary of austerity,” the system of financialization. They define the violence of austerity as “institutional violence...a form of violence organized and administered through legitimate means”. They quote Hannah Arendt, “whose essay, *On Violence*, sought to dissect the relation between political power and the organization of violence, [and] argued that the use of force to achieve political ends had become so normalized that the ‘enormous role that violence plays in human affairs’ had become ‘taken for granted and therefore neglected.’”

The Violence of Austerity is a catalogue of “institutional violence.” “It is about the life-shattering violence caused by decisions that are made in parliamentary chambers and government offices. This book is about the violence of politics”. They “focus attention on the assemblage of bureaucracies and institutions through which austerity policies are made real. Not only do institutions help to convert policies from an abstract level

to a material one, they are the very sites through which highly political strategies like austerity, are depoliticized and their harmful effect made to appear moral and mundane”. Cooper and Whyte view austerity as being a “much more naked form of class politics,” and observe that “rapidly growing levels of inequality have produced some ugly political phenomena.” They report that, for example, “hate crimes against people with disabilities more than doubled between 2008 and 2014. This trend has been widely attributed to ‘benefits propaganda’”. They denounce austerity as “a political strategy based on myth, deception and misinformation...a moralizing discourse that supports a viciously immoral politics... a cruel and violent strategy of class domination”. They emphasize that, “the various forms of violence detailed in this book (destitution, homelessness...having electricity or gas cut off), have become a very real possibility for a fast-growing section of the population and, as a number of chapters in this book document, it is the [threat] of violence that has become absolutely central to the power that institutional violence wields over its targets”. It is, in their opinion, “imperative that we reverse the effects of the crisis” and they “hope that one contribution made by this book is to show that there is no shortage of opportunity of building solidarity around resistance to the violence of austerity”. They list “activist groups and campaigns that have directly confronted the government in the courts and on the streets,” and promise that “some of the chapters in this book help to shine a light on those anti-austerity strategies of resistance”.

In the twenty-four chapters that follow, an impressive roster of accomplished academics, researchers, activists and journalists present well documented articles that chronicle the catastrophic

assault on planet and people perpetrated through neoliberal austerity politics. The contributors represent a wide range of perspectives – sociology, criminology, environmental politics and policy, law, geography – and expose a shocking spectrum of disaster. The result is a treasury of reliable information and ideas, and a compelling case for the urgent need to design and implement a new economic system that will meet the needs of the twenty-first century. Throughout the slavish commitment to the same globally dominant ideology in Canada, COMer has consistently worked to refute the neoliberal ‘logic’ and to record and condemn its practice and its consequences. We are so distracted by endless reports of sensational and obvious crime, that the legal crime behind the failing society that generates such acts of violence either escapes our detection altogether, or is dismissed as being hopelessly beyond our control. Ironically, we leave it, instead, to

‘the strong arm of the law’ to protect us. We would do well to share informative and encouraging resources like *The Violence of Austerity* and, thus fortified, to join the growing global movement for fundamental change.

“The true criticism of market society is not that it was based on economics – in a sense, every and any society must be based on it – but that its economy was based on self-interest.”
The Great Transformation, Karl Polanyi.

Anne Emmett

Vickie Cooper is Lecturer in Social Policy Criminology at The Open University. David Whyte is Professor of Socio-Legal Studies at the University of Liverpool and the editor of *How Corrupt is Britain?*

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Bookworm: A Memoir of Childhood Reading

Lucy Mangan

Square Peg (1 March 2018)

978-0224098854

336pp hb £14.99

‘Bookworm’ is a heartwarming, informative and witty book that I devoured with the childlike absorption and enthusiasm described so well by Lucy Mangan.

In this charming book, Mangan, the self-acknowledged bookworm, relives her childhood and her obsession with reading by chronicling her favourite books from *The Hungry Caterpillar* to her teenage favourites.

Though necessarily and unapologetically personal, this book excels at capturing the essence of what makes childhood reading uniquely special. She is wistful

about the time when the real world did not intrude so much, when total immersion in a book was possible and marvels at the “porousness of the boundary between fantasy and reality” which heightens childhood reading to a plane that just can’t be reached in later life.

As a contemporary of mine, Mangan shines a light on my own childhood which undoubtedly increased my love for this book. So many of the books she’d read and loved were the books I’d read and loved too. I too have a memory of flashcards; also had the edition of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* illustrated by Faith Jacques; like her, had a completist’s obsession with series of books and also imbibed books set in boarding schools by the dozen. I even found myself looking at Lucy’s Bookshelf at the end of the book to make sure she’d read *Goodnight Mister Tom*. She has and loves it just as much as

I do!

Not every book withstands the adult analysis as well as Michelle Magorian's classic, however. Throughout the book, she makes an effort to acknowledge contemporary criticism and to wrench each book from its place in her own personal history onto a more public stage, to contextualise and examine her love in as true and balanced a light as is possible when one is dealing with the sacrosanct.

This leads to some interesting musings about quality and bowdlerising, the act of removing material that is offensive or improper. It is hard for any adult reader to return to Enid Blyton's books and Mangan does it with humour and honesty and just enough respect for her younger self to still acknowledge the former obsession. Blyton was a prolific writer and consequently offered the bookworm enough fodder to sate even the hungriest reader. Her books were also reassuring to a young reader offering tidy and happy conclusions to each adventure, reliably action-packed plots and enough nostalgia and rural charm to make many a suburban or city dwelling young reader yearn to lie on a bed of bracken.

As an adult, though, Mangan has to admit that not only is the quality unreadably bad, but the troubling social, racial and gender prejudices that pepper the books fundamentally and irreparably damage one's youthful infatuation. She can still, however, give Blyton well-earned credit for fostering a love for future reading and has ultimately drawn the conclusion that books do not generally benefit from being updated and stripped of their more outmoded elements.

Partly, this conviction derives from her love of language, that is so evident throughout the book. "An author's vocabulary should exceed her reader's grasp." Through books you can accumulate new words with a hoarder's

enthusiasm. If 'tunic' is modernised to 'school uniform' how will you ever know what a tunic is?

And it is not only new and beautiful words that make childhood reading so marvellous! There is full acknowledgment given to the power of illustration. A book's art is intrinsically and inseparably linked to its story and I fully agree that the pictures in your childhood books are "destined to live forever in the mind's eye".

Mangan writes beautifully about the transformative powers of books, the power they have to inform and to show you something from another perspective. This develops throughout the book as she ages and her reading tastes develop. Young Lucy learns, for example, that watermelons in foreign places are much more plentiful than in England. Older Lucy learns that life is complex, reads of nuance and compromise and tyranny. One cannot help but draw the conclusion that we would all be better off reading about things from another viewpoint.

Equally persuasive, however, is her description of the importance of identification in literature. Seeing herself and her family depicted in *Private - Keep Out!* helped this naturally diffident child see her place in society at large. This prompts her to a rallying cry for diversity in books so children from all backgrounds can see their lives in print.

In *Bookworm*, Mangan encapsulates the dichotomy of expressing the universal joy of a pastime which is fundamentally solitary which to me perfectly sums up the wonders of reading. The characters that populate her house, her school and her favourite books are all portrayed with such affection and humour that they will leap off the page into your heart.

Rachel Hyland lives in Bristol with her husband and two daughters and works as a Copywriter

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

The quarterly journal is freely available electronically. For both print out and read only versions see www.douglassocialcredit.com.

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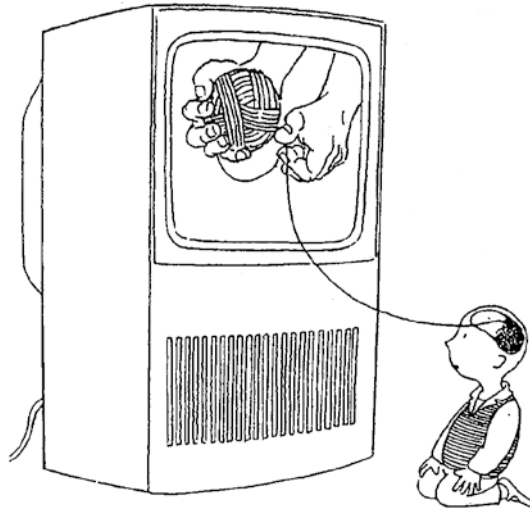
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Cartoon first printed in the May/June/July 2017 issue of the Michael journal: www.michaeljournal.org, it is reprinted here with kind permission.

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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