

Let's Schmooze

Other issues of *Let's Schmooze* can be found on the web at www.heirling.com

Capitalism ~ Problematic Assumptions

When we think of toxic poisons, we usually think of tangible things such as lethal liquids or compounds. But, intangibles ~ invisible things ~ can also be lethal. Ideas themselves can be lethal.

That's right ~ ideas can be lethal!

Let's look at one of them ~ the idea that *consumption for the sake of consumption is a good thing*.

Pundits and soothsayers incessantly claim that "everybody needs to consume as much as possible because it's good for the economy." That questionable claim lies at the macro level ~ the general economic.

Now, for an analogy at the micro level ~ we know that consumption per se destroys and kills the human body. For example, consumptive tuberculosis (otherwise known as the white death) is a lethal, wasting disease that eventually kills the host ~ the human body.

At a macro level, can it be that consumer consumption will eventually kill its host ~ our planet? After all, we are consuming all of our important raw resources at an unsustainable rate.

Once the important raw resources are gone, our economy will die, just as the human body dies when tuberculosis takes over. It's something to think about.

Another 2nd poisonous idea that is being bandied about is parallel to the first one ~ that ***growth for the sake of growth is a good thing***. Again, pundits and soothsayers claim that the economy needs to unceasingly grow as much as possible because it's good for the economy (and of course, as an aside, for corporate profits).

Now, for another analogy at the micro level ~ we know that unbridled growth per se destroys and kills the human body. Cancer is a relentless disease whose unbridled growth eventually kills the host ~ the human being.

At a macro level, can it be that "growth for the sake of growth" will eventually kill its host ~ our economy ~ and ourselves in the process? After all, human population growth is fueling Malthusian problems that will eventually wipe out most of humanity. Again, it's something to think about.

What we probably need to do is to consume and grow only as we really need to, and not just for the sheer sake of consuming and growing. Many times it is a good thing for something to stop consuming and growing, just as it is considered a good thing for tuberculosis to stop consuming the lungs and for any cancers in our bodies to stop growing.

Consumption and growth are only good if (1) they have an underlying bone-fide purpose, (2) they are carefully controlled, and (3) they are halted when the underlying dynamic is satisfied ~ such as the growth of a young human body toward adulthood.

Can you imagine the horror if someone's physical body never stopped growing! That it continued to grow just for the sake of growing!

Let's be leery of these ideas that consumption and economic growth "per se" are good. These are poisonous ideas being panhandled by shady, duplicitous characters.

A 3rd nasty idea that has become deeply ingrained into the bedrock of modernity is the assertion that ***individual, personal greed is good***. Of course, to pull off this sleight-of-hand, the vice historically known as greed had to be value re-branded as "rational self-interest." The new wording "sanitizes" greed as a good thing.

The re-branded wording makes greed sound virtuous; one is only logically looking after oneself. What's wrong with that?

Plenty, it turns out! It countermands everything that has brought humanity out of the primeval jungle. The only way that human beings survived the primitive jungle was by looking out for each other. A solitary human would quickly fall to fang and claw.

It was rational *other*-interest that allowed us to crawl out of the treetops and caves and become the dominant life form on Earth. Individuals looking out only for themselves would have led to a quick species suicide. To survive, we had to have each other's backs.

In fact, when you think about it, isn't that what's wrong today? Isn't modernity's so-called rational self-interest driving us to the brink of environmental extinction? Isn't it individual, personal *corporate greed and consumer greed* that are behind the destruction of our beautiful world as humanity knew it for thousands of years?

Humanity is here for something much better than greedily consuming and growing. That's for the lesser life forms ~ not for autonomous, intelligent beings capable of reorganizing and reshaping their conditions and surroundings.

Let's concentrate on the more important things ~ like actively and consciously reshaping our world in the direction of the utopia that we all dream about ~ together, and looking out for each other in the process.

How about it?

~ *'til we meet again* ~

For a general analysis of capitalism, look for *Expressions of Consciousness* at the Books tab at www.heirling.com.