

The Ends of Capitalism and the
Ends of Creatures:
Finance, Freedom and Festival

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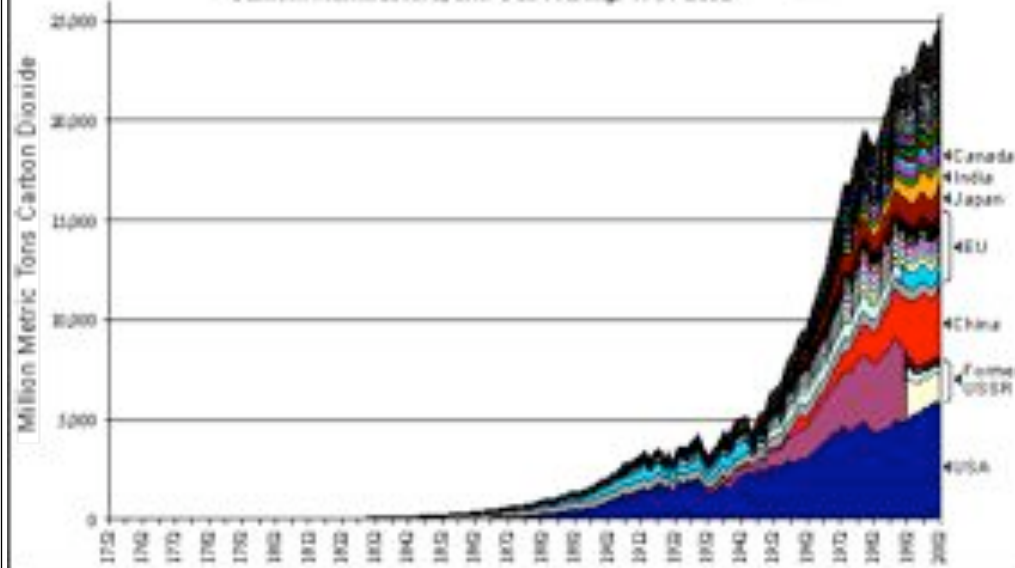
We suffer not only from the living but from the dead
(Marx, *Capital*, 20.)

For Marx the inheritance of antiquated modes of
production is the source of inherited oppressive evils

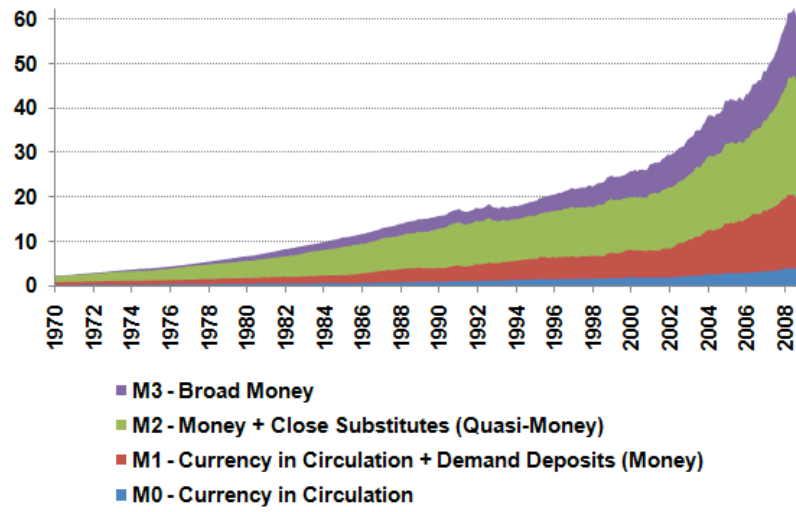
But in light of anthropogenic climate change the developing
world, and for future generations, the source of evil is the
progress of *this* generation in fossil fuelled modes of
production and value creation

Carbon intensity in the USA and Europe has *increased* in
the last fifteen years of neoliberal global capitalism

Figure 2: Global CO2 Emissions from Fossil Fuel Burning, Cement Manufacture, and Gas Flaring: 1751-2002

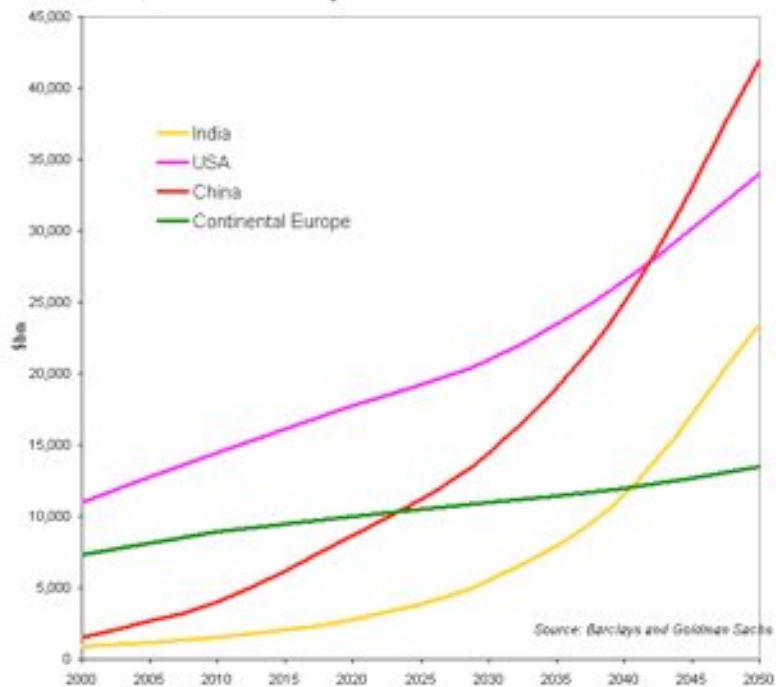


Global Money Supply from Jan 1970 - Oct 2008 Measured in US\$ Trillions



www.DollarDaze.org

Projected GDP



Misplaced Concreteness

- Humanity should be on guard against all generalization of ideas that causes us to lose sight of the facts, and above all against the error of identifying the public good with wealth, abstracted from the sufferings of the human beings (and other creatures) who create it. (Sismondi 1827)















The process by which banks create money is so simple that the mind is repelled. Where something so important is involved a deeper mystery seems only decent.

J. K. Galbraith

Creating Money

- Money is created by banks lending money at interest to make a profit
- This is a debt-based money system
- The era of deregulation grew the quantity of debt and reduced government controls over it
- Interest rates the principal remaining control

Credit Crisis

- Too much money created in relation to real world of commodities, goods & services
- Value of money declines, and hence goods on which debts secured - houses, shares
- Safety net is unemployment benefit
- But governments in UK, USA took view more was needed and they tried to pump up the supply of money, despite its falling value - **the disease presented as cure**

Usury and Growth

- Debt based economy requires growth to prevent collapse and depression because growth is needed to meet interest payments
- When gold - or conch shells - unit of exchange growth there were physical limits to money supply (though Inca gold fueled European expansion in C17 - 18)
- Money interest is destructive hence Jewish Christian and Islamic critique of usury

Usury is Foundational

- Translation of land and labour into money value advanced by John Locke (and Deng Xiaoping)
- Move to money values, and coercive markets in land & labour, created debt-based societies
- Debt or landlessness drive labourers to factories
- Financed consumerism a new form of coercion which also uses land and people as instruments to growth of stored corporate wealth

Discounting Climate Change Costs

- Usurious economics passes on present ecological and social costs to future people
- Discounting future costs of adapting to climate change is a form of usury
- Jesus' first sermon in Capernaum announces freedom to captives and debt slaves created by coercive Roman land and labour value creation

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4)

Jubilee

- The acceptable year of the Lord is a reference to Leviticus 25
- Sabbath and Jubilee are inter-related
- Usurious capitalism is coercive because money value is unconstrained
- Justice - to each according to his need - is replaced by utility maximisation & inequality

Theological Roots of Capitalism

- Reformation freeing of money from ban on usury directly led to paper based banking
- It is connected with a theology of work *apart* from sanctification
- Where work is not part of redemption work becomes an idol
- John Knox came to Edinburgh with this teaching and its citizens created the first paper-issuing bank, the Bank of Scotland

Money *as* Redemption

- New theology of value informed Locke - unproductive land is indicative of the fall
- The industrious redeem the land from the curse of sin and money value redeems the value of work on the land from the curse of 'moth & rust'
- Storage of money-value becomes the driving principle of modern capitalism

Jesus Against Storage

"The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' (Luke 12)

Relational Wealth

- For Jesus wealth is relational - the necessities of life flow from right relation to God, and God's justice
- Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things (the glories of Solomon) will be added unto you
- Seeking security - or deferred justice - through money value destroys spiritual dependencies from which arise true life

While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them.

Sabbath and Festival

- Sabbath is 'made for man' but it remains crucial to Christian ethics - 'seek ye first'
- Last act of worship of Christ - Mary Magdalene anointing him with perfume - is contrasted by Christ with penury and almsgiving
- True freedom from want arises from festival worship

The Sabbath as a day of rest from work does correspond to a well-founded human need-and this so much the more as for the majority of men the week's work threatens to adopt...a character which makes it difficult or impossible for the worker... to be more than a cog in a machine

...to observe the holy day means to keep oneself free for participation in the praise and worship and witness and proclamation of God in His congregation, in common thanksgiving and intercession. And the blessing and profit of the holy day definitely depend on the positive use of this freedom. At this point it is clear that its observance does not simply mean resting but, positively, the celebrating of a festival. This festival is the divine service of the congregation. Karl Barth *CD* III.4, 61-2

Money Fetishism

- Addiction to debt-based growth is a moral and spiritual disease
- Neoliberals presume that liberating money from social constraints will advance collective welfare
- Marx called the neoliberal mistake money fetishism
- It is about worship - worshipping creatures brings destruction and death to society & nature

Addicted to Growth

Debt-based economies necessitate growth to sustain businesses and jobs

In neoliberalism this involves an endless deferral of justice

The promise of 'jam tomorrow' justifies freeing of corporations and wealthy individuals from ecological or social obligations in the present

Consequently wellbeing and economic growth do not correlate

Limits to Growth

- There are ecological limits to growth
- There are moral and social limits to growth
- When these are exceeded destruction results
- USA's *moral* ecology is witness to this - crime, drug addiction, violence, mass incarceration
- So too is the earth system - these two kinds of destruction are *related*

The privilege of creating and issuing money is not only the supreme prerogative of government, but it is the government's greatest creative opportunity Abraham Lincoln

Since end of gold standard national governments have derogated this creative instrument to bankers

Consequently faced with a planetary emergency they have no creative powers to play with

Instead they turn again to the bankers to construct another money making scheme to 'fix' the problem

Monetary Reform

- Slowing and reversing the growth of debt-based money is essential to recovering quality of life on the planet as primary goal
- 'The issuing power of money should be taken from the banks, and restored to the people to whom it belongs' *Thomas Jefferson*
- 'the government should create, issue and circulate all the currency and credit needed to satisfy the spending power of the government and the buying power of consumers' *Abraham Lincoln*

Restoring Seigneurage

Restoring seigneurage would give governments capacity to link money supply, quality of life, & ecological constraints

It would return value of money creation to the public purse

This enhanced value could be devoted to building a low carbon, and ecologically sustainable, economy

Chicago Plan

Banks should have saving deposits to match every debt

This is how mutuals - building societies - and the
Cooperative Bank, used to operate

A proposed Post Bank in the UK using publicly owned Post
(mail) Offices could operate on this basis

Local Money

Lewes in Sussex, England has long traditions of dissent

In 2008 the town inaugurated a new local currency
exchangeable in the town for goods and services
including at a number of chain stores

Local currencies function in a number of communities
in Ireland, Switzerland, and elsewhere

Localised units of exchange rebuild ecology of human
and land community in *place*

Work is Not the End of Humanity

- Marxian revision of capitalism sustains the basis of all value in human labour
- This value orientation is addictive
- It becomes impossible to derive value from that which is not worked on
- Protestant revolution produces a new emphasis on calling - work - for its own sake

Duty Not the Answer

- *Effort* becomes more important than the good
- Philosophy, like industry, becomes 'hurculean'
- For Kant the moral law is opposed to natural inclination
- Moderns 'distrust everything that is without effort' (Joseph Pieper) - 'no pain no gain'
- They can no longer receive life from Creation as gift - it *has* to be re-engineered

Prosperity Without Growth

- Quest for growth, industry for its own sake is driven by idleness, pride and sloth
- It is moral, intellectual, emotional idleness (Roger Scrutton)
- Leisure is not idleness - 'at the end of our striving' we rejoice and make festival
- For Aristotle we work in order not to work

Green Work?

- Doing duty by the planet risks creating a new pharisaism or green puritanism
- Instead we need to recover spiritual vision
- True work celebrates and enhances creation
- But it rests on and finds its end in leisure without which it is slavery
- And true leisure rests on true worship

Freedom and Worship

- True freedom from coercive labour value and money value arises from religion
- Only where time is received as a gift on the festal first day of the week can work be free
- The highest fulfilment is to *be* at leisure
- True being is the root of a spirituality of life - from the Eucharist to every meal, to the farm, the home, the office and the workshop

Be Still and Know

- Stillness is the heart of true leisure which is necessary for accepting reality as it is
- Stillness is the antidote to speed and speed - efficiency - is why we rarely use our bodies in meaningful work
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Work Maldistributed

- In a recession - or in a transition to a debt-based economy - unemployment is a source of alienation
- Move towards local 'slow' food suggests Chinese, Africans don't *need* to transit to our model of efficiency
- We need to replace machines with muscle
- De-energising is necessary not just decarbonisation (which is over-rated)

Leisure Without Growth

- Authentic leisure is the door beyond employment and unemployment
- Total work is in conflict with the ecology of the planet and human life - sleeplessness, restlessness, mobility, distraction, consumption
- The diseases fueled by burning fossils are as grave for the human soul as the planet

Prosperity Without Growth

- This is not just a theological pipe dream
- British Sustainable Development Commission just authored a new report
- It argues steady state economy is better for human life and for the planet
- But it would need a genuinely just economy in which need is prior to greed
- True festival is the greatest antidote to greed