



The Social Artist

Earth

Mothering

Economy

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Editorial

Does the hand that rocks the cradle in fact rule the world? Could it be that the ways we bring up children from birth to adulthood determines the kind of society in which they live? Surely not. What difference could it possibly make who cares for a child, how s/he feels, and how s/he learns to see the world in those long days of babyhood, infancy and early childhood? It could well be that the total sum of our efforts as mothers determines the range of life choices open to our children, and that those choices will in turn determine the social institutions of the future. Will our children grow up to respect themselves, to love and trust others, to feel in tune with the beauties of the natural world, and to know they are part of a meaningful whole?

In the course of the twentieth century mothering became a taboo subject. Having a child was reduced to an economic choice, like buying a new car or taking a package holiday. Children entered into economic calculations in so far as they generated demand for products specifically designed for babies and children so that they in turn become good consumers of the products of the machine age. (See Juliet Schor's work, especially *Born to Buy*). The situation

was predicted by EM Forster in his novella *The Machine Stops*. Written over a century ago, and now made into a play (see *The Machine Stops* article by Chris Long), the story tells that "parent, duty of (says the machine) ceases at birth". As in *Brave New World*, mothering is an antiquated practice now rendered both unnecessary and undesirable.

During the industrial revolution families were driven out of the villages, off the land and into the factories of the early machine age, to become wage slaves to the division of labour and the 'free' market system. The records of history show that great things were achieved. The standard of living, as measured in material terms, rocketed, as did flights to the moon. And all the while, women's bodies were used to produce the next generation of workers in the system. Gravestones in the North of England mark the sacrifices of mothers as constant childbearing in unbearable conditions sent rates of maternal and infant mortality rocketing, exactly as is happening today in so many parts of the so-called 'underdeveloped' world, where ages-old agricultural communities are driven from the land to make way for the mining of the earth's resources.

And yet it is true that every single person in a position of power in the great institutions of the world was carried in a woman's body, brought to term and cared for within a family household. We don't need to be a mother to become a human being and citizen of this world. But we do need to have a mother, and to recognise that for the whole of humanity, the nature and quality of the childhood organised by our mothers has a lasting influence over the rest of our lives.

Women have found themselves caught up in situations not of their making when it comes to child bearing and child rearing. For the wealthy in affluent circumstances, birth control offers the option to get by with a small family, or to opt out of mothering altogether. But there is a crying need for some common sense questions to be asked so that mothers can take a proactive role in shaping the institutions that shape all our lives. For, like it or not, whether we have given birth or not, we rely utterly on the children of other people's mothers. Mothers all over the world have laboured to supply the labour force of the neoliberal free market economy. They have produced the producers and consumers who will continue to wreck the earth for want of joined-up thinking.

We must educate our mothers so that they can teach us to care for Mother Earth.

Boys will be boys, and girls can be tomboys. But girls need to become aware from the outset that they face decisions which boys do not, cannot, face. If they opt to become a mother, they must be prepared to lend their body, time, emotions, intellect and social life to the bringing into the world of a helpless human being. Boys and girls, need to recognise that every single purchase they make reverberates around the world in its ecological and social impacts on mothers and their children everywhere. And above all, as aunts and uncles, grandparents, neighbours, partners and friends of the mothers, we must be prepared to look again at what we are doing to children across the world. All that is necessary is to take time out to find ways of engaging in ESLs (Ecologically Sensitive Lifestyles, see Editorial in the last issue of *The Social Artist*). Lead the children into spend-free days. Re-value your time. Take over land in your locality, local parks, allotments, woodlands, gardens of friends and neighbours, find places where the children can be free to roam. Now is the time to revolt against the deathly culture of the Machine.

OUR WEBSITE - www.dougllassocialcredit.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.

The Economy is Not Economical

Niels I Meyer, Helveg Petersen and Villy Sorensen

The economy of modern industrialized societies is not based on economization, either in theory or in practice, but on ever-increasing growth. Just as the instruments of destruction form a crucial part of production and an essential source of the profit that drives development further along the wrong road, so does the huge waste involved in capitalist means of production appear on the positive side when it comes to calculating the gross national product. Traffic accidents, for example, cause considerable human and economic loss to society, and yet they figure on the plus side of the national balance sheet because they give rise to 'productive' work in the form of repairs, medical services and so on. Despite every conceivable scientific and technical advance the social balance sheet is still so primitive that it does not give any real account of how economically natural and human resources are used.

The rule that governs individual enterprises, namely that it is bad economics to live off capital, does not govern human enterprise as a whole, if we take 'capital' to be natural resources.

One of the main reasons for this is that individual enterprises, which cannot afford to run at a loss year after year (as society as a whole can do), can afford to leave the external problems to society. This necessitates organized control on the part of society and an expanding bureaucracy, though it would be a more economical solution to change the aims and objectives of business so that they coincided with those of society. One of the features of capitalist production methods is the abundance of private decision-making bodies which have the freedom to produce what they choose and to use their profits as they wish - and which are primarily devoted to creating profits. Another feature is the competition between companies - not to be first to satisfy real needs but to win the race to exploit new technological opportunities. The result of this is that resources are being squandered at an ever-accelerating rate; both products and manufacturing machinery become obsolete before the end of their useful life. Economic life time is shorter than technical life time. It does not pay, therefore, to make products

as durable as possible: waste becomes economical.

Seen in this light, the statement that 'what is good for the big companies is good for society' begins to sound somewhat unconvincing. Indeed, it is clear that what is rational and economical for the big company may well be uneconomical, and irrational for society. Given its specific aims, the business enterprise is almost duty bound *not* to give maximum consideration to the environment. The discrepancy between private and public sector interests becomes particularly serious when business takes risks with inadequate safety measures in order to cut costs. The Seveso poisoning disaster in 1976 is a particularly grave example of such practices, but it is not the only one. The rule is that economic considerations take precedence over considerations of safety; the fact that production methods can be kept secret on grounds of competition makes it difficult for the public to maintain adequate control. Indeed, local or regional authorities often go out of their way to attract businesses which might stimulate economic development in their area. An economic system which is based *primarily* on efficient production in an atmosphere of stiff competition cannot make its *primary* objectives the creation of full employment, the protection of employees' welfare or the satisfaction of their need for meaningful work - as emerges clearly enough from the fact that many working environments, even within the welfare state, are frustrating or damaging to health. Company accounting systems reckon human labour alongside other production factors like raw materials and machinery. The traditional way of

increasing profits is to keep wages down, though the strength of the unions and even the democratic ideology of equality have made this increasingly difficult. The importation of foreign labour may reduce wages but society has to carry the expense of educating the workers and their families and the social problems that inevitably occur when a group of people is introduced into a foreign community. In most European countries the importation of foreign labour during a boom period has given rise to increased problems during the subsequent recession, when the trend to reduce human labour becomes more acute. 'It is thought-provoking and symptomatic,' writes Karl Henrik Pettersson in his book *Reap the Whirlwind* (p.106), 'that of the gross investments of developed countries some 60-70% are devoted to rationalization and new forms of technology for increasing efficiency, the ultimate aim of which is to replace labour by capital'. When business 'rationalizes away' the labour force, society must again carry the economic burden in the form of unemployment benefits, retraining costs, etc.

It is of course possible, in theory at any rate, to combat this trend from within the economic system. Modern management theory has made it plain that performance deteriorates when the working environment is bad and that greater influence over one's own working conditions increases efficiency, but there is little evidence of these perceptions being put into practice. Nor has the liberalistic belief that ownership provides an incentive for supreme effort been reflected in any endeavour to secure ownership for employees in general.

According to some of the modern liberal economists it is also possible to include the so-called externalities in the company balance sheet, though business has seldom made any active effort to do so. Besides, the question still remains whether it is in fact possible to measure and account for damage to health and environment. How high a price should we put on the absence of bird song, on the adverse effects of soil drainage on fish life, or on the damage done to the landscape by a high voltage line? How should we evaluate economic remuneration for chronic ill-health or loss of life caused by efficient production? How is economic compensation supposed to make up for such losses? The fact that it is technically possible to

include externalities of this kind on the economic balance sheet does not solve any problems. The case is the same for damage caused to the environment by the common use of manufactured products. How are we to construct a reasonable bill for the proportion of total air pollution caused by an individual car-owner or cigarette-smoker? It would be an impossible and futile enterprise, just as it would be no solution to make access to healthy natural surroundings dependent on individual wealth.

Revolt from the Center, was originally published in Danish in 1978. This extract (pages 36-38) is taken from the English translation published by Marion Boyars in 1981.

Wage Slavery

Henry Makow

People raised in and educated by a system tend to conceive of it as being normal. Probably many black slaves in the USA didn't conceive of a life very different from the one they grew up in. Nothing is different today. The vast majority of people are wage slaves in a system that is not inherent in the nature of things but, rather, designed and imposed. This explains how the transformation of productivity through the application of automation and robotics can result in increased stress and insecurity for people, instead of an increasingly free and prosperous lifestyle. The control is exercised through the money system:

money is required in order to live, and in order to get money people must kowtow to others in hierarchies, both private and public. Instead of the financial system releasing individuals, which is its proper function and could easily be done (and at an accelerating pace concomitant with the progress of technology), the power-mongers who operate it have fashioned it to be a means of control. Sadly, most of the slaves swallow the propaganda constantly streaming from government mouthpieces, media sheets and screens, and academic prostitutes, to the effect that the "authorities" are really "doing the best they can in difficult circumstances".

Work and Money

We seem to have lost the ability to distinguish between making money and creating real wealth. When we act as economic agents we are dependent upon a flow of information and ideas, many of which are confusing and contradictory, providing a poor basis for exercising our options. For example, we have a hazy idea that by going out to work we are making a contribution to the real economy, in recognition of which we expect a financial reward. In some mysterious way our work appears to generate money. Production and exchange do not make money: banks make money. The simple but fundamental truth can be illustrated by a concrete example. Imagine a producer/farmer in a system of single-stage production. She has access to land, which did not need to be bought, the use of a discarded second-hand spade, saved seed potato and a pile of discarded horse manure. In these circumstances it is possible for a producer/farmer to plant and harvest a potato crop at no financial cost. The harvested crop can be put in an old container and sold to a neighbour for £5. Has the producer created £5? Or any money at all?

The transaction may have increased the purchasing power of money in general, because more goods now exist within the economy. However, if there is no more money in the system, no further trade

can take place until the farmer spends all or part of her £5, no matter how much real value (in terms of commodities) is subsequently produced through hard work. There is not the slightest reason to connect a strong *financial* economy with a strong (or sustainable) *real* economy. Money does not create wealth. Hard work does not create money.

By definition, paid employment in an industrial economy provides the employee with a money income. Very little more can be said on the matter with any certainty. Work undertaken for a money reward may add to the common good, or it may not. Certain forms of work create social or environmental costs far in excess of any calculable return, even within the terms of conventional accounting, though these calculations are rarely undertaken. Moreover, high rewards may go to tasks with dubious social value, while essential tasks receive little reward, if they are rewarded at all. Banking and legal services are highly rewarded while caring services in the home are rarely rewarded in money terms. Welfare-to-work and workfare programmes which make benefits and entitlements to a money income dependent upon the search for, and acceptance of, any form of employment regardless of the individual's preferences, highlight the contrast. The highly paid are

said to require *higher* pay to make them work, while the poor must be deprived of incomes in order to make them work. The accepted definition of work is 'employment for monetary reward'. The illogicalities of the debate come into sharp focus when considering the question of women's pay and payments for work traditionally undertaken by women. Women have always worked in the home, educating children, rearing children, growing food, preparing meals, cleaning homes, washing clothes, caring for the sick and undertaking the many tasks essential for everyday life throughout the year. In pre-industrial society the home was central to the economy of everyday life. As the industrial economy developed, it gradually undermined the home as the central economic unit. Originally founded on warfare and trade in luxury goods, the money economy crept into the home: everyday necessities ceased to be available from the land, and could only be had for a money income. Women continued to be responsible for the time-consuming physical tasks of housekeeping and home care. Often denied access to educational opportunity, women left it to men to pursue highly-paid work. Their options were (1) to marry a high earner, (2) to attempt to combine family care with low paid, insecure and casual work, or (3) to compete with men on equal terms by flouting social convention. Option (3) creates unease not only among men but also among many women. The reason is not hard to find: somebody has to be there, at home, as the emotional cushion without which human society would cease to function. Rational Economic Man evolved because Mother could be expected to pick up the pieces, just as Mother Earth would clear up all the mess in the environment that his industry

spewed out. Human society is doomed if 'mother' ventures forth to join in REM's games. However, so long as the majority of women remain financially dependent upon men, as housewives or as low-paid workers, Rational Economic Man can use his intellect to make hard-headed decisions in the cut-and-thrust of his so-called 'real world' competitive economy. The knocks he sustains and inflicts only count if they register within the artificial world of financial accounting. Social and ecological disasters are of no account. If resources are to be spent on them, they must be justified in financial terms. Mother clears up the mess in the home and the environment, and requires no financial reward for doing so. A little praise now and then will keep her silently about her business. As they battle to help victims and protect their local communities against the worst excesses of the cash-based economy, local politicians and pressure-group activists sense a fundamental fault in the system. Some seek highly-paid and prestigious jobs within the flawed system in the hope of effecting change for the better. Others devote themselves to voluntary work, constantly begging for money from a position of weakness. Like all good causes, care in the community and care of the environment are expensive luxuries which it is difficult to justify on orthodox economic grounds. Those who provide caring services free may be applauded, but when they come to claim a pension they have no proof of having made a contribution to the economy. Their claim is therefore rejected.

From *What Everybody Really Wants to Know About Money* by Frances Hutchinson, pages 150-1. Available from the Publications page of our website: www.dougllassocialcredit.com

The Origins of Debt Financing

Michael Rowbotham

There was absolutely no difference in method of operation between the moneylenders, who brought ruin to the unfortunate and the unwise, and the first banks. The early banks were simply moneylenders who operated from business premises; their 'bank' was thus a property, which suggested both respectability to borrowers and financial security to depositors. But the method was the same; each bank would use the gold deposited with it as a 'fractional reserve', against which it issued its own notes, drawn up by itself. It was their ability to create a paper substitute for gold, to create it in large quantities, charge interest on this artificial currency and thus acquire considerable wealth, all essentially by fraud, which gave both banks and money-lenders such a despised reputation.

In the seventeenth century, the lack of metallic currency became increasingly serious as gold and silver production from mines began to run low. The call for more money became ever more urgent. The amount of revenue that the King was able to collect through taxation was hit, and this led directly to the formation of the Bank of England, and the national debt. King William had already amassed debts totalling £20 million, and was experiencing difficulties in paying his army. In 1682, Sir William Petty wrote his

Quantulumcunque concerning the amount of money.

What remedy is there if we have too little money? Answer; We must erect a Bank, which well computed, doth almost double the Effect of our coined money. And we have in England Materials for a Bank which shall furnish Stock enough to drive the Trade of the whole Commercial World.

History may one day give this the dubious status of the wrongest answer of all time. However, in line with this suggestion, the Bank of England was set up by Royal Charter in 1698. William Patterson, a prominent banker, agreed to supply the King with gold from his bank's reserves, and also with paper money, essentially in return for becoming sole banker to the Treasury. The Bank of England's charter includes the written condition '*The bank hath benefit on the interest on all monies which it creates out of nothing.*' By reason of the government financing its activities through borrowing, rather than exercising the right to create money, which the situation clearly warranted, the national debt was instituted. From that day to this, the government has remained in permanent debt.

From *The Grip of Death*, Jon Carpenter 1998 (p.189). Available from the Publications page of our website: www.douglassocialcredit.com

National Dividend and the Common Cultural Inheritance

All material wealth is created in community through co-operation. As the industrial revolution progressed, access to the increased wealth was allocated through the money system in a rather bizarre fashion. Those who undertook the physical work in a factory or mine were rewarded with a money wage according to the number of hours worked or the quantity of items produced (piece work). Those who merely *owned* the business, or held a financial share in the business, received a financial reward in the form of a ‘dividend’. And those who merely supported the economic system by rearing the children, caring for the land, or managing the food, shelter, clothing and other requirements of the household – without which the economy as a whole would cease to function – were due no share at all of the wealth accounted by the money economy. The situation developed in this way for historical reasons. Without apportioning praise (to the workers) or blame (to the capitalists or men in general) it is possible to review the social framework of industrialisation with some degree of objectivity.

The unearned increment of association.

As Douglas explained in 1922:

“Men associate together in industry because there is a true unearned income in association – a telephone system requires a population to give it a value; ten men pulling on a rope can

accomplish that which ten separated men could never achieve. With the growth of machine production and the utilisation of non-human sources of energy, this unearned increment is growing enormously more important than the earned increment about which the [socialist], in particular, is so concerned.

“This unearned increment rests inalienably on a basis of Capital, not of Labour; and if Capital derives from, and should be vested in the community, as is, broadly speaking, incontestable, then it is as members of the community, tout court, unconditionally, that individuals should benefit by this unearned increment. The dividend is the vehicle for the distribution of this unearned increment, and it is in the universalisation of the dividend, and not its abolition, that we shall achieve freedom. Only when this is realised will it be grasped that it is better for everyone concerned, and especially for Labour, that the routine operators of the plant of civilisation should be selected solely for efficiency, subject to the most drastic competition, and progressively displaced by machinery.”

Since production takes place in community, *i.e.*, within society *as a whole*, all should have a right to a share of the wealth generated by society, regardless of time spent in ‘employment’.

National Dividend and the common cultural inheritance

By the 1920s and 1930s, when Douglas was writing, technological developments had reached the point where, in certain

industries, machinery could perform most of the mechanical routine tasks previously undertaken by individual workers. The result was a plentiful flow of goods into existence, at prices covering their previous costs of production, but an inadequate flow of the necessary finance as incomes to consumers, with which the products of industry could be purchased. The option was to jettison the labour-saving technologies and revert to manual labour and handicrafts in order to keep the labourers employed. In 1924, Douglas spelled out the necessity to re-think the relationship between finance and the social order:

“The early Victorian political economists agreed in ascribing all ‘values’ to three essentials: land, labour, and capital. But it is rapidly receiving recognition that, while there might be a rough truth in this argument during the centuries prior to the industrial revolution consequent upon the inventive period of the Renaissance, and culminating in the steam engine, the spinning-jenny, and so forth; there is now a fourth factor in wealth production, the multiplying power of which far exceeds that of the other three, and which may be expressed in the words of Mr. Thorstein Veblen as the ‘progress of the industrial arts’. Quite clearly no one person can be said to have a monopoly share in this; it is a legacy of countless numbers of men and women, many of whose names are forgotten and the majority of whom are dead. And since it is a cultural legacy, it seems difficult to deny that the general community, as a whole, and not by any qualification of land, labour or capital, are the proper legatees. But if the ownership of wealth produced vests in the owners of the factors contributing to its production, and the owners of the legacy of the industrial arts are the general community, it seems equally difficult to deny that the chief owners, and rightful beneficiaries of the modern productive system can be shown to be individuals composing the community, as such”.

The ‘dividends’ paid to owners of capital

derive from the unearned increment of association and the common cultural heritage. Hence a recipient of a dividend under the present financial system is a pioneer of the future, when all citizens will have the inalienable right to income security through a National Dividend.

A ‘dividend’ in its accepted sense, is a payment of money, a ‘credit’ which derives from the community but is paid through the banking system. The institutions which mobilise the issue of ‘credit’ are the banks and financial institutions.

Douglas’ analysis of the actual role of finance within the real economy of everyday practice was at sharp variance with mainstream neoclassical orthodoxy. Economic ‘science’ is almost exclusively concerned with accounting the distribution of ownership and income within a business community centred on the market. Thus orthodoxy reduces motivation to the pure calculation of profit or loss: the actions of individuals are informed by a very simple rule of thumb, that of the pain-cost and pleasure-gain of ‘Rational Economic Man’. However, although mainstream theorising purports to focus upon the physical processes of production and consumption of material goods it does so in a very confused manner: the theories of supply, demand and price are based upon financial calculations and considerations. Thus the corporations do not acquire finance in order to consume, but in order to acquire more finance from further sales, which is a very different matter.

This extract is taken from *Understanding the Financial System: Social Credit Rediscovered* by Frances Hutchinson (Jon Carpenter 2010) £15, which is available via the Publications page of our website: www.douglassocialcredit.com

Basic Income

Carole Pateman

*EDITORIAL NOTE: This is the type of material published in academic circles. In its way, it makes good sense. But it never actually gets to the point of why women are disadvantaged in terms of pay, job opportunities and access to political power. Yes, women can do virtually everything a man can do except father children. The big difference is exactly that a man can father children without taking any responsibility for them whatsoever. A woman can give birth and walk away. But in carrying the child to full term within her own body she has already taken on responsibility for that child. And that child is every single one of us. Being a child is central to becoming a human being. Whether we have children of our own or not, we are all born of woman. Yet, despite Adrienne Rich's scholarly feminist analysis of the institution of motherhood, (see *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, published in 1976) feminist academics have resolutely ignored the impact of intergenerational relationships upon women's lives as workers inside and outside the home. The time has come to move on from the 1970s, and to seek urgently to bring parenting by both parents into focus as a basic right of childhood, alongside the right to childhood itself, in freedom and in touch with the natural world.*

The idea of a basic income is that each

citizen would receive a regular payment, as an individual, that is entirely free from conditions; thus marital or employment status is irrelevant. One key question is at what level such an income should be set. My argument is that the policy only has something distinctive to contribute to citizenship if the payment is set well above the level for poverty relief – it should be sufficient for what I have called a modest but decent standard of life; it should enable individuals to participate in the life of their societies. Globally, it could be set at a level appropriate for each country.

A basic income would make available a range of opportunities to women and, if they were willing to live on the income, would allow them to exit from demeaning relationships and jobs. More generally, a basic income would provide a material basis for citizenship for everyone and, just as importantly, it would also be a symbolic affirmation that each individual counted as an equal member of society and was of equal worth as a citizen. Basic income has the potential to open up some questions vital for the improvement of women's citizenship. But the potential will only be realised if basic income is argued for in a certain way; its importance for democratisation and women's freedom has to be put at the centre of the debate (this is not the case at present; academic discussions

are typically conducted in terms of social justice, and feminist scholarship is largely ignored).

If the case for basic income is argued for in the right way, discussion of the policy could stimulate debate about the relationship between marriage, employment and citizenship, the relationship between paid and unpaid work and the question of what counts as "work". These issues are usually peripheral to conventional political

debate, but they are fundamental to the maintenance of structures of sexual power and thus to women's citizenship. The structures have been shaken over the past quarter century but they have by no means crumbled; there is still a long way to go until all women around the globe achieve full citizenship.

Originally published as: <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2011-03-07-pateman-en.html>
For more information on Basic Income see: <http://www.basicincome.org>

Asses in Clover

Eimar O'Duffy

"I've got the hunger of seven devils on me. Could your honour tell me why it is with the world so full of good things, and adverts shrieking at me to eat more, and me willing and anxious to do my share of the work, I can't get as much to do as will give me the price of a crust?"

"Ah!" said Mr Mush, There you are up against the inexorable laws of political economy. You are the victim of too great abundance. Things are so plentiful they cannot be produced at a profit, and so nobody can afford to employ you."

"That does not seem to me very sensible," said Mac ui Rudai.

"It is no use your trying to understand the matter," said Mr Mush. "The dismal science, you know. The dismal science, ha! Ha! I don't profess to understand it myself. We must take it on faith from those that do."

"Who are they?" asked Mac ui Rudai.

"The economists and bankers."

"And it is them that says that I have got

to starve in the midst of plenty?"

"O no, my good fellow. They would help you if they could, but it is impossible.

These things are governed by inexorable and immutable laws."

"Who made them?" asked Mac ui Rudai.

"They have been handed down from time immemorial, and preserved in their integrity by the Financial Hierarchy," said Mr Mush, inclining his head reverently.

"Cast-iron creeds!" said Mac ui Rudai bitterly.

"Hush, my friend!" said Mr Mush. "You must show a more submissive spirit. You should be happy to suffer in the cause of financial orthodoxy."

Extract from *Asses in Clover* by Eimar O'Duffy. This dystopian social credit novel was first published in 1933, and is now available in paperback from the Publications Page of our website, www.dougllassocialcredit.com

The Machine Stops:

Did EM Forster predict the internet age?

Chris Long

The futuristic world portrayed in *The Machine Stops* is an eerily familiar one - people mostly communicate with each other via screens, the rarity of face-to-face interaction has rendered it awkward, and knowledge and ideas are only shared by a system that links every home.

Yet that world was imagined not by a contemporary writer but by the Edwardian author Edward Morgan Forster.

Best known for his novels about class and hypocrisy - *Howards End*, *A Room With A View* and *A Passage To India* - *The Machine Stops* was Forster's only foray into science fiction.

Published in 1909, it tells the story of a mother and son - Vashti and Kuno - who live in a post-apocalyptic world where people live individually in underground pods, described as being "like the cell of a bee", and have their needs provided for by the all-encompassing Machine.

It is a world where travel is rare, inhabitants communicate via video screens, and people have become so reliant on the Machine that they have begun to worship it as a living entity.

Neil Duffield, who adapted the story for York Theatre Royal's stage, says it is "quite extraordinary" how much modern technology it predicts - and how sharply it observes the effects it will have on users.

"He predicts the internet in the days before even radio was a mass medium.

"It would have all seemed so far-fetched back in that time, when people weren't even used to telephones - and that makes it more relevant now than it was in his time - he was anticipating technology like the internet and Skype.

"And he predicts, with astonishing accuracy, the effect the technology has on our relations with one another, with our bodies, with our philosophy and culture.

"It's a warning for now for what we might be getting ourselves into."

'Such insight'

The play's director, Juliet Forster (no relation), brought the story to Duffield for him to turn into a play.

She says she became enthralled by it in the late 1980s and "year on year, it's gained more and more relevance".

"It's so eerily true and resonant. Very quickly I thought it was something that could be very interesting. Although he predicts all that technology, what's more interesting is how human beings react to it - that's what fascinates me.

"Forster had such insight into human nature and the way we would adapt and lose parts of ourselves through technology.

"It asks the question about how far we will go in allowing technology to be the thing that we rely on in order to function."

The University of Manchester's Dr Howard Booth, a Forster expert, says that though the story is fascinating, it is those

insights into human nature it offers that are more important than the predictions of technology.

"People read it and say 'look, this is somebody over 100 years ago that seems to have imagined the world of the internet and the smart phone and many of the issues that we are addressing about people living their lives through technology and not looking up and seeing the world around'.

"I would put that not in terms of him being some sort of great futurologist - the technology in *The Machine Stops* doesn't look like our technology - but in a long-standing tradition that he knew well, which questioned industrialisation and technology and the way it was starting to reach into the mind.

"So he didn't see the machines of our day, but he was starting to see the issues that are involved - that what is there to supposedly aid and help us to perform certain tasks may actually become what we start to live through, need and be unable to imagine being without."

'Recurrent themes'

Duffield agrees the story's real interest lies in what it reveals about human nature.

"It's a very personal story, there's only two main characters - a mother and her son - who communicate by what we would know as Skype," he says.

"That is central to the story, their very personal relationship, and the real genius of the piece is that he manages to explore the whole impact on society of that sort of technology through just two characters." And with themes discussing, as the play's director puts it, "the relationship between the material and the spiritual", it reveals how it links with the author's more

familiar works.

"As a genre, it's not like Forster's work, but actually, the themes are recurrent across all of his writing.

"The drama between restriction and freedom. The trying to balance your physical nature and your spiritual. The need to connect across all classes and peoples.

"All those things are in there that you find in his other work, but written in such a totally different world to what you might expect."

Dr Booth says while the work is Forster's only overtly sci-fi story, the 12,000 word piece is "quite similar to many of his short stories, which do often have a fantasy element to them".

"He did often when writing short stories take on a kind of science fiction - *A Celestial Omnibus*, for example, imagines going up to heaven and meeting writers there.

"From Merchant Ivory [who made the film adaptations of *A Room With A View* and *Howards End*], we have a certain image of Forster, but actually the themes of *The Machine Stops* are Forster's themes."

Reaction to euphoria

And the academic also has an answer for why Forster decided to write a sci-fi story.

"There are a number of things that are coming to a head in 1908. One is that he's thinking more about religion - that doesn't mean orthodox Christianity, but a sense of the spiritual, of a contact with the natural world, and he thinks that things in modern life are getting in the way of that.

"And those problems in modern life are also stopping people connecting with each other.

"He's also reacting against a euphoric view

of science and progress which, amongst the writers of the time, he associates in particular with HG Wells. And there's one very specific spur, which is an aircraft flight by a French aviator called Henri Farman, who was the first person to take a heavier-than-air aircraft - not an airship or a balloon - and do a circuit and land.

"Unlike the Wright brothers, who take off and bump back to earth, this was the first time people had shown you could have air travel and navigate the aircraft.

"That may seem a small thing to us, but to

Forster, that suggested we were very much on the edge of a machine-like world.

"He feared machines taking over, which is what *The Machine Stops* is all about - people losing their connection with life and the world and starting to live through machines instead."

The Machine Stops was recently performed at York Theatre Royal.

Chris Long is Arts and entertainment reporter, BBC News 18 May 2016

Never-ending Growth Cannot be Sustained on a Finite Planet

George Monbiot

How does our addiction to comfort lead us to becoming "controlled, homogenized, lifeless, strifeless and bland"?

As a result of the expansion of freedom and wealth enjoyed by the middle classes and upper tier of the working classes in many industrialized countries during the *trente glorieuses* (1945-1975), people encountered opportunities to lead different lives of which their parents could only have dreamt. Some took these up: There was an explosion of creativity in culture, politics, social relations and life choices. But as we became accustomed to prosperity, we seemed to forget what could be done with it. We appear collectively to have slumped into a torpor of passive entertainment and remote

social networking. This has contributed to both atomization and depoliticization: fertile ground for the neoliberal capture of politics and the neutron bomb displacement of power.

These, in turn, have allowed the very rich to engineer a massive transfer of wealth from the poor and middle into their own hands: through rents, elevated prices for essential services, debt (interest charges are economic rent, paid in aggregate to the rich by poorer people), the suppression of wages and enclosure. The liberating nature of shared prosperity has given way to the anxieties of debt and insecurity. Social relations have become characterized by competition rather than cooperation. These too have kept us politically passive.

Book Reviews

Syriza: Inside the Labyrinth

Kevin Ovenden

Pluto Press/ Left Book Club

pp. 181, £12.99

ISBN: 978-0745336862

Ah, those pesky Germans! Pure as driven snow they are not. They invade Greece in Nazi uniforms, committing ghastly crimes. Their post-war debt to their erstwhile reluctant hosts is subsequently written off. They sell the Greek navy 1.8b euros-worth of useless submarines. How far can you trust them? Not far, if you believe Kevin Ovenden and, by chance, former Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis. He has told elsewhere how his uncle, a highly-placed employee of Siemens (a Berlin and Munich-based former supplier of electrical parts for Nazi death camps) resigned rather than stuff the pockets of Greek politicians with German bribes. The current Greek defence minister, Panos Kammenos, apparently believes, along with 33 per cent of his compatriots, that the vapour trails left by airliners in the Greek sky could in fact be a form of gassing-lite, designed to make the population amenable to another (economic) invasion from the north.

Mr Ovenden's book is the result of another, personal, invasion, splendidly underwritten by a sale of T-shirts inscribed with 'Syriza - Greek for Hope'. It has been chosen to launch the newly-re-formed Left Book Club with a view to informing left-inclined readers as to events in south-east Europe. It is not an easy read, but it is an earnest, informative and provocative one. The villains are everywhere: European élites (especially Germans), the Greek business classes, Greek shipping owners who pay less tax than their lowest seamen, and, oddly, the Greek communist party. The rushed circumstances of the book's birth sometimes shows in the writing: bear-lovers will be momentarily alarmed by a reference to a "grizzly massacre." The helter-skelter nature of Greek politics means that Yanis Panoussis, one of Mr Ovenden's many *bêtes noires*, is no longer Minister for Police; in keeping with the colourful nature of his parish, the ex-minister now complains about the alleged destruction of tapes linking a Syrizan adviser and a terrorist organisation called, unambiguously, Conspiracy of Cells of Fire. At times, Mr Ovenden is cheerfully direct himself. The right-winger Antonis Samaras, sometime PM, is dismissed as an "old chauvinist

charlatan.” Having disappointingly “thrown the generals a bone” by preserving their huge defence budget, current PM Alexis Tsipras has Ovenden reaching further into his meat cupboard at the 2015 appointment of right-winger Panos Kammenos as Minister of Defence: “The top brass were tossed a side of pork belly.”

As the leader and best-known representative of Syriza, Mr Tsipras wobbles in and out of the narrative. He gets good marks from the author for calling his son “Ernesto” after Che Guevara, but is castigated for his compromises with his political opponents and knuckling under to the steely-eyed economic demands of the Troika: the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. One of the book’s governing principles is that the motivation behind the austerity measures is not economic well-being, but securing the position of European and Greek big business. Greek youth, like their equivalents in the UK, are allegedly being broken on the wheel of a “neo-liberal offensive.” One wishes young Ernesto all the best.

Left or right, you would also have to wish Alexis Tsipras good luck. The book really comes to life when Mr Ovenden catalogues Greece’s 20th century travails. As he tells it, the country has been divided up between feuding political clans who, when push comes to shove, will operate according to profit, not principle. Exacerbating this was the Second World War which had, ultimately, the coda of a civil war which pitted largely Communist partizans

against returning royalists - read Stalin versus the West. It was too much for Britain - nominally in charge- to handle. America rode to the rescue, with all that that implies. Nazi collaborators received amnesties; fishy individuals and institutions received visits from representatives of the Holy Unity of Greek Officers, bent on extirpating leftism. (Mr Ovenden is angered by the treatment of the partizans, but were they in outlook any different from the orthodox Communists he scorns for their contemptuous attitude towards the radical street protests of recent years?) As the violence diminished, patronage and corruption thrived. The Colonels’ coup of 1967 did not distress the local CIA chief. Asked about the rape of democracy, he allegedly retorted: “How can you rape a whore?” Forty-two years after the Colonels’ departure, according to Ovenden, Greece is still manoeuvred by deep state forces, focussed on frustrating socialism, by fair means or foul. His book is dedicated to the memory of two men killed in 2013 by fascist supporters of the Golden Dawn party: retail worker Shahzad Luqman and rapper Pavlos Fyssas.

What’s to be done? Mr Ovenden, who enjoys the distinction of having been expelled from the Socialist Workers Party, flirts with the notion of all-out revolution, without ever quite nailing his colours explicitly to this mast. (Some of the few people who emerge with any credit from his tale are the priests who apparently blessed Molotov cocktails that featured in a protest against a landfill site.) He hankers after a society governed, not by self-perpetuating élites, but by

politically-liberated groups of free-thinking women, workers, immigrants, anti-imperialists and general activists. It might make one shiver, but can they be any worse than the current lot? Time,

**The Political Origins of Inequality:
Why a more equal world is better
for us all**

Simon Reid-Henry

University of Chicago Press (2015)

£17.50, 214pp

ISBN - 13: 978-0-226-23679-7 and 6827

(e-book)

The question that springs to mind when reading the title and subtitle of this thoroughly researched and beautifully presented work is – what do we mean by 'equality'? I take it that we're talking about 'equality' in terms of access to the material resources necessary for human life on this planet. Furthermore, it would seem that access to the basic necessities of life is determined by sets of rules created by a political process which allocates privileges without regard to responsibilities. This work forms a part of the wider current quest to follow Adam Smith in his advocacy of “reason, principle and conscience” as the guiding principles of a global approach to social democracy. Simon Reid-Henry sets out to show that the wealthy enjoy their privileges at the cost of continuing poverty. He asks the fundamental question: “Might not we all do better if those of us with a choice about such things found ways to include rather than exclude the poor, to engage with difference rather than seeking to manage it? What if, instead of collecting refugees together and supplying them with blankets, we were to acknowledge

perhaps for a new T-shirt.

Erlend Clouston is a freelance journalist who worked for *The Guardian* from 1979 to 1997.

that “their problems are also our own”?

Reid-Henry reviews the origins of poverty, which he rightly attributes, following Polanyi, to the seizure of power by powerful interests capable of denying access to land and the means of subsistence by their ability to create the political rules of the game. The separation of labour from land, and the creation of legally backed systems of finance, facilitated 'development', *i.e.*, increased production and consumption of material goods quantified and measured in terms of money. Over the past couple of centuries economic growth has been politically endorsed by powerful commercial interests whose influence has predominated over political affairs. But now the times are changing. “However digitised or de-materialised our economy becomes, with 3.1% growth per year ... we will soon run out of the resources to sustain that growth”.

What is now necessary is a global politics that prioritises social prosperity over economic growth through a global institutional system fashioned from the joined-up thinking of all of us who presently benefit from the business-as-usual system as-we-know-it. It is time to re-direct our thinking from the “moral obligation” to give to the poor, to take account of our “political responsibilities” to prioritise social prosperity over economic growth. And that is best achieved through 'social democracy', the

only effective antidote to unregulated capitalism:

“Social democracy shares with communism an inclusive and public-oriented vision of the future. But it listens to individuals, accords them privacy, and works with modesty and reason in its answers to the question, What is to be done?”

And that is not all. Rather than paying mere lip-service to old values it “recreates them in light of public dialogue” so that distinctly forward-looking policies emerge “tempered by

the solid craft of pragmatism.” (p130) . The success of the policies of the social democratic parties of Scandinavia in the decades following the Second World War is cited as indicating the potential to defuse the tensions between sectional interests, so that sound policies could emerge to the benefit of all. This useful contribution to the most pressing issues of our times presents the facts in a readable style infused with humour, albeit that its primary readership is destined to be students and teachers in the social sciences.

Editor

Daniel Defoe and the Bank of England

Valerie Hamilton & Martin Parker

Zero Books (2016)

£11.99, pb 190pp)

ISBN: 978-1-78279-952-8

“Money is made with fiction and narrative, just as fiction and narratives can be sold for money.” (p2) Thus Valerie Hamilton and Martin Parker tell the interdisciplinary story of the emergence of the novel and the corporation as accepted institutional forms. In so doing they present us with the highly readable account of two tricksters, who confabulated fact with risk, daring and imagination to become successful projectors whose projects – *Moll Flanders* and the Bank of England – have become established as accepted matters of historical fact.

The authors trace the revolutionary transformation of society in the British Isles from feudalism based on tangible facts of land, wealth and respect for

tradition in the form of Creator, Bishop and King, to capitalism founded on the intangibles of credit, credibility and being believed.

At the end of the seventeenth century the novel and the corporation did not exist. Both came into being through the faith of the individual in new projects. 'Credit', 'credo', trust or belief becomes the new basis of the economy. By a startling twist of fate the new system comes into being as the Bank of *England* rather than the Bank of London; it is created to provide the economic wherewithall to found the military superiority of the British nation. The Bank of England is incorporated, given a body and substance, by keeping a public written record of transactions authenticated by appointed Commissioners:

“The detailed records, countersigning, the production of documents on ancient vellum note paper, gave the impression that there was a measurable and

manageable logic underpinning the Bank ...But the grounds for authentication are necessarily circular ... The Governor and Company are not a Governor and Company unless the Bank exists and the Bank does not exist unless the Governor and Company exist.” (51) .

The Bank “created an almost magical circle of money-raising which, ultimately, financed the industrial revolution” (p53) In this way the corporation becomes a permanent feature of economic life, replacing the inherited authority of royalty, Church, the family farm and the guild. The corporation, the new organisational form, is founded on debt, on the credit or belief in promises to repay that can never be realised in full. In the same way we are led to believe in the existence of Moll, who can never tell us her real name because she never existed. Prior to the invention of the novel, literature was founded upon fact. It had its fanciful dimensions and embellishments, but was based upon inherited stories of myths, legends and scripture woven around historical characters and events.

The authors lead us to appreciate the contradictory nature of all modern organisations. They exist to enable people to work together, but organisations require faith in their existence to become real enough to enable people to work within them. We are left with the fundamental question hanging in the air. Can an economy based on the money illusion continue to result in wars against people and the natural environment upon which all remain dependent? The 'projectors' of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century period created the

springboard which made the industrial and technological revolutions possible. But the spirit of self-interest, secrecy and illusion also opened the way for a new form of power based on legally-backed rights without responsibility or public accountability. The Bhopal disaster of 1984 is cited as an example of the ability of the modern corporation to shape-shift their way out of responsibility in the entrepreneurial quest for money and power.

Both literature and the corporate world depend upon the written word to create the illusions which determine how people go about forming the opinions which lie behind social policy. The authors of this intriguing and timely work set out a new agenda by focusing on how the illusions are created. They observed how academic literature and organisational management studies play their part in sustaining the credible world of illusions by establishing a range of individual disciplines, each corralled within its specialist jargon, turning out “thousands of pages of print and pixels ... to be read and judged by other academics, or published in books that only libraries can afford to buy”. Somewhat tentatively, they hope that by breaking all the rules of academia, crossing interdisciplinary boundaries and verging on the journalistic style, they may play a part in bringing to life informed discussion about practical policy options. The Glorious Revolution of 1688-9 brought political, social and economic change necessary to found the neoliberal market economy. Hamilton and Parker splendidly raise the key issue of the twenty-first century – where do we go from here?

Editor

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

Down to Earth:

A Guide to Home Economics

Frances Hutchinson (2013) £5

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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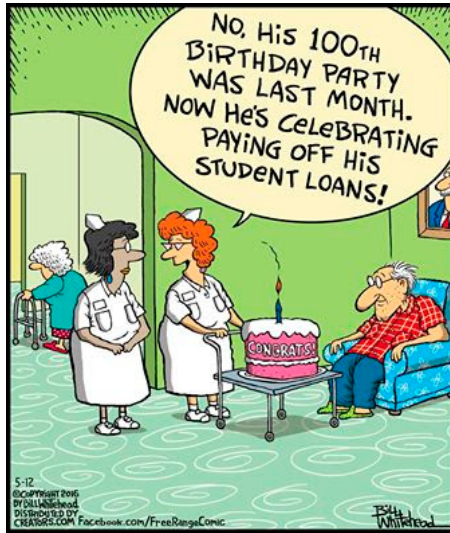
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**If we want to achieve a different society
where the principle of money operates equitably,
if we want to abolish the power money has over people historically,
and position money in relationship to freedom, equality, fraternity ...
then we must elaborate a concept of culture
and a concept of art
where every person must be an artist ...**

Joseph Beuys *What is Money? A Discussion*, Clairview Press, 2010.

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