

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

The crazy town, kangaroo court that is passing for the esteemed government of this most dangerous nation is at best a challenge to credulity. Ever was it so, but this is getting ridiculous! Where does the rabbit hole end?

A trip to my Silicon Valley home town blows my mind with the change in constant motion. I no longer recognize the streets I spent so much time riding my bike through as a kid. The sleepy old suburban neighborhood where dogs could lie in the road and drivers would see them, and avoid them, is gone.

Post-war starter homes are sold for multi-millions and scraped to the ground so that new maximum square footage monstrosities can be built. Speculators easily sell them to aspiring middle upper class professionals who delude themselves into believing that they have arrived in a desirable place- then complain about the remaining older houses, unkempt landscapes and lack of sidewalks that used to constitute the charm of this formerly unincorporated corner of the now booming metropolis. With new FAA traffic corridors established for Bay Area airports the constant drone of air traffic is punctuated with the occasional high speed low elevation helicopter and the unsettling deep hum of landing gear being deployed- too close. The din of traffic of the main arteries of creeping traffic like the sounds of the sea- a constant presence that reaches a fevered pitch during the twice daily commute. Too many people doing too many things, too quickly. In the service of mortgages, payments, and contracts. Living in a land where debt equals affluence.

The hunger for consonant thought, to dispel the psychological discomfort of dissonance is a natural and healthy response to the lives too many lead- always in motion, tied to the tyranny of time. Unfortunately only a small percentage of us have the presence of mind or luxury to ponder our lot. The advanced challenge of coming to some congruent thoughts on social dynamics, political theory, or societal priorities is easily absorbed by the pursuit of products, the priorities of daily life, and the adamant expectation of the continuation of all the details of our lifestyle.

The beliefs shared by a community become truths that cannot be challenged and therefore can no longer be discussed. When facts contradict beliefs, filtered thought becomes a self preservation tool. But when things make no sense and others operate as if they do, how does one proceed? It seems counter-productive to proclaim an apprehension of reality, to point to pesky evidence in the face of entrenched belief.



"For, as things stand, we have nothing to give. If our own riches and our own way of life are not enjoyed here, they will not be enjoyed anywhere else. Certainly they will supply the immediate jolt of energy and hope that methedrine, and similar drugs, give in extreme fatigue..."

"But peace can be made only by those who are peaceful, and love can be shown only by those who love. No work of love will flourish out of guilt, fear, or hollowness of heart, just as no valid plans for the future can be made by those who have no capacity for living now."

- Alan W. Watts: "On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are"

The shell game of government demands income to maintain. The fiscal 2018 U.S. budget gap hit a six-year high of about \$780 billion. The Congressional Budget Office forecasts it will reach \$973 billion in 2019 and top \$1 trillion the next year. forcing Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to tap the public for more funding.

Over the next decade, the U.S. government will spend about \$7 trillion just to service the nation's debt. The U.S. Treasury has ramped up sales of long-term debt to finance the government's widening budget deficit. The growing supply of treasury securities follows tax cuts and government spending increases accompanied by a fiscal outlook already made worrisome by rising expenses and higher costs to service nearly \$16 trillion in debt. The Treasury's total net new securities in 2018 amounted to \$1.34 trillion, more than double the 2017 level of about \$550 billion. In 2019, it will be \$1.4 trillion.

This can only continue of course while the full faith and credit of the good 'ol USA always pay off...As long as things continue as they always have. Today the the stock market tanked on the news Trump's intention to screw China on trade- the same day of the revelations of his loss of a billion bucks in decade- reports are that between 1985 and 1994, Trump ate the nearly impossible figure of \$1.17 billion in business losses. What a guy. I remember reading that had he had sat on his wealth and done nothing he would be worth more...a good direction to go. No body wants to hear this, but more of nothing is what we need. Simply staying put, milling about with no purpose, is the luxury the overworked aspire to. This money-centric system cannot value time spent, as Jefferson phrased it, **'pursuing happiness.'** It may even be denigrated as lazy, or God forbid, unproductive.

There is little doubt that big changes will happen. Even if we some how got our collective act together- as groovy as we may get- adaptation is the only way we survive.

The accuracy of our collective imagination will determine if we adapt in time for survival to be more than the grim dystopia we are primed to expect.

The dinosaurs in DC seem to believe that strategic geo-politics is the best game in town, (besides greasing the wheels of industry for their wealthy buddies) with all the dirty tricks of the trade, because nothing mitigates the momentum of a super state. Our option remains:

Be the change you want to see in the world.

- Joshua Golden

Doing the Math: UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

Presidential candidate Andrew Yang proposes to give every US citizen over eighteen years of age \$1000 a month. He calls it the Freedom Dividend. Yang argues that automation and robotics are relentlessly eliminating wage-labor jobs, hence the need for a UBI.

To see how it can be funded, let's do some math: The current adult (18 plus) population of the US is about **250 million** people. Giving \$12,000/year to each person would cost about **\$3 trillion**. To put that in context, the **federal budget is about \$4 trillion/year**, including \$700 billion for the military, while total **annual US corporate profit is about \$2 trillion/year** in an **economy of about \$21 trillion**. The total net financial assets of American households, according to the Federal Reserve add up to about **\$70 trillion**. What are net financial assets? They include stocks, bonds, funds, and other financial instruments. That's where the money is.

Net financial assets, in short, may be the only pool of wealth deep enough to fund something as big as a UBI. To produce the \$3 trillion dollars needed to fund Yang's UBI, you'd have to tax the **\$70 trillion** of net financial assets at a rate of 4.3 %. If that **\$70 trillion** of net financial assets were to be spread equally among **250 million** adult Americans, each of us would own a piece of the nation's financial pie worth **\$280,000**. But the pie is in fact not equally divided. Presently, financial asset distribution across the population shows that **22% of the population** has financial **assets greater than \$280,000**, and **78% has fewer or no assets** at all. That's one way to distinguish the haves from the have-nots.

Everyone would pay the same rate on the value of their net financial assets. But since every adult would also be receiving **\$12,000 UBI/year**, only those with financial assets **over \$280,000** would actually pay the tax. Actual tax payers would be the **22%** of the population with net financial assets **over \$280,000**. The vast majority-**78%** of the population-would receive more in UBI payments than they would pay in a net financial assets tax. If the 78% were exempt from the assets tax the re-distribution effect would be more than significant, rather utopian.

Funding a UBI with a net asset tax has the advantage of not being inflationary. By redistributing existing wealth, it avoids the need to print money. It also avoids cuts in social programs which fall disproportionately on lower income individuals. And, as a simple redistribution system, it requires little bureaucracy.

Although Yang's UBI is designed to make up for the long term erosion of jobs, giving out \$12,000/year (combined with continued low-income supplements like welfare, food stamps, etc.) might lead to labor shortages, especially for low-paying jobs. The gains for the low income levels become utopian. Utopia anyone?

Thanks to **ADRIAN KUZMINSKI**
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16 haikus in four clusters

i
In the starry night
the highway roaring with cars
drowns the frogs' nocturne.

Above the cornfield
flocks of soaring swooping birds
overflow the sky.

Torrential downpour
then dazzling blinding sun.
The birds ride the storm.

Grey sky, lashing rain.
The sun is a distant myth.
Flowers droop sadly.

The plants glow brightly
in these gloomy twilight days:
Strange to see green fire

The birds make merry
even on this wet grey day
They do not complain.

A fallen Buddhist,
i enjoy my cigarettes
alone, in silence.

ii
My friend is gone now.
Love and loss in one deep breath.
The trees stand witness.

My friend, a buddha,
made this garden of wonder.
All plants are his kin.

iii
In the library
we take shelter from the rain.
Like these people here.

At the post office
the grumpy clerk fumes and screams.
i chortle with glee.

iiii
These futile word games!
i sit counting syllables
while the forests die.

Warplanes drone above.
Pretending all is normal
We turn off the news.

All these books to read
Perhaps I'd be better off
going for a walk.

The buzzing of cars
imitates chaotic mind.
i thirst for silence.

There they go again.
The rats chew holes in the night.
Pretend not to hear.

- Grace Wood



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