

Why Is This So Difficult For People To Understand?

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October 2024

I often shared my writings on Social Beauty¹ and COVID² with my mother. I valued her wise reactions. Once, after she read a batch of new writings, she turned to me and with a quizzical frown and a quarter-smile she said, “Why is this so difficult for people to understand?” This was in early 2021. She was 99 years old at the time.

I think my mother intuitively understood the themes of my “writings on Social Beauty.” She grew up on a wheat farm on the outskirts of Cheney, Washington, a few miles south of Spokane. She had bright, competent, caring parents. Her father operated one of the larger wheat farms in the area. My mother fondly remembers harvest time, when all of the wheat farmers around Cheney would work together to harvest each farmer’s acreage, one at a time, in the late summer. They had to time things just right---waiting long enough for the hot summer sun to ripen the golden tassels of wheat, but harvesting before late summer rains matted down the waving fields of grain. There was both wisdom and luck involved. Most important was teamwork and group effort. They would gather their horse-drawn combines and harvest the first farm, then move to the second farm, then the next. It was a collaborative effort. None of the farmers could have harvested their individual farm by themselves. When it was my grandparent’s turn to have their wheat harvested, my grandmother would provide a huge steak and eggs breakfast each morning for all the farmers and farm-hands. After all of farms had been harvested, there was a celebration

I never met my grandfather, because he died before I was born. From what I could gather, he was an “altruistic natural leader.”³ He was highly respected among his fellow farmers and in the community as a whole. He had an innate and practiced ability to lead other farmers in a kind, competent, effective way. Other farmers trusted his advice and judgment. They loved his sense of humor, too. He reportedly enjoyed playing practical jokes on his friends. He was a leader in encouraging and teaching new conservation measures to other farmers. His understanding of ecologically protective farming was ahead of his time. He taught fundamental principles of responsible farming to the younger farmers. He was a leader at the local grange and would help his fellow farmers decide when it was best to send their wheat down the Columbia River to Portland.

He was an “FDR democrat” who believed in “public works” and cared about the plight of farmers during and after the Great Depression. He worked, politically, to obtain farm subsidies from the US Department of Agriculture when farmers desperately needed financial assistance during difficult times. These well-deserved and gratefully received subsidies also enabled the

farmers to farm the right way and honor conservation principles, rather than take harmful short cuts.

I suspect my grandfather was like the excellent physicians I have worked with: He was conservative, progressive, liberal, radical, and revolutionary all at the same time. His social, political, and economic thinking and beliefs could not be categorized by just one of those labels.⁴ All of those labels fit. He was not reactionary or overzealous. He was committed to the fundamental principles of wholesome healthy farming. He was appropriately tolerant of new and different ideas, but was also appropriately intolerant when/if conservation principles and ethical principles were violated.

My grandfather would have been horrified by the corporatization of agriculture⁵—the chemicalization promoted by Monsanto; the potentially irreversible contamination of the soil; the replacement of small family farms with mega-farms, the violations of conservation principles and other ethical and scientifically-sound practices of farming; the affront to common sense and common decency on the part of Big-Agriculture; and Big-Agriculture's increasing dominance of world farming and world food production..

Were he to be alive today, I suspect my grandfather would have recognized and understood these trends as the predictable evolution and outcome when the corporate capitalist model is applied to agriculture---just as I have recognized and understood the predictable evolution and outcome of application of the corporate capitalist model to health care. There are obvious parallels between the predictable evolution of corporatized agriculture and that of corporatized health care. Potentially irreversible disaster has occurred in both cases.

I cannot speak for my grandfather, of course, but I can easily imagine that in response to this harmful corporate evolution of agriculture, my grandfather would have been willing to strongly consider the option of applying the Children's Hospital Public Economy Model (CHPEM)⁶⁻¹⁰ to agriculture as a meaningful way, and possibly the only way, to fight Big-Agriculture and preserve small family farms, restore conservation principles, protect the soil, restore responsible farming in general, and provide healthier food at affordable food prices. He would have realized the likely futility of farmers of small family farms rising up to take on Big-Agriculture. He would have realized that Big-Agriculture is too powerful, too wealthy, too unwilling to reform itself, and too resistant to legislated regulatory checks on its behavior.

I believe my grandfather would have embraced the notion of a "public economy" (a CHPEM-inspired public economy^{6, 9}), cautiously at first but then enthusiastically. In his case, he would have focused on application of the CHPEM to wheat farming and farming in general.¹⁰ He would have considered how, in a public economy, skilled farmers who had little or no farmland of their own or were tired of financially struggling to maintain a small or medium-sized private farm,

particularly when competing against ruthless corporate mega-farms, would have opportunity to become “public farmers” who farm public farm land---just like salaried “public school teachers” teach in “public schools” and salaried academic pediatricians practice medicine in public children’s hospitals.

The public would provide the farm land, resources, and equipment. The “public farmer” could fully concentrate on farming---much like academic pediatricians appreciate and prefer working for a salary at a public children’s hospital, where they can focus on the science and clinical practice of medicine and need not deal with the “business aspects” of owning their own “private practice.” For similar reasons, some farmers who privately owned farmland, even large acreage, might prefer to sell their land to the public; farm that same land for the sake of the public; farm that land in “the right way;” and forego the “business aspects” of private farm ownership.

Granted, such a change would result in some sacrifice of individual control (loss of some aspects of individual liberty) but it would result in the public, including farmers of small farms, having greater public control over (and freedom from) an out-of-control and immensely powerful Big-Agriculture. I suspect my grandfather would have argued that creating greater public control over Big-Agriculture (by developing Public Agriculture) was well worth sacrificing some individual control, some aspects of personal individual liberty. Besides, he would have realized that as a public farmer he would not need to sacrifice the principles and freedoms that he, personally, held most dear (e.g., conservation principles, respect for the land and farm animals, respect for Humanity, and a “most precious freedom”¹¹); whereas the capture of farming by Big-Agriculture involves great sacrifice of these principles and this most precious freedom. On balance, he would feel more free and able to do more good as a “public farmer” than is the current case for private farmers who struggle to keep their small family farms afloat.

Becoming a public farmer does not mean that farmers would ignore the business aspects of farming. Public farmers who have a talent for and interest in the business aspects of farming would be asked to take the lead in looking after the financial aspects of the public farms. They would be doing so for the sake of the public, not for their own benefit---much like “altruistic natural leaders” in a public children’s hospital are asked to assume leadership positions that involve creation of appropriate budgets. I imagine that my grandfather would have been a highly valued “altruistic natural leader” within the public farm system, and he would have readily agreed to serve in that capacity. He would have enjoyed the “precious kind of freedom” that the public farms would provide. (See article entitled, “A Most Precious Kind of Freedom.”)

Many of my academic pediatrics friends and I have concluded the following: Ownership of a private practice is over-rated; corporatization of health care is unacceptable; and working for a public children’s hospital (during the altruistic era⁷) has been the most enjoyable and

meaningful way to work. Similarly, farmers of small family farms would likely conclude: Ownership of a private small family farm is over-rated; corporatization of agriculture is unacceptable; and being responsible for farming a public plot of land, as part of a larger public farm system that is devoted to “farming right” and serving the public with healthy affordable food, would be the most enjoyable and meaningful way to be a farmer.

So, in the final analysis, my guess is that my grandfather, if he were alive today, would respond to the current farming crisis by strongly encouraging farmers of small and medium sized farms to consider application of the CHPEM to agriculture---i.e., consider becoming “public farmers” in a “public farm system.” This would be analogous to school teachers being “public school teachers” in a “public education system,” or physicians being “public physicians” in a “public health care system.”

[Note: I hasten to add that none of this “application of the CHPEM to agriculture” or to other components of the general economy should occur without extensive public education and dialogue about the CHPEM beforehand.^{12, 13} An essential principle of the CHPEM is that it should never be implemented in a general economy until/unless the public has received thorough education about the CHPEM, has engaged in extensive dialogue about it, and has democratically determined whether it wants to implement a version of the CHPEM. This is analogous to the paramount importance of “patient education” and the “informed consent” process in Medicine.]

Given that my mother grew up on a wheat farm and had parents like my grandparents, it is not surprising that she could easily grasp the themes in my writings on Social Beauty. It also helped that she had devoted her adult life to raising 4 children and, at the same time, taught piano (in our home) to hundreds of community children. She was a marvelous teacher, like her mother and father. She taught piano to children for the right reasons. She was not motivated by monetary incentive, but rather by a desire to contribute in a meaningful way.¹⁴ Indeed, her teaching generated only a very modest amount of income for our family. She probably would have preferred to receive a public-granted salary for her work, like public school teachers receive their salaries. Teaching in our home would have been a win-win situation for my mother and the public. By teaching in our home she would have been providing free overhead.

So, why is it so difficult for people to understand the concepts and recommendations discussed in my writings on Social Beauty? Here are my thoughts:

A majority of the American people have probably had minimal, if any, exposure to the fundamental ideas explained in these writings. The term “Social Beauty”¹⁵ is probably new to many. Many also probably wonder what “Public Economy” means, if they have even heard the

term. They are likely to be unaware of the foundational pillars⁸ of the Children's Hospital Public Economy Model (CHPEM), which, briefly, are as follows:

- A positive, comprehensive understanding of Human Nature¹⁶⁻¹⁸ that emphasizes the spectrum of human behavioral capacities that we all have, and emphasizes that the social and economic milieu can either upregulate expression of our non-altruistic capacities and down-regulate expression of our capacities for altruistic behaviors (as is the case with corporate capitalism) or do the opposite, up-regulate expression of our altruistic capacities and down-regulate expression of our capacities for selfish behaviors (as is the case with the CHPEM).
- An understanding that "moral incentive" is a sufficient motivating factor and that "monetary incentive" is neither essential nor desirable.¹⁴
- A positive, accurate understanding of the true nature and role of "competition," particularly the understanding that the word "competition" comes from the Latin "com petere," which means "to seek (new heights) together."¹⁹
- A realization that "monetary incentive" and capitalism's version of competition are not necessary for innovation and creativity.²⁰
- A realization that individualism, private free enterprise, and free market activity are not essential for a successful social and economic model. Instead, a different kind of freedom might be the most precious of all---the freedom to enjoy widespread upregulation of the expression of human altruistic behavioral capacities---upregulation in oneself and in society as a whole (which are inter-dependent).¹¹ This "precious freedom" is provided by a public economy, but not by a capitalist economy.
- A realization that it is best to fill positions of leadership in society and the economy with "altruistic natural leaders" who have demonstrated exemplary altruism, honesty, kindness, and incorruptibility---as opposed to filling positions of leadership with those who will make corporate entities most profitable.^{3, 21-23}

Instead, most Americans have been repeatedly taught a different set of ideas. Namely:

- A negative, incomplete, and inaccurate understanding of Human Nature---one that emphasizes human capacity for selfishness and claims that selfishness is the dominant behavioral capacity of human beings; one that ignores the influence of a chosen economic model on the upregulation or downregulation of the expression of our spectrum of human behavioral capacities.
- An insistence that "monetary incentive" is the "sine qua non" of any successful economic model---because, "due to human nature," people need monetary incentive for adequate motivation and adequate performance.
- A negative, inaccurate, perverse understanding of the nature and role of competition.
- An insistence that monetary incentive and capitalism's version of competition are essential for innovation and creative advancements.
- A belief that private free enterprise and free market activity are essential components of any successful social and economic model.

- A belief that capitalism, despite its many flaws, is the best economic model that has ever been created---because it takes into account the above understandings (the “realities” of human nature, et cetera) and because alternative models “do not sufficiently take the above ‘realities’ into account and inevitably lead to authoritarian and totalitarian behaviors.”

Most people have accepted the negative and incomplete understanding of Human Nature that has been taught by the corporate capitalist economic model (CEM). Most have not been introduced to the positive, more complete and more accurate understanding of Human Nature upon which the CHPEM is based. Most people have also accepted the notion that “monetary incentive” is essential for motivation and innovation, and have not considered that “moral incentive” can be an adequate motivating factor. Most people have been taught a negative and rather perverse understanding of the nature and role of “competition,” Most have never heard of “altruistic natural leaders.” Most have been taught that capitalism, despite its flaws, is the most “realistic” and most successful economic model ever implemented, and that alternative models are inferior, would lead to disastrous results, should be feared, and should not be considered.²⁴ Most people have not worked in an altruistic children’s hospital,⁷ or a similarly altruistic endeavor---which means they might have little personal experience with collaborative, altruistic, non-profiteering efforts that practice the foundational pillars of the CHPEM.

In short, the pro-capitalist propaganda has been extraordinarily powerful and effective. It has convinced people that no alternative economic models need to be considered. Worse, the message has been that alternative economic models are dangerous to even think about. This pro-capitalist propaganda has artificially immunized people against consideration of any alternative models. That has made it difficult for people to understand “Social Beauty,” the CHPEM, and application of the CHPEM to the general economy. Pro-capitalist propaganda has been so powerful that most people are hesitant to even read about these alternative ideas.

But what has not been sufficiently understood is that the foundational (mis)understandings of corporate capitalism (those listed above) are its Achilles’ heel, and the most effective way to hold corporate capitalism to account and reverse its adverse effects on society is to point out the weakness of its foundational (mis)understandings and explain how the foundational pillars of the CHPEM represent a more accurate and helpful understanding of Human Nature and how to organize as a society.

It cannot be emphasized enough how extremely powerful, effective, and abusive the pro-capitalist, anti-public economy, anti-Humanity, propaganda has been.^{25, 26} We must focus on corporate capitalism’s Achilles heel---its inaccurate, misleading foundational (mis)understandings.

It is people who somehow developed natural immunity to the capitalist propaganda, like my mother, who grew up with wholesome ideas of collaboration, honest hard work, farming the right way, commitment to ethical principles, and who were influenced by “altruistic natural leaders,” who are able to relate to the principles upon which the CHPEM is based and are able to recognize the weakness of the foundational (mis)understandings upon which corporate capitalism is based. They are able to recognize how the corporate capitalist model generates “Mean Arrangements of Man,”²⁷ while the CHPEM generates Social Beauty and a “Most Precious Freedom.”

My mother died in 2021, at the age of 100. Forty five minutes before her death, I was visiting her at her assisted living residence and found her to be extremely agitated and distraught. She turned to me with an anguished look on her face and said, “Everything is a mess!! People are just flapping their wings, accomplishing nothing!!” She explained that she was talking about what was going on in the world. She was distraught because of what she imagined was in store for her great grandchildren, their generation, and generations to come.

I held her hand and did the best I could to assure her that things would change for the better, that the current “mess” would teach valuable lessons, and that we human beings would soon learn how to create greater Social Beauty for all of Humanity to enjoy. I encouraged her to place trust in Human Goodness. As she listened, her facial muscles gradually relaxed, the anguish on her face vanished, and soon thereafter she fell asleep, in apparent peace. I left her alone and returned to my home. But before I reached home, I received a phone call from the assisted living residence. She had died moments earlier. I hope she truly did die in peace.

My message to my mother was that because of our collective Human Goodness, the majority of human beings would soon be able to understand why and how the current prevailing Mean Arrangements of Man (the current “mess”) could be replaced with kind arrangements that create abundant Social Beauty. Humanity just needs some help to understand the root causes of the “mess” and what treatment options exist to reverse this “mess.” I would like to think that she agreed and that those reassuring thoughts allowed her to let go of her angst and fears and helped her to die in peace, knowing that she could trust her faith in Human Goodness. I hope my reassuring thoughts will prove to be accurate. I think they will.

RELATED ARTICLES:

The Footnotes refer to the following related essays, which are posted (or will soon be posted) on the **Notes From the Social Clinic** website: www.notesfromthesocialclinic.org These essays are listed, by title, in the Table of Contents (TOC) of the website.

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5. Farmers of the World Must Unite: <https://www.globalresearch.ca/farmers-world-unite-oppose-big-business-interests/5871012>
6. The Children's Hospital Public Economy Model (CHPEM)
7. The Social Beauty of Children's Hospitals
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