

point that leisure for the working class has increased, when the empirical evidence based on our everyday experiences reveal the increasing necessity of day care. Housing is arguably the most essential good, and unarguably the most expensive portion of our budgets. Steadily increasing housing costs as a proportion of income head us away from our empirical roots that acquired comparable shelter for all, and in the direction of the imposed serfdom that infected the scholastic middle ages. If complex standard of living indicators, consumer price indexes and NASDAQ all imply something different from the simple ratio of ownership housing costs to median family income, we must ignore those scholarly black box indicators and focus on what our experiences are telling us.

“Black is white” economics and politics distort the meaning of empirical experiences to fit authoritarian and idolatrous beliefs. Economic data that lacks validity and reliability, such as data that supports the morality of greed, can deceive untrained citizens. Bait and switch tactics can fool the middle class into trusting the legitimacy of politically manipulated evidence on everything from WMDs to climate change. These threats require more than what we know from our own simple experiences to remedy. Obtaining valid and reliable information will require deliberate actions by the middle class that go beyond our normal everyday routines. But before we act we must care.

Caring

Think tank pundits and news talk hosts undeniably are in great demand, as are authoritarian leaders. Our friend Hans from the fable was perfectly happy as he was being swindled. Corporations, politicians and special interest groups appear to have convinced the middle class majority to accept greed as the norm of economics, authoritarianism as the norm of politics and idolatry as the norm of culture. Why should we care about “black box” and “black is white” economics, the waggle dances of politicians or the role of unspeak and the unspeakable in our culture? There are five important reasons to care.

First, there is a strong component of our human make-up that detests hypocrisy. Perhaps this is a carry over from our empirical roots, when trusting what we experienced was of utmost importance to our well-being. As cynical as we may have become about much of our culture, we desperately want to be able to trust what others are telling us, as that is how we once survived. When such trust is betrayed through hypocrisy we want to know and we want to react accordingly.

Second, there are intimate connections between greed, authoritarianism and idolatry. We cannot conveniently choose to be for an economics of greed without endorsing a politics of authoritarianism and a culture of idolatry. Corporations, political parties and interest groups work in tandem. Conversely, should our ethics lead us to care about one of the virtues of merit, wisdom or harmony; we need to

care about all three. There is no escaping the holistic relationship of economics, politics and culture.

Third, we do not come to endorse greed, authoritarianism or idolatry except through the personal traits of vanity, cynicism and cowardice. Our sense of belonging steers us towards merit, wisdom and harmony; that which corrupts our belonging corrupts those social goals. Thus there are severe personal costs for even the wealthy, the powerful and the zealot who seem to be accommodated by our r-species behaviors. Vanity corrupts all of us socially; cynicism corrupts all of us spiritually; and cowardice corrupts all of us emotionally. These costs ultimately impact our health and happiness even as we fool ourselves with Hans-like gullibility into thinking all is fine on the surface.

Fourth, the damage done by vanity, cynicism and cowardice are not limited to the health and happiness costs to our own lives. The urgency induced by these traits causes us to forsake patience and peace. For example, our urgency considers the lives of soldiers more expendable than citizens. If we were to consider the soldier's life as equal to the normal citizen's, then we have lost more lives in our response to 9/11 than was caused by that tragedy. The additional lives of innocents abroad destroyed literally and figuratively by our urgent response to the Iraq War and our other regime changes are incalculable. All because the citizens at home, unlike the soldiers abroad, are to be cowards that refute our natural heritage and consider security the primary goal of life and government.

Fifth, by becoming more of an r-species than a k-species we fall victim to the biggest liability that r-species share. Their populations go through periods of boom and bust. Widespread famine, disease and aggression do not happen to people that moderate their behavior in accordance with their environment. This "brutish" consequence of our cultural evolution was accelerated by western colonialism, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the ruminations of great Enlightenment thinkers sitting in their armchairs.

Knowing and caring about the hypocrisies of corporations, politicians and special interest groups does not suffice. The middle class needs to change our social systems holistically to promote merit, wisdom and harmony. We need to rid the infections of vanity, cynicism and cowardice from our souls. We need to temper our urgency for the sake of patience and peace throughout the world. Such causes are worth whatever any of us can contribute. We have two possible courses of action to pursue.

Acting

The easier of the two courses of action would be for the middle class to effect change within the structures of our current systems. We would need to identify and empower those leaders and scholars in corporations, political parties and