

# Political Economy as if People Mattered, Part 3



By Steven Yates

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[*Final apologies to the ghost of E.F. Schumacher.*]

[Parts 1, 2.](#)

**Röpke again: the Humane Economy.**

[Wilhelm Röpke envisioned what he called a humane economy:](#) humane in its achievement of balance between markets and the rest of human life, especially its governance, personal as well as societal. In his vision, markets exists to serves people. People do not exist to serve markets. Nor any other worldly institutions.

Röpke anticipated what was wrong with neoliberalism before that word was coined. *Both* collectivized socialism *and* unrestrained, unregulated capitalism with its abstraction, *homo economicus*, are out of alignment with human nature as it is, outside the antiseptic world of theory. Human nature can no more be subjugated to universal transactionalism than it can to totalitarian communism. Most so-called “democratic socialists” such as AOC and Zohran Mamdani aren’t really socialists. They aren’t trying to eliminate markets, as classical Marxism called for socialism to do. They want to limit markets by limiting their most powerful participants. There’s an impulse here worth paying attention to. It is sad that such figures will never go *back to basics*: back to the

worldview / theological underpinnings of American society and its institutions. Which is the real reason nothing they do is likely to work.

Important nuance: *profit* (like money generally) is not in itself evil. It is a tool. A knife is a tool. It can be used to slice vegetables, or to stab someone. Tools are morally neutral. What matters is what is *done* with them. What happens when profitability becomes the final arbiter and end of all human life? Well, we are dehumanized. We *become* mere employees or “gig” workers. Our “value” is what’s in our portfolios, bank accounts, wallets.

Nor, for the same reason, is the *state* inherently evil (libertarians, anarchists, voluntaryists, notwithstanding). It, too, is a tool: one institution of many. When kept independent of corporate power, it *can* serve people. In the U.S., after World War II, the federal government established the GI Bill. Millions of Veterans could go to college who would not otherwise have been able to afford it. It built the interstate highway system. The next decade saw the rise of the space program. Using this tool well, including keeping it in its place as servant and not master (there is indeed only one *King*, after all!) takes vigilance and discernment: as Jefferson and others put it, “Vigilance is the price of liberty.” When vigilance fails, hijacking and empowering the state, capitalists seeking advantage, not market competition, are inevitable. (Adam Smith figured this out before the term *capitalism* was coined; John D. Rockefeller Sr. has been quoted as saying, “Competition is a sin.”)

We weren’t vigilant. Moneyed interests hijacked the state – more than once. They repeated the advantages. Among these: political-economic writers whose ideas and works rationalized and furthered the *corporate state* became the economics profession’s heroes: Keynes, Hayek, Friedman. People like Röpke sank almost without a trace. Most paleoconservative writings have sunk even deeper into oblivion.

Röpke's humane economy rests on three pillars:

- Moral order grounded in religion and family life stands above political economy on the natural hierarchy discussed in Part 2.
- Small and medium-sized ownership of property for small business purposes preserves independence and brings about prosperity while respecting locality.
- Community solidary is rooted in subsidiarity (social problems are identified and addressed at the most local level possible), stability, civic virtue, and social trust: this last a product of moral restraint on personal passion and consistent constructive personal action.

These are organic, not products of abstract ideology – not to exclude the thoughtful efforts by many that went into the U.S. Constitution. The *economy* is embedded in the totality of human society. It is transactional space; but not separate from the rest of human life.

When these principles are overridden, freedom turns on itself. It enables self-destructive behaviors, as when men (sometimes women) indulge in private pornography instead of pursuing healthy relationships. Or when they choose drugs such as cocaine, heroin, fentanyl – which a totally unfettered marketplace will make available because there's money to be made. Or just trying to live on junk food, which doesn't exact an immediate cost but, over time, will ruin one's health.

Corporations in a marketplace absent supervening morality will be prone to selling products without regard to hazards to their atomized consumers, as we see in markets for cigarettes, pornography, junk food. Since those at the top do not care about their employees, they'll abuse them until they can replace them with technology. "If you don't like your boss, quit!" This is naïve. Corporations are quite capable of ensuring that employees have nowhere to go, not without

disincentivizing exorbitant costs.

AI threatens to become the biggest job killer in history. The corporate state has other uses for it as well.

We return to: individual choice must be restrained from within, through inculcated morality and respect for truth, or it will have to be restrained from the outside to prevent societal decay (and there's no guarantee the state can do this). This is true for all groups, of whatever economic status, of all trades and professions. The best restraints are not laws but lived practice, emanating from what people believe in their hearts!

For Röpke, the humane economy would reward patient craftsmanship over reckless speculation, family stability over both parents' compulsory market participation, and community cohesion over economic development. It would shun a *growth-at-whatever-the-cost* mindset, and prioritize what is special to a locality over global uniformity.

This aligns with Aristotelian realism, Stoic discernment, Christian natural law. Political economy is oriented toward enhancing the dignity of the human person – *of intrinsic value because he was created in God's image* – a creature of flesh and blood, a living social being, not the abstract product of a philosophical treatise. In the humane economy, this sense of human dignity – manifested as respect for self, others, and community – will control appetites. This might greatly reduce temptations toward personal addictions, abusive relationships, or just the dangers of marketplace (i.e., corporate) encirclement which leads back to controlled lives.

### **What do we do about the global ruling class?**

The humane economy *could* produce *statesmen* – self-governed by prudence, humility, and a desire to serve rather than wield power. Today we have *no* statesmen. Dr. Ron Paul came the closest. He retired in 2013 (delivering a [speech for the](#)

[ages](#)). While a few in Congress are better than the rest (Dr. Paul's son Rand comes to mind, or perhaps Thomas Massie), most are career politicians focused on reelection, not the betterment of their constituents or the country. Hence they don't even formulate problems such as escalating indebtedness in all sectors. They take money from those who have it, forgetting that "the borrower is the slave of the lender" (Prov. 22:7).

The global ruling class, or superelite, situated in megacorporations, central banks, NGOs, etc., dominates governments by controlling the financial resources that reach them. It has no incentive to do anything different from what it has been doing. Its answer to the Platonist question, *Who is most fit to rule?* is, *We are, because we can!*

The global ruling class funds political classes, ruling through money, power, concealment. Sometimes through war, revolution and terror.

Answering, *What can we do?* is a tall order. I'm asked this question a *lot*. Struggling with it became a major priority years ago.

Using the political system to chain the global ruling class is clearly a fool's errand. *All* the major political parties and coalitions in every major Western country are controlled. There have been "third party" movements in the U.S., working outside the clutches of the Demopublican Duopoly. Even those achieving limited visibility, like Ross Perot's Reform Party in the 1990s, went nowhere. Perot was a billionaire and could self-fund but turned out to be a bit of a nut. But what really doomed the Reform Party was structural. Perot failed to win a single electoral vote. Had he been competitive, the failure of any candidate to achieve enough electoral votes to win would have thrown the election into the House of Representatives which would have chosen a Duopoly candidate. America's Electoral College system is not designed to accommodate three

major parties.

The Libertarians have proven useless. Dr. Paul drew from them, but when push came to shove, he ran as a Republican. And still got nowhere, mainly because of his opposition to (very profitable!) foreign wars. Libertarians advocate policies I believe the public would reject (e.g., abolishing the minimum wage, or decriminalizing heroin and fentanyl, or ending programs such as Medicare).

But they *did* ask basic questions about the role of the state in civilization, questions worth wrestling with. Many stood up as free and independent minds. The system is designed to thwart free and independent minds who, by definition, don't serve the interests of money and power.

### **Get off the grid?**

What I keep coming back to, is that there is *one* viable course of action. And at this point in time, it will carry a price most won't want to pay or be positioned to pay.

This is to minimize their contact with the control grid the ruling class operates, staying the course, building something independent: a "parallel" system that would *be* humane, i.e., could be developed as if people mattered!

This means going essentially agrarian and minimalist: getting away from cities, shedding burdensome possessions and other trappings of urban existence; learning to grow crops for food, raising chickens, etc. Some are doing this (folks like Derrick Broze, John Bush, Marjory Wildcraft come to mind). They sense trouble ahead and are acting accordingly. Those who want to separate will have to learn additional trades, ranging from off-grid power generation to furniture construction to water purification and plumbing. Each comes with challenges, which is why those wanting to go this route needed to start long before now.

Getting a “parallel” political economy up and running will take significant financial resources, a long-term commitment to navigating some steep learning curves, buy-in from family members, and a willingness on the part of all to engage in what *will* (not *may*) prove to be years of hard physical labor.

Most either won't be willing or psychologically or physically able to do this. It won't be for the elderly, and it won't appeal to those who have lived all their lives up to now in front of screens.

There are costs, either way.

### **The Coming of Digital ID.**

The cost of staying *on* the control grid will likely be having to get a Digital ID and accepting the life the World Economic Forum [promised](#), in which you “own nothing, have no privacy, but life has never been better”: this last for those who don't mind being taken care of cradle-to-grave because they've cooperated and become good little techno-serfs.

Digital ID is in the works in the U.S through the Trump administration's Operation Stargate. Palantir (owned by billionaire arch-Technocrat Peter Thiel), with Trump's blessing, is at work on a consolidated, AI-empowered database of information on every U.S. citizen, soon to include Stablecoins (a central bank digital currency not called that but just as programmable). As I write, numerous data centers are under construction.

Technocrats doubtless have plans for refuseniks. Vietnam deactivated 86 million bank accounts of people who didn't obtain that country's national Digital ID.

The U.K., too, is pursuing Digital ID. I'm predicting that the unchecked immigration of recent years and the problems it has caused will be a pretext for introducing it all throughout Europe and North America.

I don't think you'll see laws requiring you to get a Digital ID, any more than you saw laws forcing you to get mRNA shots for covid. It was learned years ago that a combination of Hegelian dialectic and structural coercion, combined with a period of 24/7 scare tactics, is *far* more effective than laws or guns at people's heads.

The first: *crisis-reaction-response* (or *problem-reaction-solution*). Allow a situation to mature into a full-blown crisis (or manufacture one on controlled media). The crisis provokes a public reaction, most effective if based on fear – the most important thing we should have learned from Captain Covid.

The ruling class then moves in with the solution it wanted all along.

If ruling class strategy was successful, much of the peasantry will *beg* for it.

Recall how masses everywhere lined up for covid shots following months of relentless fear porn. I'm sure the elites were noting how easy it was to structurally coerce compliance, whether with masking, lockdowns, or the shots themselves. Refuseniks could be demonized as "superspreaders," have their means of earning a living threatened, or just refused admission into public spaces when they couldn't produce the credit-card-sized laminated ID received when getting one's shots. (This happened to my wife and me, trying to eat out. We live in Chile where there was no alternative media to speak of and hence no resistance to the official narrative).

Digital ID will be introduced the same way. The crisis could be a (contrived?) data breach blamed on "hackers": Russian, Chinese, or Iranian, or Venezuelan; or on "domestic extremists," or whoever are that week's demons.

Several crises are underway or being fomented as I write: efforts to round up illegal immigrants that are spilling onto



U.S. citizens who happen to speak Spanish; mass shootings; the threat of war with Venezuela and the likely blowback that would lead to.

Systemic (or structural) coercion then would involve doors closed in your face, one by one. These are called *nudges*, and psychologists have been paid good money to study how they can be used to gain compliance.

You receive a renewal notice in your email. Or perhaps you have a credit card about to expire. When you try to log on to take care of it, a pop-up window you've never seen before says, "ID required." It might not use the phrase *Digital ID*, any more than *central bank digital currency* will necessarily be called that. (The latter might be called *Stablecoin*.)

There are plenty of online forms today, especially to log on and access accounts, in which if you can't supply what the program "wants," you don't get past that screen.

This will be no different – one more digital hoop to jump through. But it will spread, and the refusenik will find himself/herself having a harder and harder time doing anything online. Including paying bills, which could soon mean worse consequences than mere frustration.

Customer service (already worsening for years) will similarly vanish as the "phone tree" no longer accepts your SSN or an account number. Such options won't disappear overnight. Structural coercion phases out what is unwanted little by little, just as years ago, Microsoft began refusing to service older editions of Windows. We already have "two-step authentication" which is a barrier to those with older phones or numbers that can't receive a text.

You'll be told – *if* you reach a human being – that "old" methods of authentication "are not secure."

One day you try to access your bank account. The website has

been “upgraded.” Now you need a Digital ID (or the equivalent) to log on. For a while, you may be able to drive to your bank and conduct your transactions in person, or pay bills through the mail or in person. But as checks are phased out and AI replaces human beings, those doors, too, will close. Imagine seeing *Go to our website* pasted on locked doors, followed by a URL, and then: *we apologize for the inconvenience*.

Most paychecks are now direct deposit. That makes the switchover to Digital ID in that arena simple. Social Security and Medicare will be available only to recipients with a Digital ID, as will health insurance policies and healthcare generally. If you’re dependent on these, you’re strongarmed. The final step will be the elimination of physical cash, meaning that without the Digital ID you can’t buy food.

If you’re already partly off the grid, completely out of debt, with no bank account, and perhaps using a “parallel currency” to trade with (or bartering services for goods), you’ll have a chance of surviving without the Digital ID.

Otherwise, probably not.

And it’s always possible that independent, “parallel” activities will be criminalized. They will have been demonized as the province of drug dealers (“narcoterrorists” is now a favorite Trump administration term) and other criminals, or as harboring “neo-Nazis” or other potential “domestic terrorists.”

**“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name...” –Revelation 13:16-17.**

**We Were Warned!**

Unfortunately, the time to take this seriously wasn’t

yesterday, last week, last year, or even last decade. Warnings of coming abuses of science/technology have been around for almost a century. Aldous Huxley published *Brave New World Revisited* in 1958. A few years before (1952), “scientific philosopher” (and arch-Technocrat) Bertrand Russell published a slim volume entitled *The Impact of Science on Society*. He wrote revealingly:

**What is essential in mass psychology is the art of persuasion.... This subject will make great strides when it is taken up by scientists under a scientific dictatorship. Anaxagoras maintained that snow is black, but no one believed him. The social psychologists of the future will have a number of classes of school children on whom they will try different methods of producing an unshakeable conviction that snow is black. Various results will soon be arrived at. First, that the influence of home is obstructive. Second, that not much can be done unless indoctrination begins before the age of ten. Third, that verses set to music and repeatedly intoned are very effective. Fourth, that the opinion that snow is white must be held to show a morbid taste for eccentricity. But I anticipate. It is for future scientists to make these maxims precise and discover exactly how much it costs per head to make children believe that snow is black....**

**Although this science will be diligently studied, it will be rigidly confined to the governing class. The populace will not be allowed to know how its convictions were generated. When the technique has been perfected, every government that has been in charge of education for a generation will be able to control its subjects securely without the need of armies or policemen. (pp. 27-28)**

Russell wrote that almost 70 years ago!

Other books have examined the rise of Technocrat organizations such as the Trilateral Commission and Technocrat movements such as Sustainable Development. Antony C. Sutton and Patrick

Wood penned the first edition of *Trilaterals Over Washington* in the 1970s. This followed (Technocrat) Zbigniew Brzezinski's impactful *Between Two Ages: America's Role in the Technetronic Era* (1970); which inspired David Rockefeller to create the Trilateral Commission, its goal a New International Economic Order.

More recent superelites have written books about what they arrogantly envision is to come: Klaus Schwab's *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (2017) and *Covid-19: The Great Reset* (2020) come to mind.

All I can say is that warnings were sounded about this sort of thing long ago. Few people were interested in what we "conspiracy nuts" had to say. Isn't it a very strange "conspiracy theory," though, worked out and presented openly by the "conspirators" themselves?!

**Conclusion: We "strangers and pilgrims on the Earth."**

The situation may seem bleak. But a reckoning is coming. God is not mocked indefinitely (Galatians 6:7).

We could be in for a rough ride in the meantime, because nobody knows God's timetable, and so many people have neglected these warnings, preferring the comforts of sports and other forms of entertainment (cf. Matthew 24:38). Since we reap what we sow, how much of this does Western civilization actually deserve?

Our biggest danger at present is ending up under the heels of a Technocracy: a "scientific" dictatorship, designed by the wealthy and powerful under the materialist assumption that there are no fundamental differences between human beings and other forms of life – or natural processes, for that matter – so that there are no *moral* restrictions against building the kind of future Russell described and Huxley warned against.

But this is still God's world. *We are called on to be patient.*

Hebrews 11:13-16 tells us:

**These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that *they were strangers and pilgrims on the Earth*. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.**

*Strangers and pilgrims on the Earth* learn not to place their trust in a political party or class. They understand: no one in secular society is coming to save them. Which is why it is important to get right with God through His Son Jesus Christ our Lord (John 3:16-17, 14:6; Romans 3:23, 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).

What actions should we then take? It is good to acknowledge what latter day guides like Burke and Röpke got right: that political-economic freedom endures only when/where metaphysical/moral truth is upheld, the most fundamental truth being our intrinsic value as creations of God in His image from the time of our conception (Genesis 1:26-27, 9:6; Psalm 139:13-14; Jeremiah 1:5).

Along the way we solve problems by acquiring knowledge (Proverbs 1:7, Hosea 4:6), putting what we learn into honest work, conducting honorable trades with one another in markets using honest (not fiat) money (Colossians 3:23; Romans 13:7, Proverbs 11:1); reducing factions and divisions in our midst (Galatians 3:28); caring for the poor or for those who whatever reason are unable to care for themselves (Proverbs 19:17, Matthew 25:40, I John 3:17); mastering our passions via prayer and proper self-talk (Galatians 5:24, James 4:1-2, Philippians 4:6-7, I Thess. 5:16-22); and marrying and rearing children who will be able to pass what has been achieved on to

their children, because all have acknowledged the laws of God and of God's creation (Proverbs 22:6, Psalm 127:3, I Corinthians 7:3, Ephesians 5:19-6:4, I Peter 3:7).

Finally, caring for the world over which we were given *dominion*, i.e., *responsibility*, for – not *rulership* over – and are to remain *stewards* of (Genesis 1:28; Leviticus 25:23-24, Psalm 8:6-8, Psalm 24:1-2, I Corinthians 4:1-2, Colossians 1:16-17; Titus 1:7-9; cf. Galatians 6:9).

The ultimate humane political economy, of course, will only be established by Christ Himself on the day of His return! In the meantime, we are to be steadfast and do what we can, keeping His commands before us.

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Steven Yates is a (recovering) ex-academic with a PhD in Philosophy. (Obtain his book on the "wisdom" of obtaining such a degree [here](#).)

He taught for more than 15 years total at several colleges and universities in the Southeastern U.S. He has authored three books, more than 20 articles, numerous book reviews, and review essays in academic journals and anthologies. Refused tenure and unable to obtain full-time academic employment (and with an increasing number of very fundamental philosophical essays refused publication in journals), he turned to alternative platforms and heretical notions, including about

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In 2012, he moved to Chile. He married a Chilean national in 2014. Among his discoveries in South America: many of the problems in the U.S. are problems everywhere, because human nature is the same everywhere.

He has a Patreon.com page. Donate [here](#) and become a Patron if you benefit from his work and believe it merits being sustained financially.

Steven Yates's book *Four Cardinal Errors: Reasons for the Decline of the American Republic* (2011) can be ordered [here](#).

His philosophical work *What Should Philosophy Do? A Theory* (2021) can be obtained [here](#) or [here](#).

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