The Geodigraph Economy

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ABSTRACT

The traditional capitalist economic system operates on the assumption that large projects are only achievable by building large, permanent corporate entities, which raise capital by selling shares to wealthy investors, who then expect large returns on their investments, making profit--and not the greater good of society, their employees, and their customers--the primary motivator for such an entity's activities.

In most political and economic circles, the only widely-cited alternative to this system has been socialism or communism, which, in their own right, require the application of strong coercion, state-sanctioned force, and the erosion of individual and collective civil liberties and human rights.

Geodigraph, a series of computer software applications, proposes a third option, wherein the application of technology is used to allow natural resources, as well as the unique skills of individual free agents, to become the currency with which a conscientious, moral, human, and earth-centric economy may be conducted. Technology is used to connect skills to projects, and coordinate wide-scale collaboration, bringing all needed resources to bear on large projects without making arbitrary impositions on the natural order, or infringing on any individual's right to self-determination, while also encouraging a fairer and more equitable distribution of resources.

1. The Foundation of Happiness: Security, Self-Determination, Achievement, and Connectedness

Human beings have need for precious little in order to attain happiness. These needs can be summed up in the following four categories: security, self-determination, achievement, and connectedness. Security is the first level, including food, water, shelter, clothing, and personal safety. Those who struggle to maintain this level will be perpetually stuck in fight-or-flight mode, and cannot effectively participate in self-determination, achievement, or connectedness. Socialism and communism, applying state-sanctioned force to the pursuit of providing this level to everyone, effectively erode the possibility of attaining self-determination or achievement.

Self-determination is the ability for human beings, as individuals, to pursue their own interests and forge their own destinies. Capitalism can succeed in this, for those whose security needs are met. However, those without strong, ego-centric self-interest will typically struggle to meet their basic security needs sufficiently to participate in any meaningful engagement with self-determination.

Achievement is our desire to be productive and competent in activities that are meaningful to us. In order to reach this level, we must be both secure and have self-determination. Again, capitalism can encourage this, but only if one's self-interest and ego-centrism is sufficient to give one a place at the table.

Connectedness is our desire, as social creatures, to experience love, intimacy, and a connection with our

fellow beings. Neither socialism nor capitalism have any element to encourage this, and capitalism, through its ego-centric self-interest, actively discourages it, as it frames our fellow beings as competitors for resources, rather than as allies with whom we share kinship and a common experience.

2. Capitalism: The Ego Economy

Software developers have essentially one job: hiding complexity behind useful abstractions. You'll often hear software developers (and especially video game developers) refer to the *core mechanic* of an abstraction. In many card games, for instance, the *core mechanic* might be matching suits (hearts, diamonds, spades, clubs) into groups, or forming sequences of numbers.

Every system of economics is, by the very nature of the pursuit, an abstraction having a core mechanic. In the capitalism of Adam Smith, the core mechanic is that, given a wide enough distribution of self-interested agents (essentially, greedy people having different goals), the net effect of two self-interested agents competing for resources with conflicting goals will cancel each other out, mitigating the effects of greed and bringing supply and demand into equilibrium. Adam Smith, the father of capitalism, referred to this mechanic as "the invisible hand of God", and believed it was a self-regulating system.

The basis of Smith's axiom is a series of assumptions:

- That all human beings are basically evil and self-serving
- That evil combined with opposing evil cancels out both evils
- That perpetual conflict provides the best standard of living for as many people as possible

There are many problems with these assumptions. First, if our entire system of economics is built on the assumption that all human beings are basically evil, it sets the standard for human behavior at an incredibly low bar, becoming something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Second, how can we syncretize an economic view that promotes evil canceling out evil when nearly all cultures of the world have long agreed on the ethical axiom that two wrongs don't make a right? But, of all of these three assumptions, the third is the most troubling. Analogically, we view the whole of humanity as a collective organism, in which each individual agent functions in a manner similar to that of a cell. If a cell in the human body acts out of purely self-interested motives, the immune system kills that cell and removes it from circulation in defense of the larger mechanism. If a cell learns how to game the system, and reproduce in its self-interest without triggering the immune system, it becomes a cancer which, if untreated, destroys the entire organism.

If human cells, lacking sentience, are programmed to weed out self-interest, what sense can we make of an economic system where sentient free agents, uniquely capable of compassion, are encouraged to direct their choices towards behavior that is inherently destructive of humanity as a whole?

This is not to say that self-interest is always bad--properly-guided self-interest promotes our survival--but we must differentiate here between the true self and the ego. The former is one that recognizes its kinship with and dependence on its surroundings and companions, while the latter denies it in pursuit of fleeting material excess and meaningless flattery. Like the human body in isolation, humanity, as cells within a wider organism, must act in meaningful collaboration rather than self-defeating competition in order to ensure its continued health and well-being, as well as the health and well-being of the planet in which it lives.

Capitalism, as proposed and practiced, clearly falls short.

3. Geodigraph: The Human Economy

If we look at Geodigraph at a superficial level, it might appear to be simply another entry in a long line of collaboration tools, of which there are many. However, the reality is quite different. It respects and expands upon the natural order, by making the individual and her skills the central currency in which it trades. A traditional collaboration tool is limited in scope to a single company, pursuing its isolated goals of competition and ego-centric self-interest.

By placing individual skills and the connection of those skills with those who need them front-and-center, in a realistic, social environment. Geodigraph can satisfy humanity's need for security by giving them self-determination, achievement, and connectedness *first*, rather than making security a pre-requisite for the higher needs.