

bespokonomics

ॐ नमः शिवाय

join the movement!



bespokonomics.github.io

Terms

bespoke(adj): intentionally-made, custom-fitted, unique, irreplaceable

creativity(n): an ability to generate bespoke solutions

material(n): physical objects, that which can be reduced to the periodic table of elements

energy(n): ???

Part One: Survival

The greatest sources of our suffering are the lies we tell ourselves.

—Elvin Semrad, as quoted in
The Body Keeps The Score

Cycles

Our entire lives play out on a spinning ball that revolves around another spinning ball.

The Sun appears, and then it disappears. Predictably.

Ocean tides. The phases of the moon.

The seasons. The holy days. The years.

Human beings who lose their direct connection with natural cycles inevitably find themselves in cycles of material poverty and/or spiritual suffering.

Money

Money is ***not*** the root of all evil.

Greed is the root of about $\frac{1}{3}$ of all evil.

Money is not the root of all evil, but in a society where everything is for sale, it is the root of about $\frac{1}{3}$ of all evil.

Be grateful for what you have. Be mindful of those who lack.

Use your money to bring pleasant and needed things into the lives of those you love.

Please love yourself.

Things: How To Make Them

Consider a clay pot.

To make a clay pot requires material— clay, a potter's wheel, glaze, a kiln.

To make a clay pot requires energy— to shape the clay, to fire the pot in the kiln.

To make a clay pot requires skill, knowledge, the capacity to create.

Consider a smartphone.

To make a smartphone requires raw materials— silicon-based computer chips, lithium and cobalt for the battery, glass for the screen, etc. To make a smartphone requires specialized materials— machines, factories, etc.

To make a smartphone requires energy— to run the assembly lines, to design the parts etc.

To make a smartphone requires engineering skill, scientific knowledge, and a mathematical capacity to create.

Things: How To Make Them, contd

Consider a tomato.

To make a tomato requires material— soil.

To make a tomato requires energy— sunshine.

To make a tomato requires skill and knowledge, the wisdom to seed in well-maintained soil. In this case, the tomato itself generously supplies the capacity to create (ad infinitum, so long as it's not seedless).

You get the picture.

Goals

What goal is greater than *earning* six figures and *owning* seven figures?

What goal is greater than *freedom from survival*?

Part Two: Pleasure

;Legalize everything!

— Eric Andre

The Economy Does Not Exist

The economy does not exist.

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We will become smarter, kinder, and *wealthier* when we realize— the economy does not exist.

Needs, Wants, and Demands

Many economists constrain *demand* to mean nothing more than a shifting composite of consumer wants and needs. They even have these mathematical models called *demand curves*, which express how quickly demand falls off as prices increase. Corporations use these models to determine prices.

These simplifications are dangerous. For one, they deliberately collapse the distinction between *wants* and *needs*. The value of food, water, and housing become economically indistinguishable from luxury goods like designer fashion and high-end automobiles. When an “economy” built on such a broken concept of “demand” becomes real in people’s minds, they learn to justify all sorts of poverty in the name of Progress and for the sake of short-term personal pleasure.

We need to teach people what *demand* really means.

A *demand* happens when you think you deserve something. *Demands* become powerful when people come together and fight for them.

What do we need? What should we want? What must we demand?

A Modest Proposal

At every possible level, we should tax wealth and transform it into universal income.

Demanding the wealth tax + UBI is a way to shift every “demand curve” to prioritize needs over wants, simply by giving transformative amounts of money to those with dire *needs* whose wealth is nonexistent and whose other sources of income are unreliable and limited.

Demanding the wealth tax + UBI is a way of turning any stock market from a tool of wealth *consolidation* to a tool of wealth **redistribution**, since the owning class will be forced to sell their shares so that middle classes can buy them on the cheap.

We can adjust the cutoff for the wealth tax as high as we’d like. Too many people want Patrick Mahomes to keep his money? Cool, let’s only start the tax above \$500 million.

We can adjust the rates for the wealth tax as we’d like. 5% would mean a healthy payout over decades, 15% would mean heavy windfalls quickly. Or, we could even fix a number for the UBI payment and adjust the taxes accordingly, campaigning on slogans like “We’re going to give you \$1000/month and make the billionaires pay for it”.

Wealth redistribution is not a new idea. It’s at least as old as Robin Hood. It’s what Martin Luther King Jr. was fighting for before he was murdered for his Poor People’s Campaign.

What has changed is our *institutions*. We have standardized currencies, international banking, and publicly traded global corporations.

What has changed is the *form* and the *liquidity* of wealth. Wealth used to be solid, in forms like land and factories. Transferring that wealth even to another member of the owning class was *difficult*, because it was difficult to assess the value of the respective properties. The stock market virtualized the ownership of property; it made property more liquid and exchangeable. Now, it’s relatively easy for an Elon Musk to sell some of his Tesla stock to buy a controlling share of Twitter.

In response to these changes, the number of *economic policies* available to us have expanded. You need both stock markets and nation-states with well-established powers of taxation to really grapple with the idea of a global tax on wealth. You need a well-established currency to even entertain the idea of universal basic income.

Too many demands splinter a movement into ideological factions. Too few demands, and either not enough people will be gathered or their energies will be scattered in too many different directions.

A single demand that would restructure the “economy”, that transforms the “demand curves” underlying the flow of goods through the world, a **demand** that would give hundreds of millions of people quicker access to the things that they *want* and *need*?

This is a demand that cannot be ignored.

Declutter

You may have heard that “the things you own end up owning you”.

You may have been advised to give away your possessions that do not “spark joy”.

You may be aware of how social media is warping your mind.

You may have heard that the average American kid can identify over 1,000 corporate logos but less than 10 native plants and animals.

You may be aware of the rampant, callous wastefulness of American society.

If you want lasting pleasure, simplify.

Decentralize

Creativity. Material. Energy. These are the fundamental inputs to any economic process, no matter the scale.

Creativity can be decentralized, but only by teaching and sharing. The Internet helps a lot with this.

Material can be decentralized. Instead of directly seizing the means of production, which would be a logistical nightmare in a country with thousands of megacorporations and hundreds of thousands of small businesses, many of which make nothing of real value and are therefore not even worth seizing— we tax wealth and redistribute it as universal basic income. Those companies that survive by making useful products, like 3M, will quickly become controlled by ordinary people (since the wealthy owners will be forced to sell their stock and many ordinary people will have extra money). Those companies that exist to service the wealthy, like hedge funds and Goldman Sachs, will cease to exist.

Material can be decentralized. UBI money can be used to buy things like 3D printers, solar panels + hydrogen fuel cells, and gardening supplies.

Energy can be decentralized. Instead of allowing our employers to drain our bodies and suppress our souls, we should organize

for higher wages and shorter hours. We should even consider calling a general strike to end workplace exploitation once and for all.

By making things by yourself, for your people— any things— you are decentralizing the means of production and accelerating the downfall of the system.

The Pursuit Of Happiness?

Sometimes, I entertain the comforting thought that the only thing that has ever been wrong with America is that Thomas Jefferson mixed up his words.

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

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Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Make no mistake, as you read this, the repetition of those words in that order are making this world OK in the mind of a kind, hard-working, and *fundamentally decent* American man.

The problem is that the order is wrong.

Life, happiness, and the pursuit of *liberty*.

Well, happiness is fleeting by nature. Even joy, its more stable sibling, must be tempered by compassion and unconditional love (at least in a world such as ours). But perhaps, in this new nation we are forming in our minds, this America of the redeemed, we could at least promise *pleasure* to even the sorriest of souls. Genuine pleasure, for as long as they are able to pay for it. A nation where there are always plentiful, if not pleasant, *jobs* for them to earn the money that buys pleasure.

And outside of the concerts, the restaurants, the nightclubs, the museums; beyond the institutions exchanging money, that old devil, for *guaranteed part-time happiness*— something akin to paradise shall blossom. People of all sorts mingling freely, sometimes sowing, sometimes reaping, often learning, often traveling, always partying— pleasant people creating a *culture* of overflowing pleasure, free of cost, so long as you pass the vibe check.

Life, *pleasure*, and the pursuit of liberty.

The world has seen an economically powerful America, but the reviews were not all positive.

What the world has not seen is a *bespokonomically* powerful America. That is the nation I am fighting to create, the only America whose flag I would be willing to pledge allegiance to— a country dedicated to the creation of better food, better music, better people.