

Re-think, Recover, Re-group, Re-shape

There has been much talk in mainstream media about “centre ground politics”. It’s supposedly where most people are, politically – we talk about politicians being “right” or “left” of centre.

I’ve never been a fan of the term, and I’m even less so after the sickening farce, rapidly turning into a tragedy, of the last UK General Election. Where is the “centre ground” between evidence-backed theory and a blatant lie? Where is the “centre ground” between the politics of denial and the politics of protest? Stalemate. No-one wins.

I would prefer to talk about balanced politics.

It will not surprise you to learn that I also advocate that the balance should be struck between five autonomous voices, speaking from the perspective of financial capital, social capital, natural capital, knowledge capital and created capital.

We already have voices – loud, strident, dominant voices – representing the interests of financial capital. Financial capital feeds on competition, it excels at it. It is ruthless in pursuit of growth. It is cold in its assessment of human worth and social capital, seeing humans as simply economic units who contribute to economic growth either as Workers or Consumers. It is exploitative in its attitude towards natural capital, devouring whatever it can and discarding what it can’t use without a second thought. It is highly selective in its attitude towards knowledge, and funds only the created infrastructure which directly feeds its insatiable appetite.

Financial capital is a cancer that grows too vigorously and replicates too fast. The predator without competition that has eaten its way through all its natural prey and, faced with starvation, is trying to devour the people who created it.

As it has risen to dominate the human story, financial capital has come to govern our politics to the exclusion of all else. There is no balance. It has created the winner-take-all, ruthlessly competitive politics that are laid bare in that champion of financial capital, the USA.

We do have political movements that try to represent social capital. As it’s people who invented and continue to grow and replicate money, social capital – the will to go on growing and replicating money – is the biggest enabler of financial capital; and also its biggest rival. The political movement that tries to draw attention to the damage the *exclusive* pursuit of financial capital does to the very people who created it is attacked, pilloried, belittled and sidelined by all the formidable armoury amassed behind financial capital. It is depicted as “unrealistic”, “irresponsible”, “the enemy of freedom” – all the things, in fact, that the story of financial capital itself is! The victims themselves are increasingly presented not as fellow human beings demanding solidarity and support but as pathetic failures in the global economic game; losers, scoundrels, scroungers and layabouts, unfit for survival. The story always asks us to identify with the winners.

Until COVID-19 came along, and made us stop and think. Those who devote their time, energy and skills not to the pursuit of wealth but to the care of others are now not ‘losers’. They are heroes. We start to see the people in the gig economy on the losing side of the economic game as human beings, doing their bit to keep us safe and get us through. We start to appreciate the artists, storytellers and musicians who give us solace and wisdom, and bring us together at a time when we have to be physically

distanced, even as the pandemic destroys the system by which many of them eke out a living in an economic system that values popularity (and its consequent potential for making money) over talent or insight. We realise, with a start, how vulnerable our ridiculously extended food supply chains are and how starkly that could impact on our own individual survival.

COVID-19 makes us choose. Which do we value more? Life? Or economic growth?

It’s a choice that should inform EVERY political decision. Including who you vote for.

But the two-horse race does not deliver balanced politics. It represents only the two sides of the dysfunctional economic model we’re all working to – capital and labour.

Now the unstoppable march of Financial Capital has turned into a cancerous growth threatening to re-shape the entire planet into a form that may not even support the continuation of human life, there is a growing movement seeking to represent natural capital. Much of it is the politics of protest – that’s where people start. Those who have been in the environmental movement a long time have had the time to dig deeper into the root causes of the symptoms the politics of protest are reacting to, and they have realised that it’s the whole, interconnected global system that has to change. Just as the system of international treaties brokered by European monarchs and their cohorts had to change when they culminated in the First World War, our system of cold-hearted, narrowly focussed, international trade has to change.

The system we can change. Human nature we can’t change. We will continue to be a mass of contradictory, emotional, crazy, creative, indolent individuals, full of our own importance, sometimes incredibly smart and sometimes incredibly stupid.

Without the power of social capital behind it, attempts to reverse the destruction to our planet will not succeed. And while people are still in thrall to the money myth, we do not have sufficient social capital behind the push to change direction. We do not have balanced politics. Because, normally, people are never actually asked to choose between economic growth and life. Normally, this is presented as the same thing. That’s the lie. It’s not. And COVID-19 has begun to show us why it’s not.

Part of the reason the vast mass of humanity doesn’t understand the choice is because the other capital flows – knowledge and created capital – have been subverted to the service of the economic growth that feeds financial capital.

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This is the damage the money myth has done to the story human beings tell ourselves about who we are and what life is all about. These capitals must be released from their financial straitjacket and given their rightful place as equal partners in shaping our future.

The Grant Rule Trust logo depicts five spotlights shining down to form a single circle of white light. None of the capital flows are servants of each other. They are all vital members of a dynamic team, each with their own unique experience of life and living essential to the creation of a clear, bright light of love and hope. We need a political system that recognises and values what each contributes to the health and wellbeing of life on Earth, which humans are part of. Not masters of.