

*It is an ill wind , that blows no good*

*The virus can be a transformative moment*

Wolfgang (Bill) Price

The Corona virus event affords the political economy again a test of the capacity for adaptation of socio-economic ‘norms’ upon response to imminent public harm. How to realize the opportunity provided for new conceptions relevant to a new 21<sup>st</sup> century era of socio-economic performance.

In the aftermath of the toll there already appear celebrity pundits opining why private and public institutions had not been adequately *prepared*. There will be fault finding. And blame. As well as, vigorous advocates for restoring the market conditions and norms of *antebellum* corona. Yet, it has been those very obsolete conditions that have ossified the political economy for two decades in readying *virtues* for adaption to relevant for a 21<sup>st</sup> century social and economic norms.

Tenets of present-day political economy are sanctified in diverse gospels, texts, ordinances, and superstition (starting with Econ 101). Even amidst widespread public dismay for its impact on jobs and employment, the political forces limit their perceptions to rescuing the remnants of a past, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, century industrial enterprise order. The economic response is to rely on Euros to preserve the remnant features of a long-standing transient economy. Normalcy is perceived as embedding everyone in a job.

“U.S. can return to a semblance of normalcy if we have all in jobs. It’s about getting people back to work.”  
U.S. Council of Economic Advisors

Foregone, in the response are perceptions, conceptions, and structures for an advent reordered economy, one relevant for work and workers in a 21<sup>st</sup> century that exploits opportunities from new era innovation and technologies for and advent socio-economic European society.

“We (EU Council) are working on all the necessary measures, **to** help the economy recover...We acknowledge the need to *reflect on the resilience* of our European strategic value chains to better protect Europe from product and capital market disruptions in the future. “  
EU Council, Statement on COVID-19 economic policy response, 16 March 2020

One such lingering tenet casts doubt on any semblance of vision oriented socio-economic plans (particularly by government.) Some of Pres. Trump’s advisers suggest they adhere to

longstanding conservative opposition to ‘big government’<sup>1</sup>. Obversely, these cast optimism for the ‘invisible hand’ in a *laissez faire* economy to overcome the disruptions from their own conceptual errors and those of its disciple constituent.

These opposing senses thwart means for *preparations* for 21<sup>st</sup> century *thinkable* economic and civil society (with its accorded risks); and, for exploitable, at-hand physical and intellectual, innovation yielding prospects for enhanced individual and collective beneficial activity within society. Jay Wright Forrester (MIT) in *World Dynamics* had taken to modeling the complex interactions of the world economy, population and ecology, an initial effort to objectify further the bounds of planning beyond its theocratic *laissez faire* limits.

Estonia’s economy is bound to tech, its government is digital, and most services in the country either are or can be provided electronically—in fact, it’s nearly impossible to overstate the extent of Estonian digitization. People vote online and use digital prescriptions; a single piece of I.D. securely stores each Estonian’s personal information, including health, tax, and police records; one can even establish residency and begin paying taxes in the country digitally—effectively immigrating online. Estonians say that only three kinds of interaction with the state require a person’s physical presence: marriage, the transfer of property, and divorce.

Estonians have a sort of tradition of imaginative undertakings. In 1989–91, for example, Estonian dissidents were exchanging policy briefs on a post-occupation future before the Soviet Union actually collapsed.

A number of sources have sought to identify symptomatic indices for some dozen *thinkable, mega-disruptive*, risks that are of transformative proportion. (Their scope and import may be gathered on examining the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)) **Here in, attention is on the transition in progress toward a new order of economic and communal ‘work’.** It would accord value to many of the essential social qualities of societal work. It would fully automate the ‘cashier’ function while elevating the distinctly (essentially) human **work** within the society.

A precursor for such preparation had been the landmark: “Triple Revolution” (1965)<sup>2</sup> for its alert to the *cybernation revolution* from increasing automation. In the ensuing pandemic impact from that *cybernation revolution* there has been a fifty-year upheaval in social and economic consequences. Its agonizing disruptions remain largely imperceptible because it has been integrated into the lifestyle. (For instance, busing children to school has become norm. Cash

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/20/us/politics/trump-coronavirus-supplies.html?action=click&module=Spotlight&pgtype=Homepage>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272175017\\_The\\_Triple\\_Revolution\\_1965-2015\\_Revisiting\\_Institutional\\_Social\\_Problems](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272175017_The_Triple_Revolution_1965-2015_Revisiting_Institutional_Social_Problems)

cards as substitutes for currency has become norm. Living with stress ‘disease’ has become norm<sup>3</sup>. ) We individually are bobbing in the tide and so are oblivious to the tides.

Consider, 1667: Robert Hooke creates an acoustic string telephone that conveys sounds over taut extended wire by mechanical vibrations,

- 1971: AT&T submitted a proposal for cellular phone service to the U.S. FCC,
- Small LA town gets telephone service for the first time on February 2005,
- While, since 1971 there are 9.42 Billion mobile connections worldwide, which surpasses the current world population of 7.75 Billion.

Few take notice, but the scope of social and economic disruption from these former-day lifestyle shifts for individuals, is inconceivable. Only few, credit the scope of the impact into 2000 from that recent round of social<sup>4</sup> and economic disruption<sup>5</sup>. The induced social alienation from that disruption is evident in a World Health Organization pronouncement minding officials cease using the phrase ‘social distancing’ and urge the appropriate action ‘physical distancing’. Underscoring social relations with friends and family as an essential element in sustaining communal cohesion<sup>6</sup>.

On the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the “Triple Revolution” declaration the Council for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Progressive Economy in its commemoration issued its follow-on alert: “Economy in Transition-Are We Prepared? (2015)”<sup>7</sup>. The Resolution, the shared views of 25 eminent individual from private and public sectors, examined the consequences for future employment, income, education, as well as effects for civil society—social, ethical, and legal. Resolved is, the EU in its diverse mandates remains insufficiently insightful to confront the pandemic economic and social disruption underway. Concern is expressed that “EU Officialdom yet cling to policy

<sup>3</sup> Overall employee **stress** levels "have risen nearly 20% in three decades." At a more personal level: 76% of respondents said **workplace stress** "had a negative impact on their personal relationships" 66% have lost sleep due to **work-related stress**.

<sup>4</sup> Total auto fatalities within EU 2018, 85,629

<sup>5</sup> Includes 2 technology-driven world wars, and innovative economic excesses.

<sup>6</sup> [https://futurism.com/the-byte/who-ditch-phrase-social-distancing?mc\\_cid=0704319fa6&utm\\_term=0\\_03cd0a26cd-0704319fa6-248529881&utm\\_medium=email&mc\\_eid=5c97f66742&utm\\_source=The%20Future%20Is&utm\\_campaign=0704319fa6-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_03\\_23\\_06\\_59](https://futurism.com/the-byte/who-ditch-phrase-social-distancing?mc_cid=0704319fa6&utm_term=0_03cd0a26cd-0704319fa6-248529881&utm_medium=email&mc_eid=5c97f66742&utm_source=The%20Future%20Is&utm_campaign=0704319fa6-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_03_23_06_59)

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.21stcentury-economy.org/events/economy-in-transition/en/storage/doc/Final%20Resolution%20\(January%202018\).pdf](http://www.21stcentury-economy.org/events/economy-in-transition/en/storage/doc/Final%20Resolution%20(January%202018).pdf) 3.  
[https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy\\_reviews/new-skills-and-jobs-in-europe\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy_reviews/new-skills-and-jobs-in-europe_en.pdf)

directives, program initiatives, and human advancement goals, from a conventional fading phase of European industrial and societal organization.”

There remains in political economic circles the back-of-the-mind memory of periods of labor-intensive enterprise capitalism had afforded full-employment jobs. Inbred is the notion: “New skills and jobs in Europe: Pathways towards full employment<sup>8</sup>.” Disregarded, is the shift from an 19<sup>th</sup> century economy of scarcity, to a 21<sup>st</sup> century of abundance. And, the abundance is increasingly excess and sustained by lax (suspended) adaption of state-of-the-art physical and intellectual resources.

**Confronted with the moment’s healthcare crisis, ignores the disruption from standing patterns of innovation, technology, and organization.** Only with the anxious toll from the virus is there a desperate pursuit of means for the use of the arsenal of advanced technology to combat the stunning disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

**Yet, coronavirus is only a preview for the economic impact in progress from a longer-term transition to new economic structures and work arrangements that will suspend *job market labor*.** A new class of human resources without ‘timecards’ will not be termed “unemployment”; rather these will be termed freely engaged workers in pursuit of choice private and/or communal activity. The moment’s resort to employment from out of the home is just an interim phase for future relief from the routines of enterprise toil.

The resumption of human intimate social interaction in life on the commons will be an essential aspect of an AI and robot presence. Activity that will distinguish human thinking, feeling, and acting will emerge as the dominant aspect of formative socio-economic order.

Notably, in the present virus crisis there are vain appeals for a general public role in remedial response. Instead, there is government resort to police, military, tactics, and headlong fines to demonstrate the political credibility of the governing party.

Evident are the effects of the social disruption from the 20<sup>th</sup> century era in which technology and intellectual innovation became oriented to amassing individual earned income and industrial economic growth, while social welfare economics viz., economic efficiency and income distribution, and effect on the overall well-being of individuals in the economy, was relegated to provisional anti-poverty measures for the supposed interim (unfortunate) unemployed.

Absent, is a relevant conception of the individual as a wholly developed person in a modern prosperous society. The prospects for a 21<sup>st</sup> century society are not in patching and acquiescing to the disrupting elements from 20<sup>th</sup> century rampant consumer (retail) economics for the sake of jobs and employment. Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century such serves only to stem the widespread application of physical and intellectual technologies that yield specialized benefits.

For instance, the virus crisis exposes deficiencies in responsive medical and health care. Yet, there is no intensive transformation in medical training, or procedural applications, affording more flexibility in human intervention<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, economic performance has been largely abetted by the impact of deaths from misadventures and ‘social diseases’ which have sustained prospects for employment. Expenditures on mental disorders mount<sup>10</sup>. Obesity and its health consequences mount<sup>11</sup>. Diverse forms of addiction spread<sup>12</sup>.

Assorted vices further afford job employment. The disruptive effects from a 20<sup>th</sup> century socio-economic order are increasingly evident. The present virus disruption with its scale displacement of human resources affords economic and social policy leadership a *raison d’être* for a fitting conception of a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. Central are new economic rules<sup>13</sup>, and a new vision for the role of human potential in an AI and robot productive setting<sup>14</sup>.

In the period since the Council 2015 issue of its Resolution: “Economy in Transition – Are we Prepared?” The subject has received attention in public forums. There has been some foresight to relevant tax reforms. Yet, the prevailing EU policy response would crowd all youths, males, females, handicapped onto ages beyond current retirement into income jobs. And for successive decades beating-out the pursuit of AI and robots with so-called “lifelong learning”<sup>15</sup>. It would submit humankind to a rate race for the *human* in a STEM educated social order.

<sup>9</sup> Hospital had lacked access to valves for their lifesaving ventilator machines. Local firm printed four copies of the prototype on a small 3-D printing machine in its office.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/22/opinion/ventilators-coronavirus-italy.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>

<sup>10</sup> In Europe mental disorders are the largest contributor to chronic conditions afflicting the population. 27% of adult population.

<sup>11</sup> In EU countries diabetes in 2010 reached 6% of the population, or 33 million people aged 20-79 years.

<sup>12</sup> In Europe in 2015 total 8,441 overdose deaths, mainly related to heroin and other opioids, are estimated to have occurred, a 6% increase on the estimated 7,950 deaths in 2014

<sup>13</sup> Rewriting the Rules of the European Economy, Joseph E. Stiglitz

<sup>14</sup> Mission Oriented Research and Innovation in the European Union, Mariana Mazzucato

<sup>15</sup> Europe 2020 strategy establishes inclusive growth — fostering a high-employment economy.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/52/social-and-employment-policy-general-principles>.

The virus episode is an alert for it discloses the scope of a 20<sup>th</sup> century progressive socio-economic disruption well underway. A 21<sup>st</sup> century EU economic ethos would exploit the advent physical and intellectual innovations with the distinct prospect for extending the range for human intellectual, emotional and relational development opportunities. Clinging to a dated economic ethos (that in its period served well) subverts attempts at preparations for extracting full potential benefits from human inventiveness.

The EU and member states are NOT using the urgent matter as a means to fundamental economic adjustments for a future 21st century relevant economy. Simply fixing the 20th century economy with Euros (or \$\$\$) will NOT prepare us, or spare us, from what is ahead<sup>16</sup>.

To be prepared for a European Union is a vision for a future generation in which an individual choice for work may be realized as distinctly *human* work. One, in which any, and all, forms of purposeful activity/work finds expression and its value. A socio-economic order for a new era, one set to an ethos and rules meriting and applying economic and social innovation, for reordering distinctly human work for the social prosperity of the society<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Die Abgeordneten haben am 26. März dafür gestimmt, den Mitgliedstaaten 37 Milliarden Euro aus den EU-Strukturfonds zur Verfügung zu stellen, um die Corona-Krise zu bewältigen.

<sup>17</sup> Legatum Prosperity Index.