

THE ERA OF MIDDLEMAN

Description

*“The superior man understands what is right; the inferior man understands what will sell” ~ **CONFUCIUS**, the great Chinese sage, who lived between 501 and 427 BC.*



The Homo sapiens, who were inhabiting this planet for millions of years, as man and woman or, as male and female, suddenly began to develop a third category called the middleman since the beginning of what we call the modern age. While living independently as his own leader – as the ‘crown’ of all Nature’s creations – for millions of years, it is only in late modern civilization that man has come to be led by somebody inferior to him, namely, the **MIDDLEMEN** or the market force. Among the millions of species it is only modern humans (almost 99%) who live by **SELLING** their service or the products of their labour.

Human society, by and large, was superior or what we may term as pristine/natural up to as late as the start of the 18th century, say, till the onset of Industrial Revolution. Till then, trade and professionalism were only some sort of minor or fringe group phenomena, solely confined to certain remote pockets of the globe. Such concepts and practices were considered much inferior in a world predominantly ruled by priests, kings, warriors and the people.

Today the business of every modern man is business; and his global leader, namely, America, did not look back ever since the 1924 American President, Calvin Coolidge, declared: “The business of America is business.”

Today there is a long hierarchy of middlemen – businessmen – as wholesaler and retailer at every stage. In the long process of seed and fertilizer collection, cultivation, harvesting, procuring, preservation, packaging, transportation and distribution in the lengthy process of which it is the very value of the food item that is to bear for the cost of the long chain of middlemen involved, a practice in which the prime concern at every stage is only the profit that not only not filters down to the real producer but also adversely affect the consumer. Therefore the end consumer commodity has to be mechanically made the maximum tantalizing product, so as to elicit the maximum cost from the end consumer, for compensating the long chain of middlemen process and over-process. All these superficial special effects and treatments on the commodity however render the end product a mere caricature of its natural original state and, in the long ordeal, rendering it literally poisonous, though it is made available in world class packages and sold with the help of very tempting advertisements. This over-process or vitiation especially of human foods alone has visibly helped another modern sector: the most thriving the medical and health care industry through the creation of hundreds of junk food induced diseases for the first time human history.

Money versus Wealth

This is the story of how greed won and commonsense lost in modern history. Nature does not make man poor; man does it by destroying Nature. In making money by destroying Nature, modern man has become the most poor in history. And this is the story of how the millions of years long Nature-dependent human evolution suddenly ended up machine-dependent and now market-dependent since the last couple of centuries. Modern synthetic wealth (industry, high technology, money etc.) is being made by converting or destroying real natural wealth like fresh air, fresh water, human values, natural immunity etc.

Today money-making has become an addiction. Here, it is enough to understand how man has come to follow what market values, what money values, what the make-belief world values or, simply, what images or the artificial trends created by the market values. Today wealth, let alone knowledge, is no more generated, only exchanged or converted in different forms – mostly synthetic, poisonous forms – thanks to industrialism and middlemanism. And the margin is always going to the middleman whose only genius (success-story) revolves around manipulations and extraction of the maximum possible margin or profit. The process having become mostly scientific and mechanical, the result is that almost all natural wealth is being fast converted into synthetic

wealth – synthetic products and money that, being highly non-cyclic and non-biodegradable, glut and pollute the world today.

Today it is easy to prove that the modern methods of wealth creation actually end up in wealth destruction. Here the modus operandi is mired in hi-tech, smart conversion of natural wealth into synthetic or anti-natural wealth through smart hi-tech middlemanism. Take, for example, the mechanized agricultural practices, cooking and processing that destroy nutrition and therefore health.

The intensification of agricultural practices has led to a decline of between 25% to 75% in the levels of key mineral nutrients in farmed vegetables over the last 60 years. There has also been a rise in farmed fruit sugar levels, so much that some natural fruit juices now contain as much sugar as a fizzy drink.

If we can source quality food, our cooking methods often destroy the nutritional content. Studies show that fresh, uncooked vegetables strengthen the immune system and increase resistance to many diseases. Cabbage placed in cold water and boiled loses about 75% of its vitamin C content. Similarly fresh peas cooked for only five minutes lose 20-40% of their Thiamine content and 30-40% of their vitamin C. About 50% of vitamin E is destroyed by frying or baking food. Corruption of food crops, using chemicals fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides and the like, is another story altogether.

Tests in Spain recently measured the levels of flavonoids (a kind of antioxidant) left in fresh broccoli after it was cooked. The results show large differences in flavonoid content according to how the broccoli was prepared. The cooking methods were:

- boiling – 66% loss
- pressure-cooking – 53% loss of major antioxidant
- microwaving – 97% loss of flavonoids

Scientists in Finland found that blanching and deep-freezing vegetables destroyed beneficial compounds. Blanching prior to freezing destroyed up to one-third of the vitamin C content of vegetables and more was lost in storage. The healing properties of uncooked foods are being increasingly recognised in natural cancer therapies.

The more we let food industries create what we eat the more likely we are to be at risk from diet related problems. In effect the commercial interests of food manufacturers are systematically robbing of human health, and eventually life. Biological enhancement of crops, growth hormones in milk and meat, mercury in taste/look enhancing, colorants and carcinogens in food are commonplace.

Genetically modified foods and cloning are 'third degree methods' against Mother Nature. These highly unnatural illusory methods only help man to count the chickens before they are hatched.

A balance between free radicals and antioxidants, as we have seen in chapter 4, is necessary for proper physiological function. The nutrition status of all people, especially in industrialized countries, has been declining since the Industrial Revolution. With the Industrial Revolution came the processing of natural foods, with the resultant reduction of lignans in the food chain. Thus in the sector of food sector alone middlemanism has created a situation where 99% of food products are defective the needs of which have been artificially created but also that these products are much damaging not only to humans and other life forms but also to Nature.

As this is the condition of the food sector, the state of affairs in the rest of the social and material sectors of modern human life is no different, if not worse. You would be surprised to know, on a detailed reckoning, that almost 90% of our problems are just myths and that 95% of our wants in the market are indeed unwhants. Today man does not need almost 99% of products available in the

market. Modern man is forced or humored into buying what he does not actually need; and he thus buys these by selling or spending those things that he really needs. This world produces 99% of its things that are not only redundant for man or Nature but also are ending up as poisonous or injurious to Nature and man. And, in addition, this feat is carried out by destroying or poisoning what is essentially needed, like fresh air, fresh water and organic food and fertile soil. Here it is enough to conclude that “ the fool (modern man) and his money (wealth) is soon parted.”

Both the rich and the poor are getting only poorer: And this synthetic or abstract development has other repercussions as well. At first, it may seem that, with all these market-dictated developments, the rich are getting richer and the poor, poorer. But, in reality, both the rich and the poor are getting only poorer that almost all modern money-making process are indeed wealth-destruction methods in essence. Today 1.6 billion people are worse off than they were 10 years ago, according to a new United Nations report. As widely reported, the world's 358 billionaires may have more assets than the combined incomes of countries housing 45% of the world's people. But then they, apart from having only this poisonous synthetic wealth, are also the virtual inheritors of almost all the problems that mankind faces today than they did 10 years back.

Surrounded by the dollar-hungry Third World governments and their corrupt politicians this tiny globe has been reduced to a sitting duck for these natural wealth-to-money converting clicks or projects like WTO, IMF and World Bank. They indeed broker the wholesale loot of genetic wealth and sell the flora including its inhabitants for some abstract (synthetic) wealth, in the form of dollars, pounds or share certificates. Wealth is today shrinking to its most toxic or dangerous form. Computerization, for example, has taken the bread out of human mouth by concentrating money in a few hands. The process may be compared to the black art which flourished during the middle ages.

Living in an age of image, we all tend to be overwhelmed by images and symbols rather than reality. Here we tend to generate symbols of wealth, not the real wealth and in doing so we destroy the real wealth. Thus we go on making money and more money. Here modern science enters the scene as an effective agent in the conversion of wealth into money or wealth into synthetic wealth – artificial wealth that indeed negates the real wealth.

Today thousands of varieties of consumer goods, like the synthetic textiles and clothing, are available in lakhs of colors and designs that literally glut the third world market where drinking water has not reached nearly 50% of the villages or illiteracy is above 50% among the population. Further this artificial market-sponsored practice has become instrumental in polluting environment and the already available drinking water getting poisoned because of the long multi-pronged chemical process involved.

With a long traditional and hierarchical society like China too entering the field in a big way, the global mechanization or destruction of natural wealth is nearing completion. Like a new broom sweeping clean, the hard won Chinese entry into the global market – WTO – may results in many ‘leaps forwards’ making it literally another super ‘America’ of 1.50 billion domestic consumers in an already pollution saturated tiny planet.

Today we do not have much cotton clothes but cotton-looking synthetic, plastic clothes. We do not have wooden, leather or natural fibre made utility products but similar looking plastic, synthetic products most of which are leaking out highly toxic synthetic nanoparticles and other free radicals to environment and to the wide-ranging consumers . Here we are feeding to the images of wants, to the symptoms or to the feelings of wants and not to the real wants. When we treat a pain, modern method is to treat the symptom or feeling of pain by cutting the nerve between the brain and the particular body part. The patient goes satisfied but literally untreated. Just as the plastics are injurious to health, let alone to the natural environment – all modern taste-making and image-creating materials are damaging in the long run. In short, we are in the fast process of gilding, distorting and perverting all our natural wealth. Here what is generated are symbols, images and

impressions of wealth, we are feeding to the wrong wants, rather to the images of our wants, not to the real wants.

Evolution of money, as the only attraction and value, marks the fast erosion of wealth of all life forms

At every social, religious and political gatherings the world over, we regularly hear loud laments and chest beatings about what they call the erosion of age-old values in human life. The outcry grows louder and louder but the values never return; they only continue vanishing into thin air in greater measures.

Now, in order to have a glimpse of what indeed has happened to the real values and real wealth we have to understand them in their historical perspective and evolution. On a broad vision we can see a major change, a sharp reversal at the start of what we call the modern society, the mechanical society that finally handed over man to market force on a platter.

Modern (scientific) concept of wealth may be regarded as the stock of materials or provisions and the know-how to produce and duplicate them, which are expended for the mechanical (artificial) human requirements. So these are all mechanical or synthetic wealth, which have their most relevance to the mechanized society, to the mechanized man.

But there is a far greater angle to the concept of wealth which is more humane and natural and which most of the present moralist tend to favor and which had its pride of place in the pre-modern society or among the non-mechanical people of all times. And this wealth is the total stock of possessions, tangible or intangible, which have value. And as for the concept, value, this can be regarded as worth, desirability or goodness, the ideas of all of which however, generate more questions than answers, particularly at an age when modern man can identify only market or mechanical value or mechanical wealth. Compassion for the fellow being, generalized vision, diversity, spontaneity, will power, creativity, healthy environment which prompts man to ensure the healthy environment to posterity etc. are all what we can regard as real wealth and real values that existed for millions of years and which helped man evolve to higher stages of development and which made him the crown and ruler of all other creations. These characteristics may be identified as primary human traits and values. And this is the real progress or the forward mode of development or the real wealth creation.

By mid 20th century we had reached a point in this machine civilization where we could bear so little intimate contact with the messy reality of living things – as compared to the clean simplicity of machines – that we became willing to drain our values, for example, by locking up our mothers and fathers on the wholesale in old age homes. The alibi is to create a new investment opportunity in warehousing the old. What a strange thing to do with our unprecedented wealth, using it, that is, to divest ourselves of our closest human ties, getting rid of our history. In doing so a complex circle began a century earlier when we first locked our kids away in prison-resembling school – warehousing is completed.

Warehousing the young; warehousing the aged – good business, but good for what? Does it really matter or not that our parents die among strangers and our children live, penned up by strangers? Does that possibly have an effect on the quality of the lives neither old nor young that are left theoretically free of entanglements? Entanglements are, after all, the core of complete human lives; good lives are all about being entangled with each other. The assertion that isolation chambers for the young and old are an advance in human society doesn't square with any observable reality. In the process we only barter our real wealth for the abstract synthetic wealth called money which eventually destroys everything which man really stands for.

The synthetic production of wealth is merely the conversion of natural wealth into artificial wealth like artificial techniques and products as ready-to-use solutions in which the main role is played by

money being easily transferable, manageable, flexible, long conservable and, above all, highly maneuverable and 'powerful' – money wise. The process, however, is as destructive, inhuman, anti-Nature and inimical to the real wealth as converting the highly natural and cyclic natural petroleum into highly non-cyclic plastic and other polymer synthetic products that, by remaining non-biodegradable for thousands of years, are injurious to all life forms in Nature. The philosopher tries to get down to the most basic, simple principles. He sees people wasting material wealth, or just letting it rot, or hoarding it uselessly for the sake of purely abstract counters called dollars or pounds or francs.

From this very basic point of view, we have created a marvelous technology for the supply of goods and services with the minimum of human drudgery. Isn't it obvious that the whole purpose of machines is to get rid of work? When you get rid of the work required for producing basic necessities, you have leisure – time for fun or for new and creative explorations and adventures. But with the characteristic blindness of those who cannot distinguish symbol from reality, we allow our machinery to put people out of work – not in the sense of being at leisure but in the sense of having no money and of having shamefacedly to accept the miserable charity of public welfare. Thus – as the rationalization of automation of industry extends – we increasingly abolish human slavery; but in penalizing the displaced slaves, in depriving them of purchasing power, the manufacturers in turn deprive themselves of outlets and markets for their products. The machines produce more and more, humans produce less and less, but the products pile up undistributed and unconsumed – literally as toxic waste – because too few can earn enough money and because even the hungriest, greediest, and most ruthless capitalist cannot consume ten pounds of butter per day.

For the rest of the article, please read chapter 15 of the book Life On Meltdown

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