

What's your economy pointed at?

On the show Friends, there is a character named Joey Tribbiani. Joey loves food, he loves women and is a generally fun-loving guy with a good heart. While hanging out with his friends in an apartment, he meets someone who “doesn't own a TV”. The show is set in the early 1990s, I think, and Joey has a valid question. He likes TV, and he's an actor- so when he hears of this person who doesn't own a TV, he exclaims, in surprise “What's all your furniture pointed at !?”

In 2024, the world economy is a crazy machine, and I for one don't struggle to understand it. I just don't. It makes sense in theory. There are so many people in the world, after all- it makes sense that my products bought on Amazon are delivered quickly, and have millions of people employed in resource extraction, manufacturing, logistics, trade, warehousing, marketing and software ecommerce. I suppose this is just me lamenting about the fact that the world has so many jobs available, and so many niches and specializations, it's hard to understand and appreciate the scale, let alone understand different roles in even one industry, at least for the average joe like me. But I digress; I wish to use these words to convey my many thoughts about capitalism to you. A warning, though. I am not a student of the humanities, philosophy, economics, or anything that might prepare me to share profound thoughts on capitalism, the way money affects politics and trade of anything of the sort I will talk about below. I am however, just like you, a participant in this world economy, just like you. I was going to say “unwilling participant”, as nobody asked me, i.e. If someone told me I could live a simpler life among nature with no real economic reason to work, I may have taken it. I am also not a willing participant; I, like nearly everybody else, would like a giant set of changes to things before I brand myself a willing participant in “work”. We don't have an option though. Some more than others, but you don't have the option to “not work”- you'll starve, get kicked out of the house, or otherwise become unemployable soon enough, and exist on the streets at the whims of the working people walking by you all day. You can tell by my writing, I have lived all my life in cities, as opposed to towns, small towns, communities and rural areas.

And you know what? That's enough reason to want and demand our voice be heard. We don't have the option to choose our country of birth, our families, or to work. Many people can't choose their line of work. If you were the eldest in a 5 sibling family, and poor, you likely just start working wherever you can to help your family out, as a trite example. My point being, we're just forced into complying with the current existence structure. In today's era, we do have a lot more choice and luxury as compared to a 100 years ago. Likewise, people in 1950 were vastly better off than people born a century before them. The industrial age hit, and then the information age, and things have changed a LOT. My central proposal : We must make life better for future and current generations by having a lesser burden on our time- our most valuable resource, for once that's out, you're out.

Life has gotten easier as time has passed. In the 18th and 19th century, a large percentage of people did not grow “old”, they just died early, relative to current life expectancy. Marriages

happened earlier in your life, and babies surviving to be healthy children was not a given. In the 19th and early 20th century, luxury was something reserved for the truly rich and aristocratic. With industrialization and the cold war ending, prosperity exploded in many countries especially western (many asian countries followed suit, albeit slowly) and families had houses, comfortable living conditions, a great&stable income, a car and lived better lives than most would have expected. New industries were born and construction was solid, providing for jobs and continuous development. This sort of narrative kept true in the early years of the 2000s, but now, I feel it has been a few years since things have changed.

Now I return to the titular issue in the essay, capitalism. Essentially, my understanding of it, to let the free market regulate the price of goods, services, what have you. A fantastic idea, and in its heyday, allowed many companies to spring up, offer services in a space where before there were few companies that had a lazy share of the business, and all this dropped prices, ultimately benefiting the customer. I say customer, and honestly customer sounds cool, while the similar word I could've used there, "consumer" sounds a bit barbaric. A bit stupid. Capitalism enabled people to take loans, offer services and capture value. However, does absolute free-market no-holds-barred capitalism sound like a good idea? If you answered no, that's probably what I and most liberals might say. If you answered yes, you perhaps have more knowledge than me, or are a big proponent of capitalism or unaware of what I think I am aware of, and this whole essay is my attempt at making you see the world the way I see it, for what it is, what it could be, what it perhaps should be, and why it can't be those things.

Consider this. And also understand that I am not advocating for communism or socialism (especially as you might think of it). Only the far-right wingers that have been complaining about the UN and the "World Government" (that obviously is a piece of their shared imagination) are allowed to rail loudly against the paragraph, the rest must do so with more decorum. Ironically, I feel like conspiracy theorists, flat-earthers, Trumpers(Post-covid), and other distrusting individuals that are vilified by the left, are the ones who have been right about there being "something wrong" Unfortunately, there is an easy bedrock of theories that already exists, including satanic cults and vaccine chips and since these are fearful and shocking conspiracies, with some light patterning tossed in, those are easily believed. I think this stems from our tendency of having the natural gods (gods of wind, lightning, earth etc), the tendency of vilifying and burning so-called "witches", the easy option of blaming a bunch of problems of some sort of boogeyman, when real causes and phenomenon are too hard to discern. What has made this problem so much worse is two things- the easy access to information and disinformation, and the lapse in logic AND attention that affects all of us in this information age.

There's another thing I want to talk about, and it's how interconnected everything is. I'm not talking about the regular drivel of a globalized world, and how we can know what is happening in one corner of the world; also, we don't really get what's happening(in a relative sense, while speaking of perspective). In the show " The Good Place ", they demonstrate this well, and I enjoyed it. Spoiler alert!