

Ontology before Epistemology

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Robert Kagan, a leading light at the Brookings Institution and the author of *The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperiled World*, bemoans (with particular emphasis on *moans*) in recently published articles (one being *Springtime for Dictators*) the shitty state of the world today as revealed in the flourishing rise of populism at the expense of the virtues of liberal capitalism.

His explanation for the ills of the world are as objectively ignorant as one would expect from a Harvard/Yale man who, along with his high level diplomat wife, is deeply embedded in the Republican/Democratic party intelligentsia. The real problem for Kagan is that nasty stuff is happening and it's vital that people should be kept in the dark as to why.

In his article one would think the current wave of populism reflected the love of can-do dictators around the world and hatred for the trials of liberal democracy. He doesn't mention Corbyn or Brexit (which 60% of labor constituencies voted for because if the workers are to be oppressed they prefer that it be by one capitalist state rather than two), nor has he anything to say about the smoldering clockwork rebellion in France. No, for Kagan it's all just a quirk of human nature; the willingness of benighted humans to surrender their freedom to those who will best care for them.

Jeffrey Snider of Alhambra Investments considered Kagan's explanation and noted that it contained no reference to the decade of world economic stagnation. Snider's orientation as an investment advisor is more towards those wanting to hedge their investments in dangerous times and in that role he is very critical about the views of the Fed and 'Economists' in general -- his favorite expression being, *they don't know what they're doing*. For him the rise of populist empowerment comes from an understandable resentment people have for being commanded to accept lies about the economy as the only revealed truth.

What both Kagan and Snider have done is to use our human reasoning capacity to obtain knowledge (epistemology) as to why and how things are as they are. The issues under examination are real (ontology); they are fundamental components of our social being, and the public discussion of conclusions by prominent individuals and groups can result in actions that change the way we live.

Kagan is an insider, his job is to defend the ruling elite that is the actual cause of global degeneration. Snider speaks for individuals with money to spare for investment opportunities. He accurately identifies weaknesses in the real economy

but being entirely oriented toward the Eurodollar and monetary and credit issues has little to say about a solution for the evident crisis in the capitalist real economy. Possibly because he can't think of one.

Apart from humans consciously confronting, positively or negatively, fundamental elements of our *social* existence, there is another ontological process that engages more or less unconsciously in all that encompasses our *material* existence – all the labor that is required to maintain our physical existence in reasonable comfort. Both of these ontologies are cemented and intertwined in a dialectical relationship of mutual determinations.

The rise of populism has two focal points: The structural decay of capitalism as a reliable source of all that is required for a decent and stable life for its human inhabitants as well as the planet they call home; and the other the persistent and well paid for lies of the intellectual class who must divert failure to any cause but the actual one.

Most of the support for alternative politics is coming from the underclass. They loathe the intellectuals, the well paid thinkers of the ruling class, who in return regard them as a dangerous ignorant mob who will destroy the promise of capitalism if not kept in check. But one cannot live on words no matter how tasty – reality speaks for itself.

Economic Stuff

Friday brought in a jobs report that cheered the markets and is a good example of the kind of stuff that those huddled beneath the ruling class regard as a slap in the face, an insult to their intelligence. Last week it was a surprise 3.2% GDP for the first quarter when many were expecting something closer to 1.2%. Much of the boost was because of a large inventory build up due to concerns about a trade war and higher tariffs, and also a general downturn in retail sales, autos, and construction.

Today the Establishment Survey said there were 263,000 additional jobs in April. That caused the unemployment rate to drop to 3.6%. The lowest rate since 1969. Wow! We we are like in the good old days of the 60's. People experiencing the lousy times of the 20 teens just got their second slap in the face in two weeks. This 'good news' was largely the result of workers being driven out of the labor force. That calculation is made in the Household Survey which is also where the unemployment rate is concocted. 770,000 have left since December. A genuine rate would mean a scarcity of labor and a jump in earnings and total hours worked, neither of which has happened.

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