

Consumption Addiction

"The energy we need" is capitalism's biggest con. Even the most rabid environmentalists are looking for alternatives to "the energy we need". As we discuss the multitude of problems to be solved, almost no one mentions the 20 ton elephant; consumption addiction. Easily 2/3 of our economy has nothing to do with real need. It's about comfort, convenience, fashion, fun, fear, and waste, but there's nothing comfortable, convenient, fashionable, or fun about the droughts, floods, fires, famine, and disease that are the consequences of our consumption addiction.

Every addiction has a good side, even if it's just to avoid the pain of not having it. The energy and vitality that come with cocaine are great, but I can look at the experiences of others and see that the eventual price is misery and an early death, so I find other ways to achieve energy and vitality or I do without. On an individual level, we can see the results of the various addictions within the community, but on a level of civilizations, we've nothing to tangibly compare it to so we don't see it, and we're flirting with the death of this civilization. Will we become aware of the deadly consequences of our consumption addiction and have the brains and guts to get past it, or will we poison ourselves to death?

When you're jonsin for a fix you 'need' a fix. Unfortunately, if the fix for our consumption addiction is finding ways to consume more efficiently, every fix just takes us deeper into the addiction. All our advances in the efficiency of consumption mean nothing if it just lets us consume more.

The massive industrial potential following WWII allowed the baby boomers to get us into the mess we're in, but, despite all the talk about climate change and pollution, the next generations are still doubling down on our consumption addiction. We're hardcore energy addicts. We're rapidly burying ourselves in plastic, we're filling our environment with a wide variety of toxins, we're continuing to fill the atmosphere with greenhouse gasses, and we're rapidly cutting down the last of the carbon sink of our forests. As the climate heats up, and the weapons of war destroy ever more of the infrastructure of civilization, famine is stalking the planet.

Environmental toxins turning genes on and off during gestation are the single greatest cause of autism and a wide variety of other birth defects. Ikea is the largest single consumer of wood on the planet.

The scat of every other critter on the planet decomposes in a few months to a few years to replenish the soil that sustains us. Think of our landfills as human turds that take millennia to decompose, and that's just what makes it to the landfill.

Government has little to do with this. It's about billions of individual choices and the wisdom, courage, and responsibility to put the car keys back in your pocket, forgo our addiction to fashion, turn the thermostat down, and do without the easy convenience of plastic and a thousand other toxins made by our addiction to consumption.

In the U.S. we call ourselves a democracy, but our system of government is actually democratic capitalism, and we call ourselves consumers. Your money is the vote that counts. What money buys is energy, resources, and pollution. To grow the economy is to increase energy and resource consumption and pollution production. The ludicrous idea that we can continue to grow the economy is suicide. If we are to survive, we need to rapidly shrink the global economy. I realize that this is heresy, but heresy is often reality. In order to control our consumption addiction, we need to shrink the economy, which means a lot more people without jobs. This requires a fundamental shift in cultural awareness. As we continue to automate, there aren't nearly enough sustainable jobs to go around, and a lot of the meaningful jobs that are necessary for our long term sustenance sit idle. If we had a basic paycheck, some people would be lazy and worthless, but maybe enough of us would get to work on restoring our watershed, cleaning up our community, doing without many of the conveniences made necessary by a hectic lifestyle, and composting our food waste to replenish the complex biochemistry of our soil that is not being replaced by conventional Agrabiz.

Meanwhile, war, famine, and disease stalk the world as the world's military machines destroy the

infrastructure that sustains us and our CO2 pollution and aquifer depletion destroy our farmlands. We really do need to turn our swords into plowshares.

Throughout the history of civilizations, unbridled capitalism and corruption have been their downfall as they exhausted some part of their vital sustenance. The new generation growing up in the digital age hold great promise, but they're facing immense obstacles, most of which very few in the community are aware of. They've grown up in an age of consumption that's deeply ingrained in our culture. With all the overwhelming distractions of the new digital world, we're losing touch with the analog foundations of our civilization. We've become watchers and talkers, as excess screen time raises our children with little or no experience of doing much of anything.

When I see millions of people protesting in the streets, I'm wondering how their gardens are. I'm wondering what their overall environmental footprint is. I'm wondering what kinds of jobs they have. I'm wondering what their individual contributions are to the sustainable sustenance of civilization. I'm wondering how much they actually know about the physics of climate change. I'm wondering how much they know about the multitude of toxins we're pumping into our environment. I'm wondering if they understand the true urgency for adaptation to the immense changes soon to be upon us and the true need for austerity in the face of overwhelming consumption addiction.

All the good intentions in the world ain't worth two dead rats. It's not enough to know what needs to get done; we need to know how to do it, we need to actually get it done, and we need to get it done now. We can't wait for the government or some people called 'they' to get it done. We've handed the federal government over to the oligarchs, and they're mostly scurrilous grifters, deranged megalomaniacs, and their suckups, who haven't got a clue what needs to get done. There ain't no 'they', there's only us.

There's a lot of work that needs to get done, and almost all of it can be done at a very local level. Much of it will need to be voluntary with some local tax money for expenses. Get local, get simple, get to work, set an example, and teach when you can. Reuse, repair, repurpose, recycle, refocus, but most of all refrain. Our consumption addiction ain't making us happy.

"Wisdom without action is daydreaming. Action without wisdom is a nightmare."