

The Simple Science of Democracy and of Money—Without Consent, We’re Extinct

Bob Johnson

Exhibit A—“I like to pay taxes. With them, I buy civilization”. Exhibit B—“That government is best which governs least”. Exhibit C—“I’m from the government, and I’m here to help” (condemned, as the nine most terrifying words). The first comes from a man whose formative years were completed more than 50 years before World War One, itself an inexcusable political pandemic, from which we have yet to recover, but which we seem determined to self-inflict all over again. Exhibit C could only have been uttered by a politician, untroubled by the least understanding of malnutrition, an easily preventable disease from which one in 10 of us suffer, even in the United States.

These three statements are not only incompatible, they are also highly emotive. And however vital emotions are, they do fog the mind. Excessive emotion hinders healthcare. The cooler the clinician, the healthier the outcome. This paper offers as cool a clinical examination of politics, as possible. It points up the parallel between the human body, something every reader has, and the body politic, something every reader labours under. Nor does it seek to persuade one political view over another—rather, as with the best medical opinion, it presents alternative remedies, together with the reasons for them, so that the patient, or the citizen, can decide for themselves. Clarity matters, but Consent matters more.

It also endeavours to follow Amanda Gorman’s invitation to be “brave enough to see it”. The highest ideal in healthcare, is best summarised as follows: “the lower doctor treats disease, the middle doctor prevents it, the good doctor prevents war”. The key to any clinician’s success is accuracy of diagnosis. If it is cancer, being brave enough to know it, vastly improves the prognosis. If it is war, itself a type of political cancer, its roots are deep and even more painful to “see”, but failure to look can cost yet more deaths.

Bankruptcy in commercial settings is commonplace, and easy to understand—it is when outgoings exceed incomings for longer than can be tolerated. It has a direct equivalent in medical practice, and it occurs when, say, oxygen supply is insufficient for too long. The more usual healthcare term is, of course, illness, or in the ultimate, death. But it also applies to emotions—emotional bankruptcy has especial relevance to politics, as this paper explores.

Science, or how we understand the material world in which we find ourselves, is also less robust than formerly. Since the 1900s, Quantum Mechanics has bankrupted the very “Certainty” that was its stock in trade, a point made

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in a series of earlier papers. For those prepared to see it, we now live in a Post-Einstein-Science, which imposes a peculiarly personal burden on each and every one of us. The term “Simple Science”, in the title of this paper, represents all we are left with, once its more grandiose aspirations succumb to the real incomprehensibilities of, say, the Higgs Boson. This impacts directly on health, whether political, economic, family or mental.

This paper has seven sections: (1) The air we breathe; (2) The cash we spend; (3) The Consent we earn; (4) The medical bottom line—where does broken-thinking come from?; (5) “I like to pay taxes. With them, I buy civilization”; (6) Earning peacefulness, 100%; and (7) Conclusion. It examines how, once Absolute Science degrades into wishful thinking, then it takes with it Science’s most seductive selling point—the yearning that Science or Scientists will (soon) decide all issues—personal, family, economic or political. Each and every citizen, including every reader, faces choice—they and we, are called on to decide, to Consent and so to determine whether we will work together to enable civilisation—and so live longer—or we don’t. And just as no infectious respiratory virus can be defeated, without concerted and responsible behaviour on the part of each and every citizen, government or otherwise—neither can the devastating social toxin of Fake-News. Simpler, yes—easier, no—proving just how invaluable Amanda Gorman’s eloquent inspiration is, in saving not only livelihoods, but lives.

Keywords: fake-news, war, peace of mind, no free civilisation, our entropy-driven world, no one is safe until we’re all safe, “do-this-or-we’ll-hurt-you”, Amanda Gorman

The Air We Breathe

“The Law of Pure Cussedness”—this is how James Clerk Maxwell described his pioneering findings in electromagnetism, still in use today. It is as if, when looking scientifically for a “force” heading in one direction, you find it perversely pushing not in the direction you expect, but directly, and robustly, opposite. Or you press ahead working hard, to learn more about where an electron is, only to end up, after huge effort, knowing less. Science was meant to make everything clearer. It was fervently hoped it would tell us all the answers. The more we knew about this curious planet, the less we would need to find out. At last, all the contention and rancour so commonplace among human beings, would be replaced by a Single Absolute Certainty—Our One Scientific Truth—which only simpletons could ignore.

Alas, such Scientific Perfectionism only ever existed in the laboratory, or the armchair. Politics, in particular, never took any notice (Economics too, remains just as rudderless). The more we knew, the worse it got. Instead of getting calmer, more peaceable, every new item of scientific knowledge was pressed into service, not so much to improve our everyday conditions, but to make all our disagreements, deadlier. So much so that now, at the touch of a button, we can now incinerate our beautiful blue planet entirely, thereby rendering the whole utterly incompatible with life. Not a sensible game plan. Hardly a rational outcome for a species which labels itself *homo sapiens*. Even when optimism does peek out from among the debris, such as here—it risks being burnt at the stake.

Yet, the more obvious these scientific flaws become, the tighter we seem to cling to what we have always believed. Atomic physics today for example, opens ever more gaping blackholes, with inconsistencies and incompatibilities appearing almost as a matter of course, especially in what we have always taken for granted, such as gravity or cosmology. The more we know, the more we know we do not know. Do we then regroup? Call it a day, and find a more viable route? Reason to ourselves, that since the Laws of Nature do indeed

become ever more “cussed”—we have to change course, find other routes to reliability, to peacefulness? Sadly, no. There are answers—partial but positive—but who is there left to listen? Those progressing to the top of the tree, adhere faithfully to the old religion, finding it inconceivable they should be required to acknowledge the new.

So knowledge gets ever more porous, ever less absolute. Is there no hope, no room for optimism? Too many people dream of wishful perfections, despite ever more glaring data to the contrary. Yet all the time, right under our very noses, there is obvious, beneficial, healthy, change—for the better. You want hard, personal, irrefutable evidence? Well take a deep breath and there you have it. Not so much under your nose, as through it.

Oxygen. Now there is an interesting topic. Tighten that a little, and you have a *vital* topic. Indeed, you can take it from me, if you did not know it already, that without oxygen, you would not be. None of us would. We breathe oxygen in, and carbon dioxide out. Who can doubt that? It happens every day—or more accurately every second. Go without oxygen for longer than a few minutes, and you dispense with the need for it ever again—on a personal level that is. The rest of us will continue to make use of it, as long as we have breath in our bodies. Not just a select few of us—but every single human being ever born—no exceptions, no deviations, no demurs—few other “values” are ever as unequivocal, universal and Certain. This paper explores, and exploits, this little known characteristic of human beings.

Oxygen is indeed remarkable stuff. We normally take it in our stride—so much so that it ceases to be in an issue. So here, we place it centre stage, give it equal footing with politics, economics and all other aspects of Science, as they apply to us human beings. In fact, by pursuing the essential universality of oxygen as a human “need”, we can shed light on areas which are generally too vague, too woolly and too contentious or even toxic, and thereby give them a cooler, almost clinical airing.

Philosophers, even economists, seldom undergo medical training—too time consuming, too amorphous, too “unscientific”. Which is unfortunate, since being a medical student brings you face to face with the most intriguing entity in the entire cosmos. And you do so, not on a trivial basis, nor from a contentious or theoretical perspective, but in an immediate practical, non-academic way. Fanciful medical theorising is wonderful in its place, but you have around four minutes or so, to decide if the patient in front of you, is still breathing—after that, any philosophising you might care to make on the human condition, fades (along with the patient).

Medical theories (especially in psychiatry) have varied as much, if not more, than those in politics, economics, or even in Science itself, but unlike any of the latter, they are subjected to an immediate accountability—did the patient survive? Or, put it more generally, and adopt that part of scientific reasoning that still does help—how many survived? Do more live, using treatment A, than remedy B—if so, the optimum is obvious.

What impact does oxygen have on rationality? What if it were the missing ingredient—present when people made sense, absent when they do not? Theories and practices of politics and economics vary as widely as there are human beings—what if there were a common thread linking them all, which, if you could once tug, could pull the whole into a coherent living pattern? That would be worth working towards.

The Cash We Spend

Money is man-made—oxygen is not (“man” here intentionally embraces “woman”). And what we humans make, we can also unmake, and all too frequently do. Not so, with the air we breathe. Together with a number

of other components in the world around us, without oxygen we cease to exist. Many philosophers, and some economists ponder the latter—what is existence, and how do we measure it? Looking at these profundities from a medical viewpoint, brings an unusual clarity, not to say starkness—you may or may not have “enough” money—but factors outside your control will decide if and when the same applies to oxygen.

Being bankrupt financially is fairly easy to understand, and to define—it is when your assets, your likely financial prospects, seem unlikely to balance against your outgoings. You have insufficient funds to cover your expenses, and you go out of business—well understood, happens commonly enough. Once it does happen, there are significant external factors which might rescue you—can you borrow enough in time, to tide you over, or not? Here negotiations, and financial connections can make the difference. Assets of a different kind then come into play—are you reliable, have you been honest in your accounting, are you financially *trustworthy*?

Bankruptcy in medical terms is even simpler—does your intake of oxygen match your bodily requirements? This does not depend on your probity, your trustworthiness, what sort of ethics you elect to deploy—no, this is external to all such considerations. Does the air you breathe contain enough of this remarkable substance, oxygen, or not? This is not a financial question, nor, generally speaking, a philosophical one—but it is more vital than either. And whereas insufficient money may be temporary, with time to recover—absence of oxygen for too long, is permanent. There is no going back. And just as careful forward planning has a good chance of preventing financial collapse, precisely the same applies to oxygen supply. Given an opportunity to think things through, to think ahead, both financial and medical bankruptcy might be avoided. But this thoughtfulness has to be both coherent, and successful, else the outcome is neither. The same applies, only more so, to the next point.

Here is the brunt of this paper—there is a third type of bankruptcy, one which afflicts us all, and for which certain obvious remedies are available, if only they can be applied in time. Just as commercial enterprises risk collapsing financially, and the human body cannot survive without known vital elements, so too with the body politic. Democracies inevitably become bankrupt if they are deprived of their equivalent of oxygen (or indeed of cash). And the reasons for this, are not nearly as difficult to understand, or to correct, as is generally supposed. It is just that, as with oxygen, or cash, the topic becomes so heavily overburdened with emotion that remedies are lost in the hubbub. Incoherent thoughtlessness then prevails, taking the health of our society with it.

But why should I know more about this than anyone else? What authority do I have to outline possible political remedies?—I have not even been elected. Why pay heed to my lines of reasoning? In a word, can I be trusted? Perhaps I too have hidden agendas, which distort my outlook and cripple my ability to offer viable remedies. What if I am only hoping for profit, for financial gain, like too many economists suppose all humans to do?

The answer to these potentially devastating questions is simple enough, and it has already been mentioned earlier. When a commercial enterprise faces bankruptcy, it looks around for funds to tide it over. This is obvious, and can be 100% effective. The question then no longer turns on the value of the product or the efficiency of the service offered alone, but on whether your accounting has been honest, or your general past behaviour, reliable. Again, are you to be *trusted*? Or will further sacrifice or investment merely make things worse?

Identical factors apply to the arguments I put forward here. How much weight can you personally commit? What would dispose you to accept, or indeed reject the lines of logic I offer here? Or as I should better say, that I “prescribe” here—and then the analogy with clinical medicine becomes clear. You go to your doctor, you tell

her what troubles you—and you listen to the explanation, or partial explanation offered, technically known as the “diagnosis”. But do you accept the reasoning behind it? Are you sufficiently persuaded to undergo the treatment recommended, which will often involve you in expense, either financial, or in upending your favourite way of doing things? Most disturbing.

And some treatments prescribed can indeed be most uncongenial, even unwelcome. Give up smoking. Drink less. Take more exercise. Sit around less. You cannot lose weight in a storm. Get out more (or less). These trip off my tongue easily enough, as you may note, having been polished smooth during my 20 years work as a family doctor. My favourite with respect to exercise was “get a little breathless everyday” (it’s that oxygen again). All very worthy, and obviously beneficial—but at what cost? Think for a moment as to what would persuade you to alter the settled habits of a life time. Think back to the last time you visited your doctor. How much did she listen? Did he seem to know what he was doing? Had she met this type of problem before? Just how successful had his remedies been for all the others? These pressing, indeed vital, issues are not to be resolved by the application of “Science”—for reasons discussed elsewhere we live in a world where Simple Science wins over Absolute Science (Johnson, 2011; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2020d; 2020e). It no longer makes sense to rely Absolutely, on a body of thought or philosophy, known as Science to solve our many problems for us—if you do not take responsibility for what goes on around you, including your own health, or that of your body politic, then no one else will—our cosmos has proved just too “cussed” to help 100%.

Just in case you think that medical doctors are exceptional in relying on trust to function at all, take a look at the bank note in your wallet. If these have been issued by the Bank of England, or indeed of Scotland, they contain a remarkably naïve declaration—“I promise to pay the bearer £10” or whatever the note denominates. In the United States, legal use entails the even more aspirational “In God we trust”—to which wags respond—“everyone else pays cash”.

So whether you acknowledge it or not, the cash you spend relies on trust. Trust in the value of the coinage, trust that the person you are buying or selling from or to—are they acting honourably? Trust, above all, that you are not being sold “Fake-News”. Because if you are, then the overall “value” of any transaction, withers. Indeed *distrust* suffocates—just as effectively as lack of oxygen.

The Consent We Earn

Consent is the key ingredient to both economics and politics. When it is there, things are healthy, they run smoothly. When it is not, they do not. Yet the importance of Consent needs to be learnt. It is not a given. If you had a coercive childhood—“Do this or we will hurt you”—then the sheer beauty of consenting remains foreign to you. And you are apt to drag others down with you when you sink, as you inevitably will, the nature of the world around us, being what it is.

Until we can all move on to a Simpler Science, to a Post-Einstein-Science, then not only will Consent be undervalued, it will not be given room to breathe. It is a subtle point, but, as with all living things, an obvious one, once you allow yourself to dare to see it, in Amanda Gorman’s (2021) inspiring phrase.

It works like this. We breathe oxygen in without a second thought. Oxygen is not forced upon us. If we do not do it, it is not done. We do it for ourselves. Nobody does it for us. Breathing is second nature, but it is also *voluntary*. You do not usually decide to take a new breath, other things preoccupy you and deflect your interest and attention away from what is, and will always remain—vital.

And it is important that it is one remove from the centre of our attention. This does not mean it is not essential for our continued existence, but it does give us room to grow, to develop, to evolve, and thereby produce the infinite range of utterly glorious things human creativity is so obviously fully capable of.

Space to grow—we know this well enough in the garden or on the farm. Pack your plants too close together, try to force their pace and you are likely to come to grief—your agricultural business will fail. Living things need room—air to breathe if you are a mammal, which we are; space and light to photosynthesise with, if you are a plant, which we are not. (Plants make their own oxygen [and ours] from H_2O , courtesy of “untamed” solar “photo-electrons”).

But Consent depends on deciding. Obvious enough when buying or selling, but there all the time in the background, like breathing—if it is blocked, then so are you. Obviously, you will not Consent to something which is obviously daft. Buy this house, even though it is built on quicksand. A pig in a poke poisons all human commerce. Fake-News devalues democracy, just as surely as false prospectuses vitiate commerce. If I do not trust what you tell me, then I will not Consent to buy (or to vote).

My word is my bond. This used to be centre stage to all and every transaction, whether in cash or emotion. You can rely on what I say to be true, or true enough, so you can give your Consent as easily and as safely as breathing. If you cannot trust my motives, then my offers are poisoned. This applies to doctors and patients, as much as to citizens and their governments, or buyers and sellers—it is an intrinsic part of being a human, and when it falters, so do we all.

So what are the factors which are likely to secure your Consent? Well obviously, the situation has clearly to be to your advantage. I will Consent to buy when the purchase is of obvious benefit, it fulfils what I want, or need. And the list of such items is not endless, though not necessarily easy to define. Oxygen we have already mentioned—we would be unwise to Consent if our supply of this special gas were jeopardised.

What else comes into the balance when considering whether we would Consent or not? And here the fuller benefits of a Simpler Science come to the fore. Absolute Science, the sort that Einstein craved, entails believing that we live in a Clock Work Universe—work out all the springs and cogs, and we will find a consistent pattern underneath it all, which is repeatable in all circumstances.

Sadly untrue. What we consistently find, as Hume warned (1739), is that our knowledge does not hold Absolutely. In reality the world we find ourselves in, is based on chaos. The scientific term for this is “entropy”, or disorganisation. After all, the Second Law of Thermodynamics rules that entropy will always and inevitably increase, merely with the passage of time. This applies to any inanimate system you care to name—no Scientist will disagree. What this paper highlights is that much the same appears to apply to too many societies today. The more time goes by, the less organised we become. However by breathing in, we can hold back this chaos, this entropy, at least for a brief lifetime—and if we can, why cannot society?

The breakthrough with Simple Science is that living organisms combat entropy. They “tame” electrons. I have no idea how they do this, nor does anyone else, nor will anyone else. But what I do know is that they do. So do we. We work hard to keep body and soul together—and we work to reduce disorganisation, to keep unruliness at bay—in a word, to combat entropy—from which follows the Golden Rule for Economics—reducing entropy outperforms all other Gold Standards. The value of any activity can be rated, not only in monetary terms, but also to the degree to which it decreases, or increases, entropy—the former being better known as corruption. You work, we all work—but does this add to, or subtract from ubiquitous entropy, chaotic disorganisation? In practical healthier reality, real world wealth must be made to correspond with

entropy-reduction, not to Fake-News, deceitful practices, inheritance, land ownership or any other obvious economic factor you care to name. These points are discussed at length, elsewhere (Johnson, 2019).

Look at the label we give to living *organisms*. They organise. Every living thing, including of course ourselves, does it. The basic living cell takes in disorganised, raw chemicals (including oxygen), and integrates them into proteins, enzymes, nucleic acids, and an infinite (and ultimately unknowable) range of other vitally important components, so as to survive not only from one day to the next, but, so far, for billions of years. Our emotions, economics, and politics should promote this, not the reverse—Consent, “intent” or whatever we initiate to combat entropy—these prolong life. Clinical medicine can prolong life under propitious circumstances—the same applies to social health, but only if we all put our shoulder to the wheel. The key is to engage everyone’s Consent, because without that, we are all bankrupt (for which read, extinct).

The Medical Bottom Line—Where Does Broken-Thinking Come From?

“Would turkeys vote for Christmas?” Democratic elections can throw up odd, even contradictory decisions. And the reasons for this need to be very much better understood, if we are to have any chance of avoiding their endless repetition, to the detriment of us all. Bear in mind that over 30% of the German electorate consented to vote for Adolf Hitler, an unwise decision in retrospect, since it ensured economic devastation both for them, and for others. Equally, early in the Twentyfirst Century, two extraordinary political events followed unexpected election results, with outcomes likely to be hazardous to the nations who voted for them, and detrimental more widely.

Mention of Hitler inevitably raises the emotional temperature. Emotions can so fog the mind, they close down any further sensible discussion. So much so, that a number of social “clubs” make a point of prohibiting discussion of “religion or politics”, since past experience has taught them that these invariably lead to more rancour than clarity. Yet, there is a curious paradox here—the more important the topic, the bigger the role our feelings play in it. Without emotion, nothing gets done. So what is the answer?

Well, the workaround offered here is clinical. You go to your doctor expecting her to listen to *you*—not to prejudge the situation because of your gender, or the colour of your skin, or any of the infinite number of other human characteristics that can inflame emotions, without thinking. You do not seek medical “answers” from someone who has already pre-judged the situation without looking at your personal perspective. A doctor who cannot see beyond his own prejudices is rather too predictable to solve unexpected developments, which are always the more challenging anyway.

Accordingly, as throughout this paper, I advise the reader to place this whole topic into a clinical setting. Imagine I am running a political clinic for those whose politics no longer make sense, and which have become too painful to resolve without expert intervention—in other words—symptoms of a political disease.

Now, as with every human doctor, I do have my own decided views. I have thought long and hard about the medical issues brought to my door, and the clearer these “answers” have become, the stronger my convictions regarding what you should, or can, do about them. Better experience leads to healthier prescriptions. Again something of a paradox. I need confidence in my reasoning, but also flexibility and untrammelled tolerance in my outlook, so that I can address what you are actually suffering from, rather than what I might all too readily assume about you, as being all too typical of your sort of person, anyway.

Having cooled the topics as best I can, in the hope that they can be considered as if they applied to someone else, there are two items no self-respecting paper on the philosophy of politics could omit—they are

Climate Change and Brexit. If readers turn off at this stage because they have second-guessed my convictions on the topic, then, as with any medical situation, I will have lost their trust that I can discuss these potent matters calmly, objectively and therefore with some chance of success.

So, as often happens in a medical clinic, instead of tackling the problem, the “symptoms”, head on, at face value, in the way they have been presented—I suggest viewing them in a different light, turning attention to a different, perhaps overlooked aspect, which offers better hope. In this case, I would respectfully redirect my client’s attention away from whether Climate Change or Brexit were “right” or “wrong”, on to what their protagonists were *thinking*. What kind of thought process could dismiss the former as a “hoax”, or idolise the latter as “taking-back-control”?

Parts of the “reasoning” in these extraordinary political campaigns make eminent sense, they hold together like they always should, and seem altogether plausible. But if you pursue them a little further, look a little deeper, they fall to pieces—they do not hold true in the long run. They omit the wider picture—viewed long-term they are nonsense. And it is here where our remedies to the body politic need to apply. Do not stop half-way through. Complete the line of thought already started, so as to be better aware of the future consequences. Sadly, there is a pattern here of half-baked notions, un-thought-through passions, and blocked reasonings—in a word—broken-thinking.

And it is here that my medical background pays off. Every human needs to face the fact that other humans are perfectly capable of broken-thinking. They start off well enough, plausible, sounding realistic—and then, out of the blue, they veer into the unknown, into the airy-fairy, citing consequences which do not follow, outcomes which have no relation to the original premise—their thinking is broken. No self-respecting philosopher can neglect this self-defeating aspect of homo sapiens—or if they do, they are missing out on our most dangerous flaw.

Happily for me, a bout of serendipity by events well outside my control, lead me to uncover where this defect comes from, and why those who suffer from it, politician or patient, cannot themselves easily appreciate its origin—self-insight is invaluable, but not always readily available. It turns out that there is a “reason” for their unreasoning, a scenario in which their nonsense does make perfect sense—or rather, did.

But emotions run even wilder here than elsewhere, as witness the current dismissive reaction by too many of my medical colleagues. So, in keeping with our cool clinical aspirations, we need a case study as far removed from orthodox clinical (or political) practice as you can imagine—one such involves an aircraft, damaged in the 1939-1945 war.

Long before I even went on to the hospital wards, I heard the following in a memorable physiology lecture. Returning from a war mission, an aircraft had suffered some artillery damage, but was still airworthy. All appeared to be going to plan, when out of the blue, the captain gives his crew a well recognised, but utterly incomprehensible, order—“prepare for landing”.

Now piloting an aircraft is one of the more highly skilled jobs to which humans aspire, so a level of rationality is not only expected, but vital. This order would have been perfectly rational, had the plane been anywhere near the ground. It made no sense at all, when the plane was still several thousand feet in the air. So where did it possibly come from?

Worse followed. The captain, being in full control, set the flaps, throttled back the engines, and slowed the plane enough to “land” on the nearest cloud bank.

Not unnaturally, the plane loses power, and so sinks through the cloud, and begins to lose height. Whereupon, before the crew can react, the captain sends out the following order over the intercom—"We are now below ground level. Prepare to land again" (No wonder I remember it).

It is instructive to look closely at that statement. Part of it makes perfect sense, and part utter nonsense. If the plane had failed to land the first time, then landing again would have been entirely logical. But no aircraft flies underground—it is a contradiction in terms. So though what the pilot was saying carried most of the appearance of rationality—it was nonsense, and lethal nonsense at that. The fact that the pilot could not think straight, endangered everyone else as well, as non-thinking always does.

Fortunately the crew discovered the cause in time, so were able to implement the cure before they all perished in an otherwise inevitable crash. If they had not, we would never have heard of it. The gun damage the plane had received had blocked the pilot's oxygen equipment—not 100%, but enough to disable his mind, his thinking-apparatus. There was then insufficient oxygen in the pilot's body as a whole, to sustain his reasoning, and it was this sole fact which jeopardised his rationality, and with that, the lives of the aircrew. Happily, when his oxygen supply was restored, so was his sanity, and the crew lived to tell the tale—let us hope we too, have enough time.

It was obvious to the crew that they were *not* below ground level. They looked out of the window and saw not land, but clouds. They reasoned that "prepare to land" was not realistic, so they clubbed together and put a stop to it. The captain, so they reasoned, was no longer thinking straight. The reason in that case was lack of oxygen. But the pattern in all broken-thought is the same—parts of it seem rational, but the overall "logic" is lunatic. This aircrew cooperated effectively, and in time—can we?

Study these issues for as long as I have, and you note a pattern behind the irrational. There is a constant theme running, just below the surface. The warplane pilot knew he had not "landed", but instead of taking in the real situation, he merely re-issued the same command again—he could not bring his thinking up to date. He continued to behave and to think in the same way as he had, prior to his deprivation of oxygen. Had his presumptions been real, his actions would have made sense. But when afflicted with broken-thinking, they were lethal. So how can we make sense of these *irrationalities*?

As you sit there patiently, in my political clinic, I invite you to consider two questions. First what constitutes broken-thinking? And then where does it always come from? The first is easy, and well illustrated by the sample cited—"we are now below ground level, prepare to land again". Here the thinker seriously suggests that the second statement logically follows the first. Landing has not been successful, so the warplane pilot "invents" a reason to account for this failure. "We are now below ground level"—something which for everyone else, whose oxygen supply is still intact, is obvious nonsense. In a word, broken-thinking is a non-sequitor.

This applies to the two emotive political protagonists, as follows. Donald Trump's Climate Change policy was, in sum, "Do not Consent to Climate Change—it is a hoax". And Boris Johnson's European policy was—"Vote for Brexit, so as to take-back-control". Labelling it a hoax justified the first, whereas the second promised to eliminate dither and delay.

If people tell you your house is about to burn down, you evaluate the risk. This is rather more practical than labelling the incoming data as "Fake-News". There is no logical connection between potential fire damage and deliberate misrepresentation on the part of those giving you early warning. Suggesting they stand to benefit by misleading you, misses the whole point. Accusing them of hoaxing you does nothing to safeguard your

property—if anything, it ensures its destruction. To dismiss Climate Change as a hoax is standard broken-thinking, a classic illogical non-sequitor—B does not follow A, however much you might protest otherwise.

As regards Brexit, *homo sapiens* is either a social species, or we are extinct. We need to Consent, so we can cooperate against an incessantly hostile, entropy-driven environment—we can succeed in this as individuals, only by *sharing* control, not by withdrawing it. I cannot resist including here two of Boris Johnson’s favourite aphorisms—*dither-and-delay*, and *ignoratio elenchi*. The first was a slogan he threw at his earlier governmental colleagues, but which now stands in lieu of much of his government’s “policy”. The second is one of his favourite Latin tags, which means you loudly answer a different question to the one posed—both are classic examples of broken-thinking incarnate.

Economic theory generally supports free trade, arguing that it largely benefits both parties. Accordingly, needlessly tightening national borders ensures all manner of costs, both economic and political. All of which are fully foreseeable, but which broken-thinking excludes as a matter of course. Patching up desperately inadequate broken-thinking with Fake-News, adds fuel to the fire. The non-thinker is clearly passionate, but not about their current challenges, more about some obscure left-over, from a distant past. Not so much: How can one man avoid converting a United Kingdom into an Untied Kingdom, with such frighteningly little resistance—but how to convince all and sundry, including chiefly himself, that he is a “winner”, thereby avoiding being seen, personally, as a “loser”. Why? Where on earth can this twisted and illadvised illogic originate?

So to the second question: Where does all broken-thinking come from? Before launching into a diagnosis, an “answer” or “partial answer”, in every medical context it pays to “take a careful history”—that is to say, ask carefully for other, perhaps ancillary data, which might illuminate the healthier way forward. Here, when their policies are challenged, the protagonists do not refer to wider supporting evidence—they propagate ever more blinkered fantasies. Indeed, look carefully, and Fake-News is an integral part of broken-thinking. The warplane pilot even suggests that flying underground is perfectly acceptable for an aircraft. We know that insufficient oxygen precipitated that non-sequitor—what about the others?

Here I again dip into my past medical experience, and offer the following unorthodoxy for your judicious consideration. Broken-thinking occurs spontaneously and perfectly naturally—indeed it occurs universally in every badly run kindergarten, anywhere in the world. Aged two, accusing fellow toddlers of hoaxing you, can put you in a dominant position, especially if you are being bullied. Moreover, if another toddler has just grabbed your best toy, then you are desperate to take-back-control. However, if it is you who has done the grabbing, then any excuse that comes to mind might deflect teacher’s wrath (or others’ later, in lieu). Fake-News then promptly becomes a highly desirable survival skill—whatever you can dream up, fast enough, regardless of its relationship to reality, is better than even the threat of impending punishment.

Do not forget—many childhoods are dominated by Coercion—“Do this or we will hurt you”. It does not work, it does not make sense, but it leaves a fearsome and often long-lasting scar (the oldest patient I had who benefited from unpacking this blockage, was 82). Consent cures Coercion, it is the only reliable antidote. The next time you bewail the lack of joined-up-thinking, whether from government or anywhere else, at least you will know where it comes from.

The whole handicap of broken-thinking recurs at all levels in mental health—it is a bit like an ingrowing toenail—it self-perpetuates. Broken-thinking is too fractured to put itself right. Only trustworthy outside

support can let light into a blocked off region. As it happens, there is even solid irrefutable scientific evidence that the blockage does indeed arise from insufficient oxygen supply to the frontal lobes. Brain scans here represent the one and only objective, reproducible, non-subjective test in all of psychiatry—though even this has proved insufficient to make it mainstream. Follow this line and it becomes curable. Fascinating topics, elaborated elsewhere (Johnson, 2018; 2020e).

“I Like to Pay Taxes. With Them, I Buy Civilization.”

Civilisations die. All are vulnerable when politics can be bought and sold, and Consent is neither valued nor earned. It is here that the philosophy of money crunches up against that of democracy. A hunting party can gather more food if every member keeps keen eyed and alert. Where some become preoccupied with inedible materials, such as diamonds or gold, then less food will be gathered in direct proportion. When things are tough, as they are today, every member of the team homo sapiens, is needed—each can play a crucial part. When populations are numbered in millions, it might seem as if each voice becomes less important (partly because they are more difficult to hear)—in reality the opposite is the case—the more people involved, the more vital does it become that their viewpoint is heard, their contribution to the hunting party noted, and their true Consent elicited.

Democracy is not optional. The entropy-driven world in which we struggle to survive, takes no prisoners, it owes no one a free life. If oxygen supplies fail, people die. If food falters, we starve. So many things are already happening, and multiplying, that we need everyone’s attention to keep abreast. Broken-thinking does not help, but seeking everyone’s viewpoint via their vote is the least worst option we any of us have. There are no guarantees that the majority view is correct—but the probability is that it is. So when successive political parties continue to gain power despite more people voting for someone else, than for them, as they did with both Donald Trump (in 2016) and Boris Johnson (in 2019)—we should sit up and take notice, else forfeit any reason to be surprised.

As a bright-eyed medical student, my teaching hospital advised me to “haunt the post-mortem room” where experienced doctors dissected the causes of death. Now, 63 years later, I turn my attention to the diseases which afflict nations, a topic which requires a similar steeliness of purpose, and an unflinching insistence on looking at what goes wrong, so as to better enjoy what goes right. It is not such a great leap after all. Individual human beings become ill, so it is unsurprising that larger collections of them, as in national bodies, do so too. The overlap is gratifyingly close. What is perhaps more surprising is how a highly infectious and rather deadly respiratory virus highlights the issues so pertinently and so painfully. Broken-thinking is crippling, Fake-News is unreal, whereas only the most stringent view of realities can limit global disease.

In the same week that the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic, an editorial in *The Economist* outlined three of its most relevant factors, as follows.

Few of today’s political leaders have ever faced anything like a pandemic and its economic fallout—though some are evoking the financial crisis of 2007-09 (see article). As they belatedly realise that health systems will buckle and deaths mount, leaders are at last coming to terms with the fact that they will have to weather the storm. Three factors will determine how they cope: their attitude to **uncertainty**; the structure and competence of their **health systems**; and, above all, whether they are **trusted**. (The Economist, 2020, emphasis added)

Taking these three points in reverse order, the vital importance of **trust** has been much emphasised throughout this paper. The structure of a nation’s **health service**, suddenly becomes the front line in the battle

against an invisible intruder. What may have served well enough in the past is given a radical, indeed brutal shake up—only the most robust and best designed will limit the death toll. It is curious that *The Economist* also includes “**uncertainty**”—this does indeed have a major bearing on prognosis, and it reflects, so I like to think, the growing need to adopt a Simpler Science, which is based on acknowledging Uncertainty as central, rather than hoping, increasingly desperately, that a Scientific Clock Work Universe will eliminate it once and for all.

The National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom (UK) is exemplary. Here we have a *national* effort—started by a government that “stuffed the doctors’ mouths with gold”, so that we don’t have to. Sadly successive UK governments have been unable to resist degrading it, despite the general population continuing to give it unstinting support. Much of this paper has attempted to maintain a cool clinical approach, where emotions and passions are kept strictly under control. Here, however, they escape. What the NHS represents is what all governments should do—combat illhealth. And combat it in an organised, concerted manner, by cutting the link between cash and cure. Not easy, but even more fundamental than it first appears.

If you are ill, you earn less. If your nation does not supply healthcare as a matter of course, paid for by everyone else, then the chances are your pathology will make you and yours even poorer. A vicious circle is then set up where deprivation breeds, and the whole society suffers. Obvious enough to those who can think logically—anathema to those clogged by broken-thinking. Unhappy toddlers are disinclined to help fellow sufferers—so why cannot we grow up emotionally, and reverse this insidious downhill trend? I note that the two richest nations in the world, China and the United States have yet to think clearly on this. Where health is dependent on wealth, paupers suffer—a political and economic policy that is myopic, self-defeating and costs us all. I concede that this point evokes more passion than a cool clinical demeanour might expect, but the NHS matters directly for me. Had the NHS not insulated both me and my key patient in 1986, against the distortions which money inflicts—I could never have uncovered the key to broken-thinking (both in myself, and in her).

The Victorians discovered sewage. Cholera did not seem to notice whether you were rich or poor, it killed you off, anyway. The death toll was at least as high as with COVID. Boundaries erected between the undeserving rich, and the deserving poor did not offer much protection against microscopic pathogens—they devastated your gut, regardless of your dining habits—it is what happened to your ablutions that mattered. The waste you, or your fellow citizens wanted to be rid of, could come back to afflict you—unless you thought things through (as with plastics they still can).

So to three axioms which have been robustly applied at different times, to the philosophy of money and democracy. Exhibit A—“I like to pay taxes. With them, I buy civilization”. Exhibit B—“That government is best which governs least”. Exhibit C—“I’m from the government, and I’m here to help” (condemned, as the nine most terrifying words).

The first is from Oliver Wendell Holmes. Born in 1841, he was 73 when World War One broke out. This axiom is in such stark contrast to what passes for political philosophy or economics since, that it goes to show what a devastating impact that global political pandemic had, not only on the economies of the early Twentieth Century, but on the morbid philosophising which resulted from it, especially I feel compelled to add, from Wittgenstein, who was unfortunate enough to have battled in the Austrian trenches.

Again, if you can detach the heavy emotional fog which accompanies most discussions of wealth and politics, then it is clear enough that if you do not pay for roads, healthcare, the arts, and so on, then civilisation withers simply through lack of funds. No Free Lunch is a regular battle cry—but No Free Civilisation would be nearer the mark. Time we agreed with Oliver, and relished funding our very own civilisation, before it too, dies.

Thoreau was, apparently, horrified by the warfare his government had enacted, as we all should be. His conclusion however that “That government is best which governs least” can only make matters worse. Democracy means government by the people—not by the richest, the most desperate, the most broken-thinking afflicted—our only hope for survival, let alone civilization, is to curb toddler-thinking, assert a more mature strategy, and ensure that our more grown-up, less deadly politics wins the day. No one else is going to do this for us. If we do not do it, who will? Leaving it to others, whether scientist or otherwise, will not fit the bill. We breathe for ourselves, and we need to develop a system which allows us all to govern ourselves—Consent needs not only to be earned, but must also be valued, and by all.

Exhibit C—“I’m from the government, and I’m here to help” (condemned, as the nine most terrifying words). This is from a Hollywood star turned president. Malnutrition afflicts 1 in 10 of us, a disease from which the United States, despite its wealthy inequalities, is not exempt. Insufficient food is clearly something Ronald Reagan knew nothing of. Put such a man in charge of pandemic control, and you can witness how terrifying that prospect would be. This alone proves just how vital democracy is, for all the people. Bombast decimates. “I’m from the government, and I bring food banks, vaccines, education, enlightenment and healthcare—not to mention universal access to civilisation”. If we do not adopt a better strategy for economics and politics, insufficient oxygen will be the least of our troubles.

Earning Peacefulness, 100%

PEACE is like health—you know it exists, or can exist—but you do not always know how to get hold of it. Like health, there are things you can do that make peace more likely, but unlike health these are 100% under your control, or at least under human control. In other words, there are many things you can do to earn health, and even more to earn peace. But first, you have to Consent that they exist, and are achievable, or at least are worth working towards.

Similarly there are a number of things which you know are bad for your health, but you continue to do them anyway, such as lack of exercise, smoking, or alcohol—so with peace, it all sounds wonderful, and everybody would want more of it, but you have concluded that it is simply too far out of your reach, or it is far too complex, or you have tried everything you have been taught, and have given up. Nothing works.

Health at one level is simple enough, while at another, it is infinitely unknowable, and complicated. The key is to concentrate on the bits you can know, while skirting round those that are, and will forever remain, unfathomable. In logic, it is elementary. If you want to go to your favourite place, you take the familiar route, not via somewhere shrouded in mystery. You still might get lost on the way, but at least your intention was sound, your strategy valid, and your chances of success as high as you can make them.

Now human beings are the most complicated and intriguing entity of all, in this curious cosmos in which we find ourselves. And the way to make most sense of them is to do the best you can with what you have got. You could spend your days hankering after perfect Scientific knowledge, struggling to make sense of squaring the circle, or Certifying the electron—or you could decide to concentrate on those items that do make sense, that do improve matters, and thereafter even venture so far as to investigate delight.

So what has “delight” got to do with health, let alone peace? That is what your investigation is all about. Just as you can do more and more physical exertions, if you slowly but determinedly build up your muscular stamina—so with delight, if you have seen it around, and would like to have some yourself, then build up

gradually, learn the ropes, and begin to believe that if some people can have it, then you are entitled to it too. Which you are.

The human being is infinitely complex, but also astonishingly resourceful. A living organism that can invent our unprecedented electronics can surely master the rudiments of health, peace and delight. And just as we all need oxygen every minute, if not every second, so we are all equally well placed when it comes to these three fundamental human values. Note especially, these three cannot be bought, they must be earned. And believe me, they can be learnt. Because, quite simply, they come as part of the package deal of being alive.

It works like this. Out there is an inanimate world, which is fundamentally Uncertain—the Uncertainty Principle says so. In old-speak, it is chaotic. And as the Second Law of Thermodynamics keeps insisting, it gets ever more disorganised, ever more entropic, merely as time goes by. But into this maelstrom came a living cell. I do not know where it came from, and I do not really mind—what I do care about is keeping it alive longer, and also healthier and ever more delightful.

At this point I cannot resist bringing in my favourite molecule—*all-cis*-DocosaHexaenoic Acid (DHA). This is the most fundamental chemical our brains are composed of—without it, we could not think—it has been called “nature’s semiconductor”. It is a long chain omega fatty acid, with six double bonds—its significance here is that it did not come into existence by chance. Each double bond can point in only one of two directions—in DHA they all six invariably line up in the same way. If you synthesised this in the lab, you would have 64 different varieties (2^6). In life, you only ever get the one. In scientific terms that is so improbable ($p < 0.016$), it calls for a “scientific explanation” of something that occurs on “purpose”, since it cannot occur by chance ($p > 0.05$). More, DHA came into existence for the very first time ever, some 600 million years ago, and contrary to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, it has adamantly refused to vary by a single electron ever since. Uncertain it is not—scientifically it is Certain. And if it can be, then so can we.

How best to put this? Life combats entropy. It undoes Uncertainty, by “taming” electrons (Johnson, 2019; 2020d). DHA proves this as scientifically as you could wish—for those brave enough to see. Do not fret how it does it, just accept that it does. Because once you do, then watching it do it, is **delightful**. It is what health is all about—living processes, such as ourselves, combat entropy by virtue of being alive. When they succeed, which they do most of the time, then we label them “healthy”. When they fall ill, as we do, then entropy is beginning to gain the upper hand. We cannot win them all, we cannot live forever—but rest assured that inherent in living, is that miraculous component—“*delight*”.

So what goes wrong? Where do wars, contentions, and violence come into this? And how can we earn a peaceful way out? This is an entirely legitimate health question, because as the old adage puts it—“the lower doctor treats disease, the middle doctor prevents it, the good doctor prevents war”. But even the best doctor cannot work in the absence of Consent, i.e., Coercively—and your Consent is vital when it comes to peace. But Consent runs counter to how so many of us were brought up, and thereby, how too many still view the world. “Do this or we will hurt you”.

Working for five years with 50 murderers taught me that broken-thinking, which drove all their horrors, can be unlearned. Three pillars for peace-of-mind emerged—Truth, Trust and Consent. It works like this—Truth is keeping our mental world as close as we can to the one outside—it is never 100%, it is the nearest we can make it. It is also the direct opposite of Fake-News. Trust is relying on another’s Truth—not something which is automatic, but which can be earned and learned. And finally, to my great delight, Consent empowers us all,

and cements the other two together. You are not going to Consent to Trust another's Truth, unless they have earned it, or you have been persuaded it is in your best interests to do so. Truth, Trust and Consent—simple to say, challenging to implement, but delightfully fruitful in outcome.

Emotional bankruptcy is where supplies of these three pillars fall below your requirements. As with all other bankruptcies, a workaround is to be found by providing more of them, rather than less. Coercion is the orthodoxy, deriving directly from coercive childhoods. But Consent cures Coercion. Using social delight to defeat social harm is the sovereign cure. Hard to believe, but (in my view) true. Alec for example, a determined serial killer, initially took his delight, such as it was, from plotting to kill every two years. Where you or I might fall asleep planning our next holiday—he dropped off, scheduling his next killing. I have published verbatim dialogue showing how on arrival, part of him wanted to kill, and as long as it did, he would let it. Some two years later, he is changed. He now no longer delights in murder, but in getting on with people—again the verbatim dialogue is convincing (Johnson, 2018), at least to those open to conviction.

It turns out that broken-thinking leads to broken-Truths, broken-Trust and broken-Consent—all ever present in badly run kindergartens, and reinforced by constant repetition among those in authority. Peace-of-mind is simply not available, if broken-thinking prevails. The problem is you need to Consent to Trust powerful people, before you can believe it is True.

Conclusion

War deletes delight. If your broken-thinking cuts the link between yourself and the most delightful entities in our entropy-driven world, then costs explode. As witness the fact that more human beings have been killed at home by returning members of the army, than died on the battlefield. Donald Trump ordered the dropping of a huge bomb which sucked all the oxygen out of the air, thereby suffocating all within its range. Why? What was he thinking of? How did killing people advance either him, or the United States? It is all because of broken-thinking, which in turn arises from a toddler's need to take-back-control. If you do not believe delight exists, or have never been taught that a smile a day keeps the doctor away, then that is emotional bankruptcy for you.

You get what you pay (or vote) for—and if you cut taxes for reasons of empty dogma, you shortchange civilisation, and you should say so. We are a social species, so internecine strife presages our termination. No one is safe until we are all safe. This has been brought home with a vengeance by our current global viral pandemic, but it has been true for all of us, ever since we walked upright.

The two politicians mentioned earlier were not at peace with themselves—like disgruntled toddlers, they make it their business to discomfort others. They never learned to undo their first lesson—“do-this-or-we'll-hurt-you”. If their childhoods were a misery, no one has succeeded in telling them that adulthoods could, nevertheless, be delightful. This was a Truth they never Trusted anyone enough to Consent to. Sadly, as long as Coercion rules, **without Consent, we are extinct**, and there will be no one left to climb Amanda's hill. Can we wake up in time? Amanda believes we can. Do you?

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Leila Lee for her reliable support, which has been of such assistance in writing this paper, with respect both to scope and to depth—thank you.

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