

Housing and economic mythology

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Dear friends,

When you think about it, a striking indictment of capitalism's fundamental absurdity is that, humans remain the only species on Earth forced to pay for shelter. While other animals engage in the genuine labour of creating and maintaining their dwellings -think beaver dams, magpie nests, or ant cities -humans alone have been convinced that surrendering most of our life's labour to access basic shelter is not only normal but desirable. This perverse arrangement is not a natural way of being -it has been generationally deliberately constructed through centuries of enclosure and dispossession, transforming what should be a fundamental right into a commodity to be bought and sold. And the capitalists like to remind you that not engaging with capitalism -not securing a dwelling -is a personal failure which will be punished (see also architecture which punishes those without homes). The fact that we accept this as "normal" reveals how thoroughly capitalist ideology has infected our basic understanding of what it means to exist in the world -capitalist realism again, hello. Every other species on Earth recognises shelter as a need to be met through direct engagement with the environment. Only humans, in our capitalist fever dream, have convinced ourselves that paying a landlord or bank for the privilege of having a roof over our heads represents progress.

This distortion reaches an apex in the mythology of home ownership under capitalism. The 30-year mortgage -that great "achievement" of financial engineering -functions as indentured servitude, binding workers to wage labour for the majority of our adult lives. The cruelty and genius of this system lie in how it transforms what should be liberation -having a secure place to live -into a mechanism of control, nice. And we wonder why gaslighters, narcissists, and con artists (sorry, CEOs) are held up as exemplars of the peak of society. Workers must maintain steady employment, accept whatever conditions our employers impose, and suppress any revolutionary impulses lest we risk losing our homes. The increasing impossibility of affordability only tightens these bonds, as younger generations face the choice between eternal rent extraction or mortgage payments that consume ever-larger portions of their income. The "Australian Dream" of home ownership (yeah, that's how basic we are, the entire dream is "a home"-not collective liberation, not a brighter future, just owning a box to sit in) serves as the perfect "carrot", promising stability and wealth accumulation while actually functioning as a sophisticated tool of class control. Don't you just adore capitalism?

This feeds into the broader mythology of "the economy". You know, the reason that Trump won the election -didn't you hear the workers saying how he would make a better economy? What they forgot to ask was "better for whom?". The economy is a quasi-religious entity invoked to justify every form of exploitation and suffering for the 99%. The entire edifice of mainstream economic discourse serves to mystify what are, at their core, simple relations of power and extraction. When politicians and media figures speak of sacrificing social goods for "the economy", they reveal how thoroughly this abstraction has supplanted human needs in our collective consciousness. Our entire epistemology is built on a foundation of exploitation and extraction, and the mind-games required to reinforce this are on by an order of magnitude more twisted than any other invention. The political theatre that accompanies this -endless debates about interest rates, housing policy, and affordability -serves primarily to maintain the illusion that these relations are natural and unchangeable rather than deliberately constructed systems of control. The economy isn't real in any meaningful sense; it's a story we tell ourselves to justify the unjustifiable. Trump wins? For the economy. LGBTQI+ folks lose equity? For the economy. Entire ethnic groups

subjected to genocide? For the economy.

The psychological mechanisms that maintain this system of control are both sophisticated and brutally effective. Sociologists at the nexus of psychology have documented how economic precarity creates conditions perfect for mass gaslighting, where workers are convinced to doubt our own experiences of exploitation while internalising responsibility for systemic failures [1]. Similarly, this theoretical ground fits with “cruel optimism” , [2] the way workers remain attached to fantasies of economic mobility even as those fantasies actively harm them. The systemic deployment of uncertainty and fear as control mechanisms, particularly through housing insecurity, creates what Bauman calls “liquid fear” , [3] a persistent anxiety that prevents collective action while ensuring compliance with capitalist demands (not quite what he said, but this isn’ t peer reviewed). But ultimately this all sits under Fisher’ s “capitalist realism” , the widespread sense that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Together, these forces create a self-reinforcing system of psychological manipulation that makes resistance feel not just difficult but almost unthinkable. When the ALP, LNP, or US Republican party deploy economic mythology, they aren’ t *just* lying –they’ re activating deeply embedded psychological mechanisms designed to maintain working class compliance through a combination of fear, false hope, and manufactured helplessness.

The distortion of values reaches beyond housing and economics to infect our entire conception of human worth. And this is where we collectively offer our consent to this system, and I am further inclined to believe, is the root of a great many more misanthropic social problems. Under capitalism, ethical behaviour is synonymous with “productive” behaviour –being a “good person” means being a good worker, paying your debts, and accepting your exploitation with minimal complaint. The problem, of course, is who defines productive, what does productive look like, and for what ends. The possibility of grounding ethics in genuine human connection, mutual aid, or collective liberation becomes nearly unthinkable within this framework. Everything is a competition, everything is a battle, and everything is unthinkably “personal failure” . Even basic human needs like shelter become means of measuring and judging moral worth –the unhoused are viewed as moral failures rather than victims of systemic violence. The epistemic transformation is complete when workers internalise these values, policing themselves and others based on criteria that serve only to perpetuate our own exploitation. And this is where the mind-games really reveal themselves. We have become the prison cell for our own thinking, working, and relationships. Why?

The connections between these elements –housing commodification, wage slavery, economic mythology, and capitalist ethics –form a web of control that feels impossibly tangled. Yet understanding these connections is crucial for any project of liberation. The same logic that convinces us it’ s normal to pay for shelter also convinces us that wage labour is freedom and that human worth can be measured in economic terms. Breaking free requires rejecting not just individual elements but the entire framework that makes them appear natural and inevitable. Because it is not.

Instead, we can ask, what might it look like to rebuild these systems based on genuine human needs and values? How could we organise shelter as a right rather than a commodity? What ethics might emerge when we no longer measure worth through the lens of capitalist productivity? These questions have no home in our current “politics” , “economy” , or socially constructed, deeply performative, and twisted epistemology. Indeed, even asking these questions in a public forum gives rise to eyebrows at least, and questions about your socialist affiliations at worst. From inside this system it is impossible to genuinely change our thinking, shift our current “paradigm” , and this is equal parts because our imagination has been colonised by capitalist logic. Our entire system of thought is governed on principles of extraction, exploitation and aggression (for the 1% from the 99%). But asking questions

that seek liberatory ends remains one of the most important tasks of contemporary socialism, as does remembering that the current system is neither natural nor inevitable. It was built through deliberate choices and can be unmade through equally deliberate collective action.

Curiosity, compassion, comradeship, these are human values –and asking questions, challenging the status quo, and staying open to alternatives *in public spaces of discourse* is of tantamount priority. Every other species on Earth manages to meet their shelter needs without landlords, banks, or 30-year mortgages. The fact that we can barely imagine doing the same reveals the depth of our captivity to capitalist logic. Breaking free requires not just critiquing individual elements but recognising how thoroughly these systems of control permeate our understanding of what it means to be human. Only then can we begin to imagine and build genuine alternatives.

Or something, you do you, I guess.

In solidarity,

Aidan

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1. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0003122419874843>
 2. <https://www.dukeupress.edu/cruel-optimism>
 3. <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Liquid+Fear-p-9780745636801>