Zero-Value Equations Modernity's Hidden Costs and False Promises

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Beyond this towering mountain, immense in its ancient, arrogantly lofty peak of unapproachable white, lies a deep valley equal to it in depth and matching it in terror and darkness. Such is the civilization of contemporary man; the structure is towering, the doors are ivory, and the façade is marble inlaid with alabaster. However, this is the apparent image, the façade of the temple. As for what is concealed behind the marble walls, it is the most important and the greatest. For behind this dazzling brilliance lies darkness, oppression, and boundless tyranny. And beneath its foundations is a deep fissure in the earth, a wound in the conscience of humanity that will never heal.

So come with me, let us leap over the golden walls of the kingdom of contemporary man. Let us resist the deception of the image and the seduction of the glitter, let us excavate what is hidden behind the splendid form and beautiful appearance. Perhaps then we may reach what benefits us and in which lies our salvation, we humans.

The Apparent Image

Truly, our lives today have become different from what they were not long ago. Today, the distant is brought within a span of two bows or even nearer. We converse with the beloved of our heart in the farthest lands as if they are lounging on the sofa beside us. We bask in the warmth of their voice, and our eyes are cleansed by the light of their countenance, even as they reside at the ends of the earth, where their livelihood and abode lie.

Granted, the image has not sufficed as a substitute for a lover's embrace, nor has it satisfied overpowering soul-deep needs. Yet, it is only a matter of a few hours before wishes become reality, and the beloved is encircled by the arms of desire and longing. For the wind has become the steed of our days, and speed has become the hallmark of our era. Distances have been shortened, and the faraway has drawn near until it, like a dream, is within an arm's reach or nearly so.

More than that, sight has prevailed and intensified its beam, extending to excavate the distant and recalcitrant, as well as the deep and hidden. The eye now dispels what was concealed from it for ages. In space, in the depths of the seas, and within the body's innards, what was shrouded in ambiguity for an immense time has become clear. The hidden unknown, like the distant and ambiguous, has become near and visible.

Thus, the eye can now gaze upon the inflamed face of the sun. It closely observes its restlessness, accurately charting the timing of its impending eruptions as precisely as possible. Planets and stars have all become subjects for observation by the eye and the focus of a lens. Creatures whose existence we long remained ignorant of, on land and in sea, have become names that hold the attention of researchers and have turned into engravings in the world's perception. Truly! The universe has expanded within our perception, and the partners of existence around us have multiplied immensely in quantity and number. So, the mind has become crowded with nascent images and new names, until thought is abuzz with the masses of newcomers and the great multitudes.

And medical sciences have advanced in an unprecedented manner. Much of what was once untreatable has now become a forgotten memory, a mere relic in the annals of time. The sinister killer of the recent past has lost its venomous fangs and now begs for the mercy of its Creator. Preemptive wars and immediate ones have granted contemporary man a tangible victory against his primordial fear—disease—though seemingly temporary.

Such is the case with the insidious infiltrator, which had long mastered the art of surprise, disturbing the peace of the unsuspecting and ending the lives of many. The eye of detection exposed it and mobilized its defenses early on, rendering it powerless or nearly so. Even what was formerly lethal among them was forcibly taught the virtue of humility, as well as the merit of retreat.

Medical industries have leaped forward, bestowing upon healthcare workers remarkable detectors and imaging devices. Nothing was left, small or large, that did not receive its share of research and investigation. What was once visible only in the body's dormant states can now be observed alive and active. Incoming matter is monitored, and outgoing matter is measured. The integrity of structures is tested, and the efficiency of functions is determined.

The probing eye of man has breached the uncharted territories of the living body, invading its darkness and infiltrating its depths. It has violated the modesty of every shy thing that concealed itself and desecrated the sanctity of what was once impervious to sight. The commoner and the elite alike have grown accustomed to watching their liver, kidneys, heart, and other organs at work, and at rest, with the tranquility of the knowing.

Such is the endeavor of contemporary man in industry and manufacturing. For since he invented the machine, he appointed it the throne of his thought. He applied his arts of creativity and development to it; he employed his craft upon it. He elevated it to peaks unparalleled in measures of speed, efficiency, and consequently, productivity. Thus, it was inevitable for it to invade all homes as well as fields of work. It is present in the minutiae and magnitude of our daily lives.

And before that, the machine stormed the world of industry and proved a merit without equal. It is a diligent worker, undaunted by repetition and unbothered by monotony. It works at all times and under all conditions. It does not ask for a wage or an end-of-service compensation. It seldom complains, highly submissive to its creator, man. Precise in craftsmanship, immense in profitability. Flexible, capable of modernization, and in love with it. It constantly sheds one garment and acquires another, more vibrant one. Finally, it has acquired intelligence and shrewdness, becoming—or nearly so—a delegated master.

Yes! Today, the machine has become the ruling master of our affairs. It tops the list of influences on most of our present, as well as on all that is to come in our days. It is now the regulator of our lives, the controller of our time's rhythm. Unremittingly, it organizes our circumstances, engineers our days. And incessantly, it insinuates itself into the minutiae of our matters without the slightest doubt or a hint of shame.

And as was said in one of the masterpieces of Syrian comedy: "Man has become a slave to the machine," a fact which any investigator can corroborate. And that there are few who have escaped the calamity of this enslavement—though this statement slightly misses the mark without greatly opposing the truth. For these survivors, if they exist (which I suspect is rare), are too few to be counted as a significant number or to establish an exception that mars the overall picture of the machine's dominance over our lives.

Completing the Picture

Man did not reach those limits of splendor and glory except after heaping mounds of misery and pain upon the other half of humanity. There is no doubt that some humans rejoice in what they have gained, yet most of them still wallow in wretchedness. And any talk lacking proof is a fabrication, which I do not attribute to myself. For proofs abound from what we humans experience in the other world—forgotten by force and injustice, the world of simple people, the salt and very essence of this earth.

Despite the modernity in the sciences of medicine and healing, it has never reached my hearing that people in the lands of the simple have enjoyed abundant health and increased longevity compared to their ancestors, or even comparable to their counterparts living in the lands of wonders.

For souls continually depart from us swiftly, and health incessantly withers under the weight of sickness and pain. Their detection and monitoring technologies are far out of reach. So too is medicine; their potent medicines are their exclusive property, while their weak ones are what we are given. And it is not seldom that we have become a target for their outdated drugs and a testing ground for their anxious new ones—a statement that does not stray from truth and reality.

And just as minds have been saturated with scars and wounds from the dumping ground of its ideas and the actions of its media, so too has been the effect of modernity on our immunity against disease. Its masters from the inhabitants of the land of wonder and wonders ceaselessly promote every behavior or product that aborts our natural immunity. They defend it with the sharpness of their eyes. They lavish gifts upon companies of seduction and misguidance so that they may increase

its share of affection among the masses of the simple. And for the most part, it is either poison for the mind or ruin for the body.

Although I prefer allusion and avoid the shortcoming of being overly specific when giving examples and evidence for my claim—due to the abundance of examples and evidence in our daily lives and existence—I find myself compelled to mention fast food, mobile phones, and social media as definitive proofs for what I allege.

For they are ever-present in our dreams and wakefulness, our settling and our travels. Their effect on the bodies is evident, as is their effect on the souls. An act of demolition for all that is innate and inherited. And our immunity, our protector from disease, has not been safe from the act of seduction; rather, it has become one of its prime victims. And if you are still among the skeptical, then ask the people of knowledge and sincerity about its details and interpretation.

I do not know! How much more can the people in the lands of the simple endure! For no matter how I turn the matter over, I find them always the losers. For when the people of the lands of wonders sought advancement in the sciences of medicine and healing, they sought money and funding from the people of the lands of the simple. Their resources, however great, are insufficient for the demands of their own welfare and the requirements of scientific research at the same time. So our wondrous brother set out to seek his resources in the other world. His wars and campaigns became colonization and plunder of the lands of the simple. He snuffed out lives, destroyed dreams, and violated the rights to existence and prosperity. Then, he was able to bring about his revolution in the medical sciences... Ponder that!

Truly! The people of the lands of wonders succeeded in saving the lives of the sick and the physically weary in their homeland, and this is recorded for them in the book of glories. They succeeded in saving patients there, in the land of wonder and wonders. In contrast, and in the balance of that, they snuffed out the lives of healthy, strong fighters who defended their right to the wealth of their own lands and the security of their homelands here in the lands of simplicity and the simple.

And a watchful skeptic might say: "What then of the improved health of children and the rising number of child survivors, as indicated by all relevant statistical data?" I say: Yes! This is the truth behind which the ugliness of falsehood hides. For the people of the lands of wonder protected the sprouts only to harvest them as ripe fruits

in the prime of youth. They raised the level of survival in childhood, only to cut it down in adolescence and adulthood. Thus, they gained money from their families when they were small, and then extracted money from them through their sweat and blood in the time of manhood. And they showed no mercy in any era or under any circumstance.

The modernity of man, which embraced our children yesterday, is the very same force that reaps them today as vibrant youth and strong men. It nurtured them when they were weak and helpless, with no power or strength, but when they grew strong, it threw them into the eye of death as soldiers for its wars and fuel for its intelligent machines. Therefore, do not rejoice too much at the sight of a shepherd carrying a suckling lamb across the difficult mountain slopes. For he sees in it only that ram—a treasure of abundant meat and ample fleece.

And industry advanced and flourished in the lands of wonders, and this is credited to its people in the ledger of merits. Outdated means of production were replaced with modern ones until production speed became a hallmark of its renaissance. Production became abundant, far exceeding its own needs, so it went seeking consumers in the other world. But, to its misfortune, it found no market for its desired products in the lands of the simple. For the needs of people there are different from its own, as are their ways of life. So it worked to standardize them and mold them to its own liking and desires.

Thus, it launched an assault on the mind of the people in the lands of the simple—a war no less ferocious than wars of fire. It shattered their scale of logic. It set their women against their men, and the impulses of their children against the wisdom of their elders. So it came to pass that minds and souls submitted to it. And finally, it compelled the people in the lands of the simple to consume all that its industry produced, including its military products, as an inherent and specific part of the arrangement.

And it is worth acknowledging the peculiar morality of this wondrous man. Among the strange aspects of his behavior is that he discards the surplus of his human consumables—perfectly usable—into the sea for whales to consume, all to preserve their material value in the world of markets and prices. Yet, he refuses to bestow such surplus of the weapons of killing and destruction, the products of his civilization, upon anyone but his brother, the man of the lands of the simple. How

many wars have been instigated for the sake of the factories of killing and destruction! How many products have been sunk to the bottom of the sea to safeguard the profits of the wondrous man! For this, he deserves the great thanks and fine praise of the whales of the sea, and from his brother, the simple man, he deserves immense calamity and grievous ruin.

And let no one think that his partner in these lands necessarily belongs to the category of the wondrous man, or is beyond the reach of his ambitious radiance. The wondrous man is the fortunate few whom God has chosen and granted refuge. As for the other—the partner in the lands, like the man of the lands of the simple—he is but obligatory labor and fuel for war, to ensure dominance and control over all spheres and resources. It is the divine will that has brought them together in the same lands. Yet, in its will, it has not forgotten to discriminate between them in rights and dignities... or so the wondrous man claims, of course.

The partner in the land has just enough to scrape by today, and he has what preserves him for giving and devoting himself in service to his wondrous brother. However, after the surge of modernity in industry and manufacturing, and after the domination of intelligent machines over the fields of work, the simple partner has been left out in the open, or nearly so. He now swallows air and beds down on the frost. What was once presumed to be a cause for his prosperity has become his killer and an additional reason for his misery and unhappiness. The wondrous man gave him mere subsistence out of necessity for a cause, but when the cause vanished, he cast him out without a flutter of pity.

And man invented the automobile, the airplane, and other modern means of transportation. He also mastered speed in transit and travel between worlds and homelands. So now his cars cut through the skin of the earth and the core of the sky, relentlessly dissecting and segmenting them. The blackness of their exhaust has overwhelmed the joyous colors of nature. Their dust has filled the breaths of the earth and man alike. The balance of nature has been disrupted, its defense mechanisms exhausted, and it has fallen ill. A relentless stream of harm has been unleashed by trapping the sun's light, and it will never end until the spark of life is extinguished on this afflicted earth.

And man, the child of this earth, suffers just as his nurturing mother suffers. Today, he complains of its polluted air, its corrupted water, and its extreme temperament.

He seethes with anger at the noise of the moving objects on the surface of its crust and in the thickness of its sky. His heart has grown sick, and the blood in his veins has become corrupted. He has become emaciated, plundered by invaders and opportunists whose true form remained hidden from him and whose destructiveness intensified against him. He emerges from one health calamity only to fall into others that are more severe and bitter.

And the airplane, though it may carry the simple man and transport goods he might need for his livelihood, is the very same vehicle that delivers to him daily the offerings of his wondrous brother—packages of killing and destruction. It drops its destructive load in remote regions and receives approval from a wondrous master. It kills and ravages people and stone alike, yet earns praise and admiration from a sick heart. It spares no one distant and breaches every fortress. All are in the eye of feverish death, offered up by the wondrous master of the house.

Indeed, our world has become monochrome, playing the same monotonous tune. Once, people were distinct nations and communities in thought, culture, and ways of life. They spoke numerous beautiful languages. They approached the tangible and intangible, the visible and invisible, through diverse methods. They wove their garments from the thread of their own land and ate what their souls desired from the yield of their fields. They offered the product of their culture and existence as a unique offering, with a flavor that enriched the great stream of knowledge.

Then came one who extended wires and spread his optical fibers through the veins of the earth and the depths of the seas. He interconnected different worlds and distinct minds. He fused diverse realms into a single network and placed its command in his grasp. Rather than drawing from them and harvesting the precious yield of their orchards, he inundated them all with a flood of his directed intellectual product.

He erased the contours and twists of their intellectual uniqueness. He silenced all the nightingales and sensitive poets of authenticity in their groves. So all became one, or nearly so. One in their food, one in their drink, and one in their dress. Their images grew similar, their ways of life uniform. Languages were obliterated, melodies faded, and cultures vanished entirely. Colors dulled, attributes withered. All fell in line under a single, poor-colored banner—the kingdom of the wondrous

man. And all others deserved, without the slightest equivocation or pride, the title of the simple man.

How cunning you are, O wondrous one! And how crafty your spider's web is! Behold, the masses of the simple submit to your dreams. Their spoken word has become a language you created. Their clothing is woven in your factories and by your machines. Their movement is regulated by the rhythm of your exhaust pipes. Their vibration is an echo of your monotonous tune. Even their thought now licks up whatever your thought throws its way.

But do not overindulge in your triumph. One day, you will reap the consequences of what your mouth has blown and the calamity of what your hands have sown. For corrupting the mind never leads to a praiseworthy end. Likewise, the homogenization of thought and expression will inevitably lead to bankruptcy and impotence. Time never ceases to surprise us with new trials and severe tests. And a unified mind, no matter how domineering and arrogant, cannot alone ward off the perpetually renewing danger. You need those who sing outside your flock and deviate from your speech and thought. Learn from the lessons of time; ponder the stories of nations. For how many civilizations have been reduced to a mere line in the annals of history due to their willful blindness to history's lessons!

The Scale of Modernity is Broken

Man built the throne of his glory only from the essence of this earth. He took from here and there, and thus erected a crown. He sucked sweat and blood, and from it burst forth power and splendor. He absorbed all the colors of the earth, and became dyed in arrogance and seduction. And you will find this reality reflected today in every output of modernity. Its bright, smiling face startles us, and we are taken by astonishment. And if we seek union with it, hoping to enjoy a share of delight, it strips off its guise... and terrifies us. So our hands reap nothing but air, and our eyes embrace emptiness.

The impact of modernity on the body was no less than its impact on the soul. Opposites have never converged in anything as they have in its logic and discourse. The beautiful Layla was only accused under its law, while the wolf roams free in the forest. The lambs grind their teeth in their pastures, with the beast guarding over them. In its culture, ends and means embrace in a bond like no other. Similarly, in

its perspective, good and evil harmonize in a unity without hierarchy. For good and evil, to modernity, are two sides of the same coin.

There, in the lands of wonders, it built until the structures rivaled the skies. It mechanized, automated, and flooded humanity with an abundance of its products—both what humans needed and what they never required. It healed, achieving the finest possible outcomes in curing ailments. It dissolved distances, until the near and the far were firmly grasped within a single grip—its grip. It infiltrated realms long hidden and inaccessible to humankind. Now, the banners of its power bruise the face of our beautiful moon, and the probes of its ambition wander perplexed through every space, searching for spoils there, stretching to reach milestones elsewhere.

In contrast, here in the lands of the simple, it has killed and does not cease killing. It has destroyed and continues to destroy, without a tremor of remorse. It has disfigured cities and countries. It has shredded the unified and shown no mercy to the divided. It exaggerated the act of division, aiming to reduce the lands of the simple into powerless, scattered fragments. For in their division lies the guarantee of perpetual control and, consequently, the relentless exploitation of people and homelands for as long as it desires.

It fears the awakening of the hungry, so it resorts to preemptive wars to kill the spirit of revolution and change within them. It stole both resources and minds. It hollowed out the earth just as it hollowed out the will of the simple man. The banners of its dominance and the probes of its greed are everywhere. It tears through the terrain, sniffing out the earth's treasures—the wealth of the simple man—with no one to restrain it. For it is the enabling ruling master, and the world around it is a crowd of intimidated servants and subordinates.

That is the apparent image, and those are the completions. The first is gleaming, the others are obscured. Behind the apparent lies a capable army of exhaust pipes, money, black hatred, and possessions. Behind the latter lies crushing poverty and wretched misery. The tangible apparent confronts us morning and evening, while we struggle to grasp the hidden black truths. The apparent floats on the surface of consciousness and speaks, while the hidden sinks into the darkness of the unconscious and is suppressed.

And so, modernity has rendered humankind as two distinct entities, united only by what the Merciful has created. As for the aspects of conflict and difference between them, they are too numerous for any person to count. They share similarities in anatomy and structure, yet differ profoundly in the depths of the soul and the expressions of the tongue. They diverge in logic and vision, in dreams and aspirations, in means and ends. And they share this afflicted land as their dwelling place. They perceive existence from two contrasting perspectives.

It happened that the first advanced, seized control, and surged forward. And it coincided that the second regressed, endured tragedies, and retreated. The first waged the battle for influence and domination in the most complete manner. It conquered the plains, and the fields submitted to it. The second yielded in the most bitter form of submission. The first is few in number, yet it prevailed. The second is the salt and very essence of the earth, yet it submitted. So the first, the few, came to luxuriate in prosperity, while the second, the many, languished in misery and pain... and so it continues.

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