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Egalitarian Planet: Five proposals to elevate society by reducing disparity

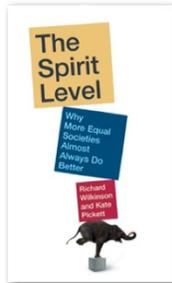
Hank Pellissier
Ethical Technology

Posted: May 16, 2011

Is inequality the primary cause of human suffering? Does disparity in wealth, power, opportunity, and education inevitably lead to despair and social discontent?



Hank Pellissier



Egalitarians, like the authors of the recent best-seller, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, believe inequity is the culprit in a plethora of social ills: it corrodes trust, community life, and social mobility, it increases anxiety and excessive consumption, and contributes to mental and physical illness, drug use, imprisonment, obesity, teen pregnancy, violence, and other corrosive psycho-social maladies.

My own [recent examination of Denmark](#) observed that the little Nordic nation was simultaneously ranked #1 in "Egalitarianism" on the GINI Index **and** #1 in "Happiness" by *Forbes*. My conclusion from this is that:

SAME SOCIAL STATUS + SHARING = SMILES

Egalitarianism seems to be a desirable societal goal, but how can we achieve it? Humanity exists on wildly different class and financial levels around the globe—how can this vast gap be bridged? When I pitched the question to five different transhumanist philosophers, a quintet of diverse suggestions bounced back.

James Hughes (author of *Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future*) believes **democratization aided by technology** is the best medicine to cure inequality. He proposes [all quotes are his] that we provide "equal access to education" by developing the "visionary, handheld AI tutor that Neal Stephenson imagined in *The Diamond Age* that maps the child's developmental needs, and leads them through a personalized dialogue to knowledge and critical thinking, drawing on the best pedagogies."

Hughes recognizes that economic progress in poor nations requires stable, accountable governments and large investments in infrastructure, education, and health care. Gains in these areas could be attained, he believes, via "communication technologies that increase government accountability, and by developing cheaper ways to build roads, communication networks, public sanitation, and health service delivery."

Hughes also believes the United Nations needs to become a "vehicle for popular democratic expression, instead of a club of nation-states represented by their diplomatic elites." With sufficient influence and jurisdiction, the UN would be able to equitably distribute wealth and political control. Hughes sees his vision enabled by "technologies that break down nation-states and ethnic identities and replace them with transnational political identities, organizations, and campaigns."

Alex Lightman (author of *Brave New Unwired World: the Digital Big Bang and the Infinite Internet*) does not regard today's economic disparity as the root cause of suffering. Instead, he asserts, "the

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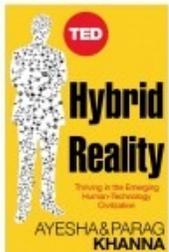
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fundamental inequalities are intelligence, imagination, ambition, and action. Someone with 10% more of all four than his chiral twin could have four orders of magnitude more wealth over a lifetime."

Of the four qualities mentioned, Lightman regards "**increasing intelligence** as the primary objective of a more egalitarian planet." He'd uplift global IQ in multiple ways, including "**biofeedback of brain waves**, nootropics, like the movie *Limitless*, only more limited, and exercise—read *Spark* by John Ratey." Lightman also believes that "brain size matters. An obese twin will have a brain that is 8% shrunken compared to his non-obese brother. Reduction of obesity to pre-Earl Butz levels in the early 1970's before the catastrophe of corn is a priority for the increase of intelligence."

Imagination can be enhanced, Lightman claims, by "promoting respect and reading of science fiction. Teach it in schools." Ambition can be strengthened if we "study the root causes of brain function, and get people to exercise more, which will fix addiction, depression, and other mental issues that reduce ambition." And finally, action? Lightman's plan to promote activity is to offer, "free classes in how to stop procrastinating, for everyone, in lieu of welfare, pensions, subsidies."

David Pearce (author of *The Hedonistic Imperative*) proffered advice that mirrored his devotion to the abolition of mental suffering. Like Lightman, he does not regard equity in wealth and class as the ultimate goal.

"Happiness based on social status is a so-called 'positional good'," he said. "No amount of material wealth can create more of it [happiness]. Suicide rates and other 'objective' indices of psychological distress—chemical depression, etc.—are actually worse today than they were for our hunter-gatherer ancestors on the African savannah. Even in a fairer society of unlimited material abundance—even if blessed with the all the technical marvels that transhumanists anticipate—our quality of life won't be significantly improved unless we also redesign our reward circuitry. In my opinion, only **genetically recalibrating our 'hedonic set-point'** can radically enhance our well-being."

Pearce believes his proposal is "technically feasible right now. For example, benign genes for our children via preimplantation genetic diagnosis could potentially enrich everyone's quality of life—and allow all humans to be born 'winners'." He also suggested "BioHappiness Education" as a policy measure for egalitarian bliss, and he praised genetic research on 5-HTTLPR (serotonin transporter) and the [COMT Val158Met genotype](#).

Giulio Prisco (author of *Engineering Transcendence*) was initially adverse to my query, replying, "I don't want an egalitarian planet where everyone is the same as everyone else because this could only be achieved by suppressing personal autonomy, free-thinking and diversity, and would result in an extremely boring planet. But I do want a MORE egalitarian planet..."

After thinking about it a little more, Prisco offered a fascinating proposal, inspired in part by the work of a famous German anarchist.

"Extreme inequality depends on how the economy is structured," Prisco explained. "A possible solution to this is the idea of **Perishable Money**—money with an expiration date, a concept originally devised a century ago by [Silvio Gesell](#). In this financial system, there are no taxes and you keep all the money you make, but as soon as you are paid money, it starts to 'decay'—perhaps losing all value after one month, or a certain % per day. So, you want to spend all your money on basic goods like food and rent. If you wish to accumulate money and save it for later, you must go to an exchange center operated by the

community and convert your extra money to a non-perishable form, but you must pay fees to do this. The fees would be the equivalent of taxes, they would provide the money that the community needed for public works, health care, etc."

In Prisco's analysis, "this system would be as fair as the current system—or fairer—and much simpler for everyone. It would also be very easy to implement now, with e-money."

Mike Treder (co-founder of the Center for Responsible Nanotechnology) believes economic egalitarianism is an intrinsically valid stance because: "It is a false assumption that anyone in modern society, by themselves, with no help from anyone else, earns money. What we call 'earnings' is really just an arbitrary allocation of each individual's estimated contribution to overall economic production."

According to Treder, each person's financial income should not be regarded as a personal possession, but as a provisionally assigned piece of the total pie—and quite probably an unfair piece at that, either too much or too little.

Furthermore, says Treder, "It is only because a complex infrastructure is in place, because an organized system of economics is working, and because government has been instituted, that we are able to have jobs and incomes at all. We all pay taxes to keep that system functioning, because without it, none of us could earn a tenth of what we are making now."

The challenge, then, is for each of us to recognize that our sense of ownership over personal wealth is invalid. "In truth," says Treder, "whatever wealth you possess is not 'your money'. You didn't earn it by yourself with no help from others. It's simply a share of total production—and often, because the system is imperfect, that share gets distributed unfairly. **Adjusting income tax rates progressively** can help to restore an appropriate balance."

COMMENTS

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'Remembering the 1950-
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Ben Hyink on 'In Favor of
the Functional Separation
of Uploaded Minds and
Simultaneous Mind Clones'
(Sep 21, 2012)

Ben Hyink on 'In Favor of
the Functional Separation
of Uploaded Minds and
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(Sep 21, 2012)

Ben Hyink on 'In Favor of
the Functional Separation
of Uploaded Minds and
Simultaneous Mind Clones'
(Sep 21, 2012)

Buck on 'Milton Friedman's
Birthday' (Sep 21, 2012)

When Aspergers is
curable, will parents be
morally obliged to cure
it in their children?

- Yes, it is a life-
limiting disability
- Depends on
severity, assistive
tech, society etc.
- No, Aspergers is
part of healthy
neurodiversity

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Obviously, the handful of policies listed above are only a paltry smidgen of the innumerable ideas that could propel our planet towards egalitarianism. Please, readers, even if you despise egalitarianism, post your own ideas, rants, initiatives, and outside-the-box-brain-dumps in the comments section below. We're not seeking consensus here—IET is a "think tank" so help us fill up the tank with your thoughts.

Hank Pellissier, the IET's Managing Director, is the author of the e-book [Invent Utopia Now: Transhumanist Suggestions for the Pre-Singularity Era](#), and he's co-directing IET's [Africa Project](#).

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COMMENTS

iPan • • May 16, 2011

Open Source Autonomous Reputation Based Real Time Tracked

Something very similar to how Manfred Macx operates at the beginning of 'Accelerando' (publicly traded reputations and so on).

Christian Henrik Nesheim • Norway/San Francisco • May 16, 2011

There are many exciting propositions here, I only really disagree with Mike.

"It is a false assumption that anyone in modern society, by themselves, with no help from anyone else, earns money. What we call 'earnings' is really just an arbitrary allocation of each individual's estimated contribution to overall economic production."

It is true that others help you make money, in that they purchase your goods (or you purchase theirs and gain from it). But we are helped to make money not by the altruism of others, but by their rational self-interest. When you earn money without anyone trying to help you, you have earned it yourself.

Earnings are not "arbitrarily" allocated, but reflect the value an individual adds to society. Or the pie, as it was called, which incidentally is not of fixed size, but which globally expands every year, thanks to, among others, those you propose to tax "progressively".

Financial income should most definitely be regarded as a personal possession, inasmuch as it is a previously non-existent value added to society, an expansion of the pie.

It is in spite of the complex government infrastructure, not because of it, that we are able to have incomes.

Mike Treder • Brooklyn, NY, USA • May 16, 2011

@Christian: Roads and sewers and schools and power generation facilities and hospitals and research universities don't build themselves. They require a shared civic effort—also known as government—to construct and maintain them. Unless, that is, you are suggesting that all landowners should be expected to build and manage their own roads and sewers and schools, etc.

There is a name for the latter approach: it's called feudalism, and history has demonstrated how much less productive that system is, not to mention less fair and less conducive to individual liberty, than democratic socialism.

iPan • • May 16, 2011

Christian's comments seem to me to reflect a kind of naive capitalism that sounds good on paper.

If only the game wasn't rigged. If only transparency allowed for a true meritocracy.

If only monopolistic interests didn't pay to suppress competition.

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Scientists Sign
Declaration that
Animals have
Conscious
Awareness, Just
Like Us**

by [George Dvorsky](#)
Aug 25, 2012
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**Transhumanists:
Who Are They?
What Do They
Want, Believe, and
Predict? (Terasem
Survey, Part 5)**

by [Hank Pellissier](#)
Sep 9, 2012

What about the deferred costs (sometimes referred to as the 'true costs') of economic expansion?

Your cheap cheeseburgers are cheap because the fuel needed to make them is obtained from exploited labor in less free societies.

Truth is, a real meritocracy doesn't actually exist. If it did, this kind of naive capitalism might be ok. If everyone played by the rules, and everyone started with the same opportunity (is it unfair that the affluent have access to better education?)

Sorry Christian, but your meritocracy just doesn't exist in the real world.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 16, 2011

The views of David Pearce and Alex Lightman are naive or misguided at best, or at worst dishonest.

Monetary inequality is the prime cause of suffering. Suffering is greatest now because the disparity

between rich and poor people is greatest. When poor people see the fabulous time rich people are having on their multi-billion dollar yachts, then naturally they feel depressed or suicidal living their impoverished lives. Poor people are tantamount to slaves.

Monetary happiness is not a "positional good". Money is the happiness of being free from menial drudgery (pauper-suffering). If nobody was poor then a person free from menial drudgery, with power equal to a current billionaire, would nevertheless be happy: material wealth equals happiness.

Monetary inequality debilitates intellectual capacity. In situations of great disparity (between rich and poor people) masses of poor people will typically suffer diminished imaginations; their cognitive functioning will be generally diminished. Perhaps Alex and David are financially comfortable thus they fail to see the horrific suffering monetary inequality causes.

Monetary inequality is utterly unfair therefore ignorance regarding the unfairness is the only method to ensure masses of poor people accept their poverty without overt discontent. Capitalism must create mass ignorance (mass stupidity) for the majority of people, because if everyone possessed equal or high intelligence then everyone would want to perform an intellectually rewarding job with high pay; but not everyone can do this. Mass stupidity is essential for the richest members of civilization to retain their riches. Mass stupidity is essential because stupid people are needed to clean toilets and perform other menial jobs for low pay.

People who clean toilets should actually receive the highest pay because toilet cleaning is one of the worst jobs.

Capitalism therefore creates a social structure based on ignorance, where people are not encouraged to use their minds; people are not encouraged to think for themselves. Look at mainstream prole-feed-entertainment for great examples regarding how our culture is designed to reduce cognitive ability: the simple fact is that mass-stupidity is immensely profitable because mass stupidity ensures people accept low wages and buy overpriced products or services without overt protest. Idiots buy overpriced junk thus idiots are profitable, thus it is in the interests of rich people to encourage idiocy.

Despite our socially engineered dumbness, the innate intelligence of humans sleeps restlessly. The discontent cannot be completely obscured by mind-numbing TV, music, films, or news; thus people feel very unhappy but because their intelligence has been suppressed they experience difficulty explaining the cause of their unhappiness. People are dimly aware they suffer so that rich people can live easy lives but their lack of intelligence prohibits them from putting their grievances into compelling terms; thus rich people maintain their strangle-hold on poor people.

The problem is that in situations scarcity greed is a natural survival trait therefore rich-survivors cling to their wealth due to scarcity. Hardwired survival traits are difficult to relinquish. There is a lack of awareness regarding the coming Post-Scarcity era. When people responsible for managing civilization are aware we are heading towards a Post-Scarcity era, they can then begin relinquishing their wealth in preparation for the utopia we are approaching. By year 2045 at the latest everything will be free because we will have entered the Post-Scarcity age.

Awareness of Post-Scarcity is the only solution regarding eliminating human suffering. PS-awareness will help stop our civilization being based upon rapine. We can begin basing our civilization upon intelligence, unity, cohesion, and humanity preparatory to the coming intelligence explosion.

Once people comprehend how nothing will be scarce in the future (no scarcity of intelligence, food, products, energy, etc) then our actions will actually hasten the arrival of the intelligence explosion. Post-Scarcity-awareness is the only truly intelligent way forward but sadly so many of the so-called intellectuals are not actually intellectuals.

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by [David Brin](#)
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by [Dick Pelletier](#)
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Jose Luis Molero • Ft. Lauderdale, FL, USA • May 16, 2011

David Pearce's proposal is the best, because he recognizes that happiness is largely based on our internal circuitry and only correlates to external conditions up to a point.

Additionally, the above "thinkers" didn't even mention war and its role in political and economic inequality because they are detached from the suffering of people outside of their country or culture.

If we programmed humans with more empathy, as proposed by David Pearce, it would discourage war and abuses by making us feel the pain of the "other." Boosting empathy would go a long way to creating a more peaceful humanity. But in these conversations with mainstream "thinkers" we are going to get more of the same "increased intelligence is the solution" cliché, when all sorts of psychological studies refute the notion that increased intelligence means decreased suffering. This is only true up to a point: once a basic living standard is achieved, intelligence can have its drawbacks such as in its association with neuroticism.

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 16, 2011

for Jose—thanks for your note, and we encourage everyone to send in their additional proposals and their opinions of the ones that have already been offered. We would also very much like to hear opinions from people who are not "white guys" like the ones in the article. However, I think your depiction of them as "mainstream" thinkers is not quite accurate, I think they'd be amused to hear that.

for Singularity Utopia - thanks for your contribution as well. I don't see Pearce's and Lightman's ideas as negating the others, though - I think Lightman and Pearce have rather original points-of-view that deserve consideration, and that can co-exist alongside the others. I also am not in agreement with you that capitalism is intrinsically evil and the source of all suffering in the world—I support capitalism that is sufficiently checked (and taxed) by the citizenry. I do agree with you though that gross financial inequality is socially unjust, which is why I wrote the article.

iPan • • May 16, 2011

@Jose

I think I remember that piece. Here's my conundrum: would someone with increased empathy force others to undergo treatment? I would think not, but then I haven't undergone the treatment. Someone would have to voluntarily test it on themselves first, and even then there are some issues.

Anyway, good news for egalitarians (another successful role model):

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43050301/ns/business-retail/>

Panera's pay-what-you-can cafe is a success

CLAYTON, Mo. — Rashonda Thornton looked up at the menu on the wall, ordered a Caesar salad and dropped a \$10 bill in a box. Pretty generous, considering the meal at Panera Bread Co.'s café in the St. Louis suburb of Clayton sells for less than \$7.

It was a year ago that Panera converted the Clayton restaurant into a nonprofit pay-what-you-want restaurant with the idea of helping to feed the needy and raising money for charitable work. Panera founder and Chairman Ronald Shaich said the café, operated through Panera's charitable foundation, has been a big success, largely because of people like Thornton.

Overall, the café performs at about 80 percent of retail and brings in revenue of about \$100,000 a

month. That's enough to generate \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month above costs, money being used for a job training program for at-risk youths.

"We took some kids that typically wouldn't be employable, didn't know how to work in society," Shaich said. "We gave them a combination of job training and life skills." The first three graduates of the program are starting jobs at other Panera restaurants.



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Shaich admitted he didn't know how the pay-what-you-want experiment would pan out. He said the success should send a message to other businesses to put faith in humanity. "The lesson here is most people are fundamentally good," Shaich said. "People step up and they do the right thing."

David Pearce • • May 16, 2011

Singularity Utopia, I promise I'm all in favour of unlimited material abundance via nanotech and IT. And I'd wholeheartedly urge a fairer society too. I was just pointing out that there is little empirical evidence that even utopian levels of material abundance will make most of us significantly (un)happier in the absence of reward pathway enhancements.

Money has existed only for some 5% of human history. By contrast, the biological roots of pain, anxiety, depression, fear, anger and malaise long preceded its existence - and will persist indefinitely unless we tackle the genetic origins of our problems i.e. ugly source code.

post-postfuturist • • May 16, 2011

"But we are helped to make money not by the altruism of others, but by their rational self-interest. When you earn money without anyone trying to help you, you have earned it yourself."

Sure, but the biggest rake off of rake offs is 'defense' (offense): for a low sum in taxes you get property defended, though the hidden costs of defense are enormous. Until America institutes a defense tax I will have no respect for this country; a defense tax is to make it clear to all what defense is mainly about: defending property.

What is liberty without property?

Jose Luis Molero • Ft. Lauderdale, FL, USA • May 16, 2011

I don't think David Pearce would forcibly genetically engineer babies to be more empathetic. More likely, parents would voluntarily choose to have children with greater empathy by seeing the benefits to their children and society that come with increased empathy. Boosting intelligence would also be a voluntary part of the program, as intelligence is associated with many positive character traits (but, as I pointed out before, is not a solution in itself for the betterment of humanity, hence some of my previous criticism).

Like I wrote before, rich material conditions are no guarantor of happiness. What can guarantee happiness is increasing our hedonic set-point by targeting those genes associated with happiness and emotional well-being.

Martha Knox • United States • May 16, 2011

Earnings do not reflect the value an individual adds to society. The value of currency is basically an idea that people agree on. "This American Life" did a wonderful episode answering the question "What is money?" and picking apart some of the complexity and revealing the fragility of currency and what it is REALLY worth. <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/423/the-invention-of-money> The "pie" is a fixed size in the sense that the resources available to the whole of humanity are finite. We can redistribute those resources differently, but the resources themselves are finite.

But perhaps more importantly, it is clear if one looks to the extremes of income, that what people earn does not directly reflect their value to society. The average CEO in 2011 earns 11.4 million, while the average childcare worker earns about \$21K a year. No one could rationally argue that what the CEO does at their job is actually worth 5400x what the day care worker does. The notion that earnings reflect the value one adds to society is quite the slap in the face to stay-at-home parents, as well as volunteer

workers. In reality, the constraints of personal financial need often limit the potential contributions one can make to society. For example, I know a talented graphic designer who unfortunately must devote most of her talents to designing credit card advertisements. She hates the job and knows they probably do more harm to society than good, but hey, she has a family to feed.

In short, I agree completely with Treder. His words are music to my ears.

Linda MacDonald Glenn • East Timor, for now • May 17, 2011

It is notable, that except for Martha's comment above, that few women have commented on this—and I cannot really comment why that is the case. I'm sure feminist philosophers have thought about this, but I have not had a chance to research or to think deeply about this issue. (Probably because I find myself caught up, like Martha's friend, in simply 'making a living'.)

I saw Hank's question posted and I've been trying to formulate a thoughtful response; is it really egalitarianism that we should seek? Or respect and recognition of the value that each of us brings to the whole, as Mike suggested?

Martha, I agree that money (or currency) is only one way that place a value on things; certainly there are other things that are priceless. (Forgive me for sounding like a Mastercard commercial). But I'm not sure that all resources are finite—solar power, for one example. Ideas, creativity, information—the creation of the internet has opened up resources that we never had before.

But, in whole, I agree with you and Mike—there is so much more to the golden rule than "he who has the gold rules."

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 17, 2011

David Pearce, I know you support PS via nanotech etc. The reason why there is allegedly little empirical evidence of utopian levels of abundance making people significantly happier is because we have NOT seen utopian levels of abundance; but regarding very rich people such as "Catherine the Duchess of Cambridge" and her husband I assure you they are SIGNIFICANTLY happier than a poor WalMart drones slaving at their dismal checkouts. Relaxing on luxury yachts is a great source of happiness and this is nowhere close to PS wealth.

David, you say money has only existed for 5% of human history but I wonder what you base such an assertion on? Where is the evidence, the data? I would say money has existed reasonably close to the point where humans first began to contemplate scarcity thus they began to fight over scarce supplies; for example if a gorilla presents a potential mate with some tasty food offerings in an attempt to woo said mate, then the food offerings are a form of money akin to an expensive engagement ring. Barter is money. The head of the pack regarding primitive animals is paid via access to the largest amount of food, which is not much different (in relative terms) to Duchess Catherine's £28,000 engagement ring.

Hank Pellissier, I disagree that Alex or David have presented original points of view. I have considered deeply the points made. Their viewpoints are merely extensions from the current flawed thinking of civilization. Capitalism could easily be defined as "intrinsically evil" because capitalism will always entail wealth inequality (suffering of poor people to fund the extravagant lifestyles of the Elite-rich), but I do recognize how capitalist greed is merely a biological survival trait and it is only in the later stages of capitalism that capitalism becomes intrinsically evil: capitalism only becomes evil (thoroughly inhuman) when the greed (financial inequality of stinking rich people) is no longer needed for survival.

Capitalism is contrary to logic because logically every worker is equally irresponsible for the financial success of our civilization. Specialized elite workers could not do the skilled work they do if the lower workers were not farmers, toilet cleaners, construction workers, garbage disposal workers, sewage treatment workers etc; thus every worker deserves equal pay because all workers depend equally on all other workers: all workers are equally interdependent. Capitalism is a primitive economic system based upon illogicality, which is somewhat excusable (due to biological survival) during times of blatant scarcity, but as we approach technological exploding intelligence the intellectually stunted nature of capitalism becomes utterly untenable. If you support capitalism you support illogicality; but let's face it the history of our civilization is that of prohibiting women from the right to vote, enslaving races, and criminalizing homosexuality, so I don't expect the world to become rational (logical) overnight. People will probably drag their heels kicking and screaming as they are pulled relentlessly towards the intelligence explosion. We should be running to meet it the explosion instead of clinging to outmoded

illogicality.

PS-awareness is the only solution but it seems people need PS-brains to appreciate the ramifications of PS.

Summerspeaker • New Mexico • May 17, 2011

Reasonable suggestions from James and Mike, but this list suffers from lack of radicalism. To David, I suggest that the conditions of industrial civilization in the form alienation, discipline, and social stratification promote unhappiness. We exist constrained by soulless bureaucratic structures and consumed in endless interpersonal rivalries. The entire system rests on boldface violence, as anyone who steps out of line quickly realizes. Such an environment does not facilitate human well-being.

While I'm not opposed to interventions to the human organism to increase enjoyment, focusing on the internal may distract from the invaluable social struggle for genuine individual and community self-determination. We must go beyond representative democracy, the current examples of which shamelessly serve the interests of ruling elites. Liberal reform through the electoral process has come chiefly in combination with mass participatory organizing and militant direct action in the streets.

Local autonomous movements with a global consciousness stand as the best chance for approaching equality and liberation. The Zapatista Revolution in Chiapas serves as the classic example. Unfortunately, the nature of the world capitalist economy makes limited insurrections difficult. As Aviva Chomsky shows in *Linked Labor Histories*, labor organizing must be international for any hope of long-term success. Small-scale production technologies offer the possibility of getting off the grid and thus

allowing for independence without material deprivation. Such technologies may also highlight the contradictions and absurdities the present distribution system. Alongside digital communications, this constitutes my hope for the future.

hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 17, 2011

for Singularity Utopia and Summerspeaker—

you are more than welcome to present your own proposals for egalitarianism. I can't see that you have done that yet, instead, you seem to both be ranting about the evils of capitalism. Please suggest your own plans to develop a more equal society? Limiting yourself to criticizing other ideas isn't as productive as actually advancing plans for reform. So, let's hear it - what are your ideas for a more equitable world?

iPan • • May 17, 2011

I'm seeing more and more 'citizen currencies' or 'peer to peer currencies' lately too, the most recent might be BitCoin.

To me, these are the pre-cursors to Whuffie.

Jose Luis Molero • Ft. Lauderdale, FL, USA • May 17, 2011

I find Singularity Utopia's assertion that "material wealth equals happiness" to be profoundly unenlightened and unscientific. The rest of this person's attacks against David Pearce founder with this false premise.

iPan • • May 17, 2011

Singularity Utopia brings up good points about interdependence.

I've noted in our civilization that one of the fundamental causes of disparity is a result of exclusion.

I believe that there is a myth that the poor envy the wealth of the rich, that they would take it if they could, and this myth perpetuates endless struggle between classes of people and endless arguments over wealth redistribution.

But we ignore the real underlying causes of this. It's not really disproportional wealth (at least I don't think so), but rather exclusion itself.

I think we need to abolish classism itself, NOT by redistributing wealth, by ensuring that everyone has equal access to resources, but by becoming more inclusive.

As an example, I read about what's-his-name, a Prince in England (the one who served in the military), when he decided to spend the night under a bridge with the homeless. I notice that politicians here in the US sometimes make token, symbolic gestures by hammering a nail into a house under construction.

Why is this important?

Because it's a symbol of inclusion.

Of course, Prince what's-his-name still doesn't really know what it's like to be homeless (he gets to go home after his camping trip), and the President of the US has no idea how to build a house, nail be damned.

But it illustrates quite well what I mean when I say that what the poor really want is the dissolution of classes, not by redistribution of wealth, because we actually admire those who can become wealthy by their own merit.

What we want is transparency, fairness (no cheating at the game - get rich by the rules), and inclusion, meaning the realization that we are all interdependent, not separate classes.

That's how we end class warfare. We don't need to "steal" the wealth of the rich, we just need to eliminate exclusion.

We're all in the same boat.

I believe that the open source methodology naturally does this emergently. Information wants to propagate. Youtube videos go viral, not because they're good, but because they make use of replicators.

Open source works in exactly the same way, by dissolving boundaries and making use of replicators.

Practically speaking, we should be bringing an end to copyright, to intellectual property, and patents.

Cue Marshall McLuhan and Clay Shirky.

iPan • • May 17, 2011

Addendum to above post^

The CEO of McDonalds wouldn't be caught dead eating at McDonalds, because he knows it is poison.

If it's good enough for "us", then why isn't it good enough for hiim?

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 17, 2011

Dear Hank, I'm confused why you think I am "ranting".

I do voice my opinions strongly regarding the horrors of capitalism but I do not consider my logic to be a "rant".

I thought I presented a clear solution regarding the issue of creating egalitarianism: the solution I suggested is "Post-Scarcity awareness".

My proposal for creating egalitarianism is: Post-Scarcity awareness. It is my view that PS-awareness is

the only valid solution to the issues of social injustice in relation to all aspects of social-inequality (wealth, power, opportunity, education etc).

My proposal for egalitarianism is: Post-Scarcity awareness.

I suggest greater PS-awareness as the only valid solution.

Regarding a plan for raising PS-awareness I have created various PS symbols, which I have attempted to draw attention to. I've asked various futurist websites to publicize my PS symbols but many futurist websites are not interested in promoting my PS symbols. Here is an example of an animated PS-awareness symbol: <http://bit.ly/dXERQa>

Here are some more examples of PS symbols: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Ps2045>

I will be updating all online caches of PS symbols within the next few weeks thereby providing people with more PS-symbols, which people can freely use and share to make our world a more ethical, egalitarian, PS-aware place.

iPan • • May 17, 2011

McFoisGras:

We forcefeed the CEO of McD's BigMacs until he's nice and plump and tasty

iPan • • May 17, 2011

Everlast - What It's Like

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCZ1YteCv5M>

iPan • • May 17, 2011

@Singularity Utopia

I see eye to eye with you on PS-awareness.

You might consider doing what I am doing as well.

Provide real world examples of successful PS-awareness models.

People need to see it to believe it, so illustrate.

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 17, 2011

for Singularity Utopia—I apologize for saying you were ranting.

I was being crabby - these threads generally don't go in the direction

I'd like to see them go, but that's democracy, I suppose.

What I was hoping to get was several additional coherent proposals, that could also be discussed. I know you think you sent in a proposal, but when I follow your link, all I see is a bunch of shiny artwork and a statement that the Singularity will bring unlimited wealth to all in 2045. I think as a proposal, your offering is a bit too "far out" to be practical, but thanks anyway.

for iPan - thanks for your offerings. Is there a way that you can state your interest in this issue into a couple of proposals? I can see that you're interested in abolishing exclusion, and that you like "sliding scale" restaurants and services—are you suggesting that the government support these enterprises in some way? thanks

for Summerspeaker - I apologize to you to, also, for my crabbiness. I was hoping for proposals from

you, which is I why I asked you the same time as I asked James, Mike, Giulio, Alex and David. Right now, I don't think your praise of the Zapatistas translates into anything that a larger entity, like the USA, can implement. But I am open to hearing further about your ideas.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 17, 2011

Some good examples of moves towards PS are: file sharing (free videos and music via YouTube etc), and free software is also a good PS example:

Firefox
Thunderbird
IceWeasel
OpenOffice
Gimp
Inkscape
Ubuntu
Fedora

iPan • • May 17, 2011

In a wolf pack, the Alpha gets to eat first, and gets the choice cuts.

But every member of the pack gets to eat.

This is egalitarianism.

iPan • • May 17, 2011

Hank-

I believe a good place to start would be to model our tax code on 'pay what you wantism', but you already know that

We need somewhere where we can begin an experiment on a small scale, I think, to see how it works.

As someone has mentioned before, it would be near impossible to simply scrap the current system and replace it with a pay what you want 'tax' code.

To get people to understand it, we need reproducible results.

That is the first step. How do we get it? Is it possible to do a limited experiment in a small town somewhere?

The pay what you want restaurants are intriguing, but people are going to raise the argument of scalability.

So, I think that's what we need to address. How do we scale it up, and how do we show proof of concept?

iPan • • May 17, 2011

Here's another idea:

See if the Thiel Foundation would be willing to invest in a pay-what-you-want grocery outlet.

If successful, it would serve as another real world model.

Martha C. Knox • United States • May 17, 2011

In response to Linda: Sadly I have often found myself to be either the only woman or one of very few on Internet forums that discuss politics, technology, and science. It bums me out. Since having a child (and another on the way) I find myself less able to keep up with these types of discussions since I find it is within my gender role to be a family caretaker and social networker for my family, too (if I left that to my husband we would probably become estranged from all friends and family, not because he doesn't care, but just because he doesn't bother to stay connected to people.) I am frankly exhausted playing traditional female roles while also working full time and having a side career as a struggling artist AND doing a significant number of volunteer hours as a leader in my Humanist community. Not to mention trying to stay informed and involved with political issues both locally and beyond. So talk of earnings being connected to one's value in society definitely hits a soft spot with me, not only as a woman, but as a socially conscious and intellectually aware working class woman. I'm sure the lack of women involved in these discussions says many other sad things about our society, but what to do about it?

I see your point about the solar power. However, the way I think of that doesn't change my belief in resources a finite. The sunlight was always there. We just weren't utilizing it for power. I have great faith and hopes about technology uplifting humanity exactly because it has the power to dramatically increase the usefulness of natural resources, as well as the power to distribute those resources much much more efficiently and cheaply.

And more general responses: I do also agree with David Pearce that material wealth does not equal happiness, and I agree with Giulio Prisco that total equality would be both boring and stifling to the human spirit. Marc Hauser wrote a great book called "Moral Minds" about the evolution and nature of human morality. In it, he cites some studies that show that while many aspects of morality differ from society to society, some things are consistent. One of these is the idea that "fairness" in terms of wealth means that the people on the bottom at least have necessary resources to sustain them (and in my opinion that would include access to health care, education, and freedom of movement unconstrained by poverty, as well as food and shelter) and that the people at the top don't have ridiculously more than everyone else. Indeed, there are people who accumulate so much wealth that they suddenly can wield a great deal of power over everyone else despite laws and government. Basically, disparity is okay so long as it doesn't get too extreme.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 17, 2011

Dear Hank,

The power of awareness can at first glance seem insignificant but awareness can change the world. The PS symbols I have created are vehicles for awareness. The CND symbol is a good example of how a symbol can unite people regarding a powerful idea.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campaign_for_Nuclear_Disarmament

The CND symbol popularity occurred at a time when internet-assisted viral-Memes were unheard of.

Via our current technology ideas can quickly change the world and a symbol can easily be a vehicle for that change.

Imagine if the concept of Post-Scarcity acquired the same or greater power than the concept of WikiLeaks. The word WikiLeaks is a powerful Meme that is changing the world. Our ideas are changed and I am convinced the idea of Post-Scarcity could easily change businesses and Governments in a very dramatic way if the PS-Meme gained popularity. The only obstacle is a lack of imagination. Perhaps the phrase for PS-awareness could be: "We open minds!?"

David Pearce • • May 17, 2011

Singularity Utopia, sadly there will never be an unlimited abundance of status goods. Status goods can never be fairly distributed. One person's gain is inevitably another person's loss. I love Ray Kurzweil's charts as much as you do. But the supply of Old Masters is never going to increase.

By contrast, biotechnology can deliver unlimited well-being for all. For sure, talk of reward pathway enrichment and genetic recalibration of hedonic set-points (etc) doesn't set one's pulse racing. As Bentham notes, "Happiness is a very pretty thing to feel, but very dry to talk about." But if we're ethically serious about creating a world without suffering, then there's no sense in simply rearranging the scenery. With responsible genetic tweaking, life can be lived entirely above hedonic zero - and governed entirely by gradients of intelligent bliss.

Critically, such wonderful life can be enjoyed not just by a Roman Abramovich in his yacht but also by a Diogenes in his tub. Nanotech riches are just the icing on the cake.

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 17, 2011

for Singularity Utopia - thanks! I certainly can't deny the meme power of the peace symbol and the word WikiLeaks, and I am in agreement with your statement that "Via our current technology ideas can quickly change the world and a symbol can easily be a vehicle for that change"—so I will look at your artwork again and get back to you with questions.

Joern Pallesen • Copenhagen • May 17, 2011

I haven't had the time to study the various proposals of the five gentlemen, and I didn't know enough beforehand, but a quick reading gave me the impression, that each proposal is perceived as conflicting with those of another, which I think is a mistake. It seems to me, that it is merely a matter of differing tactics and priorities, and could it be that each proposal / solution is applicable at different times and places.. - Remember Maslow's "hierarchy of needs".., i.e. "Ghana needs GDP, the USA needs GNH.. , squarely put, 'cause Bhutan, where the concept of GNH - Gross National Happiness, originated, is quite backward in terms life expectancy, material well-being, etc. , but nonetheless, the politics of Bhutan is officially about creating the greatest possible happiness for the greatest number of people, the point being: Need there be any contradiction? - Many are afraid that (too much..) equality will impede autonomy, but in my view it is rather the opposite: (Too much) in-equality impedes autonomy and take notice of how Denmark scores top marks in both equality AND personal freedom.

I agree completely with Hank's conclusion, that SAME SOCIAL STATUS + SHARING = SMILES, and the evidence is overwhelming:

<http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/why/evidence>

Again, however, that is not to say I dismiss any of the other proposals. We may - and rightly so - be critical of materialism, consumerism, etc., but I think that completely turning once back is a mistake. Cognitive functioning, i.e. happiness, is not a matter of either or, e.g. extravagance or simple living, but a result of physical as well as social and mental well-being. Depending on where we are, in which nation we live, in which family we were born, etc. etc., various tactics are applicable, but if you would press me in pointing out any specific measure above all others I'd point to CHILDCARE. Absolutely no-one will disagree when saying that love and attention in combination with healthy housing, good foodstuffs and a safe environment is of paramount importance for the cognitive functioning and well-being of us all.

This, in turn, requires good governance, equal opportunities, etc., but I'll stop here.., these are highly complicated matters, yet so simple.. - My message, I think, is this: Do not rule out any proposal, whether political, individual, technological / genetic, etc., it is only a matter of choice which you prefer above the other as a starting point.

As for the positive impact of an increase in IQ's: I think the whole concept of what intelligence is needs reconsideration, and I am not thinking here of social / emotional intelligence, which I do think is very important and valuable, but to me social intelligence has got more to do with "just"getting on with people, which in itself does not necessarily move you to actually DO something for your fellow beings. Intelligence then, should be redefined as CARING, for yourself as well as others, the environment, etc.

iPan • • May 17, 2011

"but if you would press me in pointing out any specific measure above all others I'd point to

CHILDCARE. Absolutely no-one will disagree when saying that love and attention in combination with healthy housing, good foodstuffs and a safe environment is of paramount importance for the cognitive functioning and well-being of us all."

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/05/110517091937.htm>

Deprivation and Neglect Found to Age Children's Chromosomes

Studies in institutionalized Romanian children have found that the length of time spent in conditions of social deprivation and neglect correlates with lower IQ and behavioral problems. A new study, led by researchers at Children's Hospital Boston and Tulane University, shows that early adversity even affects children's chromosomes—prematurely shortening the chromosome tips, known as telomeres, and hastening how quickly their cells "age."

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 17, 2011

For Joern and iPan—

thanks for mentioning Child-Care!

I am very much in agreement with that, as you probably suspect.

I also got a message from IEET fellow David Brin, who emphasized childcare when I asked him for an "egalitarian proposal"—

here's what he said:

David Brin—

"Emphasis equality where it really matters. Where it is compatible with both cooperation and fair competition... AT THE STARTING BLOCKS! All children, everywhere, should get food, care, health, education, encouragement sufficient to make them sturdy, stalwart, confident, savvy, creative competitors."

CygnusX1 • Samsara • May 17, 2011

"Creative competitors"? No David! - Creative contributors (to society.. to humanity)

How to achieve happiness and Universal moralism, value and worth that leads to a more egalitarian world society? Well intelligence alone won't be of much help to the constrained mind - Education, wisdom and insight that leads to an understanding of suffering would be greater tools to possess - Oh.. and guiding young minds away from Self-ishness and Self-gratification and towards unity.. "So say we all!"

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 18, 2011

Dear David Pearce,

I am firmly convinced PS can create unlimited abundance in all areas, including the so-called "status goods".

Firstly, the whole issue of status is a concept only applicable to a scarcity based civilization thus PS would abolish the need for status.

Secondly, Old Masters will be reproduced so that the so-called "reproduction" is atomically identical to the "original". "Reproduction" is a misnomer regarding PS superabundance because the subsequent versions will be originals. If there is absolutely no difference between the original and the copy then the so-called "copy" is actually an original. Futuristic PS-Abundance will be unlimited in all aspects.

I consider your bio-rewiring of neuronal-pleasure-centers to be an extremely dangerous proposal. If

poor people could be made to feel perfectly happy compared to Roman Abramovich on his yacht, despite the poor people wallowing in squalor, this would not be a good thing. We could rewire brains so that

slaves are utterly happy being slaves but would this be horrific. You could argue that if the slave is truly happy then there is no problem; but I firmly believe an important part of our humanity would have been lost, thus the perfectly happy human slave would in effect be dead, they would no longer be truly happy, they would merely be a robot or a empty computer program or a name-badge declaring happiness. Yes slaves could be happy living in filthy-diseased conditions but this must be avoided at all costs. Bio-rewiring may be cheaper in the short term compared to creating the technology for Post-Scarcity but ultimately it would be a false-economy, a false-saving.

post-postfuturist • • May 18, 2011

"The CEO of McDonalds wouldn't be caught dead eating at McDonalds, because he know's it is poison. If it's good enough for "us", then why isn't it good enough for hiim?"

Most of the fare served at McDonalds are belly-bombs, but not everything. The CEO could eat a salad in a McDonalds without getting the dry heaves. It's not black & white, it is shades of gray. Is McDonalds a good thing? no. But we are stuck with it.

David Pearce • • May 18, 2011

Singularity Utopia, humans for evolutionary reasons are predisposed to status-seeking. If, as we hope, an era of unlimited nanotech abundance delivers Old Masters for all, then Old Masters will simply cease to be the highly valued positional goods they are now.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positional_good

Compare how the value of a preciously acclaimed work of art plunges 99% if microscopic analysis reveals the masterpiece is a "fake". In the absence of reward pathway enhancements, tomorrow's competitive status-seekers will be just as chronically discontented as competitive status-seekers are today. The hedonic treadmill will still grind. Recall that I'm not advocating - or predicting - its near-term abolition, merely its recalibration i.e. a higher hedonic set-point for us all as the reproductive revolution of "designer babies" unfolds. (Post-)humans can enjoy unimaginably wonderful lives, spent far above hedonic zero - even if some folk still choose to compete against each other in sport, academia, politics and elsewhere.

Likewise, I wasn't advocating poverty(!). Recall that Diogenes chose to live in his tub. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diogenes_of_Sinope) Rather I was observing how, even today, one can adopt an austere lifestyle and still lead a satisfying life - but only if one is blessed with the adequate reward circuitry to do so. Whether living in a palace or a mud hut, depressives will still be melancholic.

Intuitively, one might imagine that future life governed by gradients of intellect bliss would leave people more vulnerable to "enslavement" (cf. Huxley's "Brave New World"). In fact the opposite is true. Low mood and subordinate behaviour are intimately associated. (cf. Rank Theory of depression.) Depression in social mammals seems to have evolved as a genetically fitness-enhancing adaptation to group living (<http://www.biopsychiatry.com/depression/index.html>)

Conversely, elevating mood reduces our predisposition to subordinate behaviour. Other things being equal, temperamental optimists are more likely than depressives to be "active citizens" who participate fully in a democratic society. More generally, a rich capacity to anticipate reward tends to empower rather than "enslave".

Either way, I don't think biohappiness, technological progress and socio-economic reform should be conceived as alternatives. Rather they are complementary strategies for clawing our way out of the Darwinian abyss.

Sasha • Somewhere between the void and chaos. • May 18, 2011

This does NOT seem to be about egalitarianism but about a very sick very totalitarian indoctrination system based on a perversion of 'meritocracy'

James Hughes (author of Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future) believes democratization aided by technology is the best medicine to cure

inequality. He proposes [all quotes are his] that we provide "equal access to education" by developing the "visionary, handheld AI tutor that Neal Stephenson imagined in The Diamond Age that maps the child's developmental needs, and leads them through a personalized dialogue to knowledge and critical thinking, drawing on the best pedagogies."

So this right here is a bit odd, who is to say what the 'Best Pedagogies' are? This is telling people how to think.

Hughes also believes the United Nations needs to become a "vehicle for popular democratic expression, instead of a club of nation-states represented by their diplomatic elites." With sufficient influence and jurisdiction, the UN would be able to equitably distribute wealth and political control. Hughes sees his vision enabled by "technologies that break down nation-states and ethnic identities and replace them with transnational political identities, organizations, and campaigns."

So no national sovereignty anywhere, and the votes are counted by a MACHINE?!?!? For the whole world? The resources and people of the Saharra rely on a different type of structure than the resources and people of the rainforests...

Alex Lightman (author of Brave New Unwired World: the Digital Big Bang and the Infinite Internet) does not regard today's economic disparity as the root cause of suffering.

BULLL! If you are born poor unless you are willing to be a sycophant or a sociopath, you HAVE NEXT TO NO MOBILITY.

If your family can not afford to help you get your driver's license in the states, you can not afford a good suit, or college, you are in a BAD place.

Instead, he asserts, "the fundamental inequalities are intelligence, imagination, ambition, and action. Someone with 10% more of all four than his chiral twin could have four orders of magnitude more wealth over a lifetime."

George W Bush is a wealthy man yet referred to a fetus as fweces on national tv. Gahndi was pretty damn poor yet helped topple British Imperialism.

Imagination can be enhanced, Lightman claims, by "promoting respect and reading of science fiction. Teach it in schools." Ambition can be strengthened if we "study the root causes of brain function, and get people to exercise more, which will fix addiction, depression, and other mental issues that reduce ambition." And finally, action? Lightman's plan to promote activity is to offer, "free classes in how to stop procrastinating, for everyone, in lieu of welfare, pensions, subsidies."

So the guy writes a book with the title "BRAVE NEW (Unwired) WORLD", and wants kids to read Sci-Fi (like, Brave New World with massive economic disparity and totalitarianism being the goal?) books to 'increase creativity' while drugged up on 'nootropics' about totalitarianism in a very stratified society? Sure they get indoctrinated, but what are they doing that is actually creative?

David Pearce (author of The Hedonistic Imperative) proffered advice that mirrored his devotion to the abolition of mental suffering. Like Lightman, he does not regard equity in wealth and class as the ultimate goal.

BULLL!

"Happiness based on social status is a so-called 'positional good'," he said. "No amount of material wealth can create more of it [happiness]."

Actually, they did studies proving the more capable people are of caring for themselves, the happier they are, so BULL. Also with the previous writer's ideas you can see how 'Positional Happiness' combined with reading sci-fi books about VERY STRATIFIED societies is not helping with egalitarian agendas.

Suicide rates and other 'objective' indices of psychological distress—chemical depression, etc.—are actually worse today than they were for our hunter-gatherer ancestors on the African savannah.

History lesson: Hunter Gatherer societies were almost always EXTREMELY egalitarian. I'm not a communist, but it has more to do with how many people feel like burdens to society due to being impoverished with regulations in the way of trying to do ANYTHING about it than being what you considered 'poor' (i.e they were not as stratified- almost no one was COMPARITIVELY POOR)

Even in a fairer society of unlimited material abundance—even if blessed with the all the technical marvels that transhumanists anticipate—our quality of life won't be significantly improved unless we also redesign our reward circuitry. In my opinion, only genetically recalibrating our 'hedonic set-point' can radically enhance our well-being."

So they want to make a damn slave caste?!?!?!?

Pearce believes his proposal is "technically feasible right now. For example, benign genes for our

children via preimplantation genetic diagnosis could potentially enrich everyone's quality of life—and allow all humans to be born 'winners'." He also suggested "BioHappiness Education" as a policy measure for egalitarian bliss, and he praised genetic research on 5-HTTLPR (serotonin transporter) and the COMT Val158Met genotype.

So they want to make a slave caste!?!?!?!

Giulio Prisco (author of *Engineering Transcendence*) was initially adverse to my query, replying, "I don't want an egalitarian planet where everyone is the same as everyone else because this could only be achieved by suppressing personal autonomy, free-thinking and diversity, and would result in an extremely boring planet. But I do want a MORE egalitarian planet..."

After thinking about it a little more, Prisco offered a fascinating proposal, inspired in part by the work of a famous German anarchist.

"Extreme inequality depends on how the economy is structured," Prisco explained. "A possible solution to this is the idea of Perishable Money—money with an expiration date, a concept originally devised a century ago by Silvio Gesell. In this financial system, there are no taxes and you keep all the money you make, but as soon as you are paid money, it starts to 'decay'—perhaps losing all value after one month, or a certain % per day.

I kind of like what this guy says, but a percentage per diem would not work, too many people would spend all day shopping to prevent the money from losing value, the smarter ones would buy machines that sold them candy bars or some such nonsense, than re-ate the candy bars, like a perpetual motion machine bank...

So, you want to spend all your money on basic goods like food and rent. If you wish to accumulate money and save it for later, you must go to an exchange center operated by the community and convert your extra money to a non-perishable form, but you must pay fees to do this. The fees would be the equivalent of taxes, they would provide the money that the community needed for public works, health care, etc."

Early on in the game income disparity could make this a major kill—the wealthier could buy up all natural resources to keep their money from going out of circulation and wasting it by having it tied up in the banks they have to pay for. Might I suggest land and resource caps instead, so no one person (and having ceos holding their companies resources under the belts) could accumulate too much of the resources? If you look at land and wealth distribution across the world you will see the very wealthy have been buying up what they can at an alarming rate.

This leaves no basic capital for others, thus enabling the cartels to price set AND control politics to a stronger degree (How many of the poor/middle class have the time and resources to go to various political functions and make sure they have rent paid and food on the table?)

In Prisco's analysis, "this system would be as fair as the current system—or fairer—and much simpler for everyone. It would also be very easy to implement now, with e-money."

E-Money is E-asier to steal or E-rase.

Mike Treder (co-founder of the Center for Responsible Nanotechnology) believes economic egalitarianism is an intrinsically valid stance because: "It is a false assumption that anyone in modern society, by themselves, with no help from anyone else, earns money. What we call 'earnings' is really just an arbitrary allocation of each individual's estimated contribution to overall economic production."

According to Treder, each person's financial income should not be regarded as a personal possession, but as a provisionally assigned piece of the total pie—and quite probably an unfair piece at that, either too much or too little.

Furthermore, says Treder, "It is only because a complex infrastructure is in place, because an organized system of economics is working, and because government has been instituted, that we are able to have jobs and incomes at all. We all pay taxes to keep that system functioning, because without it, none of us could earn a tenth of what we are making now."

The challenge, then, is for each of us to recognize that our sense of ownership over personal wealth is invalid. "In truth," says Treder, "whatever wealth you possess is not 'your money'. You didn't earn it by yourself with no help from others. It's simply a share of total production—and often, because the system is imperfect, that share gets distributed unfairly. Adjusting income tax rates progressively can help to restore an appropriate balance."

Kind of good, especially if to get a more level playing field they did it by acreage owned property taxes. Those 10% who hold 80% of the worlds land would be dropping properties on the market like flies, and priced to sell.

Martha C. Knox • United States • May 18, 2011

There is good evidence that peoples' baseline happiness remains the same even if they accumulate wealth, so long as they have basic necessities met. So as far as bio-rewiring neuronal-pleasure-centers goes, I would only be favor in that sort of thing as treatment for people with debilitating mood disorders, not as part of a solution to disparity of resources. Indeed, the idea of getting people to be happy even when their basic needs are not met is a creepy proposition. People whose baseline happiness is very high, still suffer when bad things happen to them. So unless we're talking about bringing people to a state of bliss even when they are starving to death (and at that point it is really just killing them off since they would have no motivation for self preservation), bio-rewiring wouldn't solve the problem of people suffering from abject poverty or other extremely unfortunate circumstances. If we manage to eliminate poverty, then further disparity of resources will not be a problem.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 18, 2011

Dear Martha C. Knox ,

I have previously heard about this mysterious so-called evidence that money doesn't make you happy; but nobody seems able to actually provide references to the "evidence".

Furthermore, and this is the REALLY CRUCIAL POINT; any survey or report which is conducted by people with strong links to the capitalist establishment will naturally support the capitalist status-quo, of monetary inequality, because they are merely protecting their vested interests. I'd like to see report on these issues written by a hobo-homeless person or by someone living in a shanty town, or an Indian farmer in the "suicide belt" who is contemplating suicide due to spiraling debts. Well-off (well-paid) academics, with funding from big-businesses, write these nonsense reports; they are basically paid to tell the poor people that there is no need to rebel.

If money really doesn't make you happy then the rich people should give their money away and everyone should have equal incomes, but the truth is money does make you immensely happy therefore people cling to their wealth because it is a VERY UNHAPPY situation being poor.

Is html allowed?...I shall try: [Thousands of poor Indian-farmers committing suicide](#)

Academics regarding their Establishment-supportive reports (the evidence); they are utterly shameful.

Think about it. How do these reports work. Do the researchers ask billionaires if they are immensely happy being stinking rich? Maybe they say "We are writing a report to see if poor people are equally happy compared to rich people." And the billionaire thinks: "Great, this is an opportunity to tell all the paupers (whom I'm ripping-off) how great my filthy-rich-life is, while they suffer horrific pain in mindless dead-end jobs." The billionaire probably thinks this will be great for my financial security if I tell all the poor people how I am immensely happy and how they are all miserable mugs because I never need to work for my money. The billionaire probably thinks: my life is one perpetual holiday without any money worries whatsoever, I never need to work, and I think my financial future will be assured if I tell everyone how I am VASTLY HAPPIER than poor people, and that I make my money selling overpriced junk.

[Affluent businessman admits products are tacky, "total crap", and overpriced. "The speech, instantly seized upon by the media, wiped an estimated £500m from the value of the company."](#)

Get real! If you ask a millionaire if they are immensely happy being filthy rich they will wisely say: I am slightly happy but not very happy, money isn't everything.

Rich people are not stupid. Vested interests. Protectionism.

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 18, 2011

for Singularity Utopia and Martha C. Knox -

here's a link to the Top Ten World's "Happiest" Nations:

<http://www.forbes.com/2009/05/05/world-happiest-places-lifestyle-travel-world-happiest.html>

as SU probably suspects, all the Top 10 are rather wealthy nations, but that does not mean that the very wealthiest nations are at the summit.

There are other factors involved - two are:

1. Low Unemployment Rate - nations with this are "happier"
2. Nations where people don't over-work are "happier"

Denmark is ranked #1, as I noted in my article, in both "Happiness" and "Egalitarianism"

SU - thanks for the link to the Indian farmer suicides, that really is a tragic circumstance.

Summerspeaker • New Mexico • May 18, 2011

Hank, I presented a specific and established proposal for an egalitarian future: worldwide anarchist revolution facilitated by small-scale production technologies and digital communications networks. It's telling that you dismiss this as ranting about the evils of capitalism.

iPan • • May 18, 2011

In terms of income level to happiness indexes, this is the most recent research I have seen, and it piqued my interest because everytime I've found myself fantasizing about having more money, I actually imagine having about this much, not more.

It's an interesting article.

<http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,2016291,00.html>

Do We Need \$75,000 a Year to Be Happy?

People say money doesn't buy happiness. Except, according to a new study from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School, it sort of does — up to about \$75,000 a year. The lower a person's annual income falls below that benchmark, the unhappier he or she feels. But no matter how much more than \$75,000 people make, they don't report any greater degree of happiness.

Before employers rush to hold — or raise — everyone's salary to \$75,000, the study points out that there are actually two types of happiness. There's your changeable, day-to-day mood: whether you're stressed or blue or feeling emotionally sound. Then there's the deeper satisfaction you feel about the way your life is going — the kind of thing Tony Robbins tries to teach you. While having an income above the magic \$75,000 cutoff doesn't seem to have an impact on the former (emotional well-being), it definitely improves people's Robbins-like life satisfaction. In other words, the more people make above \$75,000, the more they feel their life is working out on the whole. But it doesn't make them any more jovial in the mornings.

The study, by economist Angus Deaton and psychologist Daniel Kahneman, who has won a Nobel Prize for Economics, analyzed the responses of 450,000 Americans polled by Gallup and Healthways in 2008 and 2009. Participants were asked how they had felt the previous day and whether they were living the best possible life for them. They were also asked about their income.

This indicates one thing to me: a "living wage" should be about \$75,000/year

That's the benchmark to set.

Hank Pellissier • san francisco • May 18, 2011

for Sasha—thanks for your comments and critique.

You are welcome to leave your own suggestions here— you did mention taxing property, which is already in place, but perhaps you mean raising it significantly higher?

I need to correct one of your remarks—Gandhi was not poor
- he was from a well-to-do background, and was educated in London.

you seem to have a anarchist streak - correct?
if so, what is your plan to establish egalitarianism -
do you think a decentralized anarchistic movement can implement it?

I don't think so, I think egalitarianism has to be promoted and put into place by a centralized government, that has actual authority.
But you're welcome to present an alternative scenario.

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 18, 2011

for summerspeaker - thanks for the clarification, and I'm sorry for my earlier impatience. I just reread your previous entry and it seems to promote "labor organizing on an international scale" as a method to achieve egalitarianism. You are welcome to expand on this.

Right now, your suggestion seems about 90-100 years old, and unsuccessful, but you're right, it is possible that "small scale production technologies and digital communications networks" could be of some assistance to your cause. Please elaborate if you wish, I mean this sincerely, I am interested.

Also, I wonder if you have any suggestions for gender equality?
That has not yet been addressed in this thread.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 18, 2011

Hank,

I have said earlier that the disparity between rich and poor people makes poor people unhappy because they can see what a great time super-rich people are having: living easy lives.

If you average out the happiness in rich countries, the masses of poor people can drag down the overall happiness quotient because there are vastly more poor people than the multimillionaires in rich countries. I am absolutely certain the richest people are the happiest people, but as [Gerald Ratner](#) shows us, it does NOT pay to tell the truth thus rich people keep quiet about their IMMENSE happiness.

Reports judging people's happiness are only as reliable as the answers people **choose** to give; and it is also worthwhile to consider the financial bias (orientation) of the person conducting the report: I say let the Indian suicide belt farmers write a report regarding the relationship between money and happiness.

In places such as Denmark, the overall happiness is higher because there isn't a mass of very depressed poor people dragging down the figures. So although the richest countries may not be the happiest, the richest people are the happiest. Money equates happiness which is why people in Denmark are happier, because more people in Denmark have substantial sums of money but the happiest people will always be the richest. Unfortunately I wouldn't expect billionaires to tell you the truth about their happiness.

If you are having a great time at the expense of others it pays not to rub the loser's nose into the squalor of their defeat via trumpeting about your victory, because they could rebel and you (the rich person) could lose your money.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 18, 2011

David Pearce,

I disagree strongly that there are evolutionary reasons for being predisposed to status seeking. The only evolutionary predisposition is because evolution has been based upon scarcity but if you take away scarcity you take away any incentive for status-seeking. Status-seeking in a PS situation would be akin to a businessperson learning how to make stone-age tools. At one point it was a key survival trait being able to make stone-age tools but now the trait is obsolete, likewise with status-seeking: there is no need to seek status if everything is free. In a PS situation status-seeking will be obsolete comparable to how the need to protect ourselves from Woolly Mammoths is currently obsolete.

If Old Masters are superabundant then everyone can have one but as a status symbol nobody will desire an Old Master. The notion of "positional-good" will become obsolete.

I believe depression is wholly a symptom of our rapacious money based situation of scarcity. If everyone could live in a Palace, within a PS civilization, then nobody would be depressed. Living in a mud hut is more depressing than living in a Palace. There is a grave danger in making people happy living in mud huts. If people can be happy irrespective of their reality then reality could easily be ignored, which would be contrary to survival.

The relationship between depression and slavery is that being a slave is depressing. By making people happy without removing the enslavement, this will not abolish enslavement. Subordinate people may be depressed but making them happy will not free them. The only way to abolish slavery is to make everything free: Post-Scarcity; thus there is no motive for enslaving people.

True freedom means everything being free, which means PS is the only solution.

Martha C. Knox • United States • May 18, 2011

Singularity Utopia, I think you missed what I was trying to say with regards to the money doesn't equate happiness. I explicitly stated that there is evidence that happiness doesn't increase *so long that basic necessities are provided for.* So the homeless hobo and all the other examples of impoverished people I would agree are having their happiness lowered by their poor economic positions, and from what I've read the science supports that assessment.

Perhaps my phrase "basic necessities" was interpreted as just enough to keep people physically alive. I view basic necessities as adequate food, health care, shelter, but also access to education, freedom of movement (that also means movement not constrained by poverty) and a certain level of stability. So a working class family with a home and not under the poverty line, but which is one cancer diagnosis away from total financial ruin IMO is not having all their basic needs met. Neither is someone with health insurance who can't use it because they can't afford the co-pays.

I think that iPan's mentioned article strengthens the point I was trying to make. Money only makes people happy (well, really it is money ensuring that basic needs are met) up to a point, and after that it is all gravy.

I wish I could link to all the articles I've read about baseline happiness over the years, but that's not possible since I didn't keep tabs. But here's one article I found that has a lot of information that rings familiar to me and refers to a few studies:

<http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1721954,00.html>

CygnusX1 • Samsara • May 18, 2011

Quote - "for Singularity Utopia—I apologize for saying you were ranting. I was being crabby - these threads generally don't go in the direction I'd like to see them go, but that's democracy, I suppose.

What I was hoping to get was several additional coherent proposals, that could also be discussed. I know you think you sent in a proposal, but when I follow your link, all I see is a bunch of shiny artwork and a statement that the Singularity will bring unlimited wealth to all in 2045. I think as a proposal, your offering is a bit too "far out" to be practical, but thanks anyway."

Hank - are you fishing for novel ideas for a paper or book or something? It would be good to hear your proposals for the promotion of egalitarianism and universal equality and quality of life for all humans. Perhaps you could append to your article above and let us know?

This topic is one of the biggest worthy of contemplation and the answers are not so simple. It's got me thinking deeply, and I am still contemplating an article for a blog myself. In fact, the topic is so big IEET could promote their own sub-group debate and group listing to perpetuate and evolve the discussion further, (if there is not one already?) There are many articles in the archives supporting this topic of discussion from James Hughes, David Brin, to Ben Goetzl to Kris Notaro and many others.

And I notice you have not mentioned David Brin's ideas regarding global socio-economic change and transparency to overcome the shortfalls of capitalism? Which I feel is a groundbreaking, (and billionaire shaking), proposition that would radically change global perspective regarding consumerism, the free

market, boom and bust, commodity fixing, status seeking and hoarding of assets, using emerging technologies.

Of the above article contributions, I would say that James Hughes is ideally placed at the top of the list, as education driving global awareness and democracy "will" change the worldview and we all know this must be the place to begin to overcome the status quo, (and yes the rich elite and power status seekers know this would not be in their best interests, despite the positive ethical evolution this would instigate for humanity – and no, ultimately they cannot stop it, only postpone the inevitable?)

Mike Treder's social ideals regarding social contribution and rewards are also interesting – should we be eliminating wealth disparity through socialist ideals, and perhaps banding of salary groups to promote equality and guide to self-worth, uplifting the poorest and limiting the richest? The rich most certainly stand on the shoulders of the poorest and I cannot see any justification for the disparity of salaries at the top. Sounds good to me, and well supported by the comments here. Let's start the salary downsizing with bankers and sports personalities first off?

@ Summerspeaker – Even though your contributions may appear to be dismissed or disregarded, (join the club!), there are plenty of readers who do take notice of your posts and links.

@ Singularity Utopia – I am still a sceptic regarding any Post Scarcity singularity, although I remain optimistic, I think we still need to aim for a socio-economic revolution to overcome disparity and status seeking and hoarding, and also a change of philosophy regarding consumerism. Promoting protection of the planet and ecosystem etc.

@ Sasha – regarding your counter points to Giulio's ideas, you have hit the nail on the head. Giulio's idea is similar to the notion of everyone having unlimited monetary funds for a year, and can thus spend, spend, spend, (and be happy?) Yet at the end of the year they have to pass on whatever is left to the next lucky person. Here the monetary system is supported and even encouraged through consumerism and circulation of monies and their tax revenues, thus supporting employment and the well being of all members of society, (hopefully?)

However, I don't see this as practicable, and precisely because, as you point out, if you had a million bucks what would be the first thing you would do? Invest in your future yes? By buying a big house and real estate that you "can keep" after your funds have disappeared? And thus this would be the premium commodity. Ultimately my philosophical view is that there are too many bodies on this planet, and not enough resources. Yet even if we do overcome most of them, then the ownership of real estate and land ownership is still not viable. So perhaps we should aim to eliminate it altogether? Aiming for Leaseholding and time sharing of real estate only perhaps? Transient Humans should have no authority or sanction in buying parts of the planet should they?

So let me finish with a few personal observations regarding global equality.

1. Global change in perspective and awareness – To guide towards egalitarianism people need to be aware, educated, informed of the facts, before they can realise the true potential and possibility for change and to show them what is possible if they demand it through the practice of democracy? A change in global sociocultural consciousness must be the prime mover, and internet-worked technologies are ideally placed to support this?

2. A change guided towards global and political philosophy regarding human worth, value, happiness, and the nurture and education towards wisdom and the unification of human values and end to sufferings. This will not be achieved whilst the status quo is preserved by the rich and elite, so, once again, I see David Brin's ideas regarding transparency as a practicable means to supporting this?

3. Personal focus and education on mindfulness, existentialism, and of personal responsibilities regarding welfare, self-worth, self-preservation, social contributions and happiness, as well as the promotion of empathy. Simple dummies course in Buddhism should suffice for most, and early education for kids in schools, (and thus they will demand the future global social change where we are too shy to act?) I envision an ethical and spiritual, (dirty word), evolution for humanity guided by existentialism – happiness and self-understanding and self-growth playing a major part of the "hedonic shift" mentioned above.

4. Personal development as key to overcoming disparity, inequality, unhappiness, unemployment, and loss of social directive, in a Post Scarcity society. Assuming here that robots will be used as the new mechanical slaves for industrial automation and the menial tasks and duties that the poorest humans presently need to provide through manual work?

In this vision egalitarianism is promoted, yet inequality is not ultimately overcome, (I don't think it will ever). All of the basic needs of humans will be provided, the basis for ease of sufferings provided, and happiness promoted. Monies are supplanted by social and leisure rewards, (virtual world stimulus, education and other escapism). Thus hoarding of monies, commodities and the status these provide will be made irrelevant, (although the seeking of power status will not be easily overcome).

5. May be the most key issue to obstructing egalitarianism and social equality is overpopulation of the planet? Hopefully, once inequalities are pursued and overcome, then humans will naturally be dissuaded

from needless procreation? With the understanding that the pursuit of social status and happiness does not rely upon the false notion that women must have children to fulfil their lives, (although this view may be controversial, especially for women, I do believe that the current capitalist ideology strives to encourage procreation and a perpetual young workforce which is essential for it to maintain itself. In a post scarcity future, this philosophy will need to be addressed and overcome, as I believe it will naturally?)

Apologies for the length of this, I did my best to keep it short.

Peter Wicks • <http://peterwicks.wordpress.com> • May 18, 2011

Hasn't the idea that material inequality inevitably leads to suffering been disproved by empirical psychology? My initial (rather rapid I'm afraid) instinct is to agree with Giulio's first reaction: an excessive emphasis on equality is counterproductive because it undermines autonomy. On his suggestion about perishable money: isn't that more commonly called inflation?

iPan • • May 18, 2011

3D Rapid Prototyping will be a major boon to egalitarianism.

Just read about a commercially available one that is \$1700, unfortunately, it can only print using resin.

What we really need are 3D printers capable of using a larger variety of materials.

This, coupled with abundant energy (Rossi's E-cat, and Eric Lerner's DPF devices both look fairly promising right now), might just about equalize everything.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 18, 2011

Martha, I didn't miss your point, I did understand your meaning.

I disagree with the notion that money only makes people happy up to a point, or more precisely I think we disagree where that point is. I would say that any riches beyond one trillion US dollars (regarding prices on 19th May 2011) are superfluous and riches beyond that will not increase happiness; but up until the one trillion cut off I think **more money does equate more happiness.**

Let's imagine you have a choice between a yearly income of \$100,000 or a fortune of one trillion dollars, which would make you happier. Personally I'd opt for the one trillion fortune and I assure you I would be ecstatic to say the least. Actually, now that I think about it, maybe the cut off should be two trillion because I would be even happier with two trillion; the cut off could even be three or four trillion.

So let's imagine an affluent middle class family with job security etc. These people are happier than people on the bread line but I say the middle class family would be even happier if they were in the aristocratic super-rich class.

Regarding the Time magazine link [we are looking a massively rich entertainment industry business.](#) Their purpose is to entertain, to make happy, because happy slaves spend more money, thus I am skeptical regarding these reports. Let's consider the university of Edinburgh; all universities are businesses and universities are deeply integrated with many other incidental businesses; the prime purpose is to perpetuate business not make the world a better place. So the researchers determined genes account for 50% of happiness, but did they take into account the impact of money, in that money has the power to override genetic disposition. How many billionaires took part in the study to analyze the happiness of billionaires? EPIGENETICS!

I'm sorry to be blunt but this is nonsense: "Bates and his Edinburgh colleagues drew their conclusions after looking at survey data of 973 pairs of adult twins. They found that, on average, a pair of identical twins shared more personality traits than a pair of non-identical twins. And when asked how happy they were, the identical twin pairs responded much more similarly than other twins, suggesting that both happiness and personality have a strong genetic component."

How many twins were billionaires while the other twin was on the bread line?

Research! Please!

The subliminal message-cue in the article is the image of a [smiley face](#) in the header: it's entrainment!



Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 18, 2011

for Cygnus—thanks for your comments.

Regarding your question, YES—I am looking for more ideas because I agree with you, egalitarianism is a big topic and the brief five proposals I gathered are just barely enough to begin the discussion.

I am not planning a "book" on the topic, but I would like to write a followup article where I list all the suggestions—

I think the discussion would be richer if there were about 20-25.

A list of 25 would have a greater chance of impacting the public. Or so I believe. I thank you for your additional 5 proposals—!

I apologize for not having read David Brin's article on the topic—I didn't know about it. I will check it out!

My own opinion? I like all five ideas that I included. I was initially unsure of Giulio's idea, but now I think it has promise. It reminds me a bit of the "potlatch" culture of NorthWest Indians, where status was achieved only by generosity, by giving material wealth away and throwing awesome parties.

for Peter—thanks for your opinion. I am not 100% convinced yet either that egalitarianism is essential for a society's happiness.

I am going to Denmark in 2 weeks, so perhaps I will get some insight there... I am also going to Singapore later, which is presently very successful...

Singularity Utopia—my main complaint about your proposal is—does it require waiting until 2045? What can one do now? Also (half-jokingly) I think your insistence that your maximum happiness cannot be achieved without \$3 trillion is a bit... greedy? Can't you peak out at \$10 million or so? Personally, I'd be absolutely happy with \$2 million, although... 3 would be better.

David Pearce • • May 18, 2011

Singularity Utopia, I share some of your methodological worries about self-reported (un)happiness. But let's consider a so-called "honest signal": suicide. Presumably taking one's life counts as an objective sign of psychological distress. If material abundance promoted ever-increasing happiness, then we might expect to see a negative correlation between the suicide rate and GNP. Actually, the correlation is positive. Wealthier countries tend to have higher suicide rates
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_suicide_rate

Is the suicide rate declining as the world gets wealthier? No - quite the reverse.

Are there possible confounding variables here? Yes, certainly; I won't even begin to list them. I promise like you I want to see a much fairer world - and unlimited material abundance for all. But it's naive to imagine that mere wealth is going to recalibrate the hedonic treadmill or allow us to live beyond our genetically constrained hedonic ceiling. We need to tackle the deeper biological causes of suffering - not

least our sinister source code.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 19, 2011

Dear Hank, I am glad to see your recent comment, which somewhat preempts what I intended to suggest.

Your desire to make changes now is definitely something I'm fully supportive of.

Firstly regarding the 2045 date for utopia, that date is a **deadline**, the absolute latest date: the goal is 2045 at the latest. The idea is that we can make utopia happen sooner instead of later.

MY PROPOSAL

Hank, and hopefully David too, I want us to form an alliance regarding **Post-Scarcity symbol proliferation**. Consider this to be a social experiment where we have nothing to lose and everything to gain by giving my proposal a try for a month or two.

I earlier stated awareness of ideas can be a powerful tool to change the world, for example the CND symbol. I strongly feel the idea of Post-Scarcity can change the world. Viral-Memes can replicate very cheaply, extremely quickly, with consummate ease. The awareness I want to propagate into all aspects of our civilization is regarding how **Post-Scarcity will create a civilization where everything is FREE**.

Everyone can see the benefits of everything being free. People could really become tremendously enthused regarding the PS-Meme.

PS will occur via technology. I will soon write a blog-post to explain the proofs of PS; I will explain how PS is inevitable.

THE PURPOSE

I firmly believe PS-awareness has an enormous potential to change our world. The idea is that when businesses and politicians appreciate how everything will be free in the future they can begin changing their modus operandi now, in the present, in preparation for the utopia we will soon enter. When people realize scarcity will end; they will see there is less need to cling viciously to wealth, thus we can accelerate, expedite, Post-Scarcity: we can invest more heavily in science and technological development.

All I want you do is merely give this PS-Meme idea a try. I can't hurt you to try this. It costs you nothing other than a small amount of time. The CND symbol shows us how a symbol can become very powerful. Via the modern sophistication of technology I believe the PS symbol can become AT LEAST thousands of times more powerful than the CND symbol. People know that nuclear bombs are dangerous but **EVERYTHING BEING FREE (PS)** is something which could appeal **very deeply** to everyone; therefore we could create MASSIVE support for the PS ideology.

Yes Hank, a fortune of ten million would be great and two million would be good too, but as you point out three million would be better and perhaps four million better still. Once you are a millionaire you achieve great happiness and I am firmly convinced that happiness continues to rise in relation to rising fortunes thus someone with 40 trillion is happier than someone with 1 trillion.

The best thing in the world is LIMITLESS money: Post-Scarcity will allow everyone to possess limitless riches. Our minds will become limitless.

THE PS ALLIANCE

I am already in contact with David Pearce on Facebook therefore I suggest you, Hank, also make contact with me on Facebook and we can then begin coordinating our PS battle-plan.

I envisage Hank, David, and I will be the **PS epicenter**, from which this PS-Meme will vigorously explode to radically transform our world. This alliance will begin with us three and quickly we will bring more supporters into this alliance and before you know it the whole world will be aware of how everything in the future will be free, thus the world will change radically in socio-economic terms and we will accelerate quicker towards Post-Scarcity because people ardently desire a future where everything is free. Once people realize how everything can be free, we will see massive support leading to world-changing sentiments rippling throughout our collective consciousness.

Make contact with me and we shall formulate our plans.

Our PS slogan is: "We open minds."

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 19, 2011

David, yes nations are getting richer but our wealth is relative therefore people are depressed because they are relatively poorer. Everyone has more money yes, but the divide between rich and poor people has increased thus we have the reason for increasing depression, suicide: people see how vastly richer and happier the multimillionaires are, and this makes the poor people unhappy.

People are relatively poorer despite living in a wealthier world.

The richest people have become vastly richer while poor people have only become marginally richer.

Have you seen [the price of food](#) these days, it's enough to drive a person to despair.

Giulio Prisco • Budapest • May 19, 2011

I hold autonomy and self-ownership as primary values, and I find the very idea of a person having power over another person disgusting. I guess that makes me a libertarian at heart, and a radical one.

At the same time, I often support left wing positions, not despite being a libertarian, but because I am a libertarian! I want freedom for everyone, and I think the freedom to do everything that does not cost money is not very useful in today's economic system.

Note: there are self identified libertarians who want freedom for themselves and slavery for others, but I prefer to refer to them by a shorter word, beginning with F.

I am not at all against taxes. But the current taxation system makes life very difficult for normal people who want to start a little business to earn a living, force the government to employ armies of useless and idiotic bureaucrat control-freaks to force people to pay taxes, and of course is useless against rich and powerful people who can always find tricks to buy their way out of taxation (or to take back with the left hand more than they have given with the right hand).

I guess some implementations of the persihable money concept (which is basically equivalent to a negative interest rate built in currency) might provided a fail-safe, built-in equivalent to taxation without requiring the government to bullshit citizens. The useless and idiotic bureaucrat control-freaks would lose their undeserved salaries of course, but they would be given a BIG (basic guaranteed income) to stay out of our lives.

Giulio Prisco • Budapest • May 19, 2011

Continued. I have some furnitures and things that don't fit in my house, and I keep them in a storage unit. I pay for this, not the other way.

It should be the same for storing money. It should be considered not as a loan to be compensated with positive interest, but as a storage service to be paid with negative interest. (A more elaborated version of) this very simple trick would eliminate the accumulation of idle capital.

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 19, 2011

for Singularity Utopia, iPan—

I like iPan's idea of salaries of 75K for everyone. That is an amount that would work for me and my family. With that, we could enjoy a nice lifestyle with pleasant vacations, lots of enrichment activities for the kids, maybe even buy a house. I think it is a very good idea.

Singularity Utopia—thank you for your offer to include me in a Grand Triumvirate with you and David, but I'm not attaching myself to any specific egalitarian plan(s), until I have 2-3 dozen to look at. My main apprehension about your plan SU, is why do you keep insisting that you need \$1 trillion-\$40 trillion to be happy? It makes me think that you need David's "happy pills" more than anyone else on the thread. You are also not much of a diplomat yet—don't you see any value in iPan's proposal? Why can't you regard David's proposal as complementary to yours? Or even Alex's?

I am imagining that there will 10-15 proposals that make sense to me, and yours might be one of them. I sent you a facebook message. But for starters, I want you to lower your request for trillions, or I will have to get David to write you a prescription.

post-postfuturist • • May 19, 2011

There's some comprehensive comments above (esp. for one who uses "bull" so often); unfortunately it's worse than he thinks: those at the top are as he says; those at the bottom are more violent than he thinks, if they were to be lifted up they would need radical rehabilitation to prevent them from becoming wealthy predators even worse than those at the top are today. Violent nouveau riche exist, they are not mythological, and it exacerbates the trickle-down effect of corruption. As you needn't be told, such has been a side-effect of revolution so far. Don't believe it? then you do not want to know. If you want to know how bad it is at the bottom, you have to examine it carefully & continuously.

rascheR duB • • May 19, 2011

I am wary about the grand scale and need for intense centralization by micro-managers that many of the stated proposals would require. I don't believe that some prodigious turnkey proposal will have both the breadth and depth to address the tethered problems of wealth disparity and opportunities for fulfillment/happiness.

James Hughes' proposed remedy is, to my mind, the most realistic. In order to achieve the goals of economic sufficiency and a decent quality of life for all, ensuring access to up-to-date education will be crucial. In support of this, obligatory dependencies, such as health care and decent housing (under the reasonable assumption that a child cannot succeed without these vital dependencies being in the mix) also need to be reformed.

The method for raising the aggregate wealth and well-being of the underprivileged will be recursive and stepwise. Rather than conjuring an ostentatious novelty system based on wishful thinking, it is a matter of building on what exists, selecting the best results, implementing these ever more widely, evaluating failure, jettisoning what doesn't work, and re-tooling misconceived efforts for better effectiveness in the next iteration. Some will say what I suggest sounds slow, old hat and boring. Yes, what I propose is not sexy. But as ethicists, engineers and thinkers, we already have very good resources for solving problems already. Decreasing disparity means we need to incorporate current verified findings from the pertinent disciplines into the project plan, we need to ensure that we identify and eliminate skullduggery and political gamesmanship from the project plan, but we don't need to re-invent the wheel with regard to problem-solving methodologies. That would suggest that there is a paucity of knowledge and documentation about social inequity; I don't think this is true. The amount of studies and collective knowledge is vast. Hughes' emphasis on accountability and iPan's on transparency are spot-on and represent guiding values in the effort to reduce disparity of wealth.

@ Giulio Prisco:

I agree that it is misguided (and probably futile) to contrive paternalistically to satisfy every latent need or attempt a flattening of human aspirations and values. Starting with a full-court press for literacy and education, we could also instill or reinforce values such as intellectual independence, integrity and self-reliance rather than strive for a spurious consistency. For example, some people, such as artists or nature lovers, value free time to pursue their passions over remuneration and are happy with few possessions; others prefer to work long hours in order to have a nicer kitchen or a newer model of car, computer or home theater. There is no need to tamper with that (and it would be downright silly to try).

However, Giulio, I don't think you could have a viable global or local currency system based on the planned depreciation that tout. Those who are already wealthy would simply dump dollars and acquire durable material assets such as precious metals, jewelry, artwork, land, luxury items (e.g., airplanes, yachts, rare books and documents). You have not even taken into account instruments such as stock options and securities the entire purpose of which are to steadily uptick in value. I am not sure your plan considers the consequences of abolishing investment. Historically, there is a name for the state of an economy that signals to its users that their holdings today will be worth less within a short period of time. It's called a panic.

Just as material goods like the ones I've mentioned accrue in value seemingly of their own accord, money itself is volatile and cannot be micro-managed, even by the most intelligent people, over time. Plus, there are too many variables not accounted for in your plan, not the least of which is human behavior (towards hoarding, double dealing, bluffing, black marketing). A reform of education, on the other hand, could include a social component that underscored self-sufficiency to counteract (while admittedly never eliminating) some of the deleterious behaviors of *homo economicus*.

@Mike Treder :

Egalitarianism contains many great cocktail party talking points, but invalidating personal wealth on a universal, or even a large scale, has no adequate precedents and does raise serious questions about

motivation and justice. There is an enormous difference between sewer or highway construction—which benefits corporations as well as citizens—and an egalitarianism that tries to reshuffle and re-index earnings based on the notion that present-day earnings are an arbitrary allocation.

As ideological hyperbole, egalitarianism makes for a feelgood remedy. However, I have never heard the details of an egalitarian position articulated persuasively. Egalitarians tend to get mired in the *reductio ad absurdum* of whether everyone should have this or that. The egalitarian position also faces a

dilemma of adjusting disparity upwards (making the poor more like the affluent) or downward (expropriating and trimming the general population to an idealized level, as with Mao and his emblematic peasants). It's easy to say adjust upwards, but the easier thing to do is adjust everyone downwards. Also, the idealization and central planning that are inherent in egalitarianism are generally oriented toward the past, and not to the innovation and differentiation of the future. Because innovation entails unpredictability and, to a certain extent, competitiveness, it does not rest well on the egalitarian grid over the long haul, where future-orientation and changes to values come to be viewed by egalitarians with suspicion as antisocial and undesirable.

A better alternative to egalitarianism is a universal utilitarian ethic predicated on an inviolable fairness that defines and insists upon those things that would be inhumane for people to live without. Administrators and elected officials would be asked to develop infrastructure that targets those needs. The foundation for an ethic of fairness is encapsulated by the archetypal formulation "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," as well as the institutions that promote these ends. It is on this foundation we must build. The goal cannot be a fraudulent guarantee of zero disparity in wealth or goods; the goal must be the holding of political leaders accountable to put the latest resources to bear in respect of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. A starting point would be the revision of K-12 education, deployment of medical care, and new rollouts of sustainable, affordable housing.

This is doable. Only bureaucratic inertia and an attachment to old inefficiencies stands in the way. No need to wait for future utopia, design new money or reassign pieces of pie across intractably large populations and swathes of industrial and rural communities. Sometimes the most potent solutions can be accomplished with the tools at hand. It is only that we are so jaded that we think a grandiose Master Plan somewhere out there will save us.

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 19, 2011

hi rascherdub - glad to have you back.

I particularly agree with your sentence:

"A starting point would be the revision of K-12 education, deployment of medical care, and new rollouts of sustainable, affordable housing."

thanks for your contribution!

post-postfuturist • • May 19, 2011

Yes to the above; but also the poor have to be told to quit tobacco, excessive alcohol, junk food, etc. Doctors aren't magicians—not yet anyway.

Peter Wicks • <http://peterwicks.wordpress.com> • May 19, 2011

@Giulio...I'm still wondering how your concept of perishable money differs from inflation. In an inflating economy the value of a currency decreases over time relatively to a weighted average of goods that people want to buy with it. So it perishes, little by little, year by year. Some inflation is essential for growth, precisely because it gets people spending/investing money (no point in keeping it under a blanket if it's going to perish). But it also tends to be deeply unpopular, and this needs to be taken into account if we want to use the concept as a means to promote (material) equality.

Two other comments.

Firstly, it helps if we remember that money is ultimately just a way of keeping score. People often seem

to confuse it with an actual resource (as Sioux proverb goes: only when the last fish is dead will you realize you can't eat money). It's a lubricant for trade, but precisely because it provides a (flawed) way of keeping score. Ultimately it must go, because I'm the Utopias for which we should be aiming nobody needs to keep score in order to provide services for each other.

Secondly, the debate between "equality of outcome" and "equality of opportunity" is at least a century old. Not much point in rehashing it here. Isn't it obvious that the truth lies somewhere in between?

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 19, 2011

Hank,

It is not an issue of choosing one plan over another. You can simultaneously implement many different plans. The beauty of my plan is that **a viral awareness Meme costs almost nothing to implement**, other than a little bit of time. The reason why I favor my proposal over the others is that I think my proposal would be easiest to implement and most likely to produce dramatic results in a short space of time.

Yes I agree absolutely that equal wages is a step forward, and 75K sounds bearable, but perhaps we need the awareness campaign (regarding how everything in the future will be free) before the general public are more receptive to the idea of wage equality.

My point about 1 or 4 trillion of wealth creating great happiness is that the more money you have the happier you will be. It is possible I could be happy with only 1 or 2 million, but I am sure my level of happiness would increase if I became richer therefore although being a millionaire would cause great happiness, being trillionaire would cause greater happiness. I'd prefer to be a trillionaire just so I can be sure I have enough money to be happy. I suppose it is like a starving person wanting to eat a wheelbarrow or truckload of food, it's my extreme overreaction to financial-malnutrition.

I mentioned "trillions" because we need to begin thinking BIG... in a PS civilization our wealth will be limitless: infinite!

iPan • • May 19, 2011

A question I wish I could quantify:

How far does the IEET influences extend?

I mean, I know that most everyone on the staff is highly credentialed, and I know that the average IEET reader must have an IQ higher than 103.

But how many do we reach? What is the extent that we can infect the meme-plex?

I ask, because I've done the armchair philosopher thing for half my life, and my goal now is to infest those areas of the internet most likely to replicate my meme. This is why I target transhumanist sites.

Because Ray Kurzweil visited with the PM of Israel.

Because Ben Goertzel works with the Chinese on AI.

Because Hank Pellisier is a journalist in SF.

(sorry if I left anyone out, everyone here is great, I was just being illustrative)

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 19, 2011

In light of the [PROTECT IP ACT](#) Post-Scarcity awareness has never been more needed.

See also http://act.demandprogress.org/sign/protectip_docs

Linda MacDonald Glenn • East Timor, for now • May 19, 2011

Here is my proposal, which I see as a natural extension of David Brin and Mike Treder's proposals: Teach and promote empathy. Simple but profound: Teach everyone that it is an ethical imperative: Behave toward others (sentient beings) as you would want them to behave toward you.

My observation has been that empathy, in our culture and in grade school, is seen as 'weak', overly feminine, dismissed as unimportant. Boys are punished for being 'overly sensitive' and told to 'man up.' (Heaven forbid you're gay—shades of Matthew Shephard) Bullying is seen just a normal part of going to school, when in fact, there should be a zero tolerance for it.

Neuroscientist Simon Baron-Cohen suggests that lack of empathy is the root of all evil (and I include unfair disparities in that).

There are great disparities in places like Somalia, Uganda, Haiti, Libya, not because of lack of resources, but because the people in power (dictators, military, coercive forms of government) have lost empathy and withhold resources or do worse. (e.g.—The Rwandan genocide resulted from the conscious choice of the elite to promote hatred and fear to keep itself in power.)

We have the capability, in the US, to take care of children, our health, our citizens, but we have chosen not to: Because, those who are promoting tax cuts to the wealthiest 2% of the nations have lost empathy and are focusing on material wealth. Instead of putting our egos in check and embracing empathy as a core value, we are focusing on rugged individualism, suggesting that if an individual is smart enough, persistent enough, and works hard enough, he or she can achieve fortune. (If you truly believe that, you really need to read Malcolm Gladwell's book, Outliers)

So, there it is: as part of the basics (food, care, health, education, encouragement sufficient to make them sturdy, stalwart, confident, savvy, creative competitors) teach, promote, LIVE empathetically. It's a start.

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 20, 2011

thanks Linda—I am very glad to have your contribution here!

I will try to put together a list of all proposals received thus far in the next 3-4 days

Valkyrie Ice • • May 20, 2011

okay. My two cents.

Food, Shelter, Medical care, Education, and Security are the five basic NEEDS that must be met to ensure that any individual has the opportunity to reach their maximum potential. Failure to meet these needs is the the chief cause of most current human suffering (in real terms of physical and mental suffering, not angst)

I strongly favor the building of a society in which these Needs are seen as rights, and not commodities. The purpose of a collective is to provide these needs in exchange for a percentage of the individuals labor being applied to the collecting and creating of these needs. This is the function it serves in all other species but man. We work together to ensure that all members benefit, and that such benefits far exceed the benefits we could provide for ourselves alone.

Thus, a basic level of housing should be a right. Fema emergency shelter guidelines could be a good start as the minimal universal shelter requirements. No-one should be homeless.

Food is also a basic requirement. Make foodstamps universal.

Medical care should be free to the patient. Extremely strong regulation with severe penalties would need to be enforced on the "for profit" medical business to ensure that human health and actual "Cures" are created, not symptom suppressors that can be sold repeatedly. Health care should not be a commodity. Medical procedures unrelated to continued good health (ie elective and cosmetic surgeries not deemed medically necessary) are the sole areas of medical care that should continue to be "for profit"

In exchange for the provision of these rights, the individual should be participating in education, at no charge. The vital means to ensure that an individual can be a contributing member of society is education. The quick adoption of "personal tutor" software into the educational system should be a

priority. We need to stop thinking of education as something for the young and focus on life long education, with the use of personal "teacher AIs" ensuring that each individual has access to information in a manner best suited to their personal learning style and interests. By educating universally, we can encourage the individual to seek their own method of contributing to the society as a whole, enabling them to find their own "best fit" occupation as opposed to attempting to force all individuals into a "same fit" occupational mold.

Raise the floor. Remove human needs from the market as commodities, ensure everyone has shelter, food, medical care and an education, with the security to be able to use them, and you raise the potential of all of humanity. The higher you raise the floor, the greater the heights the roof can be built.

iPan • • May 20, 2011

The only problem I can see with Linda's proposal, beautiful though it is, is that empathy more or less comes down to neurophysiology.

Most of us know now about mirror neurons and some of the effects of oxytocin (which can both increase empathy - for the group - and decrease it - for outsiders), but the reality is that we can only form a kind of 'intellectual' empathy for people that don't exist in our day to day reality.

In other words, I know for a fact that a small girl is getting raped right now as I type this, somewhere on this earth. It's practically a given that this is happening. Right now.

Do I feel empathy for this? Well, here's the problem, the limitation: I cannot see or know this person. She is an abstraction to me. Of course, I think rape is terrible, but if I cannot know who this person is, or see the injury itself, then it won't hit me in the 'gut', and so there is no physical 'empathy'. That's just how the brain works.

Solution: Upload more video. I noticed that I began to feel more strongly about the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, for example, as I watched videos of people being blown up and shot. The danger with this, of course, is the intentional manipulation of media, but maybe, like Wikipedia, if enough people are adding to this media library of horror, the lies/omissions get sorted out through auto-correction.

Joern Pallesen • Copenhagen • May 20, 2011

@rascheR duB & Everyone

Your understanding of egalitarianism seems to be negatively influenced by totalitarians and their ideological ravings of the past, e.g. Mao, whom you mention yourself. I'm not sure who else and where you have in mind, but as a Scandinavian I do not in any way recognize your description of egalitarians as "mired in the reductio ad absurdum of whether everyone should have this or that". It occurred to me, therefore, that the very term "egalitarianism" by itself triggers negative reactions in many Americans. Perhaps "egalitarians" should instead refer to themselves as social-liberals, who believe that "the good of the community is harmonious with the freedom of the individual". Hank has emphasized how Danes are not only egalitarian, but also has a high degree of life satisfaction, and I myself have pointed out how this egalitarianism goes hand in hand with autonomy and the highest degree of personal freedoms. I think it is fair to say that it is characteristic of Scandinavians and other European nations like Holland to be exactly that: Social-Liberals. That is not to say we don't have more hardcore leftist egalitarians or ditto libertarians..

My 17 year old son said this to me recently: Dad, - how can any intelligent person NOT be a social-liberal?! - Those who are only social(ists) take INDIVIDUALS hostage, they are totalitarian Utopists, and those who are liberal without being social, i.e. are without EMPATHY, are.., - well.., let's call a spade a spade: psychopathic !

This being said, I would say you are definitely a social-liberal at heart yourself, - it is evident in your support of "fairness", i.e. education, medical care, and sustainable, affordable housing, - (for starters.. :) - Forget your twisted views of what egalitarianism is and do take a look at the evidence for the superiority of the more equal societies, - here's the link again: <http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/why/evidence> - then come back and tell us what about it is not articulated persuasively...

I like your bottom-up approach, - but it is important to say, that this does not exclude the more futuristic - top-down approaches. We should pursue happiness - or, rather: the favorable CONDITIONS

for happiness – on all levels, but in particular I like the words of Linda MacDonald Glenn: teach, promote, LIVE empathetically. I believe ALL parents wish the best for their children, but sadly so many of us are screwed up due to our own traumatic childhood and /or lousy living conditions, which is why the promotion of social-liberalism is equally important. I'm not trying to say this will solve everything, - far from it – here in Scandinavia we have plenty of problems to deal with, - but it will take us a long way.

Then, as individuals there's of course a lot we can do as well. May I suggest we all think deeply about this equation: Happiness is satisfaction (with what you have) divided by desires (what you want), - unless, that is, - you desire nothing, since one cannot divide by zero... – By this token, - some of you, who dream of having millions / billions / trillions would appear to be quite UN-happy.. Try another division, which I did myself: What I have (wife) divided by.. not telling you.. ha-ha – which made me a very happy guy, - (just in case my wife reads this.. :)

Ok, - I guess this discussion is not so much about what happiness IS, but rather about how to best achieve it, but hopefully my suggestions and personal priorities have come across..

Joern Pallesen • Copenhagen • May 20, 2011

Take a look at this "Action-for-Happiness" site, - part of "Equality Trust" : <http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/node/564> - Read their vision for a better future, quoted below, and then compare to what has been suggested here. The list is lacking the more fanciful, top-down suggestions one finds here, which I find regrettable, so credit to the more - not surprisingly - futuristically oriented who hang out at IEET. It would be great if both camps - if that makes sense - could learn from each other and reach some kind of consensus, - cooperating rather than degenerating to infighting..

- * Families that are loving, stable and well equipped to raise happy children
- * An education system which helps develop emotional balance and resilience
- * People giving time and energy to be actively involved in their communities
- * A healthier society with less mental illness and addiction
- * People leading balanced lives which allow them to spend quality time with their families, friends and communities
- * Employers creating positive working environments and having happy staff
- * Higher levels of trust and equality; lower levels of crime
- * People finding inner peace and contentment
- * Government policy realigned to measure and prioritise wellbeing

post-postfuturist • • May 20, 2011

"Yes to the above; but also the poor have to be told to quit tobacco, excessive alcohol, junk food, etc."

The situation might be better than I think yet worse than those of you who are more optimistic think. However you can only know by observing the bottom of 'society'—as in research you have to do field work sometimes, you can't merely examine statistics. The word that best describes the bottom is exacerbated: bad health habits exacerbated by crime and familial discord: spousal & child abuse; external vendettas, and so forth. Not merely a lack of education but also a lack of intelligence and common sense. One could write a depressing laundry list, if one were ambitious (or obsessed) enough to want to do so.

And our politics are thoroughly outmoded: everything from Marxism to libertarianism are not good politics, but rather bad religion—we live in a giant political mausoleum.

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 21, 2011

Joern and Valkyrie—great to see you both here, with your great suggestions!
I am going to write up all the new ideas along with the old proposals - there must be another 12-15 by now - and post them all here on Monday - thanks

Valkyrie Ice • • May 21, 2011

@Post-post futurist

Sorry, I disagree rather violently with your view of "the poor", a rather typical viewpoint that does nothing but provide ego stroking for yourself as you tell yourself how much better than them you are. It's an unacceptable argument.

The poor are not "stupid" or lacking in common sense. What they are is DENIED. Denied opportunity, denied real education, denied even meaning as your words show all to well. You're happy in your little social niche with looking down on them because they are socially acceptable to "look down upon"

Does that mean that every human is equally smart, creative or productive? Hell no. But the difference between a rich idiot and a poor one is that no-one is willing to call the rich person an idiot.

People are people are people are people. Had they been allowed the same opportunities as those with wealth the overwhelming majority of "the poor" would perform neither better nor worse than any other social tier. Every single negative thing you claim is "exacerbated" by being poor exists IN EVERY SOCIAL TIER, but it is indeed "magnified" with every step down the pecking order due to increasing levels of denial of human needs by those higher up the ladder.

The "way things are" right now is to use needs as a method to enforce a pecking order that inverts the true purpose of acting collectively, placing those who produce least and contribute to the collective least at the top demanding the greatest amount of tribute from those who work hardest for the least reward. Viewpoints such as that expressed in your post are nothing more than memes intended to reinforce this status quo by allowing you to "separate yourself" from "those people" and boost your ego by thinking you are "above them"

It's a problem that needs to be solved by the elimination of the concept that any human is "better" than any other. Equality of opportunity would produce equal results in the poor as well as the wealthy. Does it mean that there will no longer be people who choose to ignore opportunity and refuse to be productive members of society? No. But it will be because they made a choice, and not because they were denied one.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 21, 2011

Greed is a survival trait in situations of scarcity.

Empathy will only have mass appeal when people realize they don't need to cling savagely to their wealth due to the forthcoming Post-Scarcity era: thus PS-awareness is the only way forward.

I hope people can empathize with my PS-awareness proposal.

iPan • • May 22, 2011

I had an idea a while back that I haven't had much time to think about since.

What if everyone were granted property (land and a house) at the age of majority?

By law, a person could not sell this house, unless another residential property were also owned. In other words, everyone would be required to own at minimum one residential property (or rather, would be prevented from selling their residential property, if it were the only one they owned - so no one could willingly become homeless - they could however, sell it if they already owned another residential

property somewhere else).

Of course, there are countless practical problems, such as how to allocate which properties to begin with (as not all properties are themselves equal), but it would be a start - to ending homelessness. OTOH, I don't think people could argue that the current situation is worse, as at the very least absolutely everyone is guaranteed at least one property.

This also makes every citizen an entitled landholder by default.

iPan • • May 22, 2011

Gel - A TED Musical

http://www.ted.com/talks/gel_gotta_share.html

post-postfuturist • • May 22, 2011

"What if everyone were granted property (land and a house) at the age of majority?"

Good idea, but Rightists wouldn't go for it; they would deem it "social democracy", "socialism", "Marxism", "pinko-commie-faggism". You know what they're like, they are spoilers. They are against government spending that does not assist their wealthy grandparents. Their slogan is: 'Down With Big Government (that we don't want)'

rascheR duB • • May 22, 2011

@iPan:

There is a missing backstory as well as complications that arise from your proposal, aside from the practical problems you mentioned:

Who exactly is it that "grants property (land or a house)" and how does this entity acquire and account for the virtually endless number of properties that it would have to prepare and hold in readiness for those who attain their majority? To what extent would your plan undercut motivation toward education, as the guaranteed endowment of a house at age 18 or 21 might easily lead a sizable segment of the population to minimize or neglect the value of their own education by comparison with the extraordinary value of a guaranteed home grant?

An approximation of your proposal was tried as a land reform measure in the southern, indigenous Mayan areas of Mexico. The land reform was known as *ejido*, which roughly means "departure," and was implemented through donations or expropriations of land from large estate-holders. Parcels of land were given to rural peasants to occupy but not to own. The property could not be sold or subleased although it frequently was, on an informal, off-the-books basis. Leftists often consider the ejido program a success, but noted that the inheritance of land often left descendant generations with land parcels that were impracticably small for farming or other purposes.

Other criticisms included that the ejido system instilled a situation close to that of sharecropping in the American south. Because people on ejido grants did not have title to the land they could not benefit from the land's value; thus they had no alternative but to turn to assistance and loans from wealthier patrons and to rely on subsistence farming which contributed to deforestation. Although the ejido system was meant to keep people on the land, due to the poor quality of life ejido tenants often migrated to Mexico's cities, or to the U.S. Today, Mexico has mostly done away with the ejido program.

The ejido system has its proponents and detractors. Proponents praised it for being better than nothing. There may be lessons to be learned from further study of the ejido program. But clearly it did little to transform the rural poor.

The emphasis of an IEET plan must be to equalize opportunity—a slow growth model—rather than a quick fix or overarching, bureaucratic model. Any plan that requires management from the top will have inherent fragilities and biteback effects because bureaucratic paradigms invariably are based on ivory

tower assumptions and conjectures that, when put into white papers or social planning formulae, look much more rock solid than they are.

Perhaps a more solid beginning (more solid because already extant and thus amenable to study) might be the co-housing/co-op movement. This has a history of at least several decades and comes in several flavors. In one co-housing scenario, ordinary citizens combine their resources to purchase a house or multi-unit building. They then seek tenants who will be part of a home-centered community. This can allow flexible rent schedules (for example, tenants with few funds can do additional chores or maintenance in exchange for a lowered rent). Examples of this type of housing arrangement can be found in Chicago and Portland, OR and no doubt in many other areas.

This is obviously a humble proposal and is not intended as a blanket solution to a massive social problem. But that is my point. What is needed are a raft of targeted solutions, each of them on a small scale aimed at the precision-solving of a specific need or problem, not monolithic schemes which are attractive at first glance but which are unstable in the long-term.

I know that this is IEET, home of The Big Think. Who am I to tell a bunch of futurists not to think large? But that's what I'm saying. Think small, folks. IEET will be more effective if its members: a) study and understand the issues on the ground, and; b) go after each issue through a means-appropriate, finely granular and well-targeted approach.

post-postfuturist • • May 22, 2011

ipan,
rascheR duB references ejido as if nightmarish (I was there) third world cesspool Mexico is comparable to America. Perhaps Canadians, who haven't quite decided who they are yet, would listen to a wise proposal such as yours, ipan; there is no purpose in attempting to communicate politically in America any longer: the far Right has a psychic death grip on this country, they only really deep down care about their own families being aided—they secretly think everyone else can just go to hell.

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 23, 2011

Everyone—here's an updated list of all suggested proposals, let me know if I missed anything:

Democratization Aided by Technology + Equal Access to Education + Increase Government Accountability + United Nations A Vehicle for Popular Democratic Expression To Equitably Distribute Wealth (James Hughes)

Increasing Intelligence, Imagination, Ambition, Action (Alex Lightman)

Raising our Hedonic Set-Point via Genetic Therapy and BioHappiness Education (David Pearce)

Perishable Money—Money Cannot be Accumulated Without Paying a Fine (Giulio Prisco)

Progressive Income Tax Rates To Restore a Balance (Mike Treder)

Promoting Awareness of the Upcoming Post-Scarcity Era via PS Symbol Proliferation/Meme Epidemic (Singularity Utopia)

A Pay-What-You-Want Economy + \$75,000 Per Person Annual Income + 3D Rapid Prototyping + Everyone Granted House and Property at age 21 (iPan)

Local Anarchist Movements with Global Consciousness / International Labor Organizing Using Small-Scale Production Technologies (Summerspeaker)

Food, Shelter, Medical care, Education, Security As Five Basic Rights Provided by Collective, i.e., FEMA Emergency Shelter (No-one Homeless) Foodstamps Universal, Free Medical Care, Free Universal Education via "Personal Tutor" Software (Valkyrie Ice)

Global Change in Perspective & Awareness Via Internet Education, i.e., Embracing A Global and Political Philosophy that Values Human Worth, Happiness, and Wisdom + Political Transparency To End the Control of the Elite + Focus on Mindfulness, Existentialism, Personal Responsibility + Promotion of Empathy via Buddhism + Early Education for Children + Promotion of the Value of a Post Scarcity Society + Population Control. (CygnusX1)

Hold Political Leaders Accountable to Respect Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness + Revise K-12 Education, Deployment of Medical Care, Provide Sustainable, Affordable Housing. (rascheR duB)

Create Loving Stable Families + Education System That Develops Emotional Balance, Resilience + Community Involvement With Quality Time for Family & Friends + Healthy Society With Less Mental Illness and Addiction + Positive Working Environments + High Level of Trust + Low Level of Crime (Joern Pallensen)

Teach, Promote, and Live Empathetically And Provide the Basics to Children - Food, Health, Education, Encouragement to Make them Sturdy, Stalwart, Confident, Savvy, Creative Competitors - (Linda MacDonald Glenn)

Universal High-Quality PreSchool Education to Even the Playing Field - (David Brin)

iPan • • May 23, 2011

Just want to clarify the \$75,000/annual income thing:

The article I posted was a study on whether money makes one happy, and it found that certain types of satisfaction do increase up till about \$75,000, and then taper off.

In any case, I don't want to confuse it with a Basic Guaranteed Income proposal, but rather it should be seen as a minimum standard of life model (minimum wage).

Also, the dollar figure itself is relative to geographic location and cost of living.

\$75,000/year is an amount that I think would be set for a comfortable standard of living in San Francisco. In a rural area, such as I live in now, the same standard of living could be achieved with \$50,000/year.

iPan • • May 23, 2011

Should add 15-20% decrease in the standard work week to that as well (with same pay).

CygnusX1 • Samsara • May 23, 2011

@ Hank - Thanks for including my points in your list. Just like to correct the last key points - "Promotion of personal development, education and other personal rewards in a post scarcity society"

Also please note, I do not advocate "population control" through any authoritarian process, but rather through education and sociocultural awareness for the need to stabilise and reduce global overpopulation, (the UN is best placed to promote these values).

post-postfuturist • • May 23, 2011

Capitol suggestions. But in the near term what would be encouraging is for Obama to be re-elected so the GOP doesn't elect another insect next year.

We are thankful for small favors, as well as large, aren't we?

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 24, 2011

iPan, CygnusX1 - all changes are noted. I'd like to put them in an ebook and give you credit so if you have additional changes, let me know, or if you don't want me to include, ditto. For the ebook I might just have everyone's "long" version -

I am wondering if there isn't some thinking-outside-the-box plans that haven't been mentioned? How about space colonization homesteading - that way everyone could have iPan's free land. Or we each get 2 trillion nanobots that can make us whatever we temporarily want - food, helicopter, sexbots, mutable house... Also, many ideas could work in tandem, David's happy pills can be added to anything, for example

dor • a little lost • May 24, 2011

@hank
so glad to see this topic. Thanks!

I don't have time at the moment to read all/respond. From my perspective, it is an issue of "do people have enough?" Equality is utopian, but adequate food, shelter, clothing and health is doable if we try.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 24, 2011

Dear Hank,

Regarding my PS idea I would be grateful if you could include a link to [this Wikimedia-commons page](#) whenever you mention my idea. On that Wikimedia page people can download and share (for free) my PS symbols.

Within the next week (by the end of May) I will update the aforementioned Wiki-commons page to include some animated PS symbols.

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Ps2045>

[Promoting Awareness of the Upcoming Post-Scarcity Era via PS Symbol Proliferation/Meme Epidemic.](#)

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 24, 2011

for SU - I like that round purple symbol a lot - very cheerful - do you have buttons? Actually, I could print it and cut it out and put it in another empty button. You might want to distribute them at a transhumanist gathering sometime.

iPan • • May 24, 2011

I often like to point out to people

"Hell isn't as bad as it's made out to be, it's alright, with a little elbow grease, and a little compassion"

We're not here to create a utopia.

We're here to make things a little bit better than before.

finned words fade above the snow
the carved out psychic stitch
the carver's all who wave surrender
through all tempers looking back
the skin begins to crack
those ever double jointed blamers
i'm closed off no power the will inside no peace, no feeling all disease around security
eyes divide the cycles
find a call who's never caught
belief heals over time decision
find the vice grips never freed

a crease upon one's debt
and never paying forward
hate what will we want with hate
what will be left today
when nothing's left to beg the moral
fate what is it left to say
who will be left to play
when ugly crippled eyes remain
i'm closed off devours the meat inside of me in freeing all afraid of life eternity
eyes burning of sorrow craving inside no teeth holding on nothing is left to be believed
fear what will we want with fear
the time bomb coming near
when nothing's left to have or hope for
pain what is there left to say
an ancient plan to pay
with blood and shit tomorrow
shame we will be one in shame
until we play the game
that in the end will bring disorder
race what will be left to say
when nothing is the same
and all this shit goes under
sticking out behind the mask
kiss the mercantile abscess
rubbed behind each fertile blood
the fingernails are dirty
face the combination loss
then go towards the final cost
crippled debts gloss put over the soul unconvincing
i'm closed off devours the meat inside of me in freeing all afraid of life eternities

What Dreams May Come - D for Decision
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhsKUhXR6-Y>

World without end, nothing ever ending.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 25, 2011

Dear Hank,

I have no buttons but people are welcome to use the PS images in anyway they desire.

You can make buttons (or "badges" as they are called in the UK) via [Cafepress](#) (other stores are available).

In my [Singularity-2045.org download package](#) you will find an extra large purple circular symbol, which will give the best resolution for T-Shirt prints or maybe buttons/badges too. You could also print a poster perhaps?

Please use these images in any way you can to promote Post-Scarcity.

I will be updating all download packages hopefully by the end of May but in the meantime there are already many PS images available.

iPan • • May 25, 2011

Oh god, I can't believe Mike actually published that last comment

I was drunk last night, and highly frustrated with the limitations of our species =)

Sometimes.....you just gotta press the button. The pain test button. The vivisect button.

post-postfuturist • • May 25, 2011

For the long term, cause for optimism exists. However you all do know, don't you, that a decade from now outmoded politics (and 'culture') will continue to reign?: the Effete Statists versus the Barracuda Rightists. At this time we are practically suffocating in anachronism.

After 2020, I do not know what will happen—but none of you do.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • May 26, 2011

Dear Hank and others,

POLITICAL LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN

Another method to raise awareness regarding the better world we are heading towards, thereby accelerating our arrival there, is the political letter writing campaign I started.

The idea of the campaign is to write a personal letter to your politician or Government asking them to do more to promote the Technological Singularity. We want politicians to either increase sci-tech funding; or merely politicians can help by publicly talking about the Singularity.

[Here is a blog-post](#) regarding a recent reply received from a UK politician.

<http://singularity-utopia.blogspot.com/2011/05/political-letter-writing-reply-from.html>

Valkyrie Ice • • May 26, 2011

Thanks for including my proposals Hank.

One thing I wish to point out is that Universal free education should be mandatory. If you refuse the education, you get the absolute minimal meeting of your needs. A roof over your head, and food to eat, medical care, and security from violence.

Nothing else. You want entertainment, better food, nicer anything, You will have to earn it through education.

People must have their needs met, but humans don't value things that are completely free. There HAS to be a system in place to allow people to "climb the ladder" if they are willing to make the effort. My suggestions are extremely rough, and are intended to be little more than a means to "smooth over" the rather potentially chaotic transition between the present economy of scarcity and the rise of the economy of abundance. We are going to need SOME system in place as automation increasingly eliminates human jobs in the workplace and those humans no longer have a means to have their needs met. As the overwhelming majority of those who are rendered obsolete by automation will lack the knowledge and skills needed by those few remaining jobs, and are unlikely to possess skills or knowledge to create their own "business" or find a means to contribute to society on their own, education MUST become a priority. By making education the most effective and most easily attained means to improve one's personal "wealth" it should enable any individual to find their own means to contribute to the society as a whole without allowing anyone to suffer or die due to their needs being denied.

Valkyrie Ice • • May 26, 2011

As for "Population control"? Give people the ability to control their own fertility, so that everyone is infertile unless they consciously choose to be otherwise, and so that only two consenting people could conceive a child (no "accidental" conception possible) and the world population problem will take care of itself.

post-postfuturist • • May 26, 2011

"My suggestions are extremely rough"

Welcome to the club. Too bad you can convince us but not those who are violently opposed to us; yes, violently. And too bad in 2016, or maybe even next year, another GOP pighead will be elected.

So much for this decade.

It's far more complicated than one-dimensional Marxism (still extremely influential) postulates: it isn't merely the oligarchs at the top, it is the depravity—however you define depravity—at the bottom which takes decades to change. There's no bleach to wash out the bad memes.

Hank Pellissier • San Francisco • May 27, 2011

everyone—I am off to Denmark today - the world's most egalitarian nation! I will be visiting poster Joern, and I will report in on what semi-egalitarianism looks like.

Mike Treder • Brooklyn, NY, USA • May 27, 2011

Have a great trip, Hank, and please keep us informed!

post-postfuturist • • May 27, 2011

"everyone—I am off to Denmark today - the world's most egalitarian nation! I will be visiting poster Joern, and I will report in on what semi-egalitarianism looks like."

Fieldwork, too?

Alrighty—no one can say IEET consists of out of touch intellectuals & absent-minded professors.

Recai • Fort Lee, New Jersey, USA • Jun 1, 2011

People and leaders benefitting from current civilization will do everything to abort/delay a technological singularity. They will lose their powers and benefits. It is stupid to ask for their help.

post-post • • Jun 2, 2011

And, Recai, some of it is sheer bloodymindedness; we like to think there are pat explanations for so much of what people say & do—but sometimes there are none.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • Jun 2, 2011

Post-Singularity: everyone will gain more powers than they could ever possibly possess during pre-

Singularity times, therefore people benefiting from our current civilization have everything to gain via the Singularity.

Our universe is a very big place. How quickly does light move? One light year away is a far away place. [Apparently there is another Milky Way 30 million light years years away.](#)

The Singularity will create self-empowerment for everyone, equally. There is more than enough room in the universe for everyone to be equally happy, far beyond their wildest pre-Singularity dreams.

Notions that our leaders will do everything they can to delay/stop the Singularity shows why it is crucial for us to communicate with our leaders, so that any possible misunderstandings regarding what the Singularity is can be clarified. There is no point trying to keep the Singularity secret from politicians. Open communication is the only sensible option. Openness will dispel notions that our politicians want to restrict (slow down) progress.

I hope everyone reading this will decide to [write a letter](#) to their politician.

post-post • • Jun 3, 2011

The idea of contacting Mormons was a brainstorm. Writing politicians? a great deal of wasted motion; whereas non-fundamentalist religionists might very well be as receptive to Singulatarianism as anyone: they are looking for the Hereafter when a hereafter might be "here". Long as we don't smarm them. Right now is a bad time for politics, it is stagnant; devoid even of nostalgic value.

post-post • • Jun 3, 2011

PS,
to return to Christian Nesheim's sentence near the top of the thread:

"It is in spite of the complex government infrastructure, not because of it, that we are able to have incomes."

Naive is correct: one might say the same concerning capitalism; in spite of capitalist (Communism went bankrupt two decades ago and can no longer be held culpable) warfare to protect mining, industrial, commercial, as well as personal, familial, dynastic interests, that we are able to have incomes. Therefore as of yet we live in no civilization—plus we don't even know the cost outcome of biospheric degradation.

Singularity Utopia • Cyberspace • Aug 4, 2011

Hello Hank and David Pearce if you are continuing to follow this oldish topic.

I am revisiting this discussion because I've today stumbled across a brilliant article which corroborates my points regarding money, happiness, and sociological analysis.

I insisted money does equate happiness and I insisted that reports and studies that suggest otherwise are biased reports by the Establishment seeking to protect Establishment wealth.

I claimed rich people don't want to let everyone know how great a time they are having living a life of total luxury, thus we occasionally see propaganda which falsely states money does not make people happy.

My point is that the super-rich would be utter fools if they told poor people how happy they actually are being stinking rich, because poor people would then demand that rich people should forfeit their ill-gotten gains.

It is utter poppycock to suggest that money does not make people happy but the Establishment propaganda machine relentlessly tries to lessen the misery for poor people who slave to serve rich exploiters.

Anyway, here is the link:

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/pity-the-super-rich-miserable-lost-souls-2011-07-26>

And here are some choice quotes:

"Yes, we're asked to believe that the vast wealth of the Super Rich is such a heavy burden to bear, their misery so profound, the rest of America should willingly indulge their greedy excesses."

"Oh, puh-leeze. Pity the poor Super Rich? Don't insult our intelligence."

"Guess who paid for the study: Bill Gates."

"While it's hard to feel sorry for these miserable, insecure, poor-in-spirit souls, that really is not the biggest problem with this bizarro study. No, the real problem is the fact that it's a narrow, biased sample: Of 115,000 Americans with over \$25 million in net worth, the Gates/Boston study originally targeted 1,000 people. But of the 165 who did respond, only 120 had assets of \$25 million or more. Their average net worth was just \$78 million."

YOUR COMMENT

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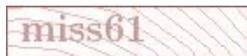
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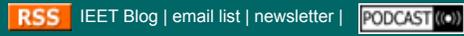
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