

Mx-Senxtism: Preliminary Thoughts On Free Trade

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Draft 1.07

2019 September 2 – 2019 September 26

It is astonishing for me to note several things about Free Trade, and there also then are some things I conjecture; and, then, things I'll have to follow further up on.

First, both Marx and Engels and President Trump find Free Trade to be problematic. In fact, Marx and Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto*, term it “that single unconscionable freedom – Free Trade”, and then go on in the next sentence to note how it does not resolve, but deepens exploitation.

Second, Trump notes that entire towns have no jobs, from one decade to the next – and thus his efforts to rekindle manufacturing and the trades, and jobs training programs, welcome. He's noted problems with NAFTA (and I don't know specific complaints, only that we've suffered the short end of the bargain, says Trump) and other trade agreements. I suggest that China may have some input. Thomas Paine had something to say about commerce, and the U.S. Constitution notes commerce a) among the several states; b) with the foreign nations; and c) with the Indian tribes. It leaves the form of the structures for the trades, manufacturing, the university, and the arts to the States and the Congress. [And this was perhaps to be our interface with the Indian Tribes; and, to get to know them (maybe if Thomas Paine had his way, by implication) – and, they, these Indians and Tribes had to exist to do commerce (that could be regulated) with them!] In addition, I suspect that China has done careful theoretical and practical work on economics and trade, that the US might recognize and work with, or at least put in a different context, while addressing its own needs as well.

Third, I suggest toward the end of this paper that both the U.S. – led by President Trump – and China – led by President Xi – might have some grounds for meaningful dialogue on the theoretical and practical outcomes, forms of Free Trade, and what might be an alternate Deeply Meaningful Trade (DMT).

There might be several reasons that Free Trade is problematic. Dunno. See what you think.

1. It is merciless to the village: Free Trade may say to the village, over a short or long period of time, “join us on the free trade ‘wire’ and its interconnections, and perhaps the givens and assumptions of the dominant cultures – and become not-a-village – or, disappear, as something that simply cannot survive”. Entire eons of the Way or ways may be forced from existence, unacknowledged and unappreciated – just to survive.

- 1.1. Marx and Engels, to the best of my recollection, did not lay out what and why about Free Trade that led to this or that, in the *Communist Manifesto* – only something to the effect, “[there was, before,] in one word, exploitation, from religious and political illusions, substituted by naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.” It may have moderated from that time, and become more aware and human, thru to today, as this awareness and humanity and joy at discovering each other becomes more accessible in our cultures: the small town or village may be at risk, still; but Marx and Engels

may have had in mind the impact on the African tribe, the Africans' freedoms, the American Indian tribes, the American Indian lands and ways of life, the factory worker in Europe or America – and may have foreseen (I'll have to study the colonial era in Africa and Southeast Asia including India) the colonialist attitudes elsewhere. Free Trade – whatever its form at the time, or guise – at all costs, or as the primary driver, in the capitalist mind of the time. Again, it may now and seems now to be more moderated, human, aware, worker-oriented, and functional, and malleable to definition or form. Others will have a further critique. A couple of points: a) I feel that concomittant with Free Trade during the Colonial era, there was some other driving idea that lay behind some of the greatest perils, and that it was not just Free Trade, at all, or even the primary idea, but set in this other context, was interpreted to great harm to others than the Europeans, along with this driving idea; b) the Europeans took some time to work out damage to themselves!; and c) I feel that in the US and parts of the world it is much different now, but there are still the locked-in layers that just are not part of a dynamic, structured, fluid system; we should make sure to take care that the individual and group is networked, connected, free-to-manuever, in a vibrant and dynamic (and free; and this deepens the notion of freedom) society, with resource.

1.2. Still, some perils exist, in the context of Free Trade, and these might be at a fairly structural or central level – and this might be one of Trump's points.

2. On point (1) – for the village (or small town!) to join the free trade 'wire', or install a factory – this may be done at peril to the village (or small town!): when a factory opens up in another nation that is a cheaper means of production, or 'up-to-date', the current factory that has been put in the village (or small town!) may after a time be forced either directly by the owner's lack of concern or indirectly through market forces to shut down – and what had once become a necessary survival disappears, leaving nothing in its place; and, the lack of the previous means to step back to (rollback to). Entire ways of life have been upended.

2.1. Remote ownership must be carefully structured, so that things, culture, economics, and ecosystems are responsive to local need and supports; and that the individual and group is taken care of, as well as the larger, structured economics. [I wonder if China couldn't be looked to for how they interpret this; and I wonder if the corporate in America couldn't be looked to, for how they best interpret it.]

3. Even if the small town is in the nation where the givens and so forth, including Free Trade, are accepted, entire towns may be forced to unemployment and relegated to economic (and therefore existential, both collective and personal) irrelevance. A disaster!

4. This may occur even if the capitalist (the factory owner of this or that enterprise) cares deeply about the people in a small town: if he does not shut down the factory, market forces will bankrupt his entire company; and in this case all towns in which he has workers and means of production, not just the small town A, suffer in the same way. So he may be forced to shut down the factory in that small town A to avoid a larger catastrophe.

5. If it is the case that it is a tendency of those capitalists who (not the aforementioned) “get on to the next big thing” with each New Idea in the capitalist markets (including technologies, popular goods, etc.) to leave behind entire proven Ways Of Doing Things (akin to Minsky's Ways To Think [See The

Emotion Machine]) in order to roll out the new, then this might be tied to the dynamic of how factories are placed and what technologies are introduced and made obsolete. There is, I feel, Deep Inventiveness, and this should be studied, alongside such tendencies – along with both modern and ancient thought. Marx and Engels, in TCM, talk about how ‘to get on to the next big thing’, leaving entire structures of proven ways of doing things in the dustbin of history, is one cause of the recessions capitalist systems have. But Deep Inventiveness – and much of both modern and ancient thought – is not like this.

6. I suspect from my consideration of Wittgenstein (Tractatus Logico Philosophicus, just the first 15 pages), my practice and contemplation of Zen Buddhism (The Gateless Barrier: Zen Comments On The Mumonkan by Shibayama comes to mind, along with Shobogenzo by Dogen translated by Nishijima, Fundamental Wisdom Of The Middle Way by Nagarjuna translated by Nishijima, and several other Zen influences, the Tao Te Ching, this very life, and zazen), the works of Marvin Minsly (“The Society Of Mind”, “The Emotion Machine”, now “Inventive Minds”), and so forth, that there is a sense of interconnectivity and interdependence that is part of the system and idea “Free Trade” – but that just because you can draw any dots you want on a blank piece of paper and connect them and the lines between them at any points, does not mean *functional, or that one understands geometry-and-the-material, or that one has models and a pattern*. The space between the sycamore tree and the house is just as much a part of the dependent arising (pratityasamutpada, as Elizabeth Mattis Namgyel puts in her book “The Logic Of Faith”), and the tree being next to the road – and thus Zaccheus can climb the tree, see Jesus, and invite Him to dinner – where ‘today Salvation has come to this house!’. To have many many wires, each meticulously done by independent voluntary contract, from the tree to the house, from the tree to the road, from the house to the road – why, no one would be able to climb the tree, and if it were a mustard tree, no bird would find room to nest!

7. So this may be why Trump is negotiating deals. It’s the underlying givens, and resulting historical patterns. I’d like to know more of the details, over time.

8. So it also is why I think there is a striking and intuitive step to be taken between the U.S. and China, both ‘mutually co-arising in awareness and function’, in determining a truly deep alternative to Free Trade. I feel this is a significant point.

9. I do not know the concepts behind Fair Trade. I suspect an important concept is that embedded in the idea freedom is this ability to do and/or connect what one wants, or can. But is that true freedom? Is it functional, realistic, of what type of value, to what ends, or aware of the mutually co-arising? I feel that the US and China can meet on these types of questions, and recognize value in each others’ societies – and commerce – in a deeply meaningful way.

10. I’ll point out to end these first 10 points, that Thomas Paine, in Common Sense, says in chapter 3, that we (the U.S.) should have commerce in order to get to know the foreign nations. It’s not just a funds transfer or contract, it’s getting to know – and this might also be consistent with China’s ideal ‘mutual benefit’.

This is no doubt somewhat newbie. But I hope to have introduced some points, and points below. A real dialogue between the US and China should occur, and I feel that with Trump and Xi it is possible.

The Americans are too dynamic and spirited, and the Chinese too rigorous and flexi, to avoid a real dialogue.

Enjoy!

P.S. There are many, many companies and enterprises doing functional work, and it's a joy to share and engage across national boundaries, and intra-national also. So this functionality should be looked for; and I suspect such functionality tends toward more just, stability, duration-oriented outlooks and outcomes. This is a significant point – and is the worlds within worlds intersecting worlds that this forms, in its own natural way; space, yielding, structure, a type of independence, always interdependence in some ways, connection, mutually defining or realizing, and the undefined.

A Note On Marxism; The American Ideal; Both Ancient And Modern Thought And Practice

I take Marxist critique seriously, but I am not a Marxist: I would realize the deep awareness a profound philosophy, religion, psychology, speculation, narrative, mediatin, and dialogue can bring to the table, as well as the sharp or unfolding insight, and that this can be essential for the individual, and the mind-breath-body-world-space; but a healthy critique is necessary; and while the political-economic is something to be reckoned with and dealt with consciously, it is not the only basis for suffering. I take the American ideal seriously, and the idea of having resources and determination to set out one's own life – and within society. There seem to be systemic problematics, including a paralyzed democracy to the tune of profound fiscal debt, a significant number in or near poverty, and shallow threads of critique and of the political (Trump would know this, from his view!) – while it is a great joy to practice Zen, and to have available (for some) many key resources. I see value in both ancient and modern thought and practice.

A Note On The U.S., DPRK, And China

I am pleased that President Trump and Leader Kim Jong Un have gotten a dialogue going. I hope the same for President Trump and President Xi. I hope the goal and reality is peaceable co-existence, each striving to create a real space for the other.

Further Notes On The US-China Dialogue, That Is So Potential

- Commerce can likely take several realistic forms. It does not have to be free trade, that benefits primarily the owner of the means of production. And I have to deepen my understanding of free trade itself. But it would seem that trade can be natural – responsive, dynamic, structured, and toward durable, self-sustaining economies, in a mutually co-arising way, recognizing the value of each

individual and group along the way (and currently, in a world that needs to be self-sustaining). We should recognize the value of these principles in each others' various approaches and thinking.

- So if the Trump administration thinks China has put up trade barriers, is this just a way that China is realistically addressing a situation? That is, Trump and his administration may be complaining about China, but it is also free trade that leads to peril here. And if China thinks that the US is bullying it, then perhaps a new angle could be instigated, to resolve America's concerns to a deeper level. So I suspect that a new language needs to be developed, between the nations. I suspect both Marxism and Thomas Paine need to be factored in: Communism for its critique of Capitalism and Free Trade, and Thomas Paine for his statement to the effect: "We should get to know the foreign nations through commerce." That is, it's not just a funds transfer, and to one's own advantage and aggregate. Yet retaining vitality. (Free Trade may have changed, over time, and still be problematic.) If China is indeed working toward "mutual benefit" then we should study that and learn from it. If the US consistently sees towns and industries shuttered, as trade's basis (its factories and means of production) move elsewhere, and sees that it is no longer reasonably self-sufficient, in a mutually co-arising world, then perhaps we can see this and reformulate our own position on economics, a natural form free market, and Capitalism; and perhaps China can come up with a deeper interpretation of the free markets (perhaps a natural interpretation of them) that avoid some of the pitfalls or harms of Capitalism, and make clear to the US a different path that allows us to pursue our interpretation of freedom (in a way that is functional, realistic, of well-considered value, in consideration of the ends, and aware of the mutually co-arising), in a vibrant and dynamic society, while consistent with and compatible with China's own Communist interpretation of the individual and the collective, and as it adapts, and as we recognize this or that.

- The following speech is mature, and this type of thing should be part of the US side of the dialogue, as well (from XinhuaNet) – it's just consistent with my thoughts and tendencies: [Spotlight: Chinese FM urges China, U.S. to promote ties with vision, conviction](#). We should see if – and this may be the reality – action and speech match. I hope that both sides can engage in meaningful dialogue, to their mutual benefit. Trump is dynamic enough that he could break through the impasse (from our point of view) and deeply engage with various factors, and multiple perspectives. I don't know what the experts on our side see. Xi has, I suspect, his own theory and praxis, carefully worked out, within a deeply considered system, and China's own team. Perhaps both sides could adapt. I don't know. I hope so! I don't know enough to know what precisely is needed. I can only begin to make some observations and suggest some pointers – but others will be seasoned, and expert, from various perspectives.

- So this is a bit of a "first step" for me, as well. Yet it's the type of deeply considered background and resourcefulness I'd bring to the table, from my own work in other fields, my own observations, Zen, and just a bit of the literature (TCM and Common Sense). This "first step" is somewhat ad-hoc, but there is system to it. I hope that it's of some value. That's its intent.

A Note For The Reader

This is meant to be added to and refined and deepened. I may do so over the length of time, and especially others should do so, given any insights here.