

Anders Indset

The  
Quantum  
Economy

Saving the Mensch  
with Humanistic Capitalism

Econ

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Saving the Mensch with Humanistic Capitalism

Econ



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# Table of Contents

Introduction 7

## Part I

A New Weltanschauung—  
Attempt or Temptation 17

1 A Revolution of Consciousness or the Collapse: It's Up to You!	21
2 Major Defects in the System—or the Wrong System?	40
3 The Forces of Change	83
4 The Funky and Bizarre Quantum Reality	127
5 The Foundations of Consciousness?	156
6 The Final Narcissistic Injury	184

## Part II

On Our Way to Quantopia 195

7 Three Future Scenarios for Our World	199
8 From the Knowledge Society to a Society of Understanding	215
9 The Q Economy Compact	233
10 Shapers of the Q Economy	288

Epilogue: An Outlook 304

Notes 317

Literature 337

Index 343

# Introduction

*If we want to understand society,  
we must rethink the economy.*

The Old Economy is dead. So is the New Economy. The utopian promise of the 1980s and 1990s failed to materialize and 2019 might go down in human history as the high-water mark. The events of early 2020 have accelerated the evolutionary developments and systemic changes that were already poised to transform our lives. As we rebuild our economic, political, and social systems, we must prepare for other potentially catastrophic future events that pose an existential risk for our species. In order to ensure both organized human life and functioning social structures, we will have to rethink and rebuild the economy—the operating system of our society.

We are now at a crossroads. We have mastered many ‘unsolvable’ problems, but the worst may be yet to come. Paradoxically, we are living in an era of collapse, but are also at the dawn of a new age. Until now we have sworn by the Old Testament of capitalism and have defined prosperity solely based on materialism—through even more possessions, even more consumption, and thus even more environmental destruction. Will life move in the direction of totalitarian regimes, nationalist economic isolation, and more global distrust, or will we succeed in restarting our economies with a solidarity-based, environmentally friendly, and technology-driven humanistic capitalism?

It's high time to formulate a New Testament of capitalism based on post-materialistic ideals that do not reduce wealth solely to one's bank account, but rather strengthens our minds and vital energy and provides us with immaterial goods such as happiness and love. I call this post-materialist system—which will transcend our current economic model, leaving both the Old and the New Economy behind—the Quantum Economy, or the *Q Economy*.

**We need a new Enlightenment; a renaissance of thinkers to lead us into the future.** We need practical philosophy and a revolution of consciousness. We must move toward a unification of the natural and social sciences to create a *society of understanding*. But in order to develop society and make progress for humanity, the underlying force must remain economic motivation. In other words, what we need is a new operating system for our economy.

Capitalism is a functioning system that lacks compassion, something that has been expressed by the Dalai Lama many times over the years.<sup>1</sup> And this is one of the core flaws of the capitalistic model. In Maslow's famous hierarchy, material needs occupy the largest space at the lowest level of the pyramid.<sup>2</sup> This is where most people, especially people in affluent parts of the world, get stuck. We hardly ever reach the higher levels of the pyramid—where we are fulfilled by non-materialistic needs—because our system fixates people on the materialistic level, where we try to define happiness based on what we consume and possess. Science has long proven that we do not become happier with more and more material possessions and consumption. On the contrary: a second home, a third car, or the very latest in digital fetishes does not increase our satisfaction, but rather only our dependence on material items.

The life cycle of any market economy begins with *revolver capitalism*—the Wild West, where quick draws on ideas gen-

erate quick money. When the engines of growth then ignite, regulation and taxation follow. The solution is growth, however and wherever. We call it globalization, but frankly speaking we never really made it that global. The public sector distributes the capital, rights and entitlements are acquired, prosperity expands into over-consumption, and the system finally collapses. Like a living being, the economy is full of vitality at birth, and when it has grown old and worn it dies and decays. Then smaller dynamic groups form and the cycle starts all over again, but with greater efficiency. This creates many baby economies whose vital energy we can use to create something essentially new: the Q Economy.

During the 2010s, the economies of Western and some affluent Asian regions developed to the penultimate stage of their life cycle. Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, addictive over-consumption had led many of these economies to the brink of collapse. **We have already plundered so many of our planet's resources with uninhibited consumerism.** With a world population of almost eight billion people, it is simply impossible to fulfill the material desires of all people—villas on the Mediterranean and Ferraris for everyone can never and will never exist. But most of these desirable objects are really just physical surrogates for immaterial needs that cannot be satisfied by luxury consumption. Emotional and spiritual goods—social recognition and contentment, meaning in life, and individual self-realization—are not available in the shopping malls of materialistic, capitalist societies any more than Western consumer goods were once available in the shopping malls of Soviet socialist economies of scarcity. “You can’t buy happiness and meaning in life,” one might argue. But in the Q Economy, we will move toward a perfectly circular economy and learn about singular infinity, become conscious about material consumption, and strive to find new business models

that capitalize on vital energies and immaterial goods to the benefit of everyone.

Why do I call this post-materialist, humanistic, and holistic economy the Q Economy? Here's a short answer: in the Q Economy, the apparent opposition between the material and the immaterial, between the physical and the spiritual, will be overcome, just as in quantum physics, in which every subatomic particle is at the same time both energy and matter—and vice versa. Quantum physics also suggests that our reality manifests itself less in physical matter than in the void between matter and energy, or in the collective momentum of a single wave function that is but one possibility in a multiverse of realities.

The world—and therefore the economy—cannot be rationally understood. It's a world of interdependencies and interstices. Because of this, we will only be able to find new paths and solutions through these spaces in between with an interdisciplinary approach. As the sciences are increasingly realizing, we already live in a quantum reality, even though most of us haven't noticed it yet. At the same time, a global movement of enlightened youth has set out on a journey. These young people put consciousness above everything else and strive for a higher level of energy. If we listen carefully, the pioneers of a variety of disciplines are all talking about the same things, even if they use different semantics. It all boils down to potentiality, consciousness, and relationships.

I have sat down with physicists and mathematicians as well as with gurus and monks, with Nobel Prize winners, and with theologians and religious scholars. The concepts of quantum mechanics are confusing, even (and especially) for classical scientists. But they are not speculation; they are scientifically verified descriptions of reality. Surprisingly, quantum physics overlaps with the visions and intuitive insights of spiritually

enlightened people from many cultures and eras. Gurus and shamans have often preached that energy is matter, and matter is energy. In quantum terms, we are all part of one universal wave function.

The basic formula of the universe is not one or the other, but rather both at the same time. Spiritual and material concepts are thus not incompatible opposites, but rather two paths that lead to the same place from opposite directions: to the space between mind and body, matter and energy, or to the universal wave function underlying our reality. Some of the most interesting theoretical approaches of our time focus on these gaps between seemingly incompatible disciplines: where quantum physics meets spirituality, and where phenomenology meets neuroscience and psychoanalysis.

Quantum reality—and thus also the Q Economy—is a world in which scientific disciplines and other seemingly irreconcilable ways of experiencing the world converge. Spirituality might just be a part of physics that we have not yet understood. The possible synthesis of supposedly insurmountable opposites is a radically new philosophical approach. At the economic level, this leads to my concept of the Q Economy because we need economic motivation to achieve progress in our society, and indeed, to save our planet and our humanistic foundations.

## *The Q Economy will change our society*

The Q Economy will not only satisfy our material needs, it will also enable us to develop our talents and live our dreams. Just another utopian dream? No, the economy of the future will structure every fundamental element of society: our material needs; our social relationships (online as well as offline);

our politics, education, and culture; and our spiritual development and self-realization. It will no longer be about the end state, but about the journey.

The past few decades in particular have been marked by materialistic hypercapitalism and addictive hyper-consumption. The lower levels of Maslow's pyramid of needs—the more basic needs—have grown larger, and the satisfaction we get from meeting our need for personal security has also increased. It's as if we can only live if we have an SUV, at least one sports car, and a vacation home—as if these count as basic needs, or even as individual rights. But in the Q Economy, we will realize that such a resource-consuming and materialistically narrow definition of basic needs cannot work for everyone—not even in the world's most prosperous regions, let alone worldwide.

At the same time, the solution to the dilemma is not to limit the capitalist model but rather to expand it. This is already laid out in Maslow's pyramid. The U.S. scientist is known as the founder of humanistic psychology, a concept designed to help people find personal fulfillment and to develop their creative potential. But overextending the lower levels of Maslow's pyramid suffocates all the other higher needs and possibilities.

Among other things, the Q Economy is thus about creating new opportunities that promote creative development and healthy self-realization, and that allow us to develop a humanistic capitalism. We must invent new business models to capitalize on happiness and optimism, security, trust, individual strengths, empathy, and solidarity. I don't mean that we need to find new materialistic surrogates—luxury products in our current economic system that only deceive or comfort us and hold us back from achieving any real happiness or trust. The challenge is rather to develop valuable services that help us develop our individual potentials and strengths. The Q Economy

will finally help humanity reach higher levels of Maslow's pyramid. And this shift is critical because we can only master the immense challenges of the very near future by working together.

Is the Q Economy the answer to the most pressing problems of our current system? Will it correct the unjust distribution of wealth, finally deliver on the capitalist promise of happiness, and help us to overcome ecological destruction? Of course, there is no such magic formula that can balance all the antagonisms. But it's also true that the market alone certainly won't fix the situation. In my first semester economics course, I learned that "the free market ensures the distribution of scarce resources." Oh, really? Contrary to the promises of Adam Smith and his disciples, the "perfect equilibrium" has turned out to be an illusion of neoclassical capitalism. Without a doubt, it is important to embrace the lessons of the Enlightenment, and to carry the torch of the late Swedish professor Hans Rosling, who showed us that, as a species, we are actually doing better than ever before. At the same time, we need to bury the myth of the perfect equilibrium and any invisible hand of the market.<sup>3</sup> The self-stabilizing machine that is supposed to maximize benefits for individual players—and thereby also for the common good—simply does not exist.

In the current economy, we are confronted by several dilemmas. Today, the twenty-six richest people in the world possess about as much wealth as the poorer half of the global population—about 3.8 billion people. But instead of blaming capitalism, we need to develop the economy in such a way that the capitalist engine is not stalled, but rather can be used to drive a more equitable distribution. We need a new perspective so that we can rethink and optimize existing structures and models. In this way, the Q Economy will become the heart of a global revolution.

The same thing applies to the existential threat posed by the ecological collapse we face. When we rethink the economy, we will develop a better understanding of our environment. **The Q Economy is based on the realization that everything is connected to everything; we must learn to holistically see the economy, society, and ecology as one interdependent and connected wave (function).** An economic system that really meets our needs will help us develop a society that also considers the needs of the natural environment, because we will finally recognize that we are also part of nature.

And what about happiness, and the blissful society that classical liberal theory tells us should materialize if we all just follow the compass of our own selfish interests? As we now know, it's not that simple. The invisible hand of the market is a model from the pre-Q Economy era. Market liberalism, according to Adam Smith,<sup>4</sup> only considers individuals who are independent of each other and act of their own accord. What remains largely unresolved in such primordial capitalist theories, however, is how the sum of countless selfish individual actions is supposed to generate social happiness.

How can we integrate well-being into the economy? This question is the starting point for the creation of a Q Economy, and thus also a quantum society. In the Q Economy, our identity will no longer be defined by what we possess and are able to achieve. This will give us back the freedom to focus our attention on who we are and what we can become. By becoming aware of the different roles we each play in this world, we will discover that we are not indivisible individuals, but rather 'multividuals.' "Know thyself" still applies today, but the *quantopian* motto is: "understand your roles, develop them further, strip them off, and try new ones."

By following this quantopian motto, we will also develop a better understanding of our spiritual dimensions and those of

the world in which we live. We are visitors on this planet with limited time and resources, but (in principle) unlimited knowledge. We are interdependent, connected beings in an infinite universe of potentiality, and we are each, ourselves, universes of potentiality. We are all on a wonderful journey to nowhere, driven by the search for plausible explanations to our basic questions of where we are coming from and where we are going. As observers, we can gain knowledge that changes our perceptions, thus influencing both our own perceived realities as well as the realities of others. This is how we can develop the Q Economy while at the same time developing a better understanding of our society.

### **Q Economy Compact**

What is the Q Economy?

- It is a way of rethinking the economy in order to better understand society.
- It will unleash an economy that goes beyond satisfying the obvious physical needs of food, shelter, and safety to include deeper psychological needs such as a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and self-realization.
- It reduces the distance between creators (artisans) and consumers, enabling direct relationships between them.
- It seems as strange and unpredictable as the quantum world but is as real as quantum physics.
- It is an interdependent system that is not linear, but rather circular. Everything is interconnected (including humans and machines) and is thus potentially infinite as a genuine circular-flow economy: a singular infinity.
- It brings together the natural and human sciences by overcoming disciplinary boundaries.

- It is characterized by decentralized and interconnected units instead of centralized and hierarchical structures.
- It is algorithmic, technical, and exponential.
- It is connected to consciousness, our understanding of consumption, and our ability to come up with new immaterial ways to thrive, innovate, and do business.

The Q Economy will emerge from the development of a society of understanding, the advancement of a consciousness revolution, the acceptance of circular infinity, and the learning and practice of philosophical contemplation.

Part I:

A New Weltanschauung — Attempt or Temptation

*How much time do you need to save the world?*

*Before you answer, ask yourself:*

*How much time do we have left?*