

Entertainment and Human Nature

by Phillip W. Weiss

It's the second day of the New Year and it already seems like 2025 started a long time ago. People do things that create the illusion that they are doing something when in fact all they are doing is killing time. Nowhere is that fact more obvious than in the entertainment industry where people watch other people performing. The entertainment industry is the only sector of the economy that is impervious to inflation.

People will pay any amount of money to be entertained. Humans demand to be entertained. It is a basic human drive. The need for diversions is part of the human species. That is the case because humans have minds that require stimulation. To meet that need, people created the entertainment industry to satisfy the human need to be diverted away from the humdrum of day to day living with all the drabness that it entails.

People want to have FUN. It makes them feel alive and give them a purpose to live. Work is not fun. Work is a necessary evil that is the antithesis of play. Work means having to expend time and energy doing something you really don't want to do and which makes you feel bored, frustrated and tired. Work means laboring for someone else who provides compensation for your time and skills that produce profit for someone else, be it a single business owner or a multinational corporation.

People are alienated from their work which is done not out of love but from sheer economic necessity. To escape from this essentially hopeless condition, people flock to places that provide entertainment. Thus, attending an entertainment venue, such as a sports arena or a stage show, is a form of escapism that provides an emotional high and thus becomes addictive. Attending an entertainment events give the illusion that you are doing something meaningful when in fact you are doing nothing productive, which is exactly why people crave to be entertained.

Entertainment transforms the worker into a spectator on whom the venue makes no demands except to spend money and to let someone else do all the work. Unlike the workplace, the entertainment venue is full of bright lights, music, and all kinds of other distractions that are designed to thrill the mind and make you feel that you are witnessing something important.

The spectacle offered by entertainment contrasts so sharply to the banality of the workplace that some people come to identify themselves with those who are being paid to entertain. That is, they become fans. The word fan is a derivative of the word fanatic. The fan is a person who is hooked on entertainment. The fan becomes a vicarious participant in the event being staged. The fan believes that he is part of the show, that the performers are his friends, and that the event is a central feature of life.

For the fan, spending money is no object if it enables him to be with his team. The fan is willing to spend prodigious amounts of money because it meets

his need to be part of something that has nothing to do with work and feeds into the illusion that he is doing something important and essential to life. Fake News reports that that the United States has a massive trade deficit. Americans import all kinds of products that used to be produced in the United States. Fake News spins this story to create alarm as part of a political agenda.

What Fake News cynically omits is the fact that while Americans may import manufactured goods from other countries, the United States has sold American entertainment and culture to the entire world. That fact never gets reported and never is included in calculating the size of the trade deficit. The whole world has become a workshop for Americans which enables Americans to be entertained. Whether this relationship is sustainable, only time can tell.