

MORE OR LESS

We compare to see if we have more or less. We are told that judgments are bad, but we all do it all the time. Not necessarily moral judgments. We are evaluating and assessing people, things, space, time, energy, situations – measuring how big, how heavy, how long, how far, how much, how many, how often, how good-looking, how wealthy, etc. Is there any significant difference between evaluating, assessing and judging?

At school we are taught how to make qualitative distinctions as well as quantitative ones. We are taught to compare, contrast and critique. We compare to help us orientate, to identify different options and to have some criteria upon which to choose from amongst them.

So why do I beat myself up for comparing and judging? I understand that it gets tricky when rather than looking at whether we *have* more or less, we start questioning whether we *are* more or less, or take that a step further to whether we are good or bad.

Our liberal society, our 'new age', looks disapprovingly at many if not most religions and moralities that have written into code ways of comparing, contrasting and critiquing people as good or bad, virtuous or sinful. But what is the literal meaning of 'sin'? To miss the mark. Is there not a mark of quality that pertains to everything? A job well done whether carpentry, painting, engineering or cuisine? Behaviour that is productive and beneficial to oneself and to others?

'Who are *you* to judge me?' we ask indignantly if someone else is telling us we did something wrong. But we all live in a culture that has a formal system of judgment that sanctions punitive consequences such as fines, jail terms, and in some cases death sentences.

So where, in my case, did it all start? When did I start being compared, assessed and judged? When did I start becoming aware of more or less? When did I start comparing myself to others and arriving at assessments, evaluations and judgments?

When I look back at my life, I see awareness of 'more or less' from an early age. For example, I was aware that my father had a 'hands-off' approach towards my sister when it came to punishment. He was more flexible, tolerant and forgiving with her than he was with my brother or I. With respect to what sociologists call S.E.S. (socio-economic status), as a young boy I was aware that my two aunts could not have been more different. Aunt Mollie, my mother's step-sister, was enormously wealthy. She lived in a big house on farmland near Derby. There were stables for her horses, and sheds to milk the cows. She had a cook and a chauffeur, as well as farm hands. She spent winters in the Bahamas and Monte Carlo. Aunt Margaret – my father's sister, by contrast, was a single mother who lived with her three children in a council flat in a low-income area of Edinburgh. When I visited Aunt Margaret, there would be at least five or six of us crammed into her small living room. My father and Aunt Margaret would smoke and drink from the bottle of scotch my father brought with us. There would be a lot of talk and a lot of laughter and seemed to me that my father came alive and was respected and looked up to by Margaret and her children. He was affectionate with them and they with him.

I was aware of these differences but attached no significance to the. That was just the way it was. It was only much later that I learned that Margaret's husband had been tragically killed by a lightning strike. He had been an architect with a good income and they had enjoyed a middle class lifestyle until his death. Nor did I know that Aunt Mollie's wealth was primarily from inheritance and having two rich husbands.

At the age of thirteen, I won a music scholarship to Sedbergh, a boy's boarding school. A year later my father was prematurely retired from his job and I heard from my mother that I might have to

be withdrawn from my new school for financial reasons. This came as an utter shock particularly because I had no idea the fees were so high or that my family's bank balance was so low. It was the first inkling that S.E.S. could be a contradictory mix of high social status and low economic status. At least, it seemed that way, given the upper middle class neighbourhood we lived in and the title of Major that preceded my father's name.

In fact being a Major wasn't such a big deal. My father felt he had considerably less status than my Uncle Arth (husband of father's second sister, Doris) who was a Brigadier who had been awarded a Military Cross in the First World War, and a Victoria Cross in the Second. It also later learned that the family home had been bought in 1950 with money donated by a relative on my mother's side of the family.

Regarding the school fees, my mother went to Aunty Mollie for help and she agreed to pay the balance of what was not covered by my music scholarship. At the same time, my parents decided to sell the house and move to a flat in the University area of Edinburgh.

At boarding school, money was completely absent from everyday life. We didn't use it. We didn't need it. We weren't allowed to have it. As a result, there was no reason for comparison of relative wealth. However the summer vacation was a different matter. Around the age of 15, I remember being asked by some school friends to joining them on a boating holiday on the Norfolk Broads and being told by my parents that we couldn't afford it. For three summers in a row, I decided to attend Army camp because the costs were minimal and because it gave me an excuse not to be in the toxic environment of my parents' new flat, a place that I no longer considered as my home. Ironically this course of action was seen by my father as unbridled enthusiasm to make the Army my career.

Gradually I became a little more aware of economic wealth. One of my best friends invited me to his house on several occasions. His father was a C.E.O. of a trawler company in Hull. Their house was a mansion with extensive, manicured gardens. They had a cook and owned a Daimler and a Jaguar. My friend had a certain air of superiority about him – 'unto the manor born', you could say. My other closest friend, David, was quite different. His father was a tea planter in Kenya and as such a renegade from the indigenous British class system. Instead he was a Colonial and as such was a member of the white, settler class who, needless to say, had much higher SES than the black African workforce. But David seemed somehow classless in my eyes. After leaving boarding school, David and I hitchhiked around Europe financing the trip with £35 (this *was* 1966 but even so, the only way we could manage it on so little money was to be extremely Spartan, sleeping in fields and making our own food.

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In the Fall of 1966, I went to Queens University, a Canadian university in Kingston, Ontario. Again I was fortunate enough to have a scholarship to cover tuition expenses and living costs. And so once again, I had side-stepped full on experience of the economy with the necessities of earning an income in order to meet expenditures.

In my first years, I discovered a fascination for Sociology and decided to make it my major. For the first time I was being exposed to conceptual tools that helped me understand my background. The structure of society came into focus: class, elites, capitalism, socialism, unions and the labour market, the history of imperialism and colonialism – and, yes, SES. At first, it seemed that Canadian society, compared to the U.K., was a classless society; no marked regional accents (with the exception of Newfoundland) and none that correlate, no obvious indicators in dress or manner. But gradually I discovered that there was class stratification in Canada – it was just more subtle.

In the summer of 1968, I spent some time working in Toronto. I had a job unloading truck trailers for 8 hours a day for minimum wages. I was living in a small rented room at the top of a run down tenement building. Suddenly I was in a different world and a gained a brief glimpse of how things

looked and felt from way down the ladder. I became aware of fundamental realities: my environment was noisy, smelly, peopled by eccentric and sometimes threatening-looking individuals; there were paper curtains and cockroaches and the frequent wailing of police from outside. There was a tavern around the corner that had green walls, no decor, sawdust on the floors, spittoons and lonely men sitting by themselves. I became aware of what 'disposable income' and 'consumer power' meant. I felt the first murmurings of discontent that for the same duration of time and considerably less effort, others could be making 5, 10, 20 times what I was earning. I began to understand that *if* there was any disposable income, there were simply two options, save or spend.

At the start of my last year at Queens, I shared accommodation with Mark, another ex public schoolboy from Britain. I recall that he had just taken possession of a brand new car – a Hillman Imp. I wondered where the money had come from. Needless to say, it turned out that Mark was from a wealthy family and his parents had given him the car as a present. Mark had been to Eton and revealed his upper class background through the use of 'received pronunciation' in contrast to my standard BBC English. Mark was an interesting combination. I noticed that despite having considerable disposable income for restaurant meals, clothes, records and marijuana, he considered himself a student radical politically.

The following year, 1969, I returned to Britain and entered the graduate program in Sociology at the London School of Economics. This time there was no scholarship, no bursary and no financial assistance from my parents. I had no savings so I had to work in order to pay for tuition and living expenses. I got a job as a substitute teacher and somehow scraped by for the first few months. For various reasons described elsewhere (*see chapters 39-41, Chameleon*), a perfect storm of stressful situations led me to drop out of the Masters Program in the Spring of 1970. That was when my life really changed.

Suddenly, the inherent contradiction in my SES became apparent. My social status was still a reflection of a good education and a middle class upbringing whereas my economic status was precarious. Firstly, I had no savings. Secondly, I had become radicalized and had rebelled against my class background. I was not alone. It was a time of political and cultural upheaval. I had been influenced by Orwell's book, Down and Out In Paris and London, and had decided to make it my intention to see life from 'the other side'. It didn't seem authentic to have my political views shaped by the conceptual insights of sociological theory without having first hand experience.

Mark, my roommate from Queens was in London. He invited me to visit him at his family home in Dorset. It was a large country house with expensive furnishings located on a large wooded acreage. I arrived to find Mark and his Canadian girlfriend learning how to make suede pants and fringed jackets from two Californian hippies. Mark's mother flitted around, seemingly unfazed by the rock music and clouds of marijuana smoke. Her liberal attitude was accompanied by a R.P. (received pronunciation) upper-class accent with its tell-tale intonation and expressions. I knew Mark had attended Eton. What I didn't know 'til a later date was the fact that Mark's father had been in MI6 and was well known due to his involvement with the Commander Lionel Crabb affair in the 1950s and the flight of the spy Kim Philby to Moscow in 1963. Mark was about to set off to Morocco with his girlfriend. He invited me to join them. I had just dropped out and was confused and disorientated. I took what little money I had and decided to take up his offer.

Marrakesh was full of hippies 'on the road'. Many of them, like Mark, pretending to be poor until it came time to line up outside the American Express office to get more funds from their well-heeled parents. Within that counter-cultural context, I felt my SES slip a few more notches.

Back in London, I moved into a communal flat with four other residents. I had no money. I needed to start my odyssey on the other side. I heard about a temporary staffing agency with the apt title 'Rentastaff' – an agency that sent desperate men to the shittiest jobs in London. Working on assembly lines and in warehouses, the work was exhausting and demeaning. I made just enough to

cover living expenses. No disposable income – no pubs, no restaurants, no money for dental treatment, no ‘extras’. And gone was the social network of resourceful friends. More shame, less tolerance, more frustration and growing anger and outrage as my awareness of the causes and consequences of inequality and inequity grew.

In 1972, I returned to Canada as an immigrant. I had drifted further to the left and more determined than ever to be an agent of social change and not to cop out by colluding with ‘the system’. The pattern continued: more shitty jobs, stretches of unemployment, one problem or another – overqualified, underqualified, inadequate conversational French, and real economic hardship; SES getting lower on both the social and economic fronts. The prospect of reversing the slide to ‘down and out’ by rising up again to ‘up and in’ did not seem like a simple matter of free choice.

Contradictions abounded. My Sedbergh ‘self’ keeping healthy by doing a daily run while undermining that as my underclass self bought pouches of Drum tobacco and smoked roll-your-owns. I subsisted on a high carb diet of rice, potatoes, pasta, oatmeal and bread supplemented by cut-price fruit and vegetables. I treated myself once in a while to apple cider – cheaper than beer or wine with a comparable alcohol content. I began to fill my journal with angry, resentful entries about the middle-class ‘poor’ who complained about the cost of gas and the fact that their mortgage payments were too much of a drain while dining out, buying IKEA furniture, and planning a winter escape to Mexico.

Around this time I came across a book entitled Poverty in Montreal which conveyed clearly the direct correlation between poverty and physical ailments (child mortality, life expectancy, etc.) and mental illness (depression, anxiety, alcoholism, etc) as well as the role played by unsafe and inadequate housing, high risk jobs, unemployment and welfare dependency. And I could see the pressures that could push people into lying, cheating, drug addiction, crime, prostitution, or whatever it took to survive. My moral compass was being shaken up as survival superseded success as the primary goal. I saw how a wider vision and deeper motivation became stunted beyond a few steps up or down the ladder. Fear of falling further became as big, or more of a factor that the ambition to climb up. The world had shrunk and the immediate environment had become claustrophobic. And gradually, over the months and several years, I came to the realization that I couldn’t afford my grand ideals – that they had become part of the problem rather than a means to any viable solutions, whether on an individual or social scale. I realized that I would have to re-enter the system at a level that utilized my education and abilities. And that meant becoming a teacher.

So I got a student loan and completed a one year Diploma of Education at McGill University. When I found full time work at a High School, my SES began to rise somewhat, despite the fact that a first year teacher at that time earned less than a garbage collector - \$8,232 versus \$10,500 (source, Montreal Gazette, March 1977). I was able to afford an old beater of a car, go for a beer when I wanted and buy tailor made cigarettes. I had risen out of the underclass. I was not middle class but now I had access to it. For example, I played squash at the McGill Squash Club and was re-introduced to a self-assured world in which talk revolved around investments, home improvements, travel, and dating women of beauty and accomplishment. The prevailing attitude was ambitious, competitive and positive rather than despairing and cynical. And occasionally there was mention of those ‘down there’ who were lazy and played victim and shouldn’t be getting government support which, after all, was subsidized by *their* taxes. And I wanted to scream out, “you just don’t get it, do you!? ... it’s not a level playing field, you haven’t been there ... if you had, you wouldn’t talk the way you do.” But the McGill Squash Club was not the place to implement consciousness-raising and/or social change.

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In 1978, I moved to B.C. and continued my career as teacher. Almost by accident I entered the world of adult E.S.L. and ended up getting a job at a Community College. Now, even though I

didn't have a Masters, most of my colleagues did or even PhD's. For several years I was a contract Instructor but eventually I was regularized and my income jumped. I even rationalized that I was working for social change, albeit on a small platform – my classroom. I was an instructor at Kwantlen College for approximately 17 years, between the years 1985 and 2002.

During this period, my partner Joan and I had two children and lived in a Housing Coop. Unfortunately, the stresses in our marriage became too great and in 1994 we decided to separate. I moved into a house on First Nations land outside White Rock. It is hard to determine my SES during those years. My job at Kwantlen meant that both social and economic determinants were within a middle class range. However, after taxes and child maintenance, my disposable income was not that great and as far as the social factor of *where* I lived, as opposed to my line of work, I had become one of a very marginal community of non natives, often referred to as 'white trash' or 'squatters' – definitely not 'middle class'.

As the 21st Century arrived, I entered a very dark period of my life in which gradually I sank into a deep and lasting clinical depression. In 2002, at the age of 55, I took early retirement from Kwantlen College. Much of my 17 years had been as a part time contract instructor, so my pension was calculated on the equivalent of 11 years of full time work. As such, the monthly benefit was about \$1000. For the next 5 years, until I received the added benefits of CPP and Old Age pensions, I worked part time as a Music Therapist (I had become qualified in the late nineties).

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It is now 2017. I am 70 years old. My total income is about \$38,000 which will decrease to \$28,000 / year when I retire from my part time music therapy job in the next few years. I live in Vancouver now and rent a one bedroom flat for about \$1100 / month. For the moment, life is pretty good. I am relatively healthy (declining vision due to glaucoma is a problem), I have disposable income, am on good terms with all members of my family, and have become a grandfather to two boys. I say 'for the moment' because there is little security in my situation. Things could change significantly for the worse if (1) my health deteriorates, (2) the landlords decides to sell the house or 'reno-evict', and (3) when I retire or am retired. There is a housing crisis in Vancouver with 0.5% vacancy rate in rental housing. There are waiting lists of several years for social housing and retirement homes. I would find it very difficult to find housing that was available or that I could afford. It is a bizarre situation. All my friends own their homes and hence don't really understand my vulnerability. They don't understand that, as I have been told recently by the one Seniors Housing Counsellor in Vancouver, there are people in my situation who have become homeless. It sounds like an exaggeration but I am assured that is the reality.

In the 2015 book, Social Class In The 21st. Century, the author Mike Savage reports on data collected as part of the 'Great Britain Class Survey' which was launched by the BBC in 2014. There were 325,000 responses to a detailed questionnaire. In addition, there were 1976 face-to-face interviews. On the basis of this research, three main determinants of social class were identified: *economic capital, social capital and cultural capital*. Simply put, economic capital refers to how material wealth you have (income + assets); social capital means who you know in the sense of social networks; and cultural capital refers to social advantage derived from what is seen to have cultural value as far as consumer tastes, knowledge and lifestyle choices are concerned.

The study verifies that individuals can have more status in one area and less in another. For example, some people increased their wealth markedly due to such factors as education, choice of occupation, hard work, and gains in the housing market. However if their background was working

class or lower middle-class, they may have felt inadequate or inferior as regards cultural capital, or held back in the area of social capital due to their family and community roots.

The most significant findings were at the two extreme ends of the class divide. At the top end, the social elite comprised 6% of the total population. They had vastly more economic capital than those below them, much of this due to substantial inheritances and huge increases in property values since the late 1980's. At the other end of the scale, what used to be termed as the 'underclass' is now referred to as 'the precariat'. They are a group who have very low amounts of all the kinds of capital. They comprise about 15% of the population. The term 'precariat' is a combination of the words 'proletariat' and 'precarious'. These days this group tend to be stigmatized by mainstream society as being responsible for their own misfortunes. Research shows, however, that this is an unfair characterization as many people claiming unemployment benefits or welfare "do so over short spells of time in between periods of low-paid, poor quality, precarious, short-term or zero-hours contracted work." (ibid, p. 354)

One of the main differences that separate the upper classes from the lower classes is housing. "There is a stark divide between those who own and those who do not ... *the significance of housing as a source of wealth is that it generates a powerful categorical divide towards the bottom of the economic distribution between those who rent and those who own ... it is partly for this reason, that we might be inclined to place the key economic division, not between manual and non-manual workers – as with the classic middle / working class divide but between a smaller group of the precariat at the bottom of the scale whose paucity of economic capital and their frequent reliance on rented housing is a defining feature of their insecurity and disadvantage and prevents any realistic prospect of getting on to the housing ladder,*" (ibid, p.77-78) (my emphasis)

So the question now is how do I fit into Savage's scheme? (I'm tempted to say 'the Savage Scheme'!) Well, given that I have been a life-time renter, have an income of \$38,000 that will decrease to \$28,000 in a few years, and have savings of under \$50,000 (virtually all of which is inheritance money from my mother, money which I accepted somewhat guiltily), it seems as if I belong to 'the precariat'. Savage points out that downward mobility is unusual and that "only 4% of the precariat come from senior management or traditional professional backgrounds." He goes on to say, "it is actually rather difficult to fall all the way down the mountainside."

Ahem ... OK ... so how did I manage it? I am hard working. I have worked all my life and am still working at the age of 70. I've never gambled. I've never spent much on travel or restaurants or booze. I'll leave it to others who know me to answer that question. However I will mention some factors that figure into the equation somewhere:

- resistance to various aspects of the capitalist system, in particular, property (land) ownership
- choosing to experience occupations at the bottom of the economic ladder for most of my twenties
- the costs of raising 2 children, divorce and child maintenance
- 'precarious' employment as a part-time contract instructor for almost half the time I taught at Kwantlen College (including spells of unemployment)

In terms of economic capital, my situation is precarious. At the time of writing, there is a 0.5% vacancy rate in the rental housing market in Vancouver. The rate of 'renovictions' is increasing (the easiest way for a landlord to break a lease) as is the rate of homelessness. If I was evicted next month, it would be a dire situation. There are long waiting lists for affordable housing, whether subsidized or not. There are equally long lists for admittance to Care Homes, and the costs of the latter exceed, in many instances, what I could afford when I am fully retired.

My social capital is somewhat better. My friends are all solidly middle-class and all but two are home owners. My neighbourhood is a contradictory blend of gentrified folks, student renters, marginal

leftists and street people dumpster diving and sleeping rough.

However I am rich in cultural capital – well educated, active in writing and music, intelligent and politically engaged in one way or another. Savage talks about those who have disconnects and very visible contradictions between the three kinds of capital, those who have more *and* less as opposed to more *or* less.

When I was young I felt somehow guilty if I was seen, by others or myself, as privileged. It was unfair to get either an advantageous or disadvantageous position at the starting line of The Long Run. I realized not so long ago that I also have a lot of hidden shame – feeling despite whatever rationalizations, that I am a failure, I am inadequate ... the shame at belonging, apparently, to the precariat, although at times these feelings of inferiority are replaced by a certain sense of superiority – a kind of idealist's, socialist's snobbery that I have the 'virtue' of belonging more to the proletariat than the middle-class, although probably the category 'intellectual/artist/non-conformist' may be more accurate.

Savage talks of snobbery in Social Class In The 21st. Century. He describes how there was a defensive reaction from most people when asked about 'class': "respondents seemed particularly concerned of the enduring connection between class and snobbery and were keen to guard against any suggestion that they make judgments based on other people's social position. One person is quoted as saying – 'I suppose the basic problem is that I would rather think of people for their inherent value rather than how class.'" (ibid, p. 373) Instead the emphasis is on meritocracy, hard work and equal opportunities for all ... their wealth was 'just desserts', and the conversation would usually be steered to those even more unfortunate than themselves."

Britain, and other western societies, are more meritocratic than in the past but by no means could be called meritocracies. As Savage points out, it all depends on where you start and what assets you have to start with. Meanwhile, the inequalities and inequities of British and North American systems have increased not decreased. Savage concludes his book by saying:

"In order to fundamentally challenge the inequities we have revealed in this study, we need to question the competitive, capitalist, neo-liberal market system itself. The legitimacy of this system depends on it being seen consistent with freedom and equality of opportunity. By questioning this association, we will be better placed to reflect on the power of other, more effective and inclusive models." (ibid, p. 406)

In both the cases of significant upward and downward mobility there is what Savage calls 'emotional politics' at work, associated with feelings of fear, desire, resentment and humiliation. In my case, the emotional politics has been extreme. From being groomed to be a member of the power elite to working in a daycare centre run by Maoists, playing in a blues band, living and working with Aboriginal peoples, to re-entering the middle class through teaching positions, to my present precarious situation, it has been a bumpy ride to say the least.

It is impossible not to compare 'more or less'. My ex-wife owns a house and 19 acres of land on Galiano Island; I rent a one bedroom unit in East Vancouver. My friends own their houses and have larger pensions. A year ago, I joined a bridge group, not out of a wish to gain 'social capital' but because I love games in general, and this game in particular. Once every two weeks, I enter a different world of upscale highrises in Yaletown and glimpse the lifestyle of the relatively wealthy. For several years, My friend Warren invited me to his Christmas party in White Rock. As mentioned before, he is a retired College instructor, and his wife is a doctor. They live in a large three floored house with an ocean view. In addition they own land on Saltspring Island and are building a second residence there. I like both of them immensely and don't find either of them 'snobbish'. However, I feel distinctly uncomfortable at their very popular parties. Because of my experience as an entertainer and music

therapist leading sing-alongs, this became my role at these parties. And that was fine so long as I stayed at the piano. People loved how I was able to animate and enliven the party. They saw, respected and admired my abundant 'cultural capital' and probably made assumptions about I would have corresponding economic capital.

The problem would come when I mingled. Warren's friends are also, by my standards, wealthy and often I would find the conversations would simply not ones I could relate to. For years I had lived in a house without municipal water. At present I live in a house that has virtually no insulation. It is chilly in winter and oppressively hot when the temperature rises in the summer. Many of them would be talking about *their* renters who helped pay their mortgages and I would reflect on how I had been helping landlord's mortgages all my life. I began to recall how black musicians of yesteryear would describe their experiences being the designated entertainers at the parties of the rich and famous. They were there due to their value as entertainers not because of any equivalency in SES. I felt like a misfit. I understood their world but they did not understand mine. Savage reported that the difficulties people from working-class backgrounds had as they became upwardly mobile, had as much to do with their self-doubts as the judgments made, or barriers enacted by others. "Many reported a paralyzing suspicion that they somehow weren't good enough, that they felt like a fraud." (ibid. p. 211)

Sociologists refer to 'status anxiety', being caught between two worlds, not knowing where to fit in. That has been a core experience for me from the start – questions of national, class and cultural identity. Margaret Atwood, in her book Survival, talks about the identity crises of immigrants and how first generation immigrants are usually unhappy and conflicted people. The 'emotional politics' has been fraught with unrelenting stress and has led to traumas of one kind or another.

When I was younger, I rebelled against English classism, imperialism and colonialism. Then I railed again the American and Canadian equivalents, whether WASP, Jewish, Iranian or the current and rapidly growing way in which Vancouver is becoming a colony of Mainland China. Apparently, B.C. admitted over 100,000 millionaire Chinese under the 'immigrant investor program ... a program that has led to money laundering on a huge scale, a housing market that has become unaffordable due to the wild increase in real estate investment, whether second residences that often lie empty or demolition of older housing so as to erect another gleaming, upscale, condo highrise. I don't like Chinese colonialism any more or any less than British or American colonialism.

The contrasts in this city are astounding. The numbers of drug addicts and homeless amaze visitors. And at the same time, the number of luxury cars is astounding. They are everywhere: BMW's, Mercedes, Range Rovers, Porsches, Teslas, even Lamborghinis and Ferraris. The private jets come and go as do the helicopters and the luxury yachts. Private security guards abound as do gated communities. There is an enormous and wide-spread market for sensual / sexual services of one kind or another, a continuum from the abundance of registered massage therapists, to private mobile massage services, to the many escort agencies; from elite private sex clubs that only the chosen know about, to high end brothels, to 'massage' parlours and street walkers.

Vancouver has become a playground for the rich. I was told the other day by the one person employed in Vancouver to deal with affordable housing for seniors that she had an impossible case load in an impossible situation where people in situations similar to mine, got evicted, had terrible problems finding alternative accommodation, in some cases ended up in homeless shelter.

How can I not compare? The Buddhist within manages to supply some equanimity while underneath, the sociologist / socialist rages.