

The Zeitgeist Movement Challenge

The Zeitgeist Movement (TZM) is conducting a challenge, offering a formal platform to anyone who thinks they can legitimately demonstrate that TZM's central thesis of a Natural Law Resource-Based Economy (NLRBE), or part of it, is flawed.

Why are you doing this?

Mirroring Sam Harris' recent "The Moral Landscape Challenge", TZM thinks this will provide a unique platform to further the intellectual pursuit of social and economic sustainability. Any scientific field must be consistently open to new information that can update current understandings. Since TZM deals in what could be considered the broadest scientific field, that being a science of society itself, which of course references all other scientific fields, TZM must be open to new information or new arguments that can alter its advocacy initiatives and understandings.

How does the challenge work exactly?

Submit a no-more-than-1,000 word essay (as a Word doc or PDF) by **July 31, 2014** at 11:59pm PST to: [challenge\(at\)thezeitgeistmovement.com](mailto:challenge@thezeitgeistmovement.com) . One essay per person – please do not send multiple drafts. Essays not conforming to these rules will be automatically disqualified. The essay must challenge TZM's central thesis or part of it – not peripheral issues. Briefly, **here is TZM's broad thesis:**

With our current understanding of science and technological potential, scarcity now has no ecological / technical basis with respect to meeting all our basic human needs. As such, we can formulate a socioeconomic system that provides an access abundance of all such human needs to every human on Earth, alleviating a great majority of the social problems that exist today. This new system, a NLRBE, would redirect human behaviour to express its more positive traits and remove the environmental basis for most of the socially disrupting ones.

The best essay (or as many as 3 if there are more exemplary critiques) will be published on TZM's global website, and each one will be responded to by Global Lecture Team member, Matt Berkowitz. The author(s) of the selected essay(s) will additionally be invited onto the ZM Global Radio show for a discussion. If no essays succeed in reaching an elementary level of cogency, no essay will be responded to – though a statement will be published by TZM to explain this.

The best essay(s) will achieve either of the following:

- a) It will succeed in falsifying part of TZM's central thesis. If so, TZM will publicly announce a shift in its advocacy, or (more unlikely) will concede that its entire thesis is invalid and will cease to exist (at least as it does now).
- b) It will not succeed in falsifying part of TZM's central thesis, but it *will* provide a decent counterargument to or at least helpful reframing of one (or many) of TZM's core advocacy points. This will allow TZM the opportunity to expand on or clarify any potential shortcomings or ambiguities in the way it has thus far presented such points.

Broadly speaking, TZM advocates *the scientific method to maximize human well-being*, and while this advocacy point is technically unfalsifiable (how could you falsify the method of science itself?), many of the specifics that we advocate can certainly be falsified (see next).

How could I expect to successfully challenge the thesis?

Several possible ways (but not limited to):

- You demonstrate that human behaviour is somehow incompatible and irreconcilable to the social conditions of a NLRBE; for example, that human behaviour is not malleable enough to adapt to a new set of environmental conditions.
- You demonstrate that the economic structure of a NLRBE is not viable in some way that TZM has not realized; for example, that economic calculation is somehow not possible without a pricing mechanism or that the technology does not exist to overcome scarcity in at least providing for all basic human needs.
- You can demonstrate that human well-being / public health will be inferior in a NLRBE compared to another socioeconomic model (existing in practice or proposed).

It is recommended that you are somewhat familiar with TZM's extensive literature and video library – TZM's new book called "The Zeitgeist Movement Defined" being the most comprehensive text on TZM's thesis and supporting data and reasoning.

What would make my essay unsuccessful?

Several possible ways:

- You straw man TZM's thesis in any way or commit other obvious logical fallacies.
- You are unaware of various scientific understandings about human behaviour.
- You are unaware of our technological capabilities TZM has determined can provide an access abundance of human needs.

- You focus on peripheral issues, such as a) the difficulty in formulating a transition plan to a NLRBE rather than the viability of a NLRBE itself; b) a singular statement made by Peter Joseph or other Global Lecture Team member that does not affect the validity of TZM's central thesis.

FURTHER Q&A

- 1) Who will be selecting the best essay(s)?

Several members from TZM's Global Lecture Team will be reviewing all submissions and reaching a consensus on which essay(s) to publish.

- 2) How can I possibly refute TZM's thesis in less than 1,000 words?

If what TZM promotes is so flawed as many detractors seem to think, it should be easy. Also, the word limit is being imposed for the sake of time, as it will be a laborious process to read through all submissions. Assuming that the best essay(s) is a good one, it may likely serve simply as an opening statement in further dialogue.

- 3) Isn't this a contest? I thought TZM was generally against competition.

No, it is a challenge in which the best submitted essay(s) will be published on the main TZM website, as well as responded to by Matt Berkowitz of the TZM Global Lecture Team. An ongoing dialogue may continue if deemed appropriate. There may be up to 3 essays published if there are multiple exemplary critiques. Due to time, we have to arbitrarily cut off the essays published at 3. This is not a contest, as no one is considered a winner or loser, but clearly certain arguments are better than others.

- 4) Is there a prize or reward? What will motivate me to submit my essay?

No prizes will be awarded, other than publication of the essay(s) on TZM's global website and an invitation to come on the ZM Global Radio show. Motivation to participate should be the intrinsic desire to advance knowledge and the fulfillment derived from doing so. Should you successfully falsify part of TZM's thesis, you can feel good about catalyzing a shift in TZM's advocacy.

- 5) I have other questions about this – who do I contact?

Contact [challenge\(at\)thezeitgeistmovement.com](mailto:challenge(at)thezeitgeistmovement.com) with the subject title: "TZM Challenge Question".