BEYOND BELIEF

A certain crime show series tells this true story in an episode.

A young girl is convinced she is pregnant.
Her boyfriend gives her money for an abortion.
She doesn’t get one.
He shoots her dead, claims it’s a suicide.
An autopsy reveals the girl wasn’t pregnant.

While this tragic story has a very real ending, it was based entirely on beliefs. Beliefs are thoughts. Like imaginations. They’re stored in places, spaces, we cannot touch. They brew in the pots of our minds and are served from somewhere deep behind our ribs. They are felt, but not handled.

Virtual reality. That’s it. Not real reality. Real reality slaps in the face, grabs ahold of body parts. Real doesn’t care about beliefs, and beliefs don’t like to admit that real even exists.

Beliefs come along to help when real fights us. Real can’t be avoided, and it can be a sticky nuisance. Real is often unfriendly, authoritarian, and can be hard to like. Beliefs can be kind and cuddly and supporting. We can make them that way. They change, adjust their fit, reverse themselves, or remain the same. It’s all up to the believer. Beliefs can overcome reason by exaggerating feeling. Beliefs are powerful ways to command others. Shared beliefs can help deceive, mislead, and hide what’s true. Stirred up they can even inspire swearing by what’s false.

Religion is beliefs.
Economics is beliefs.

Economics is like religion.
Economics is religion. Our religion.

Economics gives us principles to believe in and makes promises to hope for. Getting is its highest principle and wealth the grandest hope. Without wealth, there’s only a looming social damnation for having less than others. Material wealth is there if only you will reach for it, says the religion.

For a while, everyone believed the earth was flat, and sailors sent to explore the edges learned they didn’t fall off when they got there. They couldn’t even find the edges. The sea went on and on, until ships ended back where they began. They got nowhere. Economics is like that. We aim towards places we’re told are real. But, it’s a real that exists only in unreal parts of our heads. We never find it. But we’re religious, and saints persist. So onward towards that glittery golden edge.

Religion tells us what’s bad and what’s good. What’s good is us, and what’s bad is others. Ask anyone who is religious. That’s because religion offers ways to ignore a believer’s bads while holding others fully to blame for theirs. Our economics religion does that nicely.

Economics says my having what I have is just, while your having what you have is questionable, and it is right that I should try to get yours from you. More is spiritual. More for me. Competition. Winning. Even for things you truly need, it doesn’t matter. The religion says it’s your own fault if you never got them, or had them and lost them. Simply, you didn’t earn them or do the things that would get them and keep them without your earning them. So, it’s right that I get and keep what I can, and work for you to get and keep little. So I can have more, even get yours, and get myself to where I’m going.

The edge is out there. It must be a wonderful place. I know it, because I believe it.