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(“Enriqueca e deixe enriquecer”)

Get Rich and Let Others Get Rich Too

By various writers

Translation by Joao Martins

Envy is usually an underestimated factor for ideological motivation. Those that turn greed into an evil, like vampires in front of a mirror, never drown out the power of envy. The German sociologist Helmut Schoeck used to say, “a jealous man believes that if his neighbor breaks his leg, he himself can better walk”. This is a joke analogous to the populist discussions that promote enriching the poor by impoverishing the rich. Unless it is promoting theft, which some are effectively doing, this argument is nothing more than demagoguery.

The envious one doesn't just want what others have. He wants others not to have it at all. Much more than ambitious, the envious one is destructive. Envy doesn't impel that through hard work, society will enrich itself, but instead the destruction of the rich society. This sin of egoism is hidden under a tautological disguise. It revolts against capitalism by alleging that it is an economic system where the poor suffer a material disadvantage and the rich possess nothing but the best. However, that is what it means to be rich. Being rich is having the best. It is having access to the best schools, hospitals, and goods. Being rich is not simply carrying around a lot of banknotes in your pocket. If we say that someone who has 100 million dollars is rich, we have to consider the consumption possibilities of this money. Meanwhile, if this millionaire were to wake up in the 18th century, his fortune of Benjamin Franklins would be dependent on the interest in these “prints”. Wealth is not dependent on the cash benefit itself, but instead on its capacity for consumption. To say that the rich possess the best goods would be redundant. To be against this fact would show both ignorance and envy.

The wealthy and the poor are not exclusive to capitalism. Every economy has its wealthy. In feudalism, the wealthy were the nobles; in communism, they were the members of the establishment. The difference is that in a free market, members of society vote for their rich instead of the rich coming exclusively from the aristocracy. Wealth continually changes hands. The choice of who should be materially compensated in society rests on the consumers. They are the ones who choose what to purchase; they are in a constant state of voting, voting for whom they consider to make the best use of resources and penalizing the worst competitors. Wealth, in a free market, is not gained via a title of nobility, nor political membership. It is acquired by providing society with what it desires most. The difference between Bill Gates and Fidel Castro's wealth is the analogous to the difference between a free market and restricted one. Fidel was able to amass his fortune by force, compulsively pillaging his own people. While on the other

hand, Gates had to conquer millions of consumers, offering them products they were inclined to buy.

Contrary to Schoeck, in a free market, the healthier our neighbor is, the better we can walk. Poor neighbors mean fewer business opportunities. Furthermore, the interactions in the market occur because the two sides, the buyer and seller, expect to better off with trade. Even if one side comes out gaining more than the other, as long as individuals are free to interact in the market, both sides will be richer. Generally speaking, countries that have the richest poor are the most economically free countries. In these countries, the annual income of the poorest is \$6,451 versus \$1,185 in less free nations.

The enrichment itself does not produce any collateral damage when it occurs freely and voluntarily via production and trade. On the other hand, if it is based on compulsory measures including redistributive taxation, the granting of privilege, then there is injustice.

A society is not impoverished because there are many rich; however, it does impoverish when there are many envious thieves.