

3.2.2.3.2.30 Wealth is a golden-cage trap

INDIVIDUAL WEALTH IN CURRENT SOCIETIES

On the individual level, too much wealth is not beneficial in any current society. In any current society, if people are really wealthy, their wealth takes away their freedom, in a very practical, or impractical way.

Substantial wealth attracts attention, both politically and by the media, and envy by neighbors and the consumers of mass media. Attention and envy result in social control.

The only real values in life are a comfortable death, and before that, during one's lifetime, optimal sex. To possess a luxury villa, even with its own golf course, is no genuine value. Not if it's a golden cage.

Most very rich men and women, and most famous men and women, have bad sex. Their richness or fame overly restricts them: paparazzi, or the press in general, take good care that wherever they go, they will behave (because they have a reputation to lose). There are few opportunities of the only kind that matters: new sexual opportunities.

Wealth, in current societies, only is useful if it is hidden wealth. If one can live one's life without being under surveillance, but have the resources to experiment where one wants to live, or to live parallel lives. But one can not be as rich as Bill Gates, or any other billionaire, and keep one's wealth a secret. Thus, to be rich is an asset only to a certain point, and after that, in current societies, it becomes a liability.

Known wealth and fame are counterproductive not only for sexual opportunities but also for the primary aspect that really counts in life: a comfortable death.

One may look at poor Ariel Sharon! Any other person they would have permitted to die a comfortable death from such a massive stroke. But Ariel Sharon was kept alive by medical technology because he was an important politician.

He was placed in an artificial coma, and when doctors reduced the amount of sedatives, they proudly proclaimed before TV cameras: Ariel Sharon responds to pain stimuli!

Yes, one can imagine him strapped to the wires of a neurology professor, just like a laboratory chimpanzee, and when the professor sends a voltage through the wires, then they both respond to pain stimuli: the lab chimp and Ariel Sharon after his stroke.

To marry too rich is just as bad as becoming too rich in one's own right. It's a circumstance that can easily result in neuroses, which Sigmund Freud tried to cure. Rich, gold-caged wives were Sigmund Freud's primary patients. The wives of poor men (who were not kept in golden cages) also had problems, but they did not get the mental disorder called neurosis.

Neuroses typically develop in a materially rich environment, which is overly organized. Inappropriately organized. There is a definite connection between the richness of an environment, and the degree to which it is wrongly organized. Organizing an environment requires material resources in the same manner as in physics, any kind of order requires an input of energy.

NATIONAL WEALTH IN CURRENT SOCIETIES

Unfortunately, whenever a current human society gets richer, it is more likely to organize itself inappropriately rather than in an appropriate manner.

For example in the Muslim world. While there have been poor Muslim societies that also were repressive, the likelihood of repression in Muslim societies by and large is proportional to the degree to which a country has achieved wealth.

Thus, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Brunei are more repressive than Morocco and Indonesia. Repression and social control require resources, which poor countries don't have.

It's often better for the citizens if the countries do not have the resources needed to proceed too far on the organizing path.

People usually are not aware of what they want. Furthermore, they often lack the intellectual capacity to understand what is good for them, and for this reason, it is often better if a government, especially a democratically elected one, doesn't have the material resources to implement too many policies, even of a kind the people presumably want.

One can meet many Saudi Arabian men who are so frustrated with the situation in their own country that they regularly go abroad for sexual adventures. But at the same time, they express that they are Muslims, and that Saudi Arabia is organized appropriately along Islamic rules. It's an anachronism that many Saudi men are not capable of resolving intellectually.

If their country would be poorer, there would be an increased probability that this anachronism would not develop, or at least not develop in as pronounced a manner.

While people want to be protected by a state, they also don't want to be restricted by a state. For the people, it is often best if a state is just rich enough to protect its citizens, but not rich enough to organize much more.

There are many more cases in which a country's richness has resulted in an environment less appropriate for happiness, compared with when a country was less rich. Like Singapore.

People used to live in shop houses, often with less than adequate sanitation. These shop houses also functioned as work spaces, and they were so crowded that many activities took place outside the shop houses, in the alleyways.

But the Singaporean government has striven for years to provide modern living quarters for all its citizens, and that's what they have

achieved. Most Singaporeans now live in flats, and the members of the older generation, which used to be accommodated in crowded condition with their children and grandchildren, have been provided with their own units in high-rise apartment blocks. And instead of communicating with their neighbors and taking part in the daily activities in crowded alleyways, they now pass their days alone, watching soaps. What a fine progress! It's the wealth trap.

But many of these old Singaporeans don't know what to be discontented with. The Singaporean government watched over the country developing from Third World into First World (that's how they say it) in about 30 years. That can't be bad! To be rich can't be wrong! And the governing political party is reelected with huge majorities every time Singaporeans go to a poll.

Elections! Conventional theory presumes that people know what their interests are, and vote in accordance with their aspirations. But most people cannot articulate, not in words and not even in mental images, what they want, and still much less what is in their genuine interest. Singaporean elders who feel bored in their flats will not understand the wealth trap, and continue to elect the government that made the country rich.

In Southeast Asia, many backpackers prefer the poorer countries: Vietnam over China, Cambodia over Thailand, Indonesia over Singapore. They think that in the preferred countries, the people are friendlier. They do not realize that they like these countries because they are poorer, and this means, most of all: less organized. There is much more charm to the disorganization that comes with poverty than to the order that comes with richness.

There furthermore is a clear tendency that the pleasures which are pursued in poor countries are more genuine than those that are emphasized in rich countries. Because in rich countries, people have money to spend, they are consumers. Consumers are targeted by those who want to sell something.

But industrially manufactured pleasures (ranging from video games to soccer matches, and from Hollywood dramas to TV shows, or from hair styling to show-off cars) are ersatz pleasures. In order for people to be paying consumers of ersatz pleasures, there must be a certain

degree of deprivation when it comes to genuine pleasures (sexual satisfaction).

There is a massive commercial interest in desexualizing society, or rather: in attaching “sexuality” to consumer products, rather than letting people have uncomplicated sexual intercourse.

This all contributes to the wealth trap: that people are less happy when they are rich than when they were poor. And less happy in their rich societies than they were when their societies were poorer.