

### 3.2.2.3.2.33 Personal interests instead of a common good

Ultimately, because humans have an elaborate self, humans are individuals. The elaborate self is based on individual emotion-tagged memory, individual thoughts, and individual motivations. And every human dies his or her own death.

Humans, of course, live in societies for mutual benefits. But it is an intellectual fallacy, and an illusion, to attribute life to social formations or societies. Families, clubs, political parties, educational institutions, or societies, or nations don't have a life, even though they have processes that look like digestion (the consumption of goods and the disposal of waste) and reproduction. Social formations even have stored knowledge (in the form of books) and immune systems (in the form of ambulances).

But social formations don't have motivations. Only individual members of social formations have.

And social formations don't have emotions. Only individual members have.

However, the more cooperation there is in social formations, and the more individual members of a social formation identify with a certain social formation, the more successful the social formation will likely be. The ultimate proof for identifying with social formations, or societies, or nations, is the willingness to die for it.

On a less dramatic scale, the degree in which individuals believe in a common good, and are willing to subordinate themselves to a common good, will determine the competitiveness, the success, and the wealth of a social formation, society, or nation.

Unfortunately, this success further de-individualizes such social formations, societies, and nations, and it does so not only theoretically, but with many practical implications. These social formations, societies, and nations curtail personal freedom; personal

freedom gets sacrificed, and commandeered, for an illusionary common good.

## THE DISTRIBUTION OF RICH NATIONS

Most rich nations are in the North of the globe, and most poor countries are in the South, but it's not geography that causes wealth or poverty. After all, Australia and New Zealand are part of the Southern hemisphere, and both are rich. One couldn't say this of Papua New Guinea, which is the country closest to Australia.

A superficial view is to blame racial differences. Black Africa is the poorest and most disordered part of the world, and Haiti, with an almost entirely black population, is the poorest country of the Americas. But the coincidence is accidental.

What makes some countries rich, and others prone to poverty is not related to skin color or racial factors. Many immigrants from poor nations do very well in the US and Canada (though both countries are likely to make immigration easy only for quality people from Third World countries).

## NATURAL RESOURCES

It is also not the presence or lack of natural resources that makes a country rich or poor in the long run. Japan is a country with very limited natural resources, and it has been the richest country in Asia for a long time. On the other hand, it is easy to predict that some Third World countries that currently are rich because of immense reserves of natural wealth while not being burdened with large populations, will slide back when the natural resources are depleted.

## THE ERRONEOUS BELIEF IN A COMMON GOOD AS SOURCE OF NATIONAL WEALTH

But why are the people of some countries doing well, in spite of the destruction brought by lost wars, and in spite of the lack of natural resources, or an unfavorable climate?

There are many aspects that determine how well, or how badly, a country will fare economically.

Some aspects relate to the attitudes of people (and the roots of such attitudes can date back many generations). But sometimes, it's just a matter of the political system (like in the case of North and South Korea).

Educational systems certainly play a role. Richer countries typically have better educational systems, and the discrepancy normally reaches back more than just a generation or two.

Furthermore, in some cultures, parents and the society put more value on education than in others. Societies that have been influenced by Confucian teaching, from Singapore to Korea, will likely feature more educational drill than, for example, Islamic societies.

As in protestant Christianity, societies guided by Confucian teachings will also be more likely to regard business success as a consequence of righteousness, thus propagating an ideology that is conducive to the accumulation of riches.

One aspect that determines the likelihood of economic success in a given society is the emphasis, or lack of emphasis, that is put on the common good. This emphasis can be measured by the degree to which, emotionally or consciously, people agree that a common good justifies restrictions on the individual, including oneself. It could also be described as the degree to which the members of a society are willing to forego individual advantages if thereby a larger advantage is secured for the community.

A cultural mentality that emphasizes self-sacrifice for the common good has played a major role in the economic development of Japan and other East Asian nations in the second part of the 20th century.

From the perspective of the individual with advanced self-cognition, emphasizing the common good (and therefore solidarity) sometimes makes sense, but ultimately it doesn't. When emphasizing the common good results in an advantage for the individual during his lifetime, it is philosophically sound for the individual to act in solidarity. When such an advantage cannot be derived during a person's lifetime, or when such an advantage cannot be realistically

expected, it makes better sense for the individual to emphasize his or her own good, and not the common good.

From the perspective of a society as a whole, it may be better when individual members of a society always emphasize the common good, even when it would lead to self-destruction. It is for this anachronism that sometimes, societies based on an irrational ideology, even a foolish religion, can be stronger, and economically stronger, than societies in which the people have a philosophically more sound approach towards the question of when to emphasize the common good, and when one's individual advantage.

While lip service is paid to the common good anywhere around the globe, the degree to which individuals are put under restrictions, or choose self-restriction, for the common good varies from society to society.

## ETHNIC HOMOGENITY

If a society is ethnically homogenous to a very high degree (as are, for example, Japan and South Korea), it will be more likely that individuals will strongly identify with the community, and thus be willing to emphasize the common good.

The opposite situation exists in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa where the borders of countries have been determined by colonial European powers. In a worst-case scenario, newly independent nations were made up of two major ethnic groups who have been bitter enemies in pre-colonial times, and who then competed for dominance over the newly independent state. Such creations have spelled humanitarian disaster in various central African countries.

Better off are countries that have just one dominant ethnic group, combined with a multitude of smaller ethnic groups.

However, any country that is fractionated into ethnic groups that not only compete with each other but also hate each other will make identification with a common good more difficult than a country with an ethnically homogenous population.

The lack of ethnic homogeneity, to a certain degree, explains why the economies of countries of sub-Saharan Africa fare so poorly. Africa is by far the ethnically most fractionated continent of the earth, and practically no country there has boundaries that match ethnic territories. The people primarily identify with their clans, and beyond their clans, they identify with their ethnic relatives (by and large those who speak the same language). People don't identify with their central governments, and not even with the organizational structures of the town they live in. This creates an atmosphere that isn't conducive to economic development. Hence, these countries are poor and will likely stay poor.

In spite of the rules and restrictions, governments in African countries try to impose, the sociopolitical and economic systems of many of these countries are best classified as radically liberal. They are so liberal that even physical violence is a tool of commerce. And because being out of power often is synonymous with being repressed, a common attitude towards political change of those in government is to not accept it if one can avoid it. Any party or politician will subscribe to democratic principles if they help into power or preserve power. But if democratic principles favor opponents, the principles are abandoned, not the claim to power.

It is an attitude shared by many a common man and many a common woman in Third World countries. Most people in Third World countries have a good sense on what is advantageous for them and what isn't, and they don't have qualms to abandon principles or change sides when it is advantageous for them.

The above also explains corruption. Corruption is not just a problem of political systems; it's an attitude problem in countries where people are little inclined to accept personal disadvantages for the common good, or where they are quick to take personal advantage at the expense of the common good.

For many ethnically fractionated Third World countries, especially in Africa, an important first step for economic development would be the creation of smaller countries along ethnic boundaries, as this would likely allow a country's people to better identify with a common good.

The trend towards smaller countries of course already exists in the Third World. Newly established countries include Eritrea and Timor (with Somaliland a candidate in line), and civil wars or low intensity conflicts for independence along ethnic lines are fought in many parts of the Third World.

## IDENTIFICATION WITH TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES

Countries with respected traditional authorities are in a better position to be wealthy nations. In countries like Thailand and Japan, where monarchies are revered, they contribute to the identification of individual members of society with a common good, represented by the monarchy. By contrast, many of the poorest countries of the world are so-called republics where there isn't even a respected presidency.

Yes, there are numerous other factors that determine economic success; but other factors being equal or just comparable, the degree to which the individual members of a society emphasize the common good reliably predicts how well a society will fare economically.

## ROAD TRAFFIC AS INDICATOR

One can measure the degree to which, in daily life, the individual members of a society value the common good through a simple indicator: road traffic

When a large number of participants in road traffic are willing to give way because it makes sense for traffic flow overall, people uphold the common good versus individual advantages. The opposite is a me-first attitude, even at red lights. Traffic chaos indicates little respect for the common good, as well as the inability of the authorities to implement rules of the common good against me-first traffic participants. Either way, traffic chaos indicates a decreased likelihood for successful economic development, while countries in which road traffic discipline is observed will usually do much better.

Traffic discipline is excellent in Northern Europe and North America, which goes hand in hand with countries in these locations being the richest in the world. Traffic discipline is better in Bangkok than in

Manila or Jakarta, which is in line with the development progress in the respective countries over the past decades. Traffic rules are largely ignored in much of sub-Saharan Africa.

Road traffic conditions are an easily observable overall indicator for the likely economic development path of a country in the coming years. In Third World countries, the degree of observance of traffic regulations corresponds fairly well to the economic development potential. In general, one will find that the less the people of a country are willing to put the common good ahead of their own personal advantage, the less a country will develop economically.

### OVER-EMPHASIZING THE COMMON GOOD

Societies are all the more likely to prosper the more its members are willing to emphasize the common good over individual advantage, even to the point of self-sacrifice. From the perspective of self-cognition, on which Kreutz Ideology is based, this is wrong.

Christianity and Islam have both heavily benefited from the willingness of its disciples to give their lives for the ideals of their religions.

However, just as a genetic trait doesn't become philosophically true because it procreates itself, a philosophical idea doesn't become any more sensible because it gives its followers the strength to out-compete those who have other philosophical ideas.

Once people have achieved enough self-cognition, and are aware of their individual deaths, people realize that the only sensible individual values are optimal sexual experience, and after that, a comfortable death.

Genes, however, have only one interest: to reproduce themselves.

People know that it is their interest to avoid suffering. However, the interest of genes is to reproduce at all costs, at any magnitude of suffering.

It is therefore quite obvious that there is a fundamental conflict between individual interests and the interests of genes. Individual

interests make philosophical sense, but it's genes that form the next generation, and it's in their interest to negate the cited philosophical truth.

That lunatic religious belief systems can force themselves on societies doesn't make them any more true.

The same is applies to over-emphasizing the common good, or any form of religious, political, or military self-sacrifice. Al Qaida a suicide bombers, Catholic martyrs, and Japanese kamikaze pilots... all cases of misguidance.

Just as the medieval Irish mayor James Lynch in England who himself executed the death sentence against his son Walter because he had slain a Spanish foreigner.

The Mayor who hanged his own son

All for the sake of justice, a presumed common good.

Logically examined, many European cultural values fall into the same category of a lack of mental health.

This includes Kant's categorical imperative, an attempted philosophical proof for moral principles. The categorical imperatives can be translated into simple axioms, for example that one ought not to do to others what one doesn't want done to oneself. But there really is no logical foundation why anyone should not want to do to others what he doesn't want done on himself. It's like trying to convince cats not to eat mice because they do not want to be eaten by dogs.

Nevertheless, Kantian philosophy, just as Christianity, both of which result in an over-emphasizing of the common good, have contributed to the cultural and economic supremacy of the West, of which the current world order still is a legacy.