

Thought for the Week

Money

We have worn out the arguments for a fairer distribution of wealth. They just end up with everyone competing for more. This is because we believe that money is a good thing and the more you have the better it gets. How about looking at economics from a different angle?

What if everyone competed to have less? Wealth, I believe, is a destructive burden, which almost no one carries easily. Because you can have anything if you are rich, there is nothing you really want. You will never know who your friends are (or if you have any) because you can buy people. You will never have to overcome obstacles. You will never be allowed to step outside your group. You won't be allowed to think for yourself. You will live in fear. You are inside this stultifying cage. On the outside are people in real need. The pain of seeing (or trying not to see) others in need is screwing you up. Surely, it should be possible to put the two together? You could be free of fear and suffer less guilt if you gave away your money.

I am sorry for the rich. I was born rich and gave away my money in my twenties. If I had kept it, I would have spent it on houses because I love Georgian architecture, so now I'd be very rich. Giving it away was the best decision I ever made. I felt, and still feel, that saving is wrong. How can I have money I don't need when other people are starving? Giving changes the whole situation. If you give stuff away, you create a vacuum into which more stuff flows.

Generosity breeds generosity. You don't do it with that intention. It's a whole different area of the brain from economics, but if you take the first leap, you're into a different set of laws. Gratitude takes over from fear. If you don't have to think in terms of economics you free the brain to think in other directions. Gratitude breeds plenty, whereas fear makes everyone tight. There is an inner world that I might never have reached if I had spent all my time in the outer world.

You're not going to say 'what if everyone did it?' Are you? If everyone did it, we could have a different system of economics. You don't see how it works and nor do I. But it worked for me.

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Painswick Meeting