

Death by Compassion

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There are lots of monopolies around: One for health, one for security, one for education. There is even a monopoly for compassion.

The Ultimate Monopoly

The compassion that has been monopolised is that which we are to show to ourselves - expressed in government regulations to protect us from, for example, drug abuse. We do therefore have to cope with the resulting street crime, whether we want to abuse drugs or not. To our neighbours we are to show compassion - through the welfare state and therefore we are all poorer than we would be without having to pay for the rock-bottom services the government is forcing us to buy. We are also to show compassion to strangers - strangers in strange lands.

There goes a myth that in order to develop a sensible economy, a place that is poor needs to have money pumped into it from some richer place. This has been practised on all sorts of levels: Welfare states do it to individuals and groups of individuals; regional grants do it to certain areas inside a country and aid does it to whole countries.

Adam Re-visited

If there is any truth in this myth, the implications are intriguing indeed: A family that is below subsistence level can only be helped from the outside, it says, and the same is claimed for a city and a country. At the moment there are indeed some countries that are not below subsistence level and that is where the money for aid is taken from. However, if we go back in history far enough we will come to the day where this wasn't so. At some point, we have reached the stage, where our ancestors had hardly crossed that barrier that distinguishes human life from the rest of animal life and then we will cross that barrier back into the common animal world and find the ancestors of man living just like the birds in the field (or garden) which do not sow nor harvest and of whom the great

Charles Darwin writes: "I estimated that the winter of 1854-55 destroyed four-fifths of the birds in my own grounds; and this is a tremendous destruction ...". So at one time all of mankind was below subsistence level and if the theory above is correct then a space-ship must have landed at some time bringing with it creatures similar enough to men to appreciate his plight and compassionate enough and advanced enough to offer interplanetary aid. These creatures must have come from a place that was rich right from the beginning, or at some time in their history a spaceship must have landed on their planet ...

Man's Greatest Asset

Well, perhaps that's not utterly impossible, but there are two reasons why I would class it as so unlikely that I believe we can safely exclude it from our considerations:

First there is no evidence for man's having been helped to develop in this way, while there is a lot of evidence for man's having developed in quite a different way.

And second it would have been the only known incident in which such a scheme would have worked and that such a scheme might work is again so absolutely unlikely that it can be ruled out for all realistic purposes.

Man didn't stay where the birds still are (unless they are kept by man). He didn't stay there because he started to sow and harvest. To start this he didn't need foreign currency nor gold nor food that others had left over. What he needed was to walk upright to be able to use his hands. He needed to be able to stay in one place; to find shelter from too much heat, to find a source of heat when it was cold at night and a source of light when it was dark.

The first crossing of the threshold between man and beast was accomplished when man realized that fire can do other things than destroy, that it can give warmth and light. And that is the fundamental difference between ourselves and the other animals up to this day: We learned the use of fire. All

else was a mere consequence thereof. The use of fire totally changed man's life-style: He could settle, he learned agriculture. Consequently not all his time was taken up by the search for food so he could improve his dwelling place as well and his protection against wild beasts (and other men). Once he had settled, there was time to think and to grow. I would argue then, that there never was an need for foreign aid and that all that is needed for man to climb above the level of subsistence he has picked up through evolution a long time ago and he already carries within himself. The greatest asset man has is man.

Culture-shock

But then, why does this simple principle seem to be working in some places while in others it doesn't? Could it be the climate as in Singapore? Perhaps it is the previous colony status as in the USA? Or the low prices of raw materials such as in Australia?

The countries I have named above are rich or at least reasonably well off. They all have a similar background and similar climatic conditions to those countries where people seem to need aid. I suggest we look for the causes of poverty elsewhere. When man took his first steps out of the animal world there was something lacking that is now firmly established: There was nobody there to tell these people that they were "destroying their culture" nor that fire was dangerous and that they had no right to subject themselves and others to the risks of accidents.

Life-Science

Let us look at these two propositions: The cultural background that a primitive people has had so far will obviously not be annihilated by that people's technological and scientific development. It will develop along with the people. Nobody would seriously deny, I should think, that we ourselves have modified our culture drastically. Hardly any of us live in the framework of medieval thinking, when people burned witches with the best possible conscience. Through continuously raising the level of science and technology man has softened the immediate hardships of his environment enough that he can allow

himself to develop sentiments that go further than the will to survive. Man has begun to care about his fellow-man beyond the requirements of his genetic make-up. Many people would deny this and point in horror to such incidents as Auschwitz or Hiroshima or perhaps even Peking, chiming that such catastrophes have come about through our modifying our culture. This is factually false. The slaughter of the weak by the strong and the extinction of whole peoples by some crazy tyrant are nothing exceptional in human history. They used to be the norm. The only thing that was new was the absolute number of casualties. This did arise through technology: Without science and technology such a large number of people would not have been available to kill. They couldn't have lived in the first place. It would however have been feasible to kill all the people available - literally. In such cases there were no survivors in ancient times once the tyrant decided he didn't want any.

Peace Evolves as Man Evolves

The other thing that has changed is this: The rest of the world, those people that are not immediately involved, show concern. They do not just show concern because they are afraid that similar things might happen to themselves, they show concern and they bemoan the fact that such as this could happen to any human being at all. And *that* is the decisive difference which the modification of our culture has achieved. This, I suggest, is a natural result of evolution. If an individual should have genes to make him decide that he doesn't want to live himself, there isn't much chance he will survive to pass on that information. We can however imagine that some individuals may decide to go round killing others. This will make it very profitable for others to defend themselves. Unless we find there is a situation of such shortages that the question can only be whether you or the other person will survive, it will soon become more profitable for the individual to risk being killed himself while trying to kill others, and therefore aggression will die down. At the same time it is also profitable for people not to have to use their strength and resources to defend themselves and therefore a development will occur that will favour not only the diminution of their own violent

tendencies but also the discouragement of like tendencies in others. When left to itself a civilisation will evolve through a stage that will give people food to a stage that will give them peace. There is a system inherent in nature towards which evolution strives that can increasingly improve the chances of human survival as well as the conditions of human survival, and whoever treasures these will have to work from within that system.

Surviving Technically

So let us consider the dangers that technology and science are said to have created. We do not create anything that doesn't already exist in nature in one form or another, we just make use of some properties of already existing things and put them together in some clever way. We cannot produce a catastrophe that nature can't produce also. We know that nature will eventually destroy life on earth, the earth itself, the solar system and so forth. If we modify and use some of the properties of nature it will not lose its destructiveness. There is the possibility to destroy. But that has not been newly created. So far there was the eventual *certainty* of destruction one way or another. What has been created is a chance of averting that destruction. And from the argument above it should follow that as technology creates the chance to avert destruction, so evolution creates the desire to avert it. The simple truth is that we can either take chances or we have no chance.

As some of mankind has fallen behind, there is only one thing to do: Let them catch up. This is possible after all just as they can use the fact that fire has been tamed already, they can also use the fact that the transistor has been invented. But they must build on what there is and if all else would fail them. there would always be that ultimate asset left to them: Their power as humans to plough and harvest.

The True Causes of Hunger

This power has been broken. That is the real reason behind the calamity of the "Third World". It is does them no good to plough and harvest. Their governments have imposed controls on food prices and therefore it is not worth the farmer's while to

produce anything above his personal needs - except for the black market. Their governments' policy of under-pricing creates shortages just as certainly as our own EC's over-pricing creates gluts. The official low prices won't do their population any good as there is nothing there to buy at those prices. In the black market where there is plenty to buy they will have to pay for the food, the risk the person who sells it is taking, the soldiers he is bribing and the fact that there is nothing else available and if they can pay. they will. Most of them can't. Deregulation would resolve the problem within a few years - as it did in India for example - and that would be the end to a problem that no amount of money pumped into it could make anything but worse.

Catastrophic as EC-regulations might seem to us, they are at least not under - but over-pricing and therefore create a glut which is sold off for a symbolic fee to the Soviet Union and other tyrannies. We are not starving. But we do have some equivalent of what is happening in those "Third World Counties": Our very own housing problem, rent controls have made sensible private letting impossible. The result is a lack of affordable housing on the white market and horrendous rents on a "black market" generally called "holiday accommodation" etc. The customer has no choice, so if he can buy, he will.

How to Beat the Tyrants

World hunger is not produced by droughts or colonialism or the World Bank. It is produced by government controls. The money that government aid is pumping into the "Third World" is not going to the people. It is going to the governments that are causing them to starve and it is strengthening those very governments. Even much of private aid is not going to the people, it is often going to organisations that are owned by or associated with such institutions as the United Nations or the World Council of Churches which are renowned for their support of every tyrannical and despotic government this world holds.

Aid is a monopoly in compassion that is deadly. The first step to real compassion would be to make it very clear to our own

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population that those governments are *deliberately* starving their people. The rulers are leading the lives of absolute, feudal lords over a population that is held in its position by its appalling poverty. A hand grenade costs about as much as twenty eggs, it is therefore of the greatest interest to a despotic tyrant that none of the people he enslaves can afford twenty eggs.

We should at least avoid supporting these tyrants. If there is a way to weaken them enough to give the people they hold hostage a chance to free themselves it is certainly morally acceptable to take it. Most of all we should try to offer an alternative right here where we can have some influence. A country with economic freedom that is not bound by welfare policies and by the pressure groups that these bring about can open its borders and say to the rest of the world " *Give me your tired, your poor ..*" And that is the only realistic way to help strangers: To allow them into our midst.