

Common Thoughts: Fair & Unfair

by
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In a study I undertook in *Shaping How We Think*, under the title “Social Justice versus Justice” I wrote this:

“Social justice is not an ancient term or concept but a modern one. The “general society” spoken of by Aristotle little resembles both the first usage of social justice, and certainly not the metamorphosing of that term in the Marxist concept it became. Social justice from the beginning was about groups, or categories of people, while justice from the very beginning of time was about individuals. Justice for the individual would end up justice for all.”

I’m not going to repeat this study, but in reading a tirade about the injustices in our society, how justice and social justice were defined was that fairness was lost—assuming there was “fairness” in the first place—with the lower classes or common people losing out, I’m going to respond to this typical Marxist rhetoric.

The new charge of “white privilege” is that whites—and who are they?—get fairer treatment in all they do than non-whites. Society tilts fairness upwards, not downwards, and “whites”—again who are they?—both consciously and unconsciously are treated with fairness.

We go to odd definitions in our attempt to prove our favorite social justice constructs. A while back I looked at one of these constructs that females are totally free proven by their natural right to kill their unborn child. What an odd definition of freedom. The modern feminist movement that took root in the 1960’s, helped by activist Betty Friedan and her very popular book *The Feminine Mystique*, built their construct for the value of women by their value as workers in the marketplace. To do that they devalued women who stayed at home and raised families. To prove their vision of feminism, “woke” women attacked their own in a version of “us versus them.” The idea of value defined in terms of us versus them made female homemakers then, and white males now, evil. As regarding white males, their very presence harms non-privileged people of color. As women being free, this is seen in killing. As women having value, this is only seen in their working outside the home and homemakers hurting that image. And inclusive is defined as everyone included except those who support Trump, who are heterosexual, are white, are male, are conservatives, are non-liberal women, and the list is longer for those excluded than those included. What an odd way to define inclusive.

All this is clearly political argument. Certainly those complaining don’t see it that way but when you read and hear their pontifications, it’s political. I’m not going to get into a political debate. We can

argue politics all day and night and never reach a consensus. Why is that? Because each of us have different, though also some similar, definitions of “fair.” This is especially true when the context for fair is couched inside political theater.

So what is fair? Fundamentally, ontologically, fair? Do we have an a priori, intuitive understanding of fair? Does this fair universally apply to every person in every place at every time in history, now, and future? The assumption I got from reading this complaint that others had things (money in particular) was that every individual person had a fundamental right to the same amount of money as the next person, that no one had a fundamental right to more. That it was unfair if someone had more.

The social philosophical idea behind wealth redistribution is just this; there is an amount that all should have—no more no less—so those who have more it must be taken from them and given to those who have less (fairness). If I have \$100 and you have \$50 then \$50 must be taken from me and given to you so you now have \$100. But wait, now I only have \$50. That’s not fair, is it? To make it even, then I must have \$150 so if \$50 is taken from me and given to you then we both have the allotted \$100. Are we happy now? Can we all go home in peace?

The City of Seattle is on the warpath for social justice, in particular a fair wage. A local ordinance raised the minimum wage to as much as \$11 an hour in 2015, then as much as \$13 in 2016, and now in 2019 to \$16 an hour. While the first raise had negligible impact, thereafter it caused at least a 6.9 percent loss of employed workers in the city.

Take for instance the story of Heidi and Karam Mann who fifteen years ago purchased a Subway franchise in Seattle. Nine years later they bought a second franchise located outside Seattle. When in 2016 the wage went up to \$13 an hour they had to lay off four of their seven employees even after raising the prices on their sandwiches. While it was a nice raise for the remaining three the laid off four ended up with no money per hour. The trap the Mann’s found themselves in is that while they own the franchise it is still part of the larger company and the company as a whole has over 500 employees, and even though they aren’t corporate employees but individual franchise owners’ employees they are subject to the higher wages. They are looking now to closing the Seattle store. Is there a real winner here? Doesn’t this beg the question of fair? Fair for some wasn’t fair for all and it was sold on the premise that it would be fair for all.

In his book, *The Cave and the Light*, Arthur Herman comments on Aristotle’s writing, *Politics*, making this observation on what Aristotle says: “Diversity of interest means inequality of results, even a division between the rich and poor. . . Enforcing economic equality is not just a violation of common sense. It flies in the face of why the polis exists at all.” So what is the purpose of the polis (political state) for Aristotle. The highest good of all is the virtue and happiness of the citizens, and the purpose of the city is to make it possible for the citizens to achieve this virtue and happiness. This is not achieved from top down but comes from bottom up. As Aristotle writes: “the natural equality of all citizens in a free state requires human beings to share power and to experience ruling and being ruled in turn.” As Herman adds, “Aristotle’s science of politics is about learning how to build a harmony out of these competing existing parts through balance and moderation, rather than trying to *impose* order and harmony through rational legislation.” The social justice liberals in Seattle didn’t even consider Aristotle’s thinking, they just had an answer that to them was *the* answer and went with it. Remember that won-

derful saying that the road to hell is filled with good intentions? Well . . .

Are you beginning to see that men like Thomas Jefferson, who was influenced by Aristotle, tried to build this kind of government, as Lincoln said, “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” This flies in the face of the social justice we’re now trying to impose on each other.

Let’s look at *Merriam-Webster’s* definition of fair:

marked by impartiality and honesty: free from self-interest, prejudice, or favoritism a very fair person to do business with

(1): conforming with the established rules: ALLOWED

(2): consonant with merit or importance: DUE

Pay attention to these words:

- Impartiality
- Honesty

Free from

- Self-interest
- Prejudice
- Favoritism

Something that is:

- Allowed
- Due

The word “fair” is not a noun but an adjective—“serving as a modifier of a noun to denote a quality of the thing named.” Itself, “fair” is not self-explanatory but needs other words to give it definition and in this definition “honesty” is the only noun, and what is that?

What is a noun?

“Nouns make up the largest class of words in most languages, including English. A noun is a word that refers to a thing (book), a person (Betty Crocker), an animal (cat), a place (Omaha), a quality (softness), an idea (justice), or an action (yodeling). It’s usually a single word, but not always: cake, shoes, school bus, and time and a half are all nouns.” (Again from *Merriam-Webster*.)

Far be it from me to give a grammar lesson, the person who was always kicked out of English classes in school. But I cover this ground for the single purpose of making it clear that defining “fair” isn’t all that easily done.

When I was a little boy, Dad would drive us into town to the local barber shop where he would get his hair cut, then me. The wall behind where I sat, as well as the wall behind those in the barber chairs, was lined with mirrors. I always found it interesting that when I would look in the mirror behind Dad, looking at me in the mirror, the mirror would be a multitude of reflections of me, each reflection de-

scending until I disappeared. That's kind of like trying to define a word because each word used in the definition needs defining ad infinitum.

Where we get into trouble is our belief that we can have an idealized definition of fair. Plato, in the Myth of the Cave taught us we live in the dichotomy between shadows of the Real and the True Forms (Reality). In the shadows we never see things as they really are but not to worry there is a True Form behind what we see, the perfect form. But here's the thing; fair is an adjective and not a noun, it isn't a thing in itself, it's a characteristic of an action. So there isn't really a Platonic True Form of fair that we can turn to for understanding and make judgments like there is a "tree-ness" that makes all trees, trees. You can think of Forms as the blueprint from which all trees are made. And that there is a blueprint suggests a creator, we'll call him or it the Blueprint Maker.

I understand that this is now getting a bit philosophical, but social justice is a philosophical construct by which fair is defined. In essence we're looking at the end result we desire keeping at arm's length the means to that end. It's easier to define the end than the means. Our founding Fathers understood this, and so did the men and women who came to America to build a new life, a new reality: equal opportunity was as good as it would get to our goals. Equal outcome, the cry of social justice and their idea of fair, is a myth, a nonreality because we're not living in the idealized Garden of Eden or the New Jerusalem, we're living in-between. If you are not a Judeo/Christian there isn't an Ideal that can guide you, you have to imagine it in the fantasy part of your mind. This makes it a social construct, not an ontological one, the essence of being. And so Thomas Hobbes offers us a Social Contract, a pact intended to help us reach happiness.

In that Social Contract we agree to work with one another with impartiality and honesty, those actions defining fair. Actually, before Hobbes we were given a kind of social contract ideal found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount:

"Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! **So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you**, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7: 9-12 NIV. Bold mine.)

This isn't the first time we encounter this sentiment. The Greek Stoic Epictetus said this: "What you wouldn't want to suffer, don't make others suffer." (Quoted in *The Cave And The Light*.) While the term "fair" wasn't bandied about certainly the idea of fair was on the mind of many. But it still wasn't a social justice fair rather an individual fair.

2.

If we were all sitting around a camp fire in ancient Athens and the leader of us asked, "What is the goal of every man?", our collective answer would be, "To be happy." This idea goes along with Thomas Jefferson's words in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,

that among these are Life, Liberty and the **pursuit of Happiness.**" (Bold mine.) Because of our lack of honest and real teaching of history in our schools many may not know that Jefferson's trilogy of "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" came from Philosopher John Locke's *"Two Treatises of Government"* where he wrote "life, liberty, and estate." Estate also means property. What those who might also not know because it isn't taught is that Jefferson changed "property" to "happiness" solely because slave-owners treated their slaves as property and he didn't want to give them any cause to justify their holding slaves. Jefferson being the philosophical thinker he was would also be aware throughout history philosophers discussed happiness as the goal of mankind.

Now, on what basis did he declare self-evident truths, one of which is "that all men [mankind or humankind] are created equal"? What made some truths self-evident? What made this truth self-evident? When I look through history I don't find "equal" self-evident. Perhaps the closest to it can be found in 456 BC Athens who "[u]nder this system, all male citizens had equal political rights, freedom of speech, and the opportunity to participate directly in the political arena. Further, not only did citizens participate in a direct democracy whereby they themselves made the decisions by which they lived, but they also actively served in the institutions that governed them, and so they directly controlled all parts of the political process." (*Ancient History Encyclopedia*, "Athenian Democracy.") This is the time of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, who also saw its decline in 322 BC after the Hellenic wars, including Sparta's defeat of Athens, and Rome's march through Greece (by then the three great philosophers were dead) ended the experiment in direct democracy. But notice that even in its democracy heyday "equal" didn't mean what those in social justice think it means. First, only males could participate in democracy, and only citizens that excluded whole classes of people, especially slaves. You can conclude democracy (equal) was not defined by any idealized ontological reality of being.

The only real reference to equal was passed through verbal history by the followers of YHWH, written down in Moses' time in the first three chapters of Genesis. The problem is, the word "fair" or "equal" isn't used and we're assuming that if Adam and Eve were created in God's image, and God throughout the OT is declared a "fair" and "just" God, mankind must be created with full qualities of fairness and equality. Unless we think of Eve being a clone, an exact copy, of Adam then equal doesn't mean all that we think it means. Here's something interesting: in Chapter 1:22, after God has created "the great creatures of the sea and every living thing which the water teems and that moves about in it . . . and every winged bird . . . God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number . . .'"

In verses 27-28, after "God created mankind in his own image . . . God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it.'" Looking at these verses and you ask the question, "What is man's purpose?", we are given only three purposes: being fruitful, increasing in number, and rule over the earth. Don't see the words "Be happy." Except, I suppose, fulfilling those three tasks is the definition of happiness. I'm not intending to make a thing of this, just a moment of curiosity. What I am reaching at is that if you think you can make an unequivocal definition of "fair" you've got a real problem. There might be a True Form of fair but we're having a really difficult time getting beyond the shadows of fair. At least one we believe we need to impose on everyone, and that's what social justice warriors intend.

Wow! Am I saying there is no equality, no fairness? No. But didn't I just write that in that existen-

tial moment of our creation God never chiseled in stone like he did the Ten Commandments: Be Fair with one another? Yes I did. Thousands of years later the Apostle Paul pens a letter to his good friend Timothy who he is guiding to be a pastor saying this to him:

“We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,” (I Timothy 1:9 NIV.)

He can say this to Timothy because of something Jesus said that Matthew recorded:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (Matthew 5:17 NIV.)

And how does this fit, you wonder? I earlier wrote that Plato’s idea of True Forms could be thought of as blueprints. A blueprint gives us all we need to know about a thing, including its intent for being. A “thing” is what it was designed to be, the operative word being “designed”. An artist who takes a lump of clay and forms a drinking cup from it, the intent of that cup is for drinking liquids and when used that way functions as the artist intended. If you spoon dirt into the cup and plant a beautiful flower in the dirt, it functions as a planted pot holder but it’s a perverted use of the cup as it was intended to be. It wasn’t created to be a plant holder even if you can make it work like one. We knew that the cup was for drinking. We didn’t need to be told that until we tried to make it something else. Inherent in our being (that True Form) is our intent. We didn’t need a book filled with FAQ’s (frequently asked questions) to figure it out. When Adam first laid eyes on Eve, and Eve would have had the same reaction, he said: “This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” They didn’t need to turn to a book of directions on use to understand who and what they were, it was “self-evident.”

And so Thomas Jefferson wrote “We hold these truths to be self-evident . . .” Consider him to be the one who escaped from Plato’s cave and saw the True Forms, and while not in full clarity he understood the shadows were not true forms and he knew that he knew self-evident truths. This is what both Paul and Jesus were saying, we have in our hearts our intent built-in us by God and we only need the law (those FAQ’s) when we refuse to follow that intent. The law is a reminder to do what you already know to do and when you are following your intent you don’t need any reminders.

Go back now to those key words in our earthly definition of fair: Impartiality, Honesty, Free from Self-interest, Prejudice, Favoritism, Something that is: Allowed, Due.

The thing is, when we practice or live out these adjectives fair just happens. We typically want to begin with an ontological definition of fair then force everyone to recreate that image and condemn everyone outside our image. So we make laws of behavior rather than just live out our intentions built into our fabric of being. It doesn’t matter that we are still living in a world filled mostly with shadows. Here are a couple scriptures that some of you will appreciate:

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12.)

“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there

is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” (John 1:5-7.)

“Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going.”

“Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.” (John 12:35-36.)

Well, fellow Christians, we are without excuse. We understand fair, not as an unequivocal definition where all parts of our lives are equal—shadows at best—but in our behavior with one another—light.

3.

Part II – The Idea of Unfair

While we may not have an unequivocal ontological definition of fair, nevertheless we have an idea of unfair. We know when an action is unfair. Honestly, if you’re a non-God person I don’t know how you get to the idea of right or wrong, fair or unfair. What came out of the goo is what it is. It came with no design, it just was what it was. And yet, homo sapiens, who also have their history from the goo, understand that some things don’t work well together, in fact they clash causing problems and somehow we know this and call it a flaw in nature. But how did we get to the idea of flaw? We really can’t know what things should be and yet we understand those flaws keep things from being, what? Are hurricanes that sweep into land destroying everything in its path a flaw of good weather? Is it bad that trees are ripped from the ground by the wind, or nature, including animals, are drowned by the excessive water? Or is it neither good nor bad, just what it is? Why do we determine it bad? Because we want to build our homes where hurricanes or tornados roam and they destroy our homes and sometimes kill us. Because we don’t accept it as just what it is we try to construct homes to withstand those bad forces and make plans to get out of the way when they come. And we work on ideas how to change weather to prevent hurricanes and tornados. You would think the most prudent thing would be to not build our houses where every year they are destroyed by nature.

When humans came out of the goo there were no grocery stores or diners where one could go to get something to eat. As it turns out, life requires sustenance to live. Inanimate objects like rocks are just here. They don’t require food or drink or air to be, so why did the goo produce objects—like you and me—who do need food and drink and water to continue to exist? How did we know we needed these things? Were there bodies strewn along the way until someone seeing water took a drink and felt refreshed letting others know this is what to do? How did they know to pick plants out of the ground or leaves off the trees and eat and feel refreshed? How many died from plants that were poisonous? How interesting that this by-chance planet had air to breath, water to drink, food to eat. Pure happenstance? Just blind luck?

Well, we didn’t come directly from the goo, so evolutionary belief holds, we were a much later

product of things that came from the goo. Kind of like a lump of goo-clay was spit out from it, the clay a mixture of cells of proteins with DNA and RNA, building blocks that unconsciously created what was, not knowing what was, it just was. These cells had in them blueprints of what was to be. How did the blueprints get there? Don't ask. It just did. How interesting these blueprints because, I guess, they kept rubbing against one another and out of that friction came recognizable objects. Eventually lo and behold animals formed and apes and chimpanzees came and like a butterfly metamorphizing from a caterpillar so humans slipped out of the body of a chimpanzee and in time that humanoid became homo sapiens. But who was better off, the chimpanzee or the humanoid? Chimpanzees could swing from the trees, humanoids couldn't. I suppose it evened out in the land of no trees. Humanoids were attacked, mauled, eaten by other animals. Sometimes they came out with missing hands or arms or feet or parts in different places. It was what it was, no reason. By great luck, or would it be luck, and with time, the brains in the humanoids began to change much differently from their progenitors and a consciousness formed differently than just being aware of things but now interpreted meaning to things. Not only did homo sapiens have an awareness of themselves, they found in their minds the question, why? I've been here so I won't go further on this.

I suppose the first question was; what? What is this creature standing before me? Why doesn't he have clothes on, I don't want to see his "junk"? Yes, the second question was why. As I look over a group of homo sapiens some are short, some tall, some with red hair, some with black, some with blond, some have long noses, some short, some have oddly shaped bodies, some don't, some have a missing hand or oddly formed hands, others don't. That's the what. Now comes the why? If some have two arms of the same length and hands proportioned, why are there others whose arms are different lengths and hands oddly shaped? If the overwhelming have same length arms, are those who don't flawed? Is it an Aristotelian observation that defines the what, and percentages define the why? Is it because those with proportioned hands and same length arms can do things that those whose hands are not proportioned and with one arm shorter than the other can't. Do I conclude it's better to have proportioned hands and same length arms?

So is it unfair for those we think flawed can't do what those we think perfect can? Is there a True Form for homo sapiens and we deem the perfectly proportioned ones the true reflection of the True Form, the other bad shadows? It's not a moralism, just an existential fact? This is like me looking at myself in the barber shop's mirror seeing an infinite reflection of myself, the questions can go on forever.

So why do I have inside me a feeling of unfairness when I don't have a good handle on fair? But I do have a sense of unfair. Let me jump back to the beginning of time. No, not the Genesis account, the one from Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacque Rousseau. Thomas Hobbes was a Seventeenth Century (1588-1679) English philosopher. We find the beginnings in his book, Leviathan, where, taking from SparkNotes, we understand this:

"Hobbes begins his text by considering the elementary motions of matter, arguing that every aspect of human nature can be deduced from materialist principles. Hobbes depicts the natural condition of mankind--known as the state of nature--as inherently violent and awash with fear. The state of nature is the "war of every man against every man," in which people constantly seek

to destroy one another. This state is so horrible that human beings naturally seek peace, and the best way to achieve peace is to construct the Leviathan through social contract.”

In contrast is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Swiss/French philosopher, writer and composer. He was born in Geneva, Switzerland (1712-1778). We learn about man in the beginning, that Noble Savage, from his book, *A Discourse*. Here is what we learn:

1. Men in a state of nature do not know good and evil, but their independence, along with “the peacefulness of their passions, and their ignorance of vice”, keep them from doing ill (A Discourse..., 71-73).
2. Natural equality disappeared “from the moment one man began to stand in need of another” (A Discourse..., 92).
3. The first rules of justice develop only with the existence of private property, “for, to secure each man his own, it had to be possible for each to have something” (A Discourse..., 94).

Both Hobbes and Rousseau offer us a Social Contract to balance fair and unfair, the relationship between people. Hobbes finds it fair that we are brutes because it is the natural state of man while Rousseau finds it unfair that we have problems in adapting to others who require us to mitigate our natural goodness (freedom) to suit them.

In God’s account of beginnings we are seen as social creatures, but not in need of a social contract because whether an individual (Adam) or a couple (Adam and Eve) our behavior is the same. What Adam wanted for himself he wanted for Eve and for them as a couple. End of story. Well, not so fast.

If we find that inside the Garden we have a glimpse of True Forms, then from Genesis 4 on we find only shadows of the True Forms. We’re prisoners in the Cave, but in the Garden experience which is inside us all irrespective whether we were actually there are not, we know we’re looking through shadows because we also see Light showing us a True Reality.

With the skills of Michelangelo I can draw a True Form of the human person. But with the skills of Picasso I draw this same form in abstract blocks that tells me nothing true about human form. If all I have is the art of Picasso I know nothing of fair, but if I have included the art of Michelangelo I have an idea of True Form. Aristotle doesn’t deny there are True Forms, he just denies we can ever know them so it’s a waste of our time looking for them. We know all we need to know in the form before us and when we know its parts we know its whole.

4.

When I was in Germany with the 10th Special Forces (Abn) I was taught to read, write, and speak French. It seems that a friend of my mother’s had a daughter in college studying French and the two mothers wondered if I would correspond with her helping her out with French. As conniving mothers will do, it seems they had a bit more interest in me and this girl than just teaching French. I was 5,880 miles away from my mother and her friend’s daughter and busy practicing the art of war as a guerrilla force. I couldn’t be bothered with some girl that far away whom I didn’t know, didn’t even know her

family as they and my family only became friends after I left home, so I didn't even respond to the request.

When I finally got home from Germany the church I attended last, and the church my family still attended, held a picnic and the family and the girl also attended. For reasons of shyness I wasn't much of a playboy but I did manage to spend some good time with several very attractive German girls. On a training mission I spend three months inside France where I discovered all those teasing images of how beautiful French girls were didn't prove out. I found that German girls as a whole were far more beautiful than French girls, I mean, if you found that kind of thing important. If I wanted to take things further in my few relationships with German girls I could have easily married one, but as I explained to a friend, I was a true-blood American and I only wanted an American for a wife. A lot had changed in me through my experiences in Germany and at 22-years of age I wasn't looking for a girlfriend or marriage when I got home.

So I went to that picnic where this French-studying girl would also be, not knowing that she would be there, and after introductions I said to myself something I always said sitting in the aircraft waiting to jump out of it, "What the hell are you doing?" This time it translated to, "Why the hell didn't you take up the chance to meet this girl even just through correspondence?" She was everything I found admirable in a female; she was attractive to my eyes, and had to be to other's eyes, independent, very intelligent, and challenged life. My kind of girl. She was a Michelangelo girl and not a Picasso where I wouldn't have seen an idea of True Form, only a shadow.

Why did I go through this bit of biographical view of me? It was because of her—now my wife—that I jumped into the philosophical and religious battle for Truth with both feet and honed also an understanding of fair and unfair. In college I ended up a double major, meaning I had all the units necessary for a full Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy, and all the units needed for a full Bachelor's Degree in New Testament, and with the exception of one class (statistics) I would have also had a Minor in Psychology. If you're thinking, man, that's a lot of classes to work through, you're right and if it weren't for my wife I'd never had made it. For my Master's Degree I studied theology and ethics concentrating on philosophical ethics. One can look on me as having two halves; one side religion, the other side philosophy. I'm either a religious philosopher or a philosophical religionist. It's funny that both sides, the religious and the philosophical, condemn me, each saying the same thing, "The other side (philosophy or religion) corrupts you so why keep to it?" I even had a Dean of Students where I went to college say the same thing quoting Colossians 2:8: "*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.*" I was just beginning my academic studies and didn't think to say, "Yes, but Paul was talking about 'hollow and deceptive philosophy', not honest meaningful philosophy." Look, there are just as many screwed-up religious thinkers and theologians as there are screwed-up philosophers. There are piles of "you know what" everywhere, you just have to step over them.

In my writings, certainly this one, you'll find both sides of me making honest and meaningful points to consider. I'm thinking that if you aren't religious there's something for you, and if you're religious there's something for you.

I'm reading a substantially sized historical book right now titled, *The Cave and the Light: Plato Ver-*

sus Aristotle, and the Struggle for the Soul of Western Civilization. When Arthur Herman, the author, gets to the early church fathers, men like Clement of Rome. Ignatius of Antioch. Polycarp of Smyrna. Justin Martyr. Irenaeus of Lyons. Clement of Alexandria. Origen of Alexandria, Augustine of Hippo, Peter Abelard, among many more, he finds they all taught Christianity with parts framed in language and ideas borrowed from Plato or Aristotle, or sometimes both. Herman presents this fact as these men, all educated in philosophy including Plato and Aristotle, found their language adaptable to Christian thought so used their thinking to argue Christianity. I'm certainly not of the same caliber of the men listed here, but in my own humble way I can be counted with this group, though I have many more philosophers and theologians clipped onto my belt.

I disagree with the order Herman sees here, and it's not something that has just come to me in reading his book as I have been saying this for a long time: the wisdom of YHWH is available to everyone. Whether the greatest saint or the most despicable devil, YHWH (I use YHWH instead of God so there's no doubt which God I mean) is in the very essence of our being, and his hand is in everything else.

While Paul may not have been successful in planting a Christian church in Athens, the city of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, he certainly made clear his message:

“So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’ Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:21-31 NIV.)

Then in the city of Rome he had this to say:

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being under-

stood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:16-20 NIV.)

A Brief Contextual Look At History

First we have Adam and Eve and their family, to include those outside the family to whom Cain fled. In this story, that takes us to Chapter 5, we see worship of God but we aren't given any definition of what that worship entails. The second definition of religion found in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* is this: "a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices." In Chapter 5 we are given a list of so-called patriarchs before the Flood, in this list because like Adam and Eve they worshiped YHWH, but still we have no concept of religion. We don't know what it means or looks like to worship. Even in the story of the Flood all the way to Abraham in Chapter 12 we see worship but no "This is what to do." In fact, there are no FAQ's about worship until Exodus, Chapter 25 – 32 under the Jerusalem Bible's heading: "Instructions on the Building of the Sanctuary and on its Ministries". But these are instructions for building material trappings for worship. The Levitical Law that will come in the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, is about behavior God expects of his people and what it looks like through examples, like, "You are not to exploit the hired servant who is poor and destitute, whether he is one of your brothers or a stranger who lives in your town." (Deuteronomy 24:14 New Jerusalem Bible.) What we find in these three Old Testament books all the way to the end seen in Malachi is, among other things, what "just" or "fair" looks like. As I've written before, nowhere do we find constructs of social justice because social justice is not a moral paradigm but a political construct. Social justice is our feeble attempt to make everything "Even-Steven". The judges and prophets of the Old Testament did not proclaim God's outrage because classes of people fell into identity politics accusing those outside their identity taking benefits that they couldn't get, it was because individuals didn't live up to the image of God within them. What does impartiality and honesty look like here in God's word in Deuteronomy 24:14? It isn't there should be no "poor and destitute", it's don't take advantage of them, you are not condemned that there are those who are poor and destitute. This is telling us to treat those "fairly" we hire who are poor and destitute by giving them work, recognizing them as fellow persons in God's image so you give them the same wage you would anyone—because a workman is worthy of their hire, as Paul wrote to Timothy: "For Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'" (I Timothy 5:18 NIV.)

How God acts with His people, what He expects of them gives us clues to a partial understanding of who God is and we write a theology on that. In Paul's second letter to Timothy he writes this: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV.) Theology is a formal study of all things God; who he is, how he acts, what he says, what he expects of us.

When you hear a spoken word or read a written text, as you are hearing or reading you are interpreting those words looking for their meaning. Much of the time this is done on a subconscious level, we're not aware of it happening. Most words we understand without having to go to a dictionary and look them up because we have experienced them before and memory recalls how we understood a meaning through experience in the past. I sometimes in my writing will give a dictionary definition of a word or term because I want you to look at it the way I'm looking at it so we both can understand

what I'm intending to say. When God says "not to exploit the hired servant who is poor and destitute, whether he is one of your brothers or a stranger who lives in your town," we know "not to exploit" means not to be unfair, don't take advantage of them because of their need who will work for anything just to have something. And let's be clear, that applies to everyone whether a brother or a stranger, someone you don't know and may be living where you live. This teaching could be encapsulated into a theology of justice whose caption might be, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Theology actually goes a step farther asking How can God expect this of us?

Theology looks at the whole body of the written word, the whole body of experience in "real" life for clues on how to define all things God. I've written before on the critical importance of context. Here is how the *English Oxford Living Dictionary* defines context:

The circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood.

The parts of something written or spoken that immediately precede and follow a word or passage and clarify its meaning.

Context is a "thing" in that person, place, thing defining in grammar it's a noun. Context is a thing in itself. We don't hear a lot about something being in context as we do about something taken out of context. Here we have a conflict between Plato and Aristotle, Plato looking at a broader context to understand and Aristotle looking only at a thing in itself to understand it. What is said before and after, not just in the sentence or paragraph but sometimes the whole story defines or gives us context for understanding the word or term or phrase we're interested in.

The first English New Testament to have both chapter and verse divisions was the Geneva Bible (1560). Three centuries earlier Stephen Langton divided the Bible into chapters in the year A.D. 1227. Langton was a professor at the University of Paris and later he became the Archbishop of Canterbury. Robert Stephanus (Stephens), a French printer, divided the verses for his Greek New Testament. It was published in 1551. The reason for this was ease of reading, but in doing this it also made it easy to concentrate on a single verse and draw conclusions from that verse taking it out of context to what came before and after. The Apostle Paul, in particular, was not writing a systematic theology but letters based on a story he had in mind. I've heard too many sermons, read too many tomes based around one or two verses picked from one or more books of the Bible giving us a theology based on those singular verses that go in very odd ways, not, to me, biblical ways. Because we concentrate on singular verses we teach things that don't fit the context of the whole.

Taking that verse from Deuteronomy where Israelites are told not to unfairly treat someone poor and destitute we built from that a theology of justice, from the mouth of God, that there should be no one poor or destitute. Equal justice is not defined here as social class justice.

In terms of acting justly we need to be frightened by these words from the prophet Amos:

"I hate, I despise your religious festivals;
your assemblies are a stench to me.

Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,

I will not accept them.

Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,

I will have no regard for them.

Away with the noise of your songs!

I will not listen to the music of your harps.

But let justice roll on like a river,

righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5: 21-24.)

Earlier in this chapter, Amos gave us these specifics:

"You levy a straw tax on the poor

and impose a tax on their grain.

Therefore, though you have built stone mansions,

you will not live in them;

though you have planted lush vineyards,

you will not drink their wine.

For I know how many are your offenses

and how great your sins.

There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes

and deprive the poor of justice in the courts."

5.

We have a sense of what fair is. It's that every person, not from the goo but created by YHWH in his image, carries in them God's image making each person valuable on that basis. I understand, the legalists among you want an unequivocal definition and where you don't get one you make the rules up. We have from Amos an understanding of what unfair looks like; the poor, because they are for the most part unable to defend themselves, are taken advantage of because they can be taken advantage of. God looks down and says in effect, I see what you're doing, it's wrong, it's evil and so long as you are doing this don't come to me with festivals honoring me or anything because I despise everything about your behavior. I'm plugging my ears to you.

Say I have in my mind an idea for a product I believe everyone will want to have and use and I hire people to help me design it, others to make it and I pay them x-amount of money for their work. I sell my product at a price that will cover my costs of making the product—for the wages I pay and the overhead like rent and utilities—and make money for myself. I must factor in the selling price in relation to the cost of wages because if I pay wages too high I must sell my product at a high price, and if the market won't bear that price I must adjust my costs. But I don't dishonestly pay my workers low wages just so I make tons more money for myself because I respect them and pay them all that I can. Wages aren't based on the units I sell but in selling tons of my product I make far more money than those who work for me. It isn't unfair that I base their wages on the value of their work. I can, if I want, give them a bonus for the sales, and I do, but still I make more money than they. Is it wrong that I, who

put the money in to create my idea, who put the money in for advertising that helps sell my product, who runs the company and all that entails in my business get more money from it than my workers? Social justice would believe it is wrong, that just making more money than my employees means I'm taking advantage of them who are now victims of my greediness. Is there a limit on the money I make that beyond that limit is evil and it must be taken from me and passed to others who aren't rich like me?

Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos have, and do make a hell of a lot of money off their companies so is it fair that they should cap their income at, what? One million? Five hundred thousand? They could if they wanted to but not doing it does this mean they are evil capitalists exploiting the poor? What if you are a CEO of an insurance company or CEO of a pharmaceutical company, is there a level of fair and unfair in what you make? I believe you have a better chance here of crying foul only because if they make their money by reducing services or charging higher for their products or services, then you are making your money off others for your advantage. This is different than selling products that people want and are willing to pay for. But even with the CEO's of the insurance companies or pharmaceutical companies where does fair stop and unfair begin?

Matthew records Jesus talking social justice in Matthew 19:16-28. But really, is it social justice language he's speaking? A rich man came to Jesus with this question: *"Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"* Well, Jesus answered him, keep the Ten Commandments. No problem, he answers, I've kept them all. I'm sure he was slapping himself on the back and trying to high-five Jesus. I think there was a lot of self-righteousness in his next question: *"What do I still lack?"* Obviously he lacks nothing because he's done it all. Jesus shuts him up when he responds with something the rich man wasn't expecting: *"If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."* The rich man walked away thinking, Oh no, not that, that's too much and not necessary. Even the disciples were shocked and Jesus said to them: *"Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."*

"Who then can be saved?" they queried. It's now we know this isn't a social justice moment as Jesus answers: *"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* We typically read this as a story about wealth. The reason the disciples are shocked is because Jesus didn't go around condemning wealth, so why now? Here's something to remember; the circumstance dictates the story. What was the circumstance here? The rich man came to Jesus with a question. After Jesus gave him an answer the rich man walked away prompting Jesus to comment: *"Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."*

But, you ask, doesn't Paul say money is the root of all evil? Let's see:

"Those who want to be rich, however, fall into temptation and become ensnared by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, O man of God, flee from these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness." (I Timothy 6:9-11 NIV.)

And doesn't Jesus say "You cannot serve both God and money," so that's a judgment on money? Yes and no. Put that snippet back into the context of what Jesus was saying:

"But if your vision is poor, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?" (Matthew 6:23-25 NIV.)

Paul's advice to Timothy is flee from these things—money, yes, but anything that hinders your search for God. And Jesus is saying to not worry about your life, worry more about God being part of your life. Money, but certainly not restricted to money, can distract you if your heart is not in the right place, but there are a million things your heart can be distracted by.

In 1630 John Winthrop came to the New World. He was raised in a Catholic family, not wealthy but upper middle-class. Everything changed for him when he went to Cambridge College where he was swept up in Puritanism. As a Puritan leader he was one of the Founders of Massachusetts. What is important here is this that he said; "A man who labored merely for gain, with no thought of God, was no better than a libertine. But he who worked for God willed it, multiplying his talents like a good and faithful servant, could throw himself into his job almost as a way of worship, without a fear of losing balance. That he might amass a fortune in the process was an incidental benefit, not to be treated as a goal, but not to be rejected if it came."

German sociologist Max Weber in his 1905 book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, explained the Protestant, Calvinist, Puritan work ethic as diligence in one's work pleases God and is a form of worship, taught both by Martin Luther and John Calvin. Working hard ought to bring success so don't feel guilty if it does. This applies to the CEO down to the janitor.

I'm preaching—it feels like I'm preaching—that wealth, money, in itself isn't evil, and capitalism naturally comes out of hard work. Marx and Engels hated capitalism, but after reading their works it isn't the evil side of man they saw abusing capitalism that led them to their radical conclusions, it was that they believed only the state could properly determine everything. Individual man was always incapable of determining happiness for himself because there were always those who would take advantage of him.

Marx and Engels have an idealism in mind of who the human person is, an idealism of what fair means. I don't need here to go through their writings, Lenin bought their arguments hook, line, and sinker and applied it to Russia beginning with the Bolshevik Revolution. How has that worked out? Turns out the State is just as oppressive as those evil capitalists, that this idealistic classless society was and is always a myth. The social justice promised by Marx and Engels and Lenin was nothing more than social control by the State. Nothing changed for the Russians except for who their oppressors were.

Why doesn't idealism work? Because it comes from the mind of man interpreting the mind of

God. If there is an image of the ideal we can draw from the only place I can think of where it might be, the Garden of Eden. But what is in the Garden from which we can draw our definition of social justice? Neither the Jewish Bible (Christian's Old Testament) nor the New Testament is a story of social justice. But there's all those stories like the one I quoted from Amos that suggest social justice. No, not social justice, justice. Same thing you say. No, it's not. Again, I make this point in an essay I wrote and you can find it by going to the opening words of this essay.

Am I saying there is nothing we can draw from for an idea of justice? Let me repeat something I've already written: the circumstances determine the story. Circumstances can also be thought of as context. What, then, is the context for both the Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible? It is the story of redemption. It is a living picture of mankind, broken into 9 Series, each chapter an episode in the series. For instance:

Old Testament

- Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- Historical: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
- Wisdom: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
- Prophetic: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

New Testament

- The Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- Historical book: Acts
- Pauline Epistles: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews
- General Epistles: James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude
- Revelation

The overall theme of the whole project is man's sin and God's love, and redemption of man bringing mankind back to God, back to the image men and women were created to be. It has nothing to do with politics, though something of politics can be seen; it has nothing to do with philosophy, though something of philosophy can be seen; it has nothing to do with science, though something of science can be seen; it has nothing to do with culture, though something of culture can be seen; and it has nothing to do with theology, though something of theology can be seen. It is not the only thing we need but it certainly is the most important thing we need. Knowing Plato's Forms can help us but only God can save us. Knowing Aristotle's Ethics can help us but only God can save us. Knowing the Pythagorean theorem is important but only God can save. It's important to know the three basic principles of Plotinus' metaphysics; 'the One' (or, equivalently, 'the Good'), Intellect, and Soul, but only God can save us. You get the idea.

Knowing YHWH, and Jesus, is not only crucial to our destiny but also define for us How Then

Shall We Live, borrowing a book title from Francis Schaeffer. Each episode in each of the series titled The Bible, shows us what we do wrong and what we can do right. From studying all things God we gain both a theological and philosophical perspective on who he is and therefore what he expects. From examining the good, the bad, and the ugly of our daily living we gain both a theological and philosophical perspective and how we should live.

6.

I grew up in Clovis, California, now I live in the Los Angeles area, some 250 mile distance. I can, if I want to take a train to my family home. I could if I wanted to take a bus. I could if I wanted to drive my car. I could if I wanted to fly in an airplane. I suppose if I wanted to I could even walk to Clovis. There is no definitive way to get there, it is all up to me how I travel. What I'm saying is that there is no singular definition of "fair" that fits all.

Let's go back now to those key words in our earthly definition of fair: Impartiality, Honesty, Free from Self-interest, Prejudice, Favoritism, something that is: Allowed, Due. This isn't a definitive answer to what fair is, it is a list of principles of how being fair acts. If I hold it true that every person contains the image of God I do not with any person hold that their being is less than mine and I have a right to treat them differently. Well, what does that mean, you ask looking for a definitive answer? Think, I respond, of the Deuteronomy story that if you hire a poor person to do work for you treat them as what they are, a child of God worthy of His love and your respect, just like you would treat your brother or sister. Be honest with them, meaning don't tell them one thing and do another. It doesn't mean you must give them \$16 an hour. This in itself doesn't make for fair, other factors are considered in that decision because, as we see in the Seattle fiasco fair for some was very unfair for others.

Free from self-interest, what does that mean? Adam Smith in his book *Wealth of Nations*, showed us that the motivator for creating or building or farming or whatever we do is what we personally gain from it. As he said, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner but from their regard to their own interest." Be careful not to take this to mean wealth. Self-interest can also be esoteric, like feeling good we've done something, not that we get physical rewards for doing it. Most have never read *Wealth of Nations* and form their opinions of Smith based on what others say and have misread him because they haven't also read his first book, *Moral Sentiments*, where he tells us we should have concern in our heart for others so that we work for their health, wealth, and happiness, and if they benefit we benefit. So self-interest here is not a pejorative. But if we use someone for our own benefit—again more than just money, feelings can also be included—then we have not treated that person or persons fairly. If I have a prejudice for whatever reason then I'm not going to treat you with fairness. If I favor one person, or class of people over others then I'm not being fair to those outside my favorite group treating them as less than me or my favorites.

I understand we live in a time when we shouldn't have favorites at all because those who aren't our favorite might feel slighted so we can't give someone in school we like a valentine card unless we give everyone a valentine card. We can't have a best friend because it supposedly slights those who aren't our best friends. This B.S. is not in any definition of fair, it's just political social insanity trying to look like social justice. It's trying to unequivocally define fair but ends up defining B.S.

We've ended up making fair political. We've ended up making morality political. At least 20 states and 24 cities have beginning this year raised the minimum wage in an act of social justice, a cry for fairness. A living wage. I get that. But remember, it is political government officials, whether city, county, state, or federal making that determination. The cities of Seattle and San Francisco are proud to say they are making their decisions for citizens of their city on the basis of social justice. It sounds great that unfair will be changed to fair. How's that working out? Well, honestly it has caused more problems than solved. I've already made that argument earlier.

It's unfair that some (the few, like the 1%) make more money than the rest of us (the 99%). It's unfair that some live in luxury houses, drive luxury cars with the latest technological advances. From the "Summary of the Latest Federal Income Tax Data, 2016 Update" we read this:

- In 2014, 139.6 million taxpayers reported earning \$9.71 trillion in adjusted gross income and paid \$1.37 trillion in individual income taxes.
- The share of income earned by the top 1 percent of taxpayers rose to 20.6 percent in 2014. Their share of federal individual income taxes also rose, to 39.5 percent.
- In 2014, the top 50 percent of all taxpayers paid 97.3 percent of all individual income taxes while the bottom 50 percent paid the remaining 2.7 percent.
- The top 1 percent paid a greater share of individual income taxes (39.5 percent) than the bottom 90 percent combined (29.1 percent).
- The top 1 percent of taxpayers paid a 27.1 percent individual income tax rate, which is more than seven times higher than taxpayers in the bottom 50 percent (3.5 percent).

The rich must pay their fair share is the mantra of liberal progressive Democrats, and yes, progressive Republican. What is the greatest fallacy in this? It's in how you answer why. Why didn't the Founders put into the Constitution a personal income tax?

"During the Civil War Congress passed the Revenue Act of 1861 which included a tax on personal incomes to help pay war expenses. The tax was repealed ten years later. However, in 1894 Congress enacted a flat rate Federal income tax, which was ruled unconstitutional the following year by the U.S. Supreme Court because it was a direct tax not apportioned according to the population of each state." ("History of the US Income Tax" compiled by Ellen Terrell Business Reference Services.)

If you know anything about early American history and the causes for the Revolution you know that "taxation without representation" was one leading cause. Governments have never produced anything like products to sell to pay for their existence. Governments have always taken money from their citizens, not in the form of a personal tax but in a portion of their goods and services. Until money was minted the tax collectors would come to your farm and take a portion of whatever you farmed or raised—pig, chickens, whatever. About 1100 BC the Chinese stopped using actual tools and weapons as a medium of exchange to using miniature replicas of the same tools cast in bronze. The miniature replicas was used as money. For two shovels and an axe I'll buy your cow. The idea was right, just awkward carrying around in your pocket small shovels and axes.

Not to worry, Lydia's King Alyattes in 600 B.C minted the first official currency made from elec-

trum, a mixture of silver and gold that occurs naturally. On each coin was stamped with pictures that acted as denominations. A clay jar might cost you two owls and a snake.

“Europeans were still using coins all the way up to 16th century, helped along by acquisitions of precious metals from colonies to keep minting more and more cash. Eventually, the banks started using bank notes for depositors and borrowers to carry around instead of coins. These notes could be taken to the bank at any time and exchanged for their face values in silver or gold coins. This paper money could be used to buy goods and operated much like currency today, but it was issued by banks and private institutions, not the government, which is now responsible for issuing currency in most countries.” (The information on money comes from Investopedia, “The History Of Money: From Barter To Banknotes”)

Barter wasn't done away with but if you could get your hands on money it became your units of exchange. Governments typically minted the money they used to purchase things or services giving citizens money they could use to purchase their needs. Pounds, shillings and pence were the basic currency of Britain in the 1600s.

British Taxes

- King John introduced an export tax on wool in 1203
- King Edward I introduced taxes on wine in 1275.
- A “Poor Law tax” was established in 1572 to help the deserving poor, and then changed from a local tax to a national tax in 1601.
- In June 1628, England's Parliament passed the Petition of Right which among other measures, prohibited the use of taxes without its agreement. This prevented the Crown from creating arbitrary taxes and imposing them upon subjects without consultation.
- Charles II was to help pay for the rebuilding of the City of London after the Great Fire in 1666.
- Coal tax acts were passed in 1667 and in 1670. The tax was eventually repealed in 1889.
- In 1692, the Parliament of England introduced a national land tax. This tax was levied on rental values and applied both to rural and to urban land.
- The window tax came under the Act of Making Good the Deficiency of the Clipped Money in 1696. Clipped money refers to clipping small pieces from a coin. It had been designed to impose tax relative to the prosperity of the taxpayer, but without the controversy that then surrounded the idea of income tax. At that time, many people opposed income tax on principle because they believed that the disclosure of personal income represented an unacceptable governmental intrusion into private matters, and a potential threat to personal liberty.
- Income tax was first implemented in Great Britain by William Pitt the Younger in his budget of December 1798 to pay for weapons and equipment in preparation for the Napoleonic Wars. (From History of taxation in the United Kingdom.)

Colonial American Taxes

- Taxation in the colonies consisted of property taxes, poll taxes on men over 18, excise taxes, and forced labor contributions of a few days a month to build roads and assume other "public functions" such as constable, assessor, or "hog reeve" ("an officer charged with the prevention or appraising of damages by stray swine," according to the Oxford English Dictionary).
- Massachusetts imposed an embryonic income tax in 1634 in the form of a "faculty" tax. In 1643, Assessors were appointed to rate inhabitants on their estates and their faculties, which included personal abilities. The tax came to about 1 percent of what we might call income.
- Connecticut imposed sumptuary laws to prevent extravagance and luxury in 1676 that taxed any person who wore silk ribbons, gold or silver lace, or gold or silver buttons.
- By 1775, the British government was consuming one-fifth of its citizens' GDP, while New Englanders were only paying between 1 and 2 percent of their income in taxes. British citizens were also weighed down with a national debt piled up by years of worldwide warfare that amounted to £15 for each of the crown's eight million subjects, while American local and colonial governments were almost debt-free. Against this backdrop, Americans watched as the British monarchy attempted to raise taxes on the colonists to pay down its war debt and pay for the 10,000 British soldiers barracked in the colonies.
- The Sugar Act of 1764, a rewrite of the Plantation Duty of 1673, was designed to raise revenue rather than force the colonies to trade with England alone, and fell mostly on molasses, sugar, and Madeira wine.
- The colonies reacted particularly poorly to the imposition of the Stamp Act of 1765, which was an effort to impose a direct tax on the colonies rather than tax imports and exports.
- The Townshend Acts of 1767 imposed duties on 72 items, including tea to combat the smuggling of Dutch tea to America. Although the British repealed most of these duties in 1770, they maintained the specific tax on tea to make the point that the crown could tax when it chose to do so. (From FP News, "Tea, Taxes, and the Revolution".)

The bottom line is this: governments tax to pay for what they do, whether what they do is legitimate or not, necessary or not, beneficial or not. Again, governments tax because they do not produce anything on their own to pay for themselves. So kings and Parliament, Presidents and legislators, Governors and state legislators, county and city councils sit around tables and decide what to tax to pay for what they do. Their answers range from simple to outrageous.

7.

Neither Colonial Americans, nor newly formed United States citizens begrudged governments collecting taxes. Their arguments centered around unfair taxes, excessively high taxes, and most of all they expected and demanded a say in what and how they were taxed (Franklin's call for revolution because of taxation without representation.)

The 2019 Democrat Tax Proposal

- Increase the top marginal income tax rate from 37 percent to 39.6 percent. This nearly 3 percentage point increase in the top personal rate is not only a hike in the top bracket levy, but it's also a direct tax increase on small and mid-sized businesses. The 30 million companies which are organized as sole proprietorships, partnerships, Subchapter-S corporations, and LLCs pay their business taxes on their owners' 1040 personal tax returns. Hiking the top tax rate is a small business tax increase. AOC wants the top rate to be 70%
- Increase the corporate income tax rate from 21 percent to 25 percent. Until this year, the United States labored under the highest corporate income tax rate in the developed world.
- Bring back the alternative minimum tax (AMT) for 4 million families. Up until this year, 4 million upper middle class families had to calculate their income taxes two different ways, and then pay the higher result.
- Cut the "death tax" standard deduction in half. Over the past few decades, no tax has proven more unpopular. The new tax law didn't repeal the death tax, but it did the next best thing--it doubled the death tax's "standard deduction" from \$5.5 million to \$11 million (and twice that for surviving spouses). As a result, far fewer family businesses and farms will be subject to the death tax. Democrats propose bringing back the death tax by cutting the deduction.

Some Historical Facts

- By 1919, the top rate was 73 percent, and it took effect at the equivalent of \$67 million (\$1 million in 1919).
- During the 1920s, under President Calvin Coolidge (R), the top rate dropped back to 25 percent, and it took effect at \$100,000 — the equivalent of about \$6 million today.
- Under Franklin D. Roosevelt (D), the top rate shot up again to 63 percent in 1932, but it did not take effect until \$1 million (\$114 million in today's dollars).
- By 1942, after the United States entered World War II, the rate had shot up to 88 percent and took effect at \$200,000 — the equivalent of nearly \$9 million today. By the time the war ended, the top marginal rate was 94 percent.
- Above-90-percent rates stayed in effect through the presidencies of Harry S. Truman (D) and Dwight D. Eisenhower (R), usually taking effect when income was between \$4 million and \$5 million.
- John F. Kennedy (D) proposed cutting the top tax rate from 90 to 70 percent, which took effect in 1965. That 70-percent rate — the level proposed by Ocasio-Cortez — stayed in effect through 1981, when Ronald Reagan (R) cut rates to 50 percent. Reagan further reduced the top marginal rate to 28 percent in 1988 (and even taxed capital gains at the same rate as wage income).

Why all the bullet points on taxes? It is to put context to idea we are being sold about fair and unfair, that the rich should pay their fair share (the bullet points show they pay the lion' share of taxes) and at the moment we still believe it is unfair they don't pay more and get away with paying less.

Our Historical Debt in Terms of GDP (Gross Domestic Product—how we assess the wealth of a nation)

- After World War I, the federal debt was 32% of GDP. But by the mid 1920s federal debt had declined to below 20 percent of GDP with state and local debt rising to 16 percent of GDP.
- Then came the Great Depression, and President Hoover decided to spend his way out of trouble, boosting federal debt to 39.4 percent of GDP in 1933.
- Total government debt in the bottom of the Great Depression in 1933, including federal and state and local debt, amounted to 70 percent of GDP.
- After the total government debt peak of 70 percent in 1933, federal debt continued to increase under President Roosevelt, reaching 49 percent of GDP in 1940, while state and local debt declined, with state debt at 3.5 percent GDP in 1940 and local debt down to 16.2 percent GDP in 1940.
- But it was in World War II that the US really entered new debt territory. Starting at 45 percent of GDP in 1941 federal debt zoomed, reaching almost 119 percent of GDP in 1946 after the end of the war,
- President Reagan. He increased the federal debt up to 50 percent of GDP to win the Cold War. President Bush increased the debt to fight a war on terror and bail out the banks. President Obama increased the debt to fund a plan to revive the economy in the aftermath of the Crash of 2008, peaking at 122 percent of GDP, federal, state and local in 2016

What does this look like in dollars?

- In 2000 our national debt was over \$5.5 trillion
- In 2008 our national debt was over \$10 trillion
- In 2010 our national debt was over \$13.5 trillion
- In 2012 our national debt was over \$16 trillion
- In 2014 our national debt was over \$17.8 trillion
- In 2016 our national debt was over \$19.5 trillion
- In 2018 our national debt was over \$21.5 trillion

Right now, February 9, 2019, and these numbers are by the nanosecond rising, according to the National Debt Clock our national debt is \$21,970,246, and climbing. Our GDP stands at \$20,844,938 and climbing, but not as fast as the debt. We owe more than we make as a nation. I owe the government over \$60,000 calculated on a population of 328,521,199, not just adults but includes every baby born. They, too, owe \$60,000. Every child is born into great debt.

President Obama believed and acted on the principle that we could borrow our way out of debt. You have to spend more to eventually get more. He added \$8,588 trillion to our national debt. George W. Bush added \$5.849 trillion, a 101 percent increase from the \$5.8 trillion debt at the end of Clinton's last budget, FY 2001. How did it work spending our way out of debt?

Just some concluding statistics to consider:

- All wars since 1776 up to today has cost us \$7 trillion
- The social justice attempt at creating the Great Society first started by FDR and including LBJ cost us \$20 trillion
- The New Society, part 2 of social justices began in 2019 costs us to date \$49 trillion plus

Okay, enough with the depressing numbers.

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Conclusion

We are in unrecoverable debt because we, the government with the blessing of the people, spend so much. Thank you, progressives, for changing our individual morality into social morality. (This, you could say is a facetious thank-you.) We were, prior to 1900, taking care of, at least as much as possible, the poor and destitute and any who needed extra help. This was done by individuals, churches especially, and community organizations. It wasn't that in 1900 there was a colossal failure of this help, a need that became too great, it was that a new social idealism based on Marxism we called progressivism convinced us that government should take over.

The clash between individualism and State didn't begin with Marx. Plato was all gaga over Sparta as a vision for what a state should look like. From Bernard Suzanne we are given these points about Sparta:

- Its aristocratic, or more properly, oligarchic, and war-gearred regime, with a limited class of full-right citizens, the "Equals" (homoioi in Greek), whose role was mostly to defend the city in case of war, and among whom were chosen each year five ephors in charge of most of the day to day administration of the city, under the supervision of a "Council of the Elders" (gerousia), a body of 28 citizens aged over 60 elected for life by the assembly of the citizens by acclamation. The city also had two hereditary kings from two different families, endowed with mostly religious functions but also involved in political life through their membership in the Council of the Elders, one of whom was chosen as commander in chief in case of war.
- Its reliance on a form of slavery for survival: the citizens were not supposed to work or cultivate the earth. This role was attributed to a special class of enslaved people known as the "Helots", mostly made up of local people subjected by the Spartans, especially neighboring Messenians. In between the Equals and the Helots, was a population of half-grade citizens enjoying freedom but not citizenship, living in the countryside and surrounding villages as farmers, craftsmen or merchants, and participating in the army in separate units.
- Its "communist"-like system of ownership: land and Helots were owned by the state, not by the citizens. Land was allotted among citizens in lots called "kleroi", which were not inherited, but were supposed to go back to the state at the death of their "owner" to be reassigned to another citizen (though, over time, the system was more and more often bypassed and inequality eventually prevailed among the "Equals").

- Its special program of education for the citizens, the agogè, which lasted from the age of 7 to the age of 30 in common quarters under the supervision of the state, and was a prerequisite to enjoy the rights of a citizen. It focused primarily on physical education and the art of war, but there were also specific provisions for women and strict rules about marriage and procreation. It included occasional raids against the Helots in which future citizens were allowed to kill slaves, to prepare them for war in actual conditions. The last step of this education, reserved to the best ones, was known as the cryptia (from the Greek word meaning "hidden", "secret") and consisted in living alone for one year in the countryside and neighboring mountains without being seen by anyone but with the right to kill Helots
- Its daily common meals, known as syssitia, reserved to citizens but for them mandatory, and to which they were required to bring their share lest they lose their citizenship.

What did Plato like about Sparta? It was a totally controlled city versus Athens, whose freedoms made the citizens weak. Because of the control from above it was, of course, free from the corruption that plagued Athens as the primary source for corruption were individuals who acted as individuals. As Plato said; "No citizen should get in the habit of acting alone independently and instead must obey his leaders, even in tiny details, just as they did in Sparta."

And what did Sparta give the world? A vision of a warrior-class people who gave us a great warrior class of people who defeated Athens, a rival city-state, in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.), but who itself in 371 B.C., suffered a catastrophic defeat at the hands of the Thebans at the Battle of Leuctra. They gave us no art, no literature, no understanding of the cosmos because all those things were considered beneath the person who only needed to live a strictly controlled life to be happy. Marxism, socialism, progressivism is all about control, controlling the people to the idealism of the leaders, who know better than the masses, masses who without that control would always be in chaos.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his vision of a Social Contract, not created to secure individual rights but to bind everyone into a collective will and destiny, believed we should be ruled by the General Will. Life, for Rousseau, is a conflict between individual will and the General Will and in the Social Contract we learn that the individual will must give way to the General Will. It is the community, not the individual, who determines life, liberty and happiness. And fitting for our time, it isn't reason through which we change the world but through our passions, our emotional commitment. To reach the good life it must come through our feelings, our passions, not the mind, Right up the alley of postmodernism and what we today see going on in our politics and cultural upheaval.

Let me quote from Herman from his book, *The Cave and the Light*, on this subject regarding our new understanding of religion: "A truly civic-minded religion is not about moral teaching—the State will take care of that—or private consolation. Its role instead is to offer a set of rituals and dogmas that teach people that the best way to worship God is to worship the community: nothing more and nothing less." I ask you this question; Aren't we there already?

Fair and unfair is defined by the community not the individual, not out of reason but out of passion for the idea of fair and unfair. Yes, fair is how we all want to be treated, unfair isn't. Our problem is that we have an idea of fair and unfair but we don't have a definitive definition that shows us what

is fair. We are, as Plato would say, seeing fair and unfair through its shadows. We now know there is a True Form of fair but we can't get away from its shadows. So we created social justice laws of fairness that as an idea should work for everyone, but don't. They don't because too many bad rich guys won't give in to our definitions of social justice, they don't work because we don't understand all the ramifications of our actions (i.e., the \$16 an hour that sounds good but only for some, disaster for others).

So do we do nothing because nothing can be done? Absolutely not! But understand something Jesus taught us; the law is there to reveal to us our sins, not to make us righteous. That must come out of the heart. Because we have let go the balance between our reason and our passion and settled only on passio our hearts have grown cold and our behavior has grown evil. If you think you can cure the heart through laws and control like the Spartans, stop and read history, it never worked. Before the American Colonies could become the United States of America people had to have a conversion of the heart because since landing on these shores their hearts had slowly grown cold. And they did, at least among enough citizens, renew their faith in God and his principles and out of that renewal came the greatest nation to ever form in history. But it didn't last, our hearts have once again grown cold.

We're trying to make fair from the clay called "law". We're trying to raise the valleys and lower the heights so everything is level. We're not leveling the opportunities, we're trying to level the outcome. It's an idea whose time hasn't come and we're trying to force it to come.

I accept that there is a lot of unfairness in society, that our politics is more unfair than fair, that our economics are in some areas certainly unfair, that our religious faith has lost its salt. Unfairness is all around us. I understand this and in my own way fight the rich who steal from me, the politics that wants to control me and takes away my voice, the social insanity that pushes me out of the picture and condemns me to hell because I am a so-called white Protestant male, the culture that doesn't know what it is and lost itself in the idea of inclusion, yet excludes so many.

We're not going to get to life, liberty, and happiness the way we are travelling.