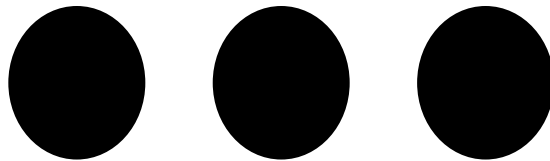




The Fallacies at the Heart of Socialism

According to his profile, Darren Hutchinson is a professor of “Constitutional Law, Critical Race Theory, Law and Social Change, and Equal Protection Theory” at the University of Florida. At his blog, “Dissenting Justice,” Hutchinson takes yours truly to task for a recent article of mine in which I contend that the enterprise of rectifying “income inequalities” is antithetical to individual liberty, for the former demands an intrusive, activist, all meddling government — i.e., a government as diametrically opposed as any to that delineated by the U.S. Constitution.



The title of Hutchinson’s post is essentially self-explanatory vis-à-vis his position: “Town Hall Author Jack Kerwick is WRONG: States Also Help to Combat Income Inequality.” Hutchinson thinks that since the individual states have been busy at work implementing one redistributive scheme after the other, he has disproven my thesis.

In fact, he has only reinforced it.

Hutchinson notes in boldfaced print that “the *national* government often *partners* with states and local governments to ameliorate the conditions of income inequality and to subsidize poor households.” (Emphasis added.)

It is telling that Hutchinson — a professor, mind you, of constitutional law — refers to the “national” government, for the men who shaped and ratified the Constitution did so precisely to insure that America would *not* have a *national* government, but a *federal* one. The latter, constrained as it is by numerous “checks and balances” — including and especially that of the sovereignty of the states that gave birth to it — cannot address income inequalities without transforming itself into something (a national government) that would’ve been dreadful to the Framers.

Hutchinson also disingenuously refers to a “partnership” between “the national government” and the states designed to “combat” inequality. First of all, there is no such partnership. Over quite a stretch of time now, the national government has been laboring tirelessly to subvert the constitutional design by usurping the sovereignty of the states. Courtesy of just the sort of redistributive projects that Hutchinson and his ilk encourage, it has been remarkably successful: The “federal” government is supreme.

Thus, the national government no more “partners” with the states than it “invests” in “public” enterprises. It bribes and coerces the states to do its bidding.

But let’s just say that this isn’t so. Hutchinson nevertheless acknowledges that, whether with or without



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the states, it is indeed the national government that is working away to rectify inequalities.

Hutchinson's response to my position not only goes no distance toward undermining it, it strengthens it.

Yet Hutchinson's post still supplies much food for thought. Like other leftists, he equates income *inequality* with income *inequity*. It needs to be noted that this is a classic instance of question-begging or circular reasoning, for whether differences in income are inequities is exactly what needs to be determined. By equating the two from the outset, Hutchinson cooks his position, for he assumes as a premise that which needs to be proven.

But the problem with redistributionist reasoning runs even deeper than this. The whole outlook can even be said to be rooted in a fallacy, what logicians call the argument *ad populum*: an (emotional) appeal to the masses.

It isn't just that inequalities aren't necessarily inequities. "Inequalities" in income aren't even necessarily inequalities; they are differences. There is, though, a good reason why the Hutchinsons of the world wouldn't think to trade in the word "inequality" for "difference" when advocating on behalf of redistribution.

"Equality" is a moral ideal with a storied history stretching back centuries in Western culture. In America specifically, equality has figured to no slight extent in informing our collective moral imagination — even if equality has by and large referred to equality before God and/or equality under the law.

Socialists know all of this, but so as to invest the *raison d'etre* of their ideology with moral legitimacy, they resolved to exploit the concept of equality for all that they could bleed from it. Hence, differences in income — regardless of how these differences came about — are transformed into "inequalities."

Differences, you see, are what we expect to witness in an open and free society. Of differences, the Hutchinsons of the world are indefatigably telling us, we are supposed to be, not just "tolerant," but enthusiastic. Differences are supposed to be *celebrated*.

This is another reason why socialists never want to call income differences for what they are. The champions of redistribution must resort to rhetoric and logical fallacies to defend their ideology, for they realize that the only argument that can be given for it, if stated openly, would promise to offend the sensibilities of ordinary folks.

As John Rawls, perhaps the most influential political philosopher of the last half of the 20th century, once put it, no one is entitled to gain or lose "from his luck in the natural lottery of talent and ability, or from his initial place in society, without giving (or receiving) compensating advantages in return." Since we deserve neither our natural talents nor the opportunities we've had to develop and showcase those talents, no one deserves to keep the fruits of their labors — unless compensation is made by "those who have been favored by nature" for those with whom it has just as undeservedly burdened with "arbitrary handicaps."

What this means is that people's natural talents and challenges are to be treated as "common assets." And common assets are to be controlled by the government.

When Barack Obama and Elizabeth Warren infamously said to entrepreneurs about their businesses that "you didn't build that," they weren't misspeaking. A person's talents and opportunities are not to be treated as his; they are common assets to be used for the common good.

Only on such an assumption, an assumption from which the lover of liberty must recoil in horror, can



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income “inequalities” be judged “the defining issue of our time,” as Obama described it.



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