

Addendum to In Defense of Socialism

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David Schmitz first says appropriate things about statistics but then goes on to do things that reveal that he is not practicing what he preaches (Schmitz 2009, 506-12). I shall put the matter less oracularly. He remarks at the beginning of his section on “Empirical Studies”:

Although I am a professor of economics by joint appointment, I am at heart a philosopher. I trust conceptual arguments. I do not want to win arguments I do not deserve to win, and, when the terrain is conceptual, I trust myself to know where I stand. I do not feel this way about statistics. This section’s main purpose is not to settle some empirical issue, but simply to show how easily numbers create false impressions (Schmitz 2009, 506).

Indeed, he does that adroitly and appropriately. But then he goes on in the later part of his “Equal Respect and Equal Shares” to suggest some settlements of empirical issues—some conclusions we should draw from a proper statistical examination about poverty and inequality in America. That is a plain unsaying of what he initially said. The only way he can save himself is by insisting, rather scholastically, on the relevance here of a distinction between “settles” and “suggests”. But that notwithstanding, he goes far beyond simply showing “how easily numbers create false impressions” (Schmitz 2009, 506). Still, as I shall go on to show, not all is dross here. Schmitz raises some substantive issues that need careful consideration and appraisal.

But first to some of his remarks about statistics and empirical studies of income equality. After separating out populations into quintiles (a portion of a frequency distribution containing one

fifth of the chosen sample), he first looks at populations according to household income rather than doing a headcount of individual incomes. Looking at populations in those terms, Schmitz points out that for those two different things we will get very different answers concerning both poverty and income inequality depending on whether we are focusing on household income or individual income. With household income we will get a far greater stretch of income inequality. He remarks, “One major source of income equality among households is that some contain more wage-earners. When the number of wage-earners *per* household falls, average income as *household* income can fall even if *individual* incomes rise” (Schmitz 2009, 506, italics in original). So we can plainly be misled here about poverty and income inequality. If we just stick to household income it will show up in our statistics as a fall in the bottom quintile’s average income.

We should, as Schmitz rightly points out, also pay attention in doing statistical analyses to which age group we are talking about. Someone flipping burgers in their teens may be in the upper quintile at age 45. Schmitz remarks, “It is easy to dig up a study showing that average wages fell by, say, 9 percent between 1975 and 1997. But it is also easy to show that average wages rose 35% between 1975-1997” (Schmitz 2009, 506). We can do either, he claims, depending on what we want to hear. But can we do so with equal legitimacy? Or is there no place for talk of legitimacy or illegitimacy when it comes to statistics? That, at least to my naïve statistical ear, sounds very implausible. *If* it is so, except as propaganda, we should forget about statistical analyses. That sounds to me doubly implausible. But I don’t think for a minute that Schmitz is suggesting that. I think—and that quite legitimately—he is just warning us to be careful. Schmitz says, again rightly, that in gathering and appraising statistical analyses we should recognize that we do not just have numbers but numbers that come with an *interpretation*.

If Schmitz had stuck with what I have just been recording, that is, with what he initially promised to do—see my initial quotation from him—I would have no complaint or even unease. He would, that is, have been home and clear had he stuck to his promise simply “to show how easily

numbers create a false impression” (Schmidtz 2009, 506). But he does not. He goes on after saying that all statistics come with interpretations to suggest, again quite correctly, that though all statistical findings are interpretive, some interpretations are better (more accurate?) than others (Schmidtz 2009, 510). (Perhaps there, viewing things *ambulando*, we will catch a glimpse of his criteria for which interpretations are better?) It is there, with his exceeding his own mandate, where I may have grounds for complaint. He can’t limit his claim to competence as he does and then go on to argue about how we determine the adequacy of interpretations.)

Let me start more concretely to say just where I may have grounds for complaint by attending to a remark he makes after his perspicuous point about the importance of paying attention to age categories. Schmidtz remarks:

The numbers seem to say that the top quintile cannot be characterized as a separate caste of aristocrats. To some extent, the quintiles appear to be constituted by ordinary median people at different ages. So, when we read that median income at the 80th percentile has jumped by 46 percent in real dollar terms between 1967 and 1999, we should entertain the likelihood that for many people living at the 20th percentile, that jump represents increasing opportunity for them, not just for some separate elite. It represents what many reasonably hope to earn as they reach the age when people like them take their turn composing the top quintile. Again, the fact that 45- to 54-year-olds are doing much better today, thereby widening the gaps between income quintiles, appears to be good news for a lot of people, not only for people currently in that age group.

Even if the lowest quintile has not been getting richer over time, this does not mean that the group of people flipping burgers a generation ago is still stuck flipping burgers. Rather, the implication is that when this year’s crop of high school graduates flips burgers for a year, they will get paid roughly what their parents were paid when they were the same age, doing the same things. (What else would we expect?) Again, if today’s bottom 20 percent is no richer than the bottom 20 percent was a generation ago, the upshot is that the lowest-paying jobs do not pay much more than they ever did, not that the people who once held those jobs still hold them today (Schmidtz 2009, 507).

That is indeed good news for a lot of people—though he does not say what percentage of the population it was good news for. It certainly was for an increasing number of people in the North

during the golden age of capitalism (1946-70). But he ignores the extensive differences between people in the top quintile when he gives us to understand that there is not there a caste or elite of aristocrats. They are the superrich, particularly those whose families have been so for a long time, passing their fortune, power, and prestige from generation to generation. Think of the three generations of the Bush family or the Roosevelts, Kennedys, and Rockefellers. America, as distinct from Europe, was supposed to have escaped that. But it did not. It just hit it more successfully.

I speak here of the very top of the top quintile. And they in many ways differ from the ordinarily moderately wealthy people in the lower part of the quintile such as Schmidt and me. I am speaking of people when they get to a certain age—say, between 45 and 55—begin to earn between \$100,000 and \$200,000 a year. They certainly are not suffering. They are reasonably well off. This includes most of the tenured professors in our society, though probably among them only a few of the professoriate gets near the \$200,000 end. (Still, we tenured professoriate are comfortably situated and have neither grounds nor motivation to complain about our own financial position or to envy the superrich, though we may feel—indeed hopefully so—that it is very wrong for them to be so rich while others are so poor and we may have contempt for them because of what they do to others and allow for themselves. Still, as a group we are generally sufficiently content with our own lot and (I think, unfortunately) do not want to rock the boat. Most of us, again I think unfortunately, can be depended on to support the capitalist order and generally status quo. People like Lenin saw this very clearly. The professionals, unlike people in the bottom quintile and particularly at the very bottom of the bottom of that quintile, the underclass, the ghetto dwellers, do not live at all badly, though this is not true of the non-tenured, non-tenurable professors who are hired year after year or even term after term. These conditions are very bad and are something that Schmidt ignores.

But we tenured or tenure-tracked professors are quite different in many ways from the very small (0.1 percent of the population) group of the superrich, an elite which is *de facto* very small but very unconstrained in its power. Entry into this elite, that is very much into the high political class,

the upper echelons of bankers and the CEOs of the large national corporations and multinational corporations, is *de facto*, though not *de jure*, limited. There are exceptions, of course, particularly for the high political class. Obama is a recent and striking example, though his mother was a professor, he went to Harvard, edited the *Harvard Law Review*, and taught at the University of Chicago. He is certainly not a working class boy made good or an underclass Afro-American rising from the slums. He came from the professional strata, a strata that is firmly reasonably high, though not the highest, in the highest quintile. It is not a part of the elite of the superrich, though *some* of the professional strata make it into that elite.

The elites sometimes have their differences—Obama and Cheney are not, to put it mildly, exactly on the same track, to say nothing of Trump and Sanders. The elites where they differ standardly, but not always, can compromise or be contained. When a member of such an elite, for example, Henry Wallace (Vice President under Franklin Roosevelt) decisively breaks with his class, he is excluded as someone who is anathema. Wallace was anathema almost as much as Paul Robeson, once a culture hero.

That such a superrich exists (and as a class or, if you will, a stratum) came out in a 2009 statistic in *The Economist* where it spoke of the “rising inequality—the top 0.1% of Americans earned 20 times the income of the bottom 90% in 1979 and 77 times in 2006—and a sense that the greedy rich have cheated decent working people of their rightful share of the pie” (*The Economist*, April 40, 2009, p. 15). No doubt this statistic is interpreted too. We are not just given a set of numbers. But is there any reasonable possibility that that statistic is so interpretable that the force of these remarks in *The Economist* are greatly reduced? Indeed, by being reasonably interpreted they instead may well be enhanced. That they would be reduced by any interpretation that did not practically come to a rejection seems very implausible, at least to someone as naïve about statistics as I am. And remember this quotation does not come from a left wing publication but from *The Economist* which, along with *Foreign Affairs* is a major spokesperson for neo-liberalism and capitalism. But Thomas Piketty, who

hardly can be accused of being naïve or uninformed, makes much of the use of inequality with considerable empirical backing.

Indeed, Schmidt is right that there are many people on the lower end of the highest quintile—people making \$100,000-200,000 more or less a year. But they are in a very different position in the world than the ruling elites—the 0.1 percent of the population—who have most of the political power, the effective control over the mass media, the banking system and related financial systems, and are the captains of industry. And it is not that the \$100,000-\$200,000 a yearers want to replace them. I doubt very many, if any, of them aspire to that. But some of us want people to know, really know, about these superrich and come to have a sense of their power over the lives of others and the injustice they as a group perpetuate. And some of us would very much like to see them replaced by a much more egalitarian structure of power, of ordering of societies and the world. (And for full disclosure, that includes me.)

Perhaps these \$100,000-200,000 a yearers constitute an expanding and increasingly influential middle class with some say as a class as to how things go in the world. I suspect it is precious little but even if they have some say, and even an increasing say, it is nothing (or perhaps I should say more cautiously, very little) in comparison to that of the elite and incredibly wealthy and powerful—the 0.1 percent of the really high elite, the very pinnacle of American society and more generally of capitalist societies. They, part of the capitalist elite, are the ones who run the show. Americans and other people of the North who are not part of that elite make up most of the top quintile. But they are in a quite different position from that elite. We live, as David Schweickart and Eric Hobsbaum show, in a plutocracy or an oligarchy, not a democracy. We elect our leaders from a list of candidates selected by the elite. The corporate powerful run the world and not in the interests of or for the good of the people, in spite of what Obama and the Clintons claim for themselves. They, if we look at their support, are not exceptions to this. Sanders would get a lot of money from relatively

poor people but that is nothing when compared to the support by the 'progressive' segment of the capitalist class, e.g., Obama and the Clintons.

Even in primaries, as in the United States, we still have such a selected list. And any party that has any chance at all will have their candidates taken from such a list. There is in the United States no working class party, let alone an underclass party. Any party that has any chance of winning in the United States that does not have its candidates for high office coming from such a list is nil.

In France, Sweden, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Germany, for example, we have parties—sometimes even governing parties—calling themselves socialist but, though they are usually a little better than their right wing adversaries, their labels to the contrary notwithstanding, they are capitalist parties now adopting neo-liberal economic policies sometimes modified by a little Keynesianism. But none of them take any steps at all toward public or common ownership and control of the means of production or seek to empower workers. The last attempt at that came from the Swedish social democrats with Rehn-Meidner plan to gradually buy the capitalists out with a 20 percent tax on corporate profits to “flow into wage earner funds to be reinvested in the corporations. The effect would be to build towards collective ownership managed by the representatives of the workers” (Harvey 2005, 112). But this amounted to a buyout of capitalism and a transfer of power, albeit gradual, to the working class. This, as David Harvey well puts it, “amounted to ‘a front assault on the sanctity of private ownership’. However generous the terms of the buyout may have been, the capitalist class was threatened with gradual annihilation as a distinctive class” (Harvey 2005, 111-13). Smelling a rat, the Swedish capitalists responded. They effectively mobilized their forces and destroyed this move toward socialism. The campaign—indeed, what Harvey well calls a propaganda campaign—against what the Swedish capitalists regard as excessive welfarism and government control causing, they claimed, economic stagnation, finally pressured even the Swedish social democrats to adopt a ‘circumscribed neoliberalization’ (Harvey 2005, 114-15).

All the present day so-called socialist parties in what in reality are not democracies but plutocracies are capitalist parties, some of them more firmly oriented in capitalism than others and some having something that somewhat resembles a human face. Sweden rather more adequately than France.

We must, in reflecting on the societies that are our lot, not only talk of quintiles but of different strata within these quintiles—strata sometimes with different outlooks and different stances and some more radicalized than others. (Here we have something which needs some difficult sorting out (Williams 2006). But these strata distinctions can be carefully articulated and be subject to statistical analyses. Of course, we still remain with a plutocracy but with these analyses we can perhaps better see where there are points where we can perhaps effectively challenge this small but very powerful hegemonic elite.

Parallel things to what I said about the superrich should be said about the very bottom of the bottom quintile. That bottom was classically (and then somewhat pejoratively) referred to as the *lumpen proletariat* or later, but then not pejoratively, as the *underclass* (Williams 1987 and 2006). I speak, bear in mind, of the very bottom of that lowest quintile. Schmitz, in talking of the lowest quintile, speaks as if it was routinely to be expected of people in that quintile that they go to university. But when Barry speaks of the poor (the people he is primarily talking about and that I am as well) he speaks of people the vast majority of which will never go to university. He speaks of people who often are disadvantaged even before birth because of their mothers, through lack of proper nutrition, not having the appropriate body fluids. Barry speaks of mothers who are poorly educated, without work or having only poorly paid and insecure marginalized part-time work. These mothers are not in a position to give their children the endowments that would help them get on in the world. The children of this underclass as well as their parents and not infrequently the parents of their parents have suffered from the same underclass condition as they do—a condition that Barry and I have specified. They come to school often without breakfast and falling asleep from fatigue.

Predictably, in such a situation they do badly in school, drop out as soon as they possibly can, and are sometimes even when they are in the later grades still only barely literate. When they leave school, if they find work at all it is badly paid and often temporary marginalized work. They are people who not infrequently fall into crime and get put into jail. After they get out they cannot find any job at all and then often return to crime and sometimes to drugs. They get jailed again, sometimes for longer terms, and so on and so on the circus goes. They do not participate in 'The American Dream'. They are people without a future. They are part of what has been called *the culture of poverty* eking out a dreary life on welfare in the Global North and even more precariously managing just to survive in the global south.¹ There are, of course, a miniscule number of exceptions who do escape the poverty trap. But they do not count for much in the big scheme of things. We should be glad of their clawing their way out if it is not a ruthless crawling out over the bodies of others. This is not what counts in trying to right the scheme of things (of getting a fair shake).

I do not know if this underclass is growing, diminishing or is in roughly a steady state in the lowest quintile. I would conjecture that it is increasing from the number of homeless and beggars I have seen in the last five years or so. But this, of course, is impressionistic and can hardly be relied on. From when I write this (2009), it appears that in the United States and Canada there are more destitute people than before. Moreover, with the recession/depression (call it what you will) in full swing, the number and size of tent cities on the periphery of cities in the United States or people living in their cars is growing. They are the recent American version of the shanty towns of the Second and Third Worlds, though not made to be so permanent. Indeed, if we speak more widely of much of the world we live on a planet of slums. Still, I do not know (again, relative to the growing size of the population) whether the poor working class is growing or, as Schmidtz *seems* to think, diminishing. But poverty and inequality in the countries of the North and most dramatically in the United States are growing and growing steeply. But with poverty and inequality both *within* countries and *between* countries of the North and, even more importantly, globally, good statistical analyses are urgently

needed. It would have to be one that gives attention to the lowest stratum in the lowest quintile, though not only there but extensively there. We would have to give, as well, close attention to what is to be called 'the lowest stratum' of the lowest quintiles and not be arbitrarily stipulative. We need good statistics here. But we also need to have accurate descriptions of what our statistics are about. This requires, given left wing emancipatory interests, accurate descriptions of certain determinate subjects. An important one of these needed accurate descriptions is of the conditions of life of the children as well as the adults of the lowest stratum of the lowest quintile. We need, with that description vividly in mind, to compare that condition of life with that of accurate descriptions of the life of children of the middle stratum of the middle quintile; people, that is, who are paradigmatically middle class. Finally, and equally importantly, we need to compare the stratum at the very top of the top quintile—the 0.1 percent *The Economist* noted (not arbitrarily) as the *superrich* (though they did not call them that) along with a description of their life conditions, including their beliefs and attitudes and access to power and willingness to exercise the power and how they carry that out in comparison with the income, wealth, power, and life conditions of the 90 percent of the population below them. (This will exclude the underclass who are still lower.) Here we should have a headcount of individuals rather than households. But we should also study the culture of the superrich similarly identified. This is something that is very difficult to study, for as compared to the lower classes, including the underclass (people in the lowest quintile), which have been exhaustively studied, there is little access to the superrich, the ruling class if you will. They are, generally speaking, a secretive and well protected lot.

For looking at some quintiles or for some strata within a given quintile it is, as Schmidt points out, important to look at age groups. But I doubt this is of much, if any, importance in studying the superrich or for comparing them with the lowest stratum of the lowest quintile or even of then next highest quintile.

The kinds of questions that I have just spotted for analysis requiring statistical, descriptive, interpretative, and explanatory answers are something, or so I think, that goes well with a left agenda, but it does require one. Schmitz points out that sometimes people, dishonestly if done willingly and honestly but mistakenly if done unwittingly, misuse statistics. But this use of statistics in answering the above questions, though not the whole of the matter that is involved in answering these questions, is likely to be an important part of the matter. I do not see why people pursuing a left agenda, or for that matter any agenda, *need* come up with statistics that just gives them the answers they want. I expect in answering these questions it often would in some rough measure yield the answers they want and I guess that is why many engaged in such an inquiry. But not because they want to *gerrymander* things to fit with what they want. That is not what we on the left want. Rather, we on the left, where we are not propagandists as many are not, want and insist on what we hope to be an impartial analysis which will show us for a given time what probably is the case for a given phenomenon. We will also hope that the inquiry *impartially carried out* will ascertain things that will be an answer that furthers our emancipatory agenda but in a way that is scientifically respectable. If we try to cook the books we are indeed being propagandists in the plainly negative and pejorative sense of that term. But it is not unreasonable to hope and indeed even to expect that an impartial inquiry on the subject we are attempting to study will yield the emancipatory answer we seek or something like it. We may and should, quite consistently with that, use all our investigative powers to refute a favored hypothesis of ours, for we, in seeking to carry out our emancipatory project, want and need to ascertain what is warranted and what is not and this requires an impartial investigation. To so come at things with those ends in view is not cooking the books. It is just the opposite. But we must be careful that we do not trick ourselves here. That, in such contexts, is a genuine wrong.

All statistics are, as Schmitz claims, interpretive but, as his own arguing reveals and as I have already remarked on, he does not think that *alles ist relativ* here but that some interpretations are better than others, that is, come closer to telling it like it is. And, for what it is worth, I think that he

is right in this. Unlike some postmodernists, he does not believe there is no telling it like it is or at least roughly like it is. If we had careful statistics—nonpartisan statistics using informedly disciplined techniques (informed in statistical gathering) on the questions I asked above—I think it would give us something that is approximately true (that is, well warranted, all that we can rationally and reasonably *take* for true) and that is extremely helpful.

Barry argues, as do I, that in crucial respects—we do not say in all respects—that things are bad and getting worse. (I initially wrote this in 2009. Now, in 2016, they are much worse.) We don't say this simply on the basis of world poverty and growing inequality, though we do agree that is part of it. But we must not conclude in so reasoning that because there are more people living on the equivalent of one to two dollars a day (a condition of extreme poverty) that the world is getting more impoverished—though there is more impoverishment in the world for the world's population has grown—but that does not entail or establish that people are proportionally more impoverished globally. There might not be worldwide such a proportional reduction of poverty but, then again, there may be. But greater proportional poverty will not be established because there is more poverty in the world when that results from there being more people in the world. The world's population is continuing to grow. It was two billion when I was born (1926); it is six billion now and it probably will be ten billion by midcentury. To show that poverty is increasing in 2009 worldwide relative to the population in 1990 or 2000 or any year previous to 2009 is to show that more people *proportionally* were living on the equivalent of one or two dollars a day than in those prior populations. But this seems at least not to be true if the relevant statistics are approximately right. However, if we exclude Asia where, though there is still an incredible amount of poverty as well as inequality, the former has been somewhat reduced in recent years (Sen 2009). If we ignore Asia and include Africa in our calculations it seems at least that global poverty and global inequality is growing. But to exclude Asia or any part of the world if what we are trying to determine is the extent—the increase or decrease or steady state—of global poverty or global inequality is obviously arbitrary.

But in any event the extent of poverty in the world is staggering and appalling and often made without caring for swaths of human beings. And if things go on like they are now the poverty and inequality in our midcentury world will still be at least as great and very likely even greater. Moreover, even if things vis-à-vis poverty remain proportionally the same or even if it is somewhat reduced, it will be exacerbated by then by the effects of global warming, e.g., more lands turned into desert and more lands salienated by the rising levels of the sea.

That aside, we learn that in China and India poverty is lessening somewhat. But it still remains appalling. Moreover, both Pogge and Sachs show that it is increasingly so, at least in its extreme form (Pogge 2002; Sachs 2005). Schmidtz thinks the opposite. While he doesn't think the world or even the United States is a rose garden and while he claims to be neither an optimist nor a pessimist, he thinks that in certain determinate ways the world is getting better at least in the United States, the only place he considers. (That, note, is a considerable and very arbitrary constraining of things.) But it does seem in the Global North—another arbitrary restriction—that things there, though in some places more so than others, are getting better. But even there dramatically racism is on the rise, homelessness increases, food banks are more in use, and killings increase. Moreover, even more so for the world taken as a whole, whether life, all things considered, is getting better is another kettle of clams. He only claims that in certain respects things are getting better. Some might say—I think mistakenly—that we cannot about things getting better or for that matter worse ascertain or even reasonably conjecture this for 'all things considered', though my impression is that we are going from bad to worse. To try to do that may even be *hubris*. But let us see if Schmidtz's arguments are persuasive here, even for the United States.

Schmidtz wants to know two things for the United States: (1) Are people doing better than their parents were doing when they were at the same age? and (2) Do people generally do better as they get older? He thinks the answer to both is a qualified 'Yes', though this, of course, he readily acknowledges, is not so for all people in the United States. (There are, after all, 35 million there living

on or below the official poverty line.) He points out that in 1967 only 3.2 percent of households in the U.S. were making the equivalent of \$100,000 US a year. By 1999, the number had risen to 12.3 percent (Schmidtz 2009, 508). So he concludes that it is not only the superrich who are getting richer. Millions from the upper middle class joined the ranks of the somewhat rich but, though he does not add this, certainly not to the ranks of the superrich. Now (2016) 6% of the people own half of the world's wealth.

We also can see that *The Economist's* statistics as well as many other statistics are saying much the same thing. (Can we plausibly believe that *The Economist's* statistics here are unreliable? That seems to me very unlikely and I would bet—though of course I don't know—that Schmidtz would agree.) These statistics show that a not inconsiderable number of people are getting somewhat richer does not show that the people described above (what I have called the underclass)—people submerged in what has been called 'the culture of poverty'—are getting any better off. The ghetto poor are still with us. And with the rise of neo-liberalism they are worse off. Their welfare payments relative to inflation have not risen. They get less and less for their meager payments. And—something Barry shows—their health care and with that their health generally speaking is worse than when the provisions of welfare states were more generous (Barry 2005, 70-94).

What would be crucial for Schmidtz's worst off case is whether a carpenter, a plumber, a worker in an automobile factory, a garbage collector, a clerk in a bank, a checkout clerk in a supermarket, or a hairdresser, as compared with workers at the upper end of the middle class, are comparatively better off as they grow older up to retirement when they have stayed on the same or a similar type of work since they came into maturity. Do they get better off or do they stay at roughly the same wage levels (adjusting for inflation) all their adult lives? I don't know the answer to that but unless they have a very strong union (something they seldom have) I suspect they do not get significantly better off. Perhaps the same thing is true for all the above type workers? But to be a

carpenter rather than a checkout clerk in a supermarket is a rather different thing normally with different endowments and entitlements. Seniority meant something for autoworkers, workers with unions. Is this true of checkout clerks in a supermarket? But neither of them is in the position of a graduate student flipping burgers or being a bagger in a supermarket, as I once was and then after graduation a year or two later I became an assistant professor. But my salary was very much more at the end of professorship than at its beginning. The same thing is true for most professors but not for unskilled workers.

Schmidtz gives us no evidence about these matters and he cannot rely on his very discriminating statistics to be of much help here. The type workers mentioned are not among the workers getting much richer as time goes on for them. They would only get marginally richer. Even if they have secure jobs, whether the above go up the job ladder and become substantially richer as they grow older—whether they get increasing seniority in their workplace—is not evident. It is one thing in this respect to be an autoworker; it is another thing to be a checkout clerk in a supermarket. It is one thing to be in the police force; it is another thing to collect garbage. And after retirement will any of them have a substantial and secure pension? This is usually true for professors, engineers, high skilled technicians, and accountants working at a university or a large and stable firm. But whether it is true, or substantially true, of some of the workers in the categories mentioned above is not evident. Certainly it is not true of the mass (though in the Global North, a diminishing mass) of low paid unskilled workers—the so called lower class—that are near to becoming the underclass. (For the distinction between ‘lower class’ and ‘underclass’, see Wilson 2006, 111-13.) Moreover, while there were once relatively secure and stable though low paid jobs for unskilled workers (say, on assembly lines) in factories, now these factories have for the most part moved from the Global North to Third World countries and there has in the North been less and less work for unskilled laborers and where there is work at all it has been less secure work. Moreover, the robots are coming.

Amazon is a model here. The unemployment has just revolved a bit all for the profit of capital. But remember, capitalism firms are not the Salvation Army.

These issues are not to be established or disestablished in a philosopher's study. Nor are they in much need, if at all, of a conceptual massage. The underclass and their close neighbors—all the really poor—do not get richer or even better off as they continue on work's way. Indeed, many of them in our times (2000-2016) are very likely in many ways to be worse off. And it still does not show what has to be shown, namely, that there is not 0.1 percent of the population that is the superrich and getting richer at the expense of other people year by year and thus drastically raising the level of inequality. (Remember that while poverty is one thing and inequality another, that still when inequality drastically occurs, as it has and increasingly so with us, it is very likely to increase poverty somewhere along the line.) We have something rather different from the rather rosy picture of life in the United States that Schmidtz gives us.

If we just use the lowest quintile in making comparisons, it looks like there are large numbers of people in the lowest quintile that have moved up a quintile or more, or at least have done so between 1979 and 1988. However, if we really care about the terrible and growing inequality that is our lot and achieving something even in the ballpark of approaching equality of condition, we should look at the relation between those at the lowest and of the lowest quintile, those, that is, who are underclass and caught up in the culture of poverty on the one hand and, on the other, those making \$100,000 US and over a year. If we do that, then we will properly see what poverty comes to in North America (the U.S., Canada and Mexico). We will become keenly aware of growing inequalities with their enormity and their destructive qualities. This will also be enhanced if we compare the conditions of life and the life chances in the United States with those on the lower end of the middle quintile (when they are at the peak of their wage earning time making just under \$100,000 US a year to those down to making \$40,000 US a year. When we compare the life conditions of that stratum with that of the stratum characterized as the underclass, we will clearly see how impoverished,

indeed immiserated and in effect excluded from social life out of the ghetto and without even remotely decent life conditions, the underclass is. We will, if we can be non-evasive, not jump with joy at our own social state or even, as Schmidtz does, acquiesce in it and try not to acknowledge how bad it is. We will see that the state of poverty is dreadful in the United States and Canada and that the inequality is simply obscene. ('Obscene', of course, is an evaluative term with a considerable emotive force, but it is a descriptive one as well. In fact, as with many such terms, its evaluative and descriptive sides are inextricably mixed. See Putnam, 2002.) And in the United States inequality is growing and has deeply destructive and dehumanizing effects. When we look at the relation between the Global North and the Global South, things are even grimmer. Vermont is one thing, Mississippi is another.

It is true that for some—say, with an income between \$50,000 and \$100,000 a year or its equivalent—in *certain respects* they are better off than their parents were at the same age. (But it must also in 'certain respects' must be stressed, as Amartya Sen, among others, shows, income does not tell it all, though it does tell a considerable part of it. Sen 2006.) Some of this gain is simply due to technology and technical know-how and has a specific and in that way a limited impact. There are, for example, more and better health treatments, ways of operating, things that can be successfully operated on, ways of drilling teeth or extracting teeth or anesthesia than were available to our parents or at an earlier time in our lives, particularly if we ourselves are rather old. Some diseases can be better cured—cancer, for example—though it is also true that more people living under contemporary conditions are getting cancer as well as some other illness including some new illnesses. There is, that is, more ways of getting ill and suffering. Matters are not easily balanced up here.

Health issues aside, there is more power going to the superrich and their political servants, to contrast, hoodwink, dominate, and some places even torture people along with more sophisticated, hidden, and effective ways of doing so. Moreover, and in some ways distinctly, there

are a larger number of people who are simply stuck in the underclass and its culture of poverty, stuck in ghettos with no prospects of getting better off as they go up the age group or go from one generation to another. They are in some quite unproblematic and un-metaphysical or un-obcurantist sense fated to be what the sociologist William Julius Wilson calls the truly disadvantaged. These are people who are completely excluded from the American dream (William Julius Wilson 2006, 108). As Brian Barry shows, their lives have gotten worse as their entitlements have dwindled as the welfare state has been increasingly dismantled or has been partially dismantled by neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism has, with its drastic and ideological diminishing of what it has called 'big government', left us with a capitalist anarchy which has made a few very rich and has disenfranchised and impoverished a far greater number of others. Social safety nets, most particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom, have been severely reduced. Neo-liberal economic policy and linked conservative politics have caused destructive harm in the world. With the current meltdown (recession/depression) we have vividly before us the wreck of the neo-liberal and the conservative system. The strange linkage of Milton Friedman and Leo Strauss. Both Chicago boys but from a very different *cepage*.

However, Schmidtz says that all the above to the contrary notwithstanding, statistics bear him out. In absolute terms of income, gains in real dollar terms, Schmidtz has it, are up. A 39.2 percent of those in the bottom quintile in 1975 had by 1991 moved up to where the top quintile had been in 1976. But, as he admits, some have not moved up at all. They are not all on Schmidtz's escalator. Still, according to the statistical analysis he gives us, only 2.3 percent of that population in 1991 "has remained at a living standard equal to that of 1975's lowest quintile" (Schmidtz 2009, 509).

I am utterly baffled by that. It runs against what I take to be the well confirmed factual claims mentioned in the above paragraph. I *suspect*, but I cannot now detect, that, as Schmidtz himself often obtains, some fancy deceptive footwork is being practiced on us with numbers or that the notion of 'living standards' or both is being Quixotically deployed. But I do not know that or have grounds for

believing it. I only suspect it. The number of people we see or read about living on welfare, the vast numbers of the underclass living in the great slums in the large cities of much of the world, that is of people with no prospects of getting a job and suffering from draconian cutbacks in welfare. They do not all live in slums of great cities. Some are scattered around in the medium-sized cities (Sacramento, for example) and small towns or the countryside. Still, this underclass is very visibly concentrated in the great city slums. This vast underclass can't be as low as 2.3 percent of the lowest quintile. It is, to put it mildly, hard to believe that there are not a lot more people immiserated in the culture of poverty than that. *Perhaps* it is true, but it would take a lot of proving to make it convincing. Something that has not been occurring.

To return to something I have just mentioned, ponder on the great slums in or around cities in the United States such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Syracuse, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Chicago, Los Angeles, St. Louis, and New Orleans where almost all the slum inhabitants are members of the underclass, very often African-American or Latino. Add to that the number of people living in similar squalor and powerlessness and social exclusion scattered about in the less populated areas of the United States. It is impossible that those populations make up just 2.3 percent of the population in the lowest quintile.

With the great poverty and increase in inequality due, in part, to the incredible increase in income and particularly the wealth of the superrich and the power that goes with that wealth and the misery they inflict on people, it is difficult to believe there is the wealth in this lowest quintile that Schmitz claims or that the underclass (the ghetto poor) is that small. We should never erase from our memories the huge and growing inequality that there is in the world and its effects on great swaths of human beings. (Remember the statistics quoted from *The Economist*.)

Perhaps what is being argued is that the superrich, as wealthy as they are, are too few to have much effect on the distribution of income and wealth of the whole population. If we taxed almost all of the superrich's income and wealth away it would not, it has been claimed, make much of a dent in

that distribution. (It could be argued, and indeed has been, in turn that income and wealth of the superrich has grown so incredibly that what may have been true before could not be true now. After all, they now (2016) have 48% of the world's wealth and it soon will be 50%. That surely will make a huge difference to the global poor. This, of course, is an empirical issue that needs investigating. An answer cannot reasonable be simply baldly asserted.)

Pace Schmidt's policy of soaking the rich, however laudable it may be given their incredible wealth, if extensively and properly done to help the poor would make a difference in the distribution, indeed a big difference, to the underclass and to the whole society. Redistribution through increase in taxes of the wealthier people in the world should go full spectrum from heavily taxing the superrich down to increased taxing (though, of course, not so heavily) the people just down the line after the superrich down to non-billionaire people earning \$70,000 a year. Though that, of course, would have to be graded in the usual way as we go up or down the income ladder quintile by quintile. There is no escaping the fact that it is not only the superrich who must get 'soaked' but the middling rich as well (though to a proportionately lesser degree). That redistributive shift in taxation would in total catch enough people to make a deep enough redistributive difference in societies and the world. That is, to make a society and finally the world a much more egalitarian place. But this would require heavily taxing the superrich. That alone would go a long way forward to making a fairer world. If it were considerable enough, it would very perhaps lead to the disappearance of the superrich. This would be a good thing given the control they now exert over our world. I certainly do not mean killing them off and distributing their riches and advantages to the peoples of the world. But the redistributive shift in taxation would it would lead to a considerable lessening of misery.

Libertarians will not like this, nor will the rich. But so what? It will lead to more fairness and more decency towards the truly disadvantaged who are deeply harmed by capitalism. Capitalism produces and sustains such indecencies. Such a redistributive policy would move in that direction of equality. It would not reduce the wealth of societies or the wealth of the world but only the way it

was distributed and could be redistributed to the peoples of the world in such things as schools, hospitals, roads and the like that are crucial for human welfare. This would be in part at least made possible by heavily taxing the superrich and to a lesser degree all of the rich. This is the wealth that is to go to the various sorts of workers doing various kinds of jobs and to various state agencies to add to meeting human necessities, some of them requiring extensive and complicated knowhow. Capitalists *qua* capitalists just take a free ride. We do not need them as a source of wealth or to keep the wealth they have oppressively accumulated.

But now we live in a world where the rich get richer not infrequently with no contribution on their part to our social world while the poor still in various ways often make contributions to the wealth of the world usually by their doing things that do not enrich them or enable them to lead flourishing lives or lives that in one way or another are not harmful to them. It is not the capitalists who produce the wealth but the workers themselves.

High taxation incrementally is enough to catch a sufficient number of reasonably well-heeled people to make a real redistributive difference of wealth toward more equality across populations including an ability to advance and societal freedom. Also note that this should not be seen as a punitive tax aimed against the wealthy of the world. In a world where the poorest are millionaires, it would not make a difference if there were a few billionaires as well, unless billionaires start to rule the world or at least try to as many oligarchs and dictators do. But in a world of millionaires where there were a few billionaires it would not make much of a difference if they were not ruling the world or trying to. But I am concerned, as Barry was, with real world situations.

However, even this, it will be said, is itself utopianism with an academic face. Still, reflecting on such matters, however unrealistic and idealistic, will give us some sense of what is to be done. Heuristic as it is, it gives us some sense of how the world ideally could go and how a world we actually live in, with its separation of classes and vicious class oppression, should be going.

We should go for this. But we should also be *somewhat* John Grayish here. We should realize, and ponder on this realization, that not in fifty years, not in a hundred years, and probably not ever are we going to get that kind of redistribution and the equality and autonomy that goes with it. We need to recognize, as Gray does, and as Dewey did as well in a very different way and in a very different spirit before Gray, that we need a good dose of *political realism* as well. We can be, and should be, egalitarians and cosmopolitans. We should, that is, hold firmly to egalitarian and cosmopolitan ideals. But we should not and need not make or try to make that our religion or ideology. We should neither think we can make a ‘new person’, a ‘new society’, a ‘new world’ overnight or perhaps ever, nor should we try to make people fit a plan, an agenda, a proscribed way of life. Perhaps as things change, if they do, incrementally we can in some ways at least make ourselves a little more decent and our world a little better and move more in the direction of equality and classlessness. At least we perhaps can—though I am not making any bets—clean up our global pigsty and make our global insane asylum a little less insane. Perhaps we can move to a more equal world and a world without the sickening poverty that is a part of our world now into a world without racism or sexism and the ethnic prejudices with all their ill effects that is our lot. Again, I am not making bets. But a hope for a better human life for us humans is not an unreasonable hope, though it need not come with great expectations. After all, the human track record is not very good. Gray has been good on that even if he suffers a bit from utopia phobia. To have such hopes does not require us to crucify our intellects and fantasize a utopia or go religious or even be religiose. Indeed, we should, recognizing what Hilary Putnam has called *a third enlightenment*, set those things just mentioned aside, agreeing with Gray that they are sometimes dangerous and utterly unrealistic things that human beings could better live without. But we could do that, as many do, without becoming wide-eyed utopians. We could, that is, keep a belief in and a commitment to the conception and values of this third enlightenment (Putnam 2004, 94-108). This is something that John Rawls taught many of us to be committed to without so labelling it.

Coming down off my moral high horse, let us consider the difference between, on the one hand, both the underclass and the lower class taken together and, on the other hand, the superrich and the rest of the highest (the best off economically) quintile taken together (Wilson 2006, 111-13). There is a vast difference between the endowments and entitlements of these two groups. The second group (and most of the superrich) has an incredible power to control things in the world and inordinate wealth. But imperialism, principally American super-imperialism, some people think is trying to close the gap while as a matter of fact it grows. And there is power in that quintile while the underclass and the lower class of unskilled workers (diminishing in some parts of the Global North but growing in some parts of the Global South, e.g., China and India) have practically no power and no say in the world or much prospect of any. This is quite unlike a large and united militant industrial working class (if there ever really was one) standing firmly in opposition to the highest quintile (part of which is constituted by the ruling class) that I am considering in my comparison. That was the working class (the proletariat) that Marx described and that may have been in existence from the rise of the Industrial Revolution to Italy and France for a while immediately after World War II. But the underclass and the lower class no longer are in that position at all. They neither have the militancy nor the power of the proletariat that Marx described and put such hopes in. This underclass is truly *lumpen*. This is a sad day for socialism and for the world. We Marxists, as Andrew Levine well characterizes, are left with a search for an effective agency for change that will bring about a socialist revolution and sustain a socialist world. We can't have, except temporarily, socialism in one country. And eventually a classless world, in Marx's sense, will be a communist world (Levine 1997 and 2003). But even if we never get that, we can more likely get a socialist world, a world quite different than the horror and insanity we have now and from the horrors of the statist Soviet Union or Mao's China. Gray would say that still is utopianism, not the scientific socialism that Marx and Engels envisioned and hoped to give a realistic characterization of some of the very general features and underlying rationale that such a world would have to have without proposing cookbooks for the future—

something which for them was a no-no. *Perhaps* that still is utopian but we can at least resolutely take this as a heuristic to be approximated as much as possible. And there is no reason why this could not be possible without running roughshod over the lives of masses of people and making a mockery of human autonomy.

However, let us set that aside for now and return to Schmitz and his belief that our world is getting better. Evidence of this for him is that more people are going to college. Does this signal what Schmitz thinks it does? Even if more people have college degrees, does this give much of a reason to think the elite political and economic power that is so much a feature of our world is being slowly eroded? I don't think so. First, we must realize that there are colleges and colleges in the United States. Attending and graduating from them signifies very considerable differences for people depending on which one they attend and graduate from. Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Cornell, and Princeton are one thing; the great state universities in California, Michigan, Illinois, North Carolina, and Minnesota are still, though somewhat differently, another thing and so are, though in again in a somewhat different way, the elite undergraduate colleges such as Amherst, Dartmouth, Reid, and Smith. But the community colleges that spring up around the United States and are something else again. They usually are little more than somewhat more dressed up vocational schools to teach people to be stenographers, computer fixers, and to be other lower skilled technicians. They track people into these jobs and into other specialized jobs like them. The students get a little sprinkling of 'higher culture' but this is pretty thin. This is very different tracking than goes on (for tracking goes on there, too) at Harvard or Yale. Students tracked in these community colleges may get secure lower paid jobs and are better off than unskilled laborers and certainly the underclass (principally the ghetto poor) or *perhaps* even skilled laborers such as carpenters and plumbers. In that way, going to college, even community college, pays. But graduates of community colleges will have little to say about what goes on in the world in which they live and they will not be very well equipped to force their way into a position where they will have a say. They will have little control over the quality of

their lives. This will be somewhat more open to the upper middle class but even they will not have much to say about what goes on in their society and with that the control over their lives is diminished. They may well be able to cultivate their own gardens in peace but still a life so restricted, even if self-restricted, has its diminishment, whether acknowledged or not. But they are comparatively well off. But life for typical graduates of community colleges is still worse. And their life conditions are very different and worse so than the very different life conditions of the graduates of Harvard, Yale or Princeton. George W. Bush had little more going for him intellectually or culturally. But his life chances were infinitely different than from those of an ordinary graduate of a community college. (How he ever got through both Yale and Harvard is rather a mystery.) But his life conditions are very, very different from that of a graduate of a community college. Class, after all, counts and counts heavily.

Big capitalists and their facilitator governments arrange for there being an enculturation and indoctrination of people to fit into the different slots needed for a capitalist society, to properly function with its various institutions—technical, service, political, and cultural.² They are educated—if you will, trained—to fit into very different slots. Where we contrast the elite universities and colleges with the community colleges, we will see how very unequal slots in society are in effect assigned. They are slots, designed or not, that make for the smooth and efficient functioning of society—capitalist society. In the elite universities there is less training and more emphasis on becoming broadly and critically knowledgeable and to be able to think for oneself in a reasonably sophisticated way. But still enculturation and indoctrination go on, though in a subtler and more indirect form that does not undermine, though it will direct such students' critical faculties (though in the process of successfully directing them it will undermine them to some degree). They need such critical faculties for their work, though in a subtler way they are being indoctrinated so that they will properly and loyally, without rocking the boat, fit into the slots that their education prepares them

for, the roles that they are to play in their society. (If this sounds like something that Orwell portrayed and sought to combat, so be it.)

Harvard *et al.* and the University of Michigan *et al.* (though usually with somewhat different aims) need to graduate students capable of managing their social order or of helping to smoothly run capitalist societies. Harvard may, for some at least, stress the first while Michigan goes more for the latter. However, sometimes, thank God, things do not work out that way. Tuttle, after all, may get off the tracks no matter what. But usually they do and it is essential that it is usually the case for capitalist societies or any of the advanced societies that we know of. That is essential if they are not going to become dysfunctional. But this requires these students not only to be loyal but to be able to think for themselves with some degree of criticalness and independence. There is, of course, a danger here for any social order but particularly severely for an authoritarian one. These students prepared for an elite role—I do not say only them—and might end up rocking the boat to one extent or another. Their acculturated capacities make it possible. Such an ability to think critically, as Peirce realized, can be unsettling of the established way of doing things. But their sort of roles in social life, the sort of tasks they need to be able to carry out, necessitates such an ability to think critically. Liberals tend to think that constrains a society's ability to control them. It is, as I have said, dangerous for the social order while at the same time necessary. But I think liberals overestimate its potential for challenging a social order. It can and often does go with subtler successful authoritarian control. This was so for the higher echelons of the KGB, STASI, and Gestapo. The work required cannot be done by robots or purely unthinking 'yes men'. So we need it in all the societies that we are aware of, whether liberal, fascist, or authoritarian statist (non-liberal capitalist societies or societies falsely calling themselves socialist or communist, e.g., Apartheid South Africa for the first and present-day China for the second). This criticalness may be framed—perhaps always is—by very different ideologies. Our capitalist societies with a tracking system does this rather efficiently but in ways that are particularly

harmful—I am tempted to say devastating—to people in the lowest quintile or at the lowest end of the second lowest quintile.

Schmidtz may be right that being at the bottom two quintiles—the bottom 40 percent in at least terms of income and wealth—is no longer a synonym for or the measure of being poor that it once was. But being jobless (sometimes coming from a family where everyone is jobless, where no one there has ever known what it is like to have a job, and with no history of anyone in the extended family ever holding a steady job) is very disabling. Moreover, this underclass is without anything even resembling a decent education, sometimes even without basic literacy, with the prospect (almost the inevitability) of living all their lives on welfare where massively the population in which they live—the ghetto poor—are similarly situated, where crime, drugs and violence are rife, where one female parent families are the norm, where in short there is practically no prospect of living a decent life. There is no possibility of human flourishing. There we have an underclass and, in spite of the fact that it is propagandistically utilized by the right, a culture of poverty. Moreover, a not inconsiderable and an increasing number of people are part of that category. That is their life. They are not just the 2.3 percent of the lowest quintile. And there we have the truly disadvantaged, the wretched of the earth of the Global North. However, this wretched of the earth of the North is comparatively speaking only a small minority of the wretched of the earth when we look at things globally. In the U.S., to stick with what Schmidtz draws our attention to, this wretched of the earth does not participate in or benefit from ‘the promise of America’—what U.S. politicians of all stripes call ‘this great nation’ and some call ‘this indispensable nation’.

Schmidtz looks to the single parent family as the principal cause of this malaise. It is true that many of the very disadvantaged children are from single parent families (usually with single mothers who are uneducated, jobless, with no prospect of a job, and poverty stricken). But this confuses an effect with its causes. These mothers do not so extensively appear in less disadvantaged sectors of the society. It is the structured nature of underclass society which produces them and reproduces

them. To move from a single parent family to a two parent family usually considerably reduces poverty and improves the life prospects of the child and sometimes its security—something that Schmitz shows. But in an underclass environment where single parent families are the norm a few single parent families make that transition or start as two parent families and then split. The culture—the culture of poverty—reinforces and sustains this. The very structure of the society, that is, ensures that that usually will not happen. (This could be put, though clumsily and unnecessarily, in methodological individualist terms.) It is clear that children from two parent families have more upward mobility, if sometimes only a miniscule amount. But even so it is a *myth* that these kids, either in one parent or two parent families (*pace* Schmitz) live in a land of opportunity. To assert that they do is either ignorance or engaging in propaganda for the United States and its rather crude capitalism. It is certainly not reality tracking.

Schmitz could respond that none of that gainsays that there has been a tendency for a goodly number of people (we do not know how goodly is goodly) to go from the upper range of the lowest quintile to the *lowest* portion of the *highest* quintile. This would mean that the middle class is expanding; that more people are getting wealthier and that there is increasingly among certain strata an upward social mobility. This upward movement, Schmitz claims, has been pronounced. There has been, that is, a lot of mobility along these portions of the quintiles, portions which contain a very large portion of the population. (He doesn't say just how large.)

This, counter-intuitive as it sounds, may very well be true. It would show that there is still social mobility in the US. The key questions that need to be addressed are these:

(1) Since the advent of neo-liberalism riding tandem with neo-conservatism, starting with the Reagan-Thatcher era, has the *underclass* (primarily the ghetto poor), allowing for the overall growth of the population of the United States, been growing, diminishing, or has it stayed in roughly a steady state? Has there been any significant mobility upward? Has the underclass participated in

any way in the enhanced prosperity that Schmidt notes? Has their impoverishment diminished, gotten worse, or stayed simply much the same?

(2) Has the general raise in income in the United States, given the other things that are going on, led to a better or worse life for the underclass and the lower class more generally or has it remained much the same, neither better nor worse? (This *may* be, because of its vagueness, a hard question to properly answer but we should try, using whatever precaution we deem necessary to answer it or in some way come to grips with it.)

(3) Along with this *claimed* increase in income across the board for the population or at least for large swaths of the population, has there come an enhancement of life chances and wellbeing of what I called the underclass, namely, the uneducated, unemployed, impoverished, with weak connections to a labor force, ghettoized people (primarily the ghetto poor), socially excluded from the mainstream society? Has not this immiseration of the ghetto poor gone on, and even increased, while there has been an enhanced prosperity of the upper middle class, namely, in quintile terms, the middle quintiles as well as with the enhanced prosperity of the superrich?³ Remember that the superrich are getting very much richer.⁴ So much so that it is not unreasonable to wonder if it is not at someone's expense. The underclass and the few other unskilled workers left in the North and the vast army of workers, skilled and unskilled, in the Global South are very likely candidates. They are the recipients of imperialist, largely American, largesse, the 0.1 percent that has gained ever more power, control and domination in the society and to a considerable degree in the world.

When we look at the United States and the rest of the North, has the picture significantly changed in the last two decades and, if so, how and for whom? (I do not deny that things are different for different countries of the North. I would hazard the guess—a reasonably safe one—that the Scandinavians and the Dutch are better off—perhaps much better off and in diverse ways—than the North Americans. And we in Canada and in Quebec are in some important ways better off than the Americans.) Still, the Global North as a whole, and even nation by nation, is much better off than the

Global South. So we need to ask both how it is in this respect in the Global North and in the Global South and how it is in the Global South when explicitly compared with the Global North. How has the picture changed in the last couple of decades in countries of the Global North and in countries of the Global South? Or has it significantly changed? And how has it changed globally? In some circumstances and for some purposes perhaps we should limit ourselves to certain countries in the Global North and in the Global South.

To the first of question it should be said that in many places (principally Africa) it has grown worse. But in Asia it has grown slightly better (think of China and India). But note that while poverty has slightly lessened, inequality has there as elsewhere grown staggeringly, though in some places more staggeringly than in others.

The second question is hard to properly answer. It seems to me (perhaps too informedly) to be the case that it has grown worse for people who once could eke out a parsimonious living on their own land who later had to abandon their land and seek employment in the cities. There they often, perhaps usually, do not find employment or when they do it is almost always employment that turns out to be in one way or another marginalized. And even when they precariously have some kind of job it is very poorly paid and often with harsh and sometimes dangerous conditions of work. So it seems to me that things will have become worse for those people. It, or so it seems, was better for them when they could keep and work their own land and eke out, even though poorly, a living from it. And that would seem to be so for a lot of people in the Global South who migrate from rural life to the shanty towns ringing the cities. That is for masses of people how things have, if I am right, become even worse. However, there seems typically to be no alternatives. (Are we back to Thatcher's TINA?) For one reason or another they cannot stay on the land (or so I perhaps too uninformedly believe). But I remember in the old Apartheid South Africa where I was repeatedly told, and (among others) by poor rural blacks, the very opposite. I do not know what generally would be said now and I do not know enough to be confident about what should be said. Certainly we must remember that people

who worked in the not greatest conditions in the mines made enough money to send remittances home. What would have happened to the women, children, and old left on the land, say, in the Transkei, without those remittances? Things are complicated. Perhaps there is no secure way of saying where the greater immiseration is, city or countryside.

The situation is even unclear for the wealthy and middling wealthy of the Global South. For such people to live in gated places is in some obvious respects better. They are in some respects safer and people who live there no infrequently live in sumptuous well apportioned homes and the like. But they still are in danger and more so than in many other situations that they could place themselves in. They could, as some do, move to one of the safer countries in the Global North. Certainly they are safer in Stockholm than in Durban. But if they remain with their gated homes in the Global South there still will be not infrequent situations where they are likely to be murdered, raped, stabbed, robbed, or subject to other forms of violence. They somehow have sometimes to go out of their homes. Even if they go to well guarded shopping malls tailored for the well off like the Brooklyn Mall in Pretoria, they still have to get there and back. Moreover, they are isolated with their own kind, all of whom are similarly isolated. Their lives in those ways are impoverished even when—or perhaps most when—they refuse to acknowledge it. They live a life where there isn't much of a community and they are living in fear. Is there with such niches a more subtle way to an enhanced impoverishment? Yet it is certainly not the plain and manifest impoverishment of the shanty towns and in the slums of the Global North and Global South places are themselves very dangerous. It is almost obscene to compare the rich and middling rich with them. It is insulting to the truly impoverished and oppressed to make this comparison. Yet it also remains true that life in the gated villages and gated private homes has its problems. Neither in them nor in the shanty towns do we have places where people can flourish or have even a whiff of a *gemeinschaft*.

To the question 'Is there across the board in our world now more impoverishment than what went on before?' the answer should be in some respects yes and in some respects no. And in some

respects it is indeterminate. That the wealthy and the middling well off are now both very constrained and not free of danger and things that make for an impoverishment of their lives is a plain reality in many parts of the Global South and even in some parts of the Global North—in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Italy to take prominent examples.

Things are unclear here and need more examination and sorting out. But I want to return to a consideration of the underclass. There we have a considerable mass of people both in the Global North and the Global South who are members of the underclass or the lower class (unskilled workers). They are very often people who themselves or their parents or sometimes grandparents were once able to eke out a living by farming either on patches of land that were either their own or as sharecroppers. But the situation for them became such that they were not able to do so and so, they were in effect forced to migrate to slums that were either in, as in Harlem, in great cities or ringed the great cities as the shanty towns of Africa and South America. Life there was often without work or only marginal work. When people park their cars in the great cities or sometimes even smaller cities of South Africa they standardly pay someone to guard their car while they shop, go to a restaurant, to an attorney or doctor, and the like. Men (I have never seen a woman at such work) stand around on the streets waiting for a chance to guard someone's car. That usually is their only source of income. This is, to put it mildly, marginal work. There is work like this all over the Second and Third worlds. People en mass migrated to the cities. There they became the ghetto poor, standardly without work. They go from being poor to being still poorer. Adrift from work, they either get no social assistance at all or only a meager social assistance that is standardly doled out to them in ways that are undermining of their autonomy and self-respect. There are slums, well populated and standardly grossly so, on the outskirts of Mexico City, Manila, Sao Paulo, Lagos, Capetown, Johannesburg, Mumbai, and Karachi, to name a few. Life there is grim, indeed, very grim.

In the United States, preeminent among the countries of the North, there are huge ghettos in New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago, Buffalo, Syracuse, New Orleans, and Miami. The lives

of these ghetto poor, people of the underclass, are very grim and in many places seem to have gotten even worse than it was for their parents. There is an inclination to say for many of these places that for people, either themselves or via their parents coming out of a rural life, their lives are becoming worse than it was for their parents and grandparents. But we have to be careful with this. This may be a kind of grotesque romanticizing of things here. Here we need careful, well conceptualized empirical work by anthropologists and sociologists. I may in my judgments here be relying too much on impressions. Consider Levi-Strauss, to recall a remark of his where he speaks of living before the Second World War in Sao Paulo. (He was there not making an anthropological observation but giving his impression as a resident. It seems to me as someone who was for a while in Sao Paulo fifteen years ago and from Levi-Strauss's remarks that he was right. But these are impressionistic remarks but perhaps not worthless for all of that. But such remarks are in need of confirmation by careful anthropological/sociological observation that is very aware of the pitfalls here that emerge from dealing with what is an evaluative notion. We should not just say off the top of our heads that it was a better place to live then than now or that even when more people who had lived there at both times would say that it was better then than now. We can, and often do, say such things, and indeed justifiably. Still, we need to know why it is said that it was better and whether the answer is borne out by the facts. Here we need social science confirmation or information or disconfirmation.

People in saying it was better would say things like it was less stressful, less alienating, less crowded, there was less crime and confrontations, less pollution, less difficulty traveling around the city, less noise, there was less poverty. Sao Paulo, they would go on to say, was more secure. There was more solidarity between people, more leisure, personal relations were friendlier, and people were more cooperative. In general there was more leisure and more neighborliness. If many people say that and did not say other things that countered that and if we had a good survey of people's opinions here and we had good evidence from the records that there was less crime, less poverty, less stress, less crowdedness, more neighborliness, and the like, we would have strong added

collaboration of that judgment. With such information about states of affairs and people's feelings here, we would have good reason, though not conclusive evidence, that Levi-Strauss's impressionistic observation was sound.

Similarly, we very much need careful anthropological or sociological confirmation or disconfirmation of the statements that both Schmitz and I have been making. We can't settle these matters in our armchairs and certainly not by simply using conceptual sophistication. We need empirical investigation and warrant which neither Schmitz nor my impressionistic observations provide. (Do we have here a philosopher's malaise pointing to the futility of purely conceptual work illustrated or bolstered with a few empirical impressions not brought against the bar of testability? For that we need anthropological or sociological observations.)

The third question also needs careful social science research. It seems to me that the trajectory of world history in the last few decades has led to a recognition that there has been an increased weakening of the working class—something that was already going on before that but has now accelerated. Their power has been eroded in favor of the superrich and the capitalist class in general, particularly the corporate capitalist class. I speak here of the period around 1975 until now (2009). But again, my judgment may be too impressionistic and not sufficiently empirically based. Some of us Marxists and other lefties think that in our times the ruling class has gained in strength and domination. Indoctrination by the media is very pervasive, successful, and *sometimes* very subtle and indirect, particularly when it is directed at more educated strata. It is not at all like the propaganda of *Neues Deutschland*, an instrument of the old East German state. Working class resistance has been weakened by the ruling class, or if you do not like 'ruling class' just use the term 'superrich'—the richest 0.1 percent in the world. This ruling class of superrich functions effectively as an elite which with its house intellectuals and spokespersons manufacture consent.

The extent of inequality is much worse than it was a few decades ago. Again, remember *The Economist's* statistics. It has increased between countries both in the Global North and in the Global

South, between countries in the Global North and between countries in the Global South, e.g., South Africa and Mali, and within all countries of the Global North and the Global South. There has been increased inequality between the North and South generally. In all these situations inequality is growing. Leonard Cohen to the contrary notwithstanding, neither freedom nor equality is coming to the USA, at least not in the foreseeable future. That notwithstanding, we should fight for *more* equality and freedom and reason carefully considering how we might achieve that and then apply that realization.⁵ (Freedom and equality as Rawls shows us are very closely linked. We can't have much of one without the other.) But we should not kid ourselves into believing they are around the corner. Our world is terribly inegalitarian and unjust. We must face the hard fact that it is going to be, if we ever get there at all, a long hard slog. And we must steel our determination to stay with it.

The questions I have been raising are mostly empirical questions. They cannot be answered by purely, or even at all, by conceptual inquiries even with enhanced conceptual precision. They cannot be settled in the philosopher's study—what Hume called the philosopher's closet—or by reflection, even by careful non-evasive reflection. They require social science investigation and research (sociological, anthropological, and economic). Philosophers *perhaps* can sometimes help by precisizing their questions or being good trend spotters—though here they usually do not know enough to do the latter—and by challenging assumptions and poorly posed questions or poorly stated answers though others, lawyers and historians, for example, can do that as well. Perhaps often better. Philosophers have no claim to special expertise here or any kind of monopoly here. It is a philosopher's conceit to think otherwise. Though it is a province of philosophers, it is not their unique province and it is not clear or even evident that their various doctrinal and methodological conceptions give them any advantage or leverage here—though it is not clear or evident that it sometimes does not. We should be open minded here but also very sceptical.

However, what is required is that we must have in answering them, if we can, some empirically well-grounded answers. But that requires social science investigation or a relying on

such investigations. This is crucial and, though there may be an armchair side to it, the major side is careful conceptually sophisticated empirical research, experimental design, hypothesis construction and testing. In general, an experimental approach and sometimes good statistical inquiries. All of these are essential and none are easy to carry out. John Dewey's defense of what he called the experimental method, while overstated, has its point. Philosophers may get impatient with such investigations but they should resist such impatience. Some things may seem obvious and not need empirical investigation and sometimes this is true. Doing so is just pedantry. Still, sometimes with these 'pedantic investigations' we may get some surprises. Some things which seem obvious may turn out to be false or to be very problematic.

I am naïve about statistical matters, though I have Schmidtz's beliefs and worries about how misleading and mistaken number crunching can be. But that includes with me scepticism about some of his own utilizations of statistics. I think that before we try to do statistics around the issues I have been talking about that we should first carefully and perspicuously describe and conceptualize our claims and reflect carefully on the questions and on their formulation that we want to do statistics on. To, that is, set out for statistical articulation. We should do that before we do the statistical investigation.⁶

The questions I have raised in this addendum seem to me to be such questions, though they may require more clarification than I have given them. All the same, adequately clarified or not, they pose, I believe, central considerations that very much need to be empirically dealt with. They are issues that Schmidtz lets pass by.

One final issue—I, like Schmidtz, am a philosopher and, also like him, I am somewhere in the ballpark of the analytic tradition, though I am a maverick more than him and, I believe, not without reason that we should be such. I do not share G. A. Cohen's firm belief that this severely analytical path is the right and only path to take (Cohen 2000, xxii-xxvi).⁷ But like Schmidtz I feel more at home with conceptual matters rather than with empirical ones. When it comes to making empirical claims,

I am wary about my capacity to deliver the empirical goods. Too often, my thinking here is impressionistic. Like Schmitz, I trust myself more with conceptual matters. It is not that I trust claims concerning conceptual matters more than those concerning reasonably complicated empirical matters, but that I trust *myself* more about claims *I* make about conceptual matters more than those I make about reasonably complicated empirical matters that ask for empirical research. I am all too aware that I do not have the proper background.

In this addendum I have assumed the correctness of some important empirical matters. But I feel unsure about some of that. I would like to see them backed up by empirical research. I expect they can be but expectations are not enough. Moreover, this is no place to just rely on robust Moorean common sense (though there is a place for that over epistemological and metaphysical matters and there Moore applied common sense to them to very good effect). But I believe that that notwithstanding, that over moral issues relevant to social and political inquiry, including normative inquiry, our conceptual inquiries, to have traction, must be rooted in empirical inquiries and rest on some empirically validated claims. Sen rightly says that “the old idea that while theorists argue, the empirical economists must give each claimant a fair shot has some rough wisdom” (Sen 2009, 48). Still, we cannot content ourselves with just doing conceptual analysis when we do philosophy, particularly social and political philosophy. There are some rough seas out there but that is unavoidable.⁸

Notes

¹ That the Right makes much use of the conception of the culture of poverty does not necessarily mean that it owns it or that it is not useful for the Left as well.

² This may be all too functional, indeed perhaps *ersatz* functional. Things, it could reasonably be said, are not so designed or so planned out. Perhaps not, but when we look at our societies with a cool eye we observe, planned or not, something very much like what I described as going on. This characterization, of course, is interpretive. But it is, or so I think, a useful and plausible interpretive description. The functional talk could be dropped, but I see no need to do that.

³ I have come to wonder if shifting to quintile terms instead of sticking with class terms or strata terms is a hat trick. What seemed like a neutral classifying matter may in reality be an obfuscating and ideological move. I don't know that and I do not have a very good reason for being suspicious. But I suspect this matter deserves examination. But we also should be careful about hunches or suspicions rooted too much in ignorance. They may be paranoid or at least some kind of fantasy.

⁴ But is the meltdown going to crimp their style? I hope so.

⁵ There are, of course, normative, if you will moralistic, remarks, but they involve thick descriptive/evaluative concepts and thus can be empirically supportable. See Putnam (2002).

⁶ Yet in the past few pages I have been doing some Aegean stable cleaning. Do we philosophers have some expertise here?

⁷ For some good critiques see Chandra Kumar (2008, 185-211) and Callinocos (2006, 254-60).

⁸ William Julius Wilson (a Harvard sociologist) tries to tighten up the characterization of the underclass. The attempt is worth careful study and would supplement what is written in this addendum.

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