

Capitalism and The Fog of Recovery

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Life's not fair. That's one of the first great lessons we all come to terms with growing up. No matter how long, or how hard your parents may (or may not) have tried to keep this from you, at some point, most of us wake up. And when we do, even though Louis Armstrong may sing otherwise, it's not a such a wonderful world.

While we live in countries which, on their surface, are governed by rules and laws that are supposed to help everyone equally, the truth is that most of these statutes work in favor of the powerful, the wealthy, and those who already have the best of what society has to offer. Beyond that, different nations offer a variety of compensations and consequences for the rest of us who are less fortunate.

In the United States, our economy is dominated by the principles of capitalism: rules governing private property and individual wealth accumulation. This construct has been repeatedly sold to us over the centuries as the best means of achieving a higher standard of living for all of our citizens. But is this true? While it is certain that Americans do enjoy a very high standard of living as compared to much of the rest of the world, it's obvious that not everyone in our country benefitted from this standard equally.

Historically, capitalism is very good at one thing: motivating people through their own personal greed. And those who have done the best under this capitalistic process have done so through growth markets: economic sectors of unprecedented profit potential. To find the very first of these large-scale growth markets in the USA, we have to go all the way back to the 1500's and 1600's when we discovered slavery: an economic policy of turning people into property as a form of capital investment. Now, if you were a white slave owner, this was about as good as it got in terms of personal greed and wealth accumulation. But, as we all know, if you were a black slave, it wasn't so "best."

Next, we can turn to the 1700's and 1800's when capitalism gave us the best tobacco industry. Of course, we soon learned that what that industry is really best

at is that it kills more people than the gun industry, the alcohol industry, and our military (outside of major war times) combined. And, it does it through a lovingly-slow process known as lung cancer, a best I'm sure we're all looking forward to one day.

After that we come to the 1900's when capitalism gave us the best petrochemical industry which, by almost every mainstream scientist's opinion, is on the verge of destroying our planet through its waste product's connection to climate change. Finally, we can jump right to the beginning of this century when doctors realized that they could do their profiteering, capitalistic best by murdering their patients for money in pain management pill mills.

The problem here is that though capitalism does provide a high degree of motivation, it does not couple that motivation with a sense of social consciousness: it's a me-me-me philosophy based on inequality. And here's the paradox. While people who support capitalism often refer to it as an equity system, it's actually an inequity system: a system of uneven shares, and haves and have nots. After all, not everyone can be rich, because if everyone is rich, then no one is rich. Wealth, in our country, isn't based upon what you have, it's based upon how much more you have than others. This, in turn, leads us down the path of individual gain, individual greed, and the hoarding of resources by the few at the expense of the disadvantaged many.

So, how does any of this relate to the fog of recovery? Because maintaining a stable recovery is all about knowing the difference between needs and wants. If you really need something - food, shelter, clothing - then this is an important goal. However, just because you want something - that next drink, that next pill, that next high - doesn't mean that you really need it. The issue here is that capitalism without a conscious is an addiction unto itself: the unnecessary drive to want more and more. After all, just like any actively using addict, there is one thing the wealthy will never have: enough. And it's this drive to acquire more and more that drives wealth addicted individuals to continually feed their greed at the expense of others.

Addiction is an industry, on both the criminal and "justice" side. Once clean, it's critical to remember that relapses, like addictions, travel in packs: fall prey to one and you're likely to fall prey to another. For those of us in a stable recovery, understanding needs versus wants in all aspects of our lives is critical to maintaining that stability. We must, therefore, realize that money can be both functional and addictive, and that falling prey to one's personal greed, even at society's capitalistic

behest, is just one more pathway toward the fog of recovery.

Robert offers anonymous and confidential substance abuse recovery telephone coaching to help those who wish to stabilize and maintain their recovery from substance abuse. Recovery coaching with Robert is available worldwide to anyone fluent in English who can reach him at **786-262-5750** (USA). For more information, please visit **<http://trafn.com/coach.html>**