

“The rich should be obliged to give to the poor because they don’t deserve what they have.”

The belief that the rich should have to give to the poor because they have not earned their wealth is one that is felt throughout the world by billions, however, like all things, there are two sides to it. On the one hand you could say it’s just that those who were born with more than enough money, should be forced to give to those who were born with none. Yet there are those from the previous generation that have worked themselves to the bone to ensure that their children will have the best opportunities possible, while living comfortably. Is it just to deprive these children of their inheritance? To stop them from fulfilling their parents’ dream for them?

If we followed that line of reasoning, where would it end? Where is the line between taking from those who have more than enough and those who do not? And who creates that line? What would stop, for example, the government, from taking money from someone they believe has more than enough money to live from, but in reality are barely scraping by? And what gives them the right to decide who has enough to live by and who has not? Some would say this is simply a justified reason for the government to steal money from our own pockets, after all how do we know that these “poor people” were actually given the money they were promised? And if they do, how do we know it was the right amount? Would this simply put even more people in need of such rules than there were before the law would be placed? These are questions worth asking, ones that must be challenged when considering putting this statement into law.

The idea given by the statement plays into Aristotle’s theory on distributive justice, stating that the more you work, the more you’re rewarded, and those who don’t work are “lazy,” despite their reasoning. This means people that are seen as those who work less (“lazy”), no matter their reason, are labelled as not worthy of rewards and so, do not get any help. This is seen as an unjust element to a theory of justice.

This statement implies that those who are rich, have been born into their wealth and that they do not work because of it, that they do not work enough to deserve the money they have. This plays into Aristotle’s theory, as these rich people would be seen as “lazy” in the eyes of Aristotle believers, making them less worthy of their wealth and therefore should have to give it up to those who are. Yet there are examples of this statement being actioned in our laws today, for example, tax is at a higher percentage the more you earn, however this

money does not necessarily go to the poor, but it does go to things that do, for example NHS or policing. Tax is also much higher on larger homes, showing, again, how they take from the rich.

However, if this theory were the basis of the statement, then it would not really be the poor that get the money, but those who work hard and achieve their goals. People that are in need of help are seen, in the eyes of Aristotle, as “lazy” and so therefore would not actually get any benefit from this. Furthermore, this premise only works for certain eras and cultures, as those born in times of prejudice and unrest are at a predisposed disadvantage to being able to work for their rewards in the first place. How is it just to punish someone for not working when the colour of their skin or their religion makes it impossible to find a place of work that would take them? In some era’s, these were reasons enough to, not only discriminate against them, but to treat them as possessions with no rights, rather than human beings born into less fortunate circumstances. In modern times this is less of an issue, people are given basic human rights and should be treated equally, however it does still happen, more likely in other, less developed countries and cultures.

Moreover, the idea that those with enough money to spare should give that to the poor is on the right track, in the prospect of actually helping those who need help. After all, so many of us ignore the poverty right in front of us, even when it affects us. We bury down the sympathetic feelings that we are predisposed as human beings to feel, and go on with our lives. We live, we love and we fight to survive all that life throws at us. Yet, while some get only a few pebbles, others get a tsunami’s worth of boulders catapulted at them from every direction. These people. These are the ones we walk by everyday and avert our eyes. These are the ones we feel guilty for ignoring, yet forget moments later. It’s because of these people and this ignorance, that any action taken to open the eyes of the public and truly come together to help, is a massive step forward to becoming the evolved, civilised, compassionate human beings we claim to be.

There is no argument that a premise such as taking from the rich to give to the poor has its holes, yet the possible outcomes far outweigh the risks of corruption. If we do not believe in justice and goodness of people then what is the point? It’s possible that, with a bit of work, this statement may actually become the stepping-stone we need to eradicate the disease we know as poverty once and for all.

