

Knowledge Better Left Unknown

They say that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. About certain things, however, any knowledge at all is dangerous and potentially fatal. One such piece of purported knowledge pertains to the size distribution of income and wealth. This knowledge serves no good purpose; it is wholly unnecessary for defensible government policy or action. It serves only as fuel for economic misunderstanding and demagoguery. It feeds envy and provokes public mischief. If such knowledge were completely unknown, no decent project would be harmed, and a multitude of destructive policies and actions would be rendered more difficult to initiate or carry out.

A lesser but still important problem is that all such purported information is subject to high degrees of conceptual and measurement error, as even a moment's reflection makes plain and a careful study of the matter amply confirms. Yet people bandy about alleged facts about the distribution of income and wealth as if such data were as precise and reliable as measurements of human height and weight.

(For much more extensive discussions of this subject, see my collection *Against Leviathan* (2004), especially chapters 1, 3, and 16.)