

Wealth, Generosity, and How Others are Valued

I dislike discussions of generosity in people based off of wealth. This is because there are vastly too many variables to consider, and few studies are able to compensate for these in a satisfactory way, to such an extent to extrapolate thoughtful results. To start, what constitutes as generous? Which philosophy of generosity are we measuring? I'm not even going to list off the other hundreds of questions needing consideration in this endeavor.

Overall, it will be irrelevant. I dislike the whole premise and consideration. Let me try to frame a different way of looking at it.

People are guided by incentive and rich people and poor people have different incentives.

Let's imagine I drop a \$100 bill. Who would I want to pick it up? A random rich guy or a random poor guy? Obviously it depends on the person, but statistically, I would much rather the random rich guy find it. This is because of the upside and downside for each person.

\$100 to a rich person has little upside. The value is low to him. While he doesn't know me and the chance of getting caught is minimal ... the cost to his reputation and his own personal integrity is just not going to be worth \$100. He would gain little and risk too much not to just notify me and give me my \$100 back.

\$100 to a very poor person has a ton of upside. The value is high to him. \$100 could make a big enough effect over his life that any hits to his personal integrity and risks of getting caught are negated by the \$100 windfall profit he is looking at.

In these sorts of scenarios, rich people will always seem more generous and kind.

I believe a reason some people will believe that rich people are heartless is because rich people will innately value others less than poor people will. All human interaction is an exchange of values. People who are rich in resources (whatever that may be) are valued higher than people who have scarce resources. When I approach a person who has more notoriety and wealth than I do, they are unlikely to see the value they hold in me. When I approach a person who has less notoriety and wealth than I do, they are highly likely to see the value I can offer them.

Our interactions with people are going to be more productive when we have equal resources to share. We will feel worthless to people who have more resources to offer and we will find others valueless if they have no resources to offer us. This will often make us believe that people who are rich are more "selfish". They aren't.

This is why I can appreciate the idea of communities of people who are relatively homogenous in values and wealth (that are voluntary). This is also why I like the idea of living in communities where everyone has a certain amount of insurance or bond just to exist in a community (so everyone has something to lose).

This phenomenon is also why I think racial and cultural issues are somewhat over-exaggerated, but I'm also very anti-leftwing here. The problem isn't multiculturalism exactly. The problem is intermixing people who don't have relatively equal amounts to lose in interacting with one another, whether in wealth or reputation. What we often seem to observe as a cultural or racial issue should more accurately be viewed as an economic and reputation disparity.

I really started this post as one thing and drifted off into a different direction.