



PAFERE

POLISH-AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL!

THE INJUNCTION "THOU SHALT NOT STEAL!" IS THE MOST IMPORTANT IMPERATIVE FOR THE ECONOMY. THE COMPLIANCE WITH IT, BOTH BY CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENTS, IS AN ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITE TO THE UTMOST PERSONAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY.

But what does it mean, stealing or committing theft?

- Against the will of man, taking away the fruits of his efforts, work, sacrifices and valued achievements;
- Against the will of man, taking away his honestly acquired property, the rights to it, or, in general, restricting his property rights;
- Depriving man of opportunities and possibilities to produce goods, by limiting his freedoms.
- Thus, it means also doing harm to others and the society, and rendering those who commit theft, a nuisance to the well-being of the people and the economy.

Money can be earned either through personal efforts, received it as an inheritance, received as a voluntary donation from individuals who acquired it through honest means, acquired as a prize, award, or a fair compensation for damages suffered. The dishonest alternative is that one can steal or profit from third parties' stolen property. The latter instance would in fact be an indirect form of pilferage. **There are no other options.**



There exist individuals who obtain profits by cheating others. Surely, there are plenty of them. But the truth is that when a person utilizes falsehoods and treachery in order to obtain somebody else's goods, that person is nonetheless stealing; hence we must make it our best effort to avoid such practices.

Capital cannot be obtained by magic spells and wishes. Despite this, it is not uncommon to hear politicians speak about the distribution of wealth and free benefits among people. However, anything that they may offer us, they must **first secure from third parties**; which needless to say, usually occurs against the latter's will - through government's force, a threat to use force, or by subterfuge.

Even if one manages to escape imprisonment, fraud will transform a person into a different individual.

If you want to be fair to your fellow man, to have respect for yourself, feel comfortable and to retain the capacity to look straight into your neighbor's eye:

RESPECT OTHER MAN'S PROPERTY!

**REMEMBER THAT YOUR PROPERTY IS A FOUNDATION OF YOUR PERSONAL FREEDOM.
THE THEFT OF PROPERTY CAUSES LIMITATIONS AND DEGRADATION OF FREEDOM.
THE MORE PROPERTY YOU LOOSE, THE LESS INDEPENDENT YOU BECOME.
IN EXTREME CASES IT IS POSSIBLE TO BECOME ENSLAVED BY THOSE WHO HAVE GAINED
CONTROL OVER YOUR ASSETS.**

The injunction “Thou shalt not steal!” is not however only an injunction against the deprivation of other individuals’ property. It is also a way of encouraging just action for the betterment of oneself and others. This commandment serves as a stimulus to improve our own existence, as far as it does not occur at the expense of someone else.

**WHAT ARE THE MOST FREQUENT AND EXPENSIVE CASES OF BREAKING THE INJUNCTION
„THOU SHALT NOT STEAL!” IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD?**

- **Socialism and communism** are built on the negation of private property – institutionalized theft is their foundation.
- **Inflation** is theft, because those responsible for it consciously reduce the purchasing power of the population. For the same reason, excessive taxation often amounts to a theft.
- **Taxes** for purposes **other than to serve the common wealth** of all citizens, like through protection of their property and liberty, national defense, law enforcement as well as the maintenance of the judiciary system, are an attempt against that property, liberty, and well-being of the people.
- Incurring a **national debt and budget deficit**, by government, means encumbering citizens and usually future generations with indebtedness against their will or without their knowledge. Such an incurrence amounts to an act of serious dishonesty.
- The **granting of monopolies, concessions and other privileges** by authorities, as well as the acceptance of such privileges at the cost of all remaining people, constitutes a theft.
- **Inheritance levies and taxes** rob the deceased of his legacy (already taxed during his lifetime), and also, rob his descendants of their patrimony.
- **Excessive bureaucracy**, complex regulations as well as countless hours required to fulfill other such formalities, are in fact robbing people of their time and consequently a part of their life.
- Government’s **confiscation of citizens’ lawfully acquired property**, in the name of “social justice” or following some load-bearing slogans, and the consequent distribution of that property through clerks and their costly intermediary to other people, is nothing else but robbery and theft.
- **Self-appropriation, by employer**, of contracted earnings of the employee, or **self-appropriation, by employee**, of any money or other awards not justified by his voluntarily concluded contract with the employer, is a theft.
- The **deprivation of employer, by employee** from profits or assets of the employer, directly – by self-appropriating of any possession belonging to the employer, or indirectly – by not devoting enough time to a honest work paid by the employer, is also mutually harmful.
- **Failure to fulfill the terms of a contract** by one of its parties, in a manner that causes the other party to suffer financial losses, often constitutes a deliberate fraud.

Of course, numerous other forms of theft are committed directly by citizens such as petty thefts, commercial frauds, individual robberies or burglaries, etc. All these, however, constitute only a scanty percent of costs, in comparison to the cost of all the frauds committed by most governments on their own citizens, in all the majesty of the law and regulations constituted by the very governments. This is exactly what the famous 19th century economist, Frédéric Bastiat, used to call “legal plunder.”

**YOU THINK, THAT THE INJUNCTION “THOU SHALT NOT STEAL!” PERTAINS NOT TO THE
COUNTRY? CAN YOU IMAGINE AN ENTERPRISE WHOSE ALL INCOME AND ASSETS ARE BEING
STOLEN? CAN YOU THEN IMAGINE A NATIONAL ECONOMY COMPOSED OF SUCH
ENTERPRISES? COULD THEY EXIST WITHOUT GOING BANRUPT?**

**In general, no one supports theft, yet still attempts against other people’s property are very common
and harmful to everyone. Just as we study and promote “the culture of life”, it is a high time that we now start
propagating also “the culture of property”.**

**RESPECT THE PROPERTY OF YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOUR OWN!
DON'T DEMAND FROM THE GOVERNMENT ANY BENEFITS PAID WITH MONEY
ATTAINED THROUGH THE THEFT FROM YOUR NEIGHBORS!
AND DON'T ALLOW ANYONE TO STEAL FROM YOU!**



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