

The 100% Death Tax - Towards an equitable distribution of wealth

Summary: All proceeds from the estates of individuals who have died in a given year would be redistributed to all persons born in that year upon reaching their majority (or, obtain their citizenship under the [Paying It Forward Proposal](#) during that same year.)

There is no such thing as personal inheritance, wealth is returned to the society as a whole and redistributed to its new members in equal portions as a 'grubstake' upon reaching their majority. The current mythology proposes that all get wealthier from the largess and generosity of a few. This proposal says that the wealthier one gets, the more there will be for all, including the children and grandchildren of the wealthy. What it prevents is that some, merely by accident of birth, will have an enormous advantage over others.

Some points of departure for discussion:

1. historical: Where did the idea originate that personal inheritance and bequest was to be the sole model for how cultures or societies were to progress and reinvest the product of the past into the future? The economic structure (socialist, capitalist, communist or some variant) does not change this seemingly universal implementation. Whether personal legacy becomes the property of other individuals or of some more abstract entity such as "the state", its distribution still depends entirely on schema devised by the system (which may be more or less equitable; but is rarely, if ever, equitable).
2. philosophy: Society as a whole, as the structure which actually creates wealth through its structure and institutions it maintains, the schema of transactions, legal conventions and distributions of resources (inclusive of education and knowledge transfer) may be said to be the original and continuing 'creditor' of wealth; wealth that only appears to be created by individuals within the society but is in fact enabled by the entire complex structure of the society itself. This is separate from the ideas in marxist/socialist canon which claim such wealth belongs to the state but that individuals 'borrow from it' for their own applications as an investment in the state and for the good of the state. Seen in this way, it would be a natural and non-confiscatory activity for a society to reclaim such wealth upon the death of an individual and to redistribute it equitably back into the society as a whole. That 'society', my proposal suggests, should not be a distribution to every individual nor to the works of the state (which would make such distribution a 'tax'), but to the new members of the society upon reaching their majority or adult citizenship. This, it seems to me, makes the bequest an investment in the future which I think befits the proper usage of any legacy. It goes without saying that this distribution would make some allowance for those who were truly dependent on that wealth and needed to be sustained, at least until they can be retrained or otherwise become independent and self-sustaining.
3. anthropological: at present, I know of no cultures which have dealt with the actual transference of wealth between generations in this fashion. Many, of course, share the common wealth. But I don't know of any that directly distribute that wealth to the next generation. I would be interested if any have, and what the results of such treatments

of wealth were. If not, then what I am suggesting would seem, indeed, a species of cultural evolution without precedent.

4. thorny issues remain: The schemes to circumvent this prescription would, of course, be myriad. People would simply attempt (from some basically 'family-centric' selfish impulse?*) to insure that their wealth was transferred to others before their death (as we now do with living-trusts and the like). How could this be dealt with? Second, if projections of logarithmic increases in life-span are correct, fewer and fewer people will be dying each year and the pot to be distributed would get proportionally smaller (though overpopulation places some limits, in theory, on that projection.) These and other questions are what I call 'administrative details', though not less important for that. Still, I think the first step is to examine the main proposition and see if and where it falls apart. Then, one can tackle other thornier issues of implementation.

End of '100% Death-Tax' proposal.
