

**Circling**

## Envy, the Green-Eyed Monster

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The three main categories normally defining “identity politics” are race, gender, and class. Our last five posts have focused briefly on the first two categories, race and gender, to show how these issues get complex very quickly. This post is the first to touch on the third category, class.

As we approach 2020’s presidential election year, such issues are already heating up, and we hope to demonstrate over time that each of us will need a worldview to move beyond random opinion into some form of coherence, if that’s even important.

Why is this statement true: Most of us Americans like to consider ourselves “middle class”?

So much so that we’ve even broken middle class down into upper middle class, middle class, and lower middle class, just to cling to the “middle” part. Rarely will we see an American self-identify as upper class or lower class, probably because of a cultural desire to be all in the same boat, to have a certain “sameness” among us.

No royalty or bowing and scraping in American society! “In the beginning,” we fought a war to break away from a world structured on class.

No, Americans need to be “equal,” and yet, such equality only seems to apply to certain social and legal matters, not economics.

Why is this true? Is it just or a good idea?

No doubt, we’re all vulnerable to what our Expert Contributor, Michael Novak (in the above video), refers to as “the main vice that destroys societies,” envy: specifically, envy of the differing abilities among us and envy of differing financial success, with the former often leading to the latter. Novak regards this as an aspect of universal human nature.



In fact, today we're experiencing a push for a degree of sameness in every individual's financial circumstances which some label "socialism." (In time, Praxis Circle will take a closer look at a range of definitions for socialism and why they're so important.)

The extent of one's desire for equality in class or economics is usually determined by one's worldview concerning justice, and these views compete on theory and on perceived facts in practice. As Novak suggests, envy might explain one's desire for this form of "equality," or a desire for power using envy as a tool.

Politically, that translates into a need for class distinctions where the goal is economic leveling: Standards of living raised or lowered to a much tighter range.

Finally, a second Praxis Circle Expert Contributor, Os Guinness, explains (in the video below) that, although we Americans are great believers in equality before the law, we must recognize that forcing economic equality always costs a significant loss of liberty; we have significant trade-off to consider.

So, you will have to eventually choose: Is true equality the recognition and respect for each individual's uniqueness and dignity or the imposition of sameness? What's possible? What produces the "best" results for individuals, families, communities, and the nation? Why are your desired results "the best"? When can means subvert praiseworthy goals, and why?

It's for you to decide.

Now we make it official: Welcome to the challenge of "Building Worldviews" in 2019-2020.

