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## WHY IS THE STATE'S REDISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH SO REVERED BY PUBLIC OPINION? A DISCUSSION ALONG LIBERTARIAN LINES

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### Abstract

This research deals with the redistribution of wealth carried by the State, what the activity implies, how it affects collectivity and the individual, and how it acts on the social imaginary. The language of the State is investigated in the theme, which associates virtue with practice, and the self-interest of social groups in search of privileges through the system of representative democracy. The method is the hypothetical-deductive with bibliographic research, data collection and analysis. The initial hypothesis to be defended points the redistribution of State is acclaimed by public opinion due to the rhetoric of virtue used by the State and the self-interest of the citizen. It concludes by attributing to the State the role of corrupting society through a favorable language and dividing it by creating competition with incentives and privileges at each other's expense.

**Keywords:** Income Redistribution. Legal Plunder. Libertarianism. Resource Reallocation. Symbolic Alchemy.

### Resumo

A pesquisa trata da redistribuição de riqueza realizada pelo Estado, o que a atividade implica, como afeta coletividade e indivíduo, e como atua sobre o imaginário social. Investiga-se a linguagem de Estado no tema, que associa virtude à prática, e o interesse próprio dos grupos sociais em busca de privilégios através do sistema de democracia representativa. O método é o hipotético-dedutivo por pesquisa bibliográfica, coleta e análise de dados. A hipótese inicial a ser defendida aponta que a redistribuição de riquezas estatal é aclamada pela opinião pública em função da retórica da virtude utilizada pelo Estado e do interesse próprio do cidadão. Conclui-se por atribuir ao Estado o papel de corromper a sociedade através de uma linguagem propícia e dividi-la pela concorrência a incentivos e privilégios às custas alheias.

**Palavras chave:** Alquimia Simbólica. Espoliação Legal. Libertarianismo. Realocação de Recursos. Redistribuição de Renda.

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, societies are dominated by the so-called Economic Interventionism Era, where States pursue abstract purposes and use the private properties of their citizens as a means to address them, whether military purposes through invasions or objectives to raise collective welfare by appropriations and regulation of the markets.

The source of the favorable condition of public opinion in relation to the redistributive policies carried out by the State is investigated. Why is the practice so cherished? The method is the hypothetical-deductive through bibliographic research, with data collection and analysis. This method works from a hypothesis, which, throughout the research development, is automatically deduced true or

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false through logical-argumentative reasoning. Hence hypothetical-deductive: the hypothesis is deduced from the rational lines throughout the text.

The initial hypothesis to be confirmed points the redistributive activity is praised due to two elements: a) the belief in virtue in the initiative, a corollary of a state language prone to transfigure the process of taking and distributing goods; b) the citizen's self-interest, which seeks to maximize its privileges at the expense of others.

Thus, the reallocation of wealth directed by the State has two bases in social thought, which are the vision of virtue in practice and the individual's self-interest. This context of kindness and reward is what makes it possible to maintain redistributive practices.

The first section works on the logic of redistribution, the need for legitimacy on the part of the State to implement policies, and the rhetoric of virtue, which guarantees and conditions the population. In the second, the citizen's self-interest is explored, which motivates him in a regime of representative democracy where the granting of promises and group privileges by the rulers mean the maintenance of political power and social division.

The bibliographic references are based on libertarian authors such as Frédéric Bastiat (2010), Hans-Herman Hoppe (2014), Murray N. Rothbard (2012), Robert Nozick (2011), and classics of discourse analysis such as Patrick Charaudeau (2019), Jacques Ellul (1973), from which the reasoning is built, the foundation for the redistribution of wealth and linguistic analysis is addressed.

Practical elements are built by legal reference to isolated legislation, such as Law n°7,998/1990 that regulates the unemployment insurance program, Law n° 10.836/2004 that creates the Family Aid Program, Law n° 12.711/2012 on admission in federal universities, Law n° 12.990/2014, which reserves 20% of the vacancies offered in public examinations for blacks, and mainly to the Brazilian Constitution of 1988.

The influence channeled by the State over public opinion through the use of virtuous terms to cover up the violation of property rights has the ultimate aim of dividing society in order to better control it. The process starts with the lack of transparency in the relation of appropriation of goods and distribution.

## REDISTRIBUTION, RHETORIC OF VIRTUE AND ACQUIRED LEGITIMACY

*State wealth redistribution* is defined as anything that relieves an individual or social groups of an expense that would presumably be assumed out of their own pocket, which is equivalent to an increase in income. The practice takes the form of some families buying the same amount of food at



lower prices, while that same price increases for others; an individual who seeks medical services and obtains them at no cost, while the costs are added to another. In both cases, income is increased by decreasing those who may not use the services or consume the products (JOUVENEL, 2012).

Redistribution can essentially take three forms: a) a simple transfer of payments, where resources are expropriated from owners and transferred to non-owners; b) an offer of goods and services with low or non-existent costs, such as education, health and infrastructure, in which wealth is confiscated from owners and transferred to the group of users of the respective goods and services; c) regulations of private companies and consumers, such as price and tariff controls, according to which the wealth of members of a group is increased thanks to a corresponding loss for others (HOPPE, 2014).

“No redistribution of income or wealth. The libertarian theory of rights excludes any law that forces some people to help others, including taxes for the redistribution of wealth.” (SANDEL, 2015, p. 79). Although it is commendable that possessors subsidize the health, housing and education expenses of economically ill-established individuals, this assistance should be optional for each individual, and not an obligation of the State (SANDEL, 2015).

The state would have no more right to force the individual to support redistributive programs than the benevolent thief that steals to share. Subtracting goods and taking taxes for distributive purposes would be unfair for violating a right to property. It is a violation of the freedom of using money as their respective owners wish (SANDEL, 2015).

The premise of this logic is that “there are only two ethical ways to obtain ownership of a good: through original appropriation, when you are the first to mix your work with the good, or through voluntary exchange. Any other way is considered unethical and punishable.” (KAESEMODEL, 2018, p. 3-4). Libertarian reasoning indicates that the redistribution tax is a form of coercion and theft, so it does not fit their model of consensual exchange.

“The public can reduce my profits whenever they want. Just refuse to buy my products.” (RAND, 2010, p. 154). Here is the libertarian logic focus on the importance of the good produced and on voluntary relations in society. Any other method of reducing profits is a form of looting, because it acts in a coercive way, however admirable or pragmatic the end may be.

Hoppe's (2014) theory of justice states that violations of property rights can be of two types: a) criminal activities; b) government interference. The hallmark of criminal invasions of property rights is that such activities are considered unjust and illegitimate not only by the victim and owners in general, but even by the criminals themselves. From this, it is considered that the victim has the right to defend himself, punish and demand compensation from the aggressor.



The crime's impact is twofold. On the one hand, crime reduces the victim's supply of goods and, on the other hand, as people perceive the risk of future harm, they reallocate their resources to this area. “They will build walls and fences; install locks and alarm systems; build or buy weapons; and will contract protection and insurance services.” (HOPPE, 2014, p. 42).

Thus, the perception of temporary risks such as robberies, thefts, floods, earthquakes, catastrophes and the like represent a variable that motivates human action to temporarily reallocate their assets in order to prevent. They are temporary obstacles and recognized as concrete evils by broad segments of society, which is why prevention is effective.

The case of government interference represents a radical shift from the preceding logic. The hallmark of government violations of property rights is that they are considered legitimate not only by government officials, the general public, but even some victims. In this situation, the victims cannot legitimately defend themselves against such violations without suffering institutionalized and social reprisals (SCHOOLAND; ELDRIDGE, 2004).

In either case, the owner's offer of property is withheld against his will and without his consent. Furthermore, government regulations on what an owner can and cannot do with his property, in addition to the rule that no one can cause physical damage to someone else's property and that all exchanges must be voluntary, *imply* a comparable appropriation of goods to a common robbery (SCHOOLAND; ELDRIDGE, 2004).

The initiation of force against life is murder, against freedom slavery, while against property it is theft. “It is the same weather these actions are done by one person acting alone, by the many against a few, or even by officials with fine hats and fancy titles.” (SCHOOLAND; ELDRIDGE, 2004, p. 251).

As in the case of crime, government interference with property rights reduces a person's supply of goods, but in a significantly different way. The crime, being illegitimate, occurs only intermittently, as the assailant disappears from the scene with his loot and leaves the victim. Therefore, crime can be dealt with by increasing the demand for protection products and services, aiming to reduce future attempts.

“In contrast, because they are legitimate, government violations of property rights are ongoing.” (HOPPE, 2014, p. 44). The aggressor does not disappear into hiding, but remains around, and the victim cannot legally arm himself against him, remaining powerless.

“As a result, future violations of property rights, rather than becoming less frequent, become institutionalized” (HOPPE, 2014, p. 44-45). Rather than promoting and improving their protection, the victim of government violations of property rights responds by associating virtue with practice. In order



as for subtraction to work, however, the government action must be considered fair enough (HOPPE, 2014). Language plays a decisive role in this aspect, as it guarantees society's endorsement.

The use of the term *social solidarity* to designate the subtraction of goods and the label of *contributors* to victims act directly in the affirmation of the practice as virtuous, legitimizing it. In the frequent attribution of *gratuitousness* to government actions, it is denied any existence of property subtraction through physical force and the significant costs in the execution of political programs (ROTHBARD, 2012).

In the 1988 Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, the reference to gratuity occurs in abundance in articles 5°, 17°, 134°, 155°, 206°, 208°, 226° and 230°. The use of the term *contributor* also has a high incidence, prevailing in articles 31°, 145°, 146°, 150°, 153° and 155°, in addition to their respective paragraphs and items (DEVECHI, 2012).

The use of figures of rhetoric lays a legal foundation in the linguistic construction that argues in favor of redistributive practices. The despoiled individual, then, would not be a victim of coercive economic subtraction, but a *contributor*, which implies voluntariness and commitment to cooperation, after all, whoever contributes does so *in favor of something*. As for the obligation of social solidarity, the rulers ignore that “solidarity, to be real, implies voluntary action” (KARSTEN; BECKMAN, 2013, p.49, our translation) and that “the decisive instrument of policy is violence” (WEBER, 2018, p. 144).

The term *gratuitous* constructs the notion of State works produced from nothing, by benevolent beings, and whose costs were not coercively removed from possessing individuals. Free State services and goods that aim to satisfy the abstract needs of peoples represent a mirage, and their main pillar is the perspective of not costing any resources, ignoring that the costs and value of goods and services cannot be measured because there is no competition and, therefore, cannot possess an attribution of value (NOZICK, 2011; ROTHBARD, 2012).

“There is a tendency towards gratuitousness in all State services” (LEROY-BEAULIEU, 1911, p. 242) whose purpose is to camouflage the real price that owners pay for goods and services and the fact that they are coerced into doing so. The general opinion is, therefore, totally distorted about the relation between revenues and expenses of the services of the State, this starting from the use of a discretionary power, that is, the physical force.

“Discretionary power is what the State can use to make its subjects listen to Bach and not listen to rock; to change the course of mighty rivers and transform nature” (JASAY, 1998, p. 269-270); to distribute rewards and privileges; to make others adopt determined values. Under these conditions, it is completely possible that when the State makes people observe the Bach cult, as they have been taught to like it, they will begin to identify with the State that gave them their tastes (JASAY, 1998).



This doctrinal action advocates instilling in the public conscience a concrete sense of the State's legitimacy, a growing willingness to obey it regardless of the hope of gains or fear of losses. "Hence, they may serve as a cunning and slow-acting substitute for buying consent" (JASAY, 1988, p. 270).

State terms and stimuli ensure that the entire process acquires a virtuous appearance, which Charaudeau (2019) calls *Referential Symbolization of Language*, that is, the legal text, when constructing meaning, rescues the meaning of virtue. "With the use of symbols, people acquire their self-conceptions" (FONTANA FILHO, 2020a, p. 58, our translation) and start to adopt new values. The victims of State dispossession themselves, then, adhere to the process and logic of redistribution.

Philip Zimbardo (2015, p. 384) points that "altering the semantics of the act, the actor and the action [...] replacing unpleasant reality with desirable rhetoric, gilding the frame so that the real painting is disguised" facilitates control by the State. With that, the exploitation becomes solidarity; the plundered by force becomes a contribution, while the onerous becomes gratuitous.

The more direct and clear the State's tax initiatives, the more likely the public will be to understand and revolt with the process. "The singular tax is more natural to serfdom; the tax on goods is more natural to freedom, because it is less directly related to the person." (MONTESQUIEU, 2005, p. 229). This means that the distance between the individual and the tax makes it difficult to understand the plundering relation.

"This was the immemorial care of Governments. The tax authorities cannot always address the taxpayer directly and pompously, showing what it is and what it is about" (DUPONT-WHITE, 1865, p. 84), under penalty of being held responsible for the means and excesses employed. The distancing of the ruler from the dispossessed, then, facilitates the subtraction of their wealth.

When it comes to reforming the legal language without ever actually doing it, it is because this form of communication represents a ruler's last garment. A State that clearly transmits the measure of things to the governed unit is a State that promotes its own decline (BOURDIEU, 2016).

If I ordered a general to fly from one flower to another like a butterfly, or to write a tragedy, or change into a seagull, and if the general did not carry the order received, who, he or I, would be wrong? [...] It is necessary to demand of each one what each one can give [...] Authority is based on reason. If you order your people to throw themselves into the sea, they will revolt. I have the right to demand obedience because my orders are reasonable (SAINT-EXUPÉRY, 1971, p. 31-32).

In this passage, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1971) alludes to the importance of the ruler not exceeding his commands upon his subjects, at the risk of them rebelling against his power. State orders must at least appear reasonable and minimally virtuous, so that their content can be appreciated and accepted by the populations without any signs of revolt.





With that, the objective of the virtuous rhetoric of State is to transform into reasonable the unjust orders of subtraction of goods and the consequent social division that the distribution of these spoils raise. The terms used not only in legal books, but in government speeches and advertisements try to distort and mask the economic relations between State and individual, replacing irreversible and inherent coercion with milder expressions that establish a character of virtue and voluntariness (ELLUL, 1973; ROTHBARD, 2012).

The taxation relations are treated as symbolic alchemy: the State earns money and distributes it free of charge, creating a favorable situation to produce recognition, admiration and gratitude, even in relation to those despoiled by it, such is the activity of reframing the process (BOURDIEU, 2016). “The more people think they are gainers and the fewer who resent this” (JASAY, 1998, p. 261-262) the easier it is to divide society into two unequal halves and ensure the support of the predominant half.

## DEMOCRACY, SELF-INTEREST AND SOCIAL DIVISION

The urge to redistribute is intimately motivated by a sense of scandal that so many are in poverty and that so many have an inadequate way of life. It is associated with a level of welfare considered below which no one should be left living on (JOUVENEL, 2012). Also, “it's good to know someone is doing something about the evils of hunger and poverty” (FONTANA FILHO, 2020b, p. 13).

S. D. Morresi (2002, p. 285) considers the libertarian line of argument “regrettable” because it advocates against the distribution of wealth by the State in a world where millions of children and adults die annually from diseases and whose causes could be avoided with minimal measures of redistribution. The author forgets or ignores that the redistributive measures so dear to him presuppose the compulsory use of the financial resources of their legitimate owners.

Morresi (2002) states that “in Latin America, millions of people die from preventable causes.” (MORRESI, 2002, p.296). Such information is used by him with the aim of trying to extirpate the seed of a thought, the libertarian, which supports the permanence and expansion of these iniquities. For the author, the evils of the world legitimize the intervention and mitigation of the owners’ property rights, as long as the ends are addressed.

This sense of awe in the face of poverty makes the redistributive process feasible, largely because of human fear and uncertainty. “If there were no organized units taking care of global problems, then the individual sentiment would be of desolation, as if nothing was being done; the feeling would be of humanity's neglect of itself.” (FONTANA FILHO, 2020b, p. 13).





The feeling of horror among the existence of poverty facilitates the acceptance of fabricated ideas, such as the one that transforms the dispossessed victim into a greedy aggressor, based on a rhetoric of good (government) against evil (possessors). The needy are portrayed as naive in need of help to be rescued by the saving State through free and benevolent policies, while opponents are villains because of their wealth. “I refuse to apologize for being more capable - I don't accept to apologize for being successful - I refuse to apologize for having money” (RAND, 2010, p. 157).

It is true that many people lack financial resources and that this is a considerable suffering, but the recognition of this fact does not make the State's address of the problem less costly to the possessors. Nothing enters the public treasury without individuals having been dispossessed. The law will be unfair if it benefits each citizen differently from the exact amount each one lost in taxation (BASTIAT, 2010).

The attitude of demonizing the entrepreneur and the wealth produced is an important part of state rationality with the aim of maintaining power and social control. The subtraction of assets from the owners cannot be a heinous attitude insofar as they are considered greedy bastards destructive of a collectively idealized dream, such as “eradicating poverty” (DEVECHI, 2012, p. 256), according to article 3, item III of Brazilian 1988 Constitution.

“A function of utopian ideology is to tell an elaborate story about the target group, demonstrating that they are intrinsically deserving of punishment” (SCRUTON, 2015, p. 70). The search for the eradication of poverty follows these forms, and the possessors are nothing but obstacles, mere fuel for the collective dream. Cooperation, however, is essential for the acts of State to be disguised in virtuous rhetoric.

I choose to be consistent and obey according to the methods they use. Whatever they want me to do, I'll do it if they point a gun at me. If they sentence me to jail, they will have to send armed men to take me to it – I will not walk on my own free will. If they fine me, they will have to confiscate my property to get hold of the money, as I will not pay it on my own free will. If you believe you have the right to force me, use your weapons openly. I will not help disguise the nature of their actions (RAND, 2010, p. 156).

Ayn Rand's (2010) libertarian approach is based upon her fictional work, one that illustrates the importance of individual cooperation in State affairs so that the process remains active in society. In purchase and sale relations where the State requires an individual product be supplied to it at a price stipulated by it, the commercial relations can only happen in peaceful terms insofar as the supplier of goods cooperates, and this has a premise of State.

There is a fundamental premise for all State actions which points individuals in general will cooperate peacefully before coercively obeying. Otherwise, the use of institutional force by the State would be a concrete and living mechanism in society, and not a tool to be hidden and manipulated as a



last resort. Thus, the State institution presupposes cooperation in order not to make its use of legitimate force unsustainable, and this requires the individual's peaceful and absolute consent.

“In order for there to be a sale”, Rearden said, speaking slowly, “the seller must give his consent. - He got up and walked to the window. - I'll tell you what you [government] can do. He pointed to the railroad siding where wagons were being loaded with Rearden metal ingots. - There's a lot of metal there. Go there with your trucks, like any other robber, except without taking the risk that a robber takes, because I'm not going to shoot you, as you know, because I cannot, and take as much metal as you like. And go away. Do not try to send me payment. I will not accept. Do not send me a check. It will not be discounted. If you want that metal, you have the weapons you need to get it. Go ahead. [...] - You need my cooperation to make this look like a sale, like a normal, morally acceptable, fair transaction. I will not cooperate (RAND, 2010, p. 37).

As Ayn Rand (2010) outlines, the individual's cooperation is an element of significant importance in the redefinition of the initiatives of subtraction and distribution of resources. When it does not occur, the rhetoric of virtue is replaced by the cruelty of legal dispossession and social control relations (BASTIAT, 2010). The self-interest of groups privileged by redistribution, however, propagates mass collaboration, and this is fundamentally due to the system of representative government.

The egalitarian trends that have been growing since modern times prevent the search for the most capable to vote and govern from taking place. Equality of suffrage in a democracy means that a wise and an illiterate have the same vote weight of one (BLUNTSCHLI, 1877). “Representative democracy has by its own character to attribute *power to the majority*, but also to entrust the *exercise to a minority* chosen by the majority, and often altered, so that it governs as the majority understands” (BLUNTSCHLI, 1877, p.413, author's emphasis).

Due to their dependence on adapting to the majority's will, the elected candidates tend to be those who promise the granting of privileges to social groups identified as quantitatively broad, the so-called *consolidated majorities*. The political representative then becomes the means by which promises and interests are satisfied for the many at the expense of the few (BLUNTSCHLI, 1877).

When in a society there is an expressive majority of whites and a minority of blacks; Catholic majority and Protestant minority; English majority and Irish minority or poor majority and wealthy minority, the redistribution system is structured through this information. The expectation is that in all countries there will be a majority of poor people, which means that the electoral system is governed by the granting of benefits to them through the assets of the groups not covered (MILL, 2006).

These policies dominate the Brazilian system and permeate different social areas. The Law n° 12.990/2014 reserves 20% of the vacancies offered in public examinations for filling positions to people considered black (BRASIL, 2014). The Law n° 12.711/2012 reserves a minimum of 50% of its



admission in undergraduate courses at federal institutions for students who have attended high school in public schools (BRASIL, 2012).

The Law n° 7.998/1990 regulates unemployment benefits for the period between three to five months of unemployment (BRASIL, 1990). The Law n° 10.836/2004 grants a monetary benefit to family units that are in a situation of poverty (BRASIL, 2004). The examples are countless, reaching into the most diverse social spheres. The quantitative strength of each of these groups benefited explains the legislation.

So, in the first case, the possession of a specific race, the black, is determinant in reaching the privilege, and not possessing it means being indebted to it. It is worth considering that Brazilian citizens who consider themselves black or brown can reach 55.8% of the population (RODRIGUES, 2019). In the second case, it is a benefit that affects anyone who has attended high school in an institution of the State, which is the rule of occurrence, not the exception. Public institutions are especially funded by the group that does not enjoy them because they do not have any return, while the privilege applies to those coming from State education.

In the third, the unemployed, whose numbers can reach up to 14.6 million (IBGE, 2020), have their needs covered by the employed, which means that the situation of being employed is discouraged as these workers pay for the instability and unemployment of others. If employees pay for the unemployed, production, innovation and investment are stripped of any virtue or competence, but it is assigned a duty of success towards failure.

In the fourth case, the evil of poverty is addressed by granting resources from those who are not in such ills. The number of poor people in Brazil is a quantitatively consolidated group. In 2014 it was 22.8%, in 2017, 26.5%, while in 2018 it reached 25.3% (CEE, 2019).

These percentages indicate to the State where to invest with redistribution policies. Not for recognizing suffering in poverty or racism, but for the numbers and legitimacy that their satisfaction evokes. “Rewards, finally, do not spontaneously grow on trees, nor are they generated and distributed to good citizens by good government. They are bargaining counters which the State *acquires* for distribution to its supporters *by taking sides* [in disputes]” (JASAY, 1998, p. 84-85, author's emphasis).

The symbolism of legislation that treats private property as part of an amalgamation of collective goods conveys that all goods belong to all people. The high levels of poverty in Brazil also contribute to collective adherence to redistributive policies, since “the exchange of coercion for security and a better living condition is a big deal for people in need of immediate help” (FONTANA FILHO, 2020b, p. 16).

Thus, poverty favors the acceptance of the population in relation to initiatives of subtraction and distribution of goods, but the effectiveness of the system depends on each citizen's self-interest in



accepting government advantages and rewards in exchange for guaranteeing the subtraction of goods. Any liberties and properties of its subjects that the State manages to appropriate must be redistributed to other groups. If the ruler does not do this, his rivals' offer of redistribution would win him over and power would change hands (JASAY, 1998).

“It must tax the subset S of society an amount T, and it must distribute T’ to another subset U. It cannot alter either S or U, it cannot vary T nor have T’ fall short of it” (JASAY, 1998, p. 227). Thus, the mechanism is fixed and invariant. The winning groups, however, change over time, but only according to the quantitative rise of new segments of interest.

Some policies appear to contribute to no plausible end, satisfying no overt taste, enhancing no conceivable pleasure of the State other than maintaining the possession of power. Therefore, power is used in order to reproduce power itself (JASAY, 1998). “Much of the redistribution undertaken by the modern democratic State has this shape” (JASAY, 1998, p. 268).

The existence of these power-keeping policies is a consequence of the participation of the masses in electoral affairs. The political representative can no longer govern without their support. “He cannot escape the masses simply because of the present population density - the mass is everywhere” (ELLUL, 1973, p. 122).

In the urgent need to maintain political power, ensuring the support of the masses is an indispensable element. The rulers, then, develop policies in order to please and honor majorities willing to participate. People vote for political parties to allow others to pay for their personal desires (ELLUL, 1973).

The process can be alluded to the tragedy of the commons. In this, several people use a public work area and their natural incentive is to use it to the full and maximize profits, even though they act to the detriment of others and spoil the soil, after all this is not their responsibility as it does not belong to them (KARSTEN; BECKMAN, 2013). “Democracy works the same way. Citizens are encouraged to take advantage at the expense of others – or to pass on their burdens to others” (KARSTEN; BECKMAN, 2013, p. 39).

The legislative intention for the redistribution of goods can vary from a desire to appease the ills of the world, as proposed by Philippe Kourilsky (2013), or even the promotion of national progress, as pointed by Charles Brook Dupont-White (1865). “The existence of a State makes every life’s flaw in society colorful and ready to be resolved. The function of such an institution is to fulfill our dreams of completeness and improvement” (FONTANA FILHO, 2020b, p. 15).

Based on the premise of redistributing to satisfy the State's purposes, social groups are segregated from one another and divided between those who are privileged with incentive guidelines,



and those who pay for the initiatives with tax disincentive programs. “The government's specialty is to confiscate the wealth of one segment of society and transfer it to another” (PAUL, 2013, p. 89) in opposition to legitimate rights and in favor of mass rights (NOZICK, 2011).

Regardless of the specific legislative interest in helping or protecting segments of society, distributive policies are based on an axiological character, within which it is judged which groups should be dispossessed and which benefited. Privileged groups can be the poor, the unemployed, the sick, the young, the elderly, the ignorant, farmers, widowers and so on. The confusion between rights and privileges directly supports the division of privileged and dispossessed.

The key point in differentiating between rights and privileges is the use of force by the State. The first do not require the force to be effective, while the latter require its use, as they can only be granted by forcing others to pay for them (KARSTEN; BECKMAN, 2013).

When a benefit only covers certain groups based on specific characteristics such as skin color, religion, sexuality, gender or social class, it is a privilege. When the benefit meets general interests and without distinction between people, such as freedom of expression and worship, availability to come and go and meeting, it is a right (KARSTEN; BECKMAN, 2013).

Benjamin Constant (2007, p.433) considers that privileged groups are actually “bribed by the government”, as they comply with the massive violation of individual rights through monetary exchange and group benefits, whether in the form of goods or services. The system proliferates interest groups, and this acts in accordance with the State's objective of dividing society in order to better govern it. With the search for privileges, society becomes weaker and in internal conflict (JASAY, 1998).

If the state promotes cancer research, why not fight polio? If medical sciences are assisted, why not arts, sports and culture? With the progression of new areas of State investment and the division of society into more and more ramified interest groups, it is unthinkable not to encourage some new cause, however absurd it may be (JASAY, 1998).

Thus, new demands are made, more resources are seized and redistributed. Any attempt by the government to cease, stagnate or even reduce distributive policies is seen as an invitation to failure in the electoral race (JASAY, 1998). “A State that taxes more and has more functions will be a more powerful State” (FONTANA FILHO, 2019, p. 10), and this means a growing need to tax to ensure the maintenance of power.

“Advocates of standardized principles of distributive justice focus on criteria for determining who should receive the goods; they take into account the reasons why someone should own something and also the general picture of assets.” (NOZICK, 2011, p. 216). Some theories of distributive justice,



such as those by John Rawls (2011), Amartya Sen (2015), Luigi Ferrajoli (2011) and Norberto Bobbio (2015) are primarily aimed at the receiver, without taking into account who has their goods removed.

It does not matter if it is better to give than to receive. Ignoring the owner is the same as not taking into account individual rights to their property. S. Gosepath (2020) goes beyond the list of authors mentioned by reporting the existence of a moral right of possessors to take responsibility for the well-being of the disadvantaged.

This right takes forms of legitimacy in the enjoyment of other people's goods. It is the final justification for the redistributive action, which would not only make use of symbolic words and speeches favorable to its doctrine, but it also claims the naturalness and objective responsibility of the dispossessed towards the victims of poverty.

## FINAL REMARKS

The rhetoric of virtue in the redistribution of wealth is a means by which the State acts and asserts its prerogatives and powers. It is not enough to distribute goods, but to do so in virtuous ways, as in the elaboration of a goal such as the end of poverty or the eradication of hunger. The mechanisms by which these State commitments are pursued also need to be in accordance with minimally just ideals.

A ruler would not be endorsed by society by himself taking away the goods of a wealthy individual by kicking doors at 3 am and scaring sleeping children. The process follows parameters that distance those who are in charge of those who have their goods removed. Democratic legislation is produced, voted on and approved, and then enforced by specialized, uniformed and armed officers.

The general population needs to corroborate the practices. That is why there is a significant political willingness to explore the self-interest of certain social groups, their needs, fears and weaknesses. Demonizing wealth and work, as well as relativizing success, failure and individual responsibility essentially contribute to the effectiveness of the redistributive process. If success and failure are due to the collective, everyone owes everyone a debt, regardless of victory or defeat in their endeavors.

The aforementioned contemporary authors who endorse what they call distributive justice see in the State the possibility of addressing evils such as hunger, disease, old age, unemployment, homelessness etc. Their theoretical models encompass important ends to be satisfied, but they neglect how to pursue these evils, who produces the wealth and who is its rightful owner.

The redistribution of wealth carried by the State pleases public opinion due to a language capable of neglecting the means employed and extolling the ends, and the self-interest of citizens, whose





satisfaction is enhanced by the environment of representative democracy. Society converges towards division in the face of a system of competition for the privileges and goods of others, but not before being corrupted by false ideals of virtue.

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