

Recession

You hear it here, you hear it there, you hear it everywhere: recession, the credit crunch, the awful economic situation, debt, poverty, want ... Er, yes ... You do indeed hear it everywhere, but ... (here we go again ...) I do wonder just a little ...

Want? Poverty? I regularly see piles of discarded food, on the pavements in my town, and no doubt it's to be seen in other towns, also: remains of take-away curries and pizzas. Could you find food discarded on the streets of Britain in the 1930s? Or today in such countries as Zimbabwe? I doubt it very much. When there was *real* hardship and poverty in Britain, and other Western countries, people had too little food to be able to waste even a tiny amount; today's nutritionists and slimmers loathe the fat that some foods produce, and remove and discard it; to such as my mother's generation (who knew real hardship in the 1930s, and then World War II), fat from meat – always collected carefully in a bowl – meant the certainty of keeping warm and nutritiously fed.

Indeed, many people in our society are suffering, particularly with the cost of accommodation and the difficulty of finding work (recently my workplace advertised four low-level jobs; 600 people applied). There *are* real difficulties (and there *are* people who do want to work); but I firmly believe that the bad economic situation is a side-issue, and the real one is *moral*. It's a side-issue that our politicians (of all persuasions) can make use of (much like Anthropogenic Global Warming) to keep more important, difficult areas from peoples' minds, and from things they would otherwise have to tackle. The recession gives great advantages for blaming the people in power for not putting it right (if you're in opposition), or blaming the previous government (if you're now in power); and it's an area which, like the weather, everyone can talk about and are affected by, and there is a measure of consensus (many say that these big economic problems are global, and beyond local cause or influence).

Whether or not we (and other Western countries) are financially bankrupt can be disputed; but what cannot, is the fact that we are *morally* bankrupt. Many people – and probably the majority of those who rule, direct, and influence the population and society – believe only in the-here-and-now, in wealth and pleasure as the one goal (*the* source of the currently-much-vaunted objective of "happiness"). Above all it is a society devoted to individual ends, selfist; and any society whose laws and government allow, much less promote, the destruction of millions of people about to be born is completely morally bankrupt.

Perhaps then, we here have the real root cause of the economic recession and financial bankruptcy, which some have seen as an overpowering global force: moral bankruptcy has consequences. The way people live has financial repercussions (think of the magnitude of individual debt that many people chose to acquire, fuelled by materialist greed, and living beyond their means; think of the consequences of the loss of the "work ethic", and the readiness to fall into the "dependency culture"!).

And yes, I do see atheism/materialism as the ultimate cause of our moral bankruptcy; perhaps when things get much worse (as I fancy they will), this suggestion will cease – as will presently be claimed - to be to be contentious.

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