

LA NEGACIÓN DE LA ESCASEZ, ESTO ES, DE LA ECONOMÍA.

En 1949, cuando Mises publica estas líneas, alguien podría haberle dicho que estaba reiterando lo elemental frente a un marxismo pasado de moda. Sin embargo Mises estaba explicando una y otra vez, aquello precisamente negado, una y otra vez, por un marxismo como creencia: la escasez. Ante la reiteración de los “socialismos del s. XXI”, y ante lo sensible que es el pensamiento religioso frente al tema de la escasez, el Instituto Acton considera indispensable que la voz del insigne economista austríaco sea escuchada nuevamente.

Lo que sigue corresponde al anexo al punto 1 del cap. XIV de su tratado de economía *La Acción Humana*, cuya lectura y estudio en ambientes latinoamericanos y especialmente católicos hubiera evitado a nuestros pueblos inenarrables y actuales sufrimientos.

*The Denial of Economics*¹

Por Ludwig von Mises.

There are doctrines flatly denying that there can be a science of economics. What is taught nowadays at most of the universities under the label of economics is practically a denial of it.

He who contests the existence of economics virtually denies that man's well-being is disturbed by any scarcity of external factors. Everybody, he implies, could enjoy the perfect satisfaction of all his [p. 235] wishes, provided a reform succeeds in overcoming certain obstacles brought about by inappropriate man-made institutions. Nature is open-handed, it lavishly loads mankind with presents. Conditions could be paradisiac for an indefinite number of people. Scarcity is an artificial product of established practices. The abolition of such practices would result in abundance.

In the doctrine of Karl Marx and his followers scarcity is a historical category only. It is the feature of the primeval history of mankind which will be forever liquidated by the abolition of private property. Once mankind has effected the leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom^[1] and thereby reached "the higher phase of communist society," there will be abundance and consequently it will be feasible to give "to each according to his needs."^[2] There is in the vast flood of Marxian writings not the slightest allusion to the possibility that a communist society in its "higher phase" might have to face a scarcity of natural factors of production. The fact of the disutility of labor is spirited away by the assertion that to work, under communism of course, will no longer be pain but pleasure, "the primary necessity of life."^[3] The unpleasant experiences of the Russian "experiment" are interpreted as caused by the capitalists' hostility, by the fact that socialism in one country only is not yet perfect and therefore has not yet been able to bring about the "higher phase," and, more recently, by the war.

¹ Fuente: www.mises.org

Then there are the radical inflationists as represented, for example, by Proudhon and by Ernest Solvay. In their opinion scarcity is created by the artificial checks upon credit expansion and other methods of increasing the quantity of money in circulation, enjoined upon the gullible public by the selfish class interests of bankers and other exploiters. They recommend unlimited public spending as the panacea.

Such is the myth of potential plenty and abundance. Economics may leave it to the historians and psychologists to explain the popularity of this kind of wishful thinking and indulgence in daydreams. All that economics has to say about such idle talk is that economics deals with the problems man has to face on account of the fact that his life is conditioned by natural factors. It deals with action, i.e., with the conscious endeavors to remove as far as possible felt uneasiness. It has nothing to assert with regard to the state of affairs in an unrealizable and for human reason even inconceivable universe of unlimited opportunities. In such a world, it may be admitted, there will be no law of value, no scarcity, and no economic problems. These things will be [p. 236] absent because there will be no choices to be made, no action, and no tasks to be solved by reason. Beings which would have thrived in such a world would never have developed reasoning and thinking. If ever such a world were to be given to the descendants of the human race, these blessed beings would see their power to think wither away and would cease to be human. For the primary task of reason is to cope consciously with the limitations imposed upon man by nature, is to fight against scarcity. Acting and thinking man is the product of a universe of scarcity in which whatever well-being can be attained is the prize of toil and trouble, of conduct popularly called economic.

[1]. Cf. Engels, *Herrn Eugen Duhrings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft* (7th ed. Stuttgart, 1910), p.306.

[2]. Cf. Karl Marx, *Zur Kritik des sozialdemokratischen Parteiprogramms von Gotha*, ed. Kriebich (Reichenberg, 1920), p. 17.

[3]. Cf. *ibid.*