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Can Economic Inequalities Be Justified?



The Good and Justice

*Angono, Philippines
Lester Garcia for
National Geographic*

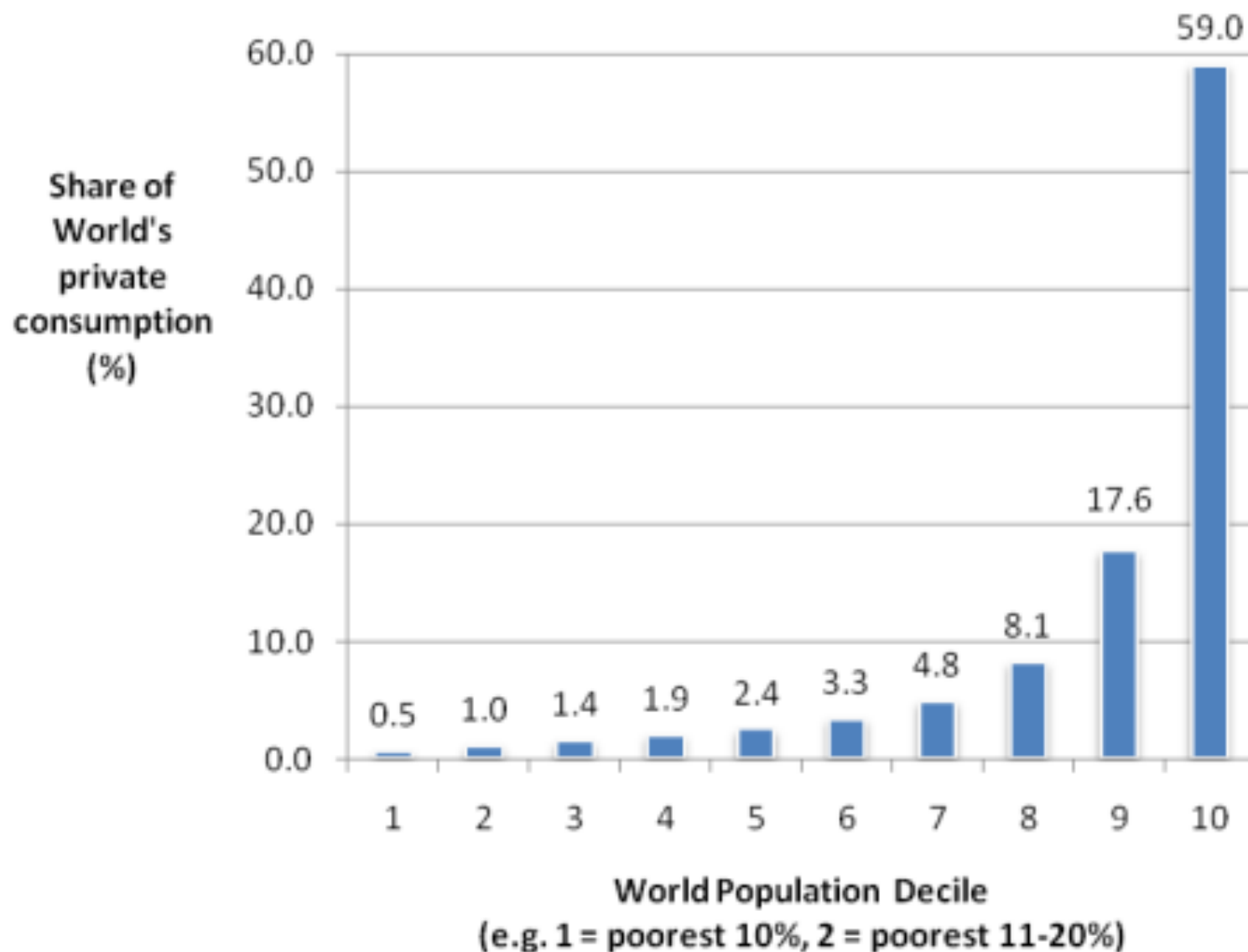
Are we morally
obligated to donate our
money to the poor?

Can economic
inequalities be
justified?

Can Social and Economic Inequalities be Justified?

Can Social and Economic Inequalities be Justified?

Inequality of Consumption, 2005



Source: World Bank Development Indicators 2008

Against Economic Inequalities

A challenge to Margaret Thatcher in the British Parliament in 1990

“...during her 11 years as Prime Minister, the gap between the richest 10 per cent and the poorest 10 per cent in this country has widened substantially. At the end of her chapter of British politics, how can she say that she can justify the fact that many people ... are relatively much poorer, much less well housed and much less well provided for than they were in 1979? ... that is not a record that she or any Prime Minister can be proud of.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rv5t6rC6yvg>

What is Thatcher's Response to the Challenge that Inequalities Widened While She Was Prime Minister?



Economic inequalities are needed to create incentives in a free market economy

A Justification of Economic Inequalities Based on the Free Market

Social and economic inequalities are justified *provided they derive from how the free market distributes wealth and money.*

But Is There Anything Bad With the Economic Inequalities Created by the Free Market?

Does the free market reward merit?

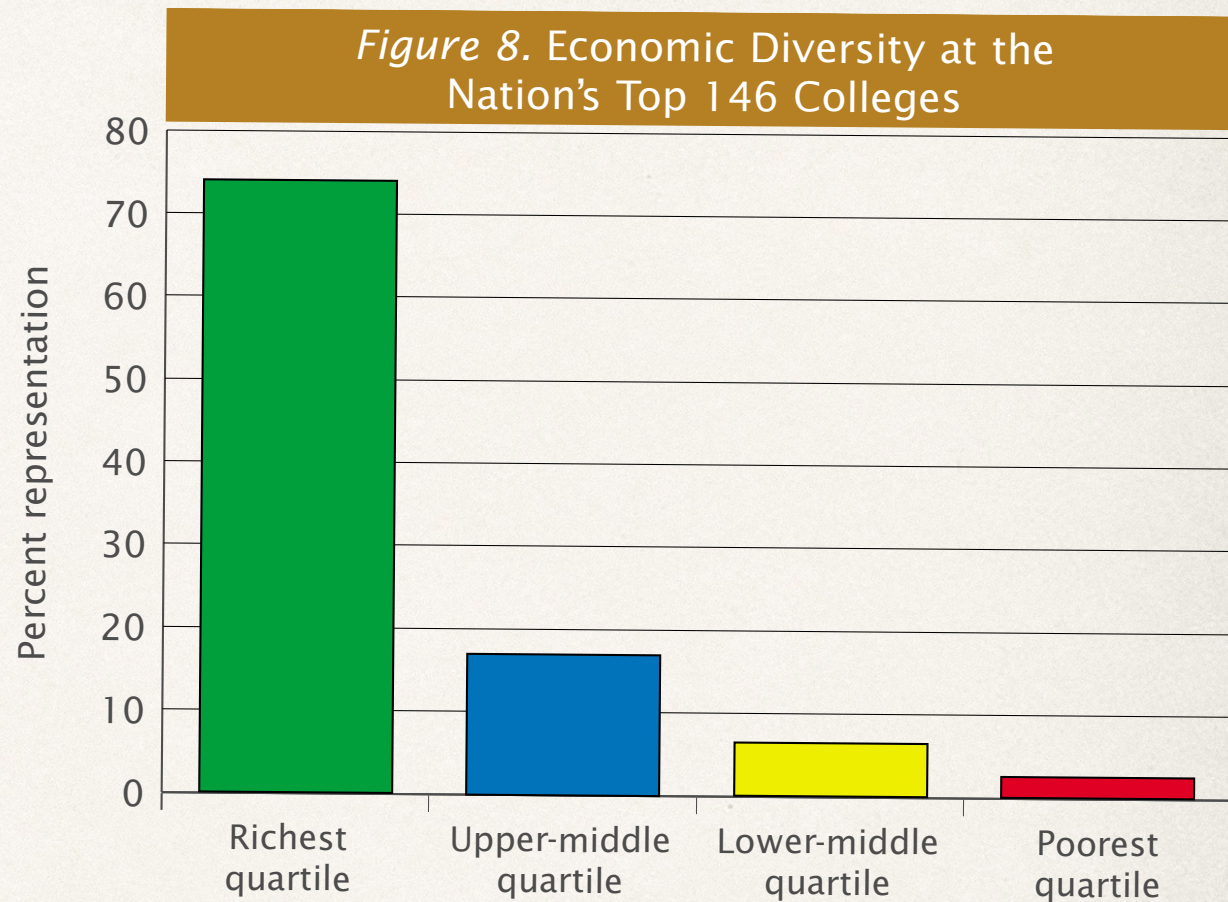
<http://thecolbertreport.cc.com/videos/2p2ijk/michael-sandel>

A Justification of Economic Inequalities Based on Merit or Desert

Social and economic inequalities are justified *provided they derive from how hard people worked to get what they have.*

How Much Does Working Hard
Matter to Achieve What You Want?

One's Family
Economic
Background
Matters a lot to
Get into a
Good
University



Source: Anthony P. Carnevale and Stephen J. Rose, "Socio-economic Status, Race/Ethnicity, and Selective College Admissions," in Richard D. Kahlenberg, ed., *America's Untapped Resource: Low-Income Students in Higher Education* (New York: Century Foundation Press, 2004), Table 3.1, p. 106.

Imagine We Lived in a Society in Which
All Economic Inequalities Depended
on How Hard People Worked

*Would All
Inequalities
Be Just?*