

# **The Economy Will Not Develop Correctly Until It Is Based on Reality**

**From *Work and Capital*, by Norberto R. Keppe**

The economy is not just a game for dozens and dozens of human beings to play at Stocks and Shares or Monopoly, with exciting peaks and troughs, living in a fantasy world. The economy is part of reality and can only be developed correctly if it returns to its true origin. It must be wedded to work, to human achievement, if peace is to return to humanity. While human beings desire to “play” with life, they will be unable to live in peace; and this attitude of unwillingness to take things seriously derives from the erroneous idea that reality is hostile, which causes us a manner of problems, from social to mental, and obscures the awareness that we are living in a society organized around fantasies.

We must not forget that work is our greatest source of pleasure or, in the case of the exploitative and dishonest work which flourishes today, of pain. There is in fact an identification between the human being and the activities he undertakes, which forms the continuity of his existence so that action and life are identical. If a man is obliged to distort his activities, he will begin a slow death until he resolves to return to the good. There is no way of existing indefinitely in a very dishonest situation.

A fact which every economist must realize is that the value of money depends on labour. Whatever fantasy one may wish to believe, there is no money without action—that of the person who deals with the materials, and of many others who add to profits of those who cheat with money. Sooner or later the workers will wake up to reality.

In the second semester of 1987 the American stock-market rose sharply. “Says one giddy stockholder, ‘it’s like picking money off trees,’” (*Time*, July 27, p.52). The shareholder’s phrase shows two things: an agitation amounting to a sickness itself in the buying and selling of shares, and the atmosphere of euphoria and immorality among the people who play this market. It is just the same phenomenon which happens on the green tables of casinos, and on race courses. People end up with the idea that success in life is just a matter of luck, putting their own work and development in second place.

When Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) affirmed that anxiety was the result of an inauthentic existence, although he was speaking only in a psychological sense, he was also in fact delineating the psychological disasters caused by the social structure. In the past, without any understanding of economics, I, too, thought that the neuroses of the human being could be cured simply through an internal act of human decision. Now I see that there is practically no chance of opting for an authentic existence in a society which has organized a way of life based on falsehood.

When Adam Smith said that the individual’s pursuit of profit would benefit all of society, he was simply unaware that the socioeconomic laws were unjust. He had no experience of life to back up the affirmations he made—he had never worked as an operative, or as an employer; the first draft of his famous book was made when he was 36 years old (1759) and the definitive edition in 1766 when he was 43. This was, we can see, a very young age at which to produce a truly scientific work. There was another very significant factor, namely, that he was the son of a tax collector. As we know, this profession has always been one to protect the interests of the powerful against the people. Let us say that the father of capitalism lived in an unreal world, which shows that he would never be capable of organizing a real economy.