

The Law of

EQUIVALENT EXCHANGE

by Michael H. Keehn
updated March 24, 2012

Revelation or injections of concepts that cause us to pause and reflect upon our perceptions and beliefs sometimes come from unexpected places. Such is the case in *the law of Equivalent Exchange*. I recently had an opportunity to watch an episode of *Fullmetal Alchemist* in which this law was set forth at the beginning of the episode. An *Alchemist* being a person who studies chemistry. From that episode here is the definition of *Equivalent Exchange*.

Humankind cannot gain anything without first giving something in return. To obtain, something of equal value must be lost. That is alchemy's First Law of Equivalent Exchange. In those days, we really believed that to be the world's one, and only, truth. —
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equivalent_Exchange

Its' foundation is simple enough. To obtain an object, whatever that object might be, something of *equivalent value* must be exchanged, given up or *lost*. As I pondered this over the time since its presentation in the episode I can not see an application where this law does not apply. However Alphonse Elric, a character in *Fullmetal Alchemist* goes on to say this:

But the world isn't perfect, and the law is incomplete. Equivalent Exchange doesn't encompass everything that goes on here. But I still choose to believe in its principle: that all things do come at a price. That there's an ebb, and a flow, a cycle. That the pain we went through did have a reward and that anyone who's determined and perseveres will get something of value in return, even if it's not what they expected. I don't think of Equivalent Exchange as a law of the world anymore. I think of it as a promise between my brother and me - a promise that someday, we'll see each other again. — Alphonse Elric, Fullmetal Alchemist

Evidently Alphonse has an elevated understanding that escapes me for I am unable to see an application in which the law does not apply. If the *object* I want is an education then I must expend my time in study, I must spend my time to earn money with which to buy books and pay tuition, I must expend my time to complete assignments and tasks associated with study, and so my time is the *equivalent exchange*. As I reflect upon all the objects I have acquired and those I still want, they all seem to tie into an exchange of my time here on earth. If I buy a new car, I pay for it with money I've earned with an expenditure of my time. The same with a house, a meal, a vacation...

I can see where an individual may acquire an object without an expenditure of their time. For example, a welfare recipient may acquire a car without earning it (that is without exchanging something of equal value from their life), but *the law of Equivalent Exchange* is still in effect. In

cases like this it just means that other productive people must be robbed of their time which then becomes the *Equivalent Exchange* that provides the car, or food, or housing, or entertainment, or medical care for the welfare recipient.

The exact same thing takes place in the case of bureaucrats, and the rich & powerful. Depending on their station, their level of contribution to the objects they acquire will vary. A low level bureaucrat will probably be required to contribute more of his time to the acquisition of an object than will a high level bureaucrat. The remainder of *equivalent contribution* will come from the working class slaves. Those who the bureaucratic and rich classes have conditioned to accept the burden of carrying those above.

To that end they burden the working class with property taxes, gasoline taxes, excise taxes, income taxes, vehicle registration fees, boat registration fees, various license fees, building permit fees, water well drilling permit fees, sales tax, etc. But the really big one is the fees that government levies on all business and which we never see, but we do pay when we buy groceries or anything else. You may be thinking that food is not taxed but you would be wrong. While it is true there is no *sales tax* on groceries, all the farmers that grow wheat are a business that are heavily taxed by government. The truckers that haul the wheat to a mill are a business which is taxed by government. The mill who grinds the wheat into flour is a business who is taxed by government. The trucker who hauls the flour to the baker is a business taxed by government. The baker who bakes bread from the flour is a business taxed by government. And the grocery store who sells the bread to you is a business taxed by government. They pay for their license to do business, property taxes, fees and fines to OSHA or one of the other alphabet government agencies. They pay and pay and pay.

Yes, business collects billions of dollars of taxes from the working class in the products and services they provide. All so that bureaucrats and the rich are exempted from an *equivalent contribution of their time*, thus allowing the bureaucrats & rich to rob the working class of their time here on earth.

Is it possible that this is the reason that so many bureaucrats look down their nose at the working class? For those who work in government and are living off the time robbed from working class Americans, you may be more closely scrutinized as Americans begin to understand these principles.

For those wishing a broader view in greater depth and comprehension, such can be found at: <http://mhkeehn.tripod.com/120222TheCoreProblem.pdf>