

**Critical Thinking Paper #3**

**Question:** Which of the four social conditions that are said to lead to human misery is the most prevalent in American society today?

From reading chapter 7, I see that Social Inequality is the most prevalent social condition that leads to misery. I say this because we can see that social inequality has a connection to misery in seven ways that Charon reveals as consequences of Inequality: Poverty, Crime, Bad Jobs, Exploitation, Lack of Self-Worth, Stress, and Institutions that Produce and Maintain Misery. Social Inequality seems to have more of an impact on society compared to the other social conditions due to social inequality being something that so many people face which is most likely causing those people to have misery. I will touch upon a couple of consequences mentioned by Charon.

The first consequence is poverty. Poverty has to do with a variety of disadvantages that deeply affect how people lead their lives. Having employment that is secure, safe, and productive is far less available for people who are poor. They have far more of a limitation than others in regard to neighborhood choice, educational opportunities, geographical mobility, and protection under the law. Problems associated with poor neighborhoods, stress in the family, disorganization, and also economic survival are more evident among those who are poor. But Charon reveals to us that poverty is something that has been built into a society of inequality. Poverty is a result of a system where some people succeed at the cost of others, where some are born into situations where opportunities are at odds against them, or where social change only benefits some and not all, unfortunately leaving some behind.

A second consequence is Crime. In a society where there is great inequality, people are

socialized to judge themselves and also others on the basis of material success. Material success is a value that many people share and a possible reason could be because almost everything in society teaches us that what makes life worthwhile is being materially successful. In a system of social inequality, opportunities are never equal and those in inferior positions in society have a choice: Either I accept my lowly position or I work in order to change my position. For those who want to change their position, they have another choice: Work extra hard in a system that is not in their favor or start doing things illegally. But crime is not only seen among the poor but also through all levels of society due to the widespread inequality and the passion people have to improve their rank such as politicians taking bribes or doctors who create shortcuts in healthcare. This, however, doesn't even come close to the misery of the unsuccessful lawbreaker among society's poor because the court system is harder on them. They can't escape prison by paying fines or hiring expensive lawyers as wealthy people do.

A third consequence of misery is Bad Jobs. A part of why misery even exists is because miserable work exists. Inequality produces work that is uninteresting, that pays little, is dangerous and insecure for many. The people who do this work aren't really receiving many material rewards. They're trapped in a life of bare survival. Charon uses the example of mining. People in Appalachia have taken this low-paying, tedious, physically demanding job as miners. Yet those who own the mines can only profit if the workers remain poor because if the workers become materially successful and expect decent wages from their employer, the rich will not find the mines profitable. Therefore, the poor have to choose between having bad work or no work at all. It is their willingness to take the low-paying job that secures them to continue being employed. Also, bad jobs are the most insecure. The people working in unskilled occupations are those at the bottom of the employment ladder. They are the ones most likely to be replaced by

machines, by labor in other societies, or by other workers who are willing to work for less. In times of depression, these people are the first to go, and most likely face long-term unemployment.

I agree with all the causes of misery that Charon gives in this chapter: Social Inequality, Destructive Social Conflict, Socialization, and Alienation. Yet, as stated previously, It seems to me that the most prevalent of them all is Social Inequality. There are many consequences that Inequality brings to society. I only touched on some of the multiple that Charon gives us. One that I and pretty much all people have seen in society is the consequence of crime. Many people are born into situations where they are in a state of poverty or low class and with a reason, they want to escape, especially being in a society where success is measured by how much material things you have. Yet these, unfortunately, do not have a fair chance of getting out of that lowly position and therefore doing illegal things becomes an attractive option. We can look at New York alone and see the amount of crime committed especially by people in New York City. A lot of these people are actually youth and have resorted to a life of crime to make it in life. This is the sad reality of our society. As a Christian, I desire that these people living a life of crime would come to know the Lord Jesus Christ so that they may know that a fulfilling life is not measured by how many material things they have but by knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. I would tell these types of people that it is only in Christ where life has meaning and purpose, where there is a peace that surpasses all understanding and where all needs are supplied by the Lord Himself since He cares for us and of course, where all misery is removed.