



ANTROPOLOGI  
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WEALTH

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THIS BOOK BELONGS TO





# ANTHROPOLOGY FOR KIDS

## WEALTH

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describe societies, based on their ideas of what is wealth and  
the ways of how each society is organizing its power to protect it.

From childhood, we read stories about rich and poor, about kings and commoners, about enormous treasures and adventurers.

But what is «Wealth»?

Does this mean that the rich are happier or smarter than the poor? Is it true that wealth is earned by the most hardworking and talented or, on the contrary, wealth is the destiny of greedy and heartlessness?

Anthropologists believe that there is no single answer to these questions. They study how people in different cultures and at different times understand differently what «wealth» is.

Today, many of us believe that the rich person is one who has a lot of money. We have learned to calculate almost everything in money: from the value of «priceless» works of art to the cost of a brilliant scientific invention, from a cost of life-saving medical operation to the minimum income per family.

However, our ability to think about drastically different things and human relations in terms of money is not universal.

In some tribes of Native Americans, to be considered as the wealthiest person in a community it would be necessary to demonstrate a significant generosity.

As recently as 150 years ago in some «civilized» countries wealth was a right to own, buy and sell human beings, and in some countries of feudal Europe the right to wear red clothes.

This book is based on research by archaeologists, anthropologists, artists and activists, as well as teenagers participating in the «Anthropology for Kids Lab» project.

After reading the stories about what different versions of what does it mean to be «wealthy» we ask you to describe your own version of wealth that will be fair and beautiful.

Perhaps, having invented possible future, we could change the present?





# HOW DO DIFFERENT PEOPLE IMAGINE TO BE RICH?

Here are the dreams of several people about what does it means for them to be rich. What do you think about it?

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※ Someone wants to own a picture by Leonardo da Vinci.

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※ Someone wants to throw a giant feast, invite friends or maybe even a half the world. To cheer them all.

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\* Chaim Soutine — the French painter with Russian Jewish origin, lived in the first part of 20 century. The price of one of his painting in the Christie's curated auction was 28000000 dollars

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\* Pavel Durov is a creator of the social network vkontakt, that is the Russian analogue of Facebook

※ Someone wants to save up, to multiply, to stash and to hoard. He or she would not give anything to anyone or would spend nothing at all, in the thrill of accumulation.

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※ Someone does not see the difference between wealth and poverty and lives in total debt.

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※ At the end of his life, **Chaim Soutine\*** was often invited to visit friends, where he regularly left his drawings and paintings as a gift, drawn there as well. They were already worth a lot of money.

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※ The ancient kings and rulers loved to scatter money in the crowd. The founder of the Russian social network, **Pavel Durov\***, once got in a balcony of his office and started to throw into the money the passers-by. They rushed to raise bills and pushed each other. Durov and his office staff had fun.

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※ Someone wants everyone to be rich: a neighbor, a friend, a relative and even a stranger. This one dreams of common wealth.

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How would you describe your own “shortage”?  
 What does it mean for you “to have plenty  
 of everything?”

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The worst poverty in my life I saw in the Dominican Republic. I lived in it for a year enough time to understand what is the difference between our Soviet poverty, when something is not enough and their poverty. For many kids in Dominican, the playground is a scrapyard, and toys are rubbish and used plastic bottles. When they grew up a little they are expected to do all kind of unpleasant things to help their families to survive.



Describe here the worst poverty you have ever seen.

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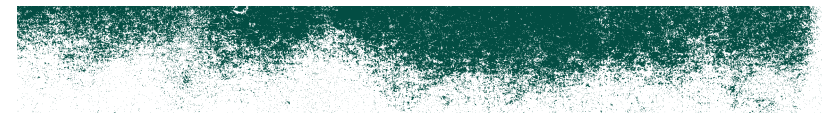
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# 03 WHAT IS POVERTY?

How does society decide what poverty is?  
 How do people conclude they are poor?



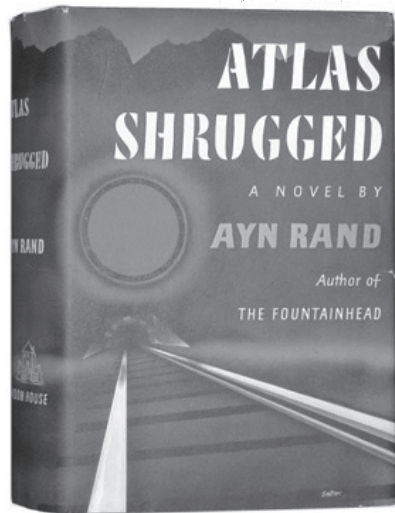
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In the USSR, many considered themselves to be poor. Long lines and shortages of goods and services were the symbols of life in socialist countries. I remember that something was always lacking: suddenly it was impossible to get pantyhose or socks, or for some reason, the chandeliers would disappear. Families spent hours discussing the possibility of “getting” a sofa or a color TV. Young people dreamed of chewing gum and American jeans. For many, it has become an obsession. Then socialism ended and capitalism began.



# 05 CAPITALIST REALISM

## Wealth as the duty and the blessing



“I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine.”  
**Ayn Rand, Atlas Shrugged**

The anti-utopian novel „Atlas Shrugged“ by Ayn Rand talks about the struggle of heroic businessmen against a society populated by ignoramuses and lazy people. The book became the bible of American right-wing politicians. Its annual print is more than 500,000 copies per year.



Ayn Rand is a famous American writer and a preacher of a doctrine of „rational egoism,“ who proclaimed the right of self-interest and prized capitalism against then-still-existed socialist enemies.  
For many years, Ayn Rand led a group in which influential American politicians and economists participated. One of them, Alan Greenspan, was in charge of the Federal Reserve Bank (1987–2006), which determined US financial policy.



If a person’s efforts entirely defined by his or her wealth, then it is possible that all poor people are just lazy. Should we help them? Are they worthy of compassion?

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Describe how in your ideal society poor and rich should relate to each other.

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# DO WE LIVE FOR OURSELVES OR FOR (TOGETHER) WITH OTHERS?

## Comment on the quotes of Ayn Rand and Thomas Piketty. Who do you think is correct?



**Ayn Rand** - American writer and a preacher of a doctrine of „rational egoism.“

“For instance, when discussing the social instinct — does it matter whether it had existed in the early savages? Supposing men were born social (and even that is a question) — does it mean that they have to remain so? If man started as a social animal — isn't all progress and civilization directed toward making him an individual? Isn't that the only possible progress? If men are the highest of animals, isn't man the next step?”

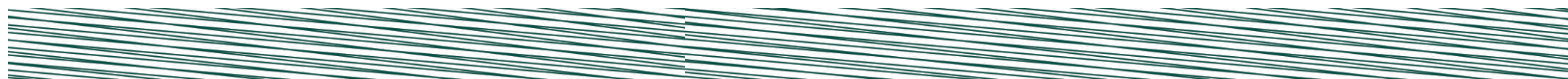
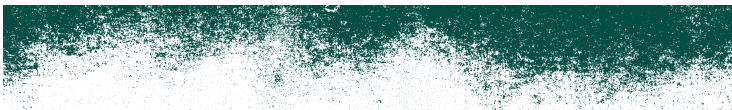


**Thomas Piketty** is a French economist whose work focuses on wealth and income inequality.

The fly in the ointment of Rand's philosophical „objectivism“ is the plain fact that humans have a tendency to cooperate and to look out for each other, as noted by many anthropologists who study hunter-gatherers. These „prosocial tendencies“ were problematic for Rand, because such behavior obviously mitigates against „natural“ self-interest and therefore should not exist. She resolved this contradiction by claiming that humans are born as tabula rasa, a blank slate, (as many of her time believed) and prosocial tendencies, particularly altruism, are „diseases“ imposed on us by society, insidious lies that cause us to betray biological reality.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.



## In the USSR, personal wealth was prohibited

The punishment for storing foreign currency or buying and selling gold was from 15 years in prison to execution. Any commercial activity has been banned. Every citizen was obliged to work for the state. **“Social parasitism”**\* considered to be a criminal offense.

\* The term comes from the ancient Greek π (parásitos), «one who lives at another’s expense, person who eats at the table of another,» used to label social offenders.



Comment on the laws of the former USSR. What do you think is fair and useful, and what is harmful and unnecessary?

※ Possession of several apartments at once were prohibited.

※ The size of country houses, plots of land and even the number of trees in one’s garden was strictly limited.

※ Private cars were rare.

※ Private schools, hospitals or prisons did not exist.

※ Private enterprises were banned.



※ How important is it for you that everyone in your country is provided with the basic necessities of life?

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What do you think are the minimum living conditions? For example, maybe music lessons should be free, and everyone should get food on their own?

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# 05 WELFARE STATE: USSR

The Soviet constitution guaranteed its citizens „the right to the standard of living necessary to maintain the health and well-being of a person and his family“. (reference — Constitution of USSR 1977)



Everyone in the USSR was provided with housing, food, free medicine, education, pensions and more. Public transportation, kindergartens and schools, free universities and paid summer vacations — different types of social services were an integral part of the social reality I grew up with.

Some believe that the quality of „services“ itself was below average. Some people think, that the socialist countries have guaranteed a very existence of a wide middle class not only in the East but also in the West. Competition between two ideologies forced Governments to protect their population.

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