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I have just been reading "Survivor guilt" in the March ASCAP, and it seems a promising line of enquiry. Having just come back from India, where the poverty of the majority of the inhabitants is very apparent, I wonder whether survivor guilt due to an unconscious comparison of my own standard of living with that of the Indians may account for the uncomfortable feeling I get from being in India.

I just wonder if the term "survivor guilt" isn't a little oblique and misleading for what they are describing. If guilt is due to the knowledge that one is transgressing one of the "thou shalt not...." instructions internalised from society's moral code in childhood, then those who internalise a moral code demanding equality are likely to feel guilt when they see themselves better off than others - which could be called "affluence guilt". Also, if they have internalised the moral code of counter-dominance a la Boehm, they are likely to feel guilty if they feel themselves becoming dominant over someone else, and the guilt in that case would serve a negative feedback function of obliterating any R-gap and restoring equality. In fact, this kind of guilt (with associated loss of RHP?) may be important in the virtually unique human capacity to maintain close and equal relationships between people of the same sex.

One would predict that the "authoritarian personality" as described by Adorno and by Maslow would not feel survivor guilt. Incidentally, the fictional paradigm for "dominance guilt" is in Stendhal's "The Charterhouse of Parma", in which the serving maid of a depressed mistress has to abase herself to an exceptional degree in order to remain "lower" than her mistress.