

Ben Shapiro's Argument that the Rich Already Pay Their Fair Share

Ben Shapiro thinks rich people already pay their fair share of taxes. Here's his argument:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dk6j_M_bge8&t=7350s

"The top 10% of income earners in this country pay *all* of the net taxes—not *some* of the net taxes—*all* of the net taxes. Because the “net taxes” are defined as what you pay into the government minus what you get back from the government." (2:02:13 – 2:02:23)

Here's my reconstruction of his argument:

- (B1) The rich pay all the “net taxes”.
- (B2) Paying all the “net taxes” is sufficient for paying their fair share.
- (B3) Therefore, the rich pay their fair share.

He defines ‘net taxes’ as “what you pay into the government minus what you get back”.

But when he says, “what you get back”, he's only talking about forms of direct financial assistance like unemployment benefits, welfare, food stamps, etc.—things the rich don't use.

So perhaps the empirical premise, B1, is true. Ben's confident it is, and while I don't trust his confidence, I'll grant it for the sake of argument.

However, I think we should reject the moral premise, B2. This is *not* a plausible standard of fairness, because it ignores all the other ways that the rich benefit from the government.

The government protects rich people's property, both legally and by force. The rich have much more property than everyone else, and the gov't typically defends it more rigorously.

Also, the government provides financial assistance to low paid workers so they can continue to survive and work for the rich for low pay. And the rich can more easily influence lawmakers to make legislation that benefits them.