

Perspective

Theories of distributive justice: A study

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ABOUT THE STUDY

Justice, in its broadest sense, is the idea that people should get what they deserve. However, there are many different fields and viewpoints that have an impact on what is considered to be “deserving,” including those that focus on morality as it relates to ethics, reason, law, religion, equity, and fairness. Occasionally, the state will operate courts and uphold their rulings in an effort to enhance justice.

Social justice

Social justice is the fair distribution of assets, opportunities, and privileges within a society. In both Western and Asian civilizations, the concept of social justice has been extensively employed to describe the process of ensuring that people fulfil their societal obligations and receive their rightful rewards from society (Baumeister, 1998). Breaking down obstacles to social mobility, building safety nets, and promoting economic fairness have been prioritised in the present movements for social justice. Establishing rights and responsibilities within societal institutions enables everyone to share in the benefits and expenses of cooperation. Different cultural traditions place different emphasis on individual duty toward society and on the balance between access to power and its appropriate use, which mediates interpretations that link justice to a reciprocal connection with society (Colquitt, 2001). Thus, social justice is used today to argue for the rights of migrants, prisoners, the environment, and people who are physically and mentally disabled, as well as to reinterpret historical figures like Bartolomé de las Casas. It is also used in philosophical discussions about human differences and efforts to achieve gender, ethnic, and social equality. Relational justice, which is concerned with the right relationship with people who share characteristics like nationality or who are involved in cooperation or negotiation, is a notion that is closely tied to social justice (Hobfoll, 1989).

Fairness

John Rawls utilised the social contract argument in his book

A Theory of Justice to demonstrate that distributive justice, the fair distribution of goods is a type of justice. In order for us to choose the theory of justice that would best serve our interests, Rawls wants us to see ourselves hidden behind a veil of ignorance that prevents us from knowing anything about our personalities, social standings, moral qualities, wealth, talents, and life goals (Hülshager, 2011). We can't influence the outcome in our favour because we don't know who we are in particular. The decision-in-ignorance thereby simulates fairness as it does not include selfish bias (Leggett, 2003). Each of us, according to Rawls, would reject the utilitarian theory of justice, which holds that we should maximise welfare (see below), because it runs the risk of causing us to compromise our own interests in favour of those of others (Muraven, 2003). We would instead support Rawls' two guiding principles of justice;

- Every person is entitled to the broadest overall system of fundamental liberties that is consistent with a similar system of liberty for all.

- Social and economic disparities must be set up in a way that is most beneficial to the underprivileged, compatible with the just savings concept, and connected to positions that are open to everyone under fair equality of opportunity (Muraven, 2006).

The fact that we would accept these standards in a fair decision-making process supports them for us as the principles of justice. According to Rawls' theory, there are two different types of goods: (1) the good of liberty rights, and (2) social and economic goods, such as wealth, income, and power (Rupp, 2006). For (1), there should be equality between citizens, and for (2), there should be equality unless inequality improves the position of the least fortunate. The idea behind distributive justice is that everyone should receive what they deserve. On what is “earned,” different theories exist. The main distinction is between theories that claim the basis of just deserts should be distributed unequally on the basis of, for example, hard work, and therefore derive egalitarian accounts of distributive justice, and theories that claim the basis of just deserts is unequally

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distributed and, therefore, derive accounts of distributive justice by which some should have more than others.

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