

Criteria of distributive justice : an economic inquiry

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PROPOSITIONS ACCOMPANYING THE THESIS

Criteria of Distributive Justice An Economic Inquiry

BY

Z. EMEL ÖZTÜRK

1. Envy-freeness is a central concept of distributive justice since, if an allocation is envy-free, no agent can object on the account that he would be better off if given someone else's bundle. The study of envy measures is a natural extension of the theory of inequality measurement to the setting of ordinal non-comparable preferences over a bundle of goods (Chapter 2).
2. The economic literature has traditionally stressed the role of laissez-faire as an instrument for welfare maximization. However, there is a strong tension between the Pareto principle and laissez-faire which makes it difficult to treat the respect for laissez-faire outcomes as an end in itself (Chapter 3).
3. A society in which people are not discriminated against on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender and sexual orientation is desirable in itself (Chapter 4).
4. Disputes about water allocation within international water basins often contribute to regional tensions and conflicts as water is a scarce and increasingly valuable resource (Chapter 5).
5. Justice arguments are often made in connection with all dimensions of social life such as income, wealth, political power, taxation, labor markets, education, health care and military service. For instance, in considering a particular policy proposal – say for reducing the amount given in student grants – the inequality implication of the policy (that is whether the policy leads to more or less inequality) is often taken to be an argument for or against the policy. A primary motivation for inequality measurement is therefore to guide policy.
6. Economics is first and foremost a way of thinking. That is what makes it so difficult to defend it against those who consider economics the source of all the ills in the world.
7. Contemporary economic theory is predominantly masculine, not because of the number of male practitioners, but because it mostly reflects masculine views of the world.
8. We know from economic theory that we might sometimes have to restrict voters' preferences if we want to avoid a dictator. One important question that remains unanswered is this: 'What if we exclude some voters from the elections?'
9. Some – usually the privileged – consider affirmative action policies as just another form of unfairness. They would be right, had the playing field not been tipped to favour one group from the beginning.