

a short history of distributive justice

****A Short History of Distributive Justice****

a short history of distributive justice unveils a fascinating journey through time, exploring how societies have grappled with the fair allocation of resources, wealth, and opportunities. This concept, deeply rooted in philosophy, politics, and economics, addresses one of humanity's oldest questions: How should the benefits and burdens of society be shared? Understanding the historical evolution of distributive justice not only sheds light on past social arrangements but also informs contemporary debates about inequality, fairness, and social policy.

The Origins of Distributive Justice in Ancient Philosophy

The idea of distributive justice can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where early thinkers first contemplated the principles of fairness and equity. In ancient Greece, philosophers like Plato and Aristotle were among the earliest to theorize about justice in society.

Plato's Vision of Justice and Social Order

Plato, in his work **The Republic**, envisioned a just society where each class performed its designated role. He believed justice meant everyone doing what they are best suited for, which naturally dictated a certain distribution of goods and responsibilities. Although Plato did not explicitly outline economic distribution, his focus on harmony and order laid foundational ideas for later justice theories.

Aristotle's Contribution: Equity and Proportionality

Aristotle took a more practical approach in his **Nicomachean Ethics**, distinguishing between distributive and corrective justice. Distributive justice, for Aristotle, was about allocating honors, wealth, and resources proportionally, based on merit or contribution to the community. This principle of proportionality became a cornerstone, influencing centuries of thought on how fairness should be measured not by equality alone but by relevance and desert.

Medieval and Religious Perspectives on Justice

As Western society moved into the medieval period, the discussion of distributive justice became closely intertwined with religious doctrines. The Christian tradition, in particular, emphasized charity, the moral duty to support the poor, and the idea of justice as a divine command.

Christian Ethics and the Moral Economy

Medieval theologians like St. Thomas Aquinas integrated Aristotelian philosophy with Christian teachings, advocating for a just distribution that respected both individual rights and communal well-being. Aquinas stressed the importance of the “common good” and the ethical obligation of the wealthy to assist those in need, which shaped the moral underpinnings of distributive justice in Europe for centuries.

Islamic and Other Religious Views

Similarly, in Islamic philosophy, distributive justice is a key tenet, with principles like **Zakat** (almsgiving) institutionalized to ensure wealth redistribution. Other religious traditions also contributed various perspectives on fairness, charity, and social responsibility, reinforcing the idea that justice was not just legal but deeply moral.

Enlightenment Thinkers and the Rise of Modern Theories

The Enlightenment era marked a significant shift as thinkers began to emphasize individual rights, social contracts, and rationality in their conceptions of justice. Distributive justice evolved in tandem with emerging ideas about democracy, liberty, and economic systems.

John Locke and Natural Rights

John Locke’s theories about natural rights to life, liberty, and property laid the groundwork for liberal political philosophy. Locke argued that individuals have a right to the fruits of their labor, which complicated earlier notions of redistributive justice but underscored the importance of protecting property rights within any fair system.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Social Contract

Rousseau took a more radical stance, emphasizing equality and the collective will. His social contract theory suggested that justice involves creating institutions that reflect the general will, which implied a more egalitarian distribution of resources to ensure freedom and fairness for all citizens.

Adam Smith and Economic Justice

While often associated with free-market capitalism, Adam Smith’s **The Wealth of Nations** also touches on justice, particularly the role of sympathy and moral sentiments in economic interactions. Smith recognized the potential for inequality in markets but believed in mechanisms that could

balance self-interest with social welfare.

20th Century Developments: From Rawls to Contemporary Debates

The 20th century brought fresh vigor to the discourse on distributive justice, especially as industrialization, capitalism, and welfare states transformed societies worldwide.

John Rawls and the Theory of Justice as Fairness

John Rawls's 1971 work, *A Theory of Justice*, is perhaps the most influential modern treatment of distributive justice. Rawls introduced the idea of the "original position" and the "veil of ignorance," hypothetical constructs that encourage designing justice principles without knowing one's social status. His two principles—equal basic rights and inequalities arranged to benefit the least advantaged—offered a compelling framework that balanced liberty with social equity.

Robert Nozick and Libertarian Critiques

In response, Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* presented a libertarian critique, arguing that justice is about respecting voluntary exchanges and property rights rather than redistributing wealth. This debate between egalitarian and libertarian perspectives continues to shape political philosophy and policy.

Contemporary Issues and Global Perspectives

In recent decades, distributive justice discussions have expanded beyond national borders, addressing global inequality, climate justice, and human rights. Issues such as income disparity, healthcare access, and educational opportunities highlight the ongoing relevance of distributive justice in public discourse.

Why Understanding the History of Distributive Justice Matters Today

Exploring the historical evolution of distributive justice helps us appreciate the complexity behind what might seem like straightforward questions about fairness. Different societies have prioritized various values—merit, equality, need, or liberty—depending on their cultural, religious, and economic contexts. Recognizing these nuances enables us to engage more thoughtfully with current debates on social welfare, taxation, and economic policy.

Moreover, history shows that no single approach to distributive justice is universally accepted or easy

to implement. The challenge lies in balancing competing interests and values to create societies that are not only prosperous but also equitable and just.

Whether policymakers, students, or curious readers, understanding this rich history provides a foundation for meaningful conversations about justice in our increasingly interconnected world. The story of distributive justice is far from finished; it evolves as societies strive to define what fairness truly means.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is distributive justice?

Distributive justice is a concept in moral and political philosophy that concerns the fair allocation of resources, benefits, and burdens among individuals or groups in a society.

Who are some key philosophers associated with the history of distributive justice?

Key philosophers include Aristotle, John Rawls, Robert Nozick, and Karl Marx, each offering different perspectives on what constitutes fair distribution.

How did Aristotle contribute to the idea of distributive justice?

Aristotle introduced the concept of distributive justice as proportional equality, where resources should be distributed based on merit or contribution to society.

What role did John Rawls play in modern distributive justice theory?

John Rawls developed the theory of justice as fairness, emphasizing principles like the veil of ignorance and the difference principle to ensure equitable distribution of resources.

How does Robert Nozick's view differ from Rawls regarding distributive justice?

Nozick argued for a minimal state and entitlement theory, emphasizing individual property rights and voluntary exchanges rather than redistributive justice advocated by Rawls.

What historical events influenced the development of distributive justice theories?

Industrialization, the rise of capitalism, social revolutions, and the civil rights movement significantly shaped discussions and theories of distributive justice.

How has distributive justice evolved in contemporary political philosophy?

Contemporary debates focus on issues like global justice, economic inequality, healthcare, and social welfare, expanding distributive justice beyond traditional national boundaries.

What is the difference between distributive justice and procedural justice?

Distributive justice concerns the fairness of outcomes and resource allocations, while procedural justice focuses on the fairness of the processes that lead to those outcomes.

Why is understanding the history of distributive justice important today?

Understanding its history helps contextualize current social and economic inequalities and informs policies aimed at achieving a more just and equitable society.

Additional Resources

****A Short History of Distributive Justice: Tracing the Evolution of Fairness in Resource Allocation****

a short history of distributive justice reveals a complex and evolving discourse centered on how societies allocate resources, rights, and responsibilities among individuals and groups. From ancient philosophical inquiries to contemporary debates in political theory and economics, the concept of distributive justice has remained a cornerstone in understanding social equity and fairness. This article undertakes a comprehensive review of the historical trajectory of distributive justice, examining its foundational theories, key philosophical contributions, and ongoing relevance in modern governance and policy-making.

The Origins of Distributive Justice in Classical Philosophy

Distributive justice, at its core, concerns the equitable allocation of goods, opportunities, and burdens within a community. The earliest systematic discussions can be traced back to the works of classical philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle.

Plato's Ideal State and Justice as Harmony

In Plato's **Republic**, distributive justice is envisioned as a form of harmony where each individual performs the role suited to their nature. Justice, for Plato, is less about strict equality and more about assigning roles and resources in accordance with one's aptitude and social function. This hierarchical perspective emphasized an ordered society where each class—the rulers, auxiliaries, and

producers—received their due, an early articulation of what might be understood as "functional" distribution.

Aristotle's Contribution: Justice as Proportionality

Aristotle advanced the notion of distributive justice by framing it as proportionality, where resources and honors should be allocated in proportion to merit or contribution. His work in *Nicomachean Ethics* distinguishes between distributive and corrective justice, with the former addressing the fair distribution of wealth and political power based on virtue or desert. Aristotle's emphasis on proportional fairness laid the groundwork for later theories that balance equality with equity.

Medieval and Early Modern Perspectives

The focus on distributive justice continued through the medieval period, often intertwined with theological considerations. Thinkers like Thomas Aquinas integrated Aristotelian ethics with Christian doctrine, emphasizing the common good and moral duties in distribution.

Thomas Aquinas and Natural Law

Aquinas expanded on natural law theory, suggesting that distributive justice must serve the common good, with rulers acting as stewards of wealth and resources to ensure social stability. His views underscored a moral dimension to distribution, advocating for fairness not merely as a legal requirement but as a reflection of divine order.

Social Contract and Enlightenment Thinkers

The Enlightenment brought a shift towards individual rights and contractual foundations of justice. Thinkers like John Locke emphasized property rights as natural rights, framing distributive justice in terms of fair acquisition and voluntary exchange. Conversely, Jean-Jacques Rousseau critiqued inequalities arising from private property and advocated for more egalitarian distribution based on collective sovereignty.

Modern Theories of Distributive Justice

The industrial revolution and the rise of capitalist economies intensified debates on how wealth and resources should be distributed in rapidly changing societies. This period witnessed the emergence of contrasting theories, reflecting differing political ideologies and economic realities.

Utilitarianism and Maximizing Welfare

Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill introduced utilitarianism, which proposes that distributive justice should aim to maximize overall happiness. This consequentialist approach supports policies that increase total welfare, even if distribution is unequal, provided the aggregate benefit is maximized.

Marxism: Justice as Class Struggle and Equality

Karl Marx offered a radical critique of distributive injustice under capitalism, arguing that wealth distribution inherently favors the bourgeoisie at the expense of the proletariat. Marxist theory advocates for the abolition of private property and the establishment of a classless society where resources are distributed according to need, laying the foundation for socialist and communist models of justice.

John Rawls and the Theory of Justice as Fairness

One of the most influential modern contributions, John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971), redefined distributive justice within a liberal democratic framework. Rawls introduced the concepts of the "original position" and "veil of ignorance," proposing that just principles are those individuals would agree upon without knowledge of their social status. His two principles—equal basic liberties and the difference principle, allowing inequalities only if they benefit the least advantaged—have shaped contemporary discussions on social justice and public policy.

Contemporary Debates and Applications

In the 21st century, distributive justice remains a dynamic field intersecting with issues such as globalization, economic inequality, healthcare, and environmental sustainability.

Economic Inequality and Social Welfare

Growing disparities in wealth and income have intensified calls for redistributive justice through progressive taxation, social safety nets, and universal basic income schemes. Debates often revolve around balancing incentives for productivity with the moral imperative to reduce poverty and social exclusion.

Healthcare and Access to Resources

Distributive justice also plays a critical role in healthcare ethics, where questions about fair access to medical services and allocation of scarce resources (such as during pandemics) highlight tensions between individual rights and collective welfare.

Environmental Justice and Sustainability

The rise of environmental concerns introduces a new dimension, focusing on intergenerational justice and equitable resource use. Distributive justice frameworks are increasingly applied to climate change policies, emphasizing fair responsibility-sharing between developed and developing nations.

Key Features and Challenges in Distributive Justice

Understanding the features of distributive justice helps illuminate its complexities:

- **Equity vs. Equality:** Equity involves distribution based on merit or need, while equality emphasizes identical shares. Balancing these remains a persistent challenge.
- **Meritocracy and Desert:** Rewarding individuals according to contributions can incentivize productivity but risks overlooking systemic inequalities.
- **Need-Based Distribution:** Prioritizing needs supports vulnerable populations but may conflict with notions of fairness tied to effort or input.
- **Social Context:** Historical injustices, cultural differences, and economic structures complicate universal applications of distributive principles.

Pros and Cons of Major Distributive Justice Theories

1. **Utilitarianism:** Pros include a focus on maximizing overall good; cons involve potential neglect of minorities.
2. **Libertarianism (e.g., Nozick):** Emphasizes individual freedom and property rights; criticized for ignoring social inequalities.
3. **Rawlsian Justice:** Balances equality and liberty; critics argue it may justify some inequalities and is difficult to implement.
4. **Marxist Approach:** Addresses systemic inequality; faces challenges in practical governance and individual freedoms.

The rich tapestry of distributive justice theories reflects humanity's enduring quest for fairness and social cohesion. As societies continue to face new challenges—from economic crises to environmental threats—the principles guiding fair distribution remain central to shaping equitable and sustainable futures.

A Short History Of Distributive Justice

a short history of distributive justice: A Short History of Distributive Justice Samuel Fleischacker, 2005-09-06 Distributive justice in its modern sense calls on the state to guarantee that everyone is supplied with a certain level of material means. Samuel Fleischacker argues that guaranteeing aid to the poor is a modern idea, developed only in the last two centuries. Earlier notions of justice, including Aristotle's, were concerned with the distribution of political office, not of property. It was only in the eighteenth century, in the work of philosophers such as Adam Smith and Immanuel Kant, that justice began to be applied to the problem of poverty. To attribute a longer pedigree to distributive justice is to fail to distinguish between justice and charity. Fleischacker explains how confusing these principles has created misconceptions about the historical development of the welfare state. Socialists, for instance, often claim that modern economics obliterated ancient ideals of equality and social justice. Free-market promoters agree but applaud the apparent triumph of skepticism and social-scientific rigor. Both interpretations overlook the gradual changes in thinking that yielded our current assumption that justice calls for everyone, if possible, to be lifted out of poverty. By examining major writings in ancient, medieval, and modern political philosophy, Fleischacker shows how we arrived at the contemporary meaning of distributive justice.

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a short history of distributive justice: New Perspectives on Distributive Justice Manuel Knoll, Stephen Snyder, Nurdane Şimsek, 2018-11-19 Distributive justice is one of the most discussed topics in political philosophy. Focusing on the plurality of irreconcilable conceptions of social and political justice, this book presents an array of new perspectives on the topic. Bringing together 30 original essays of well-established and young international scholars, the volume is essential reading for anyone interested in social and political justice.

a short history of distributive justice: Vertrag und Verteilung Stefan Arnold, 2014-08-05 Traditionell gilt das Vertragsrecht als Reich der Freiheit, als seine Gerechtigkeitsform die iustitia commutativa (Austauschgerechtigkeit). Die iustitia distributiva (Verteilungsgerechtigkeit) wird dagegen als Gerechtigkeitsform des öffentlichen Rechts betrachtet. Daraus folgt ein vertragstheoretisches Paradigma, dem zufolge die iustitia distributiva im Vertragsrecht nahezu ohne Bedeutung ist. Stefan Arnold greift dieses Paradigma an und zeigt, dass die iustitia distributiva das Vertragsrecht ebenso durchdringt und prägt wie die iustitia commutativa. Dazu erarbeitet er eine Theorie der iustitia distributiva als Gerechtigkeitsperspektive, die über das konkrete

Austauschverhältnis hinausblickt und die soziale und ökonomische Einbettung des Rechts berücksichtigt. Zugleich analysiert und bewertet er das Vertragsrecht in seiner regulativen Kapazität. Das Vertragsrecht kann demnach externe Ziele verwirklichen helfen und etwa zur Verhaltenssteuerung, zum Schwächerenschutz oder zur Verwirklichung bestimmter Allgemeinwohlbelange beitragen. Die iustitia distributiva wird vom Postulat der Vertragsfreiheit flankiert: Das Vertragsrecht muss uns Autonomie und Eigenverantwortung zuschreiben, damit wir unsere individuellen Ziele in Kooperation mit anderen durch Verträge umsetzen können. Der Autor illustriert die Bedeutung der iustitia distributiva und ihr Verhältnis zur Vertragsfreiheit auch anhand des geltenden Vertragsrechts. Eingehend analysiert er unter anderem das soziale Mietrecht, das Verbrauchervertragsrecht, das Diskriminierungsrecht und Kontrahierungszwänge.--

a short history of distributive justice: *Social Justice in Twentieth-Century Europe* Martin Conway, Camilo Erlichman, 2024-03-07 Social justice has returned to the heart of political debate in present-day Europe. But what does it mean in different national histories and political regimes, and how has this changed over time? This book provides the first historical account of the evolution of notions of social justice across Europe since the late nineteenth century. Written by an international team of leading historians, the book analyses the often-divergent ways in which political movements, state institutions, intellectual groups, and social organisations have understood and sought to achieve social justice. Conceived as an emphatically European analysis covering both the eastern and western halves of the continent, *Social Justice in Twentieth-Century Europe* demonstrates that no political movement ever held exclusive ownership of the meaning of social justice. Conversely, its definition has always been strongly contested, between those who would define it in terms of equality of conditions, or of opportunity; the security provided by state authority, or the freedom of personal initiative; the individual rights of a liberal order, or the social solidarities of class, nation, confession, or Volk.

a short history of distributive justice: *Our Far South* Mike Wilkinson, 2012 A photographic book spanning the Southern Ocean from Snares, Campbell and Auckland Islands and on to the Ross Sea and Antarctic Continent. These regions are portrayed by beautiful sweeping high resolution colour photographs that capture the scale, remoteness and the wildlife as well as the remnants of the historic expeditions in ways not previously achieved.--Publisher.

a short history of distributive justice: *The Crisis of Distribution and the Regulation of Economic Law* Shouwen Zhang, 2022-05-29 The crisis of distribution is one of the longest standing and complicated issues facing human society. Imbued with social, political, historic, and cultural elements, it varies significantly across different countries as a result of all these factors. As an emerging economy which transferred from a planned to a market economy, China has experienced large distribution gaps since it implemented the Reform and Opening-up Policy in the early 1980s, requiring stronger economic law to mitigate and regulate the crisis of distribution. The two volumes examine the crisis of distribution that China faces and proposes policy and economic law methods that can be used to overcome the distribution dilemma. The author discusses the four main concepts and focus points of the crisis of distribution – distribution itself, the crises it faces, the rule of law and development before proposing a theoretical framework of system-distribution-development to resolve distribution problems that China faces. The set should be of keen interest to researchers and students of law, economics, and political science.

a short history of distributive justice: *Enzyklopädie Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie* Jürgen Mittelstraß, 2024-03-15 Die »Enzyklopädie Philosophie- und Wissenschaftstheorie«, das größte allgemeine Nachschlagewerk zur Philosophie im deutschsprachigen Raum, wurde 1980 begonnen und 1996 mit dem vierten Band abgeschlossen. Sie erschien 2005 bis 2018 in einer komplett aktualisierten und erweiterten 8-bändigen Neuauflage, die hiermit nun in einer kartonierten Sonderausgabe vorliegt. Die »Enzyklopädie« umfasst in Sach- und Personenartikeln nicht nur den klassischen Bestand des philosophischen Wissens, sondern auch die neuere Entwicklung der Philosophie, insbesondere in den Bereichen Logik, Erkenntnis- und Wissenschaftstheorie sowie Sprachphilosophie. Zugleich finden Grundlagenreflexionen in den

Wissenschaften und deren Geschichte ausführliche Berücksichtigung. Die umfassenden Bibliographien und Werkverzeichnisse wurden für die 2. Auflage in allen Artikeln auf den neuesten Stand gebracht.

a short history of distributive justice: Confucian Perfectionism Joseph Chan, 2013-12-22 Since the very beginning, Confucianism has been troubled by a serious gap between its political ideals and the reality of societal circumstances. Contemporary Confucians must develop a viable method of governance that can retain the spirit of the Confucian ideal while tackling problems arising from nonideal modern situations. The best way to meet this challenge, Joseph Chan argues, is to adopt liberal democratic institutions that are shaped by the Confucian conception of the good rather than the liberal conception of the right. Confucian Perfectionism examines and reconstructs both Confucian political thought and liberal democratic institutions, blending them to form a new Confucian political philosophy. Chan decouples liberal democratic institutions from their popular liberal philosophical foundations in fundamental moral rights, such as popular sovereignty, political equality, and individual sovereignty. Instead, he grounds them on Confucian principles and redefines their roles and functions, thus mixing Confucianism with liberal democratic institutions in a way that strengthens both. Then he explores the implications of this new yet traditional political philosophy for fundamental issues in modern politics, including authority, democracy, human rights, civil liberties, and social justice. Confucian Perfectionism critically reconfigures the Confucian political philosophy of the classical period for the contemporary era.

a short history of distributive justice: Why We Need the Humanities Donald Drakeman, 2016-02-25 An entrepreneur and educator highlights the surprising influence of humanities scholarship on biomedical research and civil liberties. This spirited defence urges society to support the humanities to obtain continued guidance for public policy decisions, and challenges scholars to consider how best to fulfil their role in serving the common good.

a short history of distributive justice: The SAGE Encyclopedia of Business Ethics and Society Robert W. Kolb, 2018-03-27 Thoroughly revised, updated, and expanded, The SAGE Encyclopedia of Business Ethics and Society, Second Edition explores current topics, such as mass social media, cookies, and cyber-attacks, as well as traditional issues including accounting, discrimination, environmental concerns, and management. The new edition also includes an in-depth examination of current and recent ethical affairs, such as the dangerous work environments of off-shore factories for Western retailers, the negligence resulting in the 2010 BP oil spill, the gender wage gap, the minimum wage debate and increasing income disparity, and the unparalleled level of debt in the U.S. and other countries with the challenges it presents to many societies and the considerable impact on the ethics of intergenerational wealth transfers. Key Features Include: Seven volumes, available in both electronic and print formats, contain more than 1,200 signed entries by significant figures in the field Cross-references and suggestions for further readings to guide students to in-depth resources Thematic Reader's Guide groups related entries by general topics Index allows for thorough browse-and-search capabilities in the electronic edition

a short history of distributive justice: Transfer State Peter Sloman, 2019-10-30 The idea of a guaranteed minimum income has been central to British social policy debates for more than a century. Since the First World War, a variety of market economists, radical activists, and social reformers have emphasized the possibility of tackling poverty through direct cash transfers between the state and its citizens. As manufacturing employment has declined and wage inequality has grown since the 1970s, cash benefits and tax credits have become an important source of income for millions of working-age households, including many low-paid workers with children. The nature and purpose of these transfer payments, however, remain highly contested. Conservative and New Labour governments have used in-work benefits and conditionality requirements to 'activate' the unemployed and reinforce the incentives to take low-paid work - an approach which has reached its apogee in Universal Credit. By contrast, a growing number of campaigners have argued that the challenge of providing economic security in an age of automation would be better met by paying a Universal Basic Income to all citizens. Transfer State provides the first detailed history of

guaranteed income proposals in modern Britain, which brings together intellectual history and archival research to show how the pursuit of an integrated tax and benefit system has shaped UK public policy since 1918. The result is a major new analysis of the role of cash transfers in the British welfare state which sets Universal Credit in a historical perspective and examines the cultural and political barriers to a Universal Basic Income.

a short history of distributive justice: Constitutionalism Justified Ester Herlin-Karnell, Matthias Klatt, Héctor A. Morales Zúñiga, 2020 This volume analyzes Rainer Forst's theory of the right to justification from legal-philosophical and constitutional-theoretical perspectives. The contributions address issues such as the philosophical foundations of justification and constitutionalism, the justification of human rights, the requirements of social justice, and important elements of constitutional law. Forst responds to the contributions in a concluding chapter.

a short history of distributive justice: A Short History of Ethics and Economics J. E. Alvey, 2011 'This is an important and timely work that addresses the moral crisis of contemporary economics. Alvey not only provides an excellent narrative of classical Greek economics, but his arguments are aimed at restoring the central role that ethics played in the long tradition of economic thought. This is an invaluable scholarly resource for academics and students of political economy as well as the history of political thought.' Benjamin Wong, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore Arising from a disenchantment with mainstream economics a dissatisfaction that is widespread today A Short History of Economics and Ethics sketches the emergence and decline of the ethical tradition of economics and the crisis of modern economics. In doing so, James Alvey focuses on four of the leading ancient Greek thinkers: Socrates, Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle. The author uses insights from Amartya Sen's Capabilities approach as well as other sources to retrieve the ethical tradition of economics. Five aspects of this tradition which seem to lie outside of mainstream economics are identified: an ethical methodology; some notion of a just price; an understanding that ethical motivations are relevant to human action; a rich understanding of human well-being; and some notion of distributive justice related to human well-being. Creating a forum for further debate and research opportunity, this book will appeal to students, scholars and historians of economic thought, as well as to all those interested in the intersection of ethics with economics.

a short history of distributive justice: Modern Moral Philosophy Stephen Darwall, 2023-06-15 In this magisterial study, one of our leading moral philosophers refutes the charge (originally made by Elizabeth Anscombe) that modern ethics is incoherent because it essentially depends on theological and religious assumptions that it cannot acknowledge. Stephen Darwall's panoramic picture starts with the seventeenth-century thinker Grotius and tells the story continuously down to the time of Kant, exploring what was in fact a completely new way of doing ethics based on secular ideas of human psychology and universal accountability. He shows that thinkers from Grotius to Kant are profoundly united by this modern approach, and that it helped them to create a theory of natural human rights that remains of great political relevance today. He further shows that this new way of thinking provides conceptual resources that are far from exhausted, and that moral philosophy in this idiom still has a vibrant future.

a short history of distributive justice: Shakespearean Issues Richard Strier, 2022-09-06 A collection of thought-provoking essays that treat the political, social, and philosophical themes of Shakespeare's plays In *Shakespearean Issues*, Richard Strier has written a set of linked essays bound by a learned view of how to think about Shakespeare's plays and also how to write literary criticism on them. The essays vary in their foci—from dealing with passages and key lines to dealing with whole plays, and to dealing with multiple plays in thematic conversation with each other. Strier treats the political, social, and philosophical themes of Shakespeare's plays through recursive and revisionary close reading, revisiting plays from different angles and often contravening prevailing views. Part I focuses on characters. Moments of bad faith, of unconscious self-revelation, and of semi-conscious self-revelation are analyzed, along with the problem of describing characters psychologically and ethically. In an essay on "Happy Hamlet," the famous melancholy of the prince is questioned, as is the villainy of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, while another essay asks the reader

to reconsider moral judgments and negative assessments of characters who may be flawed but do not seem obviously wicked, such as Edgar and Gloucester in *King Lear*. Part II moves to systems, arguing that *Henry IV*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Merchant of Venice* raise doubts about fundamental features of legal systems, such as impartiality, punishments, and respect for contracts. Strier reveals *King Lear*'s radicalism, analyzing its concentration on poverty and its insistence on the existence and legitimacy of a material substratum to human life. Essays on *The Tempest* offer original takes on the play's presentation of coercive power, of civilization and its discontents, and of humanist ideals. Part III turns to religious and epistemological beliefs, with Strier challenging prevailing views of Shakespeare's relation to both. A culminating reading sees *The Winter's Tale* as ultimately affirming the mind's capacities, and as finding a place for something like religion within the world. Anyone interested in Shakespeare's plays will find *Shakespearean Issues* bracing and thought-provoking.

a short history of distributive justice: Tax Law, Religion, and Justice Allen Calhoun, 2021-03-08 This book asks why tax policy is both attracted to and repelled by the idea of justice. Accepting the invitation of economist Henry Simons to acknowledge that tax justice is a theological concept, the work explores theological doctrines of taxation to answer the presenting question. The overall message of the book is that taxation is an instrument of justice, but only when taxes take into account multiple goods in society: the requirements of the government, the property rights of society's members, and the material needs of the poor. It is argued that this answer to the presenting question is a theological and ethical answer in that it derives from the insistence of Christian thinkers that tax policy take into account material human need (*necessitas*). Without the *necessitas* component of the tax balance, tax systems end up honoring only one of the three components of the tax equation and cease to reflect a coherent idea of justice. The book will be of interest to academics and researchers working in the areas of tax law, economics, theology, and history.

a short history of distributive justice: Habilitation, Health, and Agency Lawrence C. Becker, 2012-06-15 Lawrence C. Becker introduces an unconventional set of background ideas for future philosophical work on normative theories of basic justice. The organizing concept is habilitation -- the process of equipping a person or thing with functional abilities or capacities. The specific proposals drawn from the concept of habilitation are independent of any particular set of distributive principles. The result is a framework for theory that includes a metric for the pursuit of basic justice, but not a normative theory of it. The basic idea is that receiving and providing habilitation is a lifelong necessity for human beings, from their nearly helpless newborn state through their struggles to survive and thrive thereafter, even into the most severe diminishment of old age. This lifelong human necessity underlies all questions about basic justice, and the possibilities for habilitation define the circumstances under which those questions arise. Focusing on the circumstances of habilitation calls attention to the central role of physical and psychological health. Without basic good health in both domains, it is not possible to cope with the habilitative demands of one's physical and psychological endowments, and one's physical and social environments. And for human beings, a particular aspect of human health effectively sums up these matters: namely human agency; the nature and extent of the ability to act effectively. The book proposes, specifically, that normative theories of basic justice adopt the habilitation framework. What then appears to follow is that the most plausible comprehensive metric for assessing progress toward basic justice will be the level and distribution of basic good health. Moreover, achieving robustly healthy agency will be the most plausible tactical target for making progress toward basic justice -- no matter what one's favored distributive principles might be.

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Originally published in 1776, Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* was lauded by America's founders as a landmark work of Enlightenment thinking about national wealth, statecraft, and moral virtue. Today, Smith is one of the most influential icons of economic thought in America. Glory Liu traces how generations of Americans have read, reinterpreted, and weaponized Smith's ideas, revealing how his popular image as a champion of American-style capitalism and free markets is a historical invention. Drawing on a trove of illuminating archival materials, Liu tells the story of how an unassuming Scottish philosopher captured the American imagination and played a leading role in shaping American economic and political ideas. She shows how Smith became known as the father of political economy in the nineteenth century and was firmly associated with free trade, and how, in the aftermath of the Great Depression, the Chicago School of Economics transformed him into the preeminent theorist of self-interest and the miracle of free markets. Liu explores how a new generation of political theorists and public intellectuals has sought to recover Smith's original intentions and restore his reputation as a moral philosopher. Charting the enduring fascination that this humble philosopher from Scotland has held for American readers over more than two centuries, Adam Smith's America shows how Smith continues to be a vehicle for articulating perennial moral and political anxieties about modern capitalism.

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