

## Distributive Justice

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- Distributive justice is concerned with stating normative principles for allocating goods and services that are in limited supply relative to the demand
- These principles vary depending on what goods are subject to distribution (e.g., income, wealth, opportunities), on the nature of subjects who receive the distributions (e.g., individuals, groups, certain reference classes), and on the basis for determining the distribution of goods (e.g., equality, individual characteristics, free market transactions).

## Different Principles of Distributive Justice, I

- Strict Egalitarianism: every person should have the same level of material goods
- Difference Principle: each individual has equal liberties and these equal liberties allow equal opportunities
- Resource-based Principles: people have equal resources
- Welfare-based Principles: what is of moral importance is the level of welfare of people (utility)

## Different Principles of Distributive Justice, II

- Desert-based Principles: distribute goods and services based on what people deserve due to their actions (Locke)
- Libertarian Principles: just distribution is not accomplished through some pattern of distribution (e.g., market forces); a distribution is just if everyone is entitled to the holdings they possess under the distribution (Nozick)
- Feminist Principles: accept many of the above principles with a focus on the difference of gender in issues of justice

## Hume

### Justice as Convention

## Origin of Justice

- The origin of justice is public utility
- What is the purpose of justice?
- Merit of justice is found in its beneficial consequences
- Would justice even be necessary if there were an abundance of resources?

## Justice and Abundance

- Suppose we lived in a world of abundant resources. Anything we wanted, we could get with little to no effort. Imagine the world of Star Trek.
- Would we need justice in this kind of world?
- "It seems evident, that, in such a happy state, every other social virtue would flourish and receive tenfold increase; but the cautious, jealous virtue of justice, would never once have been dreamed of."

## When Is Justice Necessary? Lack of Abundant Resources

- In a world with great abundance, there is no need for justice
- For example, Hume thinks there are no property rights to air and water
  - No one could be accused of injustice in using these resources because no one can have claims on these resources since they are unlimited
- By implication, justice is necessary when there are not an abundance of resources and there is competition of resources

## When is Justice Necessary? Good Character

- In a world of virtuous individuals with altruistic characters, there is no need for justice
- For example, there would be no need for contracts or promises (types of obligations) if each person could be counted on to always act, like family members, in the interests of others
  - No one could be accused of injustice in this kind of society because that person would treat their neighbors' and their own interests the same
- By implication, justice is necessary when humans cannot be counted upon to act toward another's benefit

## Argument for Justice Existing Due to Its Usefulness

1. If justice did not derive its existence solely from its necessary use in human social and political negotiations, then it would exist in all examples of social and political negotiations regardless of whether it was needed.
  2. Justice does not exist in all examples of social and political negotiations, especially in those cases where it is not needed.
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3. Therefore, justice derives its necessary existence solely from its necessary use in human social and political negotiations.

## Purpose of Justice

- "The good of mankind is the only object of all these laws and regulations."
- Purpose of justice is to bring about happiness, peace, and security
- How does one bring about these goods when there are limited resources and services to distribute?

## Problem of Distribution of Goods

- If one were a god, then one could distribute these goods based on infinite wisdom
- But, humans make and execute social laws
- If there were unlimited goods, then one could distribute these goods on a principle of perfect equality
- But, humans are not equal in deed and ability

## Principle of Perfect Equality

- Idea of perfect equality is mistaken
- At core, the principle of perfect equality is impractical and "pernicious" to human society
- Hume appears to assume that we are all unequal in our abilities and that is a good thing
  - Since we are unequal, it would be unjust to distribute resources equally (assumes merit-based distribution)
  - If we were all made equal, humankind and society would suffer from the ingenuity and resources arising from the differences and ambitions inherent in humanity

## Conclusion about Distributive Justice

- "We may conclude, therefore, that in order to establish laws for the regulation of property we must be acquainted with the nature and situation of man; must reject appearances, which may be false, though specious; and must search for those rules, which are, on the whole, most useful and beneficial."