

Studium Generale organizes:

Social Justice

just how?

Defining and Contextualizing Social Justice

Studium Generale



Universiteit Leiden

Wednesday 14th of September 2011

Social Justice Beyond Borders?

Pieter Pekelharing, Lecturer in Philosophy,
Faculty of Humanities, University of
Amsterdam

The philosopher John Rawls was of the opinion that the concept of social justice was only applicable within the borders of a state. Why did Rawls think this was the case and are his arguments still valid in a globalized world? The first question that has to be answered, however, is what social justice is: what motivates us to mete out justice, how strong are these motivations, what kind of obligations does social justice entail and on whom do these obligations rest? It is in the answer to that question that we will see that social justice is best regarded as an institutional virtue, in which the state, because of its monopoly on violence, has a special obligation to its citizens to maintain a socially just order. To that extent Rawls is right, but to the extent that states have become part of a global order and have created global institutions that have a deep impact on the lives of those living under these institutions, new demands of justice have arisen, with new social actors and different kinds of obligations. As an example the TRIPS agreement on intellectual property and its influence on the developing economies will be discussed.

Wednesday 21st of September 2011

Justice and the Market

Rutger Claassen, Assistant Professor of
Political Philosophy, Institute of Political
Science, Leiden University

Is it just that a CEO earns so much more than a normal employee? Is it just that some get access to better health care than others? Is it just that our economic activities burden future generations with a global climate that will in all likelihood bring them a lot of damage? Political philosophers have developed various competing theories to answer these and other questions about justice. In these theories, a central element is how one thinks about the capitalist market: is free market exchange between individuals a paradigm case of justice (as many libertarians believe); or is it exploitative (as many Marxists believe)? Or is it something in between? (as many egalitarians believe). In this lecture Rutger Claassen will introduce some of the main theories of justice that have been developed in political philosophy, and show how they approach the issue of the (in)justice of market-based earnings and activities.

Wednesday 28th of September 2011

Social Justice in Practice (to be confirmed)

A.G. Castermans, Professor, Faculty of Law,
Leiden University



Wednesday 12th of October 2011

The Evolution of Social Justice

Jack Vromen, Professor of Theoretical Philosophy, EIPE, Faculty of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam

The claim that social justice is an outgrowth of an evolutionary process has met great resistance. Yet on closer inspection it turns out that it can be a rather innocuous claim.

The claim can, and arguably should, be understood as a positive one, pertaining to explanation, rather than a normative one, pertaining to justification. It does not entail that we simply have to acquiesce in whatever conception of social justice evolution has furnished us with. Furthermore, the claim might be understood as saying only that a sense of social justice evolved in humans (and that that sense has behavioral implications), not that the contents of social justice are fully determined by it. Finally, if 'evolution' is understood broadly, as including cultural (or social) evolution, the claim might even become a truism. Indeed, 'cultural evolution' might be (and actually sometimes is) understood so broadly that it is hard to imagine how social justice could have emerged or developed otherwise. In this lecture, Jack Vromen will discuss the strengths and limits of several evolutionary explanations of social justice that have been proposed recently.

Wednesday 26th of October 2011

Are We Really Fair?

True Fairness Versus Instrumental Fairness
Eric van Dijk, Professor of Social Psychology, Institute of Psychology, Leiden University

All people care about fairness. And all people care about their own interests. As a result, people do not always agree about what is fair, and they certainly are not always fair. To complicate matters, people may not even be truly fair even if their behavior suggests that they are fair. Fair behavior is often 'self-interest in disguise'. In this lecture, Eric van Dijk will discuss psychological research on the use of fairness in allocation of scarce resources (e.g., money). In this line of research, simple (but elegant) experiments are used to study how fairness concerns evolve (e.g., when we grow up), to what extent fairness is a personality issue (i.e., whether some people are simply more fair than others), how we sometimes use fairness to our own advantage, and how we deceive others in letting them believe that we are fair. In the end, the lecture is about how we can distinguish 'true fairness' from 'strategic fairness.'

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Entrance is free!
Everybody is welcome without prior registration.

Time and venue:
7.30 p.m. till 9.00 p.m.
room 003
Lipsius building (1175)
Cleveringaplaats 1
Leiden



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