

Lecture 16 Reading Questions

“Markets & Moral Desert”

Readings:

Selections from “A Theory of Justice” by John Rawls.

(1) What are the common sense precepts of justice?

(2) “None of these precepts can plausibly be raised to a first principle. ... Adopting one of them as a first principle is sure to lead to the neglect of other things that should be taken into account.” Explain, using examples.

(3) Different economic systems, governed by different principles of justice, would in practice assign different *weights* to each of the common sense precepts of justice. Illustrate, using examples.

(4) Rawls thinks that his principles of justice would give the *right* weight to *each* common sense precept (“to each according to his contribution,” “to each according to his need,” and “to each according to his effort”). Do you agree?

Recall that the difference principle *does* allow giving greater rewards to more talented and hard-working people, but *only* to the extent that this improves the prospects of the least advantaged.

- (i) Why don't people with scarce talents deserve to be rewarded for their *unique contributions* even more generously than the difference principle would allow?
- (ii) Why don't the more talented deserve even greater rewards if they are willing to put in more *effort* than less talented people?

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