

# M1 Leading idea “Distributive justice”

Since the time of Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, distributive justice has been defined as that which regulates the distribution of goods and available resources in a way that is proportional to the production and merits of each and every person, while commutative justice is that which regulates contracts and has a goal of balancing the advantages and disadvantages of the contractors.

In the idea of distributive justice, an equality criterion is implied, but we need to understand to what kind of equality we are referring. Indeed, for instance, in ancient Greece, the idea of equality was different from that which we are (or should be) familiar with today. The ‘equals’, that is, those who could benefit from a just distribution, were, in the Athenian democracy, only the ‘free men’, excluding women and slaves (and children, of course). Consequently, one can see that in ancient times (but are things so different nowadays?), equality in the possession of goods is actually based on an acceptance of a substantial inequality of individuals determined by chance. It is essential to reflect on the issue of distributive justice in a world where 1% of people possess a high proportion of the global wealth and most people live in conditions of moderate to extreme poverty. The conflict, latent or manifest, engendered by the model of a globalized society that is organized according to the dictates of a “wild” and trading system free-from-rules (and often managed by unscrupulous multinationals) appeals to our minds and our consciousness. For this reason, it is important that we have the opportunity to reflect on what is meant by ‘a fair distribution of resources’, and what might be alternative models to existing policies.

This reflection is especially significant nowadays, since many populations are moving from their native countries with the hope of finding better financial and working conditions in the host countries or because they are forced to move because of wars or political persecutions.



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