



THE ETHICS OF REDISTRIBUTION: WILLIAM H. SHAW'S CASE FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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Abstract

This research paper examines William H. Shaw's ethical arguments for economic justice, focusing on his case for redistribution as a means of addressing economic inequality. Through a critical discourse analysis of Shaw's writings, this study explores his ethical principles and values that underpin his advocacy for redistribution. Shaw's ideas on economic justice are situated within the context of capitalist systems, and his critiques of exploitation, alienation, and social injustice are examined. The paper argues that Shaw's ethical framework provides a compelling case for redistribution as a moral imperative, highlighting the need for a more equitable distribution of resources and wealth. Shaw's argument against the utilitarian approach, which prioritizes overall happiness over individual rights and dignity, is also examined. Instead, Shaw advocates for a distributive justice approach that prioritizes the well-being and agency of marginalized communities. By applying Shaw's ethical principles to contemporary economic systems, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on economic justice and the ethics of redistribution. Through the application of philosophical method of critical analysis, Shaw's work within this study demonstrates the relevance and significance of his ideas for addressing economic inequality and promoting social justice.

Keywords: William H. Shaw, Economic Justice, Ethics, Redistribution

Introduction

The United States' taxation system, a cornerstone of its economic framework, has been instrumental in shaping the nation's development. However, as William H. Shaw astutely observes in *Business Ethics*, the distribution of tax burdens and benefits is far from equitable. Shaw argues that the federal government's tax policies disproportionately favor the upper class, comprising affluent entrepreneurs and corporations, while the middle class bears a significant share of the tax burden. As Shaw notes, "The tax system in the United States is designed to benefit the wealthy at the expense of the poor and middle class" (Shaw, 1990, p. 123). This imbalance is particularly striking when comparing the tax obligations of the middle class to those of the wealthy elite. Shaw contends that this skewed distribution undermines the principles of fairness and justice, ultimately hindering the nation's progress as it is the case in the Nigerian context.

Echoing Shaw's concerns, other scholars have also criticized the regressive nature of the US tax system. Going by this background, the outcome trickles down to other nations of the world especially, Nigeria. For instance, economist Joseph Stiglitz argues that "the tax system has become a key instrument for increasing inequality" (Stiglitz, 2012, p. 150). Similarly, philosopher John Rawls emphasizes the need for a fair tax system, stating that "the purpose



of taxation is to redistribute wealth and income to achieve greater equality" (Rawls, 1971, p. 278).

This paper will explore Shaw's vision for a more just and equitable economic system, with a focus on taxation and economic distribution. For a more comprehensive approach through the philosophical hermeneu-analytic method, this paper shall be subdivided into the following subsections, the Concept of Justice in General and Some Basic Principles That Have Been Proposed as Standards of Economic Distribution which dwells on the nature of justice in Its utilitarian Dimension and Mill's theory of justice. It further will delve into the utilitarian approach to justice in general and economic justice in Particular. In the third instance, the paper shall expose the Libertarian approach which includes an exposition on Nozick's theory of justice: markets, free exchange and property rights which places a moral priority on liberty and free exchange. The fourth section accounts for the contractarian and egalitarian theory of John Rawls with three key concepts of - the "Original Position", the "Nature of Choice" and the "Veil of Ignorance". Finally, this work shall critically evaluate the justice and economic distribution with a view of looking at the challenges and strengths of this economic system within the purview of Rawls and Mill. Within this critical framework the benefits and burdens of Justice and the utilitarianism in economic distribution will be visited and a valid conclusion to capture it.

The Concept of Justice in General and Some Basic Principles of Economic Distribution

The concept of justice is complex and multifaceted, and has been debated by philosophers and scholars for centuries. At its core, justice is concerned with fairness, equality, and the well-being of individuals and society as a whole. According to Shaw, "Justice is a matter of giving each person what they deserve, based on their actions and circumstances" (Shaw, 1991, p. 85). This definition highlights the importance of considering individual merit and circumstances when evaluating justice.

In the utilitarian dimension, justice is concerned with maximizing overall happiness or well-being. As philosopher Jeremy Bentham notes, "The greatest happiness of the greatest number is the measure of right and wrong" (Bentham, 1789, p. 113). This means that economic distribution should aim to benefit the majority, rather than just a privileged few. The utilitarian approach prioritizes the overall well-being of society, rather than individual interests or rights.

In this context, Mill's Theory argues that "each person's happiness is a good to that person, and the general happiness is a good to the aggregate of all persons" (Mill, 1861, p. 34). This highlights the need for economic distribution to prioritize individual well-being while also considering the greater good. By understanding the principles of justice and their application to economic distribution, we can better evaluate the fairness and equity of economic systems.

Furthermore, the concept of justice is closely tied to the idea of distributive justice, which concerns the fair distribution of resources and benefits within society. As philosopher John Rawls notes, "Distributive justice is concerned with the distribution of benefits and burdens among individuals" (Rawls, 1971, p. 10). This highlights the importance of considering how economic distribution affects different individuals and groups within society.

The Utilitarian Approach to Justice in General and Economic Justice in Particular



The utilitarian approach to justice, as mentioned earlier, prioritizes the overall well-being of society. In the context of economic justice, this means that economic distribution should aim to maximize overall happiness or well-being. According to Shaw, "The utilitarian approach to economic justice emphasizes the importance of maximizing overall utility or happiness" (Shaw, 1990, p. 90). This approach is often criticized for prioritizing the majority over individual rights and interests. One of the key challenges of the utilitarian approach is determining how to measure overall happiness or well-being.

The Utilitarian Approach

"The utilitarian approach assumes that happiness or pleasure is the only thing that matters, but this is a narrow and misguided view" (Nozick, 1974, p. 45). Nozick argues that individual rights and liberties are essential to a just society, and that the utilitarian approach neglects these important considerations.

Moreover, the utilitarian approach can lead to the tyranny of the majority, where the interests of the majority are prioritized over those of minority groups. This can result in vulnerable populations, such as the poor and marginalized. As philosopher John Rawls notes, "The utilitarian approach can lead to the sacrifice of individual rights and interests for the sake of overall happiness" (Rawls, 1971, p. 25).

In addition, the utilitarian approach assumes that happiness or pleasure is the only thing that matters, but this is a narrow and misguided view. Other values, such as freedom, equality, and justice, are also essential to a just society. As philosopher Amartya Sen notes, "The utilitarian approach neglects the importance of individual freedom and autonomy" (Sen, 1992, p. 12).

Shaw argues that the utilitarian approach to justice is based on the principle of maximizing overall happiness or pleasure. However, Shaw notes that this approach has several limitations. Firstly, it can lead to the tyranny of the majority, where the interests of the majority are prioritized over those of minority groups (Shaw, 1991, p. 89).

Secondly, the utilitarian approach can result in the exploitation of vulnerable populations, such as the poor and marginalized, for the benefit of the majority (Shaw 1991, p. 90).

Thirdly, Shaw argues that the utilitarian approach neglects the importance of individual rights and liberties, and can lead to the sacrifice of individual interests for the sake of overall happiness (Shaw, 1991, p. 91).

In all indications, Shaw suggests that the utilitarian approach to justice is limited in its ability to address issues of economic justice and distributive justice.

On this idea, Nozick and Rawls made inputs to substantiate their claims. The utilitarian approach they opined can lead to the exploitation of minority groups for the benefit of the majority. As Nozick argues, "The utilitarian approach can lead to the use of individuals as means to an end, rather than as ends in themselves" (Nozick, 1974, p. 50). This can result in the violation of individual rights and liberties, and can perpetuate social injustices.

Additionally, the utilitarian approach assumes that happiness or pleasure can be measured and quantified, but this is a problematic assumption. As Rawls notes, "Happiness and pleasure are complex and multifaceted concepts that cannot be reduced to a single metric"



(Rawls, 1971, p. 30). Moreover, the utilitarian approach neglects the importance of distributive justice, which is concerned with the fair distribution of resources and benefits. As Sen argues, "Distributive justice is essential to ensuring that individuals have the capabilities and resources they need to live a fulfilling life" (Sen, 1992, p. 20).

In contrast to the utilitarian approach, alternative approaches to justice, such as the libertarian and Rawlsian approaches, prioritize individual rights and liberties, and emphasize the importance of distributive justice and individual autonomy.

The Libertarian Approach to Economic Justice

The libertarian approach to economic justice emphasizes individual rights and freedoms, particularly in the context of economic activity. According to Nozick, individuals have rights to their lives, liberties, and properties (Nozick, 1974, p. 10). This approach prioritizes individual autonomy and freedom of choice, and argues that economic distribution should be based on individual merit and voluntary exchange. The key principles of libertarianism include individual rights, free market, and limited government interference. Libertarians believe that individuals have inherent rights to their lives, liberties, and properties, and should be free to engage in voluntary exchange and pursue their own self-interest. They advocate for a free market economy with minimal government intervention, allowing individuals to make their own choices.

However, criticisms of libertarianism argue that it neglects issues of social justice, such as inequality and poverty. Critics also argue that libertarianism assumes equal opportunities for all individuals to succeed, but this is not always the case. Furthermore, libertarianism neglects the role of luck and privilege in economic success, according to Rawls (Rawls, 1971, p. 15).

Notable libertarians include Adam Smith, known for his concept of the "invisible hand," which suggests that individual self-interest can lead to socially beneficial outcomes. Robert Nozick argued that individuals have rights to their lives, liberties, and properties, and that economic distribution should be based on individual merit. Ayn Rand advocated for a laissez-faire capitalist system, where individuals are free to pursue their own self-interest without government interference.

The Libertarian Approach: Market and Free Exchange. Libertarians argue that individuals should be free to engage in voluntary exchange and market transactions without government interference. According to Adam Smith, "The market is a more efficient allocator of resources than the government" (Smith, 1776, p. 456). This approach emphasizes the importance of individual freedom and choice in economic matters.

Property Rights and The Role of Property Rights On Economic Growth

Libertarians also emphasize the importance of property rights, arguing that individuals have a right to their property and should be free to use it as they see fit. According to Nozick, "Property rights are essential to individual liberty" (Nozick, 1974, p. 175). This approach prioritizes individual ownership and control over property, and argues that government intervention in property rights is unjustified.

Furthermore, Shaw in his exposition explains that libertarian approach emphasizes the importance of individual freedom and limited government intervention in promoting economic growth. According to Milton Friedman, "Free markets and limited government are



essential for economic growth and prosperity" (Friedman, 1962, p. 20). Libertarians argue that government intervention in the economy can lead to inefficiencies and stifle innovation, while free markets allow for the efficient allocation of resources and promote economic growth (Hayek, 1944, p. 25).

The Role of Property Rights in Economic Growth

Libertarians also emphasize the importance of property rights in promoting economic growth. According to Hernando de Soto, "Clear and secure property rights are essential for economic growth and development" (de Soto, 2000, p. 50). Property rights provide individuals with the incentive to invest and innovate, leading to economic growth and development.

Critique of Libertarian Approach

Critics argue that the libertarian approach neglects issues of inequality and social justice. According to Rawls, "The libertarian approach assumes that individuals are responsible for their own economic circumstances, but this neglects the role of luck and privilege" (Rawls, 1971, p. 15). Critics also argue that the libertarian approach prioritizes individual rights over social welfare, and that this can lead to negative social consequences.

Rival Principles of Distribution.

Shaw posited the rivalry in the distribution chain and tagged it along five basic principles which are essentially akin to a company, government agencies and business practices. They include distributions according to individual needs, to each according to equal share, according to individual efforts, according merit and finally to each according to social responsibility. This is why Shaw opined that "on the idea of distributive justice- that is, the proper distribution of social benefits and burdens (in particular, of economic benefits and burdens)-five principles might be used as a basis for distribution"(Shaw, 1991, p.86). He elucidated these principles of distributive justice in the following perspectives; distribution according to individual needs which prioritizes the allocation of resources based on individual requirements, ensuring that everyone's basic needs are met (1991). For instance, in a healthcare system, resources would be distributed based on medical need, rather than ability to pay. For the second principle which is distribution according to equal share, he holds that the principle advocates for an equal distribution of resources among individuals, regardless of their contributions or needs (1991). For example, a cooperative business might distribute profits equally among members. In this third principle, Shaw sees distribution according to individual efforts which links resource allocation to individual hard work and productivity (1991). In a capitalist system, individuals are rewarded based on their labor and innovation. In the fourth principle, distribution according to merit allocates resources based on individual talent, skill, and achievement (1991). For instance, academic scholarships might be awarded based on academic merit. Finally, in the distribution according to social responsibility Shaw maintains that this principle prioritizes resource allocation based on social welfare and the greater good (1991). For example, taxes might be distributed to fund public goods and services.

Shaw in his Business Ethics summarizes Nozick's arguments against redistributive policies, including his claims that they involve coercion, violate property rights, paternalistic, and undermine self-reliance (Shaw, 1991 p.89).



Shaw's discussion of Nozick's ideas highlights the tension between economic justice and individual rights, with Nozick prioritizing the latter. Shaw's presentation of Nozick's arguments provides a clear overview of the libertarian approach to justice and its implications for business ethics. To this effect he says "A belief in these rights shapes Nozick's specific theory of economic justice, which he calls the "entitlement theory". Essentially, Nozick believes that we are entitled to our holdings (that is, goods, money and property) as long as we have acquired them fairly. Stated another way, if you have acquired your possessions without violating anyone's Lockean rights, then you are entitled to them and may dispose of them however you like"(Shaw, 1991, p.93).

Further on his rejection of redistributive policies, Nozick argues that redistributive policies, such as welfare programs, violate individual rights and freedoms in several ways such as;

-Coercion: Nozick argues that redistributive policies involve coercion, as they force individuals to give up their property (in the form of taxes) without their consent (Nozick, 1974, p. 55).

-Violation of Property Rights: Nozick argues that redistributive policies violate individual property rights, as they take from some individuals and give to others (Nozick, 1974, p. 60).

- Paternalism: Nozick argues that redistributive policies are paternalistic, as they assume that the government knows better how to spend individuals' money than they do themselves (Nozick, 1974, p. 65).

-Undermining of Self-Reliance: Nozick argues that redistributive policies undermine self-reliance and individual responsibility, as they create a culture of dependency on government support (Nozick, 1974, p. 70).

Nozick advocates for a minimalist state that protects individual rights and freedoms, rather than a welfare state that redistributes wealth. He argues that individuals should be free to choose how to spend their own money, rather than being forced to support others through taxation (Nozick, 1974, p. 75). Shaw's book summarizes Nozick's arguments against redistributive policies, including his claims that they involve coercion, violate property rights, are paternalistic, and undermine self-reliance (Shaw, 2010, pp. 88-91).

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The Contractarian and Egalitarian Theory of John Rawls

John Rawls Contractarian and Egalitarian Theory examines three key concepts of original position, the nature of choice and the veil of ignorance we shall briefly consider these three key concepts briefly.

Original Position: Rawls' original according to Shaw's analysis is a thought experiment where individuals come together to form a social contract, behind a "veil of ignorance" (Shaw, 1991, p. 92). As Rawls himself explains in Shaw, "The original position is a device of representation that enables us to extract the appropriate principles of justice" (1991). Similarly, philosopher Will Kymlicka notes, "The original position is a hypothetical situation



in which rational individuals choose principles of justice from behind a veil of ignorance" (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 57).

It is worthwhile to note that from Shaws analysis of the original position, once an individual is out of his or her original position, he becomes aware of his or her personal choices and interest. They may now become better placed to take the right steps towards achieving their goals and ultimate good in life. Thus he states "of course, once people are outside of the veil of ignorance, they will have more specific ideas about what is good for them- they may choose a life built around religion, one spent on commerce and industry, or one devoted to academic study"(Shaw, 1991, p.103).

-Nature of Choice: In Rawls' original position, individuals make choices based on rational self-interest, but with a twist. Since they are behind the veil of ignorance, they don't know their personal characteristics or position in society. As Rawls argues, "The parties in the original position are rational individuals who are concerned to maximize their own interests" (Rawls, 1971, p. 143). Kymlicka adds, "The choice in the original position is a rational choice, but it is not a self-interested choice in the ordinary sense" (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 60).

Veil of Ignorance: The veil of ignorance is a key component of Rawls' original position. It ensures that individuals make choices without knowing their personal characteristics or position in society. Rawls explains, "The veil of ignorance prevents the parties from knowing their own abilities, strengths, and weaknesses" (Rawls, 1971, p. 19). Kymlicka notes, "The veil of ignorance is meant to ensure that the principles of justice are chosen impartially, without bias towards one's own interests" (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 58).

Furthermore, Shaw explains more that the veil of ignorance is a thought experiment device that ensures individuals in the original position make choices without knowing their: Personal characteristics (e.g., intelligence, talent, or abilities), social status or position in society, individual interests or biases. This veil ensures that choices are made impartially, without favoring one's own interests. Rawls argues that the veil of ignorance allows individuals to choose principles of justice that are fair and universal (Shaw, 1991, p.93). Kymlicka adds that the veil of ignorance "prevents the parties from knowing their own place in society, their own abilities, or their own conception of the good" (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 58). To substantiate this further, Shaw opines that " Behind what Rawls calls "though ignorance" people in the original position know nothing themselves personally or about what their individual situation will be once the rules are chosen and the veil is lifted. They do, however have a general knowledge of history, sociology and psychology- although no specific information about the society they will be in once the veil is lifted" (Shaw, 1991, p.102).

By combining the original position, nature of choice, and veil of ignorance, Rawls' theory provides a framework for determining principles of justice that prioritize fairness, equality, and individual rights.

Rawls Two Principles

To drive home his three concepts of original position, nature of choice and the veil of ignorance, Rawls discusses two principles guiding the economic and social structures of society. Where the first emphasizes is on equality of rights to the exclusive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all. And the second, that social and economic inequalities are to meet two conditions: a- to the greatest expected



benefits of the least advantaged and b- attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair opportunity.

First Principle: Shaw echoing Rawls position posits that the first principle is that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others" (Shaw, 1991, p.103). This principle emphasizes the importance of equal basic liberties, such as freedom of speech, religion, and association. Rawls argues that these liberties are essential for individuals to develop and pursue their own conception of the good life.

Second Principle: The second principle is that social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: to the greatest expected benefit of the least advantaged and attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity" (Rawls, 1971, p. 83). Shaw notes that this approach is applied to the differences in economic reward to workers like salaries, honors, rewards, privileges, honorarium etc. Shaw contends that according to this perspective, "Rawls's second principle states insofar as inequalities are permitted-that is, insofar as it is compatible with justice for some jobs or positions to bring greater rewards than others-these positions must be open to all. In other words, there must be meaningful equality of opportunities in the competition of individuals..."(Shaw, 1991, p.105).

This principle addresses economic and social inequalities, ensuring that they- benefit the least advantaged members of society (the "difference principle"), and secondly, they are tied to positions and offices that are accessible to all, under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

Rawls' two principles work together to create a just society, where basic liberties are protected and economic inequalities are addressed in a way that benefits the most vulnerable members. Kymlicka summarizes Rawls' principles as follows: "The two principles of justice require that basic liberties be equally protected, and that social and economic inequalities be arranged to benefit the least advantaged" (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 63).

He examined these principles with incomes of different classes, especially the first of the second principle using the analogy of two circular diagrams like a pie-chart with the first one representing the first principle where the chart had equal eight angles inside and the second representing the second principle where some triangles were bigger than the others in page 105.

The diagram described in Shaws analysis, with two circular charts resembling a pie chart, is a visual representation of how Rawls' principles would allocate resources and benefits to different classes or groups. The first diagram, with equal eight angles, represents the first principle, which emphasizes equal basic liberties for all. Each angle or slice of the pie represents an equal share of liberties, symbolizing the equal protection of basic rights and freedoms.

The second diagram, with varying-sized triangles, represents the second principle, which addresses economic and social inequalities. The different-sized triangles may represent different classes or groups, with the larger triangles symbolizing those who have more resources, benefits, or advantages. The diagram illustrates how the second principle aims to reduce inequalities, ensuring that the benefits and resources are distributed in a way that-benefits the least advantaged (the smallest triangles) and as it is tied to positions and offices open to all under fair equality of opportunity. By using this diagram, Rawls illustrates how



his principles would work together to create a more just and equitable society, where basic liberties are protected, and economic inequalities are addressed in a way that benefits the most vulnerable members.

To substantiate the analogy of the diagram, it is pertinent to take a close look into Rawls consideration of the diagram as presented by Shaw. Rawls uses two circular diagrams to illustrate his principles of justice (Shaw, 1991, p. 105). According to Kymlicka, the first diagram represents the first principle, where eight equal angles symbolize equal basic liberties for all. Each angle represents an equal share of liberties, emphasizing the equal protection of basic rights and freedoms (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 63).

The second diagram represents the second principle, addressing economic and social inequalities. Varying-sized triangles symbolize different classes or groups, with larger triangles representing those with more resources and benefits (Shaw 1991, p.105). This diagram illustrates how the second principle aims to reduce inequalities, ensuring benefits and resources are distributed to benefit the least advantaged (Rawls, 1971, p. 83). By using these diagrams, Rawls visualizes how his principles work together to create a just and equitable society, protecting basic liberties and addressing economic inequalities (Shaw, 1991, p. 106).

Theory of Justice: A critique of Utilitarianism

Within this ideology expounded by Rawls as a follow up on his two principles, Shaw makes us to understand that this approach is postulated as to serve as an alternative to utilitarianism which Rawls reject on grounds the greatest happiness which utilitarianism conceive as the highest good if it has to do with the greatest number of people interchanges the good and pain of a few that is neglected in the whole. This reanalyses to the unfair and unequal distribution of burdens and benefits.

According to Shaw, "Rawls intends his theory for a fundamental alternative to Utilitarianism, which he rejects on the grounds that maximizing the total well-being of society could permit an unfair and unequal distribution of burdens and benefits. Utilitarian in Rawls view treats people's pleasure and pains as completely interchangeable" (Shaw, 1991, p.106).

Rawls' Theory of Justice: A Critique of Utilitarianism

Rawls presents his theory as an alternative to Utilitarianism, which he rejects for allowing unfair and unequal distributions of burdens and benefits (1991). Rawls argues that Utilitarianism:

- Maximizes total well-being, regardless of individual distribution
- Treats people's pleasures and pains as interchangeable, disregarding individual rights and dignity

Rawls contends that Utilitarianism fails to consider the fairness of distribution, allowing for exploitation and inequality (Rawls, 1971, p. 27). In contrast, Rawls' theory prioritizes fairness and justice, ensuring that the basic structure of society is designed to benefit the least advantaged (1991).

Basic Structure: The Subject of Justice



Rawls focuses on the basic structure of society as the primary subject of justice (Shaw 1991, p.107). The basic structure includes:

- Social and political institutions
- Economic systems
- Distribution of resources and benefits

Rawls argues that the basic structure should be designed to ensure fairness, equality, and justice, rather than solely maximizing overall well-being (1991). Rawls passages as reflected in Shaw's work simply. Shaw explains that the passages he quoted from Rawls work central are inevitable because they emphasize on the natural differences between human beings as it has to do with their physique, intellect, skill and many other natural endowments. In his understanding, there is practically nothing attached by society to such difference. So "for Rawls, a desirable feature of any account of justice is that it strives to minimise the social consequences of purely arbitrary, natural differences"(Shaw, 1991, p.108).

Rawls' emphasis on benefits and burdens is a crucial aspect of his theory of justice. He argues that a just basic structure should distribute benefits and burdens fairly among members of society. This means that the advantages and disadvantages of social cooperation should be shared equitably.

Benefits, in this context, refer to the advantages that individuals gain from living in a society, such as: Wealth and income, Power and influence, - Opportunities for education and personal development and - Access to healthcare and other social services

Rawls contends that these benefits should be shared fairly, meaning that everyone should have equal access to them, regardless of their background or circumstances.

On the other hand, burdens refer to the disadvantages or costs that individuals bear as a result of social cooperation, such as: Taxes and other financial contributions, Responsibilities and obligations to others, Hardships and sacrifices made for the greater good

Rawls argues that these burdens should also be distributed fairly, meaning that everyone should contribute their fair share, and those who bear a greater burden should be compensated accordingly. Rawls' focus on benefits and burdens highlights the importance of reciprocity and mutual advantage in social cooperation. He argues that individuals have a duty to contribute to the system that benefits them, and that those who benefit more should contribute more. This ensures that everyone benefits fairly and that the system is stable and just.

In addition, Rawls' emphasis on benefits and burdens emphasizes the importance of protecting individual rights and interests. He argues that individuals have a right to a fair share of benefits and should not be forced to bear an unfair burden. This protects individuals from exploitation and ensures that their interests are taken into account.

Viewed wholistically, Rawls' discussion of benefits and burdens provides a nuanced understanding of how a just basic structure should distribute advantages and disadvantages. It highlights the importance of fairness, reciprocity, and individual rights in ensuring that everyone benefits from social cooperation.



Critical Evaluation and Conclusion

William H. Shaw's application of Rawls' theory of justice to economic systems presents a compelling case for economic justice through redistribution. Shaw's argument that economic inequalities should be arranged to benefit the least advantaged members of society is a powerful critique of unchecked capitalism. However, critics may argue that Shaw's approach oversimplifies the complexities of economic systems and neglects the potential unintended consequences of redistribution.

Moreover, Shaw's reliance on Rawls' idealized theory of justice may be seen as detached from the practical realities of economic policy-making. Some may argue that Shaw's emphasis on economic justice neglects other important ethical considerations, such as individual freedom and responsibility.

In conclusion, it is noteworthy to say that Shaw's case for economic justice through redistribution presents a thought-provoking ethical framework for addressing economic inequalities. By applying Rawls' principles of justice to economic systems, Shaw challenges us to reconsider the moral implications of economic policies and practices. While critics may raise important objections, Shaw's work remains a significant contribution to ongoing debates about economic justice and the ethics of redistribution.

Ultimately, Shaw's argument underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of economic justice, one that balances individual rights and freedoms with the need for greater economic equality and fairness. As we continue to grapple with the complexities of economic systems and their impact on society, Shaw's work serves as a valuable reminder of the importance of ethical consideration in economic policy-making.

Recommendations

After a careful study and evaluation of Shaw's work on Rawls theory of economic justice, it is worthwhile to make the following inputs consequent to the subject matter of the topic "The Ethics of Redistribution: A Case For Economic Justice".

Integrating Care Ethics: We could explore how care ethics, which prioritizes empathy, care, and compassion, could complement Rawls' justice-based approach to redistribution. This might provide a more holistic understanding of economic justice.

Contextualizing Redistribution: We could examine how different cultural, historical, or social contexts influence the ethics of redistribution. This might help identify more effective and culturally sensitive approaches to economic justice.

Redistribution beyond Economics: We could investigate how redistribution applies to non-economic spheres, such as education, healthcare, or environmental resources. This might broaden the scope of economic justice and highlight new areas for ethical consideration.

Empirical Analysis: We could conduct empirical research to assess the impact of redistribution policies on economic justice and social outcomes. This might provide valuable evidence to inform ethical decision-making.



Philosophical Critique: We could critically evaluate the underlying philosophical assumptions of Rawls' theory and Shaw's application, exploring potential biases or limitations. This might lead to a more nuanced understanding of the ethics of redistribution.

These contributions would build upon the foundation established by Rawls and Shaw, offering new perspectives and insights to advance the discussion on the ethics of redistribution.

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