

Rescuing Justice and Equality

By G. A. Cohen

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In this stimulating work of political philosophy, acclaimed philosopher G. A. Cohen sets out to rescue the egalitarian thesis that in a society in which distributive justice prevails, people's material prospects are roughly equal. Arguing against the Rawlsian version of a just society, Cohen demonstrates that distributive justice does not tolerate deep inequality.

In the course of providing a deep and sophisticated critique of Rawls's theory of justice, Cohen demonstrates that questions of distributive justice arise not only for the state but also for people in their daily lives. The right rules for the macro scale of public institutions and policies also apply, with suitable adjustments, to the micro level of individual decision-making.

Cohen also charges Rawls's constructivism with systematically conflating the concept of justice with other concepts. Within the Rawlsian architectonic, justice is not distinguished either from other values or from optimal rules of social regulation. The elimination of those conflations brings justice closer to equality.

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Editorial Review

Review
With his characteristic brilliance and philosophical depth, G.A. Cohen aims to defend a more pure equality and justice by retrieving them from Rawlsian liberalism. The result is a bracing challenge to contemporary complacency about inequality. (Joshua Cohen, Stanford University)

This book is easily the deepest and most sophisticated critical work on Rawls's theory of justice. It brings together several distinct lines of argument that Cohen has been developing over the past two decades. In so doing, it manages to provide both a detailed and intricate critique of Rawls's approach to economic distribution and, at the same time, to articulate and defend a different way of thinking about the fundamental questions of economic distribution. (Arthur Ripstein, University of Toronto)

Many liberals favor a relatively permissive attitude to economic inequality, and do so partly because they assume the egalitarian values governing our political decisions are inapplicable to our more everyday decisions. Focusing on the work of John Rawls, *Rescuing Justice and Equality* subjects such liberal convictions to a critique of unrivaled depth and brilliance, which will enhance our understanding of one the greatest political philosophers, and stimulate debate for years to come. (Andrew Williams, University of Warwick)

This masterful work is written with a remarkable combination of passion, verve, and analytical rigor. It presents a formidable challenge to Rawlsian liberalism and is a major contribution to the development of egalitarian political thought. (Samuel Scheffler, New York University)

Rescuing Justice and Equality is an exceptionally rich and challenging work. Cohen develops his ideas with a remarkable degree of ingenuity, subtlety, and textual attentiveness. Furthermore, they are presented with extraordinary clarity...[An] impressive book. (Michael Rosen *Times Literary Supplement* 2009-08-21)

About the Author
G. A. Cohen was Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory and Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford University.

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