

Study of Political Philosophy on Global Resource Dividend

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1. Background and Objectives

The main theme of Global Justice in Political Philosophy is justice beyond borders, which applies to issues such as poverty in developing countries and climate change. Thomas Pogge asserts that people living in affluent societies participate in and profit from the coercive and unjust imposition of severe poverty, and thus proposed Global Resource Dividend (henceforth “GRD”) in order to redress the imposition. Although the proposal has been reviewed and criticized by not a few researchers, there are few researches regarding what kind of normative theory is appropriate when the distribution is conducted. Therefore, the aims of this study are 1) applying luck egalitarianism and sufficientarianism, both of which are influential theories in distributive justice, respectively, to GRD in order to examine the validity and 2) suggesting another types of GRD based on Sufficiencyarianism.

2. Summary of Global Resource Dividend

GRD aims to restrict the unconditional property rights for natural resources to which each nation is entitled, tax the affluent who enjoy significant advantages in the use of natural resources, and distribute the proceeds to the poor who are largely and without compensation excluded from the use of the resources. The tax levied on the extraction of natural resources would be passed on to the end-users, and thus most of the burden will be on the citizens of the affluent nations who use much of the resources. The proceeds collected by each government will be given to the poor nations such that they use it for poverty eradication. The subject would be the resource consumption of which the restraint of is desirable in terms of environmental protection such that the system can achieve both poverty eradication and resource conservation.

3. Examination of Luck Egalitarianism and Sufficiencyarianism

Luck egalitarianism, which stands in an important position in distributive justice, claims that inequalities are acceptable if it derives from choices that people have voluntarily made, but that inequalities deriving from uncontrollable features of people’s circumstances are unjust. Chapter 4 will examine whether the theory is valid or not by adopting it to the distribution theory of GRD, and point out how luck egalitarianism may not be applicable since its theory itself contains flaws. There is the harshness objection claiming that people in extreme poverty will be excluded from the compensation if the poverty derives from their choice, as well as the difficulty in distinguishing choice from circumstance, stemming from the inability to deny determinism which claims that all phenomena including choices are under the law of causation. To avoid the difficulties that luck egalitarianism faces, sufficientarianism is focused on in Chapter 5. Sufficiencyarianism claims that, in distributive justice, it is morally significant to grant lexical priority to benefit individuals up to a certain threshold, but redistribution will not be conducted to those above the threshold. The validity of the theory will be proved by examining the consequence which results from applying it to the distributive theory for GRD.

4. Conclusion

It was proved that luck egalitarianism as a distributive theory is not applicable to the distributive theory of GRD since its theory itself contains flaws, such as the harshness objection and the difficulty in distinguishing between choices and circumstances. Sufficiencyarianism can be validly applied to GRD since it can avoid the problems that luck egalitarianism faced. Thus, another type of GRD based on sufficientarianism, whilst comparing it with Pogge’s proposal, has been suggested.