

Section 10

Symposium on Intergenerational Justice

Organizer: Anca Gheaus (UPF)

Participants: Paul Bou-Habib (Essex), Tim Fowler (Bristol), Serena Olsaretti (UPF)

Abstract:

We shall discuss the following questions: How should we share the costs of rearing children? Olsaretti argues for a pro-socialised view, in the context of discussing how children create both positive and negative externalities. Given population aging, what is a fair way of distributing the costs of supporting citizens who cease being productive members of society? Bou-Habib argues we should design a special form of progressive tax. Should we worry that childrearing in the family prevents the full implementation of fair equality of opportunities? Fowler argues we should, in order to protecting autonomy. Gheaus argues that in unjust circumstances the disruption of FEO is not a major concern of justice.

Titles and Abstracts of the talks

1.

Paul Bou-Habib: Longevity and Intergenerational Justice

The ratio of elderly persons to working-age persons is increasing in all developed states. As this ratio increases, intergenerational transfer programmes become unsustainable. This paper defends and develops one adjustment to intergenerational transfer programmes. Other things equal, persons who face higher life expectancy than others should contribute more towards the sustainability of intergenerational transfer programmes. Given the clear correlation between between income and life expectancy, policy makers should consider linking the progressivity of income tax to increasing life expectancy.

2.

Tim Fowler: Accidents of Birth and Agency: The control argument for FEO

Recently, the ideal of equality of opportunity has come under sustained attack both in the philosophical literature and in political practice. I argue that these critics have missed an important value realised by equalising opportunities: the value of control, which requires a close connection between a person's choices and her outcomes. This value is lost if too much of a person's circumstances are the result of chance. The control argument can meet two challenges that have been levelled at the Rawlsian ideal of fair equality of opportunity: the distinctiveness objection and the levelling down objection.

3.

Anca Gheaus: Parental partiality in unjust circumstances

Parents who live in unjust circumstances of a kind I specify are permitted, and sometimes are under a duty, to bestow on their children more wealth than they would be if they lived in a just society. Appeal to some version of the principle of equality of opportunity can block neither the duty nor the permission. This claim is likely to be contrary to some egalitarians' beliefs. Several principles of justice may put limits on parental partiality in unjust circumstances; (fair) equality of opportunity is not one of them.

4.

Serena Olsaretti: Children as public goods and overpopulation

In discussions about who should pay for the costs of children, scholars often invoke the public goods argument (Folbre 2001). This argument holds that the costs of children should be socialised because parents provide benefits for everyone and it would be unfair for others to reap those benefits without sharing the costs. Yet the argument seems vulnerable to the objection that added children contribute to global population pressure – or, in other words, that children are “local goods but public bads” (Casal 1999). This paper assesses whether the objection forces us to abandon the argument.