

The Place of Bentham's Concept of Justice in the Western Tradition of Economic Justice

Daisuké Arié

This paper will examine Bentham's concept of justice in the Western tradition of economic justice from Aristotle.

First, the idea of economic justice can retroact to Aristotle's theory of particular justice in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Then, retributive and corrective justice in its Book V were defined in the context of commodity transaction as the combination of two criterion of equal exchange and social value of economic agents. On the other hand, distributive justice was defined as unequal distribution of common goods to members in proportion to how much they were worth to society.

Second, Aristotle's clarification was integrated by St Thomas Aquinas into commutative justice and distributive justice. The former justice, equal exchange, had been succeeded to the enlightenment thinkers such as Grotius, Pufendorf, and Smith as negative justice that was thought to sustain fundamental structure of society. This justice was defined not by positive moral judgement but by calculated values of commodities in economic transaction in general.

Third, this paper will examine Bentham's fundamental concept of justice by reading some texts such as *IPML*, *Defence of Usury*, civil law writings, and poor law writings. And it will claim that Bentham is still in the tradition of negative justice by showing the implication of his eventual definition of justice as expediency/utility, although he expresses it in various ways with some possibilities of entering into moral judgement.

Lastly, this paper will also refer Bentham's relationship with Jevons and current neo-classical economics.