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Research Article

Back to the Theory: Re-Considering Social Policies as Egalitarian Pre-Conditions of the Liberal Meritocracy[1]

M. Onur ARUN[2]
ORCID: 0000-0002-5402-2120

DOI: 10.54752/ct.1097161

Abstract: Looking at the given literature of social policy, it is clearly seen that both definition and objectives of social policies are either explicitly or implicitly associated with the aim of building up just society. However, most of contemporary scholarly works does neither clearly express what type of social justice is aimed by these policies nor explain how and why socio-economic structure of stratified societies morally necessitates social policies. Such ambiguities appear primarily due to insufficient engagement of contemporary social policy literature with broad literature of social justice developed by political philosophy and advanced by sociological conception of inequalities. Thus, an implication of such ambiguities is that the moral justification behind social policies either remains unclear or is covertly built upon a philanthropic and/or altruistic reasoning. Departing from these ambiguities and their implications, this work firstly focuses on the desert and merit-centred value distribution through which the liberal school of social justice in the political philosophy justifies inequalities in outcome. Following this, it discusses on morally flawed nature of the meritocratic distributional model and its associated policies, such as equality of

[1] I would like to dedicate this work to Mesut Gülmez whose works and ideas have always played an enlightening role for me and other young scholars in a way that demonstrated both instrumental and intrinsic value of the field of social policy. I should also acknowledge time and energy that Engin Yıldırım, Nadir Suğur, and Aziz Çelik have kindly allocated for me during the process of refining arguments in this work. Lastly, I am grateful to Ahmet Makal whose kind suggestions paved the way prior to the publication.

[2] Dr. Öğretim Üyesi, Anadolu Üniversitesi, Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi, Sosyal Hizmet Bölümü-onurarun@gmail.com

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opportunity, by drawing on sociological conception of inequalities. Lastly, underlining the role of individual's social class in formation of merits and referring to recent conceptual developments in the broad literature of social justice, it justifies social policy as inevitable egalitarian pre-condition, rather than philanthropic and/or altruistic initiatives, for the liberal meritocratic value distribution.
Keywords: Social Policy, Liberalism, Meritocracy, Inequality, Social Class

Kurama Dönüş: Sosyal Politikaları Liberal Liyakatçiliğin Eşitlikçi Önkoşulu Olarak Yeniden Düşünmek

Öz: Halihazırdaki sosyal politika literatürü hem sosyal politikanın tanımını hem de hedeflerini, kimi zaman açıkça kimi zaman üstü örtük olarak, adil toplumu tesis etme amacıyla ilişkilendirmektedir. Fakat, ilgili alandaki birçok çağdaş akademik çalışma ne sosyal politikalarla hangi tür bir sosyal adaletin amaçlandığını açıkça ifade etmekte ne de tabakalaşmış toplumların sosyo-ekonomik yapısının sosyal politikaları nasıl ve neden ahlaki olarak gerektirdiğini açıklamaktadır. Söz konusu bu muğlaklık çağdaş sosyal politika literatürünün siyaset felsefesince geliştirilen ve eşitsizliğe dönük sosyolojik bakış açısıyla derinleştirilen sosyal adalet literatürüyle yeterli ilişkiselliği kurmamasından kaynaklanmakta ve bunun sonucunda da sosyal politikaların arkasında yatan ahlaki gerekçelendirme ya belirsiz kalmakta ya da üstü kapalı olarak hayırseverci ve özgecil nedensellikler üzerine inşa edilmektedir. Söz konusu bu noktadan hareketle, bu çalışma ilk olarak sonuç eşitsizliklerini hak ve liyakat merkezli değer dağıtımı aracılığıyla olumlayan liberal sosyal adalet ekolüne siyaset felsefesi alanı üzerinden odaklanmaktadır. Akabinde, eşitsizliklere dönük sosyolojik bakış açısından yararlanarak liyakatçi dağıtım modeli ve fırsat eşitsizliği gibi ilişkili politikaların ahlaki olarak kusurlu doğasını tartışmaktadır. Son olarak bu çalışma, liyakatın ortaya çıkışında bireyin sosyal sınıfının rolünün altını çizerek ve sosyal adalet literatüründeki yeni kavramsal gelişmelere referans vererek, sosyal politikaları hayırseverci ve özgeci girişimler olarak değil, liberal liyakatçi değer dağıtım modeli için zorunlu bir eşitlikçi önkoşul olarak gerekçelendirmektedir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Politika, Liberalizm, Liyakat, Eşitsizlik, Sosyal Sınıf

Introduction

The scholarly literature of social justice, or just society, is primarily made up of conflicting and competing normative perspectives each of which claims to be the

most adequate approach in responding questions of "who should get what" and "why". Even though these normative perspectives conflict with each other through quite persuasive counter-arguments in a way that illustrates a philosophical battlefield, they share a distinguishing common feature that they are essentially concerned with identification of just inequalities. This is to say that theories of just society are not built upon claims seeking for conditions to establish absolute equality between individuals; but they are argumentative philosophical perspectives that are primarily concerned with identifications of conditions under which inequalities are deemed to be just. This is mostly because some inequalities can explicitly be fair and ethically deserved whilst some others cannot so. Therefore, the literature of just society is not essentially composed of scholarly discussions on how to ensure absolute equality in a hypothetical society, but inherently built upon ideas aiming to clarify what sort of inequalities are (un)just, in other words (un)deserved, in that kind of society. Related to this, social policies that are underpinned by ethical, and sometimes political, justifications mostly generated by normative theories of just society are corrective measures aiming to rectify, not all inequalities, but the ones that illustrate a characteristic of undeserved outcomes within the given model of value distribution.

On the other hand, a particular shortcoming in the existing contemporary literature of social policy is that various scholars in this field tend to address all inequalities as essentially unjust, which is a common misconception emerging primarily due to insufficient engagement of the contemporary literature of social policy with the broad literature of social justice developed by political philosophy and advanced by sociological perspectives of (in)equality. To illustrate such insufficient engagement, it is a common tendency to underline role(s) of social justice in defining both social policy as well as its scope, but most of these definitions does not explicitly tell us what type of social justice (e.g. egalitarian justice, liberal justice, utilitarian justice, Rawlsian justice, and so forth) is aimed by such policies. In addition to this, it is also quite common tendency to address that social policies have initially emerged as a response to social issues appearing due to the *laissez faire et laissez passer* doctrine of the liberal distributional model. However, explanations concerning how the political decisions of governing authorities to apply this doctrine as the ruling principle of value distribution in social and economic life of society leads to social issues are given an insufficient place in the existing literature of social policy. This is to say that given literature of social policy needs to be further developed by scholarly works that aim to shed light on what types of operational mechanisms (e.g. formal/legal policies, institutional arrangements and regulations) embedded even in the hypothetically perfect liberal distributional model inevitably lead to social issues (involving unjust inequalities as well as their undeserved outcomes) and how this brings forth social policies as a moral necessity as well as source of legitimacy.

In this regard, drawing on the literature of social justice developed by political philosophy and advanced by sociological perspectives of (in)equality, this work aims to address the moral necessity of social policies within the liberal model of value distribution. To achieve this aim, it first of all discusses how the liberal value distribution justifies inequalities in outcome with reference to the concepts of desert and merit both of which occupy central place in the liberal political philosophy. Following this, it focuses on the policy of equality of opportunity as one of the foundational institutional arrangements that advocates distribution of rewards and power of positions in line with normative perspective of meritocratic liberal distribution of value and explains how this institutional arrangement leads to unjust inequalities by drawing on sociological perspective of inequality. Based on such sociological perspective that undermines moral justification behind the merit-centred liberal distribution of value, this work addresses inevitable moral necessity behind social policies by underlining their empowering characteristic within stratified industrial societies. Building upon such a stream of thought and reasoning, this work concludes with an argument that signifies social policies as egalitarian moral pre-conditions of liberal meritocratic distribution of value and thus highlights these policies as an exclusive source of legitimacy for the liberal tradition of social justice.

Liberal Justification of Inequalities in Outcome: Individual's Desert and Merit

The liberal stream of thought *inter alia* is the dominant school of thought in responding the questions of "who gets what" and "why". Rooted in works of classical liberals who, crudely speaking, advocated freedom of the self, personhood and one's right to possess fruits of her/his own labour under the broad umbrella of the natural law, liberal tradition proposes that value should be distributed according to what a person deserves as a result of her/his merits, regardless of her/his socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, or nobility such as being an offspring of an upper-class ancestor. Sociologically speaking, it asserts that distribution of wealth and power should be governed by norms of achieved statuses referring to "positions acquired through personal effort", rather than by a social and institutional structure arranged in accordance with norms of ascribed status referring to "positions involuntarily acquired through birth" (Stolley, 2005: 44; see also Flodare, 1969: 53). This is to say that status achieved through individuals' performance plays a determinate role on what s/he gets in liberal tradition, rather than the status ascribed to person at birth based on her/his family-origin, gender, ethnicity, and so forth. In line with this, two concepts identifying

primary characteristic of liberal value distribution come forward as "desert" and "merit"[3].

Desert-Centred Value Distribution and Individual's Responsibility

Different from the utility, rights or needs-centred views of value distribution, desert-centred perspective identifies positive correlation between desert and just distribution by simply claiming that "each party gets what he or she deserves" (Miller, 1999: 132). Obviously, one's desert can take a form of reward illustrating a desirable outcome of individual's actions or choices. However, it can also take a form of punishment illustrating an undesirable outcome of individual's actions or choices. In this regard, it is an approach advocating distribution of both "goods" and "evils" (Feldman and Skow, 2020) based on a particular space of evaluation[4], *viz.* desert. Thus, a person who deserves an outcome of her/his choice or action is addressed as deserver of either an advantaged position (e.g. positions involving welfare or various types of benefit) or a disadvantaged one (e.g. positions involving poverty or various types of burdens) (ibid.). The ruling dictum here is that "S deserves X in virtue of F, where S is a person, X is a mode of treatment, and F is some fact about S" (Feinberg, 1970: 61). To illustrate, a poor deserves to be deprived/needy in virtue of being, say, lazy; or, a dedicated and ambitious student deserves to be graded with better grades in virtue of being a hard-working person. Accordingly, the desert-centred approach to distributional arrangement comes forward as a perspective that underlines significance of individual's responsibility in deserving something (un)desirable.

Conceptualisation of poverty in a way compatible with the desert-centred view puts forth such emphasis quite well. Such conceptualisation was in fact effectively brought to the political agenda with the neo-liberal political turn at the end of 1970s in a way dismantling welfare provisions of the state. However, it has started to be re-emphasized especially after 2010s around austerity policies in developed welfare regimes (see Mackenzie and Louth, 2020: 20-24) through the "resilience discourse" that emphasizes individual's "agency", in other words responsibility, in dealing with socio-material insecurity whilst underlining reduction of liabilities of public institutions in overcoming welfare issues citizens experience

[3] Referring to Lucas (1995), Roemer (1998: 16) provides an explanatory account of distinction between "desert" and "merit" by noting that "one merits something (say, a position on a baseball team) because of attributes one has, but one deserves a reward (say, for rescuing a drowning person) because of what one has done".

[4] Note that in the literature of social justice, there are quite a number of different spaces of evaluation proposed as a framework based on which justness of a distributional arrangement should assessed, such as satisfaction of individual's primary/basic needs, protection of rights/entitlements, augmentation of utility (or sometimes public utility), happiness of majority, individuals' equality, and so forth.

(Donoghue and Edmiston, 2020: 8; see also Joseph, 2013: 47-51). In this conceptualisation, poor are defined in a binary way as either deserving or undeserving poor. Deserving poor are identified as those who cannot be blamed for their poverty and whose impoverishment is not because of any flaw in their characteristics (Bridges, 2017: 1052). So, those who, for example, were born disabled and have become too old to work (ibid.:1076) are considered as deserving poor since conditions that can easily lead them to fall in deprivation are not under their own control, and thus they are referred as individuals who deserve to benefit from social reliefs supported from public budget. Such conceptualisation that straightforwardly entitles disables as well as elderly to the public assistance schemes seems at first sight quite benevolent approach. Yet, the flip side of the coin is that it dialectically brings forth the question of who then the undeserving ones are. This question eventually allows policy makers to identify a large group of people who do not deserve to be supported by public assistance schemes even though they are in deprivation. In this regard, undeserving poor, contrary to the definition of deserving poor, appear as those who are poor due to flawing individual characteristics or moral deficiencies in their personalities (ibid.: 1078), such as being lazy, idle, or criminal. Based on these conceptualisations, a famous neo-liberal justification in dismantling welfare regimes and promoting austerity policies by underlining individuals' responsibility/agency to get out of poverty and its value-laden moral concepts that blame poor themselves for their deprived situations (e.g. concepts of welfare dependency and underclass) emerge[5] as a prevalent political discourse. Moving from these concepts of deserving and undeserving poor, the ruling dictum of desert-centred value distribution in relation to the question of poverty emerges as follows: A disable (or an elder) deserves to be entitled with public assistance in virtue of being unable to work, or an able-bodied (or young) does not deserve to be entitled with public assistance in virtue of being able to work, and so forth. One important quality of desert-centred view is that although it is historically originated in the liberal tradition, it should not be narrowed down as a view that exclusively belongs to the free-market economies. Through certain modifications in, for example, what the "desert-base" (e.g. a virtue of individual's characteristic or her/his choice of actions that make her/him eligible to claim a promised reward) is as well as to what extent it should administrate the distributional process (e.g. existence of any accompanying principle), the desert-centred view can take a form of arrangement governing the process of value distribution in non-market economies too[6].

[5] For a detailed critical reflection on the concepts of undeserving and deserving poor, see (Zatz, 2012). In addition, for an evaluative reflection on connection between egalitarianism and individual's responsibility as well as their relation with the concept of desert in the political philosophy, see (Arneson, 1997).

[6] In fact, Olsaretti (2004: 4) notes that some theorists of the desert-centred view affirm that "desert-based distribution of incomes, in principle, may be achieved in a non-market

Merit-Centred Value Distribution: Equal Entitlements prior to the Competitive Process

In addition to the concept of desert, a more decretive aspect that governs value distribution in liberal tradition is merit. Different from the concept of desert that involves both positive and negative connotations, the concept of merit illustrates a form of virtue in a positive sense. Merit can be addressed in relation to a particular characteristic (e.g. being a meritorious person in achieving something) that individual is expected to possess, or based on which s/he is signified as an actor ethically entitled to rewards in liberal tradition of value distribution. Being meritorious refers to different forms of individual's characteristics, or actions, in different scholars' works. To illustrate, some consider it as form of "talent" involving both "skilful performance" and "labour" (see Young, 1958 [2008]) whilst some other, for example John Rawls, address it as individual's "ambition" and "natural talents" (see Arneson, 2015). It is also observable that some scholars interchangeably use the concept of merit with individual's "accomplishments" and "efforts" (see Wilson, 2003). However, most of the empirical works takes individuals' educational achievement as an indicator of being meritorious person (see Swift and Marshall, 1997; Duru-Bellat and Ternet, 2012). On the other hand, in the classical era of liberal thought, it was mostly conceptualised in line with one's labour, regardless of the labour involving qualified or skilful performance. Based on such conceptualisation, meritocracy is considered as a system of rewarding which demands for that "wealth and status must be earned through accomplishment" (Markovits, 2019: ix). As a normative perspective, it claims that "whatever your social position at birth, society ought to offer enough opportunity and mobility for 'talent' to combine with 'effort' in order to rise to the top" (Litter, 2018: 1). In line with this, the merit-centred value distribution principally advocates that the uneven allocation of rewards, or inequality in outcome, is just, provided that such allocation is derived from individuals' efforts, skills, or achievements, rather than being a function of inherited/ascribed status such as birth-right privileges of aristocracy. Such a system of value distribution that "glorifies only earned advantages" (Markovits, 2019: xi) is apparently more egalitarian *vis-à-vis* systems allocating the value based on birth-right privileges. Moreover, the scope of the contemporary meritocratic view, as a normative principle of distribution, is seen well-extended so as to invalidate not only birth-right privileges but also any characteristic of individuals that is an arbitrary unit of measurement (e.g. gender, ethnicity, or political identity) in terms of individuals' ability to demonstrate skilful performance in a task/position expected to be completed in the most efficient way.

Two foundational prerequisites of the merit-centred value distribution can be identified as (1) initial equal entitlements that are guaranteed to everyone who satisfies relevant criteria to the task that is expected to be completed in the most

economy", let alone immaterial forms of values such as respect, acknowledgement, and admiration.

efficient way and (2) prevalence of a competitive process in determining who gets what among those who satisfy the relevant criteria to the task. The condition of "relevant criteria to the task" sometimes leads to confusion in comprehending meritocratic value distribution; yet it in fact represents a distinctive characteristic of merit-centred view in comparison to the need, right, or utility-centred views of value distribution. This characteristic illustrates that the merit-centred value distribution does not propose to entitle everyone with an opportunity to being part of a rewarding competition without querying if people's merits are relevant for the task that is expected to be completed in the most efficient way. Such a condition that calls for an initial scrutiny of people's merits in a way whether these merits are relevant to the completion of the task or not is put forth primarily to ensure feasibility and productivity within the meritocratic value distribution. In the absence such a condition, the meritocratic characteristic of distribution is in fact violated and the process of distribution turns into a process known as the "lottery procedure"[7]. To illustrate, a person may be quite talented/hard-working/ambitious and a holder of significant achievements in, say, the sport of wrestling, but this does not straightforwardly entitle her/him in any meritocratic system to, say, being part of a competitive process to run a bank[8]. In addition, this characteristic inevitably brings forth that any process of selection concerning who will be entitled with opportunity to participate in a rewarding competition should not discriminate anyone on a ground arbitrary, or irrelevant, for the completion of task. This is to say that if, for example, people's gender, ethnicity, political inclination, family background, or social and economic statuses are irrelevant for completion of the

[7] This emphasis is iteratively underlined in the literature of distributional justice (see Arneson, 2015) in relation to the idea of equality of opportunity which is a common meritocratic policy. The idea of equality of opportunity and its meritocratic characteristic are elaborated below in a more detailed fashion.

[8] It should be underlined that the liberal political philosophy is not composed of uniformed views, nor the merit-based (re)distributional model is perfectly and identically applied in practice everywhere. Due to variation in both political structures/regimes and sociological configurations of societies, the merit-based (re)distribution of value in practice takes up diverse forms in different milieus. To illustrate, in authoritarian political regimes where grassroot support is primarily maintained through nepotist relations, the merit-based (re)distribution can still be sustained through an identification of being meritorious as, for example, "loyalty to the leader" by the prevailing political authority. Under such a condition, operational mechanism that governs the distributional process would be a merit-based mechanism where a distinctive characteristic of the perfectly liberal meritocratic value distribution, namely identification of merit as a "relevant criteria to the task", is violated. However, beyond such flawed variations in the merit-based (re)distributional model in diverse political regimes, this work claims that, let alone its flawed applications, even the perfectly ideal liberal meritocratic distributional model is morally flawed without accompaniment of the empowering social policies. This is discussed in more detail in the fourth section of this work below.

task in the most efficient way[9], then anyone should not be excluded from participating in a rewarding competition.

In relation to the concepts of desert and merit as well as normative perspectives they are built upon, the underlying argument of the liberal value distribution is that inequalities in outcome are deserved, and thus they are just, so long as (1) everyone who satisfies the relevant criteria to task is given initial equal entitlement in being part of a rewarding competition and (2) the competitive process where rules are identical for everyone determines who gets what.

On the one hand, the moral justification in this argument is built upon that if everyone, without any arbitrary discrimination, is given equal opportunity to perform in a rewarding competition where rules are identical for everyone and if some end up with worse results than others in this competition, justice requires to reward uneven performers unequally. Otherwise, for example, equal rewarding of everyone without any account of unevenness in their performance (or skills, talents, ambition, accomplishments, amount of labour, and so forth), it is critically asked that how the cost that uneven accomplishers pay to be more successful is compensated? While everyone (e.g. all students) is equally entitled with taking part of a rewarding competition (e.g. graduate school admission) and some make responsible choices (e.g. studying harder than some others) in preparing themselves (e.g. during undergraduate education) to demonstrate better performance (e.g. having a better knowledge of the relevant field or holding a higher grade point average) than others in this competition, then they deserve to be unequally rewarded (e.g. taking place in the graduate school) in return of their responsible choices. If everyone is given the same reward at the end of the competition (e.g. equality in outcome), then why does anyone choose to make responsible, *albeit* costly, choice to demonstrate a better performance in the process of competition. Thus, the moral justification in the argument above addresses that the equality in outcome without any account of individuals' uneven efforts, labour, or skills is a violation of meritorious person's due.

On the other hand, the pragmatic justification in the argument is built upon concerns of productivity and progress within social and economic life, and thus indirectly associated with public welfare. This justification addresses that in cases where rewards are insensitive to not only individuals' actions and choices but also their merits, there is no incentive to be an actor motivated by socially and economically better actions/choices or to develop merits which are in essence sources for progress in social organisation. Social organisations involving both economic and political institutions that are structured by norms equally rewarding

[9] The use of conditional language here is associated with certain policies built upon statistical discrimination that, theoretically speaking, allows meritocratic model of value distribution to make "rational" discrimination on the ground of factual data demonstrating certain social groups' inadequacy for certain tasks. However, this is quite contentious issue among scholars. For more information see (Dickinson and Oaxaca, 2005; Arneson, 2015).

everyone regardless of what actors choose to do and be in these organisations are less inciting in leading people to make responsible choices with the purpose of achieving something better, more distinctive and/or productive. If everyone, for example, is going to be equally rewarded (e.g. equality in outcome) in an organisation, then how the organisation will constantly encourage people to be productive and progressive for a better public life? Obviously, some can claim that those who have a particular transcendental understanding, such as believing in intrinsic value of serving the humanity, do not need any reward to make responsible choices for betterment of public life; and actually they can be, to a certain extent, right to claim so. However, relying on people's goodwill (e.g. their intrinsic valuation of serving the humanity) is to leave betterment of public life on the virtue of individuals and thus does not guarantee it. However, a system of reward is a way of institutionalisation of inciting people to make responsible choices with the purpose of increasing public utility; and thus it is a way of relying on the virtue of institutions, rather than that of individuals.

Briefly saying, just distribution of value in liberal stream of thought is built upon two foundational concepts, *viz.* desert (underlining individual's responsibility in allocation of desired and undesired outcomes) and merit (underlining initial equal entitlements and prevalence of the competitive process in which rules are identical for everyone who satisfies the relevant criteria to the task). Based on these, the liberal approach to distribution of value plausibly claims that inequalities in outcome is just, or fair as long as the distribution is regulated in accordance with the concepts of desert and merit. Although this perspective is today addressed as one of the most dominant normative views within the political philosophy of distributional justice, sociological perspectives on inequality that underline various roles of class-based inequalities in formation of individuals' meritorious characteristics and explore how class structure of modern societies affects meritorious competitive process propose rather a substantial criticism to the liberal value distribution. Below, this criticism will be discussed in detail with reference to a particular meritocratic institutional arrangement of the liberal value distribution, namely the policy of the equality of opportunity.

Equality of Opportunity and Sociological Limits of the Liberal Meritocracy

Giving the liberal thought its due for underlining moral value of achieved status *vis-à-vis* ascribed status in value distribution, it was a radically progressive and more egalitarian idea when it first appeared in the 18th century. Today, regardless of constant violations of meritocratic assignments through politically motivated nepotist relations in modern institutions of certain countries, it has become a morally legitimate norm in regulation of distribution of administrative positions as well as certain opportunities in employment and especially higher education. This

is to say that it is hardly possible to find out a modern social organisation involving economic and political institutions in which moral superiority of merit-centred value distribution and/or meritorious allocation of positions of advantage (e.g. administrative positions) are manifestly refused.

Equality of Opportunity: Rewarding the Most Qualified One

Perhaps the most common way of applying the merit-centred normative ideal to institutional structure of modern societies is the policy known as the "equality of opportunity" which originally[10] suggests that "in the competition for positions in society, all individuals who possess the attributes relevant for the performance of the duties of the position in question should be included in the pool of eligible candidates" (Roemer, 1998: 1). In other words, the policy of equality of opportunity advocates that "positions of advantage should be open to all citizens on a competitive basis, with post and offices given to those who are best qualified according to the impartial criteria of merit suited to the particular post or office that is being filled" (Arneson, 1999: 77). This is to say that without any arbitrary discrimination irrelevant to the task, such as gender, age, ethnicity, religious belonging or religiosity, political inclination and so forth, any individuals should not be discriminated from participating in competition for valuable positions. In this regard, equality of opportunity can be considered as a non-discriminative principle (Roemer, ibid.) that is against nepotist models of value distribution where "the distribution of public offices to one's relatives and friends is just because they are near and dear to the distributor and quite independently of their fitness for the post" (Arneson, 2015). Thus, equality of opportunity as an institutional policy of merit-centred value distribution is a way of justification of unequal outcomes in distribution of valued opportunities and positions of advantage as long as they are distributed based on individuals' performance(s) (involving merits, skills, talents, and so forth) in a competitive process.

Looking at the defining characteristics of equality of opportunity identified above, three primary characteristics come to forward. The first is that the equality of opportunity does not unconditionally entitle people with a right to the desired outcome such as having a place in an educational institution or being assigned to

[10] It should be noted that the idea of equality of opportunity has been subject various scholarly criticisms since it has appeared in the scholarly literature. In line with these critics, scholars have so far suggested certain modifications with the purpose of turning the original form of the idea in a more robust and inclusive form. These scholarly modifications have inevitably led to development of different forms of equality of opportunity in the literature, such as "fair equality of opportunity", "substantive equality of opportunity", or "equality of opportunity for welfare" and so forth. Since this work does not primarily aim to reflect on and elaborate different forms of the idea of equality of opportunity, it here only focuses on its original form known as the "formal equality of opportunity" in the literature.

an administrative position in an office; but it suggests entitling people with a right to participate in a competition in which rules are identical for everyone and where the best performers are given priority for possessing desired outcome. In this regard, it is not a welfare policy to secure desired outcome for people, but it is a liberal distributive policy allocating desired outcomes unequally based on participants' performances in the competition. The second is that it is a passive entitlement that is similar to the conceptualisation of the negative liberty of Isiah Berlin (1969: 121-128) who distinguishes positive liberty (e.g. being substantively free to do and be something in a sense that individuals have or gain full control of autonomy of their own life) from the negative liberty (e.g. absence of obstacles, preventions or barriers in a sense of being free from external coercion to do, or not to do, and to be, or not to be, something) (see also Carter, 2016). This is to say that equality of opportunity does not aim to actively provide any means guaranteeing desired outcomes for individuals, but aims to remove external obstacles to make people free from coercion preventing them to participate in competition for desired outcomes. To illustrate, equality of opportunity does not advocate procurement of any means (e.g. a social policy of conditional cash transfer for parents who send their daughters to primary schools) with the purpose of actively encouraging, say, girls, to participate in educational institutions[11]. However, it is a demand for removal of external obstacles preventing them to attend educational institutions (e.g. legal arrangements calling off females' participation in education). The third and the last identifying characteristic of the equality of opportunity, as explicitly underlined above, is its meritocratic characteristic that does not suggest rewarding everyone on an egalitarian ground, but proposes to reward only those who demonstrate the best qualifications (e.g. in assignment to unique administrative position in an institution) or, in some other cases, at least a threshold level of merit (e.g. in acceptance to graduate educational institutions). Based on these characteristic, it can be seen that the equality of opportunity is not a fully egalitarian policy, but rather a liberal one that envisages equality only at the beginning of the competition by removing arbitrary external obstacles preventing people to demonstrate their merits; and then, compatible with classical liberal values, it suggests a competitive process in determining who gets what.

[11] In fact, what equality of opportunity in particularly education requires is subject to widespread discussions. For some scholars, legal permission for everyone to participate in educational institutions is seen sufficient whilst some other scholars suggest more demanding idea that it should also involve same resource allocation to reduce differences between attendees (Lazenby, 2016: 65). In order not to complicate the discussion here, the hypothetical example given here deliberately overlooks such disagreements.

Morally Flawed Nature of the Merit-Centred Distribution in Stratified Societies

This perspective, namely the merit-centred liberal value distribution that advocates the policy of equality of opportunity, can obviously be criticised through various perspectives. One perspective, for example, could be a critical view emphasizing a drawback that it primarily draws on a form of value distribution that stimulates a competitive culture, or way of life, among fellow citizens, and it thus feeds a competitive social atmosphere where people tend to become social actors who perceive each other as opponents, but not as their fellows. This is also to propose a criticism claiming that the policies deriving from the merit-centred view do not allow to open up a sufficient space for emergence of an understanding for the common good developed through relations of solidarity among citizens. As Hickman (2009: 6) underlines, "through its emphasis on individual advancement and by requiring people to be in a permanent space of competition with each other, meritocracy damages community" and adds that "it is not difficult to see the corrosive effect that the ascent of self-interest has had on our social fabric" (ibid.). So, both merit-centred distribution of value as well as its associated policy implications such as equality of opportunity can be critically assessed as socially corrosive policies. Another critical perspective could be an emphasis related to the ambiguous characteristic of what we call as merit. This is to say that "what is considered good, productive, worthy or rewardable when thinking about the norm of meritocracy might differ" and thus "practice of rewarding merit, though being a central legitimizing norm in modern societies, is severally underspecified and context-dependent and may relate to very different types of merits" (Heuer *et al*, 2020: 543). This addresses that apart from the merits' relevancy for the task, there is no clear specification of what type of skills and talents we should value in, say, assignment of people to administrative positions through the policy of equality of opportunity. This inevitably brings forth question of what form of individual qualities (e.g. actions, behaviours, skills and talents) will be accepted as meritorious in the process of value distribution and thus leads distributional process being vulnerable in the face of distortions of the market in modern societies as well as manipulative characteristics of cultural structure of society. To illustrate, individual's active and voluntary loyalty to a tyrannically configured or totalitarian political system can be identified as a necessary merit and be specified as basic/initial requirement of managerial assignment. Neither meritocracy nor its associated policies (e.g. the policy of equality of opportunity) do provide a clear procedural route preventing specification of merit in such a way, which eventually makes value distribution open to distortion and manipulation. Another criticism is that merit-centred value distribution and its associated policies do not discriminate against rewarding mechanism of naturally talented ones. In other words, "natural talents, undeserved though they be, attract praise in meritocratic societies" (Sandel,

2020: 144) and thus they are not considered inappropriate in merit-centred value distribution. However, morally considering, differences in natural talents or native abilities are an outcome of natural lottery and thus should not entitle people to any reward since they are not chosen or deserved through deliberate or reasoned action(s) of individual. Similar to unappealing nature of penalising someone due to an action that is not under her/his control, rewarding a person due to talents or abilities gained by, not deliberate choices, but natural lottery is morally unattractive in liberal value distribution that attaches priority to individual's decisions, actions, choices as discussed above.

Among various criticisms toward both merit-centred value distribution models involving equality of opportunity, the most challenging one, however, is related to the fact that individual's qualities signified as "merits" are gained through social process in which the person socialises. This is to say that individuals' merits are not natural, but they are qualities gained in the process of socialisation. As Anderson (2004: 101-102) notes, "merit that matters for meritocracy is developed talents and motivation, not potential or 'inborn' talents and motivation". Referring to Anderson's point, Satz (2007: 630) also claims that "merit that matters in the case of employment and university access is developed talent and ability, not innate talent and ability". Accordingly, inequalities in socialisation process of individuals play a non-negligible role in formation of their merits. Reminding that individuals' socialisation process takes shape in relation to her/his social class in stratified modern societies and that people's social origin play quite influential role on their life prospects (see Kerbo, 2012: 223-225; Persell and Witteveen, 2018: 363-366; Giddens *et al*, 2018: 234), uneven impacts of individual's social class on development of her/his merits should be taken into account by merit-centred value distribution models and their associated policies if they claim to be just. It is, for example, a well-explored sociological fact addressed also by some empirical works (Breen and Goldthorpe, 1999; Marshall and Swift, 1997) that there is a quite close correlation between individuals' social class and achievements they demonstrate in various fields of social and economic life such as education and employment. This is in essence not only a fact addressed by sociologists, but also a claim that leading political philosophers address, such as Arneson (1999: 78) who underlines the significance of socialisation process in formation of individuals' ambitions, and Rawls (1971: 74) who claims that individuals' willingness to demonstrate effort in achieving something and so be deserving a reward depends on her/his social circumstances. Thus, in modern societies where both disadvantages and advantages that people from different social classes possess usually function as a source that either hinders (e.g. disadvantages in cultural capital) or facilitates (e.g. advantageous socio-economic positions) their ability to gain necessary merits. In this regard, the primary critical argument appears as follows: So long as social circumstances involving either advantaging (e.g. facilitating opportunities) or disadvantaging (e.g. hindering obstacles) conditions

influence individuals' ability to form necessary merits before competition takes place, the merit-centred value distribution and its associated policies that reward winners at the end of the competition are morally flawed since they do not pay attention on to injustices (or, undeserved inequalities) in formation of merits prior to the competition. Thus, meritocracy as well as its associated policies such as equality of opportunity only identify "overt, negative, and conscious discriminations" (Lawton, 2000: 603-604) (such as discrimination against gender, ethnicity, political inclination, and so forth) and act against such forms of discriminations, but not against more covert forms of class-based discriminations. Therefore, settling the meritocratic distribution of value and its associated policies in a historical context, it can be claimed that they overthrew privileges that were simply built upon kinship relations (such as aristocratic inheritance of advantage), but have still been keeping to underpin privileges emerging in relation to class status of individuals.

Considering sociologically-informed criticism against both merit-centred distribution of value and equality of opportunity discussed here, an egalitarian criticism takes its due in claiming that this value distribution is morally flawed since it does not take an account of the socialisation process in which formation of individuals' merits are heavily influenced by class-based inequalities in modern stratified societies. Thus, an egalitarian modification in merit-centred model of value distribution and its associated policies seems as an inevitable need so long as they aim to strengthen their moral underpinnings, which invokes social policies as moral pre-conditions for the liberal model of value distribution.

Levelling the Playing Field for a Fairer Competition in Meritocratic Societies

Meritocratic distribution of value is not an egalitarian model of distribution, but is originally a liberal model prioritising individuals' merits and competitive process in allocation of value as well as rewards. In line with this, equality of opportunity as a policy applied to the institutional structure of society to distribute value involving positions of advantage according to merit-centred competitive process tends to re-produce pre-existing and unjustified inequalities since formation of individuals' merits is primarily associated with socialisation process in which individuals born and sustain their lives. Therefore, the liberal meritocratic distribution of value and its associated policies need to be modified in a way gaining the distributional process a fairer characteristic.

Recent conceptual developments in broader literature of social justice that is primarily inspired from contemporary literature of political philosophy and sociological theory of inequalities provide quite robust underpinnings for such a modification that opens up a space to incorporate social policies with meritocratic policies of value distribution such as the equality of opportunity. To illustrate,

Riva's (2015) attempt to clarify an embedded ambiguity in the term of equality of opportunity is quite promising in this sense. Addressing the binary meaning that the concept of opportunity involves, Riva underlines that the concept can be considered as either an "option"[12] or a "chance"[13]. In the former case, the concept is considered in a sense that "a person has the opportunity to do or to obtain something, if and only if their doing or obtaining that thing depends exclusively on what they do"; however, in the latter case, it refers to that "a person has the opportunity to do or to obtain something, if it is possible for that thing to happen but they have only limited control over the factors on which its happening depends" (ibid.: 296-297). The conceptualisation of opportunity as an option thus emphasizes that an outcome of a person's choices/actions exclusively depends on her/his conducts; yet its conceptualisation as a chance underlines that the outcome depends on some sort of "luck"[14] which refers to various conditions that are beyond individual's own control. Considering that the moral justification of both merit-centred value distribution and its associated policy of equality of opportunity are foundationally built upon individual's merits acquired through labour and effort, a person's luck can be signified as a factor inappropriately influencing who should get what in a meritocratically configured just society. In this regard, influence of luck on individual's success in a competitive process should be removed to gain the competition a fairer characteristic. This is to say that if the primary aim is to configure the equality of opportunity as a fair policy, the moral requirement is to remove the influence of luck on competition.

However, luck which refers to conditions beyond individual's own control is notwithstanding quite pervasive characteristic of today's modern stratified societies. The luck in stratified societies can be a good one for some individuals and facilitates their abilities to be successful in a competition. On the other hand, it can be a bad luck for some others and hinders their abilities to be successful in the competition. It is not, for example, under a person's control to born with a particular gender since anyone is not able to choose to born as either male or female. So, if being male or female becomes an influential factor on individual's formation of merit due to a particular cultural configuration of society and thus affects their success in the competitive process, then the meritocratic policy of equality of opportunity becomes morally flawed due to the influence of external factors outside of individual's control. In today's stratified societies, these and

[12] For example, "everyone should have the opportunity to be adequately nourished" (Riva, 2015: 297).

[13] For example, "everyone who buys a lottery ticket has the opportunity to win" (Riva, 2015: 297).

[14] Notice that discussion on luck and its influence of individuals' welfare occupy an extensive space in the literature of justice, especially in the framework of the approach known as the "luck egalitarianism" (see Knight, 2013; Kibe, 2011; Barry, 2006; Arneson, 2004).

similar conditions (e.g. born to an (non)affluent family who can(not) gain their children various merits or *vice versa*) which are not under the control of individuals play quite an influential role on formation of their skills, abilities, talents, performances, ambitions; and they hence play quite an influential role on individuals' success in the competition. To illustrate, educational places in most of both advanced and advancing industrial societies are today to a large extent distributed based on the equality of opportunity. Applicants previous achievements (e.g. primarily their previous qualifications in France and UK, abitur exam results in Germany and annual university entrance exam results in Turkey) are taken as the primary space of evaluation to specify who should get what departmental position in which university. In Turkey, more specifically, equal opportunity to participate in the university entrance exam is secured for every high-school graduate by law, regardless of their ethnicity, social class, gender, and family origin; yet it is their performances in the competitive process of the exam that determine who will get what position in which university. Thus, the exam illustrates the meritocratic ideal of value distribution through an application of the equality of opportunity for the allocation of positions in the best, good and less good universities[15]. Yet, such distribution of educational positions in Turkish universities is quite insensitive to luck over which applicants have no control previous to the exam. To illustrate, it is a well-known fact that families whose economic capital is sufficiently high heavily invest in private tutoring services for their offspring to equip them with advantaging qualities in the competition for the university entrance in Turkey. Considering that any individual has no control over choosing to born to an affluent family who can afford private tutoring services, the university entrance exam in Turkey can be addressed as a luck-involved policy of equality of opportunity that unfairly puts those who born to a non-affluent family in a disadvantaged position during the competitive process[16]. In this regard, it is a moral requirement to remove the influence of luck (e.g. effects of external social conditions, such as individuals' family origin, over which they have no control) on contestants' success in the competitive process of the university entrance exam in Turkey, if the aim is to configure equality of opportunity for university education

[15] It should be noted that European educational institutions, *vis-a-vis* Turkish ones, represent a system of allocation that is more sensitive to conditions over which university applicants have no control. For example, while the primary assessment criteria still remain as the previous qualifications of the applicants in the UK, their place of origin, family's economic status, ethnicity as well as gender are to some extent taken into account in the allocation of university positions.

[16] Obviously, quite a number of different variables can be addressed as a source of luck that is influential on individuals' success in taking place in educational institutions in Turkey. In fact, the research report prepared by Candaş and Yılmaz (2012) can be addressed to gain a comprehensive insight concerning factors leading to emergence of unfair inequalities over which disadvantaged individuals have no control in Turkey.

as a policy that fairly distributes desired outcomes/rewards in a competitive process.

One way to remove the influence of luck in competitive process as well as unequal advantages of those whose social characteristics unfairly bring forth certain advantages in competition could be requiring them starting the competition in a backward position. For example, for the same position in the same university, those who are from advantaged social backgrounds could be required to demonstrate a higher performance in the competition in comparison to the initial position of those who are, prior to the competition, from socially disadvantaged background. However, such a way of equalisation would be a deliberate attempt creating artificial disadvantages for the socially advantaged/lucky ones and thus would turn into a model of equalisation at a backward/disadvantaged positions.

Ethically speaking, a more plausible way of equalisation of contestants prior to the competition would be lifting up disadvantaged individuals' position to the level of advantaged ones and thus equalising the ground of competition for all contestants. This perspective is in fact commonly addressed in the literature of distributive justice with reference to the concept known as "levelling the playing field" (see Roemer, 1998; Mason, 2006; Arneson, 2015). The idea behind the concept refers to necessity of levelling the field of competition in such a way that all individuals start the competition in an equal position. The concept of levelling the playing field as an idea that can gain the policy of equality of opportunity a fairer characteristic inevitably invokes certain deliberate institutional arrangements, namely social policies, that can play instrumental roles to lift disadvantaged ones up to a position of those who are socially advantaged prior to the competition. In this regard, social policies in achieving such a task can be formulated as a necessary moral intervention that can turn the competition envisaged by the meritocratic equality of opportunity into a fairer process of value allocation. This is also to say that social policies are inevitable egalitarian pre-conditions for the liberal meritocratic value distribution since they can play an ethically affirmative role strengthening the moral justification behind liberal meritocratic value distribution by equalising uneven conditions of contestants prior to the competition. However, this characteristic of social policies is hardly given an explicit emphasize in contemporary scholarly works, which is mostly due to insufficient engagement of the contemporary social policy literature with the broad literature of social justice developed by political philosophy and advanced by sociological perspectives of (in)equality. Such an insufficient engagement and its symptoms can be observed, for example, in definitions of social policy within the contemporary literature. Even though the emphasis on justice is a common theme in certain scholarly definitions of social policy (e.g. Çubuk, 1979: 9; Talas, 1990: 12 quoted from Altan, 2021: 22; Güven, 1997: 11; Gülmez, 2017: 14), these definitions do not explicitly narrate what type of social justice (e.g. egalitarian, liberal, utilitarian, Rawlsian, capability-centred) is aimed by such policies. Some other definitions, on the other

hand, do not straightforwardly address the relationship between social policy and social justice, but constrain themselves with underlining affirmative, corrective as well as protective roles that social policies play against various social maladies (e.g. İzveren, 1968: 9; Koray and Topçuoğlu, 1995: 2; Tokol, 1997: 1 quoted from Altan, 2021: 22; Ören, 2013: 28). In fact, quite a number of grounding scholarly works in the field (e.g. Culpitt, 1999; Midgley, 2000; Yeates, 2001; Jordan, 2006; Maton, 2017) does not provide a precise, in other words dictionary-wise, definition for social policy, yet they mostly tend to explain scope of social policies as well as their primary fields of interest in a way that mostly emphasizes concerns for social justice either implicitly or insufficiently.

On the other hand, within the context of discussion maintained above, social policies come forward as morally necessary egalitarian interventions to the liberal meritocratic value distribution in the form of institutional actions aiming to empower disadvantaged groups in order to remove influence of luck in the competitive process and thus to level the playing field with the purpose of turning the competition into a fairer process of distribution. Empowering characteristic of social policies which is explicitly addressed by Lister (2010: 23) can obviously take various forms in relation to objectives and types of competitive process adopted by legal institutions that aim to distribute valued positions and offices involving wealth and/or use of power. In relation to hypothetical examples given above, for example, children of economically disadvantaged groups can be provided an unconditional publicly-funded tutorship to lift them up to the level of privileged children who can enjoy private tutorship whilst preparing themselves for the university entrance exam. Or, women who are less able to gain necessary merits to be appointed as a manager in institutions due to the patriarchal structure of society that, say, assigns them as the primary actor of domestic care can be supported through unconditional publicly-funded childcare services, and so forth. In these hypothetical cases, social policies (e.g. publicly-funded tutorship or unconditional childcare services) are signified as institutional actions of empowerment for disadvantaged individuals so as to lift them up to positions of those who are advantaged and thus as morally necessary means to turn the competitive process of, say, university entrance or appointment for managership positions into a fairer process where contestants initially possess genuine equal opportunities.

Finally, it should also be emphasized that empowering characteristic of social policies aligns with one of the distinctive characteristics of the liberal value distribution that highlights the significance of individual's responsibility and her/his choices in determining who gets what. As discussed above with reference to the liberal conception of desert and its relationality to the phenomenon of poverty, the liberal value distribution advocates to focus on individual's responsibility in deciding what s/he should get in the distributional process. It claims that individuals should take responsibility of their own choices and actions as long as there is no coercing power forcing them to make such choices, which

has led to emergence of the concept of (un)deserving poor in the relevant literature. The conditionality in keeping individuals as responsible agents of their choices here is explicitly associated with that if they are in control of circumstances in which they make their choices. Considering in this framework, empowerment that refers to "the means by which individuals, groups and/or communities become able to take control of their circumstances and achieve their own goals" (Adams, 2003: 8) comes forward as a pre-condition for keeping members of disadvantaged groups as responsible actors of their choices[17]. In other words, providing empowering social policies to members of disadvantaged groups prior to the competition becomes an inevitable moral necessity for (1) keeping them responsible actors of their choices and thus (2) justifying inequalities in outcome. In this regard, empowering characteristic of social policies brings forth these policies as morally necessary means by which disadvantaged ones can find out an opportunity to become agents who can take control of their circumstances and thus take the responsibility of their choices of action. In the face of sociologically-informed criticism discussed above, this seems an inevitable way as long as the liberal meritocratic value distribution models aim to morally justify inequalities in outcome.

Conclusion

The primary point of departure in this work is that the existing contemporary literature of social policy insufficiently engage with the broad literature of social justice that has been significantly developed by normative argumentative discussions within the field of political philosophy and advanced by sociological perspective of inequalities. An important negative implication of such an insufficient engagement has appeared as various ambiguities in both definition and purpose of social policies within the existing contemporary literature. To illustrate, most of the leading definitions regarding social policies either explicitly or implicitly underlines a close relationship between "the necessity of social policies" and "the aim of establishing social justice"; yet what type of social justice is aimed by social policies is not clear in these definitions. Moreover, most of the grounding works in the field explicitly addresses social policies as institutional means aiming

[17] Notice that empowerment is a contested subject. As addressed by some critical feminist research (e.g. Nussbaum, 2000; Khader, 2011; see also Allen, 2006) based on ungeneralizable empirical data, disadvantaged individuals sometimes make apparently self-subordinating choices and ill-informed decisions. In this regard, empowerment is not always a policy flourishing lives of disadvantaged individuals. However, such a discussion outruns limits of this work since it necessities extensive theoretical and methodological discussion on formation of individuals' preferences as well as choices in relation to distorting and manipulative characteristics of cultural, economic and political structures surrounding their lives.

to rectify various social and economic maladies of the liberal distributional model of value; yet they refrain from shedding light on what type of underlying and/or foundational mechanisms within this model lead to emergence of such social and economic maladies. This in fact illustrates a picture of "treatment without diagnosis".

Based on this point of departure, this work primarily focused on the liberal school's normative understanding of distributive justice within the existing literature of social justice and aimed to explain how its proposal of just distribution inevitably and eventually leads to undeserved outcomes, particularly, unjustified inequalities. In doing so, it firstly addressed two foundational concepts, *viz.* desert and merit, which are proposed by the liberal stream of thought as the primary spaces of evolution in deciding who deserves what from the value distribution and why s/he deserves that. Drawing on the broad literature of social justice developed in the realm of political philosophy, it has then identified how the liberal political philosophy of social justice justifies inequalities in outcome with reference to individual's desert and merit. This discussion is particularly significant in addressing that according to the liberal meritocratic understanding of justice, inequalities are not always and essentially unjust since some of them, especially those gained through individuals' meritorious characteristics, are deserved. Such a view towards the conception of just society, or social justice, is an illuminating example that the scholarly literature of social justice is made of deeply opposing and contended normative views; and therefore, the literature of social policy, where quite a number of scholars and grounding works underline a close relationship between the necessity of social policies and the aim of establishing social justice, should be more concerned with identifying what type of social justice is aimed by these policies. Following the identification of just distribution of value within the liberal meritocratic justice model, this work has then turned its attention on the most well-known meritocratic institutional arrangement, namely the policy of equality of opportunity, which proposes to distribute certain forms of value (e.g. rewards and power of positions) in line with the normative perspective of the liberal conception of social justice. The indispensable characteristic of the meritocratic equality of opportunity is that it does not unconditionally entitle people with a right to the desired outcome, but it proposes that individual's access to the desired outcome should be governed by a competitive process in which rules are identical for all participants of the competition. Therefore, it is not a fully-egalitarian institutional policy, but essentially a liberal meritocratic arrangement that prioritises to remove arbitrary obstacles irrelevant to the completion of tasks before the competitive process and to reward those who demonstrate the most outstanding performances in the competitive process. Clarifying such identifying characteristic of the meritocratic institutional arrangement of the equality of opportunity, this work has turned its attention on questioning what make people successful in competitive processes prior to the decision-making process

concerning who should get what as deserved rewards. Focusing on the formation of individuals' talents, skills, or abilities that make them successful in competitive processes, it has referred to various socially-constructed aspects of the merit-formation in stratified societies by primarily drawing on the contemporary literature in sociological conception of inequalities. Referring to contemporary sociological perspectives of inequality, it has discussed that the liberal distribution of value and its associated polices, such as equality of opportunity, are morally flawed since they propose solely and exclusively taking individual's merit as the basis of decision for who deserves what in stratified industrial societies despite the fact that formation of people's merits are primarily associated with their social origins, such as class-status. Based on such sociological perspective of inequality that undermines moral underpinnings of the liberal meritocratic distribution of value, this work has subsequently highlighted significance of empowering social policies in a way that has incorporated this significance with a recent conceptual development in the broad literature of social justice, namely the concept of levelling the playing field. The concept of the levelling the playing field and theoretical underpinnings on which it has built up have addressed in this work as robust and plausible normative moral justification to respond the question of why stratified societies where class-based injustices quite prevalent inevitably need empowering social policies so as to establish just society within the realm of the liberal meritocratic value distribution. Accordingly, drawing on the contemporary sociological conception of inequalities in formation of individuals' merits and the evaluative framework of the concept of the levelling the playing field, this work has advocated that social policies are necessary institutional means for moral justification, as well as legitimacy, of the liberal meritocratic distribution of value, which conceptually leads to an identification of these policies as inevitable egalitarian pre-conditions in stratified modern industrial societies. Hereby, through maintaining such a discussion, this work has underlined that developing a more substantial relation and a deeper engagement with the broad literature of social justice developed by the distributive theories of political philosophy and advanced by the contemporary sociological conception of inequalities is both instrumentally and intrinsically promising for the contemporary scholarly literature of social policy.

Beyan

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