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DEMOCRATIC DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

By exploring the nature of economic justice and of democracy, Ross Zucker seeks to explain how democratic countries with market economies should deal with the problem of high levels of income inequality. Revising a basic assumption of social thought, Zucker suggests that people are more equal than political theorists usually suppose them to be – in regard to their attributes, wants, and economic contributions. Such equality morally warrants corresponding limits on income inequality, beyond the measures suggested by Rawls's theory of justice. The origin of equality lies in formative relations between persons, for example, those in the economy, and this book contends that the study of persons-in-relations can provide perspectives on equality that have been overlooked. Zucker also considers the manner in which the ethics of community bear on the just distribution of property. There is, he argues, a dimension of community in market economies that extends more widely and inheres more deeply than liberals, communitarians, Marxists, and social theorists recognize, and it provides further moral support for limiting income inequality.

Integrating this view of economic justice with democratic theory yields "democratic distributive justice," whose central proposition is that the preservation of a redistributory property right is among the chief ends of democratic government. While prevailing theory defines democracy in terms of the electoral mechanism, the author holds that the principles of just distribution form part of the very definition of democracy, which makes just distribution a requirement of democratic government. The problem of income inequality is thus an inherently interdisciplinary one, and grappling with it requires extensive use of political, economic, legal, and philosophical theory.

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For Herbert Zucker

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