



Capabilities and Social Justice

The Political Philosophy of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum

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The capability approach to social justice construes a person's well-being in terms of the substantive freedoms people value. John Alexander engages with the rapidly growing body of literature on the capability approach in economics, inequality, poverty measurement and development studies. Critically assessing Sen and Nussbaum's work in normative economics, social ethics and political philosophy, Alexander develops a unified vision of the capability approach embodying the ideal of creating the greatest possible condition for the realization of basic capabilities for all. He then assesses this vision as a political theory arguing that capabilities are necessary but not sufficient for overcoming conditions of domination. The book calls for a more intimate relationship between individual liberty and the freedom of the political community as a whole.

Contents

Introduction; Part I The Capability Approach in Perspective: Sen's critique of utilitarianism; Rethinking Rawlsian justice; Towards a capability theory of justice. Part II Capabilities, Morality and Politics: The theory of broad consequentialism; The question of individual responsibility; Aristotle and Nussbaum's hybrid theory of capabilities; Which freedom? What sort of public reasoning?; Bibliography; Index.

About the Author

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