

Equality of Resources, Ethical Principles and Sustainable Development

Równość zasobów, zasady etyczne i zrównoważony rozwój

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Abstract

A harmony between human being and natural resources are significant, but exploitation of the natural resources are not respectable in numerous sense. My main contention in this paper is that in order to save the natural resources for future generations there should be a state policy for equal distribution of natural resources, so that we can accomplish the need of the present generation and at the same time preserve the resources for future generations. This paper is an attempt to apply the Ronald Dworkin's ethical philosophy of ambition-sensitive and endowment-insensitive notion of distributional equality on sustainable development.

Key words: Dworkin, sustainable development, resources, equality, state

Streszczenie

Harmonia między człowiekiem a zasobami naturalnymi to kwestia niezwykle istotna, jednak eksploatacja zasobów naturalnych w wielu aspektach nie jest zrównoważona. Mój główny postulat w tym artykule jest taki, że aby oszczędzać zasoby naturalne dla przyszłych pokoleń, powinna istnieć odpowiednia polityka państwa dotycząca równego podziału zasobów naturalnych, abyśmy mogli zaspokoić potrzeby obecnego pokolenia, a jednocześnie zachować zasoby dla przyszłych pokoleń. Artykuł ten jest zarazem próbą zastosowania etycznej filozofii Ronalda Dworkina w kontekście zrównoważonego rozwoju.

Słowa kluczowe: Dworkin, zrównoważony rozwój, zasoby, równość, kraj

1. Introduction

Resources are required for the survival of human being in this world (Aikins, 2014); taking this into account, we must generate harmony between human and natural resources. We can attempt to control exploitation of natural resources through an appropriate distribution of resources and make sure of the well-being of our future generations. This entails the problem of sustainable development. We have to reserve and use our resources in such a way that could accomplish the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Sustainable development has been instigated in late 20th century by The Brudtland Report emphasized on remodeling our ways of living and governing for a

global agenda for change (Strange and Bayley, 2008, p. 24; Baker, 2006, p. 19). This report gives significant importance to well-being of our future world (Prakash, 2018, p. 217).

Contemporary American philosopher Ronald Dworkin, as an ethical individualist, focuses on living well as to lead a good life. Now we have to apprehend that we do not only have responsibility of ourselves but also have a responsibility of the well-being of future generations. Here, it is a significant apprehension that how to protect the natural resources. This question can be addressed with the statement that the awareness of the present generation will play vital role in well-being to future generations, because present generation is a significant member of the chain of succeeding generations.

Therefore, conservation and distribution of the natural resources are main concern here. In order to save the resources for the future generations one has to make sure that the state would distribute the natural resources rationally among the citizens. Moreover, moral justification is significant for any theory which is being adopted by the state. Dworkin employs justice as a parameter for the distribution of resources that implies to the doctrine of distributive justice. Distributive justice combines the idea that requires compensation for individuals for their unchosen talent deficiencies and at the same time distributive justice prohibits compensation of individuals for the outcomes of their free and voluntary choices provided that these choices proceed from a fair prior distribution of resources (Anerson, 2008, p.88.). Here Dworkin proposes a fresh insight to uphold distributive justice – distributional equality that is equality of resources which assumes some real and some hypothetical market devices to provide a just distribution of goods and opportunities (Dworkin, 2000) and therein lies ethical ground for liberal equality (Dworkin, 2011), that is why he does not divorce ethics from justice. In this paper, I will argue that one can accomplish sustainable development through Dworkin's ambition-sensitive and endowmen-insensitive doctrine of distributional equality.

2. Equality of resources

There is an argument that an ideal model of equality is not applicable for a state. Many scholars have argued differently for the right theory of equality and investigated that the competing theory would be the best possible theory. However, here, I will critically examine the best possible theory, which treats people as equals. For Dworkin, distributive justice is an excellent notion through which, one can improve the poor quality of life and build a just society (Dworkin, 2000, p. 11). There is need for moderate politics to not to ignore equality so that one can make balance between equality and other values. For a just society, distributive equality is significant to balance between natural resources and human.

Dworkin proposes the notion of economic market as a hypothetical device, which can be used to set prices for a huge range of goods and services. Dworkin constructs an abstract form to make use of hypothetical markets in impersonal social goods. For an instance, imagine there are several of shipwreck survivors on a desert island that have ample resources although no residents are in that island. These survivors are not entitled to any of island's resources prior. These resources will be divided equally among immigrants if the *envy test* is satisfied. Here it is significant to write, that theory of envy test holds that once the distribution is over, then no immigrant would prefer other's bundle of resources to his own bundle. Consequently, *envy test* exemplifies to immigrant the value of resources for himself as well as others.

Taking this into account, this test can sustain an individual for usage of natural resources appropriately for himself and for the future generations.

This imaginary example of shipwreck can implement on world's natural resources so that all individuals are equally entitled for worldly natural resources. Thus, this distributional equality validates the equal share of natural resources for all individuals in this world. Alexander Brown has applied the same example in broader sense and argued for sustainable development and distribution of natural resources (Brown, 2009, p. 171). Now it is significant to elucidate the Dworkin's understanding of auction which is significant theory to divide resources equally. According to him, one faces a problem when he tries to divide physically non-divisible resources like milking cow and arable land etc. or suppose that we have large amount of old claret and plovers' eggs and all the resources are being distributed equally among the immigrants. However, there is a possibility that many of immigrants dislike eggs and can feel that they have not been treated equally. Here, this method of division does not satisfy the *envy test*. Therefore, in this equal distribution, there is a need for more fair treatment in the initial auction. The same problem goes with the distribution of natural resources, because all natural resources cannot be divided equally among immigrants that is why many immigrants can feel to be treated unequally and here also envy test would not be satisfied. However, to satisfy the envy test, Dworkin proposes a form of auction or other market procedure. He writes that one should distribute the clamshells as money, which does not have intrinsic value among immigrants. Now every item on the island is listed to be traded and auctioneer offers a set of prices for each lot and one can adjust the price of goods until a set of goods clear the markets. In this auction, each immigrant is free to bid on bundles of (non)-identical resources. By hypothesis, once the auction is over, each immigrant decides that goods are equally divided and no one prefers someone else's bundle of resources instead of one's own bundle. Here, Dworkin attempts to avoid difficulties in this auction through *authentic preferences*. Dworkin's equal auction is striking in the simple context of natural resources. This auction affords equal share of natural resources for the society that has a dynamic economy. However, it is significant to note that inequality in the world also rises due to luck. For instance, after getting resources one may not lead to a good quality of life due to some other factors like, inability to proper use, adverse circumstances, natural calamities and so on. Luck plays a key role to lead a good life. In the specific situation, there is a mechanism of redistribution between fortune's victims and beneficiaries. However, this distribution will depend on the aggregate operation of the insurance market (Casal and Williams, 2004, p. 151). Thus, Dworkin offers the notion of hypothetical insurance market which

provides insurance to transfer brute luck into option luck. According to Dworkin, there are two kinds of luck.

- *Option luck* – this is a matter of how deliberate and calculated gambles turnout whether someone gains or losses through accepting an isolated risk he or she should have anticipated and might have declined. If I buy a stock on the exchange that rises, then my option luck is good.
- *Brute luck* – this is a matter of how risks fall out that are not in that sense deliberate gambles. If I'm hit by a falling meteorite whose course could not have been predicted, then my bad luck is brute (Dworkin, 2000, p. 73).

For distinguishing this, one can state that these two kinds of luck are cited as a matter of degree. On a looser construal, if an agent does not get reasonable avoidable outcomes then agent falls into brute luck, otherwise agent will make the results a matter of option luck (Vallentyne, 2002, p. 533). For instance, A and B are suffering from cancer. Case of A, one cannot point out any reason that is gambled risking the cancer; on the other hand, B is suffering from cancer because he is a chain smoker. Here, one can point out that B opted an unsuccessful gamble and A has suffered brute bad luck and A can transferred his brute bad luck into option luck to purchase medical insurance. Dworkin proposes a link between brute luck and option luck that is insurance. One would be better in situation to buy or reject the insurance as a calculated gambling. Through this insurance, we can transform natural calamities, which occur due to exploitation of natural resources, as brute bad luck into option luck. But it does not mean that this insurance totally wipe out the distinction of these two forms of luck. Dworkin shows that developments are consistent with equality of resources and to short out this, at first, one should elaborate the luck factor which has deep impact on immigrants' post-auction destiny.

Further, Dworkin expounds to how equality of resources consistent with the persons who are dissimilar in possessions or earnings in virtue after option luck. Different people have different wishes to lead a life and for that they have to pay prices accordingly. They have to use their clamshells to gamble. There is the factor of risk (it is inherent in the gamble) and accordingly, one can win or lose. Winners enjoy the life with more wealth or the life as they want to lead. On the pole apart, those who lose, they miss the chance to enjoy the life which they want to lead. Some do not like to gamble while prefer to a safer life instead of they will not get more prosperity in life, happy with less. After the equal distribution of natural resources among survivors, they start to engage in different activities so that they consume and exploit natural resources differently, as a result, inequalities start to take place. Therefore, Dworkin

recommended his distributive equality in ambition-sensitive and endowment-insensitive procedure for global redistribution to avoid unjust inequalities.

3. Ambition-sensitive and Endowment-insensitive

There is a possibility that different persons adopt different trade and production or different persons adopt same trade and production. Consequences are dissimilar and persons would envy each other's resources. Now, equality of resources faces problem when one produces more resources by his trade, thereafter others immigrant would begin to envy of his bundle of resources. There is an argument that if there is an existence of non-transferable resources then that condition will lead a person to complex insurance market (Ferreira and Peragine, 2015, p. 4). But Dworkin represents his auction in that way so that hypothetical insurance market adopts to produce such a society in which no one envies of other's resources and distribution is said to be equal in that account. Suppose, all the immigrants are roughly equal in talent at the few modes of production. Here, the resources allow each to produce roughly the same goods from the same set of resources. In spite of that they chose to lead their lives differently so that in the initial auction, they obtain different bundles of resources and after that employ them differently.

It is noteworthy that anyone can reach the same conclusion if one has the same point of view on the same matter. If A earns more because he enjoys his hard work than B, so A can spend more for leisure in life. B has simpler and less expensive taste due to less earning, shows his less hard work. There are no envies of the total package (work + consumption) in the equality of resources while the choice should be indifferent. We are assuming here that the equal talents gain unequal wealth as time passes away, nevertheless, initial auction would construct continuing equality of resources. One cannot redistribute A's money at the end of every six month. In such a way, Dworkin applies the envy test *diachronically* that is sorting out the problem of envy.

Here, another objection can inherent as in the real world people are different in talent and produce resources differently as well. Now the *envy test* would fail, though this is diachronically. Suppose B does not have enough idea about the farming and he cannot enjoy farming as A. So B cannot bid enough to take that land and thereafter he has to settle for less in the rest of life. B becomes envy of A's package of wealth and occupation both. Consequently, one can find that initial auction scheme will not assure continuing equality in unequal talents for production, though *envy test* is a necessary condition of equality of resources. But Dworkin argues that there is no necessity of any *envy test* because he distinguishes between being envy of each other and envy of another's bundles of resources. There are different

kinds of people in a society as some have more talents or looks or satisfied life or wealth or occupation etc. than others.

Further Dworkin argues that one should not misinterpret this equality of resources with the concept of equality of opportunity. Both are unlike by the hypothesis. In equality of opportunity, if A and B immigrants start with equal shares then prosperity of A will not damage the prosperity of B. On the other side, equality of resources does not accept the claim; if A is entitled to more profit then the circumstances may decrease the value of B's share. Because A produces superior quality products that is why other people do not like to buy B's products. Suppose A does not produce superior products, then people do not have any other option than to buy B's inferior quality products. Here, one can argue that this equality of resources tries to show that all men are connected through their activity that is why their consumption or investment of natural resources is related too.

Further, Dworkin discloses that A is entitled for his profit and it is not possible to eliminate all kinds of envy through political distribution. So B is not satisfied with his less wealth and occupation rather than A. Here we should not misconstrue that B is envy of A's circumstances because there is difference between what A has and what A is. If we apply the scheme of education and taxation for satisfying B's circumstances to redistribute some of A's wealth to B then only we try to eradicate B's envy of what A has rather than what A is.

To forbid the starting-gate theory, Dworkin acknowledges that the requisites of equality does not allow both ambition-sensitive and endowment-sensitive while there is need to a formula which has two opposite requirements that is ambition-sensitive and endowment-insensitive which shows the practical consistency in the real world. Further, Dworkin elucidates some forms of income tax that is the periodic redistribution of resources that is, on the one hand, neutralize the effects of differential talents and on the other preserve the consequences of the one's desire to choose an occupation. We should not misconstrue that this scheme makes compromise in equality for the sake of some autonomous value but between two requirements of equality (ambition-sensitive and endowment-sensitive). Interestingly, there is a close relation between talents and ambitions but one cannot redistribute the part of every person's earnings that is trait to his talent which is different from his ambitions (Arneson, 2008, p. 88). However, individual is responsible for their free choices but should not be blamed for unchosen conditions.

So we should differentiate fair differences in wealth that is produced by the difference in occupation from unfair differences. If we analyse these unfair differences entail to genetic luck then it seems to imply the problem of handicaps. Though one cannot relate handicapped and the lack of skilled person, there is

other (luck component) hiding factor which plays the key role between skills and ambitions. So, there is no insurance market against lack of ordinary skills while there is an insurance market against calamities that result in handicaps.

If we construct a hypothetical insurance market for those who have some lack of skills like handicaps then we face difficulties. For Dworkin, insurance is for person who have no opportunity to earn and in this condition insurance company will pay the differences between the coverage level and the income he does in fact have an opportunity to earn (Dworkin, 2000, p. 94). Suppose we feed all the information in computer about talents, ambitions, tastes and attitudes as well as raw materials and technology available before entering into auction. Consequently, as an assumption, one finds that there is no income tax for this scheme because computer cannot predict the results of the auction or everyone's level of income. After depicting the difficulty to accomplish an answer, the computer shows that there is a distinction between two kinds of decisions, firstly, small cost purchases reimbursement for an unlikely but serious loss and secondly, gambling problem occurs when a small cost purchases a small chance for large gain (Dworkin, 2000, p. 95). Therefore, he accepts that in a hypothetical insurance market talents allow for the decisions that seems to gambles rather than insurance and there is an ordinary insurance market for the handicapped.

Thus Dworkin admits that in a hypothetical insurance market talents allow for the decisions that seem to gamble rather than insurance but for the handicapped, there is ordinary insurance market. Now we can consider that ambition-sensitive and endowment-insensitive requirement of equality is applicable in the distribution of natural resources. Initially, all individuals are entitled for equal share of natural resources; however, this equality cannot be maintained in the case of ambition because different persons have different ambitions. Some ambitions are positive and some have negative impact towards sustainable development. This is a just distribution and *envy test* is a necessary condition of this equality of resources, that is why this is sensitive towards reasonable ambitions which are not harmful for others or future generations or natural calamities. Dworkin employs justice as a parameter for the distribution of resources which relates ethics with this theory, so that it would be vehemently sustained harmony in the ecological changes.

4. Connection with Ethical Principles

Dworkin affirms that *ethical model of challenge* argues that the goodness of a good life lies in its inherent value as a performance (Dworkin, 2000, p. 251) which embraces that we are ethical as well as political liberals. To prove this assumption, we should start from justice. We have already discussed that the

distributive justice depends on distribution of resources. Ethical liberals admit that we live in pluralist societies. It does not mean government should adopt hedonistic notion to judge everyone's notion, while government should adopt the notion in which people face the challenge for leading a life and this is identifying life's value for themselves. Ethical liberals must not participate in two-stage separation procedure¹ that divorces ethics from justice. That is why, Dworkin insists that the challenge model admits that justice is a matter of what resources people have, rather than of what well-being they attain with those resources. The challenge model of ethics is inherently egalitarian, because the character of people's critical interests depends on just share of resources and that is a large share for them, rather than John Rawls difference principle (Rawls, 1971, p. 154) that acknowledges a thin concept of the good that holds that the more resources citizens have the better for them or any other premise of contractarian theories of justice (Hobbes, 1651; Locke, 1689; Rousseau, 1762) that accept to surrender their some interest out of respect for the interest of others. In such a way, challenge model of ethics conquers other political conception and it asserts about justice and the good life in a more integrated way. Now, we can admit that the impact of challenge model of ethics on political philosophy is insightful. Consequently, to distribute natural resources by this procedure, not only emphasizes on justice but also embraces to live well for all individuals.

In a contemporary world, all claims about to give preference to a person or some people due to special lineage or talent or beauty or wealth or favoured by God etc., are already rejected. So this model not only rebuffs these claims but also give special reason to resist such claim. Dworkinian model entails equality directly so that people's best self-interest would be critically understood. It means that living well has a societal dimension and if in a society people treat my self-interest to lead a good life less important than others, then I live less well. Indeed in political system, no one can live a good life with inequality or through injustice profit in their resources.

Further Dworkin elaborates the issue of neutrality or tolerance in the political theory and distinguishes it about different ethical convictions into two versions; it might be neutral in its appeal that is called ecumenical and it might be neutral in its operation that is called tolerant. In most of the circumstances both are interconnected. Dworkinian model of ethics never takes side of any concrete ethical convictions but concedes the proposition that justice is a parameter of good life and one should have only allowed resources (Dworkin, 2000, p. 282).

Consequently, Dworkin discloses that a comprehensive liberal theory of justice is grounded on two prin-

ciples of ethical individualism and this would also be a base of the distribution of natural resources;

- The principle of equal importance: this principle claims that the legitimacy of a sovereign lies within an equal concern for every citizen. We should not misunderstand that this principle states that all human are equal but it construes from an objective point of view. Through this principle auctioneer must maintain an unbiased and objective attitude towards its entire immigrants while distributing natural resources and this is the exceptional and requisite virtue of divider. This principle is coherent with the principle of beneficence but no such principle follows its form.
- The principle of special responsibility: this principle claims, that this is an individual's accountability for his or her own life choices and what is admitted as a successful or damaged life, whatever range of choices are allowable by their resources and culture, this is individual's decision. Hence through this rational principle individuals should construct his life as best possible way with given fair share of natural resources and does not sustain any choice of ethical value. It does not concur with the judgment of others which are forcefully laid on the person whose life is right for him to lead.

Dworkin proclaims that the first one is dominated to the second one and the two principles are acting in concert and they make sure that a sovereign is concerned equally with every citizen while leaving enough space for personal decisions and life choices. Hence, Dworkin advocates that *the right to equal concern and respect* is more absolute than standard conception of equality (Dworkin, 1977, p. 273). Dworkin's vital argument is that a sovereign must secure a just distribution of resources and he proposes equality of resources. He admits this distribution should be endowment-insensitive (insensitive to differences in a social status as well as natural talents and handicaps) and ambition-sensitive (sensitive to personal choices). Consequently, these two principles have to be conducted through an implementation of Dworkin's equality of resources and on account of justice. The first principle requires that the government should adopt endowment-insensitivity towards its citizen's fate and second demands to make citizens fate ambition-sensitive.

In his book *Sovereign virtue*, Dworkin corresponds the two key values of humanism – equal concern/importance and the special responsibility as the most absolute formulation of basic principles of political morality; these principles have been transformed in

contrive to distribute success, to defined, according to some formula they take to be fair.

¹ In its first stage citizens decide for themselves what makes a life successful for them, and in its second stage

Dworkin's another book *Justice for Hedgehogs* into two basic ethical principles, these are; the principle of self-respect and the principle of authenticity and both the principles together construct the principle of human dignity. Through human dignity, Dworkin pays attention to personal responsibility and individual ethics (Dworkin, 2011, p. 202-213). Nonetheless, he mentions to the political morality and the interpretative integrity of all basic value notions. So Dworkin's concern is that justice demands equality of resources and he underlies the principle of individual responsibility in this distribution (Ferreira and Peragine, 2015, p. 5). Now we can admit that he builds ethical analogues of the political principles and relates equality of resources to justice more explicitly. We can implement natural resources in this theory so that we can consume or invest these resources in such a manner that can be sustainable for future generation because Dworkin's distribution has a special connection with ethics to avert the exploitation of natural resources.

5. Conclusion

No one can live a good life with inequality or through unjustified profit in their resources. Through his equality of resources, Dworkin tries to show that all men are connected through their activity, that is because their consumption or investment of natural resources is related. Taking this into account, his ideal device would be fulfilled by equal distribution of natural resources for present society and preservation for the future as well. Ethical liberals must not participate in two-stage separation procedure, which divorces ethics from justice, that is why – in the light of ethical individualism – equality of resources divides equal share of natural resources with equal concern and respect and individuals also have special accountability to consume these natural resources to live best possible life.

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