

Justice and Stability

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The Question

We will consider two arguments in defense of the view that we should be cautious in changing the laws and other rules that guide our social and political life – even in cases when we know that the changes will further justice.

We will criticize the first argument but defend the second one.

1. The Argument from Expectations

The argument has two main premises.

According to the first (value) premise, institutional reforms are morally problematic as far as they disappoint people's reasonable expectations. According to the second (empirical) premise, institutional reforms tend to disappoint people's reasonable expectations. The conclusion of the argument is that institutional reforms

A Problem

However, the empirical premise of the Argument from Expectations is questionable. The argument is based on the assumption that institutional reforms “tend to disappointment” people’s reasonable expectations, but it is unclear whether reforms in fact have close relations to disappointment of a relevant kind. No doubt, those who benefit from social stagnation are

2. The Planning Argument

Like the Argument from Expectations, the Planning Argument has two main premises. The first premise is the claim that we have a *prima facie* moral obligation not to complicate people's task too much when they try to make rational and detailed (long-term) plans. The second premise is the empirical statement that in certain circumstances institutional reforms – including reforms that may further justice – tend to complicate the

A Defense

- A. To attack against individuals' chance to make rational plans is to attack against their *freedom and agency*.
- B. If someone thinks that we do *not* live in circumstances where institutional reforms tend to complicate the making of rational and detailed plans, it seems that she has the *burden of proof* to show that this is so.

Conclusion

Possibly, there are cases in which the value of stability is more important than the value of distributive justice. Stability is important as it allows people to make rational plans and brings about feelings of security and continuity.

The value of promoting stability is only one value among many that we would like our

Thank you!