

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2018 · 10 marks

Comment on distributive justice in about 150 words.

• FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 fair allocation of benefits + burdens → **Aristotle's** classical form, distinct from corrective justice

R2 not whether to distribute but on what basis → the criterion is the real question

Body flow

definition (honour / wealth / assets / offices) → **Miller's** three criteria: rights / desert / need → mapping: **Hume**—rights—hierarchy / **Spencer**—desert—market / **Kropotkin**—need—solidarity → **Miller's** synthesis (merit + welfare) → **Rawls**: primary goods → Difference Principle → least advantaged → social + natural lottery

Counter-view

single-criterion positions pull apart → market-desert (**Spencer**) vs need (**Kropotkin**) → neither market alone nor redistribution alone suffices

Conclusion routes

R1 distributive justice = combining desert with need, not choosing

R2 modern theory (**Miller**, **Rawls**) leans to synthesis — efficiency with fairness for the worst-off

Distributive justice concerns the fair allocation of the benefits and burdens of social life - honour, wealth, assets and offices. Aristotle gave its classical form, distinguishing it from corrective justice and tying distribution to a just principle, not equal shares.

The real question is the basis of distribution. Following David Miller, in *Social Justice*, three criteria compete - acknowledged rights, desert and need - each connected to a social form: David Hume with rights & hierarchy, Herbert Spencer with desert and the market, Peter Kropotkin with need and solidarity. Miller argues that merit and welfare must be combined, since the market alone widens inequality while redistribution alone ignores efforts.

John Rawls proposes the modern view. He treats distribution as the fair sharing of primary social goods, and his Difference Principle permits inequality only

when it benefits the least advantage, correcting misfortune from the social and natural lottery.

Distributive justice thus turns on combining desert with need, not choosing between them.