The Systemic View on Economic Injustice

And Why It Matters

Name student: M.F.A. van den Bos
Student number: 0367084
Email: m.f.a.vandenbos@students.uu.nl
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ingrid Robeyns
Course: MA Thesis
Date: 06-16-2024
Word count: 15.344

Abstract

Economic injustice remains one of the most pressing and complex challenges of our time, critically examined by scholars such as Thomas Piketty, Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Elizabeth Anderson. This thesis seeks to explore the multifaceted nature of economic injustice, analyzing it through the lenses of political philosophy, sociology, economics, and critical theory to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing economic disparities.

The central research question investigates whether economic injustice should be understood as structural or systemic, using Sally Haslanger's distinction to clarify the nature of economic disparities and their underlying mechanisms. The thesis argues that existing views on economic injustice often fail to fully account for its systemic nature. Consequently, it contends that economic injustice must be seen as both a structural and systemic phenomenon, deeply embedded in societal institutions and practices.

By examining key theories from scholars such as John Rawls, Sen, and Anderson, alongside interdisciplinary insights from intersectionality and critical realism, the thesis highlights the interconnectedness and adaptability of systemic injustices. It emphasizes the need for multifaceted policy interventions that target both structural barriers and the broader systemic factors that perpetuate economic disparities.

Through a critical engagement with the Dutch educational system as a case study, the thesis illustrates how structural injustices perpetuate socio-economic divides and argues for comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of inequality embedded within societal norms, values, and power dynamics. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the debate on economic injustice by offering innovative solutions grounded in a nuanced understanding of its structural and systemic dimensions.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Economic injustice remains one of our time's pressing and complex challenges. Scholars such as Thomas Piketty in *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2014) and Joseph Stiglitz in *The Price of Inequality* (2013) have highlighted the growing economic divides and their detrimental effects on democracy and social stability. Amartya Sen, in *Development as Freedom* (1999), and Elizabeth Anderson, in *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives (and Why We Don't Talk about It)* (2017), emphasize the ethical dimensions and urgent need to address economic disparities. Reports from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Inequality Lab consistently identify economic inequality as a major global risk, while Oxfam International's annual inequality reports advocate for systemic changes (UNDP 2020; Chancel et al. 2022; Ahmed et al. 2022; Oxfam 2023).

This thesis seeks to explore and understand its multifaceted nature, examining it through the lenses of political philosophy, sociology, economics, and critical theory. By integrating these perspectives, the thesis aims to provide a comprehensive framework that captures the complexity of economic disparities and proposes pathways for achieving greater economic justice.

The central question guiding this research–whether economic injustice should be understood as structural or systemic, following Haslanger's distinction–aims to clarify the nature of economic disparities and their underlying mechanisms. This requires a thorough analysis of current theories and concepts within political philosophy, as these frameworks offer diverse perspectives on justice and power dynamics. Additionally, incorporating insights from interdisciplinary fields enhances the understanding of how economic injustices manifest and persist, providing a more comprehensive view of their causes and potential remedies. This approach thoroughly examines economic injustice based on both philosophical precision and practical relevance.

The thesis contends that many existing views on economic injustice fail to fully account for its systemic nature. Consequently, this research will argue that economic injustice must be seen as both a structural and systemic phenomenon, deeply embedded in and perpetuated by societal institutions and practices.

To achieve this, the thesis is structured around several key objectives. First, it aims to define and distinguish economic injustice from related concepts such as economic inequality. This distinction is crucial for understanding economic disparities' broader implications and formulating effective responses.

To systematically approach the research question, the thesis will classify economic injustice into three distinct perspectives: individualistic, structural, and systemic. Each perspective offers unique insights into economic disparities' root causes and implications, necessitating a multifaceted analysis to develop effective solutions.

Next, the thesis will explore the individualistic perspective on economic injustice, which attributes disparities to personal choices, efforts, and abilities. This viewpoint aligns with the meritocratic ideal, suggesting that individuals succeed or fail based on their own merits. However, I will argue that this perspective often overlooks the broader societal and structural factors that influence individual outcomes. Therefore, the thesis will critically assess theories that emphasize personal responsibility and merit, highlighting their limitations in addressing the root causes of economic injustice.

The focus will then shift to structural approaches, which consider how societal systems and institutions perpetuate economic inequalities. Key theories from scholars such as John Rawls, Sen, and Anderson will be examined to understand how structural factors, such as education systems, labor markets, and social policies, shape economic outcomes. But I will also look at intersectionality, which does acknowledge some of the systemic issues we should consider. All these approaches recognize that individuals' opportunities are significantly influenced by the structures within which they live, emphasizing the need for institutional reforms to promote fairness and equity.

Building on the structural perspective, the thesis will argue for a systemic understanding of economic injustice. This perspective highlights how economic injustices are not only a result of specific policies or practices but are also sustained by broader societal norms, values, and power dynamics. The thesis will emphasize the importance of comprehensive, multi-level interventions to dismantle these entrenched inequalities by examining the systemic nature of economic injustice.

In conclusion, this thesis aims to significantly contribute to the debate on economic injustice by offering a framework that integrates individual, structural, and systemic perspectives. I will thoroughly critique existing theories, propose new insights into understanding economic disparities, and suggest practical pathways for achieving economic justice. By situating the research within the broader literature and societal debates, I aspire to enhance the discourse on economic justice and offer innovative solutions.

Chapter 1: Defining Economic Injustice

In his book *The Concept of Injustice*, Eric Heinze (2012) explores how Injustice is viewed throughout history. In his last chapter, he discusses how the concept of modernity is tied to the idea that societies driven by Reason are meant to become more efficient and productive. In these modern societies, justice often manifests through comprehensive, systematic, and technocratic methods influenced by thinkers like Bentham and Mill (utilitarianism) and Rawls (liberalism). Justice, as portrayed in modernity, is deeply rooted in measurement, often leading to what, I believe, could be translated as systemic injustices (Heinze 2012, 153).

Economic injustice is commonly understood as focusing on fairness and ethical dimensions of resource distribution. For instance, Will Kymlicka (2002, 177–85) explains that under Marxist theory, exploitation occurs when capitalists extract more value from workers' labor than they compensate them for, which is seen as a form of injustice. This view reflects observable disparities in income, access to resources, and opportunities for advancement (Rawls 1971; Fraser and Honneth 2003; Bowles, Gintis, and Osborne Groves 2005; Sayer 2009; Freeman 2018; O'Neill 2018; Olsaretti 2018; among others). Such inequalities are often seen as inherent to the economic systems in place and can be attributed to various factors (Marx 1974; Horwitz 1976; Okun 2015; among others). To provide a comprehensive understanding of economic injustice, I argue that it can be examined through three distinct perspectives: individual, structural, and systemic. I suggest considering this perspective to simplify the analysis and support my argument. However, I do not mean to imply that it is the only perspective to consider. The structural and systemic distinctions are derived from Sally Haslanger's description (Haslanger 2023, 22). Each perspective offers a way to analyze economic disparities' root causes and implications.

- Individually: This view suggests that economic inequalities result from individual shortcomings and differences in effort, skills, and choices. It aligns with the meritocratic ideal, but I will argue that it overlooks broader societal influences.
- Structurally: Structural injustice involves unfair societal systems and practices that distort values and cause harm, often through unjust resource distribution and violations of democratic equality. It emphasizes the role of unjust policies, social norms, and historical contexts in shaping economic outcomes. It recognizes that individuals' opportunities and outcomes are significantly influenced by the structures within which they live, emphasizing the importance of addressing institutional and policy-driven factors to mitigate economic inequalities that come from unjust practices.

- Systemically: The systemic perspective delves deeper into economic injustice's entrenched and self-reinforcing nature. Systemic injustice refers to the deeply embedded structures that perpetuate economic disparities over time, making them resistant to change. These structures adapt and evolve, often shaping individual identities and societal expectations to align with the existing unjust system. I will argue that this perspective is crucial for understanding how economic inequalities are sustained and derived from injustices and why they are challenging to dismantle.

By exploring these three perspectives–individual, structural, and systemic–I argue for a more comprehensive framework to understand economic injustice. In the subsequent chapters of this thesis, I will critically assess traditional theories that focus on individual shortcomings, examine current debates that highlight structural factors, and present my argument that economic injustices are fundamentally systemic. This will illustrate economic injustice's complex and multifaceted nature, emphasizing the need for systemic change to achieve true economic justice.

1.1. Economic Injustice vs. Economic Inequality

Before discussing the different perspectives on economic injustice, I want to clarify the difference between economic injustice and economic inequality. While related, economic injustice and economic inequality are distinct concepts often conflated in discussions about social justice.

Different theories offer various perspectives on economic inequalities. Utilitarianism evaluates them based on their impact on overall happiness, permitting inequality if it maximizes societal welfare (Mill [1863] 1998, 55). Rawls' justice as fairness distinguishes between inequality and injustice; inequality is acceptable if it benefits the least advantaged and ensures fair equality of opportunity (Rawls 1971, 60–113). Marxist theory sees economic inequality as inherent to capitalism, resulting from exploitation (Marx [1887] 1974). Kantian ethics focuses on duty and respect for persons, identifying economic injustice when it violates individuals' rights to dignity and autonomy (Driver 2007, 81–83).

These theories highlight that economic inequality and economic injustice, while related, are not synonymous. Inequality is not inherently unjust but becomes so when it contravenes certain ethical principles. Some views, however, directly pose forms of inequality as injustice, such as egalitarian theories (Arneson 2013). These will only be briefly discussed in the upcoming chapters. In this thesis, I will view economic inequality as referring to the uneven distribution of wealth, income, and opportunities within a society, measured and quantified by differences in economic outcomes such as income levels and access to resources. Economic

injustice, however, addresses the ethical dimensions of these disparities, examining the fairness of the processes and structures that lead to economic inequality.

Chapter 2: The Inadequacy of the Individualistic Perspective on Economic Injustice

Here, I will explain how the individualist perspective on economic injustice centers on the belief that economic disparities arise primarily from individual differences in effort, skill, and choice. While they do touch upon some structural points, they are mainly individualist as I will point out. This aligns with the meritocratic ideal, which holds that individuals should be rewarded based on their talents and hard work. Proponents of this perspective argue that personal responsibility and individual merit are the primary determinants of economic success, and thus, economic inequalities are a natural and justified outcome of these differences.

In this thesis, I will focus on a select group of theories and scholars that I believe are some of the most pertinent to the individual perspective on economic injustice. My aim is to illustrate how these views are represented in current debates and their implications. While I strive to engage with significant literature, it is possible that some important perspectives or critiques may not be addressed. The objective is not to refute each view individually but to examine them collectively, demonstrating that although these theories are valuable, they often overlook economic injustice's structural and systemic aspects. Therefore, I will concentrate on those theories and scholars that best serve this purpose.

2.1. Libertarianism

In this chapter, I choose to discuss Robert Nozick's libertarian view because it already illustrates the meritocratic ideal, which argues that economic disparities are justified if they result from individual efforts and choices and are highly individualistic. For example, Nozick's "entitlement theory" suggests that any resulting inequality is fair if a person earns wealth through hard work and fair transactions. This perspective helps us understand how proponents of the meritocratic ideal view economic success as a reward for personal merit, making Nozick's theory a key example for examining the strengths and limitations of this viewpoint in discussions of economic injustice.

Libertarians consider individual freedom to be the highest political value and see coercion as the opposite of that freedom. Libertarian theory, drawing from classical liberal

thinkers like John Locke, Adam Smith, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant, views the state's moral role as limited to enforcing rights that enable socioeconomic cooperation (van der Vossen and Christmas 2023).

Nozick's theories in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* represent the individualist approach to economic injustice by prioritizing individual liberty and property rights (Nozick 1984). According to Nozick's "entitlement theory," economic injustice arises when wealth is acquired or transferred through means that violate individual rights, such as theft, fraud, or coercion. He argues that economic justice is maintained through voluntary exchanges and respect for property rights, asserting that individuals have rights to their own labor and its products, while economic injustice occurs when these rights are infringed upon through coercion or redistribution (Hunt 2015, 158).

Nozick's libertarian perspective emphasizes individual autonomy in economic transactions. It asserts that justice is about the processes of acquiring and transferring property rather than achieving a specific distributional pattern. According to this perspective, if individual rights and voluntary transactions are respected, the resulting distribution of wealth, regardless of inequality, is just. Critics like G.A. Cohen (1995, 116–22) challenge Nozick by highlighting how self-ownership under capitalism can lead to exploitation, where capitalists benefit from workers' labor. This illustrates that the viewpoint can be critiqued using arguments of structural injustice, as exploitation occurs via the dominant capitalist system over which individuals lack control. This exploitation perpetuates power hierarchies as wealth accumulates with those already advantaged, creating generational inequality. Without intervention, the disparity widens, making it increasingly difficult for newer generations to attain equal opportunities, thereby reinforcing economic injustice.

To illustrate this, let me give examples from de Maagt and Robeyns (2017, 13–16), who argue that current inheritance practices and the relatively low tax burdens on inheritances contribute significantly to existing wealth inequality. This is because inherited wealth allows certain families to accumulate resources across generations without significant taxation, leading to a concentration of wealth. This concentration of wealth then undermines equal opportunities by giving wealthy individuals disproportionate influence over political and social systems, which can negatively impact democratic processes and values. This influence perpetuates unequal power dynamics, reinforcing economic injustice and exploitation in our current system.

In another article, Robeyns (2019, 255–58) argues that excessive wealth can harm political equality and democratic processes. Wealthy individuals can use their resources to exert disproportionate influence over politics and policy-making, which distorts democratic

representation and decision-making, leading to a society where the voices of the less wealthy are marginalized. This creates an unequal power dynamic that not only perpetuates economic injustice but also threatens the foundational values of democracy by allowing the wealthy to dominate political discourse and decisions.

Nozick might respond that this would nevertheless be an injustice on the merit of the benefactor who has earned the wealth through personal effort and wishes to pass it on to their chosen heirs. From his perspective, this merit-based argument against inheritance tax would be compelling because it aligns with the principle of respecting individual rights and freedoms. However, de Maagt and Robeyns (2017, 11–12) assert that inheritance should be viewed as unearned wealth because the recipient has not worked for it. For example, while someone who builds a successful business through effort deserves their wealth in this view, inherited wealth simply results from being born into a wealthy family, perpetuating advantages based on family background. This would actually undermine the principle that opportunities and wealth should reward individual effort and merit.

Exploring the merit argument is interesting because it aligns with the libertarian perspective, which emphasizes individual responsibility and freedom. Libertarians believe that wealth should be distributed based on personal effort and contributions (you could say, merit or desert), as this respects individual rights and rewards hard work and initiative. These critiques of inheritance and the merit argument are only examples of how not incorporating structural approaches more thoroughly can lead to contradictory outcomes. However, there are also arguments to give against merit and desert-based approaches to justice. This leads me to explore meritocracy and desert-based theories in the next part.

2.2. The Meritocratic Ideal and Desert-Based Justice

Here, I will explore merit and desert-based arguments as individualist approaches to economic injustice. To make my point, I will limit myself to discussing some influential scholars. I will argue that these 'ideals' for justice cannot be incorporated because they lack the structural and systemic depth to assure economic justice.

Zalta (2023) discusses meritocracy as a system where rewards and positions are allocated based on individual talent, effort, and achievement. Historically embraced by various cultures and philosophies, it emphasizes that people should be rewarded according to their merit, extending beyond political power to all social goods, as advocated by Aristotle. "Merit" encompasses worth, quality, virtue, or excellence, but its definition varies by context. Meritocracy also demands equal opportunity, ensuring a "level playing field" where everyone

has an equal chance to succeed (Mulligan 2023, section 2.3). This principle influences policies like inheritance taxes and public education and involves debates about addressing natural advantages and the state's role in ensuring equal opportunity for all (Mulligan 2023, sections 1-2).

Aristotle suggested that justice involves proportional equality, where people receive rewards in proportion to their contributions (Keyt 1991, 48). David Miller supports meritocracy with reservations, acknowledging it as one of several principles of justice (alongside equality and need). He believes a just society rewards people based on their social contributions, aligning with Aristotelian proportional equality (Miller 1976, 166). Alternatively, Mulligan's monistic view argues that justice is solely about giving people what they deserve based on merit, emphasizing equal opportunity and judging individuals solely on their merits (Mulligan 2017, 3–5, 30–33, 55–58). One of Mulligan's justifications is that meritocracy's intuitive appeal is rooted in the widespread belief that it is a just system, a sentiment stable across various demographics and cultures. Additionally, George Sher's autonomy argument suggests that merit-based distribution respects individual autonomy and dignity by considering only relevant attributes like skills and talents, thus giving people control over their lives (Sher 1987, 121).

Most of these authors do believe that meritocracy, while maybe desirable, is not achieved in our current system. For example, Mulligan (2017, 6–8) argues that although meritocracy should be an aspiration, we do not currently live in one. Meritocracy highlights a common thread that justice involves proportionality and merit, whether seen through the lens of equal opportunity, social contributions, or individual autonomy and dignity. In this sense, economic injustice is characterized by deviations from meritocratic principles, such as lack of proportional rewards, neglect of equality and need, unequal opportunities, and biases based on irrelevant attributes.

I would also like to discuss the desert-based theories here, as I believe my critique will remain the same for both. While related to meritocracy, desert-based theories differ by focusing on what individuals deserve based on their efforts and contributions rather than solely on their social contributions or outcomes. Economic injustice occurs when people do not receive what they deserve. This perspective, rooted in the works of philosophers like Aristotle, Leibniz, and Mill, contrasts with other justice theories that might prioritize equality or need (Feldman and Skow 2020, section 5). Fred Feldman explores various interpretations of desert, acknowledging the challenges in implementing desert-based justice but proposing nuanced applications like Political Economic Desertism (Feldman and Skow 2020, section 5; Feldman 1995c; 1995b; 1995a; 2007). Feldman suggests that justice can be measured by governments' fair distribution

of economic and political goods. From a desertist perspective, economic injustice occurs when individuals do not receive economic rewards proportional to their contributions ánd efforts. T.M. Scanlon critiques desertist theories, which argue that people deserve economic benefits based on their actions or efforts, for not adequately explaining why some individuals should receive more benefits than others. He suggests that any differences in economic benefits must be justified within the context of a broader and more comprehensive system of justice rather than solely on individual merit (Scanlon 2018, 119–30). This implies that factors beyond personal effort, such as societal structures and fairness, need to be considered to justify economic inequalities.

Some other important scholars, while not endorsing meritocracy or desert-based theories per se, do touch upon the subject. For instance, although primarily known for his theory of justice, Rawls (1971, 106–8) addresses this by emphasizing the importance of fair equality of opportunity. In *A Theory of Justice*, he argues that while merit should be rewarded, societal structures must ensure that everyone has a fair chance to develop their talents. This explanation reveals that success is not solely determined by an individual's merit or skills. Rawls critiques this individual account using structural means.

Meritocracy and desert-based theories are important views to discuss in the individual dimension of economic injustice because they resonate deeply with people's inherent sense of fairness and justice. Empirically, meritocratic principles are supported across diverse fields such as equity theory, experimental economics, child development, evolutionary psychology, and neuroeconomics.[1] These disciplines consistently demonstrate that individuals across various demographics–race, gender, socioeconomic class, political persuasion, and culture–find meritocratic distribution intuitively appealing. Nevertheless, the argument has some structuralist aspects, including the demand for equal opportunity, which requires measures to ensure a "level playing field". For instance, Rawls' critique emphasizes that societal structures must ensure that everyone has a fair chance to develop their talents, indicating the need for structural reforms to support a merit-based system.

The way I see it, the meritocratic ideal and desert-based theories' focus on individual talent, contributions, and merit raises significant issues related to power dynamics and structural inequalities. Who decides what constitutes "contributions," "merit," and which "talents" are valuable? Often, those in power determine these criteria, reinforcing existing hierarchies and marginalizing those whose skills and contributions are not recognized by the dominant group.

[1] This is stated and backed by Mulligan (2023), section 4.1. with empirical evidence.

For instance, a person with creative talents may be overlooked in a system that values analytical skills more highly, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion. Furthermore, individuals with specific needs, such as those who are neurodiverse, may struggle to succeed in environments designed around conventional notions of merit and talent. These environments typically do not accommodate their unique learning styles and strengths, leading to difficulties in achieving success (Griffin and Pollak 2009, 23–41). Increased support and inclusive practices in education are necessary to serve these individuals better, ensuring they are not disadvantaged by conventional expectations (Griffin and Pollak 2009, 23–41). Moreover, these individuals may possess unique abilities that are not acknowledged or supported by current structures, limiting their opportunities to prosper. This highlights fundamental flaws in the meritocratic ideal and desert-based theories: it inherently favors those who fit the established norms of success, ignoring the diverse array of human capabilities and the structural barriers that prevent many from reaching their potential. Thus, by not addressing these structural ánd systemic problems, the meritocratic system and other desert-based theories inadequately support true equal opportunity and perpetuate economic and social injustice.

2.3. Liberal Theories of Social Justice and Economic Injustice

Liberal theories of social justice are important to the debate as they have significantly shaped contemporary debates on fairness and equality. Grounded in principles articulated by Rawls and further developed by scholars such as Ronald Dworkin and Nozick, these theories provide foundational frameworks for discussing the distribution of resources and individual rights. Their emphasis on creating a just society through fair distribution and the protection of individual freedoms continues to influence policy-making and ethical discussions, making them essential for a comprehensive analysis of economic injustice.

Despite acknowledging some structural aspects, I categorize liberal theories within the individualist approach because they fundamentally focus on the rights and benefits of individuals rather than groups or collectives. They primarily address how institutions can create equal opportunities for individuals without fundamentally challenging the deeper structures that perpetuate inequality. I will show that this focus limits their ability to fully address the entrenched and self-reinforcing nature of economic disparities.

Rawls introduced the concept of the 'difference principle,' which posits that inequalities are justifiable only if they benefit the least advantaged members of society (Rawls 1971, 75–78). This principle has spurred debate among liberal political philosophers, leading to what is now often referred to as liberal egalitarianism. This approach emphasizes that a just society

must ensure equal wealth and opportunities unless an unequal distribution improves the situation of the most disadvantaged. This liberal view is inherently individualistic because it centers on the rights and benefits of individuals rather than groups or collectives. The focus is on creating a society where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed, and any inequalities must improve the individual prospects of those worst off (Courtland, Gaus, and Schmidtz 2022, section 2.3).

Prominent scholars who have developed and critiqued these ideas include Dworkin, who emphasized the commitment to equality, and Nozick, who critiqued Rawls's theory by arguing that any patterned distribution principle would require constant interference with individuals' lives. Friedrich Hayek (1982, 85–133) also criticized the idea of social justice as a 'mirage,' arguing that true freedom is found in a decentralized market where property rights are respected and outcomes are not predetermined by any central authority. Milton Friedman (Friedman 1968, 12–13), another prominent libertarian, argued that economic freedom is essential for political freedom and that minimal government intervention ensures that the market can allocate resources and rewards based on individual merit and effort. He posited that government interventions often lead to inefficiencies and distortions, which hinder economic growth and individual freedom.

Incorporating the republican conception of liberty adds another layer of understanding to this debate. Republican liberty focuses on freedom as the absence of domination. According to Philip Pettit, being free means not living under the arbitrary power of another (Pettit 1996, 576; 2002, 5). Unlike traditional liberalism, which often focuses on negative liberty (freedom from interference) or positive liberty (the capacity to achieve one's potential), republican liberty is about ensuring that no individual or entity holds unchecked power over others (E. Anderson 2018, 91). Thus, the individualist approach in liberal theories of social justice is complemented by the republican emphasis on preventing domination, suggesting that a just society requires both fair distribution of resources and safeguards against arbitrary power (against power structures).

While the liberal view of social justice is inherently individualistic, focusing primarily on the rights and benefits of individuals rather than groups or collectives, it still acknowledges structural injustices through mechanisms arguing that a just society must ensure equal opportunities unless an unequal distribution improves the situation of the most disadvantaged. This acknowledgment shows an awareness of structural issues affecting individuals, aiming to create equal opportunities for success. However, the liberal approach remains individualist because it does not fundamentally challenge the structures that produce and perpetuate

inequality; instead, it works within these structures to improve individual outcomes. Liberalism can be seen as inadequate because it does not seek to overhaul the underlying systems of power and domination. Instead, it focuses on mitigating their effects on individuals, which is not sufficient to achieve social justice since even if these systems become non-dominative, the norms and values they have already embedded in our society will persist.

Let me explain. First, we can see this is also a psychological issue, as intersectionality addresses, which I will point out later. For example, societal expectations and stereotypes related to race, gender, and class can persist even if legal inequalities are addressed.[2] Second, from a systemic perspective, structures adapt and evolve, often shaping individual identities and societal expectations to align with the existing unjust system. Thus, while liberal theories provide important tools for addressing economic injustice, they fall short of comprehensively addressing the root causes of systemic inequality. To further elevate this argument, I will discuss this in the explanation of structural and systemic injustice theories.

2.4. Some overall critiques

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the individualist perspective on economic injustice emphasizes personal responsibility, suggesting that economic disparities result from differences in effort, choices, and abilities. Scholars advocating this view highlight personal agency and individual decisions in shaping economic success. However, as I have tried to demonstrate, they fail to acknowledge structural issues. Other critics also argue that this perspective overlooks broader societal influences and structural factors impacting economic outcomes. For example, Iris Marion Young (1990, 21–75) points out that it neglects structural and institutional factors, emphasizing social group differences and systemic discrimination. Sen (1995, 146–51) challenges the focus on merit by addressing structural barriers that limit opportunities, while Nancy Fraser (Fraser 2007, 3–27) calls for redistributing resources to tackle structural inequalities and achieve justice.

Given these critiques and the ones I mentioned throughout this chapter, it becomes evident that we should explore alternative perspectives that account for these broader influences. Therefore, the next chapter will delve into the structural view of economic injustice, emphasizing the role of societal systems and institutions in perpetuating economic inequalities.

[2] E.g., even if laws mandate equal pay for equal work, gender stereotypes that undervalue women's contributions can persist, leading to ongoing disparities in promotions and career advancement.

Chapter 3: The Structural View of Economic Injustice

The structural view of economic injustice emphasizes the role of societal systems and institutions in perpetuating economic inequalities. Unlike the individual perspective, which attributes disparities to personal failings or differences, the structural approach recognizes the profound influence of historical, political, and social contexts. This section will explore key theories and scholarly works that have shaped the understanding of structural economic injustice. It will also become evident that some of these theories do touch upon systemic issues, highlighting their relevance to our understanding of economic injustice. However, these discussions tend to focus on individual systems rather than explicitly addressing how systemic issues are interconnected and how they change and develop to influence individual identities and societal expectations, further reinforcing the existing unjust system within the injustices they describe. Therefore, I will categorize them under the structural view.

3.1. Structural Injustice and Distributive Justice

Distributive justice examines the fairness of how wealth, opportunities, and privileges are allocated within a society. It encompasses a range of theories that offer different perspectives on what constitutes a just distribution. When discussing structural approaches to economic injustice, it is essential to consider distributive justice theories because they offer frameworks for assessing and guiding the distribution of economic benefits and burdens. By establishing ethical guidelines and principles for distribution, these theories influence economic policies and practices, which in turn affect the overall economic health of a society, including levels of inequality and access to resources. Key theories include Rawls' Difference Principle, Egalitarianism, Welfare-Based Principles, and Feminist Principles, highlighting different aspects of justice and providing insights into how societal structures can be designed or reformed to promote fairness and equality. Other distributive justice theories, such as Desert-Based and Libertarian Principles, align with the individual approach and have been discussed in the previous part.

For now, I will focus exclusively on Rawls's distributive justice because this will allow for an in-depth exploration of its principles and applications. Rawls's framework, particularly the Difference Principle, provides a robust basis for discussing economic justice and the role of institutions in mitigating inequalities. By concentrating on Rawls, I can thoroughly analyze how his principles address contemporary issues without the need to delve into each distributive justice theory separately, thus maintaining a clear and coherent argument.

Furthermore, since other distributive justice theories like Welfare-Based Principles, Egalitarianism, and Feminist Principles encounter similar problems related to systemic and structural issues, a focused critique and enhancement of Rawls's framework can effectively address these broader concerns. This approach allows for a more detailed and nuanced discussion of how Rawls's principles can be applied and potentially improved to tackle economic injustice comprehensively.

Rawls' Difference Principle, a part of his broader theory of justice as fairness, permits inequalities only if they benefit the least advantaged. Rawls emphasizes the importance of designing institutions that ensure fair opportunities and improve the welfare of the least well-off, making his approach fundamentally structural (Rawls 1971, 60–83). Samuel Freeman, in his book *Liberalism and Distributive Justice*, expands on this by distinguishing between classical and high liberal traditions. Classical liberals prioritize robust private property rights and economic liberties almost equally with personal liberties, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, whereas high liberals, influenced by John Stuart Mill and Rawls, do not consider economic liberties as basic and emphasize more regulated markets to ensure fair distribution of wealth and opportunities (Freeman 2018, 2–23).

Freeman addresses significant critiques of Rawls's principles of justice by Sen and Cohen, aiming to demonstrate their practical relevance and adaptability. Cohen criticizes Rawls for not adequately addressing the role of individuals in achieving justice, suggesting that Rawls's principles should also guide personal behavior (Freeman 2018, 295–318). Here, we see that even if a theory is inherently structural, if there is a lack of the individual perspective, it can become inadequate as a theory of (economic) justice. As I stated earlier, the individualist approach seems inadequate, but this does not mean we should dismiss it altogether.

Freeman responds by emphasizing that Rawls's principles are primarily designed to apply to society's basic structures–such as laws and institutions–rather than individual actions. This approach allows for a "division of moral labor," where institutions are responsible for ensuring justice, thus enabling individuals to pursue diverse values and goals without bearing the entire burden of creating a just society (Freeman 2018, 295–318). Freeman's response maintains that individual and structural approaches to justice should be addressed separately to uphold justice within a society effectively. However, viewing individual and structural approaches to justice separately can be inadequate because it overlooks the interconnectedness between personal behaviors and societal structures. For example, if institutions alone are tasked with ensuring justice, individual actions that perpetuate inequality, such as discriminatory hiring practices or biased decision-making, may remain unaddressed. Integrating both perspectives is

crucial to fully addressing and mitigating economic injustices, as personal actions often reinforce and are influenced by systemic and structural conditions. This is something that intersectionality, which I will address later, asserts as well.

On the other hand, Sen argues that Rawls's focus on ideal theory–imagining a perfectly just society–is too abstract and does not help in making real-world decisions. Freeman counters this by explaining that Rawls's ideal theory provides a clear goal and framework for justice, guiding us in identifying and addressing injustices in our imperfect world. By having an ideal standard, policymakers can ensure their actions are consistently aimed at achieving long-term justice rather than settling for short-term fixes that may not address underlying issues. Freeman illustrates that Rawls's principles can effectively guide practical decisions in areas like healthcare, education, and economic redistribution. For instance, policies ensuring universal access to healthcare and education align with Rawls's principle of fair equality of opportunity, helping individuals to develop their capacities and compete fairly. Similarly, the difference principle can guide tax policies to ensure they benefit the least advantaged members of society. By applying these principles, Freeman shows that Rawls's theory is not just an abstract ideal but a practical tool for creating fairer and more equitable social structures (Freeman 2018, 257–93).

While Freeman's response to Sen's critique highlights the practical applications of Rawls's principles, it does not fully address the underlying power dynamics and systemic issues that perpetuate injustice. Ideal theory may provide a clear framework for justice, but it often overlooks how entrenched interests and power imbalances can obstruct the implementation of just policies. Without addressing these systemic barriers, even well-intentioned policies may fail to achieve their intended outcomes. For instance, universal access to healthcare and education may still be undermined by socioeconomic inequalities and institutional biases that Rawls's theory does not explicitly confront. Like a policy ensuring free healthcare and education for all might still fall short if poorer communities lack nearby facilities or face discrimination, as will be discussed with intersectionality. Thus, Freeman's approach, while valuable, may not be sufficient to tackle the deep-rooted and complex nature of systemic injustice. Moreover, who determines what policies are needed, and on what basis can you engage in this discussion? There are many things that Rawl's theory does not address that really need to be addressed when looking at systemic issues.

Theories such as Welfare-Based Principles, Egalitarianism, and Feminist Principles encounter similar problems related to systemic and structural issues. While I will not discuss them in-depth, I will highlight some of these problems here. For instance, Welfare-Based

Principles aim to maximize overall welfare but often overlook entrenched power structures and historical inequalities that perpetuate economic injustice (Lamont and Favor 2017, section 5). Egalitarianism, while advocating for equal distribution in different ways, faces practical challenges like measuring and comparing different goods and services and often fails to account for the dynamic nature of societal inequalities (Arneson 2013). Feminist Principles highlight gendered economic disadvantages but may not fully resolve underlying injustices, as they often focus on immediate structural reforms without addressing deeper systemic causes (Lamont and Favor 2017, section 6). However, I do believe the Feminist Principles better align with the systemic view and are very promising in this regard. Overall, these limitations reinforce the need for a comprehensive approach with systemic considerations to address economic disparities effectively.

3.2. Policy and Institutional Interventions

Sen's capability approach and Anderson's theory of democratic equality differ from traditional distributive justice theories by actively acknowledging the differences in people's abilities and circumstances (due to structural and even systemic barriers) and highlighting institutions' crucial role in perpetuating or alleviating injustices. Sen's approach emphasizes enhancing individuals' capabilities, such as access to education and healthcare, while Anderson's theory focuses on ensuring institutions enable equal participation by removing structural barriers to equality. I aim to illustrate here how these structuralist approaches touch upon systemic issues but should be taken further than they do now.

Sen's capability approach represents a significant shift in thinking about economic injustice by focusing not merely on the distribution of resources but on what individuals can do and be–their capabilities. This approach is structural in nature because it goes beyond surface-level distributions and delves into the foundational elements that shape people's abilities to lead fulfilling lives. Instead of measuring justice solely by income or wealth, Sen emphasizes individuals' capabilities, such as access to education, healthcare, and the ability to participate in civic life. Societal structures and institutions influence these capabilities, enhancing or restricting them. Sen identifies structural inequalities in education, health, and social services as critical barriers to developing capabilities. These inequalities are deeply embedded in the social and economic systems, so addressing the underlying structural factors that perpetuate them is necessary. Sen's approach calls for policy interventions that target these structural barriers. For example, ensuring universal access to quality education and healthcare empowers individuals by providing them with the necessary tools and resources to succeed. This, in turn,

can lead to better job opportunities and higher earnings, thereby promoting greater economic justice by reducing inequalities and enabling a fairer distribution of wealth and opportunities. These policies must be designed to restructure societal frameworks that limit opportunities for disadvantaged groups (Sen 2001, 5–91).

Anderson's theory of democratic equality further elaborates on the structural aspects of economic injustice by emphasizing the role of institutions in ensuring that individuals can participate as equals in a democratic society. Anderson argues that justice requires institutions that enable individuals to develop capabilities necessary for equal participation in society. This involves providing resources and designing institutions that remove structural barriers to equality. Anderson highlights structural barriers preventing equal participation, such as discriminatory practices, unequal access to education and healthcare, and economic insecurity. Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive policy reforms that change the underlying institutional frameworks. Anderson advocates for policies that promote educational access, healthcare, and economic security. These policies aim to restructure societal institutions to provide a fair and equal playing field for all individuals, ensuring everyone can develop their capabilities and participate fully in society (Anderson 1999, 287–312).

Both Sen and Anderson's frameworks can be viewed as structural because they focus on the foundational aspects of societal systems that shape individuals' opportunities and outcomes. Structural approaches to economic injustice recognize that economic inequalities are deeply rooted in historical, social, and institutional contexts. They do this more comprehensively than the Distributive Justice theories I discussed earlier. Since addressing these inequalities requires changing the structures that perpetuate them, policies and interventions need to target the root causes of inequality rather than merely its symptoms. Institutions play a crucial role in shaping economic outcomes, and therefore, effective policies must consider how institutions can be designed or reformed to eliminate structural barriers and promote justice.

While Sen's capability approach and Anderson's theory of democratic equality acknowledge the structural barriers that affect people's abilities and opportunities, they do not fully address the systemic nature of these injustices. Sen's focus on enhancing individuals' capabilities and Anderson's emphasis on institutions ensuring equal participation highlight critical aspects of structural inequalities. However, they could be further developed by incorporating a deeper understanding of systemic issues–those deeply embedded, self-reinforcing structures that perpetuate economic disparities. Systemic injustices shape individual identities and societal expectations, adapting over time to maintain the status quo. To effectively

combat economic injustice, these theories should consider the dynamic and pervasive nature of systemic barriers, proposing reforms that not only address structural inequalities but also dismantle the underlying systems that sustain them. For instance, policies must not only provide access to resources but also challenge and change the cultural and institutional norms that reinforce inequities.

3.3. Structural Injustice and Intersectionality

Recent debates that I would put under structural economic injustice but do have significant systemic potential have increasingly focused on the intersectionality of race, gender, and class. Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991; 1998), examines how different forms of discrimination and oppression intersect and interact, creating unique and compounded disadvantages for certain groups.

Crenshaw is a foundational figure in the study of intersectionality. Her work highlights how race, gender, and class intersect to create distinct experiences of oppression and disadvantage. Her concept of intersectionality is explicitly structural because it identifies the ways in which institutional structures, such as the legal system and labor markets, perpetuate inequalities. For example, African American women may face unique economic challenges that are not fully addressed by policies targeting either racial or gender inequality alone (Crenshaw 1998, 314–34). Crenshaw's theory implicitly touches on systemic issues by showing how these intersecting forms of oppression create pervasive and self-reinforcing patterns of disadvantage. Patricia Hill Collins' work (Collins 2002, 10–12) also explores how intersecting social identities, particularly race and gender, shape individuals' experiences and opportunities. Collins argues that structural inequalities cannot be fully understood or addressed without considering how these intersections create distinct forms of disadvantage. Her contributions are explicitly structural as they highlight the institutional and cultural barriers that intersecting identities encounter. Moreover, Collins' work implicitly acknowledges systemic dimensions by discussing how these structural barriers are deeply embedded in societal norms and practices, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of economic injustice. This recognition points to the need for policies that address surface-level disparities and target the underlying systemic factors that sustain them (Collins 2002, 224–44).

Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth's (2003, 65–136) work on redistribution and recognition integrates economic and cultural dimensions of justice. Fraser argues that economic injustice (maldistribution) and cultural injustice (misrecognition) are interrelated and must be addressed together. Her theory is explicitly structural, as it emphasizes the need for institutional

reforms that redistribute resources and recognize diverse identities. Fraser implicitly engages with systemic issues by highlighting how these injustices are perpetuated through intertwined economic and cultural systems, which adapt to reinforce existing power dynamics. This dual approach underscores the complexity of addressing economic injustice, as it requires simultaneous interventions at multiple levels of society.

In their comprehensive review, Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013, 786–802) discuss the development and application of intersectionality in various fields. They highlight how intersectionality has been used to analyze complex social issues, including economic injustice. This work explicitly addresses structural aspects by showing how overlapping forms of discrimination manifest in different institutional contexts. Implicitly, it acknowledges systemic elements by demonstrating how these intersecting discriminations form an entrenched network of inequalities that are resistant to change. Their work calls for integrated policy approaches that address the multifaceted nature of structural and systemic injustices.

3.4. Policy Implications

The structuralist approach to economic injustice offers significant potential in addressing economic inequalities by emphasizing the role of societal systems and institutions. Key theories, such as Rawls' Difference Principle, Sen's capability approach, and Anderson's theory of democratic equality, provide robust frameworks for understanding and mitigating economic disparities. Rawls' focus on designing institutions that benefit the least advantaged, Sen's emphasis on enhancing individual capabilities, and Anderson's stress on enabling equal participation highlight the importance of structural interventions. These theories accentuate the need for policies that ensure fair distribution of wealth, opportunities, and resources, such as universal access to education and healthcare, which can enhance individuals' capabilities and opportunities.

However, while these theories are promising, they often miss the systemic depth required to address all issues comprehensively. They tend to focus on individual systems rather than explicitly addressing the interconnectedness of systemic issues and how they evolve to influence individual identities and societal expectations. For instance, Rawls' framework, though comprehensive in its structural approach, does not fully account for the entrenched power dynamics and systemic barriers that obstruct the implementation of just policies. Similarly, Sen's capability approach, while addressing structural inequalities, may not fully capture the adaptive and self-reinforcing nature of systemic injustices. While highlighting the role of institutions in ensuring equal participation, Anderson's theory also needs a deeper

engagement with systemic issues to effectively address the underlying power structures. Therefore, there is a need to move beyond structural explanations and incorporate a more systemic understanding of economic injustice to ensure that policies effectively address the root causes of inequality that are unjust.

Intersectionality appears most promising in this regard. It acknowledges how various social identities overlap and combine to form distinct and compounded disadvantages. I find this perspective fundamentally lacking in earlier theories since it is crucial for understanding how economic inequalities are sustained and why they are challenging to dismantle. Intersectionality acknowledges how race, gender, and class intersect to perpetuate economic injustices, highlighting the need for policy interventions addressing various forms of discrimination and oppression. For instance, policies ensuring universal access to healthcare and education, aligned with Rawls' principle of fair equality of opportunity and Anderson's emphasis on enabling equal participation, may still be undermined by socioeconomic inequalities and institutional biases that have adapted and evolved over time to have shaped individual identities and societal expectations of an unjust system if the systemic nature of these issues is not addressed. Therefore, a more thorough engagement with the systemic dimensions of economic injustice is necessary. This involves recognizing and dismantling the deeply entrenched power structures and institutional practices that perpetuate inequalities, ensuring that policies address surface-level disparities and target the underlying systemic factors that sustain them. I will more thoroughly discuss this in the next chapter.

In conclusion, while structuralist approaches to economic injustice provide valuable frameworks and interventions, they must incorporate a deeper understanding of systemic issues to be fully effective. Intersectionality offers a promising avenue for integrating structural and systemic perspectives, ensuring that policies address economic injustice’s multifaceted and interconnected nature. However, by more explicitly addressing systemic barriers and power dynamics, we can develop more effective solutions to economic injustice, creating a more just and equitable society.

Chapter 4: From Structural to Systemic

As I outlined in the previous chapter, unlike an individualistic view that primarily blames personal attributes and failings for economic inequalities, structural injustice emphasizes how societal structures create and perpetuate inequality. These injustices result in unequal treatment

or outcomes for certain groups due to institutional policies, practices, or norms. Nevertheless, I believe all of these views collectively contribute to our understanding of economic injustice. Each perspective sheds light on different facets of the issue.

Before getting into the systemic part, I will elaborate on how we should understand structural injustices. This is important because the structural approach sets the basis for the systemic view, as I will show here. To enrich our discourse, I will explore Haslanger's concept of structural injustice and her analysis of social structures, complemented by insights from other influential scholars in the field.

4.1. Haslanger's Definition and the "Invisible Foot"

Haslanger argues that social structures are essential for providing structural explanations in the social sciences (Haslanger 2016, 113). These structures help identify and critique structural injustices, provide contexts for human agency, and are formed by individual relationships. In other words, she explains that examining how societies are organized is essential to understanding why things happen the way they do. These organizations, known as social structures, act as invisible frameworks that shape how people behave and interact with each other. For instance, the rules, schedules, and hierarchies are all components of a school's social structure. Following Haslanger's argument, in order to comprehend why some students thrive while others face challenges we need to go beyond focusing solely on individual deficiencies and consider how the school is organized. Unfair rules or biases may disadvantage certain students, regardless of their hard work. This does not mean that individual attributions are dismissed entirely. It does mean that we should consider structural (and systemic) aspects when examining the nature of inequalities to understand if they are unjust.

Structural explanations differ from individualistic explanations by focusing on how the structure influences individual actions. Haslanger emphasizes that focusing only on individual actions is inadequate for understanding social issues. For example, an individual's success or failure may be better explained by their structural conditions rather than their personal attributes alone. Haslanger uses the concept of the "invisible foot" from Okin (1989) and Cudd (2006) to explain how structural factors contribute to ongoing injustices, such as the economic disadvantage of women compared to men. The term "invisible foot" refers to a metaphorical concept that critiques the "invisible hand" theory proposed by Adam Smith ([1776] 2000, 593–94).[3] While the "invisible hand" describes the self-regulating nature of the marketplace that

[3] The "invisible hand" was coined by economist Adam Smith in the 18th century. It describes how individuals inadvertently contribute to society's overall welfare while acting in their own self-interest. Through the forces of supply, demand, and competition, the invisible hand is said to allocate resources efficiently, promoting economic prosperity and societal benefits without the need for central planning or intervention.

purportedly leads to beneficial outcomes for society, the "invisible foot" suggests the opposite: it highlights how individual actions, motivated by self-interest, can lead to harmful or unjust outcomes, particularly in the context of social and economic inequalities (Okin 1989, 138; Cudd 2006, 148–51).[4]

For example, as Okin illustrates, women may decide to stay home and care for children because it seems economically rational if their partners earn higher wages, thereby maximizing the family's overall income and reducing childcare costs. However, this perpetuates gender inequality by excluding women from the workforce and undervaluing unpaid domestic labor. Similarly, Cudd explains that employers may pay women less or hire fewer women for high-paying roles to maximize profits, assuming women are more likely to take time off for family responsibilities or may leave the workforce temporarily. These assumptions and practices, while aimed at maintaining efficiency and reducing costs, collectively contribute to structural gender discrimination and a persistent gender wage gap. Thus, the "invisible foot" metaphor reveals how rational choices, when aggregated, can reinforce and perpetuate existing inequalities.

Similarly, Haslanger uses a hypothetical couple, Larry and Lisa, to demonstrate how structural conditions influence choices, perpetuating gender inequity. In the example, economic incentives, limited access to affordable childcare, societal norms, and employer biases collectively influence individual decisions, just as Okin and Cudd both illustrate. Men often earn higher wages than women, making it economically rational for the lower earner (typically the woman) to reduce work hours or leave the workforce to care for children. Cultural expectations reinforce this by promoting women as primary caregivers. Consequently, women face career advancement disadvantages and employer biases that view them as less committed, creating a feedback loop that justifies lower wages and fewer professional development opportunities for women. This structural dynamic forces women like Lisa into sacrificing their careers for family responsibilities, perpetuating economic disparities and reinforcing gender-based structural disadvantages. Therefore, social structures create a choice architecture that constrains behavior by limiting and organizing the possibilities available to individuals. Haslanger argues that understanding these constraints is crucial for explaining individual actions and identifying structural injustices (Haslanger 2016, 122–28).

By emphasizing structural explanations, Haslanger highlights the importance of addressing the broader social systems that perpetuate injustices. This perspective shifts the focus from blaming individuals to understanding and altering the structural conditions that limit

[4] The term "invisible foot" is not explicitly mentioned in Okin's "Justice, Gender, and the Family," however, Cudd refers to Okin's ideas in her book "Analyzing Oppression," where she explains the concept using Okin's theories about gender roles and the economic oppression of women.

fair opportunities. For example, addressing gender inequities requires looking beyond individual choices to the structural factors that shape and constrain those choices, as displayed in the "Invisible Foot" example.

4.2. Segregation in the Educational System as an Example

One example of structural injustice in our contemporary society is the educational system's tendency to create homogeneous social networks among individuals with similar educational backgrounds, resulting in socio-economic segregation. Research shows that higher levels of education may divide social networks, as individuals with greater educational attainment often form connections with others who share similar educational backgrounds (Schakel and van der Pas 2021, 418). This dynamic can lead to the development of uniform groups based on socioeconomic standing (Blossfeld 2009, 513–14; Huang, Maassen van den Brink, and Groot 2009, 462). Which in turn leads to a division in economic prospects (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, 103–17; Bol 2013, 14).

The Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau (SCP) in the Netherlands has highlighted a growing concern about societal division, particularly along educational lines. Individuals with higher and lower levels of education tend to live separately, hold different viewpoints, and engage in political and social activities differently. This segregation is evident in the educational system, where students are sorted into different educational tracks upon entering secondary education, particularly in urban areas where schools often cater exclusively to specific educational levels.[5] Schools that offer a broad range of educational levels are becoming less common. The makeup of a school's student body, whether homogeneous or heterogeneous in terms of backgrounds, impacts its ability to achieve educational goals, especially those related to socialization and citizenship (Vogels, Turkenburg, and Herweijer 2021, 165–76).

In many societies, people are taught that hard work leads to success and prosperity, reinforcing the value of meritocracy. However, as we have seen in previous chapters, economic injustices, such as unequal access to education and job opportunities due to discriminatory practices and reinforcing norms and values that have adapted to these unjust institutions, undermine this principle and perpetuate inequality. For example, if there are more schools catering to specific educational levels than schools offering a broader range, this limits children's opportunities to interact with peers from different educational backgrounds, leading to segregation. It is found that socioeconomic background significantly influences the

[5] One must attend physically different schools for various levels of education, such as havo/vwo for higher education and vmbo for lower-seen education.

educational track a student initially enters in the Netherlands (Tieben and Wolbers 2010, 280–87). Tieben and Wolbers focus on distinguishing between correlation and causation in these effects. The Dutch educational system is highly tracked, meaning students are placed into different educational tracks at age 12 based on their performance and teacher recommendations. The study differentiates between the total impact of socio-economic background (unconditional effects) and the impact after accounting for previous educational transitions (conditional effects). Unconditional effects show the overall influence, whereas conditional effects isolate the influence considering the student's educational path up to that point. The analysis reveals that socio-economic background affects educational outcomes both directly and indirectly. For instance, children from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be placed in higher tracks initially and have better chances of moving to higher tracks during their education. However, even after accounting for these factors, parents' educational level continues to have a significant effect, suggesting a causal relationship.

The study concludes that socio-economic background significantly influences secondary education outcomes, not only through initial track placement and intra-secondary transitions but also through a persistent, direct effect of parental education. This finding highlights the structural injustice within the educational system, where socio-economic segregation is perpetuated through tracked educational paths that favor students from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently, the system reinforces socio-economic divisions and contributes to homogeneous social networks, aligning with broader concerns about societal division along educational lines as highlighted by the Netherlands's SCP.

This initial placement sets the trajectory for their entire educational journey. During secondary education, socio-economic background and the segmentation of schools into different tracks impact students' opportunities to change tracks, thereby shaping their graduation prospects. Thus, inequality in educational outcomes is largely driven by the initial track placement, highlighting the profound impact of socio-economic status on a student's educational path. In another research, it is concluded that while educational reforms and societal changes have influenced educational transitions, significant inequalities based on family background persist. The effects of parental education remain strong, indicating the ongoing importance of cultural resources in educational success (Tieben, de Graaf, and de Graaf 2010, 88). Therefore, structural injustices in stages, such as the selection of educational tracks for children, have long-term effects, persisting across multiple generations. These injustices perpetuate inequality and undermine the principle of meritocracy, demonstrating the need to address economic and educational disparities to ensure a fairer society.

This segregation within the educational system, as highlighted by both Schakel and Pas (2020) and the SCP, reinforces socio-economic divisions by limiting interactions among students from diverse backgrounds. The research by Tieben and Wolbers (2010) further illustrates how socio-economic background significantly influences educational trajectories. This seems to become more of a vicious cycle perpetuating inequality through structural injustices.

One might argue that children of highly educated parents are simply smarter due to inherited traits. However, recent research on "genetic nurture" suggests that parental genotypes significantly influence children's educational outcomes through environmental pathways, not direct genetic transmission. This meta-analysis shows that genetic nurture effects, largely mediated by family socioeconomic status and parental education, significantly shape a child's educational achievements (Wang et al. 2021). Another study uses a sample of Norwegian half-brothers to examine the relationship between stepfathers' education levels and stepsons' intelligence. It finds that the education level of a younger half-brother's father positively correlates with the intelligence score of the older half-brother, indicating significant non-genetic influences on cognitive development. Firstborn men whose half-brothers' fathers had high education levels scored 33% of a standard deviation higher in intelligence tests compared to those whose half-brothers' fathers had low education levels, even after adjusting for the biological parents' education levels (Eriksen, Sundet, and Tambs 2013, 218–20). Another study shows that both environmental and genetic predispositions significantly influence children's educational attainment. Research on adopted and nonadopted individuals found that polygenic scores, which measure genetic propensity for education, were twice as predictive of educational outcomes in nonadopted individuals compared to adoptees (Cheesman et al. 2020, 583–91).

Overall, these studies indicate that the success of children with highly educated parents is not just due to inherited intelligence but also the enriched environments these parents provide. The findings emphasize the vital role of the family environment and the necessary supportive environments that highly educated parents provide to enhance educational attainment.

Haslanger’s explanation of structural injustice, combined with the concept of the "invisible foot," can be effectively applied to understand the educational system's perpetuation of socio-economic segregation. In the context of the educational system, structural injustice manifests through the tracking and sorting of students based on socio-economic background. In the Netherlands, for instance, students are placed into different educational tracks at a young age, a process heavily influenced by their socio-economic background. Children from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be placed in higher educational tracks, which sets them on a trajectory for better educational and career opportunities. This initial placement

is often based on performance and teacher recommendations, which can be biased by the student's socioeconomic status (as intersectionality theories often show).

This tracking system creates structural injustice because it perpetuates socio-economic divisions and limits social mobility. By segregating students into different tracks, the educational system reinforces existing inequalities and reduces the chances for children from lower socio-economic backgrounds to interact with and learn from peers from more advantaged backgrounds. This leads to homogeneous social networks and further entrenches socio-economic divisions, making it difficult for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to break out of the cycle of poverty.

Haslanger's "invisible foot" metaphor illustrates how rational individual choices, when aggregated, contribute to structural injustices. Just as women may rationally choose to leave the workforce for child-rearing, leading to gender inequality, parents and educators might rationally place children in different tracks based on perceived abilities and socio-economic background, reinforcing socio-economic segregation. Although seemingly rational, this practice fails to account for the child's true potential, especially when their environment does not provide equal opportunities for development, which affects their capacities (as seen in earlier research). Consequently, these decisions reinforce existing social divisions, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage for certain groups and maintaining the status quo of inequality.

Haslanger's emphasis on structural explanations highlights that addressing these injustices requires more than changing individual behaviors; it requires altering the underlying structures that constrain and shape those behaviors. In the educational system, this might involve reforms that reduce segregation through tracking and provide a more tailored learning environment based on socio-economic background and/or the child’s needs, promote more inclusive and diverse school environments, and provide additional support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The reason why I take education as an example here is because education also significantly impacts socio-economic outcomes. Educational levels and the selectivity of study programs profoundly influence employment opportunities, job security, and wages. These educational disparities often reflect and reinforce existing socio-economic inequalities (van der Velden and Wolbers 2007). Additionally, in the Netherlands, highly educated non-Western ethnic minorities are less likely to move to better neighborhoods compared to their native Dutch counterparts, even with similar education levels. This is due to factors like income disparities, intergenerational poverty, and neighborhood preferences, which highlight how deeply ingrained structural inequalities can limit the effectiveness of individual efforts to improve socio-

economic mobility (de Vuijst and van Ham 2017). Therefore, addressing educational disparities becomes a matter of economic justice.

While education clearly plays a role in shaping socio-economic outcomes, it is also embedded within broader societal rules that shape our moral values and determine what is considered right or wrong based on cultural norms. These societal rules can sometimes lead us astray and cause us to value the wrong things or treat people unfairly (Haslanger 2016, 126; 2023, 21). Haslanger explains that structural injustice happens when societal practices and structures distort our perception of value or arrange us in unfair ways. For instance, the educational system's tendency to create homogeneous social networks based on socio-economic status, as discussed in previous research, embodies this misrepresentation. By attributing a child's lack of success in the education system solely to their perceived lack of effort or intelligence, we perpetuate an individualistic narrative that fails to recognize the profound influence of socio-economic background and structural segregation. This perspective confuses the structural barriers that hinder equal opportunities, such as unequal access to quality education, biased tracking systems, and the socio-economic segregation that limits interactions between students from diverse backgrounds for individual failings. Focusing only on individual characteristics ignores how these structural injustices constrain choices and opportunities, thereby perpetuating inequality. Recognizing the impact of these structural factors is essential for creating fairer educational policies and practices.

4.3. Expanding the view on Structural Economic Injustice

Browne and McKeown's (2024) collection of essays in *What is Structural Injustice?* provides a comprehensive exploration of structural injustice, addressing various dimensions and manifestations. They delve into institutional racism, structural health inequalities, and epistemic injustice to illustrate how structural factors influence individual actions. For instance, institutional racism is highlighted as a significant aspect of structural injustice, where systemic discrimination affects marginalized groups, particularly Black Americans. Jonathan Wolff explains that this form of racism is not merely about individual prejudices but involves broader social structures that perpetuate racial inequalities. For instance, historical and contemporary policies in housing, education, and employment systematically disadvantage Black communities, reinforcing cycles of poverty and exclusion. These structural barriers create an environment where Black individuals face significant obstacles to achieving social mobility and equity (Wolff 2024, 19–22).

Epistemic injustice, a less commonly discussed but equally important dimension, involves the ways in which marginalized groups are systematically discredited or silenced in knowledge production and communication. This form of injustice means that the experiences and insights of these groups are often ignored or undervalued in societal discourse, which perpetuates their marginalization (Fricker 2007, 1–2). Alison M. Jaggar and Theresa W. Tobin thoroughly examine the concept of Epistemic injustice through the lenses of testimonial and hermeneutic injustices. Testimonial injustice occurs when prejudices affect the credibility of someone's testimony, while hermeneutic injustice arises when gaps in collective interpretative resources prevent marginalized groups from making sense of their social experiences (Fricker 2007, 17–18, 149–51). Jaggar and Tobin emphasize that these injustices are not just isolated incidents but are often embedded in broader structural conditions that systematically disadvantage certain groups (Jaggar and Tobin 2024, 169–75).

Structural epistemic injustice is highlighted as a pervasive issue where the social and institutional arrangements give undue epistemic advantage to more powerful groups, often at the expense of marginalized ones. For instance, Jaggar and Tobin discuss how dominant social narratives and knowledge systems, such as those propagated during colonialism, systematically discredited indigenous knowledge systems and languages. This suppression not only marginalized these groups but also distorted the entire epistemic framework in favor of the colonizers. Such structural injustices persist in modern forms, including epistemic neocolonialism, where Western institutions and ideologies continue to dominate global knowledge production and dissemination (Jaggar and Tobin 2024, 169–77).

Let me give an example in the Netherlands, where in the 1950s and 60s, many so-called "guest workers" were recruited mostly from the Mediterranean region (Southern Europe, Morocco, and Turkey) and were originally intended to alleviate temporary labor shortages (Tesser, van Dugteren, and Merens 1998, 15–56).[6] This assumption influenced policies that prioritized the preservation of migrants' unique identities without integrating them into the public and political arenas (Essed and Nimako 2006, 286). The policy, rooted in this assumption, underscores in the inaugural 1970 Foreign Workers' Note the priority of preserving the unique identity of migrant groups (Scientific Council for Government Policy and Sleegers 2007, 15). Despite the government's efforts to preserve their cultures, the assumption that they

[6] The terminology related to this subject has faced increasing criticism due to the negative or stigmatizing connotations associated with terms like 'guest workers,' 'luck-seeker,' or 'foreigners,'. It is therefore essential to emphasize my awareness of this issue and that I will mostly use the term 'labor migrants' as this is currently employed to refer to this group by: Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 'Arbeidsmigranten - Home | Volkshuisvesting Nederland', (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties 2021) Accessed 12-06-2024.

would eventually return to their country of origin had significant implications for their future integration. Let me break that down.

Family integration occurred in the 1970s and 1980s as many immigrants chose to stay (Essed and Nimako 2006, 288). As a result, when these families chose to stay, their children struggled in school due to language barriers. Research shows that immigrant children in the Dutch education system encounter significant difficulties, mainly because of language barriers (Driessen, Van der Slik, and De Bot 2002, 175–81). The "Invisible Foot" concept illustrates how structural factors contribute to these difficulties. For instance, many immigrants have not had adequate opportunities to learn Dutch because of the initial thought that they would return to their country of origin. This directly affects their children's ability to succeed in school because, as we have also seen in earlier research, the educational outcomes of these children are significantly influenced by their environment (Driessen, Van der Slik, and De Bot 2002, 190). This implies that without targeted interventions to address language acquisition, not only for children but also for their overall environment, they are likely to continue facing substantial barriers to academic success. This situation is a clear case of epistemic injustice: the children's difficulties are not due to a lack of ability but to systemic barriers that have ignored their needs and experiences. The initial policy assumptions and the resulting lack of support for language acquisition marginalized these families' knowledge and experiences. By failing to address these structural barriers, the system continues to disadvantage immigrant children, perpetuating their marginalization in knowledge production and educational outcomes in Dutch society.

In the context of another study and epistemic injustice, it is shown how structural biases in the recognition of educational credentials contribute to the marginalization of immigrant groups (Kanas and van Tubergen 2009, 893–901). For instance, Surinamese and Antillean immigrants benefit more from their origin-country education compared to Turkish and Moroccan immigrants because their educational background aligns more closely with the Dutch system, reflecting a bias towards former colonies. This exemplifies testimonial injustice, where the credibility of one's knowledge might be unfairly assessed based on origin. Furthermore, the higher economic returns for education obtained in the Netherlands underscore hermeneutic injustice: the dominant Dutch educational system and its language are privileged, while the educational achievements and cultural knowledge of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants are undervalued and underrecognized. This systemic preference perpetuates their economic disadvantage and marginalization, as their valuable skills and experiences are not adequately acknowledged within the Dutch labor market. For example, a Moroccan engineer might find

their qualifications dismissed, forcing them into lower-skilled jobs despite their expertise, highlighting a clear case of epistemic injustice.

We also find this back in Alasia Nuti's (2024, 221–41) argument on the concept of historical structural injustice. Nuti challenges the traditional understanding of historical injustice as merely causing or creating a legacy of new injustices. Instead, she introduces the concept of the "presence of history," where past injustices are actively reproduced in contemporary unjust contexts. Nuti claims that the terms 'causality' and 'legacy' inadequately describe the ongoing influence of historical injustices, advocating for viewing these injustices as processes that continually reproduce inequalities between structural groups. She proposes a typology distinguishing between Historical Structural Groups (HSGs), Nonhistorical Structural Groups (NHSGs), and Historical Groups with Structural Dynamics. For instance, HSGs, such as women and former slaves, have histories of formal discrimination and exclusion that persist even without overt discriminatory laws. This ongoing reproduction of injustice shows the need for active dismantling of the structures sustaining these inequalities beyond merely acknowledging past wrongs.

The earlier examples of educational and economic disparities among immigrant groups in the Netherlands align with Nuti's concept of historical structural injustice by demonstrating how past policies and assumptions continue to reproduce contemporary inequalities. For example, the Dutch government's initial policies for labor migrants based on the assumption that immigrants would eventually return to their countries, failed to integrate these families, leading to significant language and cultural barriers for their children in the education system. This reflects Nuti's idea of the "presence of history," where the initial exclusionary policies have ongoing effects, perpetuating educational and economic disadvantages for Turkish and Moroccan immigrants. These groups, categorized as Historical Structural Groups (HSGs), face persistent structural inequalities rooted in their historical marginalization. Thus, dismantling these ongoing injustices requires more than acknowledging past wrongs; it necessitates actively addressing the structures that continue to sustain these inequalities.

Jaggar and Tobin (2024) also address the practical implications of recognizing structural epistemic injustice. They argue for rethinking moral epistemology and justification practices, suggesting that philosophers should move beyond seeking a single paradigm of moral reasoning. Instead, they should focus on understanding and dismantling the structural conditions that perpetuate epistemic domination. This involves engaging with diverse knowledge systems and fostering democratic reasoning practices that are sensitive to the specific contexts of epistemic injustice. Doing so aims to create more inclusive and equitable

epistemic environments that recognize and integrate marginalized perspectives (Jaggar and Tobin 2024, 172–84). For instance, we can create more equitable educational and economic opportunities by recognizing the value of different cultural backgrounds and addressing the specific contexts of epistemic injustice, such as the overlooked needs of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants. This approach not only acknowledges but actively integrates marginalized perspectives, aiming to rectify the ongoing reproduction of historical injustices in contemporary contexts.

4.4. How to Understand Systemic Economic Injustice

In chapters 2 and 3, I have shown how the individualist and structuralist approaches to economic injustice are exemplified through different theories of distribution and justice. Individualist theories, such as those advocated by Nozick and proponents of meritocracy, emphasize personal responsibility and merit, often overlooking broader societal influences that perpetuate inequality. In contrast, structuralist approaches, including the works of Rawls, Sen, and Anderson, focus on the role of societal systems and institutions in shaping economic outcomes and promoting the fair distribution of resources. While structuralist theories address many of the root causes of economic injustice by emphasizing the need for institutional reforms and policy interventions, they often fall short of fully encapsulating systemic inequalities' interconnected and adaptive nature. Intersectionality, in this regard, with scholars like Crenshaw and Collins, does a better job of understanding how deeply entrenched power structures perpetuate economic disparities and develop more effective strategies for achieving true economic justice. However, I will argue that there is ample reason to understand economic injustices as systemic in our contemporary society and that we should apply this view more actively.

Haslanger's work is instrumental in this context. Haslanger distinguishes between structural and systemic injustices, noting that while structural injustices are tied to specific institutions, systemic injustices are broader, involving multiple interconnected systems that create a self-reinforcing cycle of disadvantage that is hard to change (Haslanger 2016, 122–27; 2023, 22). For example, limited educational opportunities in marginalized communities often result in reduced economic prospects. This, in turn, impacts health outcomes, leading to a cycle that continues across generations. To give an example from the Dutch context again: structural injustices are often associated with specific institutions, such as the educational tracking system in the Netherlands. In this system, students are placed into different educational tracks based on their socio-economic backgrounds. This practice limits opportunities for students from lower

socio-economic backgrounds, reinforcing socio-economic segregation. However, systemic injustices go beyond individual institutions and involve multiple interconnected systems that create self-reinforcing cycles of disadvantage. For instance, the limited educational opportunities in marginalized communities not only reduce economic prospects but also adversely affect health outcomes. A study demonstrates that the influence of education on health is not linked to unmeasured hereditary or social factors, indicating that there is a causal relationship between education and health (Groot and Maassen van den Brink 2007, 196). The connection between education and health suggests that individuals with higher levels of education usually enjoy better health outcomes. According to a study conducted in the Netherlands, the advantages of education on health encompass enhanced overall well-being and a decreased likelihood of chronic diseases (Groot and Maassen van den Brink 2007). Research conducted in Amsterdam indicated that living in low-income areas is connected to negative pregnancy results, particularly giving birth to babies that are small for their gestational age (SGA) (Agyemang et al. 2009). The research showed that women in poorer neighborhoods had a higher chance of experiencing SGA births, even after considering individual factors like age, education, and ethnicity. Another research study indicated that having lower levels of education is connected to worse self-reported health and an increase in disability rates. These differences in health become more noticeable as individuals grow older, suggesting that educational inequalities in health become more pronounced over the course of a lifetime (van Kippersluis et al. 2010, 430–36).

This perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage that spans generations, making it difficult for individuals to break free from poverty. As economic inequality becomes entrenched, it normalizes the disparity, leading society to accept and justify the status quo. This normalization is evident in societal rules and values that prioritize meritocracy and individual effort, as we have seen in Chapter 2, often overlooking the structural barriers that constrain opportunities for disadvantaged groups. Consequently, these established norms and values influence policies and institutional behaviors, further reinforcing systemic barriers. For example, the Dutch educational system's tracking practice reflects broader societal values emphasizing merit and individual effort while ignoring the structural inequalities perpetuating socio-economic segregation.

The current debate on economic injustice often lacks a clear articulation of systemic ideas. While many scholars focus on structural aspects, they sometimes fail to explicitly address how these structures are interconnected and self-reinforcing. They frequently base their arguments on structural concepts and propose structural solutions. However, I argue that we

should not only focus on structural issues when understanding economic injustice but also emphasize the systemic nature and ensure that the solutions we develop address both aspects. This gap highlights the need for a more explicit recognition of systemic factors in discussions of economic justice.

Some theories and scholars I have discussed already mention many systemic factors in their work. For instance, Wolff's discussion of institutional racism illustrates how historical and contemporary policies in housing, education, and employment disadvantage Black communities. This aspect is structural because it highlights specific institutional practices and policies that create barriers for Black individuals. Simultaneously, it is systemic because these interconnected policies across different domains (housing, education, employment) create a self-reinforcing cycle of disadvantage that perpetuates racial inequalities. The systemic nature is evident in how these barriers interact, ensuring that overcoming one barrier does not eliminate the overall disadvantage.

Jaggar and Tobin's analysis of epistemic injustice demonstrates how marginalized groups are systematically discredited in knowledge production and communication. This form of injustice is structural when looking at specific instances where prejudices affect the credibility of an individual's testimony or where gaps in collective interpretative resources prevent marginalized groups from making sense of their social experiences. It becomes systemic when considering how these injustices are embedded in broader social and institutional arrangements that give undue epistemic advantage to more powerful groups. For instance, the historical suppression of Indigenous knowledge systems during colonialism shows how epistemic injustice operates on a systemic level, distorting the entire epistemic framework to favor colonizers and marginalizing Indigenous perspectives across multiple societal dimensions and values.

The example of the Netherlands' policies towards labor migrants illustrates both structural and systemic injustices. Initially designed to address labor shortages, these policies did not integrate guest workers' families into Dutch society, leading to educational and language barriers for their children. This is a structural issue involving specific educational and labor practices. The situation is also systemic because these barriers are interconnected, affecting educational outcomes, economic prospects, and social integration, creating a cycle of disadvantage across generations. Additionally, the Dutch educational system's focus on merit and individual skill normalizes the assumption that these children are less capable, rather than addressing their structural disadvantages. This perpetuates systemic injustice by overlooking

the broader systemic barriers and attributing failure to individual shortcomings instead of inequitable structures.

Nuti's (2024) concept of historical structural injustice underscores how past injustices continue to reproduce contemporary inequalities. Nuti argues that past exclusionary policies have ongoing effects, perpetuating educational and economic disadvantages for immigrant groups. This perspective is structural as it identifies specific historical policies and their direct impacts. However, it is systemic in recognizing how these historical injustices create enduring frameworks of inequality, influencing current social, economic, and educational systems in a way that continuously reproduces disadvantage. Nuti's argument shows that dismantling these injustices requires addressing both the historical legacies and the interconnected systems that sustain them.

In summary, these authors illustrate structural injustices by identifying specific policies and institutional practices that create disadvantages. They also highlight systemic injustices by showing how these structural elements are interconnected, creating cycles of disadvantage that persist across multiple domains and generations. Distinguishing between structural and systemic injustices helps develop more comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of inequality rather than merely address isolated issues.

4.5. Critical Realism and Social Structures

In this section, I will introduce critical realism to provide the philosophical foundation necessary for understanding how deep-seated structures influence human actions and societal changes. I will show that this view is essential for understanding the systemic nature of economic injustices. I will explain this through Margaret Archer's morphogenetic approach and Haslanger's exploration of agency under structural constraints.

Before getting to these approaches, let me first explain critical realism, as it forms the philosophical foundation. Critical realism is a philosophical approach that asserts the existence of a real world independent of our perceptions and theories. It acknowledges that while our understanding of reality is always influenced by our social context and individual perspectives, it is still possible to make rational judgments about the world. Critical realism aims to uncover the underlying structures and mechanisms that cause observable events, going beyond mere appearances to understand the deeper realities shaping our experiences (Bhaskar and Lawson 2013, 3–15; Bhaskar 2013, 16–40).

Haslanger argues that categories like gender and race are created by society, not just by nature, and are deeply integrated into how society is organized (Haslanger 2012, 145–204).

Haslanger also highlights the influence of social power structures on knowledge production, suggesting that our understanding of reality is shaped by social practices and ideologies, which can distort what we consider to be objective knowledge (Haslanger 2012, 98–109). She defends a version of realism that acknowledges the social construction of categories while maintaining that some aspects of reality are independent of our social constructions (Haslanger 2012, 198–204).

Haslanger's theory posits that gender and race are not inherent biological traits but are instead shaped by societal norms and expectations. This means that our ideas about what it means to be a certain gender or race are constructed through cultural and social interactions rather than being purely dictated by nature. Additionally, Haslanger emphasizes that these social constructs influence how knowledge is produced and understood, suggesting that the dominant social and power structures can distort or bias what is accepted as objective truth. This highlights how societal influences can profoundly shape our perceptions and beliefs.

In the context of critical realism and economic injustice, Haslanger's position emphasizes that social structures and individual agents both play crucial roles in perpetuating systemic oppression. She argues that structures cause injustice through the misallocation of power, while agents cause harm through the abuse of power within these structures. This dual approach recognizes that individuals contribute to and navigate oppressive systems, but these systems themselves are often beyond the control of any single individual, necessitating both structural and agent-based interventions to address economic injustice.

Archer posits that social structures, such as economic systems, social norms, or institutional frameworks, exist prior to and shape individual actions (Archer 2013, 359–64). This notion is critical for grasping how economic injustices are perpetuated. Existing structures influence and limit the actions available to individuals and groups, but through their actions within these constraints, individuals and groups can transform these structures over time. This cyclical interaction between structure and agency is known as the morphogenetic cycle (McKeown 2024, 72–74).

The morphogenetic cycle is segmented into three stages, highlighting the systemic nature of economic injustice. At the initial stage (T1), pre-existing structures condition the range of possible actions for individuals and groups. This stage demonstrates how entrenched economic systems and social norms create conditions that sustain inequality, making it challenging for marginalized groups to alter their circumstances. During the interaction stage (T2-T3), individuals and groups engage with these structures, navigating within the constraints and opportunities they provide. This period is marked by both the reproduction of systemic

injustices and the potential for contestation and change through collective agency (Archer 2013, 374–78).

Haslanger complements Archer's theory by exploring how individuals can act within these large social systems that often create injustice (Haslanger 2024, 49–64). She explains that societies are like complex machines where everything is interconnected and difficult to change without affecting the whole system. Instead of looking only at individual actions to understand social issues, Haslanger suggests we need to see the bigger picture of how these actions fit into the larger social structures. She introduces the concept of "cultural technē," which includes the shared meanings, stories, and assumptions that shape our social interactions. These cultural resources help people understand how to behave and interact with others in society, but they can also make it difficult to change unjust structures because they make certain actions seem natural and acceptable. Despite the rigidity of these structures, Haslanger believes individuals still have some power to make changes. People act within the 'choice architecture' shaped by various factors like laws, norms, and available resources. While social practices often reinforce unjust structures by making it hard to see alternatives, individuals can still challenge these norms and work toward change. This means recognizing the complex ways in which our actions are influenced by the broader system and finding ways to disrupt the cycle that keeps these injustices in place.

Understanding economic injustice through the combined lens of Archer's morphogenetic approach and Haslanger's analysis of agency underscores the importance of collective action and both structural and systemic reform. Addressing systemic economic injustice requires recognizing the power dynamics and institutional barriers perpetuating inequality by combining the three perceptions I have discussed. It involves individual efforts and coordinated actions to challenge and transform existing structures and our norms and values.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Discussion

In this thesis, I have examined the multifaceted nature of economic injustice through the lenses of political philosophy, sociology, economics, and critical theory. The central research question–whether economic injustice should be understood as structural or systemic–has guided an in-depth analysis of current theories and concepts within political philosophy,

emphasizing the importance of integrating interdisciplinary insights to capture the complexity of economic disparities.

The analysis revealed that economic injustice cannot be fully understood or addressed by viewing it solely through an individualistic perspective, which often overlooks broader societal and structural factors. For instance, while emphasizing personal responsibility and individual effort, the meritocratic ideal fails to account for the deeply embedded structural and systemic barriers that influence individual outcomes.

Structural approaches, drawing from the works of scholars such as Rawls, Sen, and Anderson, provide a more comprehensive understanding by considering how societal systems and institutions perpetuate economic inequalities. These approaches emphasize the need for institutional reforms to promote fairness and equity. However, even structural approaches must be complemented by a systemic perspective that recognizes how economic injustices are sustained by broader societal norms, values, and power dynamics.

The thesis argues that economic injustice must be seen as both a structural and systemic phenomenon, deeply embedded in and perpetuated by societal institutions and practices. Addressing economic injustice requires a multifaceted analysis that integrates individual, structural, and systemic perspectives to develop effective solutions.

The exploration of intersectionality highlighted the compounded disadvantages individuals face at intersections of race, gender, and class. While insufficient, this approach seems more promising as it suggests that one-size-fits-all policies are inadequate and that effective interventions must be tailored to address how different forms of oppression interact.

Chapter 4 elaborated on this progression, starting with a deep dive into structural injustices through Haslanger's framework. The "invisible foot" powerfully illustrates how seemingly rational individual actions, when aggregated, can perpetuate systemic inequalities. This insight is pivotal in understanding how societal structures, not merely individual failings, shape economic outcomes.

Furthermore, the examination of educational segregation in the Netherlands exemplifies how structural injustices perpetuate socio-economic divides. The Dutch education system's tracking mechanism, influenced heavily by socio-economic background, entrenches inequalities, limiting opportunities for upward mobility. Studies by Tieben and Wolbers (2010) reveal how initial track placement, influenced by socio-economic status, profoundly impacts educational trajectories, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage. This example shows the need to view educational disparities as economic injustices through the lens of structural injustice, which recognizes the broader societal mechanisms at play.

Moving beyond the structural, the thesis has argued for a systemic understanding of economic injustice. Haslanger's distinction between structural and systemic injustices is crucial here. While structural injustices relate to specific institutions, systemic injustices involve a web of interconnected systems that create and reinforce cycles of disadvantage. This systemic perspective is essential for understanding how disparate institutions interact to sustain economic disparities across generations. For example, limited educational opportunities in marginalized communities not only constrain economic prospects but also adversely affect health outcomes, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of disadvantage. Research from the Netherlands illustrates this well, showing that educational disparities correlate strongly with health outcomes, further entrenching socio-economic inequality.

The concept of historical structural injustice, as discussed by Nuti, provides additional depth to this understanding. It challenges the notion of historical injustice as merely a legacy, proposing instead that past injustices are actively reproduced in contemporary contexts. This view is evident in the plight of immigrant communities in the Netherlands, whose historical marginalization continues to influence their socio-economic status and educational outcomes. Policies that initially failed to integrate migrant families have left lasting impacts, perpetuating language barriers and educational disadvantages for their children. This exemplifies how past policies continue to shape present inequalities, reinforcing the need for active dismantling of these enduring structures.

Furthermore, the conversation about epistemic injustice, based on the work of Jaggar and Tobin, emphasizes how marginalized groups are consistently silenced in the creation of knowledge. This type of injustice emphasizes the need to include diverse perspectives and acknowledge the worth of various knowledge systems in promoting truly fair societies. By tackling these barriers to knowledge, we can establish educational and economic environments that are inclusive, genuinely fair, and just.

Drawing on critical realism and the works of Margaret Archer and Sally Haslanger, it became clear that systemic injustices involve multiple interconnected systems that create self-reinforcing cycles of disadvantage. This systemic view demands comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of inequality embedded within societal norms, values, and power dynamics.

The systemic view emphasizes that economic injustices are not isolated incidents but are the result of complex interconnections between various societal systems, such as education, employment, healthcare, and housing. These systems interact in ways that perpetuate inequality and disadvantage, making it clear that addressing one area in isolation is insufficient.

Comprehensive strategies must consider these interconnections to dismantle systemic injustices effectively. Moreover, systemic injustices are adaptive, meaning that they evolve and respond to attempts at reform in ways that can maintain or even reinforce the status quo. This insight from the works of Archer and Haslanger highlights the resilience of systemic barriers and the need for persistent and adaptive strategies to combat them. Policies must be flexible and capable of evolving in response to changes in the system to be truly effective.

The systemic view demands a shift from addressing symptoms to targeting the root causes of inequality. This involves understanding and altering the societal norms, values, and power dynamics that underpin systemic injustices. By focusing on these foundational elements, policies can aim to create long-lasting change rather than temporary relief. Recognizing systemic interconnectedness and adaptability requires comprehensive strategies that simultaneously address multiple facets of injustice. This means integrating efforts across different policy areas and ensuring that interventions are coordinated to tackle the underlying structures and processes that sustain economic disparities.

5.1. Discussion

In my thesis, I have tried to incorporate a comprehensive and interdisciplinary analysis of economic injustice, yet it could benefit from a more critical engagement with the practical implications of its theoretical arguments. While the integration of political philosophy, sociology, economics, and critical theory provides a robust foundation, there is a gap in the empirical validation of these theories. With the examples from some theories themselves and the educational system in the Netherlands, I have mostly concentrated on making the point of why economic injustices are both structural and systemic. Future research should incorporate more empirical studies, including longitudinal data and case studies, to provide evidence for the systemic and structural claims made. This would enhance the credibility and applicability of the proposed solutions.

Additionally, the thesis could delve deeper into the complexities and challenges of policy implementation. While I argue for the need for multifaceted and coordinated strategies, it stops short of exploring how these strategies can be practically realized within existing political and economic systems. There is a lack of discussion on the potential obstacles, such as political resistance, institutional inertia, and socio-economic constraints, that could impede the implementation of proposed reforms. A more detailed analysis of these barriers and potential ways to overcome them would make the recommendations more actionable and realistic.

However, I do believe that some of the theories I have named also have these discussions embedded in them and this could be further explored.

Moreover, the overall debate would benefit from a more critical analysis of the cultural and normative shifts required to support systemic change. While it recognizes the importance of altering societal norms and values, it does not provide a detailed roadmap for achieving these shifts. Understanding the mechanisms through which cultural change can be fostered, such as through education, media, or grassroots movements, is crucial for the success of systemic reforms.

Finally, it would be interesting to explore the impact of technology and digital platforms on economic injustice more thoroughly. The current discussion largely overlooks how technological advancements and the digital economy contribute to or mitigate economic disparities. Given the increasing influence of technology in shaping economic opportunities and outcomes, a critical examination of its role is essential. This could include an analysis of how automation, artificial intelligence, and digital platforms affect labor markets, income distribution, and access to resources, as well as the potential for technology to be leveraged in addressing economic injustices. Incorporating this dimension would provide a more holistic and contemporary understanding of the issue.

Bibliography

Agyemang, C., T. G. M. Vrijkotte, M. Droomers, M. F. van der Wal, G. J. Bonsel, and K. Stronks. 2009. "The Effect of Neighbourhood Income and Deprivation on Pregnancy Outcomes in Amsterdam, The Netherlands." *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 63 (9): 755–60. https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.2008.080408.

Ahmed, Nabil, Anna Marriott, Nafkote Dabi, Megan Lowthers, Max Lawson, and Leah Mugehera. 2022. "Inequality Kills: The Unparalleled Action Needed to Combat Unprecedented Inequality in the Wake of COVID-19." Oxfam. https://doi.org/10.2-1201/2022.8465.

Anderson, Elizabeth. 2017. *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives (and Why We Don't Talk about It)*. Princeton University Press. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/u-unl/detail.action?docID=4862165.

———. 2018. "Freedom and Equality." In *The Oxford Handbook of Freedom*, edited by David Schmidtz and Carmen E. Pavel, 90–105. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1-093/oxfordhb/9780199989423.013.25.

Anderson, Elizabeth S. 1999. "What Is the Point of Equality?" *Ethics* 109 (2): 287–337. https://doi.org/10.1086/233897.

Archer, Margaret. 2013. "Realism and Morphogenesis." In *Critical Realism: Essential Readings*, edited by Margaret Archer, Roy Bhaskar, Andrew Collier, Tony Lawson, and Alan Norrie, 356–81. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

Arneson, Richard. 2013. "Egalitarianism." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2013. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/egalitarianism/.

Bhaskar, Roy. 2013. "Philosophy and Scientific Realism." In *Critical Realism: Essential Readings*, edited by Margaret Archer, Roy Bhaskar, Andrew Collier, Tony Lawson, and Alan Norrie, 16–47. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

Bhaskar, Roy, and Tony Lawson. 2013. "Introduction: Basic Texts and Developments." In *Critical Realism: Essential Readings*, edited by Margaret Archer, Roy Bhaskar, Andrew Collier, Tony Lawson, and Alan Norrie, 3–15. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

Blossfeld, Hans-Peter. 2009. "Educational Assortative Marriage in Comparative Perspective." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35:513–30.

Bol, T. 2013. "Why Does Education Pay off? Relations between Institutional Context and the Mechanisms by Which Education Pays Off in the Labor Market." Doctoral Dissertation,

Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:542-11475.

Bowles, Samuel, Herbert Gintis, and Melissa Osborne Groves, eds. 2005. *Unequal Chances*. Family Background and Economic Success. Princeton University Press. https://doi-.org/10.1515/9781400835492.

Browne, Jude, and Maeve McKeown, eds. 2024. *What Is Structural Injustice?* New York: Oxford University Press.

Chancel, Lucas, Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman. 2022. "World Inequality Report." World Inequality Lab. wir2022.wid.world.

Cheesman, Rosa, Avina Hunjan, Jonathan R. I. Coleman, Yasmin Ahmadzadeh, Robert Plomin, Tom A. McAdams, Thalia C. Eley, and Gerome Breen. 2020. "Comparison of Adopted and Nonadopted Individuals Reveals Gene–Environment Interplay for Education in the UK Biobank." *Psychological Science* 31 (5): 582–91. https://doi.org/10.1177/09567-97620904450.

Cho, Sumi, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall. 2013. "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38 (4): 785–810. https://doi.org/10.1086/669608.

Cohen, G. A. 1995. *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*. E-Book. Studies in Marxism and Social Theory. New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CB-O9780511521270.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2002. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Second edition. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4-324/9781003245650.

Courtland, Shane D., Gerald Gaus, and David Schmidtz. 2022. "Liberalism." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2022. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/-liberalism/.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé W. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6): 1241–99. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039.

———. 1998. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." In *Feminism and Politics*, edited by Anne Phillips, Repr., 314–43. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cudd, Ann E. 2006. *Analyzing Oppression*. Studies in Feminist Philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press.

Driessen, Geert, Frans Van der Slik, and Kees De Bot. 2002. "Home Language and Language Proficiency: A Large-Scale Longitudinal Study in Dutch Primary Schools." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 23 (3): 175–94. https://doi.org/10.1080/-01434630208666464.

Driver, Julia. 2007. *Ethics, the Fundamentals*. Blackwell Publishing.

Eriksen, Willy, Jon M. Sundet, and Kristian Tambs. 2013. "Are Stepfathers' Education Levels Associated with the Intelligence of Their Stepsons? A Register-Based Study of Norwegian Half-Brothers." *British Journal of Psychology* 104 (2): 212–24. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8295.2012.02113.x.

Essed, Philomena, and Kwame Nimako. 2006. "Designs and (Co)Incidents: Cultures of Scholarship and Public Policy on Immigrants/Minorities in the Netherlands." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 47 (3–4): 281–312. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020715206065784.

Feldman, Fred. 1995a. "Adjusting Utility for Justice: A Consequentialist Reply to the Objection from Justice." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55 (3): 567–85.

———. 1995b. "Desert: Reconsideration of Some Received Wisdom." *Mind* 104 (413): 63–77. https://doi.org/10.2307/2108439.

———. 1995c. "Justice, Desert, and the Repugnant Conclusion." *Utilitas* 7 (2): 189–206. https://doi.org/10.1017/S095382080000203X.

———. 2007. "Return to Twin Peaks: On the Intrinsic Moral Significance of Equality." In *Desert and Justice*, edited by Serena Olsaretti, 145–68. Mind Association Occasional Series. Oxford University Press.

Feldman, Fred, and Brad Skow. 2020. "Desert." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2020. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/desert/.

Fraser, Nancy. 2007. "Re-Framing Justice in a Globalizing World - Consensus." In *(Mis)Recognition, Social Inequality and Social Justice*, 1st Edition, 29–47. Routledge.

Fraser, Nancy, and Axel Honneth. 2003. *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. verso.

Freeman, Samuel. 2018. "Rawls on Distributive Justice and the Difference Principle." In *The Oxford Handbook of Distributive Justice*, 13. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.001.0001.

Friedman, Milton. 1968. "The Role of Monetary Policy." *The American Economic Review* 58 (1): 1–17.

Griffin, Edward, and David Pollak. 2009. "Student Experiences of Neurodiversity in Higher Education: Insights from the BRAINHE Project." *Dyslexia* 15 (1): 23–41. https://doi.org/10.1002/dys.383.

Groot, Wim, and Henriëtte Maassen van den Brink. 2007. "The Health Effects of Education." *Economics of Education Review* 26 (2): 186–200. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2005.09.002.

Haslanger, Sally. 2012. *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199892631.001.0001.

———. 2016. "What Is a (Social) Structural Explanation?" *Philosophical Studies : An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 173 (1): 113–30. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-014-0434-5.

———. 2023. "Systemic and Structural Injustice: Is There a Difference?" *Philosophy* 98 (1): 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819122000353.

———. 2024. "Agency under Structural Constraints in Social Systems." In *What Is Structural Injustice?*, edited by Jude Browne and Maeve McKeown, 48–64. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hayek, F. A. 1982. "Volume 2 The Mirage of Social Justice." In *Law, Legislation and Liberty: A New Statement of the Liberal Principles of Justice and Political Economy*. Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group.

Heinze, Eric. 2012. *The Concept of Injustice*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

Horwitz, Morton J. 1976. "The Legacy of 1776 in Legal and Economic Thought." *The Journal of Law and Economics* 19:621–32. https://doi.org/10.1086/466890.

Huang, Jian, Henriëtte Maassen van den Brink, and Wim Groot. 2009. "A Meta-Analysis of the Effect of Education on Social Capital." *Economics of Education Review* 28 (4): 454–64. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2008.03.004.

Hunt, Lester H. 2015. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia An Advanced Guide*. New York Academy of Sciences. Newark: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.

Jaggar, Alison M., and Theresa W. Tobin. 2024. "Moral Justification and Structural Epistemic Injustic." In *What Is Structural Injustice?*, edited by Jude Browne and Maeve McKeown, 168–86. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kanas, Agnieszka, and Frank van Tubergen. 2009. “The Impact of Origin and Host Country Schooling on the Economic Performance of Immigrants.” *Social Forces* 88 (2): 893–915. https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.0.0269.

Keyt, David. 1991. “Aristotle’s Theory of Distributive Justice.” In *A Companion to Aristotle’s Politics*, edited by David Keyt and Fred D. Miller, 238–78. Oxford: Blackwell.

Kippersluis, Hans van, Owen O’Donnell, Eddy van Doorslaer, and Tom Van Ourti. 2010. “Socioeconomic Differences in Health over the Life Cycle in an Egalitarian Country.” *Social Science & Medicine* 70 (3): 428–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2009-.10.020.

Kymlicka, Will. 2002. “Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction.” In *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Second Edition. Oxford University Press.

Lamont, Julian, and Christi Favor. 2017. “Distributive Justice.” In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2017. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/justice-distributive/.

Maagt, Sem de, and Ingrid Robeyns. 2017. “Inheritance and Inheritance Tax: An Ethical Analysis.” Ethical Annotation #3. Ethics Institute, Utrecht University.

Marx, Karl. [1887] 1974. *Capital Volume I*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

McKeown, Maeve. 2024. “Pure, Avoidable, and Deliberate Structural Injustice.” In *What Is Structural Injustice?*, edited by Jude Browne and Maeve McKeown, 65–84. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mill, John Stuart. [1863] 1998. *Utilitarianism*. Edited by Roger Crisp. New York: Oxford University Press.

Miller, David. 1976. *Social Justice*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties. 2021. “Arbeidsmigranten - Home | Volkshuisvesting Nederland.” Onderwerp. Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties. 2021. https://www.volkshuisvestingnederland.nl/onderwerpen/arbeidsmigranten.

Mulligan, Thomas. 2017. *Justice and the Meritocratic State*. First edition. Political Philosophy for the Real World. London: Routledge.

———. 2023. “Meritocracy.” In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Fall 2023. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/meritocracy/.

Nozick, Robert. 1984. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. Repr. London: Blackwell.

Nuti, Alasia. 2024. “Towards a Pluralistic Account of Structural Injustice.” In *What Is Structural Injustice?*, edited by Jude Browne and Maeve McKeown, 221–40. New York: Oxford University Press.

Okin, Susan Moller, 1946-2004. 1989. *Justice, Gender, and the Family*. New York: Basic Books.

Okun, Arthur M. 2015. *Equality and Efficiency: The Big Tradeoff*. Brookings Institution Press.

Olsaretti, Serena. 2018. *The Oxford Handbook of Distributive Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

O’Neill, Onora. 2018. “Liberal Justice: Kant, Rawls and Human Rights.” *Kantian Review* 23 (4): 641–59. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415418000432.

Oxfam. 2023. “Richest 1% Bag Nearly Twice as Much Wealth as the Rest of the World Put Together over the Past Two Years.” Oxfam International. September 4, 2023. https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/richest-1-bag-nearly-twice-much-wealth-rest-world-put-together-over-past-two-years.

Pettit, Philip. 1996. “Freedom as Antipower.” *Ethics* 106 (3): 576–604.

———. 2002. *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*. E-Book. Oxford Political Theory. Oxford: Clarendon Press. http://site.ebrary.com/id/10273243.

Piketty, Thomas, and Arthur Goldhammer. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Harvard University Press. http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/j.ctt6wpqbc.

Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press.

Robeyns, Ingrid. 2019. “What, If Anything, Is Wrong with Extreme Wealth?” *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 20 (3): 251–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.20-19.1633734.

Sayer, Andrew. 2009. “The Injustice of Unequal Work: Contributive Injustice - the Unequal Sharing out of Good and Bad Work - Is a Major Contributor to Class Inequality.” *Soundings*, no. 43, 102–13. https://doi.org/10.3898/136266209790424658.

Scanlon, Thomas. 2018. *Why Does Inequality Matter?* First edition. Uehiro Series in Practical Ethics. New York: Oxford University Press.

Schakel, Wouter, and Daphne van der Pas. 2021. “Degrees of Influence: Educational Inequality in Policy Representation.” *European Journal of Political Research* 60 (2): 418–37. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12405.

Scientific Council for Government Policy, and Fleur Sleegers. 2007. *In Debat over Nederland: Veranderingen in Het Discours over de Multiculturele Samenleving En Nationale Identiteit*. Amsterdam University Press.

Sen, Amartya. 2001. *Development as Freedom*. Repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sen, Amartya Kumar. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press.

Sen, Amartya and Russell Sage Foundation. 1995. *Inequality Reexamined*. First Harvard University Press paperback edition. New York, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Sher, George. 1987. *Desert*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Smith, Adam. [1776] 2000. *Wealth of Nations*. London: Electric Book Company.

Stiglitz, Joseph E. 2013. "The Price of Inequality." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 30 (1): 52–53. https://doi.org/10.1111/npqu.11358.

Tesser, P. T. M., F. A. van Dugteren, and J. G. F. Merens. 1998. "Rapportage minderheden 1998." Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.

Tieben, Nicole, Paul M. de Graaf, and Nan Dirk de Graaf. 2010. "Changing Effects of Family Background on Transitions to Secondary Education in the Netherlands: Consequences of Educational Expansion and Reform." *New Directions in Education Transitions Research* 28 (1): 77–90. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2009.12.004.

Tieben, Nicole, and Maarten Wolbers. 2010. "Success and Failure in Secondary Education: Socio-economic Background Effects on Secondary School Outcome in the Netherlands, 1927–1998." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 31 (3): 277–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425691003700516.

UNDP. 2020. "The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene." New York: United Nations Development Programme.

Velden, Rolf K. W. van der, and Maarten H. J. Wolbers. 2007. "How Much Does Education Matter and Why?: The Effects of Education on Socio-Economic Outcomes among School-Leavers in the Netherlands." *European Sociological Review* 23 (1): 65–80. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcl020.

Vogels, Ria, Monique Turkenburg, and Lex Herweijer. 2021. "Samen of gescheiden naar school." Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau. https://www.scp.nl/publicaties/publicaties-/2021/02/04/samen-of-gescheiden-naar-school.

Vossen, Bas van der, and Billy Christmas. 2023. "Libertarianism." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Fall 2023. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/-fall2023/entries/libertarianism/.

Vuijst, Elise de, and Maarten van Ham. 2017. "Educational Attainment and Neighbourhood Outcomes: Differences between Highly-Educated Natives and Non-Western Ethnic

Minorities in the Netherlands." SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY. https://doi.-org/10.2139/ssrn.3037906.

Wang, Biyao, Jessie R. Baldwin, Tabea Schoeler, Rosa Cheesman, Wikus Barkhuizen, Frank Dudbridge, David Bann, Tim T. Morris, and Jean-Baptiste Pingault. 2021. "Genetic Nurture Effects on Education: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." https://doi.-org/10.1101/2021.01.15.426782.

Wilkinson, Richard Gerald, 1943-, and Kate Pickett. 2009. *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. New York: Bloomsbury Press.

Wolff, Jonathan. 2024. "Structural Harm, Structural Injustice, Structural Repair." In *What Is Structural Injustice?*, edited by Jude Browne and Maeve McKeown, 12–30. New York: Oxford University Press.

Young, Iris Marion. 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton University Press.