

INEQUALITY: IS IT UNJUST?

A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY PERSPECTIVE

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There are many forms of inequality. How *much* should we care about income inequality relative to other forms of inequality?

IS INCOME INEQUALITY UNJUST?

THREE VIEWS

1. Income inequality is bad in itself
2. Income inequality is bad because of its effects on other goods
3. Other inequalities are more important



The highlands of lack egalitarianism

The Marxist Peninsula

The Rawlsian Plains of Justice

Walseria

The ancient mountains of hierarchy

The islands of the Foucauldians

Capabilities of Sen

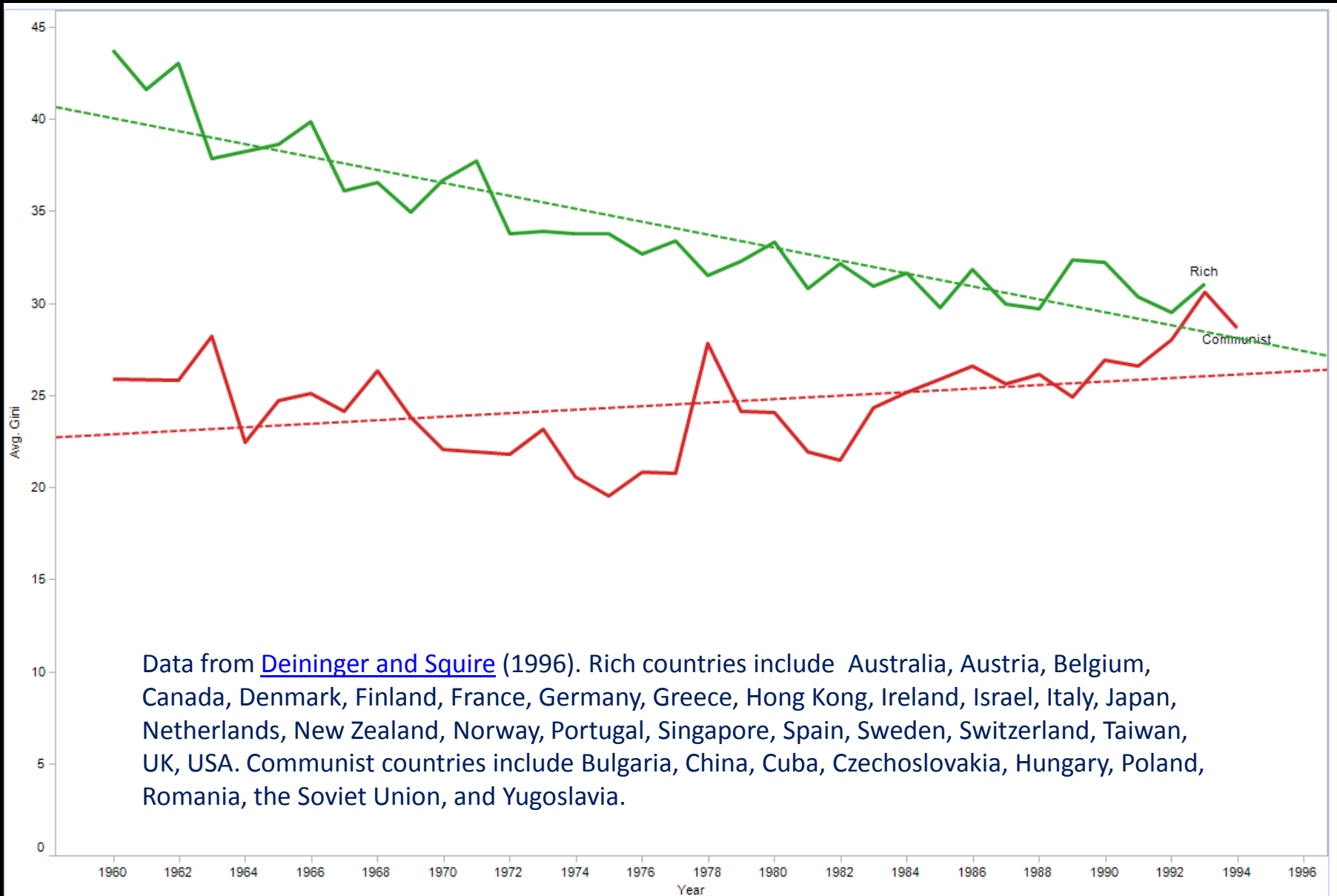
Nozickia

The pluralist pirates

The libertarian Archipelago



Trends in Gini index of inequality, 1960-1994



INCOME EQUALITY IS NO GUARANTEE OF EQUAL CITIZENSHIP

1. The mechanism that produces the distribution of income matters. Is this mechanism just?
2. Income equality is consistent with political and other forms of inequality

EQUAL CITIZENSHIP

1. Certain rights and liberties are *part* of what it means to be an equal citizen
2. An egalitarian society is a society that minimizes the potential for *domination*
3. Yet moral intuitions about the importance of *freedom* to equal citizenship may conflict with moral intuitions about equality and limit its extent

INCOME INEQUALITY AND THE FAIR VALUE OF LIBERTY

The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread. (Anatole France, *The Red Lily*, 1894)

INCOME INEQUALITY AND DOMINATION

Tyranny. The following statements, therefore, are false and tyrannical:
“Because I am handsome, so I should command respect.” “I am strong,
therefore men should love me.” “I am ... et cetera”

Tyranny is the wish to obtain by one means what can only be had by another. We owe different duties to different qualities: love is the proper response to charm, fear to strength, and belief to learning. (Pascal, *Pensees*, no. 244, c. 1662)

INCOME INEQUALITY, LUCK, AND DESERT

There is no more reason to permit the distribution of income and wealth to be settled by the distribution of natural assets than by historical and social fortune (John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 64, 1999)

Those who have been favored by nature, whoever they are, may gain from their good fortune only on terms that improve the situation of those who have lost out (John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 87, 1999)

INCOME INEQUALITY AND CHOICE

From each as they choose, to each as they are chosen (Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, p. 160, 1974)

INCOME INEQUALITY AND DEMOCRACY

...government of the people, by the people, for the people...
(Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg address)