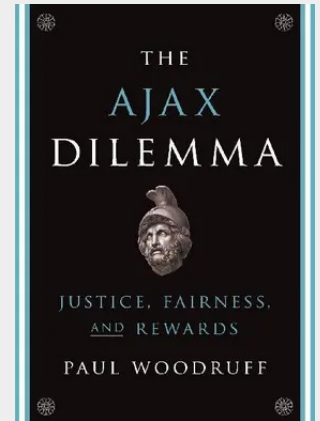


Woodruff

Ajax Dilemma

Justice, Fairness, and Rewards

We live in a world where CEOs give themselves million dollar bonuses even as their companies go bankrupt and ordinary workers are laid off; where athletes make millions while teachers struggle to survive; a world, in short, where rewards are often unfairly meted out. In *The Ajax Dilemma*, Paul Woodruff examines one of today's most pressing moral issues: how to distribute rewards and public recognition without damaging the social fabric. How should we honor those whose behavior and achievement is essential to our overall success? Is it fair or right to lavish rewards on the superstar at the expense of the hardworking rank-and-file? How do we distinguish an impartial fairness from what is truly just? Woodruff builds his answer to these questions around the ancient conflict between Ajax and Odysseus over the armor of the slain warrior Achilles. King Agamemnon arranges a speech contest to decide the issue. Ajax, the loyal workhorse, loses the contest, and the priceless armor, to Odysseus, the brilliantly deceptive strategist who will lead the Greeks to victory. Deeply insulted, Ajax goes on a rampage and commits suicide, and in his rage we see the resentment of every loyal worker who has been passed over in favor of those who are more gifted, or whose skills are more highly valued. How should we deal with the "Ajax dilemma"? Woodruff argues that while we can never create a perfect system for distributing just rewards, we can recognize the essential role that wisdom, compassion, moderation, and respect must play if we are to restore the basic sense of justice on which all communities depend. This short, thoughtful book, written with Woodruff's characteristic elegance, investigates some of the most bitterly divisive issues in American today.



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