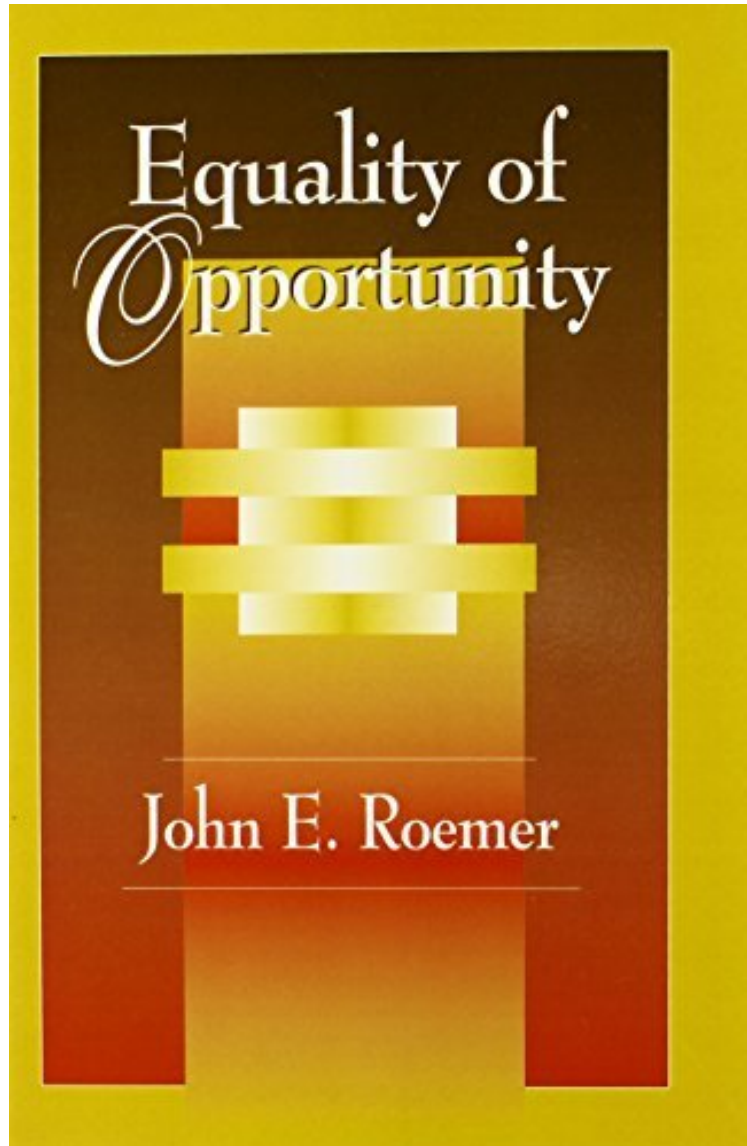


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Equality of Opportunity

John E. ROEMER

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John E. ROEMER : Equality of Opportunity before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Equality of Opportunity:

5 of 8 people found the following review helpful. SuperbBy MalkaunsThis is a brilliant, thoughtful and concise explanation of the equality of opportunity concept that blends ideas from economics and philosophy to provide deep insights into the theoretical and practical implications of equalizing opportunity. It will become the benchmark on the topic for many years to come.

John Roemer points out that there are two views of equality of opportunity that are widely held today. The first, which he calls the nondiscrimination principle, states that in the competition for positions in society, individuals should be judged only on attributes relevant to the performance of the duties of the position in question. Attributes such as race or sex should not be taken into account. The second states that society should do what it can to level the playing field among persons who compete for positions, especially during their formative years, so that all those who have the relevant potential attributes can be considered. Common to both positions is that at some point the principle of equal opportunity holds individuals accountable for achievements of particular objectives, whether they be education, employment, health, or income. Roemer argues that there is consequently a "before" and an "after" in the notion of equality of opportunity: before the competition starts, opportunities must be equalized, by social intervention if need be; but after it begins, individuals are on their own. The different views of equal opportunity should be judged according to where they place the starting gate which separates "before" from "after." Roemer works out in a precise way how to determine the location of the starting gate in the different views.

Roemer's combination of the techniques of economics and philosophy throws down a challenge to those in both disciplines. He believes he has sorted out equal opportunity, to leave us only with questions of personal responsibility and efficiency. A dash of political science may rein in what we can make of his account, but Equality of Opportunity is a very important work of metaphysical welfare economics. --Keith Dowding (Times Higher Education Supplement) Articulates a level-playing-field view of equal opportunity. Proposes that the equal-opportunity policy must equalize, in an average sense, the educational achievements of all types of people but not equalize the achievements within types, which differ according to effort. (Journal of Economic Literature) From the Back Cover John Roemer points out that there are two views of equality of opportunity that are widely held today. The first, which he calls the nondiscrimination principle, states that in the competition for positions in society, individuals should be judged only on attributes relevant to the performance of the duties of the position in question. Attributes such as race or sex should not be taken into account. The second states that society should do what it can to level the playing field among persons who compete for positions, especially during their formative years, so that all those who have the relevant potential attributes can be considered. Roemer argues that there is consequently a "before" and an "after" in the notion of equality of opportunity: before the competition starts, opportunities must be equalized, by social intervention if need be; but after it begins, individuals are on their own. The different views of equal opportunity should be judged according to where they place the starting gate that separates "before" from "after". Roemer works out in a precise way how to determine the location of the starting gate in the different views. About the Author John Roemer is Elizabeth S. and A. Varick Stout Professor of Political Science and Economics, Yale University.