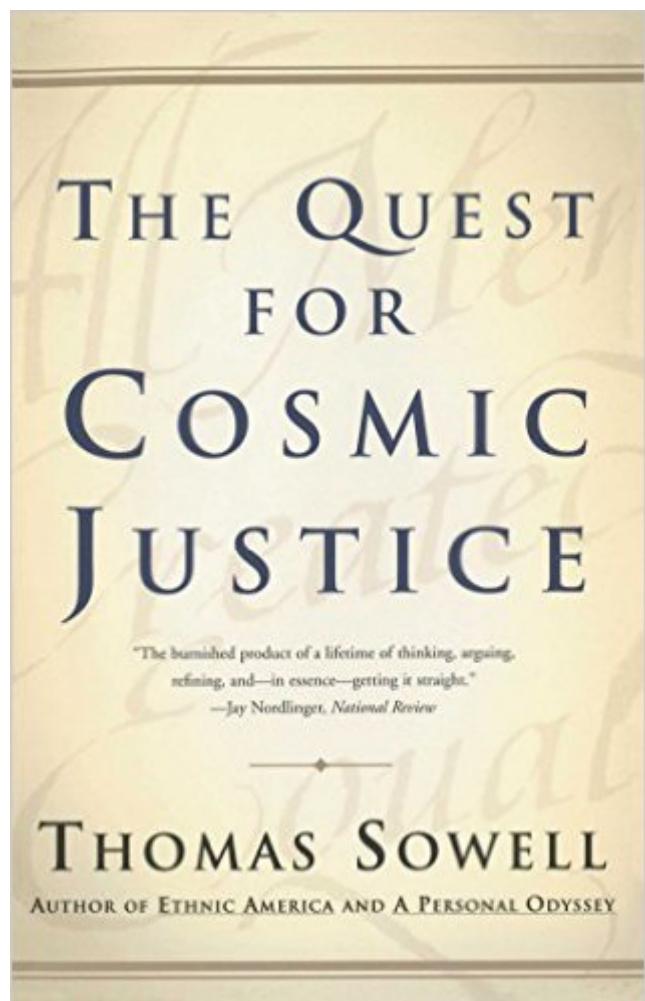


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The Quest For Cosmic Justice



Synopsis

This is not a comforting book -- it is a book about disturbing issues that are urgently important today and enduringly critical for the future. It rejects both "merit" and historical redress as principles for guiding public policy. It shows how "peace" movements have led to war and to needless casualties in those wars. It argues that "equality" is neither right nor wrong, but meaningless. The Quest for Cosmic Justice shows how confused conceptions of justice end up promoting injustice, how confused conceptions of equality end up promoting inequality, and how the tyranny of social visions prevents many people from confronting the actual consequences of their own beliefs and policies. Those consequences include the steady and dangerous erosion of the fundamental principles of freedom -- and the quiet repeal of the American revolution.

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Customer Reviews

Thomas Sowell's "The Quest For Cosmic Justice" is a stab in the heart of left-wing politics. Early in his book, the author makes a clear distinction between traditional ideas of justice and what Mr. Sowell describes as "cosmic justice." Traditional justice is process-oriented. Everyone plays by the same rules and is judged by the same standards. It is a system that "flesh and bone" human beings can live under. Cosmic justice, on the other hand, means providing everyone with equal prospects of success. This concept of "fairness," as morally spurious as it is, becomes outright dangerous when it requires third parties to wield arbitrary power to override rules and control outcomes. These third parties - found in government, universities, the media, and the courts - see a nation desperately in need of cosmic justice. The gap between the rich and poor is supposedly growing,

threatening our economic future. The so-called "earnings gap" between men and women is supposedly the child of a sexist society. Police brutality is becoming a high-tech version of lynching. And so on. Of course, many of these "problems" disappear when confronted with real-world experience and statistical evidence. Creating government "solutions" to these "problems" only entrusts more and more power in the hands of people further and further removed from the real world. To allow any government authority to determine how much money you receive for your work is not only a distortion of the economic process but is a dehumanizing attempt in reducing everyone to political clients. Government price controls on food, supposed to help the poor, have led to widespread hunger in countries around the world.

As I read this book, the thoughts of arrogance, condescension, and hubris came to mind - not towards the author - but towards the subjects of his discussion. Certainly one cannot fault the social engineers and institutional "tinkerers" for their intentions. However, intentions are not the measure of success - results are. The policies of the "anointed" have become gospel, not subject to debate or empirical verification. In essence, anyone who disagrees with them or offers another approach is necessarily opposed to the intentions of those holding the true "gospel" of social harmony, prosperity, and peace. But this substitute for evidence and effectiveness has failed the most important element - those who are the intended beneficiaries of the "anointed" policies. The efforts to "equalize" and pursue "cosmic justice" not only have few success stories - but rather there is an abundance of proof to show that their policies are counter-productive and even harmful. But never mind the petty details! We're merely interested in doing the right thing, having the right motives, having our hearts in the right place, etc. Consequences be damned! We know what works best! The conquest for social justice will not be deterred by such things as uncooperative human beings, lack of success, or the Rule of Law. This book is an excellent follow-up to Sowell's "Vision of the Anointed" as it drives home the point that those who embrace visions of cosmic ideals are embarking upon an endeavor requiring super-human skill. And their pursuit in spite of this fact does good for no one - not the least of which are those who they claim to want to help.

"You can't change the rules in the middle of the game." "Hey, you just made that rule up." "You're cheating!" Kids on a playground arguing? No, adults in our judicial and political systems. In the first section of *The Quest for Cosmic Justice*, Thomas Sowell takes us on a tour of the world through time to display examples of childlike behavior in adults. He discusses two types of justice. Traditional justice is process-based: make up the rules before the game, everybody plays by the

same rules, and the end result is left open. Cosmic justice is ends-oriented: have rules, but fiddle with them so that the game ends as someone wants it to. In the second section of the book, Dr. Sowell examines equality, a much bandied-about word, but slippery in the extreme as to what it means. If we have learned anything from science it is that defining terms is crucial to progress - unless one is pursuing cosmic justice, of course. He talks of ". . . politically imposed equality . . . poisonous relations between the races and sexes . . . internal dissensions and demoralization have played a crucial role in the decline and fall of other civilizations, and there is no reason to expect this one to be immune." Visions, their necessity for humans to operate and the things that can go wrong with them, are treated in the third section. The final section concerns the quiet repeal of the American Revolution. Comparisons of the French Revolution to the American Revolution were very informative, at least to me. I remembered an awful lot of heads got chopped off in France, but hadn't made the connection between that and the philosophy underlying the French Revolution.

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