



## “Parental partiality in unjust circumstances: the case of inheritance”

**Speaker:** Anca Gheaus (CEU Vienna)

**Chair:** Maria Rita Testa (Luiss)

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**Aula 205AB** - Viale Romania

### Abstract

One of the questions that need to be settled by an adequate theory of justice concerns the extent of permissible parental partiality. As part of a general inquiry in this matter, the more specific issue of inheritance has recently drawn egalitarians' attention. They widely agree that the intergenerational transmission of wealth represents a great obstacle to distributive fairness, and that states should therefore seek to interrupt such transmission by strict regulation of inheritance. Assuming this view is correct, there remains the separate question of what, if anything, are individual parents permitted to bequeath to their children in the absence of just redistributive policies. I argue for the following thesis: Parents who live in unjust circumstances (of a kind I specify) have at least a moral option, but possibly also a duty, to bequeath more resources than they would be permitted to bequeath if they lived in a just society. The amount of permissible parental bequest is determined by reference to what children need to either (a) avoid poverty; or (b) have the level of resources they would have if they lived in just circumstances; or (c) avoid coming to non-comparative harms. Depending on empirical and normative circumstances, these alternative criteria can justify as permissible various levels of bequest. But in unjust circumstances it is likely that even the most modest levels of justified bequest would considerably contribute to the perpetuation of distributive unfairness. I conclude that parents' permissible, or maybe even required, responses to unjust circumstances unavoidably perpetuate injustice.

### About the Speaker

Anca Gheaus is an Assistant Professor in the Political Science Department at the Central European University (Vienna). I work in political philosophy, with a special interest in justice and the normative significance of personal relationships. My forthcoming book on surrogacy, coauthored with Christine Straehle will appear in the "Debating Ethics" series from Oxford University Press. I am also writing a monograph on child-centred childrearing, under contract with Oxford University Press.

**Luiss**  
Libera Università Internazionale  
degli Studi Sociali Guido Carli

Viale Romania 32, 00197 Roma  
T +39 06 85 22 52 90-57 00-57 02  
scienzepolitiche@luiss.it

www.luiss.it