



Research Forum WINTER 2019



Tuesday, 7 January 2020
16:00 – 18:00 c.t., FANC C, S 106

Fair Play, Coercion, and the Costs of Children

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“Are non-parents under a duty to contribute to the costs of raising children? A prominent argument in favor of such a duty is that a contribution by non-parents is required by the so-called principle of fair play: Parents produce societal benefits, some of which are received by non-parents. Not reciprocating, it is argued, would be unfair on the part of non-parents. However, both the persuasiveness of the principle of fair play and its applicability to the case of parents and non-parents have been disputed. In response, some more recent contributions to the debate highlight the role of coercion in distributing benefits produced by parents: It is not just that parents happen to produce societal benefits, states deliberately and forcibly redistribute these benefits to everyone. I argue that neither the original version, nor the version of the principle of fair play that highlights state coercion are plausible.”