

Justice Power and the Myths of Human Progress in Post Human Futures

Navneet Kumar Verma

Department of Political Science, Government College, Siwana-Balotra, Rajasthan, India
email: drnavneetverma@gmail.com

Abstract

Human civilization has long been narrated as a journey toward justice, equality, and enlightenment. However, a critical examination of history demonstrates that these ideals have often functioned as myths—powerful yet illusory constructs that legitimize hierarchies, stabilize authority, and drive social cooperation. From the cognitive revolution to the agricultural and industrial transformations, humanity's progress has consistently been intertwined with inequality, domination, and ecological disruption. The scientific revolution and the rise of capitalism further reshaped global structures, embedding justice in the rhetoric of growth and prosperity while marginalizing vast populations. Today, new frontiers in biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and genetic engineering revive ancient myths of immortality and omnipotence, raising profound ethical and existential dilemmas. This paper revisits the trajectory of human history through the lens of justice and imagined orders, tracing continuities between ancient myths and modern technological ambitions. By analyzing revolutions in cognition, agriculture, empire-building, capitalism, and science, the study argues that justice has rarely been realized as a universal principle; instead, it persists as a legitimizing narrative. The future of humankind depends on recognizing these illusions and consciously shaping narratives and technologies to promote survival, sustainability, and ethical responsibility rather than domination.

Keywords: Justice; Myths; Cognitive Revolution; Agricultural Revolution; Empires; Capitalism; Science; Industrialization; Immortality; Homo sapiens; Artificial Intelligence; Biotechnology; Future of Humanity

1. Introduction

Human history has often been narrated as a progressive story of justice, fairness, and enlightenment. From school textbooks to philosophical treatises, the dominant narrative has celebrated humankind's ability to create moral orders, establish laws, and build societies based on principles of equality. Yet, a closer examination of history reveals a different trajectory—one that is less about universal justice and more about the endurance of myths, survival instincts, and power struggles. Justice, in this sense, has rarely been realized as a consistent or universal principle; rather, it has functioned as an imagined construct, invoked at different stages to legitimize authority and stabilize social hierarchies. The history of humankind is not linear progress toward fairness but a complex negotiation between imagination, power, technology, and adaptation.

The earliest phases of human development already illustrate this paradox. The emergence of Homo sapiens as a distinct species did not immediately give rise to systems of fairness or justice. What distinguished humans from other species was their ability to create and share collective stories—beliefs about gods, spirits, and abstract concepts such as law or morality. These imagined realities enabled cooperation on a scale unmatched by any other species, but they also laid the foundation for exclusion and inequality. Justice, as understood in this early period, was not about impartiality but about loyalty to one's group, clan, or tribe. The very success of humans in organizing societies was built on narratives that gave meaning to cooperation while simultaneously dividing insiders from outsiders. Thus, the seed of justice was sown as an imagined principle, powerful in mobilization but fragile in its universality. With the transition to agriculture, these contradictions deepened. Farming promised stability and abundance but instead imposed rigid hierarchies, relentless labour, and anxieties about the future. Surplus food was accumulated in the hands of elites, while ordinary people laboured under systems of taxation and control. Writing, one of the most celebrated human inventions, did not initially serve to preserve poetry or philosophy but to record taxes, property, and debts. Justice in this new order became synonymous with compliance to rules that preserved hierarchy, not with equality among individuals. The agricultural transformation therefore institutionalized myths of fairness while embedding structural inequality. The very notion of order was equated with justice, yet this order perpetuated systems of domination.

The rise of empires carried this paradox to new heights. Empires expanded not only through military conquest but also through shared myths—religious doctrines, imperial ideologies, and legal frameworks that unified diverse populations under common narratives. Roman law, the Mandate of Heaven in China, and the universal claims of

monotheistic religions all portrayed justice as divine or imperial order. Yet in practice, such justice primarily served the ruling elites, reinforcing loyalty and hierarchy while marginalizing the powerless. Religion in particular offered a universal moral framework, but it also intensified exclusivity and conflict. Justice became tied to obedience, belief, and hierarchy, rather than impartial fairness. Markets and money added another layer of illusion by presenting themselves as neutral mechanisms of exchange. In reality, economic systems entrenched disparities, masking inequality beneath the rhetoric of equivalence. Justice was thus invoked at every turn, but its meaning was reshaped to suit prevailing structures of power.

The modern era, marked by scientific and industrial transformations, did not escape this historical continuity. The scientific revolution, rooted in the principle of ignorance and the pursuit of discovery, promised universal knowledge. Yet science evolved in tandem with political and economic interests, often serving the agendas of empires and capitalists. Capitalism, with its ethic of growth and accumulation, redefined justice in economic terms: prosperity, competition, and opportunity became the markers of fairness. Industrialization deepened these contradictions by generating unprecedented wealth alongside alienation, ecological destruction, and class inequality. Progress was celebrated as a universal good, but it concealed the costs borne disproportionately by workers, marginalized groups, and the environment. Justice, once again, was cloaked in the language of advancement, even as disparities widened. The twenty-first century presents the most decisive challenge in this trajectory. Humanity's ambition has shifted from survival and growth to transcendence. Biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and genetic engineering now promise to overcome mortality itself, giving rise to visions of post-human futures. These pursuits, however, risk intensifying the same historical patterns of inequality. Access to life-extension technologies and engineered intelligence will likely remain concentrated among elites, repeating the dynamics of agricultural surplus, imperial privilege, and capitalist profit. Artificial intelligence, though celebrated as neutral, already reproduces biases and inequities embedded in data. Justice, in this emerging order, risks becoming biologically and technologically predetermined, raising existential questions about the very definition of humanity. The pursuit of immortality may fulfill ancient myths but will also expose new fault lines of exclusion and domination.

It is therefore imperative to examine the history of humankind not as a steady march toward justice but as a recurring cycle of myths, technologies, and power struggles. At every stage—from the earliest human societies to the digital and biotechnological age—justice has served as a legitimizing narrative rather than a universal principle. The critical question for the future is not whether justice will finally be realized but whether humanity can consciously reimagine justice as an ethic of survival, sustainability, and responsibility rather than a mask for hierarchy. The task is not to abandon myths but to craft them responsibly, ensuring they sustain life rather than perpetuate domination.

This article seeks to expand on these themes by analyzing human history through the lens of justice and imagined orders. The sections that follow revisit major turning points—the shift from foraging to agriculture, the rise of empires and religions, the entanglement of science and capitalism, the transformations of industrialization, and the challenges of biotechnology and artificial intelligence. Each stage demonstrates how myths and narratives have stabilized social systems while embedding inequality. By bringing together historical and contemporary perspectives, the paper argues that the illusion of justice has been central to human progress and remains critical to understanding our future. Ultimately, the future of *Homo sapiens* depends less on achieving justice as an abstract ideal than on managing the powers we have created with conscious ethical responsibility.

2. Literature Survey

The question of whether justice has ever existed as a universal principle in human history has long preoccupied scholars from diverse disciplines. Rather than treating justice as a timeless truth, many researchers emphasize that what we call justice has often been a product of myths, social constructs, and legitimizing ideologies. The literature spans anthropology, history, sociology, economics, and political philosophy, with particular attention to the transformations that have shaped humankind—from prehistoric cooperation to global technological ambitions. This survey situates the present study within six broad thematic domains.

2.1 Human Origins and the Power of Myths

Anthropologists and historians have repeatedly emphasized the role of shared beliefs and imagined orders in enabling cooperation at scales far beyond kinship. Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* [1] highlights how geography and environmental resources determined differential patterns of human development, yet even his environmental determinism acknowledges the crucial role of culture and belief. Mithen [2] focuses on the emergence of symbolic thought and imagination as the foundation of cooperation, while Childe [3] describes the "Neolithic Revolution" that transformed nomadic bands into agricultural societies.

Scott's *Against the Grain* [4] disrupts the celebratory view of agriculture, suggesting that farming created new systems of inequality, labor extraction, and state control. Anderson's *Imagined Communities* [5] provides a modern counterpart, showing how nations are built on collective fictions that allow strangers to cooperate under common banners. Together, these studies illustrate that myths and imagined realities—whether of gods, spirits, or nations—were not illusions to be dismissed but powerful social technologies that stabilized hierarchies while enabling large-scale coordination. Justice, in this light, was never impartial; it was embedded within narratives that served survival and power.

2.2 Empires, Religion, and Civilizational Narratives

The consolidation of empires represents another pivotal stage in shaping justice as an imagined construct. Huntington's controversial *The Clash of Civilizations* [6] underscores the continuing salience of cultural and religious identities, while Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* [7] questions the very foundations of Western claims to universal rationality. Empires such as Rome, Persia, and China legitimized authority through doctrines like Pax Romana or the Mandate of Heaven, portraying imperial domination as justice. Religion reinforced this paradox: polytheistic tolerance often coexisted with strict hierarchies, while monotheistic traditions institutionalized exclusivity in the name of universal truth.

These perspectives demonstrate that justice was consistently tied to obedience and loyalty rather than fairness. Empires and religions invoked myths of order and universality, yet these myths primarily stabilized ruling elites. For Harari [8], [9], the central thread is clear: human beings cooperate flexibly in large numbers not because of innate fairness but because of their capacity to believe in shared fictions. Justice was, and remains, a rhetorical device rather than an absolute principle.

2.3 Capitalism, Markets, and Inequality

The literature on capitalism deepens this critique by exposing how economic systems redefine justice in terms of growth, prosperity, and opportunity while masking structural disparities. Marx's *Das Kapital* [10] famously portrays capitalism as a system of exploitation in which surplus value is extracted from labor, while Weber [11] explores the religious and cultural values that underpinned capitalist expansion. Piketty [12] extends this trajectory into the twenty-first century, demonstrating how wealth concentration is a persistent feature of capitalist economies.

Graeber [13] offers an anthropological perspective, arguing that debt is one of the oldest tools of inequality, transforming moral obligations into economic subjugation. Zuboff's *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* [14] illustrates how digital platforms commodify human behavior, reinforcing control while promising empowerment. The digital economy, far from being an egalitarian space, replicates older hierarchies in algorithmic form. Brynjolfsson and McAfee [15] also warn that automation intensifies inequality by creating a divide between “superstar” firms and displaced labor.

Taken together, these works show that capitalism reshapes justice into the language of efficiency, productivity, and opportunity. Yet beneath the rhetoric lies the persistence of inequality, echoing Harari's observation [9] that myths of fairness mask deeply embedded unequal realities. In this sense, justice under capitalism becomes a narrative tool—invoked to legitimize growth while obscuring structural exclusions. This perspective aligns closely with the paper's argument that economic systems across history have consistently used the illusion of justice as a stabilizing mechanism.

2.4 Science, Industrialization, and the Illusion of Progress

The scientific revolution and industrial transformations are often celebrated as the hallmarks of progress, but literature also highlights their paradoxical consequences. Morris [16] explores why the West rose to global dominance, emphasizing the interplay of geography, culture, and technological innovation. Kurzweil [17] offers a more optimistic account of technological trajectories, predicting a future where humans transcend biology through exponential innovation. Pinker's *Enlightenment Now* [18] likewise celebrates reason, science, and humanism as drivers of progress.

Yet critical voices such as Rifkin [19] and Brynjolfsson and McAfee [15] emphasize that industrial revolutions fundamentally alter labor, family, and community structures, often at great social cost. Industrialization, while producing unprecedented prosperity, also entrenched alienation, ecological degradation, and systemic inequalities. Justice was reframed as progress itself, an illusion that concealed the costs borne disproportionately by marginalized groups. This aligns with Harari's reminder [8], [9] that technological and economic systems have rarely distributed benefits equitably.

2.5 Biotechnology, Artificial Intelligence, and Post-Human Futures

Contemporary literature is dominated by concerns about biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and the possibility of post-human futures. Fukuyama [20] warns of the ethical and political dangers of genetic engineering, raising questions about dignity and equality. Bostrom [21] highlights the existential risks posed by superintelligent AI, where human control may no longer be possible. Harari's *Homo Deus* [9] brings these debates together, arguing that the pursuit of immortality and technological omnipotence may transform *Homo sapiens* into entirely new entities—or render them obsolete.

Kurzweil [17] presents a more optimistic view, suggesting that the singularity will enhance rather than eliminate humanity, while Zuboff [14] critiques the growing dominance of algorithmic control. Brynjolfsson and McAfee [15] emphasize that AI is not neutral: its benefits accrue to capital owners while ordinary workers face disempowerment. Rifkin [19] similarly cautions that technological shifts create upheavals that governments often fail to anticipate. These critiques highlight a continuity with earlier epochs: just as agriculture, empire, and industrialization redefined justice in hierarchical terms, biotechnology and AI may entrench new forms of inequality.

Justice, in this scenario, risks becoming biologically predetermined or technologically encoded, echoing ancient myths in new forms. The rhetoric of fairness—whether framed as “equal access” to digital technologies or the promise of enhanced life spans—often conceals the reality of selective distribution. As Harari insists [9], the “immortality project” is unlikely to serve humanity as a whole; rather, it will privilege elites while deepening global divides. This body of literature therefore strengthens the claim that contemporary technological ambitions are not departures from history but extensions of long-standing patterns of myth and inequality.

2.6 Integrative Perspectives on Justice and Human Futures

Several integrative works attempt to synthesize these perspectives. Christian's *Maps of Time* [22] offers a “big history” framework linking cosmology, biology, and human societies, while Taylor [23] situates modernities within a broader geohistorical narrative. Harari's twin volumes—*Sapiens* [8] and *Homo Deus* [9]—stand out for weaving together anthropology, history, and futurism, presenting a sweeping account of myths, technologies, and power. Across these works, the unifying theme is clear: justice has rarely functioned as a universal principle. Instead, it has been invoked as a legitimizing narrative, stabilizing systems of power across epochs.

The literature thus provides a rich foundation for the present study. By bringing together scholarship on human origins, empires, capitalism, industrialization, and post-human futures, it becomes evident that justice is less a reality than an enduring myth. The challenge for the twenty-first century is not to discover justice as an eternal truth but to consciously reimagine it as an ethic of sustainability and responsibility in the face of unprecedented technological ambitions.

3 Justice as a Historical Myth

Justice has long been one of humanity's most cherished ideals, yet its practical reality has often been inconsistent with its moral appeal. In this study justice is approached as a historical myth, an imagined order that holds societies together by providing narratives of legitimacy and fairness. These narratives do not reveal objective truths; rather they offer explanations that communities accept to justify cooperation, authority, and social arrangements. That acceptance is central: once a population buys into a story about what is fair, institutions and practices grow up around that story and reproduce it across generations. The story becomes a lived framework that orders expectations, normalizes distribution, and shapes identities.

The interpretive stance adopted here treats justice as an active cultural device. It asks how ideas of justice are constructed, how they change across time, and how they function to reproduce certain social and economic structures. This is not a denial of moral aspiration. Instead, it is a descriptive account that clarifies why moral claims about fairness have historically failed to produce universal equality. By recognizing justice as a narrative, the study can trace its transformations and show how the same functional logic persists even while the forms and language of justice shift. The goal is to connect vocabulary to institutions, and rhetorical claims to material outcomes, so that the promises of justice can be evaluated not only as ideals but as mechanisms that shape who benefits and who is marginalized.

3.1 Justice as Narrative Power

The persuasive power of justice lies in its narrative force. Stories about who deserves what, about rights and duties, about rewards and punishments, are the grammar through which societies make sense of distribution and authority. These narratives can be brief and local, such as clan rules that govern sharing and retribution, or they can be vast and abstract, such as legal codes, religious canons, or economic doctrines that claim universal validity. In every

case the stories do two things: they provide intelligibility for social arrangements, and they legitimate existing hierarchies by offering moral or instrumental grounds for them.

When justice becomes a dominant story it shapes institutions, rituals, and expectations. Courts, laws, ceremonies, and educational practices reproduce the narrative across generations. Importantly, the narrative reshapes perception: inequalities appear natural, privileges become deserved, and dissent becomes deviant. Because narratives are internalized, they need not be constantly enforced by violence; they function through habit and consent as much as through coercion. In this sense justice operates like a cultural technology — a set of practices and representations that translate abstract claims into routinized social processes.

The narrative quality of justice explains why appeals to fairness can be mobilizing even when outcomes remain unequal. People will support systems that promise a comprehensible order, even when their own position within that order is disadvantaged, because the story offers meaning, predictability, and identity. The moral force of justice matters less than its narrative coherence. Political leaders, religious authorities, and economic elites thus have strong incentives to craft compelling accounts of fairness that align with their interests — not necessarily to achieve universal equality but to secure legitimacy and social calm.

3.2 Continuity of the Myth and Contemporary Implications

One of the core insights of this approach is continuity. Across very different historical conditions — small foraging groups, settled agricultural villages, imperial polities, industrial nations, and global digital societies — the function of the justice narrative has remained remarkably stable. What changes are the forms and technologies of persuasion: kinship and ritual in early societies, legal codes and imperial theology in ancient empires, markets and contractual language in capitalist orders, and now algorithmic governance and technocratic rhetoric in contemporary life. Yet the underlying function is always to make complex social orders understandable and acceptable. This continuity implies that modern innovations do not automatically confer moral progress. New terminologies — rights, equality, access, inclusion, digital fairness — may articulate noble aims, but they can also be enlisted to maintain existing advantages under a modern guise. For example, promises of universal access to technology can be rhetorically empowering while leaving structural barriers intact. Similarly, meritocratic rhetoric or appeals to “innovation” can legitimize unequal outcomes by framing them as deserved results of talent and effort. The modern vocabulary is powerful because it appears neutral and technical, but that apparent neutrality can conceal political choices and distributional consequences.

Recognizing continuity calls for greater reflexivity when adopting new social narratives. Instead of assuming that modern frameworks will inherently produce better outcomes, it is necessary to examine who benefits and who does not, and to ask what vested interests might be reinforced by the rhetoric of justice. This is a practical responsibility: if justice is a narrative that organizes collective life, then shaping that narrative ethically requires attention to distributional consequences, institutional design, and mechanisms of accountability. Practical consequences follow from treating justice as narrative. Policy makers, scholars, and civic actors must evaluate claims about fairness not only by their normative language but by empirical effects. It is insufficient to declare a policy just; one must examine how it restructures power, who gains access to benefits, and how social identities are reconstituted in the process. Because narratives are transmitted culturally, efforts to change unjust patterns must engage institutions of schooling, media, law, and governance — not merely publish statements of principle.

Ethical reimagining of the justice narrative also demands humility. Historical awareness shows that no single script of fairness has proven universally valid. The attempt should therefore be less about discovering a final, pristine account of justice and more about creating resilient institutional arrangements that are open to revision, redistribution, and democratic accountability. An ethical narrative of justice needs to foreground survival, sustainability, and the protection of those most vulnerable to sudden social and technological shocks.

To operationalize this framework, research must combine historical sensitivity with concrete institutional analysis. Scholars should map narratives of justice onto institutional mechanisms — laws, markets, educational curricula, welfare systems — to see how stories are embedded in structures. Comparative studies that trace similar narratives across different societies can reveal mechanisms through which myths persist or change. Policy experiments that transparently evaluate distributional outcomes can test whether new narratives actually improve equity.

In particular, technologies that mediate public life require careful scrutiny. Algorithms, platforms, and bioengineering do not operate in a vacuum; they are introduced into existing narrative landscapes and therefore acquire legitimacy from preexisting stories about progress and fairness. This means scrutiny is needed not only of technical design but of the social imaginaries that validate technological deployment. Civic engagement, public deliberation, and institutional checks are essential to prevent new myths of fairness from entrenching old inequalities.

Finally, the narrative approach suggests a modest but powerful normative agenda. Rather than promising absolute solutions, the aim should be to foster narratives that prioritize resilience, inclusion, and ecological stewardship. This requires deliberate storytelling: crafting public narratives that link justice to survival, the protection of vulnerable communities, and long-term planetary health. Such narratives must be embedded within institutions that enable redistribution, democratic participation, and continual revision when inequalities become entrenched. This is the methodological basis for the analysis that follows.

4 Justice Across Human History

Human history provides a rich record of how justice has been imagined, redefined, and applied across changing social orders. Yet when examined closely, justice does not appear as a stable principle of fairness. Instead, it takes the form of a narrative that adapts to context while retaining its essential function: to legitimize authority, enable cooperation, and make inequality appear acceptable. From early foraging groups to modern industrial societies, the myths of justice have shifted in vocabulary but remained consistent in purpose. By revisiting different stages of history, it becomes possible to see continuity where the surface suggests rupture, and to understand justice as an evolving myth rather than a progressive achievement.

4.1 Early Human Transformations

The earliest human communities were small, fragile, and dependent on cooperation for survival. Food sharing, conflict resolution, and group loyalty were essential, but these practices were grounded not in universal fairness but in myths that defined who belonged and who did not. Justice was relative, offering protection to insiders while excluding outsiders. Stories about ancestors, spirits, or sacred rituals created cohesion within groups, while simultaneously justifying hostility or indifference toward others.

The agricultural revolution transformed this dynamic. Farming generated surplus, permanence, and stability, but it also introduced hierarchy and dependence. Rules of justice developed around property, inheritance, and labor. Writing and legal codes emerged as tools for recording obligations and legitimizing authority. These were not neutral systems of fairness; they were narratives that made inequality appear orderly. Farmers who surrendered part of their harvest as tax could believe that it was fair because the law said so. Landowners and rulers reinforced their dominance by framing extraction as a just requirement for the preservation of stability.

The early period demonstrates the dual function of justice: it bound communities together while justifying exclusion and exploitation. Far from eliminating inequality, the narratives of fairness made hierarchy appear natural and even necessary.

4.2 Empires and Religion

As populations expanded and empires emerged, the challenge of governance intensified. Force alone could not secure vast territories; rulers turned to the language of justice to provide legitimacy. Roman law promised order, Chinese rulers invoked the mandate of heaven, and imperial proclamations around the world declared conquest as stability. Justice became synonymous with obedience to the empire, a narrative that reassured populations even as it concentrated power at the top. Religion amplified this process. Polytheistic traditions often encouraged pluralism but also preserved rigid social roles, reinforcing the idea that inequality was divinely ordained. Monotheistic faiths carried an even sharper edge: by declaring loyalty to one true God, they established absolute distinctions between insiders and outsiders. Justice in this context meant obedience to divine law, not impartial fairness among all humans. Those within the faith were promised protection and salvation; those outside were often excluded or subordinated.

Economic exchange further reinforced the imperial myth. The invention of coinage and the spread of trade created an impression of neutrality, as if exchange were inherently fair. In reality, markets served imperial interests, channelling wealth upward while masking disparities with the appearance of equivalence. Justice here was a convenient narrative: it portrayed economic hierarchy as natural and divine order as universal, allowing empires to expand without constant reliance on force.

In this stage, justice was elevated to the level of sacred truth, yet it continued to function as a myth that legitimized authority and inequality. The empire became just because it declared itself so, and religion provided the stories that made this declaration credible.

4.3 Science and Capitalism

The scientific revolution introduced a new vocabulary of rationality and discovery. Knowledge was celebrated as universal, yet it was harnessed for imperial ambition and economic gain. Scientific progress did not belong to humanity in general but to institutions that held power. Justice in this period was reimagined as rational order and

objective truth, though its benefits were distributed selectively. The narrative of fairness shifted from divine decree to rational progress, but the outcome was similar: authority and inequality cloaked in the language of justice. Capitalism reshaped justice yet again, presenting prosperity, competition, and opportunity as its foundations. The market was portrayed as neutral, rewarding merit and effort, while in practice it reproduced structural inequality. Success was framed as deserved, while failure was attributed to individual shortcomings. This narrative was persuasive because it promised hope: even those disadvantaged could believe in the possibility of upward mobility. Justice became synonymous with market efficiency, a story that reassured populations even as wealth concentrated among elites.

The union of science and capitalism demonstrates how flexible the myth of justice can be. Rationality and prosperity replaced divine sanction, but the function remained unchanged. Justice legitimized authority, stabilized cooperation, and concealed exploitation. Progress was celebrated as fairness, even though its benefits remained unevenly distributed.

4.4 Industrialization and Modernity

The industrial revolution multiplied these dynamics, linking justice directly with modernization. Machines transformed production, generating unprecedented prosperity, but they also displaced labor, disrupted families, and inflicted severe ecological costs. Justice was equated with technological advancement, and progress itself was presented as proof of fairness. Yet this fairness was uneven. Industrial elites reaped immense profits while workers endured long hours, poor conditions, and meagre rewards. Colonized societies provided raw materials and labor, often under coercive systems justified in the name of civilizing missions. Justice became the narrative of modernization: every sacrifice was portrayed as necessary for universal improvement, even as actual benefits were narrowly distributed.

Modernity reinforced the illusion that justice could be achieved through progress. By equating technological advancement with fairness, it disguised exploitation and ecological destruction as inevitable steps toward a better future. The myth persisted because it promised eventual rewards, allowing populations to accept suffering in the present for imagined equality in the future.

4.5 Continuities Across Time

When these phases are viewed together, a consistent continuity emerges. Justice has shifted in vocabulary — from kinship and loyalty, to divine law, to rational progress, to modernization — but its function has remained constant. It has always been a narrative that legitimizes authority, stabilizes cooperation, and conceals inequality. This continuity reveals that humanity has not steadily advanced toward fairness. Instead, it has continuously reshaped the myth of justice to fit new conditions. The forms differ, but the purpose persists. Myths of justice made agriculture tolerable, empires stable, markets legitimate, and industrialization acceptable. In each case, inequality was preserved under the guise of fairness.

Understanding this continuity is vital for interpreting the present. The justice invoked today in terms of digital equality, technological access, or human enhancement is not fundamentally different from earlier myths. It may use new language, but it serves the same purpose: to stabilize systems of power while concealing their exclusions. The challenge for the future is not to discover justice as a universal principle but to consciously reimagine it as an ethic capable of confronting survival, sustainability, and vulnerability in an age of unprecedented technological ambition.

5 Conclusion

The idea of justice has accompanied humanity across its long history, yet what emerges from this study is not the image of a universal principle but that of a persistent myth. Justice has never been absent from human imagination, but its role has been less to create equality than to legitimize authority, stabilize cooperation, and make inequality tolerable. By treating justice as a historical myth, it becomes possible to see connections across vastly different epochs and to recognize that humanity's most advanced ambitions continue to echo its most ancient illusions.

The exploration of justice across history shows a clear continuity. Early human communities relied on myths of kinship and spirituality to define belonging. Agricultural societies developed laws and records that made inequality appear natural. Empires invoked divine sanction and imperial decrees to frame conquest as fairness. Capitalism reframed justice as prosperity and opportunity, while industrial modernity equated it with technological progress and modernization. At each stage, the vocabulary changed, but the function remained constant: justice was a story that explained and legitimized systems of power.

Recognizing this continuity is important because it challenges the common belief that history is a march toward fairness. Instead, history reveals a pattern of adaptation: the myth of justice is continually reshaped to fit new

conditions, but it consistently sustains unequal structures. The promise of justice is what keeps societies stable, not the actual realization of equality. This perspective prevents us from mistaking revolutions in economy, politics, or technology as signs of moral progress. They are often extensions of old patterns, dressed in new language.

This insight has urgent implications for the present. Today's dominant narratives about justice are framed in terms of digital access, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and sustainability. These narratives promise fairness, efficiency, and inclusion, but they risk reproducing the same dynamics that defined earlier epochs. Just as empires declared obedience to rulers as justice, or markets declared competition as fairness, modern technologies may declare algorithmic decision-making or genetic enhancement as equality. The language of justice may once again be used to conceal exclusions, this time under the guise of neutrality, innovation, or inevitability.

If justice is to become more than a myth, it must be consciously reimagined. This requires rejecting the illusion that fairness will automatically emerge from progress, modernization, or innovation. It demands narratives that place survival, sustainability, and responsibility at the center. A just order for the future cannot be one that stabilizes inequality through rhetoric; it must be one that deliberately protects the vulnerable, distributes benefits equitably, and acknowledges the ecological limits of human ambition.

The continuity of justice as myth is sobering, but it also offers a source of clarity. By recognizing how justice has functioned across history, societies can become more deliberate about shaping its future. Instead of repeating old patterns under new forms, humanity has the opportunity to craft new narratives that align justice with resilience, inclusion, and planetary well-being. The task is not to abandon justice as an illusion, but to transform it into a conscious ethic that resists domination and embraces responsibility.

This study has argued that justice is best understood as a historical myth, powerful not because it is true but because people believe in it. Across time, that belief has been mobilized to support authority and cooperation while obscuring inequality. The challenge of the present is to ensure that the myths of justice we continue to create do not merely reproduce old hierarchies in modern forms. By reimagining justice with awareness of its history, humanity can shape a future where fairness is not only invoked but practiced, where the stories we tell about justice align with the survival and dignity of all.

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