Twitter Thread by Jon Pike



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You will hear the argument that, if LT doesn't win a race, this shows that LT's participation is fair. Joanna Harper has a version of this: what we are after is 'meaningful competition' and we have that if the outcome is uncertain... (Thread) 1/

...Both these views are, bluntly, wrong. They misunderstand the nature of sporting fairness. Here's why: (this is going to be a bit philosophical).
The standard work on fairness is John Rawls' A Theory of Justice (1971 (2nd ed. 1999) ... 2/

...The crucial distinction that we need is on pp. 73- 76, of the 2nd edn. between, otoh *imperfect/perfect* procedural justice and, otoh, *pure* procedural justice... 3/

...Two examples: First, a murder trial, second a Lottery. Start with the murder trial. This is fair *in some sense* if the defendant is found guilty if he did it, and found not guilty if he didn't do it. Call this 'outcome fairness' 4/

...But it is fair *in another sense* if the rules concerning evidence are followed, witnesses are not coerced, the jury does not look up previous accusations on the internet etc. Call this 'process fairness.' ...5/

...Clearly, you could have a (process) fair trial and fail to convict the murderer, and a (process) unfair trial that succeeds in convicting the murderer. So the 'process fairness' and the 'outcome fairness' can come apart... 6/

...(If it's possible for them to come apart, then you've got a case of imperfect procedural justice. If the process guarantees the fair outcome, you've got perfect procedural justice – think 'you cut, I'll choose' dividing up a cake) ...7/

Both of these are different to 'pure procedural justice'. In this case there's *no fact of the matter* about whether the outcome is fair. This is like a lottery. No-one deserves to win a lottery. If nothing interferes with the random process, the outcome is fair...8/

Sports competitions are best understood as examples of 'pure procedural justice.' There's no independent criterion to decide who 'deserves' to win. If the rules are fair, and they are followed, the outcome is fair... 9/

... or, the other way around, outcomes are fair if and only if they arise from fair processes. /10

...The rules governing women’s sport at the moment, are not fair (in the main), because they do not exclude people with male advantage. So it doesn’t matter what the outcome of this unfair process is, it’s still unfair. /11

...No women’s competition in which LT competes has a fair result, for anyone. It doesn’t matter where LT finishes, and it doesn't matter if the outcome is uncertain. Sporting fairness is a property of the rules. The rules are not fair. /ends