

Piketty & Rawls

Economic Justice
PPE 101

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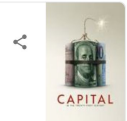
Capital in the Twenty- First Century

2019 · Documentary · 1h 50m



Activity: Piketty Film

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First Century
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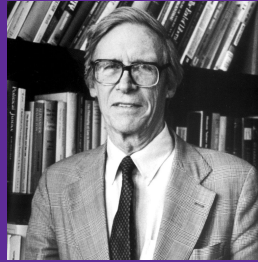


Group Activity

In your groups, answer the following questions:

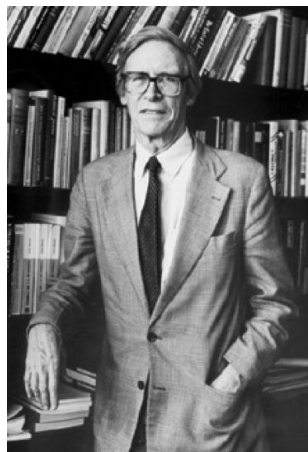
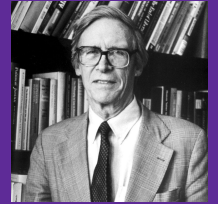
1. So far, technology has always produced more jobs. Will that always be the case? Why or why not?
2. Piketty worries that the 21st century will resemble the 18th/19th century. Do you think he's right? Why or why not?
3. What's so bad, if anything, about wealth inequality?

Rawls



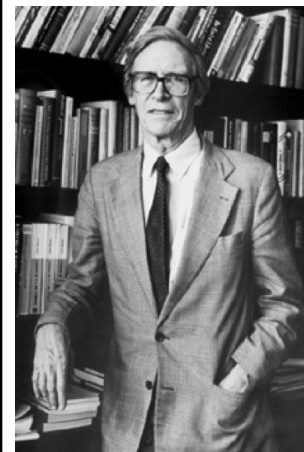
Key Ideas:

Distribution Principles
Two Principles of Justice
The Original Position
Veil of Ignorance



John Rawls

American Philosopher
1921 - 2002



Idea Behind Justice As Fairness:

"Once we decide to look for a conception of justice that prevents the use of the *accidents of natural endowment* and the *contingencies of social circumstance* as counters in a quest for political and economic advantage, we are led to [Rawls' Principles of Justice]. They express the result of leaving aside those aspects of the social world that seem *arbitrary from a moral point of view*." [14]

JUSTICE AS FAIRNESS

1. **Equal Rights:** Each person is to be granted an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for everyone else.
2. **Social Inequality:** Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are ...
 - (a) ... attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity (*Equal Opportunity*);
 - (b) ... to the greatest expected benefit of the least advantaged (*The Difference Principle*).

Two Principles of Justice

1. What do these two principles say?
2. Why think that these two principles are the correct principles of justice?
3. What would a society that obeys those two principles look like?

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Two Principles of Justice

1. What do these two principles say?

- (a) Extensive Basic Liberties for everyone.
- (b) Equal Opportunity
- (c) The Difference Principle

The Second Principle of Justice: "social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both [2.(b)] reasonably expected to be to *everyone's advantage*, and [2.(a)] attached to positions and offices *open to all*." [Theory of Justice, 53]

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"Equally Open"	"Everyone's Advantage"	
	Principle of Efficiency	Difference Principle
Careers Open to All Talents	System of Natural Liberty	Natural Aristocracy
Fair Opportunity	Liberal Equality	Democratic Equality

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Two Principles of Justice

Race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. = morally arbitrary
 Social class (wealth of your parents) = morally arbitrary
 Which natural talents you have = morally arbitrary

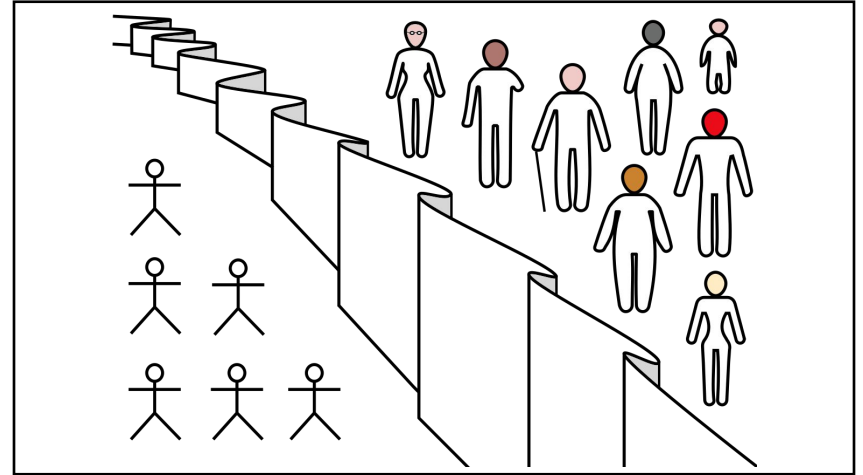
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The Original Position



The Original Position

“By ensuring that no one knows his or her place in society ... the veil of ignorance ensures that no one can advantage, even unwittingly, of a favorable bargaining position” (A Theory of Justice)

- A **fair** and **impartial** point of view from which we deliberate about the principles of justice that should govern a fair society.
- We are to imagine ourselves deliberating **without knowing** anything about our talents, abilities, gender, religious views, sexual orientation etc.
- We do know fundamental facts about science, economics, psychology, and so forth.

What Principles Would We Choose?

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DECISION IN THE ORIGINAL POSITION

	Person X	Person Y	Person Z
Society A	10	10	10
Society B	12	13	14
Society C	5	10	25
Society D	2	9	100

You don't know who you are (Person X? Person Y? Person Z?)

Which society should you choose to bring about?

Rawls: in this decision situation, you should *MaxiMin*.

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Which society should you choose to bring about?

The society in which the worst off is doing best.

Argument for the Difference Principle

The natural talents we are born with are a matter of luck. They are **arbitrary** from the **moral point of view**.

Therefore, those who are talented do not **deserve** more of the 'pie' just because they had good luck.

But, the least-advantaged benefit from encouraging the development and exercise of some of those talents. (e.g. teachers, doctors, etc.)

Therefore, it is in the interests of the least well-off that there be an unequal distribution of resources that rewards and encourages that pool of talent.

Why the Least-Advantaged?

A society is organized fairly when its principles can be justified **even** to the worst off in society.

From the original position, we are concerned with coming up with a social contract whose justification can be appreciated by everyone in society.

Inequalities that obey *The Difference Principle* can be justified even to the least-advantaged.

Why the Least-Advantaged?

Inequalities that obey *The Difference Principle* can be justified even to the least-advantaged.

“Without that inequality, you’d be even worse-off!”

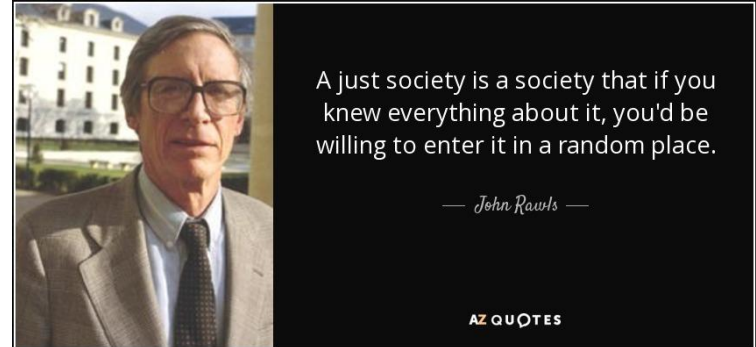
Two Principles of Justice

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The Rawlsian Utopia

- Everyone is guaranteed an extensive set of basic liberties.
- Fair Equality of Opportunity: people with the same natural talents have comparable life chances.
- What economic inequalities there are obey The Difference Principle: they are to the expected benefit of the least advantaged.

The Rawlsian Utopia

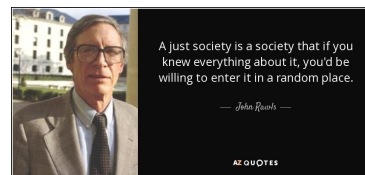


The Rawlsian Utopia

A Regulated Market

Redistributive Taxation

Social welfare programs (A wide and secure social safety net)



Breakout Group Activity

1. Appoint a scribe
2. Appoint a chair
3. Discuss
4. Decide on a principle

1. **Laissez Faire:** Markets will operate without government intervention, except to protect private property (including intellectual property through patenting and copyrighting legislation) and to place modest limits on the emergence of oligopolistic and monopolistic markets.
2. **Equality of Resources:** People will have roughly equal resources available to them over their full lives.
3. **Sufficiency:** Everyone will have a 'basic needs' safety net guaranteed. Above that level, markets will determine rewards, except as the democratically elected legislature chooses to constrain them. (If you select this principle, be prepared to explain what count as basic needs and why).
4. **Maximin:** Inequalities of resources will be arranged so that the least advantaged will better off than they would be under any other arrangement.
5. **Equality of Welfare:** Resources will be distributed so that everyone is more or less equally happy.
6. You may, if you choose, formulate a compromise between these principles, or formulate an entirely different principle. If so, it must be precise and you must be prepared to defend it.

Questions?

	Group Member 1	Group Member 2	Group Member 3	Group Member 4
Plan 1	B-	B-	B-	B-
Plan 2	A	C	A	A
Plan 3	A+	C+	B+	A+
Plan 4	B+	B	B+	A-
Plan 5	C+	A	C+	C+
Plan 6	A+	B-	A	A+