

JOHN RAWLS APPROACH TOWARD FAIR REDISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES

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Abstract

John Rawls' theory of justice has profoundly influenced contemporary political philosophy, particularly through his critique of moral arbitrariness. This article explores Rawls' conceptualization of moral arbitrariness and examines how his principles of justice are designed to address inequalities that arise from factors beyond individual control. Central to Rawls' theory are the difference principle and the principle of fair equality of opportunity, which aim to rectify social and economic disparities by ensuring that inequalities are justified only under conditions that benefit the least advantaged and are accessible to all. The paper investigates the application of Rawls' principles in modern contexts, evaluating their effectiveness and feasibility in addressing contemporary issues of inequality and social justice. It also critically engages with various criticisms of Rawls' approach, considering whether his theory is practical and whether it offers sufficient solutions to real-world problems. By examining alternative theories and perspectives, the article assesses the theoretical and practical impact of Rawls' work on political philosophy, social policy, and public discourse. Through a comprehensive analysis, this study aims to elucidate the strengths and limitations of Rawls' theory in addressing moral arbitrariness and to contribute to ongoing debates about justice, equality, and the role of theoretical frameworks in shaping public policy.

Keywords: Justice, Fairness, Redistribution, Veil of Ignorance, Inequality, Arbitrariness

JOHN RAWLS'IN KAYNAKLARIN HAKKANİYETLİ DAĞILIMI YAKLAŞIMI

Özet

John Rawls'un adalet teorisi, özellikle ahlaki keyfiliğe yönelik eleştirisiyle çağdaş siyaset felsefesini derinden etkilemiştir. Bu makale, Rawls'un ahlaki keyfilik kavramsallaştırmasını inceleyerek, bireylerin kontrolü dışında kalan faktörlerden kaynaklanan eşitsizlikleri gidermek amacıyla geliştirdiği adalet ilkelerinin nasıl tasarlandığını araştırmaktadır. Rawls'un teorisinin merkezinde yer alan fark ilkesi ve fırsat eşitliği ilkesi, sosyal ve ekonomik eşitsizliklerin, yalnızca en dezavantajlıların yararına olduğu ve herkese erişilebilir olduğu koşullarda haklı görülebileceğini savunur. Makale, Rawls'un ilkelerinin modern bağlamlardaki uygulanabilirliğini araştırarak, bu ilkelerin günümüz eşitsizlik ve sosyal adalet sorunlarını çözmedeki etkililiğini ve uygulanabilirliğini değerlendirmektedir. Aynı zamanda, Rawls'un yaklaşımına yönelik çeşitli eleştirileri ele alarak, teorisinin pratik olup olmadığını ve gerçek dünyadaki sorunlara yeterli çözümler sunup sunmadığını tartışmaktadır. Alternatif teoriler ve bakış açılarını inceleyerek, makale Rawls'un çalışmalarının siyaset felsefesi, sosyal politika ve kamu tartışmaları üzerindeki teorik ve pratik etkisini değerlendirmektedir. Bu kapsamlı analiz aracılığıyla, çalışmanın amacı, Rawls'un teorisinin ahlaki keyfiliği ele alma konusundaki güçlü ve zayıf yönlerini ortaya koymak ve adalet, eşitlik ve teorik çerçevelerin kamu politikalarının şekillendirilmesindeki rolü üzerine devam eden tartışmalara katkıda bulunmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Adalet, Hakkaniyet, Yeniden Dağıtım, Cehalet Perdesi, Eşitsizlik, Keyfilik

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Introduction

The first argument that Rawls asserts in his book "The Theory of Justice" is the notion that the first virtue of social institutions is justice, as truth is to thought (Rawls, 1971). For Rawls justice is the central truth to his theory of justice translated as the inviolability of individuals that can never be overridden. Going back to Aristotle, the way to achieve such inviolability would be the understanding that human beings are not devoid of political and social structure (Miller, 1995). As observed with the *social contract* tradition, justice could never be replaced by mere natural law (Vanberg, 1994), but the original contract in the words of Rawls must be centred around the principles of justice. Rawls also criticizes Kant's ethical framework that serves to be a substitute for natural law, and the tradition employs hypothetical rather than actual contracts. In a way Rawls observes the Lockean or the Kantian traditions being void of content, which Rawls places the principles of justice in the centre and continues to define justice as an imperative fairness.

However, the question for Rawls is then how a social group must decide to deem something as just or unjust. It would be this Rawls starts an imaginary social community that starts with what he calls, the *original position* (state of nature in Lockean terms) is Rawl's version of the hypothetical social contract that provides specific information to guide towards a particular outcome (Fazl, 2020). In this original position no one knows anything about their class, gender, social status or the distribution of resources (Rawls, 1971). Rawls' book is about a thought experiment wherein fairness presumes, first that equality in division is desirable, and second, that individuals act in self-interest (Green, 1985). One of the biggest problems with Rawls' thought experiment is the absence of additional context, such as whether people are healthy, starving or handicapped that might challenge the notion of *equal division as being fair*. This example highlights that the principle of equality and the expectation of self-interest are not inherent truths but rather theoretical assumptions that are critiqued. In a sense all individuals find themselves in a similar situation and must agree upon what the principles of a just society that is also fair would look like.

Rawls' original position aims to justify a desirable distributive outcome and uses a hypothetical choice scenario to lead to a fair outcome (Taylor, 2017). Rawls imagines designing a society, including its economic and political systems, without knowing one's own social standing, gender, race, intelligence, talents, or any other personal characteristics (Pogge, 1989), designing the rules of a game without knowing one's proficiency ensuring impartiality. Rawls posits that the people in the experimental social group would only know general facts, such as the existence of a moderate economic condition (Elliot, 2013). This ignorance of personal details is intended to create fairness, aligning with Rawls' Kantian approach (Bankovsky, 2012). As with Kant the categorical imperative requires universalizable choices, for any conceivable standpoint, regardless of consequences (Pogge, 1998). By designing social rules without knowledge of one's future identity, individuals would ideally choose rules beneficial to all, embodying the Kantian ideal of impartiality (Graham, 2015). Thus, Rawls frames his theory as an extension of Kantian universal ethics, seeking fair and just principles for society by removing personal biases from the decision-making process. The original position compels people, despite one's inherent self-interest, to contemplate society holistically and consider what would be desirable irrespective of one's personal circumstances (Fremantle, 2016).

The central methodology of Rawls' work involves starting with the veil of ignorance (Rawls, 1971) to reach a consensus on principles of justice (Graham, 2015). Unlike a traditional social contract, Rawls does not seek mutual agreement among individuals but rather aims to assert that any rational person would choose common and rational principles to constitute a fair society (Hampton, 1980). As with Thomas Hobbes Rawls pursues to embed the legitimacy of a fair society in its rationality (Castiglione et al., 1995). Hobbes would argue that it would be inherent for any rational individual to surrender his/her freedom to an absolute sovereign in order to avoid civil war and chaos. Similarly, Rawls endeavours to root social justice in a sauce of rationality that dictates the acceptance of the principles of justice over existing alternatives. It must be observed that Rawls' hypothetical thought experiment is overly abstract and idealistic (Nielsen, 1991), but also quite comparative. Rawls assesses his principles of justice with great skill against prevailing alternatives such as utilitarianism,

perfectionism (as derived from Aristotle), and Marxism. His objective is to demonstrate that his principles perform better from the perspective of the veil of ignorance (Rawls, 1971).

Rawls's general principle of justice (Nagel, 1973) starts from behind the veil of ignorance, culminating in two primary principles of justice, which essentially constitute three principles. As his argument progresses, Rawls also introduces the design of specific institutions. Similarly, as the veil of ignorance is lifted, and individuals begin to learn about their particular circumstances—such as being female rather than male—they cannot then amend the principles to favour their specific situation that were agreed upon when individuals were behind the veil of ignorance. In recognizing the deep pluralism of values alongside common physiological needs, Rawls suggests focusing on resources rather than utility (Scanlon Jr, 1972) as is the case with classical and neo-classical utilitarianism. Since everyone requires similar resources regardless of their life pursuits—whether they are intellectuals, artists, athletes, or politicians—emphasis is to be placed on basic resources, which serve as instrumental goods necessary for all individuals. This approach is particularly pertinent in political theory, as it pertains to the actions of the state, which operates with broad measures rather than precise interventions. The idea of the government measuring individual utility is both technically challenging and morally undesirable. Therefore, a realistic political theory should concentrate on basic resources within society that the state can effectively influence.

Rawls' shift from utilitarianism to resource-based justice has contributed to the lasting impact of his views (Yılmaz, 2016). By proposing that social values, defined as resources, should be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution benefits everyone, Rawls offers a framework that aligns with the state's capacity for action and addresses fundamental needs. This notion has been influential, even among those who disagree with Rawls' specific resource-based theory, as it has led to the development of various other resource-oriented theories. Rawls' basic principle of justice is that all social values, encompassing resources like liberties, opportunities, income, and wealth, should be distributed equally (Koller, 2013) unless an unequal distribution is advantageous to all. Although Rawls mentions the social bases of self-respect, he does not elaborate much on this aspect, and it remains underdeveloped in his work. His primary focus is on the following main categories of resources: liberty and opportunity, income and wealth (Rawls, 1971, p. 54).

Liberties, as defined by Rawls, include rights similar to those in Western democracies, such as freedom of speech, religion, association, and participation in democratic politics (Rawls, 1982). Rawls' principle for the distribution of liberties states that each person should have equal amount of rights in a social political system of total liberties for all. This principle might initially appear to be lacking substance, but it holds significant meaning upon closer examination. Rawls' approach to justice is comparative rather than based on a single philosophical demonstration, as he argues that his principles should be evaluated against alternative theories, such as utilitarianism, from behind the veil of ignorance to determine which makes more sense. This comparative-advantage method acknowledges that while Rawls believes his principles are rational choices, he remains open to other theories that might prove more effective.

By defining primary goods as instrumental resources that individuals would prefer to have more of, given other factors being equal, Rawls grounds his theory in practical terms. The primary goods—liberties, opportunities, income and wealth—serve as the foundation for Rawls' resource-based approach to justice, highlighting fair distribution to ensure a just society. Rawls' theory of justice introduces a compelling critique of societal inequalities (Mandle, 2009) through the lens of "moral arbitrariness," a concept that challenges the legitimacy of inequalities based on factors beyond individual control (Metz, 2000). Rawls posits that certain social and economic inequalities are unjustifiable if they stem from morally irrelevant characteristics. These characteristics, such as natural talents or social status, are deemed "arbitrary" because they are not under individuals influence and should not dictate their life opportunities or social position. This argument forms the basis of Rawls' critique of traditional justice theories that often fail to address the impact of such arbitrary factors.

In Rawls' original position, he argues that rational individuals, devoid of knowledge about their own attributes, would reject principles that allow moral arbitrariness to shape their destinies. Instead, they would choose principles designed to mitigate the influence of such arbitrary factors on

their life outcomes. Within this social outcome Rawls asserts that each person should have an equal right to a comprehensive scheme of basic liberties, where social and economic inequalities must be arranged so that they are (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, known as the difference principle, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity (Van Parijs, 2003). Rawls intends with these institutions to address and rectify the injustices arising from moral arbitrariness. By ensuring that social and economic disparities are justified only by fair and equitable conditions, Rawls aims to create a society where inequalities are not merely the result of chance or arbitrary factors but are structured in a way that promotes overall fairness and justice (Rawls, 1968).

Rawls principle of justice comes down to the perspective of the most adversely affected person. Since individuals behind the veil of ignorance do not know their future social, physical or religious identities, they must consider the implications for those who are most disadvantaged under any given circumstances. If the principle is acceptable even to the most adversely affected individuals, it aligns with Rawls understanding of the Kantian categorical imperative. This approach is not about sympathy for the least advantaged; rather, it is rooted in rational self-interest aimed at establishing a universalizable principle.

In a social group, the principle of justice regarding religious freedom may be arranged by Rawlsian ethics would be to provide the most extensive system of liberties compatible with similar freedoms for all. The evaluation from the standpoint of the least advantaged person would ensure that the principle must be universalizable. This approach also is the same with Rawls' cake-cutting analogy where the person cutting the cake in half must get the last slice in order to maintain a fair division. Rawls affirms that individuals should select the system that maximizes their religious freedom regardless of their future beliefs. In essence, Rawls' reasoning about principles of justice involves evaluating them from the perspective of the most adversely affected individuals, ensuring that chosen principles are justifiable to everyone, including the least advantaged. This comparative method underscores the robustness and practicality of his theory, as it provides a structured way to evaluate and affirm principles of justice, such as religious freedom, in a pluralistic society.

Early Enlightenment and Rawls' Pragmatism

In discussing Rawls' two principles of justice are the principle for the distribution of liberties, which advocates for the most extensive system of liberties compatible with similar liberties for all individuals (Rawls, 1971). The second principle is the principle of equality of opportunity, which is known as the difference principle. The difference principle advocates for maximizing the minimum share, aligning with the standpoint of justice as the perspective of the most adversely affected individuals (Rawls, 1971). This perspective is not rooted in sentimentality but in the universalizable idea that affirming a principle from the standpoint of the most disadvantaged ensuring its affirmation from all conceivable standpoints.

Observing the two principles of justice one may assume that Rawls is an egalitarian, which would be false as his principles demonstrate that a pure market system, through mechanisms like a trickle-down economics, benefits the least advantaged the most. Contrarily, in case when a heavy state intervention would achieve this objective, Rawls would support such a heavy state intervention as well. Thus, both egalitarian and anti-egalitarian outcomes would align with Rawls' framework (Botti, 2019). An additional consideration arises when examining the worst-off individual in his thought experiment. In such a scenario, a small marginal gain for the least advantaged would require significant cuts to the middle class and substantial benefits to the wealthy. Rawls' principle simply requires pragmatic arrangements that benefit the least advantaged the most, regardless of the broader distributive consequences. Rawls's theory neither is capitalistic nor socialistic as Rawls asserts a system that benefits the least advantaged in a practical policy experimentation. Rawls does not argue for political theory construction nor for political economic frames. For Rawls this determination should be resolved in the practical realm of political economy rather than through philosophical

debates. Rawls' position here is defensible, as the efficiency of political-economic systems in benefiting the least advantaged is evidently an empirical question rather than a purely philosophical one. Rawls' theory has a general conception of distributive justice, which is then refined through more specific principles to apply it practically.

To understand Rawls' pragmatism, one must also consider the role of science, understood through reason, as Rawls is also moulded by the Enlightenment thought. The early thinkers had equated science with certainty, drawing from Cartesian ideas⁷⁶ of mental certainty and Locke's notion of privileged access to one's own thoughts. Locke asserted that true and lasting conviction requires inner persuasion, which cannot be imposed externally (Van Der Schaar, 2012). Hobbes, meanwhile, contended that knowledge derives from the will, likening the laws of geometry to political laws, both seen as products of human creation (Bird, 1996). Thus, early Enlightenment emphasized certainty as the hallmark of science. However, the mature Enlightenment, represented by thinkers like John Stuart Mill, embraced a different view. For Mill, science was characterized by fallibilism—the idea that all knowledge is subject to doubt (Hoover, 2021). Mill's advocacy for the marketplace of ideas and competition in public discourse was grounded in the belief that this process facilitates the discovery of truth. The extensive discussion on freedom in "On Liberty" illustrates this, arguing that a system encouraging open debate is essential for approximating truth (Mill, 1998). This mature Enlightenment commitment to science thus became a commitment to fallibilism and continuous search for truth through experimentation.

Rawls may be observed to have a partial return to early Enlightenment ideals. Rawls' theory of justice proposes a unique answer to the hypothetical question: "What principles would people agree upon if designing society from scratch?" This thought experiment, despite recognizing that no actual social contract existed, posits that identifying such principles provides a standard for evaluating existing institutions. Societies can thus be judged by how closely they align with this ideal, improving or deteriorating as they evolve toward or away from it. Rawls may be labelled as a neo-Kantian and as a neo-Kantian Rawls seeks a universally affirmable standard for assessing political and social arrangements. Rawls' focus on protecting the least advantaged assumes significant risk aversion⁷⁷, a notion debated the lack of a unique answer, as different assumptions about risk yielding different principles. Rawls' early efforts to derive unique principles from Kantian ethics ultimately proved unworkable.

As Rawls matured in his thinking, he recognized the limitations of his neo-Kantian ideas, shifting towards a more pragmatic approach towards the political and policy-making. This move acknowledges the empirical nature of political and social arrangements. For example, while many would agree on the value and universality of freedom, debates over whether such universality would necessitate universal wage distribution for everyone would arise. Rawls' evolving thought reflects a broader Enlightenment trajectory from the certainty of early thinkers to the fallibilism of mature Enlightenment (Stier, n.d.). His later work, acknowledging the empirical and contested nature of social principles, which align with the notion that practical political agreements often require accepting incomplete theorization. This pragmatic approach offers a more realistic framework for Rawls addressing the complexities of social justice and political economy.

The above arguments demonstrate that Rawls' political pragmatism presents a contrasting intuition to traditional Enlightenment rationalism. This notion underpins Rawls' idea of political

⁷⁶ Cartesian ideas refer to the philosophical concepts and theories developed by René Descartes, a French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist who lived in the 17th century. His ideas form the foundation of modern Western philosophy and are primarily encapsulated in his works such as "Meditations on First Philosophy" and "Discourse on the Method."

⁷⁷ Risk aversion refers to the preference for certainty over uncertainty, particularly in the context of financial decision-making and investment. It describes an individual's tendency to prioritize security and avoid risks, even if it means potentially lower returns. Risk-averse individuals prefer investments with known and stable returns over those with higher potential rewards but greater uncertainty and potential for loss. This behaviour is driven by the desire to minimize potential negative outcomes and preserve wealth. In economic theory, risk aversion is often modelled using utility functions, where the utility of wealth increases at a decreasing rate, reflecting diminishing marginal utility of wealth.

pragmatism focusing on what political arrangements people with diverse values and worldviews would agree upon. Rawls introduces the idea of what he calls "overlapping consensus," where different ideological circles intersect in a shared agreement area (Rawls, 2020). This approach is less ambitious than traditional rationalism because it does not require individuals to share the same metaphysical or epistemological beliefs. Instead of convincing others of one's metaphysics, epistemology, and political theory, Rawls propose identifying overlapping consensus among diverse viewpoints. This method acknowledges the improbability of universal agreement on fundamental beliefs and emphasizes practical political agreement. People might support the same political institutions for different reasons, and that would suffice.

The mature Rawls reflects this shift and argues that political consensus can exist without uniform reasoning. This is akin to the secret ballot in voting, where individuals' reasons for their choices are private and varied. This approach signifies a significant retreat from the Enlightenment's original quest for universal scientific principles applicable to all rational thinkers. The mature Rawls diverges from the Enlightenment zeal of his earlier work and thinkers like Jeremy Bentham (Nelson, 2019). Despite this shift, Rawls maintains that his three principles of justice would be part of the overlapping consensus (Rawls, 1989). However, he cannot definitively prove this as his assertion lacks the robust justification that his earlier Enlightenment framework sought. There exists a way to reconcile the mature Enlightenment with a democratic outlook without abandoning the Enlightenment's foundational aims.

The difference between Rawls and Jeremy Bentham is that Bentham centralizes his idea of *utilitarianism*. Bentham's utilitarianism or as it is called the "principle of utility" rests upon actions that maximize overall happiness or pleasure while minimizing pain or suffering of a society. Bentham's utilitarian *maxim* - "the greatest good for the greatest number" - offers a clear, outcome-driven criterion for moral and political decision-making that involves political decision-making. According to Bentham his approach possesses universal applicability. For this reason, Bentham's suggestion is that his utility principle can serve as an objective and impartial metric for any society. This universalism for Bentham is a scientific endeavour that provides a framework for governance and ethics. One may conclude that Bentham's utilitarianism is consequentialist in nature, judging the morality of an action based solely on its outcomes excluding intentions behind an action. For Rawls the normative idea of individual rights, is the Enlightenment's most significant value for individual freedom that is institutionalized through a doctrine of individual rights. This notion is fundamentally rooted in the sacredness of the nature of individual rights as thinkers, like John Locke, grounded these ideas in theological arguments (Van Der Schaar, 2012). Locke grappled with the tension between God's omnipotence and the timelessness of natural laws, ultimately favouring the will-based theory, where laws are products of will (Oakley & Urdang, 1966). Locke's concept of humans as a reflection of God provided individuals the capacity to make and possess, as God owns His creation. Over time, the theological foundation of this workmanship model was secularized, as Karl Marx attempted to detach the workmanship ideal from its religious roots while retaining the principle that creation must be associated with ownership. This secularization is further radicalized by Rawls, who critiques the moral arbitrariness of both nature and nurture (Waldron, 2004). According to Rawls, whether differences among individuals result from genetics or upbringing, they remain morally arbitrary, as individuals do not choose these factors.

Rawls extends this critique to question why anyone should be entitled to the products of their labour (Rawls, 1971). His argument leads towards a socialization of capacities, suggesting that no one has a special claim to their capacities since these too are arbitrarily distributed (Stein, 1997). However, this position is problematic as it is inherent for human beings to naturally feel entitled to the product of their labour, reflecting an inherent resistance to let go of what one has produced. Rawls attempts to reconcile this by differentiating between having capacities and choosing to use them. He argues that individuals who choose to work should benefit more than those who do not, as the former exercise their capacities. Nonetheless, this distinction falters when considering that the will to work is also influenced by morally arbitrary factors, such as upbringing. Therefore, the differences in individuals' capacity to utilize their talents lead to an infinite discussion on what is arbitrarily distributed.

One other theorist is Ronald Dworkin, who distinguishes between material resources and physical and mental powers in his work (Tremain, 1996). He argues that material resources are morally arbitrary and should be equalized, but physical and mental capacities should not. However, this distinction could also be viewed as problematic as compensating blind individuals for their disadvantage would require physical and mental powers also to be redistributed based on their arbitrary nature. Ultimately, Rawls' and Dworkin's attempts to uphold a secularized workmanship ideal reveal the challenges of separating moral arbitrariness from individual entitlement. Despite the philosophical difficulties, the resistance to let go what individuals believe they deserve indicates a deep-seated attachment to the workmanship ideal (Murphy, 1992). This underscores the complexity of balancing individual rights and moral arbitrariness in contemporary theories of justice.

If we were to adopt a rigorous interpretation of Dworkin's arguments, one might consider extreme measures such as imposing blindness on all sighted individuals. While such scenarios are not realistic to be pursued as a state intervention for fair redistribution, it demonstrates the moral complexity of state redistribution. The secularization of the workmanship ideal in Locke's theory, rooted in a divine framework, renders that human capacities and differences are products of God's design, not human action. For Locke, these differences in intellect or physical ability are divinely ordained and thus do not necessitate moral justification. This theological perspective sidesteps the need for human accountability in the distribution of resources and opportunities. However, the secular adaptation of this ideal as demonstrated above introduces complications. The question for individuals in social groups may wonder rightly why certain individuals should receive more than others based on morally arbitrary traits. The assumption for Rawls that inequality should be justified by moral arbitrariness presumes that equality is a default (original or initial) position. This presumption may not come as a self-evident phenomenon as religious individuals could argue that a divine intervention could justify inequality as a natural outcome.

Rawls' approach attempts to address that the person who makes the final division will ensure fairness, assuming the will to seek the maximization of fairness. However, we have seen that justice as fairness may not mean equality when additional contextual information is introduced—such as varying needs and resources among individuals making it problematic. Rawls' framework reveals an unresolved tension between the divine justification of Locke's model and the secular quest for equitable distribution. This unresolved tension reflects broader difficulties in reconciling historical theological perspectives with contemporary moral and political theories.

Conclusion

Rawls' approach addresses what he calls moral arbitrariness, which is idealistic in real-world scenarios as Rawls operates behind a veil of ignorance to expose social and economic disparities. Rawls' principles raise questions about their adaptability and practicality, yet Rawls ignites sound debate on arbitrary inequalities. The debate surrounding Rawls' notion of moral arbitrariness highlights significant philosophical and practical considerations in the pursuit of justice. Rawls highlights the evolution of thought regarding justice, fairness, and the social contract. Rawls' theory of justice, particularly his concept of the original position and the veil of ignorance, revolutionized political philosophy by introducing a method to derive principles of justice based on impartiality and fairness. His emphasis on evaluating principles from the perspective of the least advantaged individual ensures that the chosen principles are justifiable to everyone, aiming to create a society where inequalities are structured to benefit the least well-off.

The transition from early Enlightenment ideals of certainty in science and rationality to the mature Enlightenment's embrace of fallibilism is mirrored in Rawls' evolution from a neo-Kantian approach to a more political pragmatic stance. This shift recognizes the empirical and contested nature of social principles, moving away from the quest for universal scientific principles to a focus on overlapping consensus among diverse viewpoints. Rawls' critique of moral arbitrariness challenges traditional notions of entitlement based on natural talents or social status, proposing a more egalitarian

distribution of resources. However, the inherent complexities and potential infinite regress in distinguishing between morally arbitrary factors and individual entitlements underscore the ongoing philosophical debates in contemporary theories of justice.

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