

8/VI/73

DUP in Meritocracy

One main difference between Rawls' conception of the just society and my own (and which reveals my willingness to allow much greater equality in a synchronous sense), comes when he discusses "Institutions for Distributive Justice" (#43). In such things as the public delivery of goods associated with the social minimum, he thinks of a "fifth branch" of the government (the other four are Musgrave's), the exchange branch, which will employ Wicksell's unanimity criterion of no public expenditures without agreement on ways to cover them. In Rawls' system, the people would not vote to move social needs to public level unless it was more efficient ~~than~~ (by the taxes they'd pay) than leaving it in the private level. A representative body would decide this. The ~~point~~ point is this: Rawls assumes that the initiative for most every broad social welfare program should come from the people, and I would expect much of it to come from private wealthy individuals, in the form of ~~many~~ family-free foundations, who would act altruistically according to their personal desires rather than see their money lapse to the state (it not being capable of significant transfer to descendants or other private persons). Rawls' system, therefore, is much more socialistic by its thrust than mine, no matter that he says it should work in a ~~market~~ free-market economy. For to make the unanimity criterion work, he freely admits, there cannot be great maldistribution of income and wealth, else the sense of what was just would be very different in different sectors of society. Also, one has to wonder at the efficient operation of this principle, since it calls for agreement on very complex issues.

Rawls' method, in short, calls for a sociological nexus of control of the common good, mine prefers much great latitude ~~for~~ for individual decision by those who acquire wealth in the lifetime but must return it to the public sphere.

Rawls' notions about each generation saving for the next, and so building up a capital which will make some future generation surely well off, has something very unhistorical about it. The works on p. 286, n. 21 need to be investigated to see what theoretical economics has to say about this.

However, an ingenious thought appears on p. 307, where he imagines an artificially induced equality of opportunity via unlimited possibilities of education, and what it should bring about. After a while, there would be a surplus, almost of well-qualified people in terms of training, and so the unequal shares they get will be largely in terms of their effort. On the whole, however, their large supply would lower their overall rewards, and thus reduce the differences between the lowest income class and the more favored ones. Thus equality of income and wealth would insinuate itself steadily into society once the pump has been primed. ~~It~~

The hidden joker here, I would guess, would be the subtler working of family influence to get a bit of advantage for descendants, if just in the form of a good-income position, where the marketplace is glutted with adequately trained people. In the first stages, when just the chance of the favored and wealthy to secure fine education for their children would ^{them} guarantee/greater life chances, even though wealth could no longer be transferred, there would persist some domestic form of transmitting better life changes; but in the later stages, one would have to go outside the family, and work in shady ways against the open market situation to secure childrens' success in life, since there would be such a fiercely competitive situation among equally educated people.

In these matters, as in general in Rawls' theory, there is an assumption of very gradual historical development, with no thought about huge paradigmatic shifts. He seems to imagine that we are on the threshold now of the perfectly just society, and just need to clarify our principles.