

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-64667-3 - Rawls's a Theory of Justice: An Introduction

Jon Mandle

Frontmatter

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*A Theory of Justice*, by John Rawls, is widely regarded as the most important twentieth-century work of Anglo-American political philosophy. It transformed the field by offering a compelling alternative to the dominant utilitarian conception of social justice. The argument for this alternative is, however, complicated and often confusing. In this book Jon Mandle carefully reconstructs Rawls's argument, showing that the most common interpretations of it are often mistaken. For example, Rawls does not endorse welfare-state capitalism, and he is not a "luck egalitarian" as is widely believed. Mandle also explores the relationship between *A Theory of Justice* and the developments in Rawls's later work, *Political Liberalism*, as well as discussing some of the most influential criticisms in the secondary literature. His book will be an invaluable guide for anyone seeking to engage with this ground-breaking philosophical work.

JON MANDLE is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University at Albany (SUNY). His previous publications include *What's Left of Liberalism? An Interpretation and Defense of Justice as Fairness* (2000) and *Global Justice* (2006).

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*The University of Albany (SUNY)*



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*for Jack*

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## Preface

I was not fortunate enough to know John Rawls personally. However, the interactions that I did have with him were consistent with what virtually everyone who knew him reports – he was generous, modest, and kind. Since our interactions were mostly professional – he was replying to my questions, commenting on papers and ideas – he was serious and focused and very helpful. I wrote to him for the first time soon after I read *A Theory of Justice* in graduate school. I am still amazed that he took the time to respond – as he did whenever I wrote to him over the subsequent years. He was a wonderful role model for a philosopher. It is to his memory that I dedicate this book.

*A Theory of Justice* was published in 1971. In early 1975 Rawls revised the text in preparation for the German translation. It was not until 1999, however, that this revised text was published in English. Rawls made no attempt to incorporate developments in his theory that occurred between 1975 and 1999 – in particular, he did not make revisions in light of the publication of *Political Liberalism* in 1993. Still, the revised edition includes some significant changes that Rawls regarded as improvements over the original text. It should be regarded as the authoritative text, and I quote from it accordingly. However, owing to the existence of the enormous secondary literature published before 1999, I have cited passages by giving first the page numbers from the original edition and then from the revised edition. Where the editions differ, I have indicated this in a footnote.

Many people contributed to this project. Some did not know they were doing so while others knew it all too well. Those that I wish to thank include Chris Bertram, Harry Brighouse, Josh Cohen, Sam Freeman, Kristen Hessler, Jay Mandle, Joan Mandle, Rex Martin, Pete Murray, Thomas Pogge, Mardy Rawls, David Reidy, Arthur Ripstein,

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*Preface*

Karen Schupack, and Anna Schupack, as well as two reviewers from Cambridge University Press. Hilary Gaskin deserves special mention for her great patience and encouragement as editor. Finally, I thank the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press for permission to quote from *A Theory of Justice* by John Rawls, © 1971, 1999 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.