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Summaries

John Rawls's Theory of Justice (I)

by Percy B. Lehning en R. J. van der Veen

This is the first part of a critical review essay on 'A Theory of Justice' by John Rawls. This part concentrates mainly on the method by which Rawls seeks to justify his two principles of 'justice as fairness'. After an examination of different kinds of evaluations that Rawls's theory produces, the authors discuss the two ideas which form the method of justification; (i) the social contract and (ii) the test of coherence between institutional consequences of general principles and considered judgments of justice (the 'coherence theory of justification', as it has been called by Feinberg).

Whereas it might be held that the derivation of principles of justice from unanimous choice in a hypothetical 'original position' (the social contract) is superfluous in view of the coherence theory, the authors maintain that the idea of contact serves to secure impartiality. Moreover, Rawls uses this idea to argue against utilitarianism in terms of its own type of individualistic rational-choice argument. (The failure of Rawls's theory in this respect will be examined in the second part of the essay).

To prepare the ground for the discussion of Rawls's theory of just institutions, different interpretations of the principles of 'justice as fairness' and its associated priority rules are examined.

A theory of human behaviour and the political process

by J. K. De Vree

The article represents an attempt to analyse the basic mechanisms of human behavior and of the political process in a mathematically strict way. Assuming nothing stronger than ordinal judgments, this requires the development of a special mathematical formalism whose main features are sketched.

Politics being conceived as always ultimately being an affair of human individuals, an adequate analysis of the political process requires some theory of individual action. The latter is defined as a matter of choice from sets of behavioral alternatives (*behavioral sets*), ordered in terms of *utilities*: behavioral probabilities are then explained (in a somewhat complicated way) from the alternatives' relative utilities. Utilities, in their turn, are explained from preferences and (subjective) probability estimates.

Politics is concerned with collective outcomes or actions, in all cases to be conceived as sets of behavioral probabilities defined for the set of people or collectivity involved and the situation concerned (*behavioral matrices*). In particular a

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political process is said to occur when people seek to change or influence such matrices by *demand behavior*. Demand behavior occurs and is effective to the extent that someone associates valued outcomes to the alternatives of others, so affecting their utilities — so much follows from the behavioral theory.

In its turn such demand behavior is a matter of *demand access* (the probability that it does indeed succeed in associating an outcome to the other party's action) and *demand force* (the utility shift it then induces).

Finally a 'condition of equilibrium' for *sets* of demand behavior (*i.e.* political processes) is designed, defining (relatively) stable political outcomes or settlements.