§1. Reflective equilibrium

The argument from the Original Position...

P1 We should choose whichever PSJs we would choose in the OP.

P2 The PSJs we would choose in the OP are the PEL and the DP (with the PEL taking lexical priority).

C We should choose the PEL and the DP (with the PEL taking lexical priority).

Three conceptions of moral philosophy...

We have achieved narrow reflective equilibrium when we have adopted the conception of justice that achieves consistency among our considered judgments about particular cases, as well as our more general principles, while also requiring the fewest possible revisions to these judgments and principles.

We have achieved wide reflective equilibrium when we have also considered all of the main arguments for alternative conceptions of justice.

§2. Hypothetical contracts

T1 ‘What I have attempted to do is to generalize and carry to a higher order of abstraction the traditional theory of the social contract as represented by Locke, Rousseau and Kant.’ (T viii)

T2 ‘A hypothetical contract, one might say, isn’t worth the paper it’s not written on.’ (G.A. Cohen, Lectures on the History of Moral and Political Philosophy, p.89).

The bad interpretation...

P1 We ought to accept any PSJs that we have agreed to accept.

P2 In the Original Position, we would have agreed to accept the PEL and the DP (with the PEL taking lexical priority).

C We ought to accept the PEL and the DP (with the PEL taking lexical priority).
The good interpretation…

P1 The PSJs that we would have agreed to accept in the Original Position are the fair PSJs.

P2 In the Original Position, we would have agreed to accept the PEL and the DP (with the PEL taking lexical priority).

P3 We ought to accept the fair PSJs.

C We ought to accept the PEL and the DP (with the PEL taking lexical priority).

§3. Liberal egalitarianism

Welfare egalitarianism…

We should arrange things so that people have equal quantities of happiness.

Resource egalitarianism…

We should arrange things so that people have equal quantities of resources.

T3 ‘For questions of social justice we should try to find some objective grounds for [inter-personal] comparisons [of well-being], ones that men can recognize and agree to. At the present time, there appears to be no satisfactory answer to these difficulties from a utilitarian point of view.’ (TJ 90-91)

P1 We would not choose a PSJ if there were no objective way of deciding whether or not it was satisfied.

P2 There is no objective way of deciding whether or not the welfare egalitarian principle of justice is satisfied.

C We would not choose the welfare egalitarian principle of justice.

T4 ‘…comparisons are made in terms of expectations of primary social goods… primary goods are things which it is supposed a rational man wants whatever else he wants…the primary social goods, to give them in broad categories, are rights and liberties, opportunities and powers, income and wealth…’ (TJ 92)

So Rawls is a resource egalitarian…

Welfare egalitarianism and the problem of pleasure witches/pleasure squibs…

Resource egalitarianism and the problem of offensive tastes…

T5 ‘In justice as fairness… persons… implicitly agree to conform their conceptions of their good to what the principles of justice require… We can express this by saying that in justice as fairness the concept of right is prior to that of good.’ (TJ 31)
Telic egalitarianism...

We should aim for equality because a more equal state of affairs is a *better* state of affairs.

Deontic egalitarianism...

We should aim for equality, but *not* because a more equal state of affairs is a *better* state of affairs.

Rawls is a deontic egalitarian…

Is Rawls a proto luck egalitarian…?

Formal equality of opportunity…

We should arrange things so as to eliminate inequalities that are due laws preventing e.g. people of a particular race or sex from having particular jobs.

Fair equality of opportunity…

We should *also* arrange things so as to eliminate any inequalities that are due to people’s socio-economic circumstances.

T6 ‘Intuitively, the most obvious injustice of [formal equality of opportunity] is that it permits distributive shares to be improperly influenced by… factors… arbitrary from a moral point of view.’ (TJ 72)

Similarly, if we have fair equality of opportunity…

T7 ‘…distributive shares are decided by the outcome of the natural lottery; and this outcome is arbitrary from a moral perspective.’ (TJ 74)

T8 ‘Rawls seems not to have realized the full implications of his own argument against the prevailing view of equality of opportunity.’ (Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p.72)

The bad interpretation…

P1 Both formal and fair equality of opportunity permit people’s shares to be influenced by morally arbitrary factors.

P2 We should not permit people’s shares to be influenced by morally arbitrary factors.

C We should reject both formal and fair equality of opportunity
Luck egalitarianism...

We should arrange things so as to eliminate inequalities that are due to brute luck.

Shares should be ambition-sensitive but endowment-insensitive.

Rawls denies that the fact that a person is clever and talented is by itself a reason to permit this person to have a bigger share.

So what reason do we have to permit clever and talented people to have bigger shares…?

The fact that, by doing so, we make the least well off people better off.

Rawls thinks that shares can be properly influenced by morally arbitrary factors.

§4. The basic structure of society

Our actions, attitudes, dispositions affect the distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation...

…so do the principles of social justice tell us which actions we should perform, which attitudes and dispositions we should adopt?

T9 ‘...the primary subject of justice is the basic structure of society... the way in which the major social institutions... determine the division of advantages from social cooperation... By major institutions I understand the political constitution and the principal economic and social arrangements.’ (TJ 6)

References