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John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Page 63

"...assuming that there is a distribution of natural assets, those who are at the same level of talent and ability, and have the same willingness to use them, should have the same prospects of success regardless of their initial place in the social system."

In this passage, Rawls describes the features of a society that follows the principle of "fair equality of opportunity" (FEO). FEO means that comparably talented and hardworking people should have an equal chance of achieving their life goals, regardless of their starting point in society. This principle helps to mitigate the morally arbitrary effects of the birth lottery, whereby certain people are born into lower social classes, but possess a natural endowment of ability and diligence similar to those born into higher classes.

Rawls argues that FEO is part of the second principle of a just society that people would arrive at from a hypothetical "original position." The passage drew my attention because I feel that the concept of the original position can be enriched by introducing the element of immigration. Imagine that the people in the original position must create a society that operates within a larger community of societies, some of which may be unjust. Deliberating behind an expanded "veil of ignorance," the people would now need to ask: What if the birth lottery assigns me to an outside, unjust society? How will this affect the principles underlying the just society that I ultimately hope to join, regardless of my global starting point?

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Very interesting idea.  
Hard to expand Rawls beyond the nation state.  
Charles Beitz has tried.



② then fair equal opportunity would

I believe that FEO would take on greater scope in this case to include those initially born outside the just society and subsequently choose to enter it. That is, equally gifted and enterprising native-born and foreign-born individuals would, in the just society, have an equal chance of fulfilling their life goals. The impact of the morally arbitrary distinction of national origin—in addition to the forementioned distinction of social class—would thereby be mitigated.

③ This expanded conception of FEO and the original position has deep personal meaning for me because it reflects the story of my life. I was born not only into a family of modest means, but also into a society that, from my parents' perspective, intuitively fell short in terms of FEO. I immigrated to the U.S. with my parents as a child, and although they have faced challenges due to cultural and linguistic barriers, I have personally benefitted from what has probably been the closest approximation of FEO possible in the real world. Indeed, I am here today, writing this response, because of the extended conception of FEO proposed above.

social mobility in the US is below the Scandinavian countries

Immigration remains an important issue in our society, especially as we head into the 2016 elections. Presidential candidate Donald Trump has advocated for such measures as restricting H-1B visas for high-skilled foreign workers and strictly hiring American workers first. I believe that such policies would move the U.S. farther from the ideal of FEO that has made my story—and countless more like mine—possible. I believe that in a just society, FEO expands, not contracts.

Word Count: 465

Great extension of R's ideas!