# Contents

# Theory of Justice: Political Activity or Authentic Development?

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## Abstract

In this article, it will be shown that philosophers/theoreticians of justice, such as John Rawls, are engaged in a kind of performative contradiction, since despite their implicit call for justice, their mere academic activities in developing a theory of justice, does not really help the cause of justice in society. Then by referring to thoughts of Heidegger, Levinas, and Nietzsche, among others, it will be shown that although the struggle to achieve social justice is necessary and has the highest priority, it is an impossible task; and yet human beings are existentially obliged to engage in this unavoidable task. Finally, it will be shown as why this "task of social justice" will be best achieved as, what could be called, "authentic development" or horizontal development at the bottom, and playing chess with the powers that be. In defining "authentic development," it will be compared with what Denis Goulet calls by the same name; where he defines the desired development with its results, rather than its process.

**Keywords**: Development; Authentic Development; Possible Impossible; Death; Eternal Return; Fredrich Nietzsche; Martin Heidegger; Emmanuel Levinas; Jacques Rancière; John Rawls; Denis Goulet; Opportunity of Freedom;

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## Introduction

What this article tries to engage with is the problem of justice. By this, it is meant to show the manner of achieving social justice where it is assumed that it also includes political justice. Part of Marx's theoretical work could be considered as an attempt at solving the problem of justice. In the 20th 21st centuries, we can find many theoreticians and philosophers that have attempted to solve this problem directly, or indirectly, such as people like John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Murray Bookchin, Charles Tayler, or Jürgen Habermas. Indeed, everyone whose thought could be regarded as generally socio-political could be considered to somehow address this problem of justice. The problem is, therefore, fundamental to human existence. The solutions, however, vary and could be divided into two main groups: 1) those that take the theory route, by trying to define justice in general terms, and to show or prove its necessity for the wellbeing of society; and 2) those that take the action route, and propose political action against the powers that be, in order to bring about a more democratic power structure. Let's take John Rawls and Karl Marx (of the Communist Manifesto) to be the representatives of these two groups, respectively.

Group 1's action: Development of theory A
Group 1's proposal: "If we act according to A, we will have justice in society."
Group 2's action: Development of theory B
Group 2's proposal: "If we act according to B, we will get the power in our own hands; and then we will implement justice (e.g., based on the formula: to each according to its needs…)."

Group 2's second action: Attempting to get the power from the powers that be, by party activity, political mobilization, and/or revolution, based on theory B.

In what follows, I will try to show that these attempts fall short of the goals they implicitly intend, that they are in fact avoiding a fundamental dilemma or impossibility, and that the solution is in the form of what I call "authentic development."

A word of caution about the word power: I'll be using this word both in its traditional sense and the Foucauldian sense; hopefully the context makes it clear which one is intended. I'll also use it in its traditional sense, to refer to the state, assuming that the state includes both formal and informal powers.

## Power and Academia

The distinguishing factor in case of Group 1 is that they are mostly academics, since in academia one can both spend time theorizing and make a living at the same time. We can, of course, find exceptions to this, where the theoretician is outside academia. We, therefore, could have named Group 1 as "the intellectuals." But since, nowadays, most intellectuals are from academia, we'll call them "the academia."

If we observe the relation between power and academia, it is not hard to realize that power tries to form academia as one of its functionaries. At the same time, depending on how primitive or sophisticated power is, the academia can *pretend* to be independent. What does sophisticated power mean here? By comparing the feudal power structure with modern ones, it is possible to conjecture that the modern state comes into being when the real powers in a society hide behind the ideology of

"democracy." Here, by ideology it means false consciousness. That is, the modern state consists of real informal power that has considerable influence over the formal power structure. What President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his farewell address, (2006) referred to as the "military-industrial complex," or what Mike Lofgren (2016) in his excellent analysis and revelation calls "the deep state," are good instances of the working of this ideology. It is interesting to note, as Henry Giroux points out (2007), that Eisenhower's speech originally included "academic" in the draft, so he really was talking about the "military-industrial-academic complex." As the publisher of his book describes on the jacket of the book (ibid):

Giroux argues that the university has become a handmaiden of the Pentagon and corporate interests; it has lost its claim to independence and critical learning and has compromised its role as a democratic public sphere.

Academia plays two roles here: 1) develops and supports the ideology, through think tanks[1], and 2) by allowing certain theoreticians to talk about justice, or democracy, such as Rawls, Tayler or Habermas, and even teach and theorize Marxism, *gives the impression that academia is independent, and that society is democratic* i.e., it helps create the ideology of democracy. In the US, it is enough to listen to presidential campaign speeches, to understand the function of the ideology of democracy. Rawls might say that he is not interested in the fact that his theories could be used to maintain the ideology of the state,

because he is helping the cause of justice. It is precisely here, that we have to disagree. No doubt, Rawls or Tayler do want and think that they are helping the cause of social justice, by showing that the present society is not just, and how to be just. But the crucial point here is that power is not bothered by these theories, because the circle of influence of these theories is only within the confines of the academia. Indeed, the Weberian metaphor of the *Iron Cage* could be used here to explain the closed world of academic journals and conferences. Of course, this does not mean that people do not have access as such to these theories, but that even if once in a while they can find their way to the mainstream media, it will be drowned in the millions of other news items, talk shows, TV series, and celebrity news.

Here, Theodor Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's analysis of "culture industry" (2002, p. 94) is illuminating, since it shows the influence of financial powers over culture to: 1) distract people, from the real issues (both the media, Hollywood, and television programing do this); 2) to frame the issues, so that the real issues are not noticed or raised; and consequently, 3) to reproduce ideology, to justify the status quo. Perhaps just as Adorno saw the working of the culture industry, we could now see the working of an "academic industry," or rather an "academic market."

Beyond the functions of academia for power, it is important to see the inherent *performative contradiction* of theoreticians of justice, or indeed any philosopher as such. On one hand, anyone who claims to be after the truth and tries to tell others about it, is trying to realize that truth in society; and in case of theoreticians of justice, they are trying to bring in social justice. On the other, practically, they do not care about the

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[1] Refer to the classic study of the relation between power elites and academia by Laurence H. Shoup and William Minter (2004), originally published in 1977.

ineffectiveness of what they do. In fact, they seem to be afflicted by a sort of naiveté: they think the problem that power faces is "how to bring about justice in society," and this is why they try to advise power on this matter! Whereas, in the best of cases, the problem of power is how to bring about social justice, *without losing power*; an impossibility of course.

Let us see this *naiveté* in case of Habermas with his theory of communicative action. The gist of Habermas' theory is that if people abide by the rules of communicative action, and in their dialogue with each other, they do not try to deceive the other parties, and then they will reach a consensus:

I tried to delineate the general pragmatic presuppositions of argumentation as specifications of an *ideal* speech situation. This proposal may be unsatisfactory in its details; but I still view as correct my intention to reconstruct the general symmetry conditions that every competent speaker must presuppose are sufficiently satisfied insofar as he intends to enter into argumentation at all. Participants in argumentation have to presuppose in general that the structure of their communication, by virtue of features that can be described in purely formal terms, excludes all force…. (Habermas 1984: 25)

As is aptly apparent from this quotation, Habermas' theory is for an ideal situation where the participants all have a symmetric condition, i.e., are of equal power, and their communication excludes all forces. It is perfectly all right to theorize about ideal situations, but what about reality or what about all the real situations of conflict? Habermas, just as the academia, is silent here.

Let us now attend to those who directly resist power.

## Power and Political Activism

The distinguishing factor in case of Group 2 is that their solution is to place people's representatives in the position of power, where in most cases, they know themselves to be such. We, therefore, call these political activists "the power seekers."

They are either after power themselves or organize their followers to present their demands to the state; and they do these through party activities, political mobilizations, or social movements, which in extreme cases, could lead to revolution.

On the whole, the intention of these power seekers could be summarized as: they know themselves and/or their leaders to be the ideal substitutes for those in power. Many things could be wrong with this picture:

1. Power seekers are not as good as they think, although in most cases, they are better than those in power.

2. To run a country is not as easy as power seekers think.

3. There is always the possibility that a movement/revolution could be derailed by opportunists, and consequently, true representatives of the people lose power.

But the most fundamental factor that makes this picture wrong is the assumption that the ideal situation is when the "good people" are in power i.e. when we have a good power in place. In more simple terms, what is wrong with Plato's "Philosopher King," is not that he is a philosopher, but that there is a ruler in power: *it is not good to rule or be ruled*. The question is obviously how then society can function. Before attempting to answer this question, it is worth noticing that the Abrahamian

prophets, particularly from Moses onward, did not come to rule, but came to spread the word of god i.e., they were not rulers but *messengers*. This opens the possibility of a different reading of religion's meaning and history, and of "holy texts."[2]

One old response to the above question is through "social contract," where people forfeit some of their freedom in order to obtain services of the state. It must be said this Enlightenment's solution, in retrospect, is not so enlightened. First of all, using Martin Heidegger's notion of *Thrownness*, (2010, p.38) it can be shown that we are always already thrown into a society, i.e., a contract—even if there ever was any—is forced upon us, and not chosen by us. Second of all, even if we consciously and decidedly enter into such a contract, the resulting situation has all the ills that we have observed historically, and that we want to get rid of. The question, therefore, remains.

Let us summarize our argument so far:
1. To seek power even with the intention of bringing about justice in society, is wrong, because:
2. Power as such is wrong.
3. But why?
4. Because power encroaches upon people's freedom.

We can further summarize this summary by abstracting it into a principle:

### One cannot decide for the other

Based on this principle, it is possible to offer a different criticism from Marx's, of the exploitation of the workers by the owners of

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[2] In my view, this fact—that prophets did not come to rule, but were merely messengers—is extremely thought provoking. It goes without saying that one does not have to believe in these religions, to rip the results of this thought experiment.

the means of production. Marx criticizes the owners for not giving the surplus value to its rightful owners, the workers. Here, the owners could say that they are not spending the surplus value for themselves, but they invest it to expand the factory, etc., and create more jobs. This could be true in some cases; and Marxism doesn't offer more to refute this argument. We can offer, however, a more radical criticism in this case: since the workers are the true owners of the surplus value, it is only *they* who can decide how to spent/invest it. The owners cannot decide for the workers.

### The Impossible Responsibility

On one hand, if it is the case that one cannot decide for the other, then it is impossible to help the other through political action. On other hand, as Emmanuel Levinas says, we are responsible for the other (1969; 1998), meaning, we are responsible for the society's well beings. The crucial point about this responsibility is that it is never-ending, i.e., it is impossible to satisfy it. Or, if according to Heidegger, being-in-the-world is an existential dimension of the human person (2010, p.12-27) then one's destiny is entangled with the society's, and so one's responsibility toward oneself becomes one's responsibility toward society. We, therefore, seem to be facing a double bind: we should help the other, and yet we should not decide for the other! Perhaps Kantian ethics can help us, at least at the personal level.

The Kantian Categorical Imperative, that "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law," (1993, p. 30) is, in fact, impossible to follow and use, since it is impossible to consider all the situations (in order to make it a universal law). We should realize that not

only the Kantian ethics, but any other ethics that offer a formula to solve the ethical question is doomed to failure. One of the reasons for this failure is the impossibility of calculating the effects of one's action into the future.[3]

Neither ethics, therefore, at the personal level, nor political activity as such, at the social level, can help us overcome this double bind.

## Authentic Development

We have now arrived at the main question and problem of this paper: How to achieve social justice? This indeed, at a deeper level, could be considered to be the problem of political philosophy too, if we take justice to be the *claimed* final goal of any political system.

Now, let us call the solution to this fundamental problem, that "releases" us from the double bind too "Authentic Development." It should be emphasized that this notion of authentic development is different from what Denis Goulet calls by the same name. Goulet defines:

For any society, authentic development means providing optimal life-sustenance, esteem, and freedom to all its members (2006, p. 150).[4]

First, this definition is significant because unlike traditional definitions of development that are only in terms of economic factors, it relates development to other aspects of human life such as life-sustenance, esteem and freedom. Second, it involves all the members of a society, and not the statistical average of the whole

society. Third, Goulet is the one who related the development to ethics, and established a new field of "development ethics." This definition, although goes beyond what theoreticians of justice define; however, is still an advice to the powers that be. The hidden subject of the gerund "providing" in the definition above is the state. Moreover, in this definition at least, authentic development is defined in terms of what it achieves, and not how it is achieved. And it is the "how" that we should be after.

So, how can one help the other to develop, without deciding for them? The golden answer is to empower others by providing conditions for their development; it is then up to them to make use of those conditions, or not. The others' freedom is therefore respected. Now the reason why it is appropriate to call this general approach "authentic development" is that Heidegger's notion of authenticity (2010, p. 53-62) can be shown to eventually lead to this notion of development.

To get rid of the double bind is to act not to obtain power, but to empower. To empower is to facilitate the freedom and development of the other; contrast this with what Goulet suggests in his definition: The State should provide freedom to its members. Well, what if the State does not provide freedom to its members (?)- a situation which is always the case. State's power means precisely that the state decides for the members of society.

If one is under any illusion that modern "democracies" do not encroach upon the freedom of their members, then it is worth reminding ourselves of the distinction between the formal and the informal state/power. It is possible to theorize that, in fact, the modern state came to being when the informal powers could safeguard their

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[3] This issue obviously is quite important and merits a much longer treatment that the space limitations of this article does not allow.

[4] Also, refer to two excellent commentaries by Astroulakis(2010), and Schaink(2013).

interests (i.e., power) by hiding behind the formal power that *seemed* to be elected democratically.[5] That is, they were complex enough not to directly enforce their power, as the kings did during feudalism.

Now, how can this empowering be done? Foucault's analysis of power can help us here. An important aspect of power, according to Foucault (1975), is that it achieves its goals, much less by brute force, but much more by constructing subjectivities of the populace in a way that the workings of society safeguards the power's interest with the least resistance. And this is done through discursive and non-discursive practices that reinforce and reconstruct the docile subjectivities (1975, Part 3). This is how society can resist power too, by creating/designing the proper discursive and non-discursive practices that, on the one hand, defuse and nullify power, and on the other, nurture independence, cooperation, and—following Nietzsche—sovereign subjectivities. To identify these subjectivities, we have a number of analyses that we can refer to: Marx's notion of the "total man," (1969, p. 53) Nietzsche's noble, sovereign and artist (1989, Second Essay), Heidegger's authentic Dasein, Marcuse's one-dimensional man (1964), and Guy Debord's (1995) distinction between having and being.

These desired subjectivities, cannot be developed in isolation. The proper ground and context of their development is community as an incubator of the sovereign individual. In fact, there is a dialectical (without sublation) relation between the individual and the community, where both affect and strengthen each other.

The developed community/society is not just an economically prosperous society. Emphasizing economic prosperity has dangerous consequences for development plans that understand development only in terms of economic factors, such as those offered by the World Bank or the European Union, and nowadays could be called Neoliberal. What these solutions (intentionally) miss is the multidimensionality of society. A modern society could be conceived to have at least five dimensions or aspects: Cultural, Social, Economic, Political, and Legal. Each aspect has its own structure, organizations, and most importantly, institutions. A properly developed society is developed in all these aspects in a uniform and coordinated manner which involves all members of society and not just the urban population or a class of people. Now to achieve such a coordinated development, it has to happen from the bottom-up; i.e., it cannot happen from the top, for three reasons: 1) the power elite will never plan its own elimination; 2) the power elite cannot know how much each aspect should be developed at any time; and most importantly, 3) it is the populace/community itself that can really know what it needs—based on the level of its development—and demands and creates what it needs. In other words, it is the community itself which is self-engendering and self-developing. Here, we can refer to Adorno's notion of *micrology*[6] to emphasize the necessity of going to details, but it

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[5] See the eye-opening analysis of the "Deep State" in (Lofgren, 2016).

[6] Adorno describes micrology such: "Micrology is the place where metaphysics finds a haven from totality. No absolute can be expressed otherwise than in topics and categories of immanence, although neither in its conditionality nor as its totality is immanence to be deified." (1983, p. 407)

should also be pointed out that this necessity is fundamental and beyond what micrology suggests. It is fundamental since there is no other way to know about people's needs and requirements of their development; and it is beyond what Adorno had in mind by this term, since it was to be operative within the subject-object framework, whereas here both the subject of knowing and the object of knowledge are the same: Community.

Philosophically, this approach is, in a sense, Kantian, since unlike political activists, the focus is not on the power, but is on the *conditions of possibility* of power. And in the social realm, these conditions are in fact the "body" of the desired social phenomena. In this sense, attention should be focused on the materiality of these phenomena, since we would be involved in "body building."

### The Opportunity of Freedom

It might be argued that in societies under despotic regimes, there is no freedom for the people to spend time to educate and change themselves; and in the so-called Western democracies, although there is time, but power intentionally distracts the people, be it through sport spectatorship, or through entertainment; and even when one is after the "truth," he is misguided by "fake news." There are ample analyses that show these phenomena; to name a few, we can refer to Adorno's culture industry, Noam Chomsky's *Necessary Illusions, and Manufacturing Consent*, SlavojŽižek's many analyses of ideology (1989, 1993, 2002, 2012), and the recent shocking revelations about Cambridge Analitica's conspiracy (with the help of Facebook) to disinform and manipulate the people of the United States (Sumpter, 2018). No doubt, power tries to limit people's freedom, and manipulate

them into obedience through construction of docile subjectivities. The important point is no matter how powerful a system of power, it can never be total; there is always a gap between the state's full control and the level of one's freedom. Symbolically we could say that even when one is in a prison, one can either lay down and pessimistically complain about one's situation, or one can spend one's time doing physical exercises, and read books, if they are available. Philosophically, we could say life can never be reduced to a system; there is always an opportunity of freedom for people to develop themselves.

### Inviting the Other

Despite this inalienable opportunity of freedom, people do not use it to develop themselves further! What can be done? It is here that the activists should primarily focus; and it is here that the double bind gets resolved. The activist who has already recognized his/her own freedom and has taken hold of it, should neither remain a passive observer, nor should s/he try to take hold of power on behalf of the people, but instead should *invite* them to develop themselves. This act of inviting could, of course, involve providing the conditions of what has to be done; we call it "body building."

Is the political realm totally left to power? Not at all. As was said, the primary focus is on developing at the bottom, or horizontally, but *to the degree* that people themselves become developed and powerful, people should try to use all means possible to put their demands for autonomy to the power. The general formula to act therefore becomes: Develop at the bottom, play chess at the top.

It is worth comparing this approach with the anarchist's, in particular that of Murray Bookchin. It can be shown that since Bookchin's problem, as far as it relates to this discussion, hovers around hierarchy, he somehow misses the real issue, which is "how can people develop?". To his credit, Bookchin does not totalize the horizontal organization, as pointed out by David Harvey (2015):

[A]t the risk of seeming contrary, I feel obliged to emphasize that decentralization, localism, self-sufficiency, and even confederation, each taken singly, do not constitute a guarantee that we will achieve a rational ecological society. In fact all of them have at one time or another supported parochial communities, oligarchies, and even despotic regimes (2014: 73-74).

Here we can raise a deeper and a fundamental criticism pointed at both Marxists and Anarchists, so far as they both are looking for a final model of organization that somehow solves the problem of unfreedom of hierarchy. The criticism is not so much against their models, as it is against the fact that they think there is a *final solution*; they want a revolution, but one that finally ends, so they can rest.

*Seek less water and find thirst instead*
*If you long to go uphill*
(Rumi)

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# «نظریهٔ عدالت»، کنشگری سیاسی، یا توسعهٔ اصیل؟

شهریار شفقی[1]

## چکیده

در این مقاله ابتدا نشان داده خواهد شد که فیلسوفان/نظریه‌پردازان عدالت همچون جان رالز مرتکب نوعی تناقض اجرایی (Performative Contradiction) می‌شوند،   چراکه باوجود ادعای   ضمنی   عدالت‌خواهی،   با نظریه‌پردازی در آکادمی در جهت اجرای عدالت در جامعه عمل نمی‌کنند. سپس با رجوع به آراء هایدگر، لویناس و نیچه نشان داده خواهد شد که گرچه پیاده کردن عدالت در جامعه ضرورت و اولویت دارد ولی این کار ناممکن است، بااین‌حال انسان در هستی خود مجبور به قبول این وظیفهٔ ناممکن است. در انتها نشان داده خواهد شد که چرا این «وظیفهٔ پیاده کردن عدالت در اجتماع» به بهترین وجه به‌صورت آنچه «توسعهٔ اصیل»، یا «توسعه افقی در پایین، شطرنج در بالا با قدرت» می‌شود نامید، می‌تواند انجام شود. در تعریف «توسعهٔ اصیل» آن را با تعریف دنیس گوله مقایسه کرده و نشان داده خواهد شد که گوله توسعهٔ مطلوب را با نتیجهٔ آن تعریف می‌کند و نه با فرآیند آن.

**واژه‌های کلیدی:** توسعه، توسعهٔ اصیل، ناممکن ممکن، مرگ، بازگشت ابدی، فردریک نیچه، مارتین هایدگر، امانوئل لویناس، ژاک رانسیر، جان رالز، دنیس گوله، فرصت آزادی.

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