PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Introduction

- **Social justice** is a concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society. This is measured by the explicit and tacit terms for the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal activity, and social privileges. In Western as well as in older Asian cultures, the concept of social justice has often referred to the process of ensuring that individuals fulfill their societal roles and receive what was their due from society.

- In the current global grassroots movements for social justice, the emphasis has been on the breaking of barriers for social mobility, the creation of safety nets and economic justice

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- Social justice assigns rights and duties in the [institutions](#) of society, which enables people to receive the basic benefits and burdens of cooperation. The relevant institutions often include [taxation](#), [social insurance](#), [public health](#), [public school](#), [public services](#), [labor law](#) and [regulation](#) of [markets](#), to ensure [fair](#) [distribution of wealth](#), and [equal opportunity](#)

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Interpretations that relate justice to a [reciprocal relationship](#) to society are mediated by differences in cultural traditions, some of which emphasize the individual responsibility toward society and others the equilibrium between access to power and its responsible use.[10] Hence, social justice is invoked today while reinterpreting historical figures such as [Bartolomé de las Casas](#), in philosophical debates about differences among human beings, in efforts for gender, racial and [social equality](#), for advocating justice for [migrants](#), prisoners, the [environment](#), and the physically and developmentally [disabled](#)

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- While the concept of social justice can be traced through the theology of Augustine of Hippo and the philosophy of Thomas Paine, the term "social justice" became used explicitly from the 1840s. A Jesuit priest named Luigi Taparelli is typically credited with coining the term, and it spread during the revolutions of 1848 with the work of Antonio Rosmini-Serbati.[2][15][16] However, recent research has proved that the use of the expression "social justice" is older (even before the 19th century).[17] In the late industrial revolution, progressiveAmerican legal scholars began to use the term more, particularly Louis Brandeis and Roscoe Pound. From the early 20th century it was also embedded in international law and institutions; the preamble to establish the International Labour Organization recalled that "universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice." In the later 20th century, social justice was made central to the philosophy of the social contract, primarily by John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* (1971). In 1993, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action treats social justice as a purpose of human rights education

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- Some authors such as [Friedrich Hayek](#) criticize the concept of social justice, arguing the lack of objective, accepted moral standard; and that while there is a legal definition of what is just and equitable "there is no test of what is socially unjust", and further that social justice is often used for the reallocation of resources based on an arbitrary standard which may in fact be inequitable or unjust

DIFFERENT CONCEPTS OF JUSTICE

- The different concepts of justice, as discussed in ancient Western philosophy, were typically centered upon the community.
- An Artist's rendering of what Plato might have looked like, From Raphael's early 16th century painting, *Scuola di Atene*
- Plato wrote in *The Republic* that it would be an ideal state that "every member of the community must be assigned to the class for which he finds himself best fitted." In an article for J.N.V University, author D.R. Bhandari says, "Justice is, for Plato, at once a part of human virtue and the bond, which joins man together in society. It is the identical quality that makes good and social. Justice is an order and duty of the parts of the soul, it is to the soul as health is to the body. Plato says that justice is not mere strength, but it is a harmonious strength. Justice is not the right of the stronger but the effective harmony of the whole. All moral conceptions revolve about the good of the whole-individual as well as social".
- Roman copy in marble of a Greek bronze bust of Aristotle by Lysippos, c. 330 BC.The alabaster mantle is modern.
- Plato believed rights existed only between free people, and the law should take "account in the first instance of relations of inequality in which individuals are treated in proportion to their worth and only secondarily of relations of equality." Reflecting this time when slavery and subjugation of women was typical, ancient views of justice tended to reflect the rigid class systems that still prevailed. On the other hand, for the privileged groups, strong concepts of fairness and the community existed. Distributive justice was said by Aristotle to require that people were distributed goods and assets according to their merit.
- Socrates
- Socrates (through Plato's dialogue *Crito*) is attributed with developing the idea of a social contract, whereby people ought to follow the rules of a society, and accept its burdens because they have accepted its benefits. During the Middle Ages, religious scholars particularly, such as Thomas Aquinas continued discussion of justice in various ways, but ultimately connected being a good citizen to the purpose of serving God.

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- After the Renaissance and Reformation, the modern concept of social justice, as developing human potential, began to emerge through the work of a series of authors. Baruch Spinoza in *On the Improvement of the Understanding* (1677) contended that the one true aim of life should be to acquire "a human character much more stable than [one's] own", and to achieve this "pitch of perfection... The chief good is that he should arrive, together with other individuals if possible, at the possession of the aforesaid character." During the enlightenment and responding to the French and American Revolutions, Thomas Paine similarly wrote in *The Rights of Man* (1792) society should give "genius a fair and universal chance" and so "the construction of government ought to be such as to bring forward... all that extent of capacity which never fails to appear in revolutions."

- *Social justice* has been traditionally credited to be coined by Jesuit priest Luigi Taparelli in the 1840s, but the expression is older

- Although there is no certainty about the first use of the term "social justice", early sources can be found in Europe in the 18th century. Some references to the use of the expression are in articles of journals aligned with the spirit of the Enlightenment, in which social justice is described as an obligation of the monarch; also the term is present in books written by Catholic Italian theologians, notably members of the Society of Jesus. Thus, according to this sources and the context, social justice was another term for "the justice of society", the justice that rules the relations among individuals in society, without any mention to socio-economic equity or human dignity.

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- The usage of the term started to become more frequent by Catholic thinkers from the 1840s, including the Jesuit Luigi Taparelli in *Civiltà Cattolica*, based on the work of St. Thomas Aquinas. He argued that rival capitalist and socialisttheories, based on subjective Cartesian thinking, undermined the unity of society present in Thomistic metaphysics as neither were sufficiently concerned with moral philosophy. Writing in 1861, the influential British philosopher and economist, John Stuart Mill stated in *Utilitarianism* his view that "Society should treat all equally well who have deserved equally well of it, that is, who have deserved equally well absolutely. This is the highest abstract standard of social and distributive justice; towards which all institutions, and the efforts of all virtuous citizens, should be made in the utmost degree to converge."

- In the later 19th and early 20th century, social justice became an important theme in American political and legal philosophy, particularly in the work of John Dewey, Roscoe Pound and Louis Brandeis. One of the prime concerns was the *Lochner era* decisions of the US Supreme Court to strike down legislation passed by state governments and the Federal government for social and economic improvement, such as the eight-hour day or the right to join a trade union. After the First World War, the founding document of the International Labour Organization took up the same terminology in its preamble, stating that "peace can be established only if it is based on social justice". From this point, the discussion of social justice entered into mainstream legal and academic discourse.

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- Thus, in 1931, the Pope Pius XI stated the expression for the first time in the Catholic Social Teaching in the encyclical Quadragesimo Anno. Then again in Divini Redepmtoris, the Church pointed out that the realisation of social justice relied on the promotion of the dignity of human person.The same year, and because of the documented influence of Divini Redemptoris in its drafters, the Constitution of Ireland was the first one to establish the term as a principle of the economy in the State, and then other countries around the world did the same throughout the 20th century, even in Socialist regimes such as the Cuban Constitution in 1976.

- In the late 20th century, a number of liberal and conservative thinkers, notably Friedrich von Hayek rejected the concept by stating that it did not mean anything, or meant too many things. However the concept remained highly influential, particularly with its promotion by philosophers such as John Rawls. Even though the meaning of social justice varies, at least three common elements can be identified in the contemporary theories about it: a duty of the State to distributecertain vital means (such as economic, social, and cultural rights), the protection of human dignity, and affirmative actions to promote equal opportunities for everybody.