

Ethics Common Seminar Personal Statement

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Justice requires a peaceful society. This is necessary because without peace we can't sustain a society that is just to everyone. Thus I agree with this statement, but how might we get to that point (and might justice be needed before peace can be reached?). Our society makes it so that we can't imagine the prosperous ever providing for the poor and thus in large part they don't. The two principles Rawls gets at work along these lines, but their one failing is the original position. You first enter into a veil of ignorance that assumes you don't know your exact position; this just isn't realistic. I actually agree with much of Rawls' theory, but as the original position wouldn't happen in our society to form a new society I find myself disagreeing with him in a fundamental way. To create a just society respect for each other and embracing how you interact will be key. Accepting responsibility for your own actions, including support (or lack thereof) of others, is another major element to a peaceful and just society.

Principles I think would help this statement come to actuality: Power should be less as correlated to monetary wealth so much as wealth of social status. Anyone can rise or fall on the social ladder and deserves the resources to reach the status they aspire to. A right to a say would be required to have an equal society.

The prosperous would be the ones providing education and other resources to those lower down to enable them to rise as desired if they cannot provide them on their own. Such fluidity in society lends to equal classes; this enables a peaceful just society with supportive members. Class fluidity will enable the talent otherwise trapped in poverty to be utilized in the upper-class. Society needs this, but those in poverty won't recognize their potential without the prosperous supporting their intellectual development (and basic human needs).

I don't think that equality in society is required for justice, but it would help ensure a just society. If we can bring this statement to actuality then there will be an equal society, what else would the prosperous providing for the poor create? But that is an equality created by the goodwill of the few. A right to a say would provide a less artificial equality. Ismael Garcia articulates this by stating that "a just social order cannot be created for the poor nor can it be created without them". The poor must have their words not just heard but heeded to create a just and equal society in which everyone can be prosperous.

In U.S. politics money has allowed candidates to gain advantages over their opponents and to ultimately win even presidential elections. Lobbyists can influence Congress; another tie money has to power. The prosperous we're discussing here have more power than the poor just because they can throw money in support of candidates and interests. Power gained through money is inherently unequal, and in cases has proven to be a corrupt power.

The solution to this conundrum is to separate the two. In a just society money would not bring power, only other aspects of life such as social status would. Biblical tradition shows us a few examples of economic systems that had hints of such a correlation. The first is Hebrew tradition based on the stipulation that all things belong to God. The Sabbath year was every seventh year when the fields were left fallow and in which all debts were forgiven. Then, every seventh Sabbatical year was a Jubilee year in which all land reverted to its original owners. This tradition places power and wealth on something other than monetary gains.

The second example, that went counter to economic systems of its day, is that of Jerusalem which held all goods in common. Not only was everything held in common, but

those who owned land or houses were to sell them and give the money to the apostles. Very few communities today have such a system, but those that do don't factor money into the equation of power. Benedictine monasteries are the only communities that come to mind to hold such an economic system. With all goods held in common, even if monetary gains were allowed, what use would they be? Hence these communities have power based on pillars that are more just than the pillar of monetary wealth.

My thoughts on this statement incorporate some ideas of a few of the authors we've read, either for support or rebuke. Each of the principles discussed serve as tenets for the statement. Diminishing the power money has will equalize society in such a way that it would feel obligatory for the prosperous to support those below them. Likewise heeding the say (based on the idea of Nozick's) of everyone below you will form a society more just than one akin to a dictatorship. I think our society is at least aiming to do this more than most, but even the U.S. could do more. I believe class fluidity is important to a just society so that the entire class structure may one day erode into irrelevance as a just and equal society emerges. Why should a just society require support for the disadvantaged as each principle permeates? The answer here is that it is part of who we are to want support and inclusion, and so a just society would hold such actions as important values.

To conclude let me say that my views, while influenced by the authors, are formed from experience and other influences more. The above articulation of my views on this statement discusses them with evidence and briefly touches on why I hold these views, but if I had more space would extend into further detail.