



**IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities**

**Vol. 11. No. 2, (2025)**

**ISSN: 2488- 9210 (Print) 2504-9038 (Online)**

**Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University Umuaya**  
**Indexed: Academic Journals Online, Google Scholar, Igwebuike Research Institute**

**EXAMINATION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES IN MODERN NIGERIAN SOCIETY IN  
THE LIGHT OF JOHN RAWLS PHILOSOPHY**

**Orji, Chidi Paul, Ph.D.**

Department of Philosophy, University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Umuagwo,  
hipaulco@gmail.com, [paul.orji@uaes.edu.ng](mailto:paul.orji@uaes.edu.ng)

&

**Olaiya, Olajumoke Olufunmilola**

Educational Foundations Dept.; Federal College of Education (Technical), Akoka, Lagos.  
[olajumoke.olaiya@fctakoka.edu.ng](mailto:olajumoke.olaiya@fctakoka.edu.ng), [olajumokeolaiya@gmail.com](mailto:olajumokeolaiya@gmail.com)

&

**Nwagbara, Rufus Godswill**

Department of Philosophy, Babcock University, Ilisan Remo, Ogun State  
godswillnwagbara@gmail.com, [nwagbarag@babcock.edu.ng](mailto:nwagbarag@babcock.edu.ng)

&

**Egberongbe Tijani Taiwo Ph.D.**

Department of Philosophy, Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago Iwoye, Ogun State.  
[egberongbetaiwo@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng](mailto:egberongbetaiwo@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng) [titaiwoegbe@gmail.com](mailto:titaiwoegbe@gmail.com)

&

**Joachim Okoroafor PhD**

Directorate of General Studies, Gregory University, Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria.  
[j.okoroafor@gregoryuniversityuturu.edu.ng](mailto:j.okoroafor@gregoryuniversityuturu.edu.ng)

&

**Iyadunni Olamilekan**

Department of Philosophy, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago - Iwoye, Ogun State.  
[lokoinmillion2005@yahoo.com](mailto:lokoinmillion2005@yahoo.com)

&

**Chukwu Peter Damian Ezechi**

Directorate of General Studies, Gregory University Uturu Abia State  
[d.ezechi@gregoryuniversityuturu.edu.ng](mailto:d.ezechi@gregoryuniversityuturu.edu.ng)

&

**Ese Henry Inoke**

Department of Philosophy, University of Port Harcourt (UniPort), Rivers State.  
[henryinoke@gmail.com](mailto:henryinoke@gmail.com)

**Abstract**

*Nigeria is plagued by numerous forms of ethnic and political conflicts. The British government's colonial occupation of the country is the cause of this. As a result, the country is divided along ethnic lines and people today live in inequity. These discrepancies cause crises because national resources are allocated in an unequal manner. Ethnic relations are further strained as a result of Nigeria's many ethnic groups. However, in a welfare state, overlapping consensus- as Rawls put it—can become a national consensus when the constitution protects underprivileged ethnic groups through mutual understanding and a readiness to change one's mind to suit the needs of*



*others. A just and equitable welfare society must provide interethnic cooperation, peaceful coexistence, and constructive connections in a multiethnic state like Nigeria, where there is division, antagonism, unhealthy rivalry, and evident imbalances between the ethnic groups.*

**Keywords:** John Rawls, Social Injustice, Welfare, Overlapping Consensus, Nigeria

## Introduction

Africa's numerous ethnic groups and their relations are one of the continent's problems. Nigeria, a case study nation with an estimated 250 ethnic groups, has a lengthy history of colonial control that has persisted into the present political era, resulting in uneven relations between the many diverse ethnic groups. The leadership approach, according to Osuji, is focused on race interests and individual riches, which has led to the well-known lack of a shared national mission. The British deliberately seeded a compound ethnic conflict (Osuji, 2018:148). Nigeria's political system has had numerous difficulties since its founding, the majority of which may be attributed to ethnic politics and mentalities. Nigeria's leaders refused to let the country's values—such as integrity, respect for the rule of law, and a dislike of corruption and ethnocentrism—influence their actions or perspectives (Emordi, 2008:47). The issue of maintaining political stability and communal cohesion arises when people cannot agree on how to define social fairness. How can political unity and stability be preserved in a society when viewpoints are all-encompassing, diverse, and occasionally contradictory? Thus, the main argument of this essay is that ethnicity is the main thing preventing Nigeria from developing as a country. Meaningful development will not happen if the issue is not successfully resolved; instead, it will remain elusive and illusive. The ethnicity of Nigerians is determined by genetic affinity. It is a spontaneous, natural event. It can therefore be used profitably to promote human happiness in addition to being beneficial on its own. An ethnically heterogeneous group claims to be related by blood or heritage. There may be wide variations in the gathering's size and location. All ethnic groups share the following traits: claim of a common ancestry that needed to be passed down through several generations (Osuji, 2018:151).

The psychological effect of sharing a common ancestor strengthens people's sense of unity and connection to one another. The risk of aestheticism is that it produces and maintains separation. The Federal Employment Character Act, the National Youth Service Corps program, and the Unity school systems are just a few of the programs that have been implemented to mitigate the detrimental effects of racial prejudice. Now, though, it is a part of the country's development. The argument for introducing social justice (equity and fairness) into Nigerian politics was evaluated in this essay, along with the applicability of John Rawls' overlapping consensus to resolve the growing ethnic disputes. Rawls attempts to create a practical formula for a fair and equitable distribution of rights and liberties, as well as a strategy for distributing socioeconomic benefits, such as money, health, education, and other political rights, in order to meet the concept of an overlapping consensus. Conflicts between Nigeria's numerous ethnic groups over the country's resources continue to be a cause of unhappiness and a danger to the nation's political stability, unity, and peace. An analysis of Nigeria's ethnic conflicts reveals a history of political upheaval and changing coping mechanisms specified in the constitution, which apply to a range of ethnic groups. Nigeria's many ethnic groups are currently fiercely competing with one another



on matters like power and resource distribution. Numerous governments have made fruitless attempts to address the aforementioned issues. This study adopts an analytical approach. It examines Nigeria's issues with political instability and ethnic relations through critical analysis. Nigeria's social injustice and ethnic problem, which is only becoming worse, will be critically examined in this study in an attempt to have a comprehensive conversation about the difficulties in ethnic relations. Through his overlapping agreement, it will also emphasize the applicability of John Rawls' social justice theory. It will also be shown what John Rawls's overlapping consensus means. With the help of Rawls' overlapping consensus, a new socio-political welfare framework is created in Nigeria, acting as a model for addressing concerns of social inequality.

### **The Issues of Social justice in Nigeria: An Overview**

Nigeria has seen numerous ethnic, political, and economic crises. There are a lot of different opinions about this. While some attribute this issue to inept leadership, others attribute it to the British government's colonial domination over the country (Olugbemi & Osuji, 2021:28). There are now differences among the people as a result of the country's ethnic division. Unfair resource distribution across the country has led to rivalries. Tensions occur when one ethnic group- especially the minority ethnic groups- is marginalized at the expense of another. In terms of leadership and governance, it is challenging for one ethnic group to become the dominant force. And as a result, people are now distrustful and antagonistic to one another. Therefore, the problem of ethnic relations is made worse by Nigeria's many ethnic groupings. People become more confusing, dehumanizing, unfair, unbalanced, and biased as a result.

### **The Two Principles of Justice proposed by John Rawls**

Two principles of justice will be agreed upon by the individuals in the hypothetical original situation, Rawls argues. Simply put, Rawls states that the first of the two principles is as follows: Every individual must have the greatest complete basic liberty that is consistent with the equal rights of others. According to Rawls (1989:60), social and economic inequalities should be arranged so that they are (a) rationally expected to benefit all parties and (b) connected to positions and jobs that are available to everyone. In Rawls' view, the second rule is to prioritize the first. Every person's rights must be respected if society is to be just. Everyone in society is treated fairly, according to the argument, as long as individual liberty is respected. The socioeconomic status differences that exist in all societies are the subject of another principle. Following this, Rawls states that "as a general comment, these principles concern mainly, as I said, the basic structure of society" (Rawls 1989:61). He says that "a just society can be established with just two principles, like justice." This is due to multiple factors. The first is that, based on a contract, persons in a fictitious starting situation select these principles. "What Rawls means by justice is defined by these two principles" (Rawls 1989:61–62). As in the original argument, everyone behind the curtain of ignorance is equal since they are unaware of the details. Rawls is aware that people in every community are aware of their financial success and social status. According to Rawls, not everyone should enjoy the same social and economic advantages. People who are already less fortunate shouldn't be harmed by any disparity. Inequality in society must benefit everyone. Rawls states that the second principle "relates, roughly, to the distribution



of income and wealth and to the design of organizations that use hierarchies or differences in authority and responsibility" (Rawls 1989:61).

The principles ought to be arranged in a sequential fashion, with the first principle coming before the second, in accordance with Rawls. This ordering states that greater social and economic advantages cannot be used as an excuse or payment for a deviation from the equal liberty institutions required by the first principle. Rawls (1989:61) argues that the structures of authority and the distribution of wealth and income must be in line with the rights to equal citizenship and opportunity." When it comes to social and economic distributions, the principles are set up to prevent the violation of basic rights and freedoms. Economic disparities are only acceptable provided they do not further separate the less fortunate. The fundamental rights and liberties of any group of people cannot be threatened by an unequal wealth distribution. This interpretation of justice as fairness holds that a society can only be deemed just and equitable if it can be shown that any inequities are beneficial to everyone. A society must uphold its basic freedoms and rights and allocate its resources in a way that satisfies the dual ideals of justice and fairness in order to be deemed just. In these hypothetical systems, everyone will receive the same treatment. People will always be mainly interested in basic necessities and freedom. Therefore, even in situations where resources are allocated unfairly, fundamental rights are maintained. Rawls wrote, "Imagine, then, a hypothetical initial arrangement in which all the social primary goods are equally distributed: everyone has similar rights and duties, and income and wealth are shared equally." He depicts this distribution in this way. This current state of affairs provides a benchmark for evaluating progress. If certain differences in income and organizational power give everyone a better starting place, then those differences are consistent with the universal knowledge, claims Rawls (1989:62). According to Rawls, a theoretical model can be used to determine whether a society is just or not. A society is deemed just if it upholds justice and fairness with the same steadfastness as the society from which it originated. If it turns out that it was not constructed according to the two principles, society may use them to make the necessary changes. According to Rawls, a society cannot be considered just unless its rights and liberties are safeguarded above its social advantages. Disparities in social and economic standing could be seen as somewhat justifiable if institutions place a high priority on protecting individual rights and freedoms. According to Rawls, the equality of every individual's rights and liberties within a society is all that is necessary to be considered just.

### **John Rawls's Original Position**

The original position is to introduce a reasonable framework or strategy for the development of justice principles in order to guarantee that the principles agreed upon at the end of consultations are fair and, therefore, carry the kind of drive that confers participation and expected legitimization, submission, and acknowledgment (Rawls, 1993:256). The original position was founded on Kant's concept of autonomy and the categorical imperative. The first viewpoint according to Rawls (1993:251) is a "procedural interpretation" that clarifies the character of people as free, equal, and rational. From Rawls' point of view, there can be no universal moral notion of justice. A democratic state can now tolerate a variety of inconsistent ideas of what is good because to the establishment of constitutional governments and the institutions of large



industrial market economies (Rawls, 1993:108). As a result, justice is separated from its members' loyalties and moral development. As Rawls advises, we should not begin with the good as it is independently defined in order to affect their way of life. Our character is essentially shown by the values we are prepared to accept as directing the circumstances in which these objectives are to be established and the methods by which they are to be achieved, rather than by our goals themselves. The objectives that the self supports come second since the self comes first (Rawls, 1971:560).

People are hidden beneath a veil of ignorance, and nobody knows anything specific about them, others, or their social and historical circumstances. Freeman argues that "the parties' decision is to be based solely on their knowledge of general facts that they share with each other, which includes general knowledge of psychology, economics, and other relevant social, biological, and physical sciences" (Freeman, 2007:155). Rawls goes on to say that "the individuals in the first position are reasonable." People assume that because they are logical, they have a sense of justice (Rawls, 1977:145). Since certain actions are clearly just while others are blatantly unjust, Rawls' logic implies a natural sense of justice and evil. Every individual will benefit from selecting a justice notion that serves their particular interests (Rawls, 1977:142). This indicates that they are not influenced by religion or other elements and they do not consider any specific good to be an end in and of itself. According to Rawls "the choices of the parties in the original position will be restricted by natural laws, and those deciding will have certain inclinations to choose among them" (Rawls, 1971:159-161). These "assumptions," though, must be accurate and appropriately broad. Rawls concludes by saying that "there may be good reasons for enshrining convictions of justice more directly into first principles" (Rawls, 1977:8). The convictions will be made public in this way. Accordingly, people's perceptions of justice are greatly influenced by institutions and society. According to Rawls, moral character and a sense of justice are developed through the family. A country's politics and constitution must be just, equal, and fair in order to govern a "well-ordered" society, the institutions and groups that make up society, and the family.

### **The Veil of Ignorance: John Rawls' Concept and Application**

In order to apply and elucidate his ideas of justice, Rawls mainly use a hypothetical scenario in which everyone is initially placed behind his veil of ignorance. Rawls believed that the only way to guarantee justice and equity during the establishment of a society was to remove this curtain of ignorance. The veil of ignorance protects every future member of the new civilization from some realities about their unique situation. This suggests that, in the interim, no one will be able to predict with any degree of accuracy what they will become in the new society. Before the guiding principles for the society are chosen, no member of the projected society will be aware of his responsibilities or duties because everyone's knowledge of his situational role, position, or profession will only become known once a viable thesis of governance has been widely accepted. According to Rawls' theory, each and every citizen ought to select one or more of these principles. Both men and women work in a variety of occupations in this society, including lawyers, doctors, teachers, farmers, clerks, carpenters, drivers, mechanics, the wealthy and the impoverished, the industrious and the smart, leaders, and politicians, among others.



People would be more inclined to favor or support a specific vocation, role, or position if they were aware of what it would include beforehand. Thus, in Rawls' view, everyone must be informed before selecting the principles. According to Rawls, the goal of consensus-building or selection is to maintain social fairness and equality. In the first paragraph of *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls asserts that the first and most significant virtue of social organizations is justice. This is because any unjust social system, regardless of how well-functioning or efficient it is, must be altered or abolished. Society must be viewed as a cooperative project with reciprocal advantages. Members of society must be seen as offering fundamental social advantages on an equal footing with individuals. Since everyone is in an equal position and no one can develop principles to favor his particular situation, a just agreement or contract leads to the principles of justice. These social goods include things like money, income, opportunities, freedoms, rights, and power. People worry about how the benefits of their cooperation will be distributed when none of the parties to the arrangement benefit, which leads to the topic of distributive justice (Rawls, 1977:10). The ensuing vision of justice must be ensured in order to attain a careful equilibrium. In this instance, our inherent sense of justice and our moral principles align. They would also agree with those who took the original stance. The first principle, also known as the liberty principle, is followed by the second principle, also known as the difference principle. Unless doing so will benefit the most vulnerable members of the community, benefits to society should be distributed fairly. That's why Rawls (1977:62) described justice as "simply inequalities that are not to the benefit of all." People's physical and mental characteristics vary according to the socioeconomic class they were born into. The rewards and benefits that these natural and social events offer to society should be balanced.

### **John Rawls' Overlapping Consensus: it's Relevance**

According to Rawls, a society that is well-ordered can only be expected to establish and preserve the type of political stability necessary for an overlapping agreement to exist. The "reality of reasonable pluralism," or the inevitable and unavoidable existence of a plurality of incompatible and incommensurable reasonable comprehensive doctrines, necessitates an overlapping consensus (Rawls, 1993:36). The variety of opposing and incommensurable "reasonable comprehensive philosophical and moral doctrines found in modern democratic societies are not a mere historical condition that may soon pass away; it is a permanent feature of the public culture of democracy," according to Rawls, and as such, they will emerge and endure in all democratic societies (Rawls, 1993:36).

Therefore, any idea of justice that seeks to create the foundation for a community in order must be able to deal with this reality in a suitable manner. According to Rawls, the foundation of a well-ordered society can only be established by an overlapping agreement that considers the fact of reasonable plurality. Therefore, Rawls argues that the public conception of justice must provide the "right" form of stability, or "stability for the right reasons" (Rawls, 1996:42), in order to produce the kind of political stability required to establish and maintain a just and stable democratic government. This implies that citizens must act morally in order to uphold the idea of justice, according to Rawls. In the pluralistic societies of today, to act justly, one must recognize



and be willing to follow the rules of permissible plurality. In Rawls' opinion, living inside a fundamentally just framework promotes the willingness and desire to act in this manner. They will observe that in order to be stable enough to establish and maintain a well-ordered society, the public's concept of justice needs to satisfy two requirements: It must be willingly and freely supported by at least a substantial number of people." The political notion of justice may engage "each citizen's reason" from within the confines of his or her own comprehensive doctrine, even though the overlapping agreement only concerns this conception (Rawls, 1996:143). People with different ideologies are able to accept the overlapping consensus's demands as morally sound. According to John Rawls, the existence of this shared moral affirmation guarantees that support for the overlapping consensus will not alter in reaction to "shifts in the distribution of political power" or changes in people's individual circumstances, to the extent that this is humanly possible (Rawls, 1996:148). According to Rawls, people will continue to support opposing political philosophies even if those philosophies eventually take over society and gain more relative weight (Rawls, 1996:148). A political concept of justice enables an overlapping agreement that can offer the "greater" degree of stability required to create and preserve a well-ordered society. In fact, Rawls contends that the emergence of an overlapping consensus—which is therefore desirable due to its distinct qualities that allow it to garner the moral support necessary to accomplish its goals, requires the establishment of a political conception of justice.

### **A Welfare State Framework**

The term "welfare state" refers to a system in which the government bears the primary responsibility for providing social and economic security to its citizens in the form of health care, education, social security benefits, pensions, and other benefits (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2009:453). The idea was first proposed in the 1942 Beveridge Report and was implemented by several British administrations in the 1940s. Since then, the welfare state has experienced significant transformation and is now recognized by many developed countries.

In addition, there has been a noticeable departure from the social democratic legacy that developed in Britain in the 1940s (Esping-Anderson, 2000:162-163). It can be said to have split into three different types: the corporatist and stratified "conservative" form found in Germany; the market-driven "liberal" model found in Australia and the USA; and the Universalist "social democratic" type found in Germany. The fundamental principles of all three versions, albeit with varying degrees of welfare provided, are that society must ensure that each member has a sufficient standard of living, and that every citizen has a political right to a minimum standard of living, nutrition, health, housing, and education (Lehning, 2009:213). A fundamental aspect of all these social achievements that ensured citizens' care "from the cradle to the grave" was the understanding that the adverse effects of a market economy needed to be minimized. The impetus for these developments was this realization of the interplay between the market and the state, or more specifically, the person in a market-governed society. The recognition that these issues were, at least in part, systematic rather than the result of individual errors or failures followed this realization (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2009:385).

### **Rawls' Theory of Social Justice and a Welfare Structure**



Given that Rawls' "theory of justice" focuses on balancing morally arbitrary injustices while upholding fundamental human rights, it provides a very good explanation of many of the main principles and objectives of the contemporary welfare state (Birnbbaum, 2010:496). In his landmark book *A Theory of Justice*, published in 1971, Rawls defined this fundamental idea as "justice as fairness". According to him, his participants must be rational, uncoerced, have a solid grasp of human behavior, society, and political and economic structures, as well as an equal voice (Holt, 2011:395). From this veil of ignorance, Rawls asserted that all individuals in the original situation will adhere to one of two fundamental principles of justice: the allocation of economic and social goods and the allocation of civil and political rights. Every person has the right to the most extensive set of fundamental rights that is compatible with a similar system of liberty for others, according to Rawls' first principle (Rawls, 1971:250).

This idea thus includes fundamental liberties like the freedom of expression, of religion, of political association, and so forth—all of which are recognized as features of a liberal democratic state. The basis for the allocation of economic and social resources should be "Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least privileged and (b) attached to the offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality and opportunity" (Rawls, 1971:83). The dual form of the welfare state has a considerable impact on the "original position's perception of its legitimacy," and condition (a) is Rawls' "difference principle." According to the same principle, this call for a welfare state, which is required to provide free education to all people it serves at a respectable level. However, it also permits those same wealthy individuals to pay higher taxes than others, as long as the extra funds are subsequently allocated to the less fortunate members of society (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2013). Rawls also refers to "negative income tax" (Birnbbaum, 2010:498), which is a guaranteed minimum income for everyone living below a certain income threshold.

Since neither pure capitalism nor complete socialism can be achieved, the welfare state appears to be the most logical and widely accepted middle ground between the two radical ideologies. The fact that the "veil of ignorance" eliminates the arbitrary nature of social gain is another feature that distinguishes his "original attitude" and the resulting society from a more capitalist, libertarian interpretation. The fact that Rawls' "original position" is now regarded as a support of the welfare state may be explained by this ambiguity between libertarianism and egalitarianism.

As long as it benefits all parties involved, his "difference principle" supports the disparities of market capitalism and imposes no limitations on those who are fortunate enough to benefit from it. Furthermore, it offers the least fortunate members of society enough social protection. Regarding Nigeria's welfare state, there are two ways to understand Rawls' theory of justice. One is that the welfare state that Rawls argues we ought to establish under the idealized conditions of the "original position" is actually very comparable to the one that is in place now. As in a true welfare state, the government would meet our material necessities, including health care, education, and social security benefits. Whatever our position in Rawls' hypothetical Nigerian society, we would all have the same fundamental rights.



### **The Need for a Welfare State Structure and a Rawlsian Approach to Issues of Social Justice in Modern Nigerian Society**

Rebuilding Nigeria's institutions is essential to resolving ethnic tensions in the nation. This highlights the essential principles of Rawls' theory of social justice, which accords great importance to freedom, equality, and the well-being of the underprivileged. The distribution of rights, responsibilities, privileges, and other contentious issues in Nigeria will be governed by the two guiding principles. They would only be applicable to Nigerian society's fundamental structures. One interpretation of Rawls' emphasis on his first principle is that it reflects his unshakeable and unrelenting devotion to the liberal school. However, it is important to remember that these principles are meaningless unless Nigeria becomes a liberal society. They would also control the allocation of social and economic advantages. Liberty highlights how important it is for every individual in society to be untouchable. The rights necessary for good social administration include moral, intellectual, and political (the ability to vote and hold public office), and they uphold ideals such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of conscience, and freedom of thought. The first principle states that these liberties should be equally available to all citizens (Rawls, 2001:53).

The principles would also dictate how social and economic advantages are distributed, but it's crucial to keep in mind that they have no real significance until Nigeria develops into a liberal society. Liberty emphasizes how crucial it is that all members of society remain untouchable. The freedoms necessary for efficient social governance encompass political, intellectual, and moral arenas (such as the ability to vote and hold public office), and they promote concepts such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of conscience, and freedom of thinking. According to the first principle, all citizens ought to have equal access to these freedoms. When choosing the kind of social-political structure for the country, the ideal of liberty would also ensure that the two guiding principles- Liberty, Equality, and Welfare- represent a viable alternative, especially when they are uncertain of the direction of future events, regardless of the economic, social, and political circumstances of the participants in the national dialogue. The second concept, equality of opportunity, is one that the country's ethnic groupings would naturally support. A key component of the second principle is ensuring that Nigerians with comparable capacity and resources encounter comparable conditions- social inequality promoting the welfare and interests of the most disadvantaged. The second principle, which deals with discrepancies, is where the difference principle originates. Despite its lower ranking on the lexical hierarchy, this principle is fundamental and essential to Rawls' larger goal, which involves the welfare of the socially disadvantaged to some extent. According to Rawls, this principle "requires that existing inequalities must contribute effectively to the benefit of the least advantaged; otherwise, the inequalities are not permissible," regardless of how much people are motivated to work in order to earn their larger shares of the output (1999:64). But does he have the right to give the first principle more weight than the second, considering how important liberty is in modern society? People are free to enjoy what is lawfully theirs as long as it is their private property, therefore no member of the public or government should be able to impede any



individual's freedom, according to Mill (1987:128), who shares Rawls' first principle, which emphasizes the primacy of liberty. Does this imply that people are free to act however they like if society has no power to control how they behave in matters that affect them? One person's freedom cannot be sacrificed for another's freedom. Freedom comes with duties, and unbridled rights and liberties can backfire. Is the State able to intervene at this point?

There are instances when people make choices that, in contrast to what Mill would have us believe, may not damage others but may injure them personally, therefore no member of society is ever fully independent. Are the State or other members not entitled to act in these situations? According to John Stuart Mill's theory of liberty, the individual must be the first to intervene and serve as the last arbiter. People are free to act in whatever way they see fit, both legally and socially, and they are also free to bear the consequences of their choices. "Neither one person nor any number of persons is warranted in saying to another human creature of ripe years that he shall not do with his life for his own benefit what he chooses to do with it" refers to the fact that he is the one who is most concerned with his own well-being; that society's interest in him as an individual is fractional and entirely indirect, except in regards to his conduct toward others; and that the average man or woman possesses infinite knowledge. According to Rawls, the fundamental institutions of society are in charge of governing society; hence, wealth will be redistributed to help the poor. While broad standards outlining expectations should be established, Mill responds that personal matters should be left up to individual freedom. A person's life can only be influenced by society through ideas and advice. Although it is impossible to compare the negative consequences of disregarding counsel or the opinions of others, the consequences of allowing others to decide what is suitable for them are far greater. Ultimately, it is up to each individual to determine what is best for them.

### Conclusion

One of the divisive topics surrounding the allocation of national resources and public sector jobs is inequality, a problem that frequently surfaces in Nigerian national discourse. The major goals of Rawls' theory of social justice are to alter the incentives and rights that this system provides, as well as the rules by which it operates. For instance, this strategy can be advantageous for fiscal and economic policy, as well as income and taxation. It has less to do with specific transactional circumstances and scenarios and more to do with the context of such transactions. The basic practical goal of Rawls' theory of social justice is to ensure that no member of society is ever left behind. When the agreements end, these ethnic groups will have made way for the establishment of individual liberties and rights that were established in accordance with Rawlsian intentions, rather than how to come up with a new system or social-political welfare structure based on these two principles. This is likely acceptable because there would be no need to defend particular ethnic groups and the interests of all people would be taken into account equally.

A well-ordered society, as defined by Rawls, is a welfare society that is guided by a common public understanding of justice. This implies that there is a concept of justice that the people at a given time in their history understood and accepted. It follows that the lack of this agreement inside the political system exacerbates issues with unity, political instability, and ethnic relations



among the many ethnic groups, including those in Nigeria. It is clear that when Nigeria was established and the Amalgamation occurred in 1914, there was no shared sense of justice among the populace. When Nigeria gained its independence in 1960, it was also evident that no philosophy, paradigm, or set of principles had been established for the creation of the country's basic social structure. From the beginning, these fundamental defects were the root cause of Nigeria's social unfairness issue. The liberal worldview is timeless, and for these and other reasons, Nigeria must embrace it. It is a philosophy that prioritizes freedom, individual liberty, rights, welfare, equality, free and fair elections, constitutional democracy, and unrestricted access to social institutions.

### References

- Birnbaum, S. (2010). "Radical liberalism, Rawls and the welfare state: justifying the politics of basic income", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, (13).
- Concise Oxford. (2009). *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press.
- Emordi, E. (2008). "Economics of Nation-Building under the Military in Nigeria" in *Contemporary Essays on Nigeria Society, Economy and Law*, Emordi, S. E. Edeko, B. O. Iganija (eds.). Ambrose Alli University Publishing House.
- Esping-Anderson, I. (2000). "Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism" in Pierson, C. and Castles, F(eds) "The Welfare State: A Reader". Polity Press.
- Holt, J. (2011). "The Choice of Economic Systems in the Rawlsian Original Position", *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory*, (39).
- Kanu I. A. (2010). "A Discourse on the Romance between Philosophy and Christian Theology". *International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition*. 2. 185-198.
- Kanu I. A. (2011). "Corruption in Africa and its Challenges for the Enterprise of Christian Theology". *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences*. 4. 492-500.
- Kanu I. A. (2012). "On the Possibility of Miracles". *International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition*. 4. 81-89.
- Kanu I. A. (2020). "Igwebuike theology of Ikwa Ogwe and the Inculturation of the Gospel message". *OGIRISI: A Journal of African Studies*. 16(1),15-28.
- Kanu I. A. (2020). "Igwebuike theology of Omenani and the missionary bifurcation of horizons". *OGIRISI: A New Journal of African Studies*. 16(1), 127-144.
- Kanu I. A. (2024). "The Inculturation of Consecrated Life in Africa: Towards a Logic for Promoting Indigenous Gifts of Fidelity". *The Catholic Voyage: African Journal of Consecrated Life*. 21(1), 245-265.
- Kanu I. A. (2012). "Inculturation and Christianity in Africa". *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 2(17), 236-244.
- Kanu I. A. (2016). "Igwebuike as an Igbo-African hermeneutics of globalisation". *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. 2(1), 61-66.
- Lehning, P. (2009). "John Rawls: An Introduction". Cambridge University Press.
- Mill, J. (1987). *Utilitarianism & other Essays*. Ed. Allan Ryan. Penguin Books.



- Olugbemi, V., and Osuji, U. (2021). “Gender Equality and National Development: A Historical Viewpoint” *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Developmental Studies (SGOJAHDS)*. 4(2).
- Osuji, U. (2018). “Evolving Authenticity: A Logical Inquest from Trado- Cultural to Social-Political Ideals” in *Scientia: Plasu Journal of General Studies*, 1, Issues 1.
- Rawls. J. (1971). *Theory of Justice*. Oxford University Press.
- Rawls. J. (1989). *Theory of Justice*. Oxford University Press.
- Rawls. J. (1993). *Political Liberalism*. Columbia University Press.
- Rawls. J. (1996). *Political Liberalism*. Columbia University Press.
- Rawls. J. (2001). *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. Harvard University Press.
- Rawls. J. (2003). *Political Liberalism Expanded*. Columbia University Press.
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (2013). “*Distributive Justice*”,  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justice-distributive/>.