

**RAWLS'S USE AND INTERPRETATION OF REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM
METHODOLOGY: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PRAGMATIC USEFULNESS
OF CRITICAL THEORY.**

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Abstract

In his theories of local and international justice, John Rawls uses reflective equilibrium as his contract methodology. Rawls's use and interpretation of reflective equilibrium methodology, however, raises some fundamental questions, particularly, what can be regarded as the potential of the methodology to achieve the outcome that Rawls purports; or whether Rawls has one theory of justice which he tries to extend to international justice; or whether he has two theories of justice, one at home another abroad. In this paper; I discuss these contentions on the use and interpretation of reflective equilibrium methodology in Rawls theories of local and international justice and argue that Rawls has overemphasized the potential of this methodology as a collective deliberative tool to pursue consensus. Hence, Rawls cannot be claimed to have one theory of justice which he extend to international justice, but two distinct theories of justice one at home another abroad. Hence, under Rawls's interpretation of the methodology, its effectiveness should be judged on basis of its capacity to lead to the claimed outcome.

Key words: Reflective equilibrium, methodology, justice, global justice, consensus.

Résumé

Dans ses théories de justice locale et internationale, John Rawls fait usage de la réflexion équilibrante comme sa méthodologie contractuelle. Néanmoins, l'utilisation et l'interprétation de la réflexion équilibrante chez Rawls suscite des questions fondamentales, plus particulièrement, sur la capacité de la méthodologie proposée de conduire aux résultats escomptés. Aussi, faut-il clarifier si Rawls dispose deux théories de justice, une théorie nationale et une théorie internationale. Dans cet article, l'auteur discute les contentieux qui existent à l'égard de l'utilisation et l'interprétation de la méthodologie de Rawls dans ses théories justice nationale et internationale. L'auteur défend que John Rawls a exagéré sur le potentiel de sa méthodologie comme un outil de délibération pour arriver au consensus. Ainsi, Rawls ne peut pas prétendre avoir une théorie de justice qu'il étend au niveau internationale. L'auteur défend que Rawls a deux théories de justice, une nationale ou locale et l'autre internationale. Et sous l'interprétation de la méthodologie de Rawls, l'efficacité de cette méthodologie doit être jugée sur base de la capacité de cette méthode d'atteindre les résultats escomptés.

Mot Clés : Réflexion équilibrante, méthodologie, justice, justice globale, consensus.

The method of reflective equilibrium is usually resorted to when people are deliberating to make a choice among competing beliefs, principles or rules. John Rawls argues that, from a systematic application of this methodology, people can deliberate and choose right principles of justice, which can work in a local or in an international context of

justice. His *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and *The Law of Peoples* (1999) respectively focus on defending the above claim in the local and in the international contexts of justice. My close analysis of the methodology will, however, demonstrate that the method is weak on a level that makes Rawls's purported results hardly achievable. As a way of evaluating the effectiveness of the methodology, I will critically analyze and discuss Rawls's use and interpretation of the methodology in his theory of justice in local and international contexts. The first part of the analysis will expose Rawls's contractual theory of justice in local and global cases. The second part will explore and scrutinize his contractual method of reflective equilibrium and its use. The third part will critically examine Rawls' interpretation of the methodology and its presumed outcome, and evaluate the method's potential to achieve the goal Rawls purports. The fourth part will extend the discussion to the normative to see whether Rawls has one theory of justice, which he extends to international context of justice, or whether he has two theories of justice one at home and another abroad.

In *A Theory of Justice* (1971, 1999), Rawls introduces his contractual conception of justice. He proceeds by tracing an initial contract form people of a particular society would enter to set up a certain form of government. Having chosen a conception of justice, people concerned are supposed to choose a constitution and a legislature to enact the law. The key issue is how to choose principles of justice on which the basic structure of the government is to rest. Rawls imagines a set of conditions whose role is to ensure that the outcome of the original agreement is just. These conditions are meant to allow people concerned to choose the principles which will assign basic rights and duties, and determine the division of social benefits. Rawls thus formulates an initial and hypothetical situation called "original position", which substantiates the conditions under which the principles of justice are to be chosen (10-11).

In setting up conditions for securing a fair outcome of the process, Rawls first identifies the social benefits, such as just distribution of basic rights and duties, the principles of justice are aimed to achieve. He also assumes compliance with them among all contractors. He secondly designs an initial position, according to which, all contractors are equal in their rights to choose the principles of justice. They are also assumed to be equally and appropriately motivated by the fair and just distribution of social benefits the application of the chosen principles of justice is meant to bring about. He additionally draws the "veil of ignorance", behind which all parties have the same information, and no one has the knowledge of the facts, which would undermine the fairness of an agreement on the terms of distribution of the relevant social benefits. Lastly, he concludes that the terms of organization of the society contractors would choose, among possible principles of justice, would be just and fair for everyone concerned (T.J. 15-7). Such terms are thus taken as the necessary conditions for justice, or in other words, principles of justice.

In *The Law of Peoples* (1999), Rawls expands the aforementioned contractual approach to the realm of international justice. He takes the original position with its veil of ignorance as a model of representation of liberal societies. In the international context of justice, representatives of peoples or of States act on behalf of their various States and make rational choices of principles so as best to protect the interests of those States. Similarly to the context

of local justice, the representatives of States work under the veil of ignorance: they know nothing about the particular circumstances of their own society, its economic power and its strength in comparison with other nations. Nor do they know the size of their territory, the population they represent, the extent of their natural resources, the level of their economic development or any such information. However, they do know that reasonably favorable conditions which make constitutional democracy possible (32-33).

Some features characterize representatives of States and their roles. For instance, they are reasonably and fairly situated as free and equal, and representing rational peoples. They have to deliberate and establish the content of the Law of Peoples (a law governing the basic structure of the relations among peoples). In addition, representatives' deliberations have to proceed in terms of right reasons as restricted by a veil of ignorance. The selection of the principles of the Law of Peoples has to be based on peoples' fundamental interests inspired and guided by a liberal conception of justice (L.P. 33). A liberal conception of justice, in Rawls's view, is defined as one which insists on securing certain rights, liberties and opportunities for all citizens, and takes as a priority values and interests of citizens. It also insists on States to afford adequate means for citizens to take advantages of their rights, freedoms and opportunities (L.P. 57). Rawls assumes that, at the end of the deliberations and all the conditions taken, representatives of peoples or of States would choose and endorse the Law of Peoples.

On the first encounter of Rawls's contract theory, there is a striking observation that the thinker imposes constraints on participants' knowledge, motivation and tasks. Some of those constraints, such as the veil of ignorance, beg a question. In fact, the usefulness of the veil of ignorance and its related constraints are debatable. Rawls argues that the role of these constraints is to ensure fairness of the choice situation for every participant, and thus a fair outcome of the process. The veil of ignorance, claims Rawls, allows contractors to avoid favoring some principles of justice, as it keeps deliberators from accessing any relevant information on their country or on themselves, which would influence their choices (T.J.76). Yet, if we admit that participants are rational agents with proper motivation (unbiased motivation), it remains unclear why they are to be imposed this constraint of the veil of ignorance. In fact, the knowledge of relevant information on the choice which is to be made and possible alternatives is a crucial element to evaluate moral justification of participants' choice. In addition, if the choice is rigged so that it may respond to a certain pre-conceived conception of justice, this would jeopardize the fairness of the outcome and its justification.

Yet, despite these constraints, Rawls seems to be unsatisfied with the appropriateness of the situation from which contractors are to choose principles of justice. In his view, the constraints are only able to secure fairness of the outcome of contractors' choices, but they do not guarantee that whatever principles of justice contractors choose be acceptable (T.J.79). Consequently, he supplements the constraints with the condition of adequacy, which is to apply for any principle which ought to be accepted as a principle of justice. As it will be shown below, the newly added condition of adequacy is to be substantiated through the methodological procedures Rawls proposes in both constructing his theory of justice and also in justifying the outcome of contractors' choices.

In constructing his theory and in seeking for justification of its outcome, Rawls uses **reflective equilibrium** as the contract methodology. Before investigating whether this

methodology achieves the goal Rawls purports, it is important to first define reflective equilibrium. According to Daniels (1996), reflective equilibrium methodology consists in rationally adjusting morally (or non-morally) held beliefs and judgments by seeking coherence among them (22). The method proceeds by isolating a set of beliefs/ judgments with the principles and the rules which govern them. Such belief/judgments are filtered under reflective scrutiny in the light of a presupposed appropriate context of beliefs formation to avoid error. (In Rawls's contract case, this appropriate context of belief formation is accessed according to contractors' confidence in their beliefs at the initial stage of their involvement in the contract). The judgments are then tested for coherence against other moral principles and other background theories such as theories in human sciences (social theories, theories of the nature of human person, the role of morality and justice in society, etc), depending on the subject being investigated. After this process, a particular set of arguments wins, and the moral agent is persuaded that some set of principles or beliefs are more acceptable than the alternatives. At this stage, the reflective equilibrium is reached. The agent can then go on to adjust his previously held moral beliefs, judgments or principles to the newly held moral standard (Ibid).

According to Rawls's use of the methodology, reflective equilibrium in its practice proceeds in two steps, namely, narrow and wide reflective equilibrium. Narrow reflective equilibrium is the first level of deliberation when beliefs and judgments are compared to other beliefs and principles, allowing revision of some of initially held views. Wide reflective equilibrium is the second level of deliberation which consists in testing for coherence and consistency newly held beliefs against various types of moral theories and other theories in human sciences.

Rawls uses the method of reflective equilibrium to construct his contractual theory of justice. He argues that the constraints to the choice situation do not guarantee the adequacy of any chosen principle of justice (T.J 79). In order to guarantee that principles of justice which will be chosen are adequate, the principles should march contractors' considered judgments about justice in reflective equilibrium. In this regard, the condition of adequacy requires that the device of the contract be in reflective equilibrium with the rest of contractors' beliefs about justice. Therefore, the contract theory shows how to determine principles of justice which should be chosen from competing views; but its justification for being so designed to accomplish such a role must be generated from reflective equilibrium, which it seeks to achieve. In other words, according to Rawls's understanding and use of the methodology, reflective equilibrium must work as a device for constructing his contract theory of justice.

Rawls also uses reflective equilibrium to justify the possible outcome of contractors' choice of some principles of justice instead of others. Reflective equilibrium methodology is used as a form of deliberation in which rational agents make choices among competing conceptions and principles of justice. Yet, in Rawls's view, at the level of narrow reflective equilibrium, contractors are only able to determine principles of justice which are best for the case being investigated. But, at this stage, the question about the justification of which set of beliefs about justice should be accepted remains answered. He claims that people might only converge on a common, shared and justified agreement on which set of principles of justice to choose, after the deliberation has passed the scrutiny of wide reflective equilibrium. It is only then that right principles of justice can be adopted with the support of every contractor

(T.J.96). Therefore, in Rawls's view, it is only at the level of wide reflective equilibrium where the contractors would be convinced about the principles of justice, which are justifiable for themselves and for other people.

Wide reflective equilibrium takes the deliberation about the choice of principles of justice to moral level. Though, it can be argued that even previous steps of the deliberation are not performed in moral vacuum, it is evident that, at the stage of wide reflective equilibrium, contractors are looking for *what is right* (what are the right principles, which can march their conception of justice in local or international context). In this perspective, the principles of justice which are to be chosen must be consistent with contractor's moral beliefs and other beliefs about justice in wide reflective equilibrium. It is evident that the principles which are meant to organize the society are fundamentally political. But they must be built on a strong moral basis to win the contractors' support.

Rawls's claim that wide reflective equilibrium leads to a common and shared agreement on which set of principles of justice to choose is highly debatable. In fact, taking wide reflective equilibrium as a state of balance of all beliefs and judgments that are relevant to justice domain after they are tasted for coherence against some background theories in human sciences, one may wonder where the questioning process would stop after the deliberation is extended to testing coherence of principles of justice against different theories in human sciences. Apparently, the process seems to depend on how far contractors are prepared to carry on questioning, and this can take an endless time span. In this perspective, the probability of achieving a common and shared agreement on which set of principles of justice to choose is indeed narrow. Moreover, when taken in the perspective of a collective deliberation, the methodology can lead to a multitude of reflective equilibriums. For instance, if we admit that an individual's judgments can be coherent, such coherence may not be sufficient for a collective decision. For instance, other deliberators might appeal to other intuitive moral judgments, other moral principles, or might consider other facts to be relevant to the decision. This would result in different reflective equilibriums. Consequently, it is unlikely that wide reflective equilibrium necessarily leads contractors to Rawls's claimed common and shared wide reflective equilibrium.

Yet, the reflective equilibrium methodology has been advocated by some scholars, including Rawls himself, as a coherence account of justification, which works in many areas of inquiry, such as ethics and political philosophy. The basic idea for such appraisal is that the method allows us to test various parts of our beliefs system against other beliefs we hold, at the same time verifying coherence among those beliefs against a wide range of views, principles and rules. The process allows revision and refinement of initially held beliefs when they are challenged for consistency. Consequently, when reflective equilibrium is taken as a coherence account of justification, beliefs or judgments are held to be justified after they have stood the scrutiny of narrow reflective equilibrium and have proven to be coherent in wide reflective equilibrium. The question is whether reflective equilibrium leads to a coherentist account of justification. A response to this question deserves a close analysis of the methodology at work.

Rawls's view, contractors are justified for choosing certain principles of justice when these cohere in wide reflective equilibrium (T.J.126). Yet, the idea of coherence has an unclear meaning. Generally, the concept of coherence relates to a system whose elements

stand in mutual relations of consistency (non-contradictory) and some kind of interdependency (giving support to one another) (Peterson, 131). Concretely, a belief A coheres with an antecedent set of beliefs, if A can be inferred from the antecedent set of beliefs (ibid). In other words, a person is justified for holding a belief A only when this belief survives comparison with its competitors through wide reflective equilibrium. Yet, it is not clear why the belief A merits acceptance and other equally coherent beliefs do not. Suppose, for instance, that we have two beliefs B and C, and coherence is to be achieved by revising any of these two beliefs. How can one know which belief should be revised and which resulting equilibrium is justified? It is evident that, for the process to succeed, some beliefs must be taken as working partially foundationally and serving as reference in seeking for consistency with other beliefs. Consequently, what we would have is not solely a coherentist account of justification, but a modest foundational account of justification¹.

An example can shed light to this distinction. Suppose that contractors are to use reflective equilibrium to choose a principle of justice which would govern the State's distribution of healthcare from two competing views. The first view is that healthcare should be distributed according to people's age; and the second is that it should be distributed according to people's needs. Suppose again that, after a close scrutiny of these two held positions of beliefs through reflective equilibrium, the contractors choose the principle that healthcare should be distributed according to people's needs. Nonetheless, it is important to note that distributing healthcare according to age would not necessarily be unjust, as everyone can age and this makes the principle fair for everybody. Nevertheless, contractors who held such belief may change their mind and choose the second principle of distributing healthcare according to people's needs. Such a change, however, is not necessarily a paradigm shift of their previously held beliefs on justice. There is a belief in fairness as a key characteristic of justice which works relatively foundationally to both cases of beliefs mentioned. We cannot have a conception of justice which totally excludes the basic idea of fairness. From this perspective, reflective equilibrium methodology does not solely lead to coherentist account of justification; but it is also compatible with a modest foundationalism. Therefore, it can be argued against Rawls that his interpretation of reflective equilibrium methodology as exclusively coherentist account of justification cannot be fully justified.

Rawls's interpretation of reflective equilibrium methodology changed through time². This is observable throughout some of his works. In his *A Theory of Justice* (1971, 1999), Rawls initially claimed that people's beliefs about justice are justified when they cohere in "wide" reflective equilibrium, and the process leads to a shared conception of justice (127). In *Political Liberalism* (1993), Rawls changed his mind. His change of view came about due to what he calls "the burdens of judgments", according to which, there is a complexity of structure and interaction of people's beliefs about justice, which intervene in peoples' accounts of justice. Due to the complexity, uncertainty and variation in people's experience, people's reason, when freely exercised, is led to an unavoidable pluralism of comprehensive

¹According to foundationalism, beliefs are justified if they are inferable from a set of basic beliefs which are directly justified. This is the arguments M. Timmons (1987) supports in his article "Foundationalism and the structure of moral justification", *Ethics*, pp: 595-609.

²This view was supported by Prof. Alan Thomas (2006) in his book, *Value and Context: The Nature of Moral and Political Knowledge*. P 201.

moral and philosophical views. Such an unavoidable pluralism would make Rawls's claimed common understanding of justice as fairness hardly reachable (P.L.99). He then abandoned his previous conclusive claim that the use of wide reflective equilibrium necessarily leads contractors to a common and shared conception of justice.

In his effort to face the challenge of reasonable pluralism, Rawls restructured his concept of justice as fairness into a "freestanding" political conception of justice in which people with divergent comprehensible views on justice may agree in an "overlapping consensus" (P.L.118). However, it is important to note that, in Rawls's view, the public justification of this political conception of justice does not appeal to philosophical and religious views which appear in the comprehensive doctrines, which form Rawls's concept of overlapping consensus (P.L.121). If then we consider, as Daniels proposes, the process of working back and forth among the key shared views in the public, democratic culture and other different features of the political conception of justice as a political reflective equilibrium, there would be no convergence on a shared wide reflective equilibrium, which contains the political conception of justice. The political reflective equilibrium is not a shared wide reflective equilibrium, as it avoids any appeal to a broad range of beliefs (such as philosophical and religious beliefs), which would have to be included in case of wide reflective equilibrium. Yet, for the case at stake, contractors' justification for adopting such a political conception of justice, as articulated in political reflective equilibrium, would have to incorporate it within a wide reflective equilibrium, which would include their own comprehensive moral, political and religious doctrines. In Rawls's view, such a conception of justice would count as a reasonable view for them, only when it coheres with their other held beliefs (philosophical and religious beliefs) in wide reflective equilibrium. Nonetheless, Rawls does not accept any appeal to philosophical and religious beliefs as possible tools leading to overlapping consensus. Thus, Rawls's notion of "freestanding" political conception of justice does not necessarily lead to overlapping consensus through wide reflective equilibrium. Any deliberation based on Rawls's freestanding conception of justice would face some challenges linked to the exclusion of philosophical and religious beliefs. Consequently, there is an apparent gap between Rawls's interpretation of reflective equilibrium methodology and its assumed outcome.

In addition, Rawls' interpretation of the method of reflective equilibrium overemphasizes and idealizes human rationality. In fact, his interpretation of the methodology assumes a certain predictability of the outcome of the deliberation which, in his view, must end with a shared agreement on some principles of justice. Yet, if it is possible for contractors to have divergent departing points of view in their beliefs about justice, it is also possible for the deliberation to produce different reflective equilibriums. Rawls assumes that critical pressure must produce convergence among all contractors on some beliefs about justice. If human rationality was predictable in this way, it would not be so difficult for people to reconcile their views whenever there are divergence views over an issue of shared interests. Real life cases testify that critical analysis does not necessarily lead to an agreement or to any predictable results. Hence, Rawls's interpretation of the methodology seems to give too much credence to human rationality, looking at the deliberation as moving in one direction towards a certain conception of justice. Given the possibility of divergent departing points in contractors'

beliefs about justice and the complexity of human rationality, the predictability of any possible outcome of the process remains uncertain.

Having discussed Rawls's use and interpretation of the methodology, we may now scrutinize its extension to international justice. Rawls's extension of reflective equilibrium methodology to international justice begs a fundamental question. Given the contextual dissimilarities in the local and global cases of justice, one may wonder whether Rawls has one theory of justice which he tries to extend to the international context of justice or whether he is advocating two theories of justice, one at home and another abroad. A close look on the contract contextual dissimilarities in local and global justice can help us scrutinize this issue.

Though the contract situation in the case of international justice has many similar points with the one for local justice, especially in the constraints it imposes to contractors, it also incarnates some dissimilarities. For instance, Rawls proposes an egalitarian theory of local justice and shift to non-egalitarianism theory of global justice. In fact, in the context of global justice, equality is not a characteristic of peoples or States participating in the contract, but a measure of states' representatives' fitness in the constraints of the contract situation. In addition, while individuals are the subjects of justice in local context, peoples or States are at the center of international justice. One may wonder whether what individuals owe to each other in the context of local justice is comparable to what States owe to each other in the context of international justice.

Moreover, political and economic well-being of all members of the society is the goal of local justice. But global justice focuses on securing just local institutions so that they may secure the well-being of their members. In other words, the well-being of local individuals is not the direct concern of international justice. In fact, in Rawls's view, international justice requires institutions designed to meet basic needs in societies where this can contribute to domestic justice, but not in societies where it does not (L.P 57). He adds that "there should be certain provision for mutual assistance between peoples in times of famine and drought and, where it is feasible, as it should be, provisions for ensuring that in all reasonably developed liberal societies people's basic needs are met" (L.P. 59). Without interpreting Rawls's words as discriminatory against some societies, it is clear that his theory of global justice looks first at how well local institutions are performing in term of justice, and any assistance to local individuals is measured in terms of its contribution to enhancing local justice.

Owing to these differences, it is observable that Rawls shifted from an individual-centered egalitarian theory of local justice to a non-egalitarian and institution-centered theory of global justice. In Rawls's view, domestic justice is not an end in itself, but it exists for the sake of securing the well-being of human persons who are at the center of moral concern. The natural duty of establishing just domestic institutions is a duty owed to them (T.J. 115). Yet, in the case of global justice, a just domestic regime is portrayed as an end in itself. Global justice does not evaluate just domestic institutions in terms of how well local individuals are doing in terms of economic well-being. But on how it implements a liberal conception of justice, which, in Rawls's view, comprises some key elements, namely, securing certain rights, liberties and opportunities for all citizens, giving priority to such political orientation over other values and interests, and affording adequate means for all citizens to take advantage of their rights, freedoms and opportunities (L.P. 57). Therefore, while local justice takes the individual as the ultimate goal of moral concern, global justice seeks establishing just local

institutions whose role is to create an adequate local political environment, which can increase the individuals' potentials of achieving economic well-being.

Rawls did not propose a theory of global justice whose role would include dealing with existing global economic discrepancies. Yet, it is obvious that, in case contractors approve the law of peoples in the form Rawls proposes, the question of economic inequalities would remain unresolved. Citizens from poor countries would still wonder which substantial change global justice is offering them as they would still be struggling with economic poverty. According to Thomas W. Pogge, any plausible conception of global justice should be sensitive to international social and economic inequalities (196). In his view, establishing just domestic institutions is not enough, especially when individuals are not able to afford basic necessities such as food, medical care, shelter, education, clothing, etc. Pogge rejects the claim that countries are poor just because they are governed by corrupt and undemocratic institutions. He argues that poverty itself brings about corruptibility and vulnerability to external manipulations (207). Therefore, any adequate theory of global justice should take into account global economic inequalities.

An alternative egalitarian law of peoples would have more potential to win contractors' support through wide reflective equilibrium. In fact, Rawls's non-egalitarian theory of global justice seems to stand the scrutiny of the deliberation just because peoples' representatives are acting sight blinded with the veil of ignorance. They have no information about the economic discrepancies which exist among represented States and how economically well or bad represented peoples are. Yet, Rawls claims that representatives of States are representing the fundamental interests of peoples (L.P. 54). One may wonder which fundamental interests of peoples they are representing while they do not have any relevant information about the peoples or the States they represent. Rawls assumes that peoples are exclusively interested in living under just and liberal institutions, and from this sole motivation, delegates would endorse his non-egalitarian law of peoples. It is highly probable that any alternative egalitarian law of peoples, as Thomas W. Pogge proposes³, would win delegates' support over Rawls's proposal. Obviously, people are interested in having higher rather than lower average standards of living. Delegates of States would also be interested in improving the economic well-being of the peoples presented. Thus, any inclusion of egalitarianism to Rawls' theory of global justice might lead to a different conclusion than Rawls's own proposal.

In conclusion, in view of the contextual differences between Rawls's contract theory of local justice and global justice, it is hardly defensible to say that he still has one theory of justice which he extends to international context of justice. There are some fundamental characteristics of justice in local context such as egalitarianism, whose absence in his theory of global justice makes a substantial change. It can then be supported that Rawls has two theories of justice, one at home and another abroad. As has been argued, the method of reflective equilibrium which he uses as his contract methodology is fragile. It fails to provide

³ In his article "*An Egalitarian Law of Peoples*", Thomas W. Pogge proposes an egalitarian theory of global justice whose role would include dealing with existing global social and economic inequalities. In incorporating an egalitarian component to his theory, he designs a global institutional arrangement called Global Resource Tax (GRT), which would use some principles to collect financial means and redistribute them in favor of present and future global poor.

adequate assurance about which belief should be revised or replaced with other beliefs when deliberating. Additionally, the method seems to open the deliberation to an endless questioning process. Though Rawls tries to give an interpretation of the methodology as leading to a coherentist account of justification, rejecting any other alternative, his view is not fully defensible as the method is also compatible with modest foundationalism. In my view, the method involves an information burden which is hardly achievable. It also assumes a certain outlook on human rationality whose applicability remains highly contested. In this regard, Rawls' use and interpretation of the methodology overemphasized some of its aspects. The effectiveness of this method, which would be measured through its potential to reach its presumed outcome, remained unproven.

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