

[This is a further few paragraphs on the issue of redistributive justice. We excised this selection because we believed Hass had already made his point. - Robert Von Stricker Beresford]

One of the big problems of Rawls' and the modern liberals approach to the state, and one that's at the centre of the debate between Rawls and Nozick is the approach to "justice." Nozick favours an "entitlement" view: human beings are entitled to what they have right now. Rawls favours an historical view: redistribution must occur to make amends for the past. I tend to side with Nozick, but not entirely. As with everything else, these two concepts should not be accepted as perfectly immutable and right. The past has already happened, we can't do anything about that. We cannot remedy things from the distant past. We can try to remedy things that have just happened, or happened within current lifetimes. But, for practicality's sake, we must at some point forgive most of the terrible things that have happened. The sins of the father should not be visited upon the son. Nor should they be visited upon the government. That's not to say we should completely forget terrible shit. There is nothing wrong with commemorating through (publicly funded) monuments or museums. But that's where it has to stop. Punishments and compensations for stuff that happened ages ago, though it produced the current situation, will not get us anywhere. In the words of a girl who I once e-stalked, "it's in the past."

We have to draw a difficult moral line – a statute of limitations as it were – where that 'past' begins. We have to draw it somewhere. All societies must do this. But this is not a question that can be answered by abstract appeals to 'reason' or 'justice' or what have you. It's a tough moral call, like all the other tough moral calls we, as human beings, are forced to make on a daily basis. At some point, forgiveness must come into play, or civilization will degenerate into one of those Old West rancher feuds. "Forgiving attempts the seemingly impossible, to undo what has been done, and...it succeeds in making a new beginning where beginnings seemed to have become no longer possible" (The Philosopher 2005, 58).

Redistributive justice is a conceivably never-ending process of redress for historical wrongs. It

must be limited by time, and it must be limited by our principles: life, human historical experience, moderation, prudence, and so forth. I do not, in anyway, advocate Nozick's complete and utter rejection of redistribution, given what I think of human beings and of the nature of government, I could not possibly reject redistribution outright. I don't think we can ever avoid it either. But Justice is a human concept, like everything else, imposed upon a world that predates humanity. Should we not try anyway? Of course we should try, but it depends who we try. Attempting to achieve anything (Justice, Equality, Freedom, What Have You) "at all costs," or "above everything else" is only destructive. "At all costs" is always destructive. And we can't aim for perfection. We must always aim for "better" but never for "best."

Elites, whether merely elites, or elites with input from non-elites, will always have to make these decisions about justice. They will be unfair to some, and way too beneficial to others. People will be upset with the decisions. This is the nature of things. I have never read or experienced anything that suggests that unfairness can ever truly be avoided (despite Rawls' concept of "justice as fairness"). The way we, as a society, mediate this is through our institutions. So we need to design realistic institutions which "minimize the mean and maximize the generous" for the society while respecting actual individual's rights – and their entitlements – as much as possible.