

## Theoretical Foundations for Social Justice Ethics in Social Policy

by John Rawls and Robert Nozick

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### Abstract

The transformation of social welfare and social policies requires an understanding of the philosophical principles and fundamental concepts to guide the direction of social welfare and welfare policies toward the goal of social justice. This article aims to examine the intellectual concepts of justice as proposed by John Rawls and Robert Nozick. Comparative analysis was performed to reflect the differences and similarities of the two concepts. Rawls' conception represents the social democratic ideology, while Nozick's perspective represents the new libertarianism ideology. Utilizing document analysis, Rawls' principles of justice emphasize two central tenets: (1) the principle of equal fundamental liberties for all individuals and (2) the difference principle, which advocates for benefiting the least advantaged in society. Rawls' theory posits that societal inequalities can be rectified by redistributing economic benefits to the disadvantaged. On the other hand, Nozick's principles of justice include (1) the principle of just acquisition, stating that resources must be acquired fairly, and (2) the principle of just transfer, which entails voluntary exchanges without state intervention. Both ideologies prioritize individual liberties and oppose utilitarianism, emphasizing the importance of justice and its outcomes. These perspectives underscore the underlying philosophical foundations and divergent policy paradigms based on contrasting worldviews.

**Keywords:** Justice, John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Ethics, Social policy

### Introduction

Challenging questions often posed when people face critical problems and strive to solve them at a societal level include whether the government should be the first-handed instrument used to solve problems, how they should find the solution, whether it is effective, to what extent the responsibility should be given to the government sector, and whether allocating this responsibility to the government may actually lead to more problems. In contrast, questions are also asked as to whether that instrument is the responsibility of the people in terms of taking care of themselves and sharing the responsibilities with all sectors, how much risk or impact they can accept with minimum assistance or interference from state power, how the resources are distributed for solving or responding to the problems and needs of the people, how much the shares could be, and what criterion is used as a reference. The resource distribution is always subject to conflict (Kelsen, 1975, cited in Pakeerut, 2011, p. 331). These questions are all worth careful consideration as they are embedded with different political, philosophical, and economic ideologies.

The global social issue that must be addressed is inequality, which leads to injustice. In Thailand, inequality ranks first among 20 countries globally (Jitsuchon, 2015). This significant statistic indicates that inequality in Thailand is closely linked to the crucial variable of social injustice, reflecting

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societal unfairness. The establishment of a justice society, often referred to as a fair or equitable society, is a recurring theme. Justice or fairness is not only a concept but also a principle, means, and ends within itself (Rawls, 1999). Justice is also metaphorically likened to the core of social welfare and welfare work (Nontapatumadul, 2022; Aroonjit, 2014).

Understanding the concept of justice can either be straightforward or challenging. Due to its multifaceted complexity, justice cannot be indicated or defined (Tejapira, 2013; Pakeerut, 2011). It also depends on societal norms, legal principles, moral ethics, social conditions, economic factors, technical definitions, practices, time, geography, social conditions, and individual perspectives (Nelson, Palonsky, & Mccathy, 2010). The concept of justice is as old as politics itself. Justice is fundamental to political science, ethics, law, and philosophy. It has also been interpreted differently. Some perceive justice as a virtue, while others equate it with equality. What may be fair for one person may not necessarily be the same for another (Pandey and Jaiswal, 2020). Scholars not only attempt to define justice but also propose various theories related to it. Justice seems appropriate in one context but may vary in another. Therefore, the study, interpretation, and reflection on the definition of justice or fairness represent the exploring of the value of human life from different perspectives. Everyone's viewpoint may differ, but all aim to uncover the value of life and dignity by utilizing wisdom and reasoning as their principles. However, human lives do not effortlessly and consistently align. Conflicts of values may arise in human thoughts and actions. These conflicts entail dual or multiple disputing feelings that may lead to decision-making challenges (Nuremram, 2002). For instance, assigning value to justice reflects the diverse concepts of fairness among scholars from the past to the present. Ultimately, thoughts and actions require ethical considerations to reflect on the valuation of justice or fairness according to the fundamental perspectives of individuals.

Social justice has been widely discussed over the past 200 years. Scholars advocating for ethical theories based on duties or significant regulations of individual justice include John Rawls, the author of "Theory of Justice," published in 1971. Rawls' work challenged the utilitarianism paradigm, sparking extensive debates and discussions. Three years later, Robert Nozick, Rawls's colleague at Harvard University (Schaefer, 2008), responded directly to Rawls's ideas through his work "Anarchy, State, and Utopia" in 1975. Nozick's notable contribution, often referred to as the Entitlement Theory, provided a contrasting perspective based on natural rights, mainly influenced by Locke's ideas (Salahuddin, 2018) within the framework of libertarianism. Both Rawls and Nozick have been acclaimed as leading contemporary political philosophers of the 20th century. Rawls constructed his theory on the foundation of Kantian moral principles, which underpin the concept of the welfare state. In contrast, Nozick developed his theory based on Locke's natural rights philosophy, emphasizing new libertarian ideals to challenge Rawls's ideas. Both theories significantly influence the understanding of public policy (Chaiyaporn, 2022), serving as frameworks for shaping public and social policies.

The transformation of social welfare, social security, and social policies requires a thorough investigation and understanding of the philosophy, ideology, and political framework of society, politics, and economics. This transformation is essential to discern the direction of change or reform in social welfare and social security towards the goal of social justice. The underlying perspectives of ethical principles diverge in social policies. It is necessary to understand ideologies, such as Social Democracy, which broadly interprets social welfare and emphasizes comprehensive benefits, and an understanding of Neoliberalism or the New Right, as a significant global influence (Nontapatumadul, 2022). This article, therefore, aims to study the ethical concepts of John Rawls and Robert Nozick and to analyze and compare both perspectives. John Rawls represents the social democratic ideology, while

Robert Nozick represents the new liberal ideology. By examining related literature, this article presents examples illustrating similarities and differences, leading to different perspectives on social policy planning.

## **1. Theoretical foundations for social justice ethics in social policy**

Theoretical foundations in social policy on the ethics of John Rawls and Robert Nozick, including arguments based on ethical foundations between both perspectives, are detailed as follows:

### **1.1 Ethics based on the concept of justice by John Rawls**

The theory of John Rawls has gained significant attention in academia. Over the past several years, Rawls has proposed a theory of justice rooted in the traditional social contract theory, originally proposed by John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant, who rejected utilitarianism that aimed at the greatest sum of satisfaction. Rawls' theory prioritizes equality and fairness, acknowledging the differences among individuals. He asserts that individuals should mutually agree on the starting point, known as the original position, where the veils of ignorance shroud the knowledge of one's characteristics, such as gender, economic status, social class, ethnicity, beliefs, religion, and politics (Rawls, 1999). Citizens can have choices within a systematically established set of criteria. These criteria are constructed from what Rawls refers to as the "original position of equality" concept, which leads to the formation of a social contract. This contract is based on two principles: 1) The Principle of Equal Liberty, which entails providing equal fundamental liberties for all individuals, and 2) The Difference Principle, which permits inequalities in society and the economy only if they benefit everyone equally (Equal Opportunity), and provisions of those benefits are for the least advantaged individuals in society (the Least Advantaged). Rawls believes that to address natural inequalities, a society must prioritize the primary benefits to those who are economically disadvantaged.

John Rawls argued that caring for the most disadvantaged is not merely a societal duty but a moral imperative that must be enacted through fair institutional structures. Rawls thus emphasizes the significance of welfare extensively to enhance the capabilities and opportunities of those who benefit the least in society. The welfare distribution enables them to attain equal potential and abilities to seize opportunities in the same way as others. The state is responsible for establishing a welfare system that grants social welfare as a universal entitlement to ensure equal opportunities or social status for everyone (Santikul, 2020), thereby striving for egalitarianism in society.

### **1.2 Ethics based on the concept of justice by Robert Nozick**

The concept proposed by Robert Nozick acknowledges inequality as a necessity within a market economy system. He contends that individuals should receive rewards appropriate to their differing abilities, which is a system that must remain free from state intervention (Iatridis, 1994). Each person has the right to live their own life as they wish without interference while simultaneously respecting the rights of others. These rights include 1) the right to non-interference, 2) the right to property acquired fairly, 3) the right to make contracts, and 4) the right to enforce contracts (Koven, 2015). These principles must always be considered.

Based on these grounds, Nozick thus disagrees with providing welfare for any specific group within society funded by taxes imposed on another group. Such a practice is unfair. Delegating governmental responsibilities for service provision to citizens is seen as over-empowering the state,

potentially leading to inefficiency (Pandey & Jaiswal, 2020). Consequently, Nozick agrees with the concept of the Minimal State.

The concept of fairness in Robert Nozick's theory of distributive justice comprises two conditions (Koven, 2015): 1) Justice in initial holding refers to whether resources are initially acquired in a just manner, meaning whether the acquisition of resources for generating wealth occurs fairly (e.g., without theft). 2) Justice in transfer relates to whether resources are acquired through voluntary exchanges in the market or whether the individuals providing them do so willingly. If both conditions are met, it can be concluded that there is justice in the distribution of benefits. The state cannot legitimately seize property without consent from the rightful owner according to principles of distributive justice, which dictate that any distribution of resources to society for charitable purposes or any other benefits must occur through voluntary exchanges with the willing consent of individuals. Even though inequalities and disparities may arise, they are deemed acceptable if people exchange freely and with willing consent.

### **1.3 Arguments on ethics based on the concept of justice by John Rawls and Robert Nozick**

Rawls prioritizes the optimization of benefits for the individuals who receive the least benefits. He agrees with redistributive policies and comprehensive welfare provision as the duties of the state and views the state as the best solution for rectifying inequalities by redistributing resources. However, according to Nozick's perspective, individuals do not primarily seek the best for those who receive the least benefits from the state. Instead, they desire basic welfare guaranteed to ensure a decent quality of life. They also seek freedom without state interference. As the size of the state increases, its power and control over citizens grow. Consequently, individual freedoms diminish. A minimal state, therefore, is preferable (Wuttichai, 2022), as it maximizes individual freedoms, aiming to afford citizens full liberty.

The endorsement of policies, which is aimed at the redistribution of resources to ensure comprehensive welfare benefits, particularly for marginalized groups in society, and support for the state in resource allocation under Rawlsian principles, has been contested by Nozick. Nozick argues that agreeing with such principles would entail a higher tax burden for everyone. Individuals would be compelled to contribute to a system whereby the state redistributes resources according to its post hoc vision. This contribution may not necessarily be fair or genuinely beneficial to society. It also disregards the consent of individuals' preferences (Pandey and Jaiswal, 2020). It is also considered unfair (Koven, 2015) due to their violation of fundamental principles for short-term gains, causing long-term societal damage and infringing individual rights. Acceptance of such infringements implies a tacit endorsement of their perpetuation, potentially leading to the acceptance of unfair practices.

Nozick argues that economic inequality does not necessarily cease or vanish within society, even when resources are distributed equally. Those who work diligently and utilize their abilities continue to work within the societal framework, while those who remain unemployed or show reluctance continue in their behavior. Economic inequality reemerges within society (Pandey and Jaiswal, 2020). Consequently, Nozick disfavors social welfare systems. The state primarily assumes the responsibility of tax collection and resource allocation or service provision to the people, especially if it prioritizes the social disadvantage over others within society.

Rawls rebuts Nozick's notion that adhering strictly to individual rights is excessive. Rawls argues that society does not exist solely to affirm the pre-existing rights of individuals in isolation but rather as a collective endeavor where everyone strives for a better life within the shared societal framework (Yezzi, 1986). Therefore, the concept of justice encompasses setting conditions for fair

social cooperation. Individuals who are equal in freedom and rationality agree upon conditions from the original position, which involves ignorance. This rational veil leads to reaching agreements on social cooperation by establishing a relatively neutral starting point. In this way, both principles of justice fulfill the task of formulating a social contract.

Rawls and Nozick also disagree regarding the significance of naturally acquired assets and socially advantageous circumstances that afford individuals disparate advantages. From Rawls' ethical standpoint, there is no justification for why individuals should be entitled to more benefits simply because they possess innately acquired assets, are luckier, or benefit from socially advantageous circumstances. Rawls contends that accepting this concept would lead to an acceptance of the principle of difference or the second principle of justice to a greater extent. Conversely, Nozick sees no reason why individuals should not have a right to possess their naturally acquired assets, such as being born into wealthy families or reaping benefits from socially advantageous circumstances, e.g., individuals engaging in commerce and growing rich through the sale of goods or provision of services. The individual's economic growth meets market demands and aligns with prevailing societal conditions. On the other hand, those with fewer or no assets might feel unfortunate, which does not necessarily entail injustice (Yezzi, 2020). The foundational concepts of both thus differ.

Nozick's conceptual framework has been critiqued theoretically as his foundational principles render him an advocate of libertarianism. He also sought to separate the state from politics and the people over which the state holds no control of authority. Furthermore, he has been criticized for being indifferent to the suffering of others (Pandey and Jaiswal, 2020). The rationale behind this critique is that poverty management is the state's responsibility. It is argued that the state should act to break the cycle of suffering, ensuring that the people do not suffer.

## **2. The comparative analysis of frameworks between John Rawls and Robert Nozick**

The frameworks proposed by Rawls and Nozick exhibit both similarities and distinctions as follows:

### **2.1 Similarities of frameworks between John Rawls and Robert Nozick**

Although the perspectives on justice by Rawls and Nozick present contrasting arguments, there are notable similarities in their frameworks as follows:

Firstly, both Rawls and Nozick emphasize the preservation of basic fairness principles in their theories, notably the principle of preserving individual liberties (Salahuddin, 2018), prioritizing the importance of universal freedom for all individuals. That freedom cannot be violated before considering other principles.

Secondly, both philosophers diverge from certain aspects of the utilitarian principle (Gališanka, 2019), particularly in sacrificing the benefits of the minority for the satisfaction of the majority and claiming ethical concerns (Santikul, 2020). Maximizing overall satisfaction for the majority may result in suffering, sacrifice, and burden-bearing by certain groups of people (Rawls, 1999) without genuinely addressing individual differences.

Thirdly, Rawls and Nozick acknowledge that their theoretical speculations may have practical implications for justice or fairness in human nature at a low level (Pandey and Jaiswal, 2020), as individuals tend to act according to their desires.

**Table 1** Comparability between the frameworks of John Rawls and Robert Nozick

| Similarities                              | John Rawls and Robert Nozick  |
|---|---|
| Major principles                          | The principle of preserving freedom is paramount, with no individual capable of transgressing it.                           |
| Disagreement                              | The utilitarian ideology aims to maximize benefits for the majority, albeit at the expense of disadvantage to the minority. |
| Awareness of the attributes of the theory | The theory is merely a prediction that may not affect the true nature of humanity in the natural world.                     |

Source: the author's analysis

## 2.2 Distinctions of frameworks between John Rawls and Robert Nozick

The frameworks proposed by Rawls and Nozick differ as follows:

Point 1: Rawls' conception of justice asserts that everyone possesses inherent rights akin to freedom. The control of inequality is permissible if it benefits the most disadvantaged individuals in society. Such control compensates for inequalities (Sari, 2020). Conversely, Nozick argues that fair exchange aligns with the moral virtues of diligence, industriousness, and individual effort, culminating in rights to property ownership and inheritance (Nozick, 1973). Those rights characterize absolute ownership derived from individual creation.

Point 2: Rawls' theory emphasizes fundamental principles of equal basic freedoms, equal opportunities, and the principle of difference. Rawls rationalizes that societal inequalities arise only if the disadvantaged group benefits the most. In contrast, Nozick's entitlement theory emphasizes the acquisition and transfer of property, highlighting individuals' rights to acquire and transfer property freely, leading to fair exchanges through voluntary transactions.

Point 3: Rawls's conception emphasizes the significant role of the state in fostering societal justice. Rawls advocates for a welfare state to address social inequalities. In contrast, Nozick argues that the state should primarily safeguard fundamental rights by considering any form of wealth redistribution as unfair and a violation of individual rights.

Point 4: Rawls advocates for an equal distribution of resources and opportunities to benefit those disadvantaged in society. Conversely, Nozick underscores the significance of individual rights and liberties. He contends that individuals inherently possess rights to their work. Any redistribution of resources constitutes a fundamental infringement upon individual rights.

Point 5: Rawls's framework relies on tax-based mechanisms to ensure fairness in resource distribution (Pantasee (translator), 2003), while Nozick's perspective places confidence in market mechanisms to establish justice or fairness. Nozick posits that an efficient market system can administer effective welfare provisions (Aroonjit, 2014).

Point 6: Rawls prioritizes the state's provision of social welfare, believing that the state can comprehensively aid in alleviating the various hardships the people face. He contends that welfare states can effectively mitigate societal inequalities. Conversely, Nozick opposes state-driven welfare as any interventions infringe on individual liberties. He suggests that the state may exploit welfare to consolidate political power, aggravating societal inequality.

Point 7: Rawls perceives property rights as a societal construct that should be controlled by state regulation to ensure fairness. He claims that individuals lack inherent, absolute property rights and urges for the distribution of property beneficial to society. Conversely, Nozick asserts the fundamental nature of property rights, arguing that individuals possess inviolable property rights. The state intervention, instead, endorses universal welfare provision. (Nozick, 1999)

Point 8: Rawls' theory prioritizes the overall well-being of society. Everyone should prioritize benefiting those who are most disadvantaged in society. On the other hand, Nozick prioritizes individual rights and liberties, arguing that individuals have the right to pursue their benefits and that society should not interfere with individuals' choices.

Point 9: The outcomes of Rawls' principle of justice as fairness or equality contrast with Nozick's (Santikul, 2020). It posits that equality entails quantitative fairness. Although fairness may not strictly indicate quantitative equality, it ensures that individuals have equal opportunities.

**Table 2** Distinctions of the frameworks between John Rawls and Robert Nozick

| Distinctions               | John Rawls  | Robert Nozick  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Justice and fairness       | Benefits must be provided to those most disadvantaged in society to redress inherent inequalities.  | The exchange of fairness based on individual capabilities leads to the acquisition of property ownership rights by consent.  |
| The focus of the principle | The foundational principles of equality and diversity benefit marginalized individuals within society.  | The principle of acquisition and transfer of property rights freely occurs through voluntary exchanges.  |
| State's role               | The state's crucial role in fostering justice through providing welfare to the people cultivates social equity.                                       | The state's responsibility to safeguard and uphold fundamental rights is essential. The state's redistribution of wealth is construed as infringing upon personal freedoms and equity. |
| Resource distribution      | Resource distribution is the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities to benefit marginalized individuals within the societal framework. | The lack of support for resource distribution is considered a violation of individual rights, as individuals inherently possess rights to their intellectual output.                   |
| Mechanics for justice      | Tax system mechanism  | Market system mechanism  |
| Social welfare perspective | Emphasizing the significance of social welfare, the state endeavors to comprehensively alleviate the various hardships the people face.               | The state's welfare provision is regarded as violating individual freedom.   |
| Rights of property         | The entitlement to property constitutes a societal  | Property rights are considered fundamental and inherent.   |

| Distinctions        | John Rawls  | Robert Nozick   |
|---------------------|---|---|
|                     | framework warranting regulation by the state. Individuals inherently lack absolute entitlements to property. Distribution should be arranged for the collective societal benefit. | Individuals possess absolute property rights. The state lacks the authority to intervene or infringe upon these rights. |
| Prioritization      | Focus on society  | Focus on individuals  |
| Ethical consequence | Equality and equity in justice  | Equality of justice   |

Source: The author's analysis

### 3. The foundation of transforming social welfare programs and social policies

The foundation of ideas in transforming social welfare and social policy requires understanding the fundamental concepts of social and economic foundations. This understanding leads to the goal of social justice. Prioritizing and recognizing the benefits of welfare in any form will add value to the welfare concept. The state must identify the responsibilities of welfare. Social welfare should be based on a consensus of political, economic, and social ideologies, as it can reflect the principles, formats, characteristics, and fundamental welfare mechanisms according to real-life conditions. It should be combined with considerations of appropriateness, aligning with social contexts in various dimensions.

To create a clearer understanding of the application, The author would like to provide the following examples. Suppose we accept and desire social policies that focus on providing social welfare to the people, primarily benefiting disadvantaged groups in society to create social justice. In that case, we must accept the burden of higher tax rates. The government then can manage the expenditure incurred from the necessity of providing social welfare, such as redistributing resources to provide welfare to the unemployed homeless. The state will determine the tax rate to collect from working people. The more they work hard and earn, the more taxes they will have to pay proportionately. As can be seen in the welfare states in Denmark, Norway, and Finland, which greatly prioritize welfare for the people, citizens must pay high taxes, resulting in a high proportion of income from taxes, ranging from 37-41% of GDP (Na Ranong, 2014; Chaimongkol Suprom-in, cited in Santikul, 2020). If Thailand transformed into a welfare state, the people must accept and agree to higher tax rates to achieve comprehensive welfare policies that benefit the underprivileged. This action aligns with Rawls' fundamental ethical theory. However, Thai people cannot accept the high tax rates imposed by the state because they see that the tax they must give to the state is their income earned and exchanged according to the abilities and efforts of each individual. Therefore, imposing high tax rates is considered unfair. Thai people can only accept social policies prioritizing basic welfare as necessary for everyone. Acceptance of the policy depends on reciprocal exchanges in the market system, or what is known as welfare in the market system, such as working and receiving benefits from social security, purchasing health insurance, and so on. This is akin to accepting the fundamental ethical theory of Nozick, which undoubtedly leads to different foundations of ethical theory and thus affects the formulation of other social policy directions.

Considerations for the transformation of social policies involving various components may be considered. An exemplary case in Thailand is the health policy, which has undergone significant changes, from the "30 Baht to Cure All Diseases" initiative to the current "Gold Card" system. The

transformation has faced considerable criticism and academic scrutiny regarding its impacts. This health insurance policy in Thailand reflects an explicit state welfare provision aligning with Rawls' concept of social democracy, emphasizing welfare state provisions and healthcare as a fundamental right of the people. This policy positively impacts society by improving public health, assisting low-income households, and supporting non-working household members (Na Ranong, Wongmontha & Na Ranong, 2006). The mortality rate of children and infants in rural areas decreased, while income and savings were indirectly inclined (Puey Ungphakorn, Institute for Economic Research, 2017). However, some data reflect the reality of Thai society, indicating that the tax revenue may not sufficiently support comprehensive welfare policies (Tachotiusanee, 2023). This shortcoming is caused by the low tax payment at 16-17% of the GDP (Na Ranong, 2014; Chaimongkol Suprom-in, cited in Santikul, 2020). The country is also experiencing an aging society and rising healthcare costs due to advancements in medical technology, leading to the higher cost of healthcare (Na Ranong, Wongmontha, Na Ranong, 2006), inadequacy compared to health expenditure and efficiency (Puey Ungphakorn Institute for Economic Research, 2017), decline in healthcare service quality (Na Ranong, 2014), corruption in the procurement of medical equipment (Thai PBS, 2020), and so on. Due to the impacts mentioned above, many sectors have proposed changing the primary health insurance program back to one that only helps the poor or disadvantaged groups (Na Ranong, Wongmontha & Na Ranong, 2006). Changing social policy regarding the healthcare system should be considered appropriate and aligned with the reality of society and the economy in the present era. This concept is based on the Nozick's neo-liberalism. The country's healthcare system may be adjusted to take the form of health welfare in which the people must be actively responsible for their health expenses through various savings funds or by contributing to healthcare service costs. In the case of disadvantaged groups or those unable to afford healthcare expenses, public and private sectors of society will have a role in aiding and care, as well as in promoting the purchase of health insurance by the public to establish a foundation of health security for themselves and their families.

These different political ideologies, theories, or principles lead to different outcomes in policy and practice, each with advantages and limitations. Rawls' concept has the advantage that social welfare is considered a basic social right that citizens are entitled to as it provides people with comprehensive life assurance and helps to alleviate the poverty of the people (Neuhaus, 1979 cited in Petprasert, 2003). However, the limitation of this concept may lead to interference with the liberty of the people and distract the mechanisms of the free market (Baldock, 1999). The state needs to allocate a high budget, and welfare may start to decline and may not adequately address the real needs of the people (Petchprasert, 2003). Providing welfare may be transformed into rights but may not be effective and binding. This provision might lead to complaints and ultimate conflicts. At the same time, Nozick's concept has the advantage of the incentive used for competition among private sectors to improve welfare quality. It also allows non-profit private sectors to organize welfare through charity organizations and communities to contribute to a better society. However, the limitation of welfare may lead to social and economic inequalities (Touraine, 2001). No idea, theory, or ideology is perfect or "the best." There are only foundation principles that lead to methods for social goals, depending on perspectives, beliefs, and values. A global trend of changing welfare policies and social policies is emphasizing welfare neither in the ideologies of social democracy nor new liberal ideologies. Instead, there is increasing compromise between these two ideologies. For instance, the state prioritizes the concept of welfare through workfare rather than welfare per se like welfare states, but welfare is derived from work without rejecting the principles of free-market liberalism (Heron, Kevins and Kersbergen, 2022; Kemran Mestan, 2016). Changing social policy and organizing social welfare in Thailand should

consider fundamental ideas, ideologies, and principles compatible and suitable for domestic and international social, economic, and political conditions. This change aims to reduce social inequalities and align with global situations.

This article points out that the underlying basis of social policies lies in political ideology, economics, and society. It is also rooted in ethics, behavior, human relationships, rights and responsibilities, and the allocation of benefits in society. All of these vary according to individuals' perspectives, ideologies, philosophies, or fundamental beliefs, which become the foundation for the diversity of social policies. These perspectives and ideologies are crucial for countries in shaping future social policy direction, forms, and clear objectives. However, the author would also wish to highlight that "nothing is free in the world; everything has a price to pay." This idea should remind the state not to fall into excessive indulgence in populism, leading to ultimately harmful consequences for society, as seen in the past in countries that once flourished but fell into ruin (Bunma, 2014) due to the manipulation of populist policies by politicians.

## Conclusion

Social justice is the heart of social welfare work. The foundation of social policies is based on the concept of justice, with a crucial aspect of justice being the moral claims that connect human behaviors in society. Justice is part of the ethical duties related to moral principles, involving allocating and distributing various societal benefits. Ethical theories of justice are framed within the idea of impartiality towards fairness. Justice is also characterized as an inclusive and abstract concept. Definitions and meanings of justice may be similar or different depending on individual perspectives or fundamental beliefs. Therefore, valuing different ethical principles of justice leads to varying importance in designing, planning, and implementing various social policies. These practices create knowledge that leads to understanding fundamentals, critical thinking, decision-making, and developing appropriate social policies aligned with social structures and contexts.

Ultimately, the author remains of the view that no matter how much we study systems or fundamental ideologies, no matter what policies are implemented, we cannot escape the reality that these ideologies and policies cannot be valid if the fundamental democratic rights in the country are not fully realized.

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