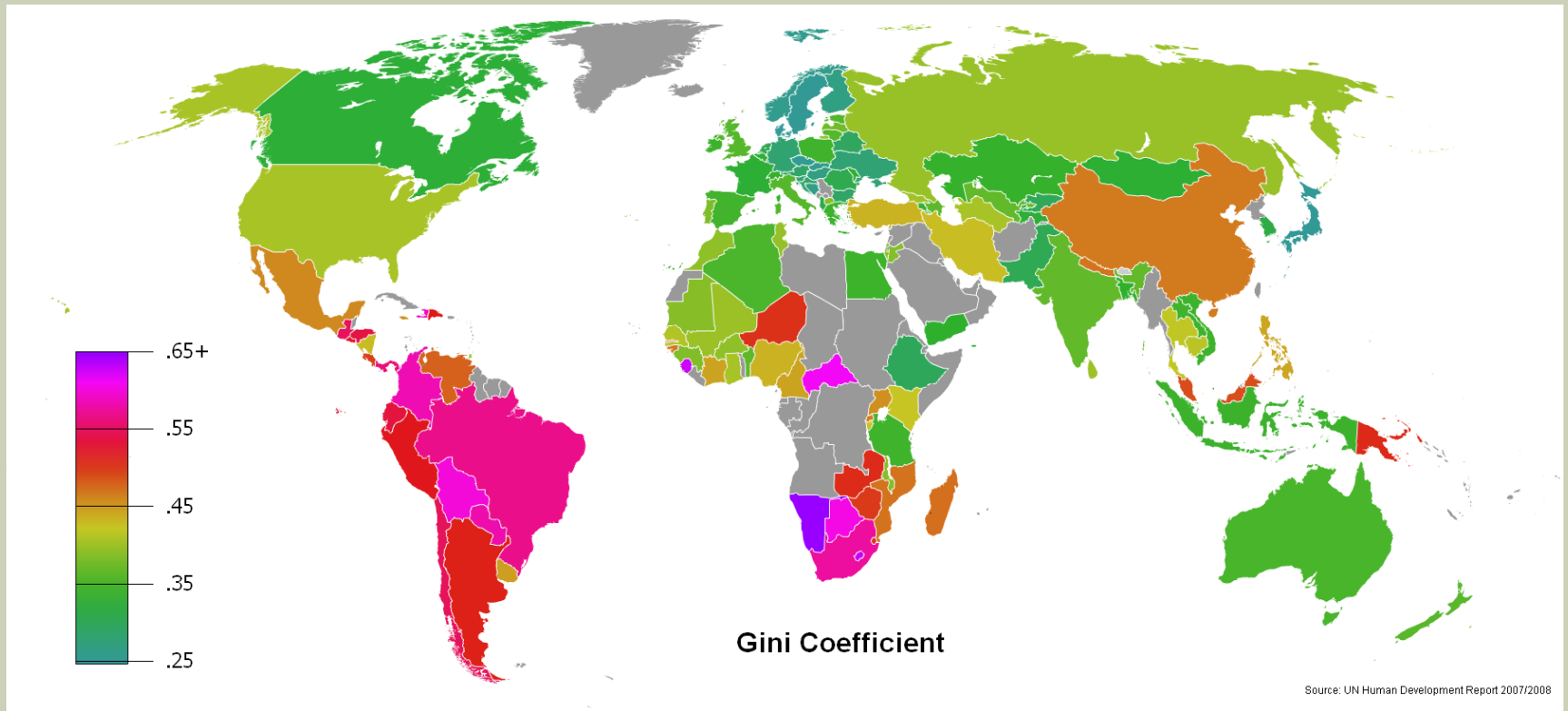


DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

A JUST SOCIETY?

- Distributive justice – how society distributes its benefits and burdens: social primary goods - liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect (e.g., equality of political representation)
- Some societies seem obviously unjust – serfdom, apartheid, segregation
- Current form in US:
 - What system of taxation is fair – flat, progressive, etc.
 - Executive compensation, Wall Street Bonuses
 - Income/wealth inequality?

GLOBAL (IN)EQUITY



FOUR CLASSIC THEORIES OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE.

- **Egalitarian.**
 - “To all the same.”
- **Meritocratic**
 - “To each according to their merit.”
- **Socialist.**
 - “From each according to their ability, to each according to their need.”
- **Libertarian.**
 - “From each what they freely choose to contribute, to each what they have made or others have freely chosen to contribute.”

RAWLS ON THE JUST STATE

■ Justice as fairness

- A just society is one run on just principles
- A just society would be a fair society
- Fairness involves *Distributive Justice*
 - There is a fair distribution of primary social goods
 - wealth,
 - opportunities,
 - liberties and privileges,
 - bases of self respect (e.g. equality of political representation)

RAWLS ON THE JUST STATE

- What is a Fair Society?

- Would a fair society would be one that any rational, self-interested person would want to join?
- Not quite. They will be biased to their own talents.

RAWLS ON THE JUST STATE

■ The Veil of Ignorance

- Suppose they chose from behind a *Veil of Ignorance* where they didn't know what their talents were or where they would be placed in society?
- They would choose a society that would be fair to all because they'd have to live with their choice
- So, a fair society is one that any rational, self-interested person behind the veil of ignorance would want to join

RAWLS ON THE JUST STATE

■ The Original Position

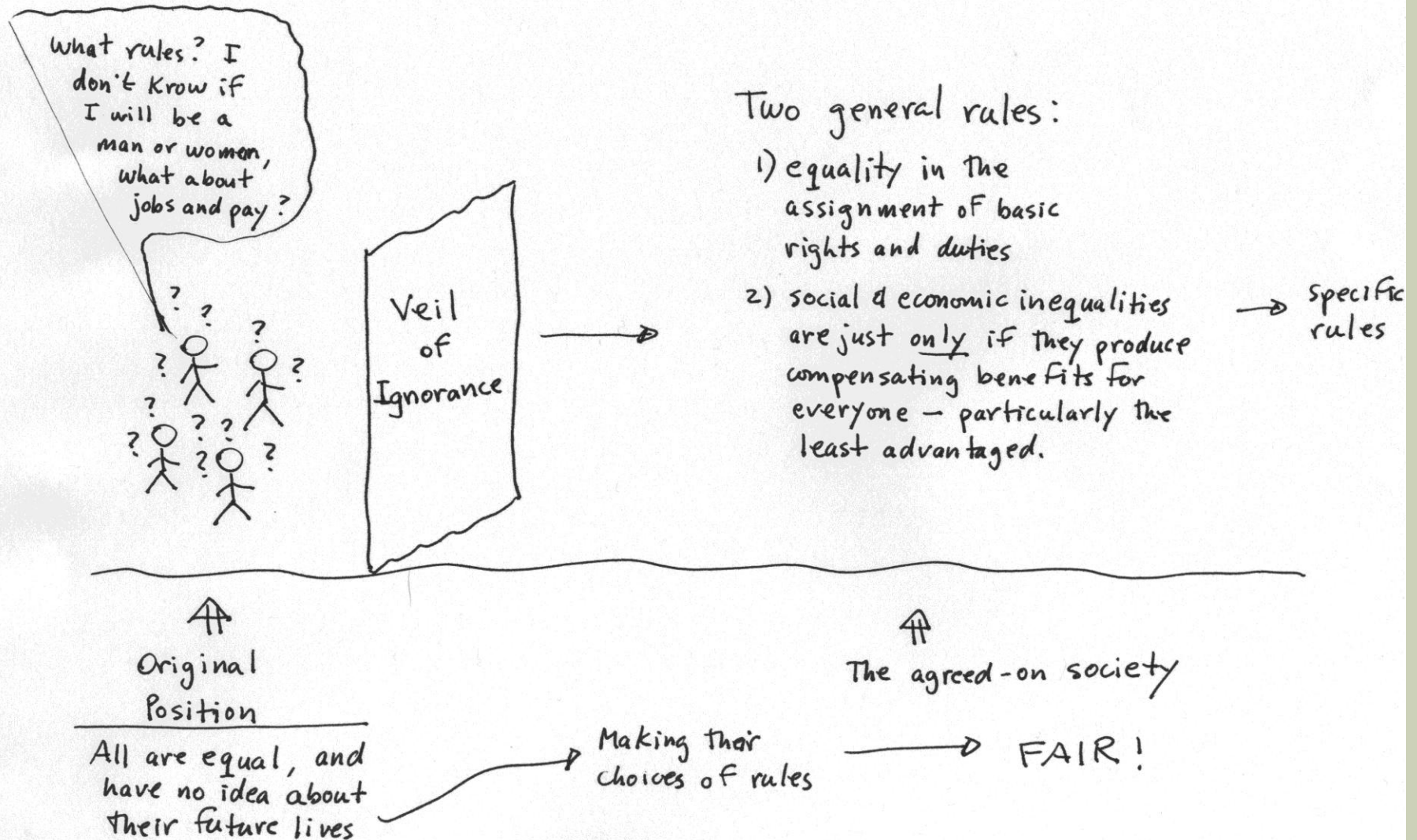
- How would we choose?
 - We are choosing fundamental social conditions determining our life prospects
 - We get to choose just once
- We would follow a *maximin* choice principle
 - choose the setup in which your worst outcome is better than your worst outcome in any other setup
- We wouldn't give up fundamental rights and liberties

RAWLS ON THE JUST STATE

■ The Original Position

- Rawls is a *Social Contract Theorist*
- In forming a social contract we decide upon the basic structure of society
- We do so as self-interested and rational choosers, from behind the veil of ignorance
- This choice position Rawls calls *The Original Position*

Rawls' Theory of Justice as Fairness



RAWLS ON THE JUST STATE

■ Two Principles of Justice

1. Each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of basic rights and liberties, compatible with the same scheme for all
2. Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions:
 - a. they are to be attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity;
 - b. they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society (*The Difference Principle*)

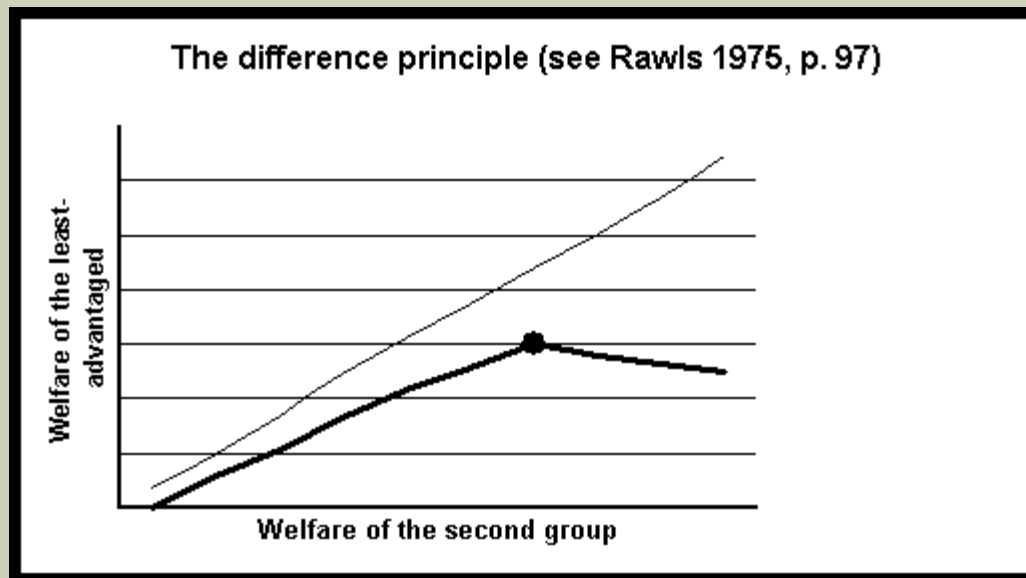
RAWLS' FIRST PRINCIPLE.

- The basic liberties for all citizens:
 - Political liberty (right to vote and be eligible for public office).
 - Freedom of speech and assembly.
 - Liberty of conscience and freedom of thought.
 - Freedom regarding your own person.
 - Right to hold personal property.
 - Freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as these are understood under the rule of law.

RAWLS' SECOND PRINCIPLE.

- Holding positions of authority and offices of command open is clear enough.
 - For example, no hereditary positions.
 - No exclusions based on gender, race, etc.
 - No “tests” based on wealth or property.
- Arranging social and economic inequities so that everyone benefits is less clear.
 - However, Rawls provides the framework for thinking about this – original position and veil of ignorance.

- The rich group is only allowed to have more welfare as long as their marginal contribution to the welfare of the poor group is positive



WHICH IS BEST?

Society A

Group one: 20

Group two: 25

Group three: 30

Total welfare: 75

Society B

Group one: 15

Group two: 35

Group three: 55

Total welfare: 105

Society C

Group one: 17

Group two: 17

Group three: 17

Total welfare: 51

ITEM 1

- **1A.** The owner of a small office supply store has two employees, Mike and Bill. They are equally productive and hardworking and are both currently earning \$7 per hour. The owner decides to move his store to a new location nearby where he knows business will be better. He lets his workers know that if they wish to continue at the new location he will be able to raise their wage. He explains that they will continue to have the same responsibilities but that one worker will earn \$8 per hour and the other \$12 per hour. He also explains that which worker gets the higher wage will be determined later on the basis of a coin toss. The workers can choose to go with the owner to the new location under these terms or to find similar work elsewhere for their current \$7 per hour. They both choose to go with the owner.
- Fair?

RESULTS

- Fair 14% Unfair 864 N = 142

ITEM 2

- Suppose Mike and Bill begin working for a computer software company at the same time and in the same capacity: Initially they both earn a salary of \$50,000 per year. After a trial period Mike demonstrates that he is hard working, productive and performs far beyond initial expectations. Bill, on the other hand, is lazy, unproductive and performs far below initial expectations. Their supervisor decides to give Mike a \$10,000 per year raise and to cut Bill's salary by \$1000.
- Fair?

RESULTS

- Fair 80% Unfair 20% N= 177

ITEM 3

- Jane has baked 6 pies to give to her two friends, Ann and Betty, who do not know each other. Betty enjoys pie twice as much as Ann. In distributing the pies, what is fairer:
- A. 2 pies to Ann and 4 to Betty, or
- B. 4 pies to Ann and 2 to Betty, or
- C. 3 pies to each?

RESULTS

- A 40%
- B 4%
- C 56%

EQUITY/EFFICIENCY

- Suppose, as used to be the case, that the US government makes land available to farmers at no cost provided they reside on their claim and cultivate it. Each farmer may sell whatever he produces. Suppose as well that there are just two applicants, Farmer Adams and Farmer Brown, interested in two tracts of land, 1 and 2. Tract 1 is more productive than tract 2 and the tracts are located too far apart for one applicant to work both. The government may choose among one of the following two policies, X or Y:

- X. *Farmer Adam gets tract 1 and produces 150 bushels of wheat and Farmer Brown gets tract 2 and produces 90 bushels for a total of 240.*
- Y. Farmer Adams and Farmer Brown share tract 1 evenly whereby each then produces 100 bushels for a total of 200.
- Policy X is chosen. Fair?

■ Fair 62%

■ *Farmer Adam gets tract 1 and produces 120 bushels of wheat and Farmer Brown gets tract 2 and produces 90 bushels for a total of 210. . . .*

■ Fair 52% Unfair 48% N =105

■ *Farmer Adam gets tract 1 and produces 200 bushels of wheat and Farmer Brown gets tract 2 and produces 90 bushels for a total of 290. . . .*

■ Fair 55% Unfair 45% N= 109

ABSENCE OF ENVY?

- Is a fair distribution one in which no one envies the other?
- Chris, who is blind, does not like TV and Pat, who is a vegetarian, does not like hamburger. Suppose that Chris and Pat work for the same company in the same capacity and earn the same base salary. The time comes for the end of the year bonus. Chris, who works much harder than Pat, receives a \$2 coupon for a hamburger. The less productive Pat, on the other hand, receives as a bonus a \$2000 wide screen television.