**JOHN RAWLS, POLITICAL LIBERALISM**

(1993,1996, New York: Columbia University Press)

**Legitimacy**

the political relationship in a constitutional regime has these two special features: First, … Political society is closed: we come to be within it and we do not, and indeed cannot, enter or leave it voluntarily. Second, political power is always coercive power …

political power is ultimately the power of the public, that is, the power of free and equal citizens as a collective body.

This raises the question of the legitimacy: … we view citizens as reasonable and rational, as well as free and equal, and we also view the diversity of reasonable religious, philosophical and moral doctrines found in democratic societies as a permanent feature of their public culture … in the light of what principles and ideals must we, as free and equal citizens, be able to view ourselves as exercising that power if our exercise of it is to be justifiable to other citizens and to respect their being reasonable and rational?

To this political liberalism says: our exercise of political power is fully proper only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution the essential of which all citizens as free and equal may reasonably be expected to endorse …

(pages 135-137)

**The first Principle of Justice**

Each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties which is compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all.

… consider which liberties are essential social conditions for the adequate development and full exercise of the two powers of moral personality over a complete life.

The priority of liberty: the basic liberties … have an absolute weight with respect to reasons of public good and of perfectionist values [specified independently of a notion of right]. … a basic liberty can be limited or denied solely for the sake of one or more other basic liberties … however these liberties are adjusted to give one coherent scheme, this scheme is secured equally for all citizens. The priority of these liberties is not infringed when they are merely regulated, as they must be, in order to be combined into one scheme …

(pages 291-295)

The two moral powers: persons [are] regarded as free and equal persons in virtue of possessing to the requisite degree the two powers of moral personality, namely the capacity for a sense of justice and the capacity for a conception of the good (page 34)