A Theory of Relative Deprivation Revisited (11)

Kenji KOSAKA

ABSTRACT

Runciman (1966) discusses the problems of relative deprivation in theoretical and historical terms in line with the theory of social justice. The present paper attempts to clarify how those two notions are related to each other. Runciman distinguishes between “just inequality” and “unjust inequality”, partly depending upon J. Rawls’ theory of justice. Inequality is “just” as long as one can agree to a given principle without knowing the subject’s ability and prospective career, where he/she might lose and be at the bottom level of reward. He proposes three criteria: need, contribution to the common good, and merit, as justification for “just class inequalities”, and “praise” rather than “respect” for “just status inequality”. “Relative deprivation” is, then, assessed adequately by way of claims to justice.

Key Words: relative deprivation, Runciman, justice, inequality