

## Michael Walzer's Theory of Complex Equality

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### Abstract

In his influential book "Spheres of Justice," esteemed American political theorist Michael Walzer introduced his concept of "complex equality," which had a profound impact on contemporary political philosophy. While this theory argues for evaluating justice within different social sectors, each with their own standards for resource distribution, the concept of fundamental equality supports a more uniform distribution across all spheres. This study explores Walzer's fundamental concepts, such as complex equality, and their implications for citizenship and justice. It emphasises the distinctiveness of Walzer's approach compared to other theories of equality, particularly those that advocate for straightforward equality. The study also examines justice as a localised issue rather than a global one and explores the concepts necessary to engage the public in a way that could potentially impact political institutions. By conducting a thorough examination of current scholarly works and analysing Walzer's theoretical framework, this study highlights the importance and difficulties of implementing intricate equality in contemporary political and social settings. It provides valuable insights for future research and practical applications in the fields of justice and policy-making.

**Keywords:** Michael Walzer, spheres of justice, complex equality, thick and thin Morals arguments, blocked exchanges.

### Introduction

The United States widely recognises Michael Walzer as a leading figure in the field of political theory. He was born in 1935 to a family of Jewish immigrants from

Galicia (Austria) and Belarus, and he grew up in the Bronx. He completed his higher education at Harvard University and co-founded the journal *Dissent* (Karim et al., 2023). Walzer has made notable ethical contributions to the field of contemporary political philosophy, specifically in regard to the subject of justice. This is exemplified in his work "Spheres of Justice," where he presents a range of ideas such as complex equality, shared understandings, social criticism, thick moral concepts, thin moral concepts, cultural pluralism, national identity, and a nuanced understanding of context and commitment (Karim et al., 2023).

Goodin (2012) suggests that the discussion of justice and equality, which is closely tied to Latin American Pluralism (PL), makes Walzer's book a crucial but overlooked read. The analytical foundation argues that the pursuit of equality can sometimes lead to feelings of betrayal. Individuals dedicated to initiating an equality movement often find themselves, knowingly or unknowingly, undermining their own mission. Latin American philosophy has challenged this perspective, arguing that equality does not mean endorsing betrayal or allowing the wealthy to dominate the less fortunate. According to Walzer, in this perspective, complex equality emerges as the most logical choice. Achieving this goal involves delivering social benefits that align with their diverse meanings in different cultures. According to Walzer, democracy is a social structure within the dominant North, however, that simple equality can only be preserved by a "centralized agency, based on coercion, that could very easily appropriate the goods that supposedly should be distributed" (Elizondo, 1994).

In this perspective, the majority of societies allow the state and the market to distribute resources according to their own interests. Similarly, monopolised goods also make their way to other distribution hubs. For instance, Goodin (2012) the impact of capitalist societies, where the dominance of money undermines the independence of other areas of distribution, such as education, health, and power. In certain societies, such as the US, money is empowered to acquire almost anything, regardless of the social principles governing the distribution of other resources.

This work focusses on the sophisticated equality thesis of Michael Walzer and its relevance to modern political philosophy. This comprehensive investigation is

informed by Michael Walzer's intricate theory of equality and its relevance to contemporary political philosophy. This paper seeks to highlight the key concepts of Walzer's complex theory of equality and compare them to other theories of equality, specifically those that support a more straightforward notion of equality. Supporters of academic research argue that justice is a matter that primarily concerns local communities rather than the global stage. It also explores the idea of cultivating an engaged citizen who can have an impact on the government. Through this thorough investigation, the project aims to shed light on Walzer's contributions to the discourse on effective citizenship, justice, and equality. This study is significant as it delves into matters of justice and its connection to freedom, equality, and effective citizenship. These concepts are central to philosophical discussions surrounding governance, politics, and economics, as well as the study of Michael Walzer's theory of justice. Therefore, researchers extensively delve into the fundamental enquiries regarding distributive justice and its intricate connection with rights and the functions of the state. The research problem focusses on the central enquiries: What are the characteristics or elements of Michael Walzer's theory of complex equality? This leads to several subsidiary questions that further elucidate aspects of the problem, including:

- What are the distinctions between Michael Walzer's theory of complex equality and other theories advocating simple equality?
- What kinds of evidence justify the belief that justice is local rather than global?
- What are the foundations, concepts, and mechanisms through which a citizen can be created who has an effective role in the political community?

### **Literature Review**

Michael Walzer, in his work "Spheres of Justice" published in 1983, explores a form of communitarian liberalism that places a strong emphasis on embracing diversity. The author challenges the notion of a universal theory of justice, deeming it misleading. Instead, they advocate for "complex equality," which suggests that different rules should govern the distribution of different social goods. This idea gives rise to the development of separate "spheres" of justice (Heywood, 2004). The

foundation of social justice is rooted in the differentiation of spheres for the allocation of social goods, necessitating the establishment of distinct criteria for distribution within each sphere. This ensures that the allocation of resources within one sphere does not directly impact the allocation in another. Hence, it is evident that no individual societal benefit can result in unfair control or oppression (Walzer, 1983). Michael Walzer's Theory of Complex Equality has made significant contributions to political philosophy and social justice.

This literature study examines the ideas presented by Walzer in his influential 1983 work "Spheres of Justice". Walzer's theory of equality suggests that justice should be evaluated based on specific criteria related to different social goods, rather than relying on a universal standard. In order to ensure a fair distribution of resources, it is important to consider the social significance and context of each good, rather than simply relying on a uniform distribution based on simple equality (Walzer, 1983). From this perspective, the validity of universal concepts of justice is called into question, emphasising the importance of preventing certain distributional zones from becoming overly dominant (Lang & Bell, 2018). Research suggests that understanding complex equality can help us navigate the ethical impact of technology and find a balance between various social values (Popa et al., 2023).

In a critique of Hayek's social justice beliefs, Tebble (2020) contends that different allocation criteria should be applied to different realms of society, drawing upon Walzer's theory. Universalist conceptions of justice overlook the varied social benefits, but a nuanced understanding of equality can assist in comprehending them.

A recent study focused on the involvement of Big Tech companies in the healthcare sector, using Walzer's paradigm as a framework (Bangsawan, 2022). According to the concept of complex equality, it is suggested that Big Tech's influence should be observed and controlled in different areas to avoid prioritising technology interests over societal values related to health (Joyce et al., 2021). Machine learning researchers have also investigated complex equality. Examining Walzer's concepts, this analysis explores how a fair distribution of technological advantages and disadvantages can address biases in machine learning algorithms. Using Walzer's theory, an argument has been made against standardised testing and funding

practices in education. According to [Ware \(1981\)](#), educational resources should be distributed based on the specific needs and circumstances of different societies, in line with the principles of equal opportunity. While Walzer's theory is widely acknowledged for its sophisticated approach to justice, some scholars argue that it is excessively rigorous and challenging to implement in practice. The various requirements and the need to maintain diverse distribution spheres could potentially create practical challenges for legislation and implementation ([Ying et al., 2023](#)).

Critics also question the underlying principles of complex equality. According to their perspective, different civilisations and situations require diverse interpretations of societal values and meanings, as suggested by the theory. The significance of complex equality in relation to international justice remains a contentious issue. Although the concept addresses inequality within specific nations, there are concerns among experts that it may not be sufficient in addressing global disparities that arise from a combination of social and economic factors. Michael Walzer's Theory of Complex Equality provides a fundamental framework for a diverse community to comprehend social justice ([Lee et al., 2023](#)). The critique of simplistic egalitarian policies is rooted in the recognition of the varying distribution of social goods and their multiple implications. However, the theory's global significance, moral foundation, and practical applications are also compromised. In order to tackle these challenges, future research should explore novel methods for attaining comprehensive equality in various social and technological contexts.

### **Methodology**

The research addresses the problem by proposing a hypothesis that suggests contemporary philosopher Michael Walzer's preference for theoretical speculation within the pluralistic tradition. He introduces a theory in justice known as "complex equality", which requires further explanation of its terms and clarification on how it addresses various epistemological enquiries. His approach in interpreting this theory and the principles he relied on are clearly evident.

## Research Design

In order to confirm the research hypothesis, various scientific methodologies were utilised, including historical methodology and textual analysis. The study employs descriptive research, which involves investigating the research topic by providing a detailed description of its characteristics. This approach enables researchers to investigate questions regarding particular phenomena, such as issues pertaining to the characteristics of specific groups or populations, as exemplified by Michael Walzer's theory frequently referencing American society. The objective is to examine the attributes and results of Walzer's theory of "complex equality," while also generating additional questions that arise from the research. One crucial aspect to focus on is resolving concerns regarding the notion of effective citizenship within the political community.

Understanding "complex equality" in Michael Walzer's work involves analysing his philosophical approach to conveying ideas and developing his concept of justice. It also entails analysing the mechanisms he suggested to bridge the gap between theory and its practical implementation in political and economic domains. Hence, a descriptive study is ideal for this task as it enables a thorough exploration, portrayal, and comprehensive investigation of the features and outcomes of the theory of complex equality.

## Data Collection and Interpretation of Findings

Our study utilised a wide range of scholarly articles as credible sources to collect information on the theory of justice, with a specific focus on "complex equality" as proposed by Michael Walzer in his justice theory. Using these sources improved the study's credibility. After thoroughly examining multiple articles, the notion of complex equality was elucidated in accordance with Walzer's propositions. Researchers have examined the difference between "complex equality" and "simple equality" in accordance with current academic studies. The results section organises findings into three key themes that highlight the application of the complex equality concept in Michael Walzer's justice theory. The study primarily examined the philosophical

methodology used by Walzer to explain his theory of justice in "Spheres of Justice." The second axis focused on justice in the political sphere, while the third axis addressed justice in the economic sphere. The design of the descriptive study enabled the researcher to thoroughly investigate and describe the different aspects of Walzer's theory of complex equality.

## Results

### The Complex Equality

According to Michael Walzer, justice is a product of human creation. Therefore, in order to address the complex questions it poses, we must consider the specific demands that arise when examining the history, culture, and composition of various societies (Farrelly, 2004).

Every society generates its own social goods, with the perception of fair distribution differing across cultures. The values of hierarchical and class-based societies greatly contrast with those of democratic liberal societies. In addition, within a given society, there exist various principles that dictate the distribution of social resources. The organisation of social goods cannot be governed by a single or even two fundamental principles. The determination of the appropriate principle for a specific social good must be based on its social meaning (Farrelly, 2004).

### First: Walzer's Philosophical Methodology and General Conception of Justice

Michael Walzer utilises established and essential methodological approaches in ethical and political philosophy to tackle moral and political concerns. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this list of methods is not exhaustive. The author suggests that it is crucial to prioritise these methods. Walzer discusses three methodological paths: the Path of Discovery, the Path of Invention, and the Path of Interpretation. He describes his approach as primarily interpretative Walzer and Said (1986), defending it by comparing it to the other two methods (J. T. Reiner, 2020).

Philosophers and theologians have long relied on the method of discovery to uncover the rules governing human behaviour. This ancient approach involves

revealing what already exists through natural law or divine revelation, rather than inventing something new (Orend, 2000).

In the methodological approach of invention, philosophers rely solely on human reason to construct ethical and political principles, adopting an objective and unbiased perspective. They frequently create hypothetical scenarios to uncover the fundamental principles that underlie ethical and political values. In this context, the philosopher is seen as a lawmaker (Yudha et al., 2024). Given the challenge of locating an impartial legislator, philosophers often resort to employing different hypothetical scenarios. Michael Walzer provides various examples of these hypotheses, one of which is "the original position" proposed by John Rawls (Orand, 2000).

According to Walzer, both the method of discovery and the method of invention are crucial. Nevertheless, these methods alone are inadequate since individuals already possess the very qualities that these methods purport to provide. Understanding the ethical world is inherent to human existence and does not require discovery or invention, as it has already been formulated. Both methods require interpretation as a necessary component. The principles put forth by the method of discovery, although they may seem objective and comprehensive, still necessitate further reinforcement or imposition. The initial formulations lack clarity and require interpretation. In the same vein, the principles presented by the method of invention can be a subject of debate and necessitate interpretation. Thus, both methods are inherently intertwined with the realm of interpretation (Rainer, 2002; Shapiro, 1992).

Michael Walzer argues that the main objective of philosophical methods in studying ethical and political issues is to discover the most optimal interpretation of prevailing ethical and political commitments in societies. This entails directing the interpretive approach towards comprehending and elucidating the customs and moral obligations unique to individuals within the community, without insisting on uncovering universal principles of justice or devising general normative systems. The interpretive method begins by examining individuals' lived experiences and aims to comprehend the intricate processes that shape the formation of ethical and political norms in human societies (Rainer, 2002).



As stated by Walzer, the interpretive method is seen as a tool for decoding ethical discourse. It is known for its adaptability and capacity for innovation. This implies that it can adjust to swift changes in the world, necessitating fresh or revised ethical evaluations rooted in emerging technologies, novel experiences, recent events, or unfamiliar individuals. Walzer argues that the interpretive process plays a role in broadening ethical understandings and does not lead to definitive conclusions. Instead, it may temporarily suspend consensus judgements. It is important to note that interpretation can adapt to meet the evolving ethical demands and needs of human societies (Orand, 2000).

The interpretive method starts by examining the cultural and social traditions that individuals experience in human societies. The primary emphasis is on the ethical beliefs and principles of these cultures and societies, rather than relying on preconceived ideas about human nature or universal standards of justice. According to Walzer, this method is characterised by its descriptive and educational nature, as it begins by outlining really ethical and political beliefs. It evaluates individuals or institutions based on their own principles, resulting in either praise and continuation or blame and a call for reform. In both scenarios, it presupposes that individuals maintain their allegiance to their community (Orand, 2000; Walzer, 1985).

In the words of Michael Walzer, a society is comprised of individuals who coexist based on their cultural heritage and collective past, while being safeguarded by the governing body. He defines the political community (the state) as a political union that unites individuals and government. Individuals express their inherited cultures through the political forms they collectively endorse. According to Walzer, the social contract is seen as an ethical bond that unites society, surpassing differences in interests (Wang et al., 2024). It draws strength from various factors such as history, culture, religion, and language. It represents the reality of people uniting to safeguard themselves and reap the exclusive advantages that membership in a society can provide.

Michael Walzer presents two different concepts of society. The first is the ethical community, where individuals come together based on their shared ideas about social goods, which are represented by the sovereign nation-state. The second

concept involves the legal community, where individuals collaborate to establish limitations on state authority. discuss the importance of the ethical community and highlight its significance. According to Walzer, ethical terms typically possess two value dimensions: maximalist morality and moral minimalism (Bader, 2013).

### **The Thick Morals Arguments**

These conceptions are held by individuals in every society, representing all human societies equally. These discussions and judgements are grounded in ethical principles and applied in real-life situations. As a result, these principles do not apply universally as they are not shared by all human societies. These concepts and perceptions vary depending on the environment and cultural conditions of each society within the broader spectrum of human societies.

### **The Thin Morals Arguments**

These ethical conceptions are broad and universally applicable, with concise meanings that have minimal content. They function to limit the actions of individuals and various human communities.

According to Michael Walzer, the use of interpretation in defining justice reveals the existence of Thick and Thin Arguments concerning fair behaviour and fair social, political, and economic structures. The concept of justice is grounded in a combination of ethical principles, encompassing both thick and thin perspectives. An optimal understanding of justice encompasses both Thick and Thin principles of justice (Orand, 2000; Rainer, 2002), as follows:

#### **Thick principles of justice**

This set of rules, outlined by Walzer in 1994, offers a comprehensive and well-founded perspective on cultural norms. According to Walzer, these principles have a limited scope as they are based on the unique perspectives of individuals within a community, rather than being universally applicable. They pertain to the distribution of social goods and fairness (Rainer, 2002).

These principles are found in the realm of distributive justice in society, where the allocation of social goods like wealth, political power, healthcare, education, and others can differ in significance across different societies. Hence, varying principles are necessary based on the characteristics of each society. It is crucial to take into account how social goods are understood and valued by individuals in the community within the context of that particular society. Understanding the significance of longevity and immortality is crucial in determining the fair distribution of healthcare resources within a society (Orand, 2000; Walzer, 1994).

### **Thin principles of justice**

It embodies a shared set of fundamental principles of justice that apply to both individuals and societies at large. These principles have a universal nature and are not limited to any particular time or location. They act as a shared political limitation that applies to individuals and societies alike. These regulations are not biased towards any specific interests or cultural backgrounds, but instead aim to ensure fair behaviour for all individuals and communities from a universal standpoint. These principles are universally accepted by individuals in all societies. Every society has its own set of principles of justice, and any violation of these principles, whether committed by an individual or a group, is considered inherently unjust (Orand, 2000; Walzer, 1994).

Michael Walzer posits that thin principles of justice are encompassed by thick ethical conceptions, which also incorporate culturally specific principles. Therefore, the fundamental principles of justice serve as a unifying element among various interpretations of justice, providing societies with consistent guidance based on historical, cultural, religious, and political factors (Orand, 2000).

According to, ethical principles are complex and encompass cultural integration. They become evident in specific cases when ethical language is directed towards specific purposes. Put simply, Walzer highlights the importance of prioritising thick principles over thin principles based on their origin.

According to Walzer, the principles of justice, which are part of broader conceptions, do not form the fundamental basis of justice as an ethical and political value. Instead, they are a fundamental aspect of the complex notions of justice found

in human societies. These principles, as discussed by [Walzer \(1994\)](#) and [Orend \(2000\)](#) represent a common foundation found in various human societies, rather than being an absolute truth of justice.

In addition, Walzer asserts that these minimal principles serve as a limitation on the more detailed principles. For instance, if a government fails to adhere to these fundamental principles, it can only be regarded as inadequate and unfair. Arguments based on specific ethical details cannot excuse breaches of general ethical principles. Local customs and traditions should not take precedence over the urgent need to end torture and severe cruelty ([Orand, 2000](#)). The duality of principles of justice exemplifies the fundamental nature and ethical essence of humanity. It is crucial to adhere to this principle as it reflects a fundamental aspect of a fair and inclusive society: its universal nature. It exhibits human qualities and is marked by specificity. Ultimately, it functions as a community. Over time, philosophers' efforts to prioritise individuality over communal well-being have resulted in various injustices, including the use of force or the exertion of power in both physical and mental realms.

As stated by Walzer, justice is ingrained in the customs of societies and is demonstrated through various practices, relationships, bonds, and institutional arrangements within these societies. What is deemed fair in one society may not hold the same value in another. Hence, to uphold the autonomy of individuals and human communities, it is crucial to honour their unique perspectives on personal fulfilment and the equitable allocation of societal resources. Social goods and their shared meanings are subject to change and can be understood from the perspective of community members ([Walzer, 1983](#)).

Justice is rooted in the loyalty and commitment to the most accurate interpretation of shared conceptions and social meanings of goods that justice pertains to within a specific community. Two groups are responsible for presenting and evaluating these interpretations: the interpretive community and the community of expertise ([Walzer, 1983](#)).

Walzer differentiates between the interpretive community and the community of expertise. The interpretive community comprises knowledgeable social critics who devote their lives to studying the collective beliefs held by individuals in a particular

society. The community of expertise, however, is broader and includes individuals who are examining the current ethical and political discussions in society. According to Walzer, the interpretive community's perspective is crucial for determining the most accurate interpretation of the community's shared notions of justice and fairness. This is because it interprets the shared values of communal solidarity in a continuous and enduring manner. An effective social critic always communicates using the language and values of their society when offering their critique (Orand, 2000; Rainer, 2002; Walzer, 1983).

Walzer's understanding of justice is centred around the idea that every human society is a community that distributes social goods. Members of the community come up with ideas for these social benefits and actively participate in their development, sharing, and trade. Hence, it is crucial to give due consideration to the community in all its aspects and the various social benefits it encompasses, along with the way they are distributed across different periods and locations (Walzer, 1983).

Walzer's theory of justice centres around the idea that "Social goods," which encompass both material and moral values, are developed and allocated within a social framework. These lack of inherent or universal meanings that are universally agreed upon by all societies. Instead, they are the result of specific social relationships that do not have any pre-existing existence or value. Thus, distributions are crafted based on commonly held understandings of the nature of these goods, highlighting that their social significance is not set in stone or universally applicable, but rather changes over time and varies among different societies, and at times even within them (D. Boucher & P. Kelly, 1998; Johnston, 1994).

Walzer discusses the concept of "shared conceptions" as the way individuals in a particular cultural heritage envision the structure of their community and the meaning of social belonging. The author highlights the importance of shared beliefs and intuitions in shaping the requirements of communal life. They also discuss the distribution of benefits among community members and the appropriate mechanisms for doing so (Robert Mayer, 2001; Walzer, 1983).

People initially imagine these advantages, then work to bring them into existence, and finally share them among one another. The processes of envisioning

and creating take precedence and exert control over the distribution, as these benefits are first conceived and shaped in the minds of community members before being allocated. The distribution process is structured around common understandings of the characteristics of products, their identification, interpretation, collaborative production, and eventual allocation (D. Boucher & P. Kelly, 1998).

Walzer discusses a wide range of material and moral values that are highly regarded in American society, as well as in many other societies. He highlights the fact that the interpretations of these goods differ across different cultures. These topics encompass a wide range of areas, such as membership, security and welfare, money and goods, jobs and employment, hard work and leisure time, education, kinship, empathy, virtue, recognition, and political power. According to Walzer, the distribution of these benefits does not adhere to a single standard or set of interconnected criteria. Some goods can be distributed based on the principle of free exchange, like money, while others can be distributed based on entitlement, like punishment and honour, and some can be distributed based on need, like security and welfare (Farrelly, 2004).

According to Walzer, the distribution of social goods must consider a variety of factors, such as reasons, procedures, and agents. This suggests that the principles of justice are inherently pluralistic in nature. Historical and cultural factors influence different interpretations of the social goods, giving rise to all these differences. To evaluate distributive social justice, one must consider a particular society, its members, the significance they place on social goods, and the methods of distribution employed. Without adhering to this framework, it is impossible to make judgements that are universally valid in any society or throughout history (D. Boucher & P. Kelly, 1998).

Walzer supports his theory of distributive justice by emphasising a unique perspective, which he refers to as the theory of complex equality. Based on this theory, each social good is seen as a separate realm of justice. Complex equality is attained when the position of a citizen in one domain or in connection to one social concern cannot be undermined by another citizen's advantage in a different domain. For example, having a political position does not provide any benefits in other areas, such

as healthcare access or improved education for one's children (Farrelly, 2004a; R. Reiner, 2020; Walzer, 1983).

Simple equality aims to distribute dominant goods like money equally, while complex equality challenges this notion by highlighting contradictions. Complex equality permits variations in social benefits while safeguarding against the transfer or domination of these benefits in other domains. Hence, in order to maintain a balanced distribution of social goods, it is essential to ensure the autonomy of different spheres, preventing any one sphere from exerting excessive control over others. Therefore, it is crucial to establish a system of comprehensive equality in order to prevent any form of domination (Farrelly, 2004a; Walzer, 1983). Walzer has condensed the theory of social goods, also known as the theory of complex equality, into six hypotheses:

- All goods related to distributive justice are social goods with shared meanings because conceptualization and invention are social processes. Consequently, goods have different meanings in different societies, where they are valued for different reasons. Thus, they can be valued in one society and depreciated in another.
- Individuals' identities are defined by how they conceive, create, possess, and employ goods as social benefits, making it difficult to draw a clear line between the individual and what pertains to them.
- There is no single set of basic or primary goods that can have a universal conception across all ethical and material worlds. They are conceptualized in extremely abstract terms; for example, bread can be seen as the essence of life, the body of Christ, a symbol of the Sabbath, or a means of hospitality, and so forth.
- The meaning of goods determines their movement; thus, whether distributions are fair or unfair relates to the social meanings of goods. For instance, terms like purchasing religious office, bribery, or prostitution describe injustices arising from the sale of goods that should never be sold outside a common understanding of their meaning.
- Social meanings are inherently historical, and distinct spheres of justice must remain independent.

- When meanings differ, distributions must be independent. For example, money is inappropriate in the realm of religious office, and piety should confer no advantage in the marketplace.

In the view of Walzer, the creation of an egalitarian society requires an appreciation for intricate equality that upholds the autonomy of distributional domains. In order for societies to achieve true equality, it is crucial that they are free from any form of domination. The presence of dominant values can greatly undermine the concept of complex equality, as argued by (Walzer, 1983).

As stated by Walzer, achieving complex equality involves independent distributions across all spheres based on their internal standards. For example, this happens when wealth does not dictate political influence, or when political power does not compromise job appointments based solely on merit. Hence, an effective model of equality necessitates complexity as it avoids relying on a singular distribution mechanism. Instead, it divides society into multiple distribution zones to ensure that no single area's outcomes dominate over another's (E. Goodin et al., 2007).

Walzer's framework highlights the complex relationship between the social meanings of goods, diverse societal valuations, and the importance of fair distributions to maintain a concept of justice that considers contextual integrity.

To achieve fairness in a society, it is important to develop strategies that prevent the benefits of a specific area from being unfairly distributed to other areas. For instance, the welfare state's mechanisms can help balance economic values and social belonging, preventing one from overpowering the other. Without economic prosperity and the accompanying luxuries, individuals experience a decline in social standing and a lack of belonging, even within their own community (Robert Mayer, 2001; Walzer, 1983). As a result, individuals may experience a diminished sense of social connection and may choose not to engage in the political and cultural aspects of their community.

Walzer's theory proposes a two-step approach to theorising about justice. First, theorists must interpret the meaning of the relevant good. Then, they must present an argument for distributional principles that align with this meaning. Both aspects of



this method emphasise the important contributions to justice theory made by Michael and Walzer from their respective perspectives ([J. T. Reiner, 2020](#)):

- It poses a significant challenge to universal theories that seek to derive a set of universally applicable distribution principles by questioning how this is possible when goods available for distribution are particularly localized in time and place.
- It emphasizes that theories of equality must understand equality as a political relationship that avoids dominance and repression. Therefore, they should not specify principles of justice too precisely, allowing more room for democratic decision-making.

### **Secondly: Justice in the Political Sphere**

Justice in politics is intricately tied to freedom, equality, and democracy, which is vital for the equitable allocation of political power. The goal is to foster engaged citizens who actively contribute to their community, particularly in terms of effective participation in the political sphere. Michael Walzer will discuss potential solutions and methods to address these issues.

### **Political freedom and its relationship with equality, and the role of citizenship in shaping lifestyle:**

Michael Walzer highlights the importance of democratic societies in preventing individuals from dominating multiple areas of life based on their excellence in one area. Success in a particular institution should not automatically guarantee success in other areas of society for true freedom and equality to be achieved ([A. Graber, 1991](#)).

As defined by Walzer, liberty is seen as an additional value that is incorporated into rights within social spheres. Thus, it is imperative to distinguish and segregate these social spheres in order to safeguard those rights. As per the concept of liberty, individuals have the freedom to live independently in separate domains. It also necessitates a particular understanding of fairness, or more precisely, the lack of distinct inequalities between individuals of different beliefs, economic classes, and other categories. Eliminating such disparities is essential for creating a fair and equitable society ([Walzer, 1984](#)).

In the words of Walzer, liberty and equality are interconnected concepts, with the presence of one relying on the presence of the other. The theory of complex equality enhances this connection. The system of complex equality promotes individual liberties within society and allows individuals to participate in collective decision-making on the meaning and value of social goods (Walzer, 1984).

In promoting individual liberty's within society, Walzer places two constraints on political liberty (Walzer, 1984):

- **Exclusion of Discrimination:** This promotes the idea of treating all individuals and groups equally, regardless of their circumstances or merits, in order to achieve a fair distribution of goods.
- **Exclusion of Coercion:** This guarantees political rights for everyone, including political equality, equal opportunities, the right to vote, and the ability to run for office. This limitation also prevents the manipulation of institutions and practices that reflect the shared desires of society, such as gatherings, conversations, and voting.

Walzer emphasises the significance and need for these limitations and their reinforcement against prevailing assumptions in society. They play a crucial role in safeguarding individuals' autonomy, as they uphold the principles of equal respect and concern and foster the importance of diverse citizenship. This ensures the presence of engaged citizens rather than subordinate ones. Individuals who lack these societal benefits are unable to effectively contribute to shaping and safeguarding areas of justice or establishing fair principles of distributive justice. Thus, guaranteeing certain public goods for all members of society helps to prevent ignorance, subordination, and indifference, which can impede the attainment of political justice. Therefore, Walzer argues that John Locke's assertion of "one voice for each citizen" is inadequate (Walsh, 1995).

Walzer highlights the significance of engaging in political activities when considering the interpretations and importance of societal benefits. The author contends that genuine freedom should be built upon common understandings among individuals in a community, which are shaped by their customs and heritage. Given the intricate nature of interpretations, the utilisation of social meanings for social

goods sparks discussions, exchanges, and involvement among members of the community. This ensures that no single group holds sway over the establishment of their collective understandings. This is accomplished by establishing connections and relationships so that individuals can both lead and be led (Walzer, 1983).

Walzer's understanding of political liberty encompasses two separate interpretations of citizenship. Firstly, the negative concept functions as a form of protection against control, where the individual is seen as a passive recipient or beneficiary of benefits and goods. Based on this concept, individuals are shielded from any kind of interference, be it from other people or society. However, it does not necessarily promote the development of strong relationships among individuals, unlike the positive aspect of citizenship. Additionally, the positive concept entails actively engaging in the pursuit of a fulfilling life. It is essential for everyone in society to establish principles of fairness and shared understandings of what is valuable (Walzer, 1970).

The idea of citizenship, seen as active involvement in interpersonal connections, seeks to avoid individuals feeling disconnected from the state and instead encourages them to become part of a larger collective in different social domains. It is essential for the state to ensure adequate protection, allowing individuals to engage in associations and spheres of governance, both as participants and as those being governed. It is crucial for individuals in society to be fully protected by the state in order to actively participate in various associations and spheres (Walzer & Said, 1986).

Therefore, political freedom is contingent upon both active political engagement and the absence of coercion in submitting to others' will. By engaging in participation, individuals can collectively develop a common understanding of social goods that align with the collective desires of a society (Walzer & Said, 1986). Walzer highlights the importance of citizens in determining areas of justice and governing them, whether as equals or counterparts. Individuals who are unable to engage in decision-making processes may not be considered true citizens in the context of citizenship. Instead, they may be seen as passive individuals who simply receive or benefit from the actions of the political community (Walzer & Said, 1986). Hence, the

call for equal citizenship necessitates an examination of democracy's significance in Walzer's argument, specifically in relation to the equitable allocation of political power.

### **Fair distribution of political power.**

Walzer connects his theory of distributive justice to a comprehensive democratic perspective on society and value. He posits that in a society where citizens both govern and are governed, complex equality will supplant social despotism. This shift will be determined by their active involvement in specific domains of activity. This represents the perspectives of participants regarding the trade of goods that result in their emergence. Walzer argues for the inclusion of both dimensions in political democracy, where no single area has dominance over the others (Bellamy, 1999; D. Boucher & P. Kelly, 1998).

In the view of Walzer, a theory of justice must take into account the unique political and social context of a community, where its members have a shared understanding of goods and how they should be distributed. In modern or contemporary states, language, history, and culture come together to create a shared awareness, especially more so than in other places. Due to their common culture, members of this group are united and dedicated to distributing, exchanging, and sharing social resources with each other (Biale et al., 1998).

In the opinion of Walzer, democratic politics is seen as a means of fostering respect. He emphasises that democracy goes beyond just giving people power and highlights its moral significance when it operates effectively. It empowers citizens, enabling them to be truly effective and earning them pride and respect (Bellamy, 1999).

Walzer emphasises the crucial role of political power in establishing and maintaining the boundaries between different spheres of justice. It ensures their distinctness and safeguards against any one sphere overpowering another. Furthermore, political power is instrumental in establishing suitable principles for allocating various resources within its respective domains and navigating the presence of inequalities that arise from such allocations. Political power is widely regarded as the most significant aspect of justice (Walzer, 1983).

Political power refers to the authority that an organisation possesses to protect the boundaries of different spheres of justice, including its own. It plays a crucial role in shaping societal perceptions of the significance of goods. Nevertheless, there is a potential for misuse when political authority exceeds the limits of other domains of justice. Walzer emphasises the importance of maintaining strict control over political power, but not limiting it to specific boundaries. Identifying these controls poses a core issue in the political realm (D. Boucher & P. J. Kelly, 1998).

Walzer discusses the importance of limiting political power to avoid its dominance in other areas of justice and to prevent it from becoming tyrannical. He discusses the idea of "Blocked exchanges of political power," proposing that political power in the United States should not oppress the people, interfere with family life, manipulate the judiciary, unjustly seize property, exert influence over religious matters, limit academic freedom, or suppress freedom of thought, press, assembly, and civil liberties (Bellamy, 1999).

According to Walzer, democracy is the most suitable method for distributing goods, which includes political power as one of these goods. Individuals in society must grant authority to certain individuals to govern through democratic elections. The selection of a democratic political system is not based on its inherent justice, but rather on its suitability for the fair distribution of social goods. The reason is its autonomy from the influence of any non-political factors. Political decisions are made through discussion, reasoning, persuasion, and dispute resolution, focussing on ideas rather than wealth, status, or social standing.

In addition, Walzer asserts that democracy necessitates equal rights, but not necessarily equal power. The exercise of power in politics differs among individuals based on their rhetorical abilities, organisational effectiveness, and the historical methods employed to resolve conflicts. Politicians aim to capitalise on any advantage they possess in their pursuit of electoral objectives. These advantages are acceptable in the political sphere and are seen as completely legitimate because they do not compromise equality among individuals.

As noted by Walzer, gaining political power through wealth inequality or receiving government assistance from influential connections is seen as unjust

exploitation. Prohibited uses include inequalities that benefit certain individuals while disadvantaging others. Those who exploit such inequalities are viewed as exploiters in political work. In addition, Michael disagrees with the notion of restricting political authority solely to philosophers, exemplified by Plato's concept of rule by guardians who possess knowledge. He presents two arguments in his rejection of this idea (Matravers & Pike, 2003):

- The first argument asserts that individuals' right to rule does not depend on their knowledge of the truth but rather on the fact that individuals are compelled to obey the laws of the state that bind them as free individuals. Therefore, they should be the ones who create these laws.
- The second argument states that no matter the degree of total knowledge of truth that some may possess, it lacks legal validity unless it has acquired the consent of citizens through democratic discourse.

Michael Walzer and Robert Dahl share a common belief in the efficacy of democracy. Dahl asserts that democracy may not be the optimal form of government in the political realm, nor the sole ideal framework for making political choices. According to Dahl (1990) this political system stands out due to its ability to form strong unions, making it a highly effective system. Walzer argues in favour of distributing political power in a democratic manner, but he does not assert that democracy is the most ideal system for this purpose. He acknowledges that democracy is a strong system of governance in the political sphere.

### **Membership within the community**

When discussing membership in society, Walzer's concept of social justice involves a particular community or restricted sphere known as the "political community". He characterises it as a collective of individuals dedicated to distributing, trading, and primarily sharing social goods among themselves. Thus, the initial social benefit allocated and exchanged within this community is "membership" (Galston, 1989).

Membership is considered a fundamental aspect in all human societies, according to Walzer's perspective. Thus, the distribution principle is based on a pure

egalitarian principle or a form of simple equality. To achieve what he refers to as "the community of equals," it is important to distribute it evenly among all members of society. This perspective is grounded in a core principle called "the right to the commonwealth". It encompasses the right of individuals to retain their community and the freedom to shape and enhance it in alignment with their personal vision of a fulfilling life. Thus, it is imperative that every individual in society is granted an equal right to membership (I. Cohen & Wellman, 2005).

As defined by Walzer, when goods are distributed within a specific sphere of justice only to individuals within that sphere, it means that membership in that sphere cannot be separated from other spheres in a manner consistent with the principle of non-domination. Participation in various spheres of justice is contingent upon one's membership within the community. It is essential that principles of distribution prioritise the enhancement of membership for every individual in the community. Unemployment and poverty are economic issues that can lead to a sense of disconnection from one's community (Pinzani & Rego, 2019).

According to Walzer, it is important for membership in the community to be evenly distributed among its original members. However, membership within various spheres of society should be distributed based on specific rules that align with the nature of those spheres, such as associations, unions, or other entities. As an illustration, membership can be found in forums as well as in cultural and social associations. The distribution of membership varies based on the nature of the association or union. Individuals can also develop neighbourhood ties and acquire membership through their relationships with neighbours (Walzer, 2009).

Distributional principles differ based on varying notions of membership within different spheres. The process of becoming a member varies based on the level of the union, whether it is at the state or local level. Local unions typically have the freedom to choose their members, while national unions do not possess this authority. All national states should provide full membership to their original and permanent members. In addition, unlike local unions, they have the authority to regulate the admission of foreigners due to concerns about their integration through migration and normalisation (Robert Mayer, 2001).

Conflicts may arise between the rights of individuals in different communities regarding freedom of movement and migration. According to Walzer, the right to membership is considered an absolute right, although it should not be overstated. It is important to prioritise the protection of strangers and foreigners in the community to ensure their well-being. It is important to consider the implications of a complete ban on migration. Such a ban would infringe upon individuals' freedom of movement and their right to avoid being confined or controlled by their communities (Tutui, 2011; Walzer, 1983). In times of necessity, it is important for individuals to feel a sense of obligation towards their community and contribute to its protection as part of their rights in society. The state has a valid reason for this, as it aims to protect its community from potential collapse.

Foreigners' entry into the community is contingent upon the collective political decision of its members. According to Walzer, various groups, such as those based on religion, language, or ethnicity, have the authority to establish criteria for admitting foreigners into their community. This allows them to carefully choose members in order to safeguard their cultural privacy and maintain the autonomy of their society. This arises from the need to honour the community members' right to engage in decision-making, which is morally valid. States represent the collective identity of their citizens, but it is important that national states do not base admission to their communities on religious, linguistic, or racial factors (Walzer, 1983).

According to Walzer, states can refuse immigrants to protect their desired societal structure. Preserving a community's unique way of life necessitates a certain degree of border control. Therefore, the regulations regarding membership in a society do not generally adhere to the principles of fairness. It is within the jurisdiction of each state to determine whom they choose to acknowledge (J. T. Reiner, 2020).

Conflicts may arise when the rights of individuals within society clash with the rights of others to life. For instance, when deprived strangers are denied access to goods or when persecuted individuals, who face the threat of losing their lives in other societies, have no place to seek refuge. Walzer suggests that the principle of mutual aid, driven by a shared commitment to the common good, can serve as a viable solution to this problem. Nevertheless, he argues that this principle should only be



applied in situations of pressing need, and when the potential losses from accepting membership are relatively insignificant ([Thigpen, 1984](#)).

When considering membership, it is important to strike a balance between the principle of mutual aid and the need to protect the community. However, there is no one-size-fits-all principle that can be applied universally. Resource availability can play a role in certain situations. However, when denying shelter and sending refugees back to their countries of origin under this principle could potentially lead to loss of life, then the entitlement to seek refuge seems to be an unquestionable right ([Walzer, 1983](#)). In addition, states have obligations towards those in need under the principle of mutual aid, which greatly limits their freedom to establish membership rules. According to Walzer, it is crucial for states to embrace refugees, particularly those for whom the state is accountable due to their unfortunate circumstances. He offers numerous illustrations concerning the acceptance of refugees ([J. T. Reiner, 2020](#)).

Walzer suggests that the United States missed an opportunity to accept refugees from Eastern Europe during the Cold War, as they shared ideological alignment with anti-communist dissidents. He argues that accepting Vietnamese refugees is an ethical necessity, given the unjust war in Vietnam and the responsibility of the US for destabilising the region and causing the refugee crisis ([R. Reiner, 2020](#)). This viewpoint is shared by many American leftists, including Walzer.

Walzer emphasises the injustice of states expelling indigenous people, who rightfully belong to the political community. The reason for this is that the core aspect and entitlement of the community is rooted in the individuals' right to live on the land they occupy within their community ([Barkan, 2001](#)).

### **Thirdly: Economic Justice**

According to Michael Walzer, social and economic inequalities are seen as unavoidable hierarchies that cannot be eradicated, but rather need to be managed by embracing the concept of complex equality. Walzer is concerned with the encroachment of powerful economic forces into areas of justice that should be separate. To prevent economic influence from automatically taking control of political power or exclusive healthcare, specific mechanisms are needed for containment ([Gaus,](#)

2000). We will now examine these constraints and mechanisms in detail, exploring them sequentially:

### **Blocked Exchanges and Economic Liberty:**

Walzer discusses the notion of "blocked exchanges" as a way to describe specific social transactions that involve the exchange of money and goods for other social benefits. He argues that these methods should be banned in order to maintain the separation of justice and the distribution of goods based on their social significance. This is accomplished by establishing a distinct boundary between what is available for purchase and what is not (Wolfe, 1989).

Walzer presents a thorough list of exchanges that are not allowed, such as the buying and selling of human beings, political power, the administration of justice, freedom of speech, the right to marry, exemptions from military service, the selling of virtues like forgiveness, and occupations that people turn to out of desperation, where workers are forced to compete for meagre hours, low wages, and inadequate workplace protections. Furthermore, individuals are unable to sell their right to emigrate from the political community once they have fulfilled their material obligations, such as military service. In this list, Walzer aims to define a notion of economic justice that safeguards against the domination of other realms of justice by financial power (Wolfe, 1989).

As stated by Walzer, these exchange restrictions align with widely accepted principles in American society and most liberal nations. However, these laws may vary in different countries, for example, some countries prohibit polygamy while others have legalised the sex trade. He suggests that while societal norms regarding what is allowed or forbidden may differ, there are certain ethical principles that apply universally and cannot be disregarded.

Walzer proceeds to outline a variety of goods and services that can be ethically acquired through monetary means. These encompass a wide range of items such as commodities, consumer products, services, stocks, documents, centres, and commercial projects, among others. These social goods and services are considered

valuable by individuals, as they contribute positively to life. The market offers incentives to boost demand for a variety of desirable items (Sally, 2001) .

Walzer discusses how individuals acquire ownership of goods through production, development, or exchanging cash equivalents. Money functions as a tool for comparing value and facilitating transactions. These functions of money are necessary for acquiring and owning things, which can only be accomplished through effort, reflecting John Locke's concept of combining labour with land. Goods can be exchanged once they are owned, as desire, production, ownership, and exchange are all part of the commodity patterns. Yet, these commodities can exceed their intended scope in various ways, necessitating prompt attention.

Walzer argues that blocked exchanges act as constraints that can be imposed by both government officials and ordinary individuals who are advocating for their interests and asserting their rights. The prohibition of blocked exchanges is grounded in the principles of individual rights, including respect, dignity, and humanity. In addition, prohibiting them promotes a more balanced form of equality. When market distributions go beyond their appropriate boundaries, it may be necessary to consider political redistribution (R. Reiner, 2020).

Walzer recognises the challenge of preventing the economic realm from overpowering other spheres of justice, even in the presence of blocked exchanges. In the political sphere, money and commodities can indirectly influence it through a process known as "indirect purchasing" of political power and positions. In elections, owners of companies and economic institutions can manipulate their workers by using the threat of job loss to influence their voting decisions. This allows them to gain political power by exploiting their employees.

Walzer also highlights the potential risk of transferring meanings of goods from the market to other spheres of justice, whether directly or indirectly. Thus, the system of prohibited exchanges is ineffective in preventing this occurrence. The marketplace has the ability to influence the political realm by redefining the concept of political action on its own terms. Voters then vote as consumers with needs that must be met, rather than as citizens with beliefs that should be honoured. Political parties often rely on marketing strategies to promote their programs, similar to the techniques

employed by economic institutions. Rational discourse may take a backseat in this process (Walzer, 1983).

Market relations are known for their wide-reaching nature. Therefore, an economic system that completely refrains from intervening in the market, much like despotic totalitarianism in the political realm, permeates all aspects of justice and controls all distribution processes. Every social good has the potential to be transformed into a commodity, reflecting the influence of market forces and their impact on society (J. T. Reiner, 2020; Wolfe, 1989).

Walzer condemns exchanges that result in poverty and deprivation, deeming them unfair, even if they are rooted in voluntary transactions between people. This is because they exert control and restrict personal freedom in a society that values intricate fairness. Thus, it is essential to prohibit them in order to uphold a balanced notion of personal freedom within society and to avoid the potential for excessive control that they can bring about (Karimi Nodehi, 2021).

For Walzer, it is the responsibility of the welfare state to ensure that its citizens have their basic needs met, as these needs are crucial in alleviating deprivation. He also highlights the importance of implementing legislation that promotes equitable and unrestricted individual and collective unions, exchanges, and transactions. In addition, it is important to impose certain regulations on the marketplace, including tax systems and laws to prevent monopolies. Ensuring that society meets the basic needs of its members is crucial for the preservation of individual freedom and societal advancement. In this context, the voluntary acceptance of risks becomes meaningful (Walzer, 1983).

### **Industrial Democracy in the Economic Sphere**

Michael Walzer supports Robert Dahl's perspective that if democracy is deemed suitable for governing the state, it should also be deemed suitable for governing economic enterprises. Suggesting otherwise implies that democracy is not justified in governing the state itself (Robert Mayer, 2001).

Based on the concept of distributive justice, Walzer proposes that employees should be granted the freedom to select their own managers, taking into account

various factors. They highlight the prevalent inequities in contemporary work environments when it comes to power dynamics. It is clear that this principle has not been extensively utilised or tested in the economic realm. Although the level of worker participation may differ among various types of organisations, many still maintain a certain level of authority in their operations. The selection of management is not determined by the workers, and work is governed by rules and commands, with minimal or no involvement from employees, which positions them as subjects rather than citizens. This subordinate status contradicts the principles of democracy (Robert Mayer, 2001). Walzer's argument for industrial democracy is based on the idea that goods should be distributed according to a single rule, as each good represents a distinct sphere of justice. According to American culture, the distribution of political power is based on the principle of one person, one vote. Applying this logic, it can be concluded that employees should rightfully hold power in the workplace (Robert Mayer, 2001). Their rationale for industrial democracy aims to accomplish two objectives: firstly, a socialist objective, and secondly, a republican objective (Walzer, 1984):

### **The socialist goal of industrial democracy**

Michael Walzer seeks to achieve a more equitable distribution of economic power by promoting communal ownership relationships. The conversion of private ownership into public ownership is rooted in the belief that inequalities resulting from free markets lead to the poor being compelled to rely on the wealthy, resulting in forms of control and subordination in industry that resemble authoritarian rule in politics. Capital has the ability to exert significant control over productive capacities, thereby gaining immense power over the state (Walzer, 1984).

The author contends that in a society built on intricate equality, the act of acquiring political power within political systems and corporations ought to be forbidden. Although individuals have the right to possess wealth acquired legitimately, it is important to prevent them from using their wealth to buy subordination. In order for distribution mechanisms to operate effectively and autonomously, power must be returned to producers, granting them the freedom to

select their own managers. In order to achieve the traditional principle of distributive justice, it is essential for a socialist society to be democratically structured. This is because only in a democratic socialist system can the principle of dividing spheres be effectively implemented (Robert Mayer, 2001).

According to Walzer, it is crucial for economic institutions to incorporate democratic participation in their decision-making processes. He supports the implementation of progressive taxes on income and wealth to ensure that the benefits are distributed to the less fortunate in society. In a society that values complex equality, it is essential to adopt a democratic socialist approach. This is because democratic socialism is the only system that can effectively uphold the non-domination standard and ensure the cohesiveness of a complex equality society. As a result, any injustices and significant income disparities will diminish (Robert Mayer, 2001; Walzer, 1984).

### **The republican aim of industrial democracy**

Walzer argues that the Republican objective of industrial democracy aligns with his own advocacy for a second goal of industrial democracy. Its main objective is to promote active participation of citizens within the state. Industrial democracy serves as more than just a means of power redistribution in the market. Its institutions aim to foster a robust and efficient political community (Walzer, 1984).

Michael Walzer's objective is to establish a society rooted in solidarity, where the pursuit of a fulfilling life is intertwined with voluntary organisations within civil society. Members of these associations actively contribute to defining their own vision of an ideal society. According to Walzer, industrial democratic institutions motivate individuals to address inequalities in the market (Howard, 1986).

In addition, their goal of promoting and bolstering democracy in economic sectors and institutions is to create a fair society with two key elements: firstly, to reduce power imbalances by improving the living conditions of the most disadvantaged; and secondly, to empower members of society to support and strengthen essential arrangements and institutions in civil society (Van der Veen, 1999).

According to Michael Walzer, it is crucial to establish equitable wages for all workers in order to achieve a just distribution of power in the economic realm. They argue that it is unjust for a small group within economic institutions to have excessive power while the majority have very little. According to [Walzer \(1970\)](#) this inequality would be considered unfair, although employers do have legitimate control within these institutions. Walzer suggests three principles for ensuring health security and welfare in a society: communities should meet the needs of their members according to their own understanding of those needs, resources should be allocated based on the level of need, and equal social membership should be taken into account when distributing these goods.

### Discussion

Michael Walzer's theory of Complex Equality presents challenging and groundbreaking ideas and proposals that stimulate theoretical discussions, diverging from conventional global ethical theories. Through its objective approach to political theory and its consideration of lived reality, the theory inherently embraces a pluralistic and relative nature. It evaluates arguments that rely on abstract global principles to address distributive justice issues. When disputes and conflicts arise in a society where people share culture, traditions, history, and lifestyle, it is difficult to separate individuals from the world they live in and make meaningful ethical judgements. Given the varying interpretations of goods' social meanings, it is possible to find a practical approach to distribution and move away from endless debates about distributive justice on an idealistic level.

Walzer's perspective introduces fresh and captivating notions about distributive justice, managing to present a distinct understanding of justice. His ideas in distributive justice are influenced by the Platonic conception that divides society into three classes: philosopher-rulers, soldiers and guards, and workers. A fair society is realised when every class upholds its position in the social hierarchy, as outlined in their theory of separations of spheres of justice. Regarding the objections and criticisms that need to be addressed, they pertain to several unclear matters that have sparked numerous enquiries. Some of these issues are:

- According to Michael Walzer, the complex equality principle aims to free individuals from domination and interference, while also emphasising the importance of political authority in preserving separate spheres. He fails to provide a clear explanation for the limitations of this protective power, particularly in regards to its inability to intervene in matters of justice, which could result in situations of domination and subordination. In addition, the preservation of distinctions within spheres of justice requires increased political intervention.
- • The concept of equality often perpetuates social disparities between different socioeconomic groups instead of actively addressing them. It is crucial that arguments for social justice are made within and across different spheres, fostering dialogue and understanding. For example, in developing countries, the pressing issue of poverty has highlighted the urgent need for the establishment of social justice throughout societies.
- Michael Walzer's approach can be seen as drawing inspiration from the Marxist method of interpretation. Within this framework, he offers critiques and rejects abstract and holistic principles.
- The significance of "shared understandings" and the loyalty they inspire as a measure of justice, along with their role in upholding state boundaries, lends legitimacy to authoritarian systems in societies with hierarchical structures.
- Their support for the principle of mutual aid motivates indigenous citizens to seek asylum and citizenship in countries like the United States and others that provide assistance, potentially disregarding their own nations.

#### **Implications: Theoretical and practical**

The theory of Michael Walzer expands our understanding of justice, both in practical and theoretical terms. Considering the significance of prior knowledge in determining fairness, it raises doubts about the practicality of universal moral standards. Walzer's approach acknowledges the need for diverse perspectives in different areas of society, promoting a range of opinions. This perspective initiates discussions on ethical relativism, cultural standards, and their impact on justice, as well as the objectives of political power. In a practical sense, Walzer's concepts can



guide legislators towards policies that prioritise justice and are sensitive to the specific circumstances. They can also influence training programs in political science and ethics, as well as inspire interdisciplinary research on complex issues of equity. Exploring the connections between various social spheres presents new opportunities for public discourse, legal frameworks, and initiatives promoting social justice. It has an impact on policies and practices aimed at reducing inequality, as well as on approaches to social welfare, resource allocation, and conflicts. Walzer's theory connects theoretical concepts to practical applications, thus enhancing a more sophisticated and responsive legal system.

### **Limitations and Future Research Indications**

This work emphasises potential areas of study for future researchers. The study utilised an executive descriptive research approach, heavily drawing on existing studies and primarily emphasising the theoretical aspect. Future researchers can explore this issue by using different methodologies like experimental studies or interdisciplinary approaches. This will help to gain a deeper understanding of Michael Walzer's theory of justice and their concept of complex equality. An effective approach is to conduct interviews with policymakers or legal experts who possess a deep understanding of this theory. Hence, this study aims to provide valuable insights that can enhance the practical application of this theory.

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