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As members of an organized society, we expect many things. Importantly, we expect liberty, sufficient healthcare, and justice. We expect to have liberties so long as they don't interfere with the liberties of others. We expect full access to healthcare such that it is practiced with a utilitarian approach. Justice is the glue that holds healthcare and liberty together; and without liberty and healthcare in an organized society, there is no justice.

When one expects liberty from their society, they expect to have the same rights as their fellow societal members no matter their race, age, gender, economic condition, etc. John Rawls refers to this as treating people from behind a "veil of ignorance."¹

Uwe E. Reinhardt brings up an alarming statistic, "[a]t any moment, over 40 million Americans find themselves without health insurance coverage, among them some 10 million children younger than 18 years."² This statistic is largely due to the unnerving economic divide that exists in the United States. The children without healthcare are predominantly in poor families.

Now one can ask, when a poor child without insurance becomes seriously ill, are we to not treat this child simply because his parents cannot afford it? Some would argue that sure, we will treat him and just bill the parents the full cost of the treatment. This family would then face an inevitable downward spiral and the child's pile of cards becomes increasingly stacked against him. Some argue that this child has equal access to healthcare, but that simply isn't the reality. This child therefore has less liberties and inequitable access to healthcare in contrast to other citizens and thus true justice is not upheld.

¹ Ronald Munson, Intervention and Reflection: Basic Issues in Medical Ethics, 8th Edition, pp.760

² Munson, pp.530

In John Rawls's Theory of Justice, he suspects that members of a society "would recognize that we have duties both to ourselves and to others."³ He also suspects that they would "want to take measures to see that their interests are protected"³ if they are incapable of acting or deciding for themselves. He presumes that they would do the same for others they, themselves, know. Ronald Munson suggests that Rawls thus "approves a form of paternalism: others should act for us when we are unable to act for ourselves."³ From this perspective, we see that the majority would prefer to provide to society as it does to them.

In a system where we are required to purchase health insurance, we would be providing to society capital in exchange for equal access to healthcare. Is this then infringing on one's liberty? This argument would suggest that requiring us to pay taxes merely to be a citizen must, too, infringe upon our liberties.

As millions of Americans suffer, America's healthcare system exists in an unjust state. To require citizens to purchase health insurance, would be at least one step closer to justice and equal access to healthcare.

³ Munson, pp.761

Works Cited

Munson, Ronald. "Rawls's Theory of Justice." Intervention and Reflection: Basic Issues in Medical Ethics. 8th ed. Thomson Wadsworth, 2008. 759-761.

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