John Rawls claims that society should be built on justice, and all other virtues should come after and only if they are in accordance with justice that we had set as the basis of society. No theory should be left unquestioned and the same goes for laws and institutions, as they are realistically defined solely by the current society and the level of development of the human mind and conscience at that given moment, therefore may not be fitting to a society in different circumstances. Justice is consistent, it never changes, but our understanding of it does. That is why justice should be the base of institutions. I strongly agree with this statement.

Justice is a complicated and, dare I say, an infamous concept. Many philosophers throughout history have tried to define it and there still isn’t a firm definition that everyone has accepted. It is the main subject of Plato’s Republic, and there it is nicely shown how justice can be treated as the foundation of society, as they smoothly go from trying to define the term itself to organizing the ideal state in different conditions. But we cannot take one book as the proof of a thesis, as we cannot take one functional state as the proof that an unjust state can work.

It is a fact that an unjust state can be fairly developed and efficient. Let us take Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire as two most intuitive examples. Compared to most of today’s states, one can argue that they were quite unjust, as slavery was legal, and it even was fundamental to development of both states. Yet those are amongst the states which were superior to most others in that point in history. Every branch of economy was highly developed for that time. Also we all feel influences from their cultures daily, and most of the laws of modern society are based on the laws and rules of the two countries. But what can we also say about those two civilizations? They no longer exist. They were defeated by the new. The same can be said for the slavery in USA. The state still exists, but the laws were definitely revised as they did not satisfy the society. And as for modern countries, most of the ones with slave system are not amongst the most developed.

There are also many examples of theories which were not true, and were revised. Humans by nature seek the truth, but under the influence of opinions we can get side-tracked into believing something untrue. For an example, people believed the Earth was flat as it had seemed quite intuitive, and it still does. But that is not true, and we have firm evidence of that, not only theoretical but physical as well (photos, videos). Even so, there are still many people who believe
the flat Earth theory. Religion is also an example, but there is no proven right side in that debate. It is a fact that religion has come to be because people were not able to explain some phenomena. Today we can mostly explain what is happening around us. So what keeps some of us religious? Well, there are people who actually do believe there is something or someone in charge of everything. But I also think there are many people who are in a dilemma and what drives some into believing is, I think, fear of the inevitable death we all face. I know for certain that it is what makes some even atheistic people religious as I was a firm believer of immortality of souls just because I didn’t want to accept the fact that my existence will come to an end.

Thus we can conclude that system of thought, as social institutions, is not ideal, and will always be subjected to personal opinions and preference. But what we can also conclude is that both will always tend to gradually move towards the unreachable and ideal. I believe that the ideal will never be reached (that institutions will ever be purely based on justice, nor that our system of thoughts will be based on truth), but I definitely imagine a free justice-ridden society to be what we should all lean towards and that is why I agree with this citation. I’d also argue that the fact that human conscience will never be perfect and pure is the reason we will never truly understand justice, as it requires the ideal mind to be fully understood.