RC Workshop | Nikita Ma'am | Sept 3

Special class

RODHA • Sept 3, 2025

Rodha

RC Workshop

-Nikita Gupta

Passage 1

Psychology +

Behavioural Economics

Predictably Irrational

The Upside of Irrationality

Irrational Exuberance

~~Nudge~~ Nudge

As a supplier of momentary relief, the Great Depression seems an unlikely candidate. But when it turns up on page 363 of Walter Scheidel's "The Great Leveler" it feels oddly welcome. For once – and it is only once, for no other recession in American history boasts the same achievement – real wages rise and the incomes of the most affluent fall to a degree that has a "powerful impact on economic inequality".

richest

Only four things, Mr Scheidel argues, cause large-scale levelling. Epidemics and pandemics can do it, as the Black Death did when it changed the relative values of land and labour in late medieval Europe. So can the complete collapse of whole states and economic systems, as at the end of the Tang dynasty in China and the disintegration of the western Roman Empire. When everyone is pauperised, the rich lose most. Total revolution, of the Russian or Chinese sort, fits the bill. So does the 20th-century sibling of such revolutions: the war of mass-mobilisation.

beggar

And that is about it. Financial crises increase inequality as often as they decrease it. Political reforms are mostly ineffectual, in part because they are often aimed at the balance of power between the straightforwardly wealthy and the politically powerful, rather than the lot of the have-nots. Land reform, debt relief and the emancipation of slaves will not necessarily buck the trend much, though their chances of doing so increase a bit if they are violent. But violence does not in itself lead to greater equality, except on a massive scale.

Perhaps the most fascinating part of this book is the careful accumulation of evidence showing that mass-mobilisation warfare was the defining underlying cause of the unprecedented decrease in inequality seen across much of the Western world between 1910 and 1970 (though the merry old Great Depression lent an unusual helping hand). By demanding sacrifice from all, the deployment of national resources on such a scale under such circumstances provides an unusually strong case for soaking the rich.

Income taxes and property taxes rose spectacularly during both world wars (the top income-tax rate reached 94% in America in 1944, with property taxes peaking at 77% in 1941). Physical damage to capital goods slashed the assets of the wealthy, too, as did post-war inflations. The wars also drove up membership in trade unions – one of the war-related factors that played a part in keeping inequality low for a generation after 1945 before it started to climb back up in the 1980s.

Catastrophic levelling will be less likely in future. Pandemics are a real risk, but plagues similar in impact to the Black Death are not. Nor are total revolutions and wars fought over years by armies of millions. On top of that, since the Industrial Revolution, general prosperity, regardless of inequality, has risen. And in past decades, global inequality has fallen.

There are two other possibilities. One is to note that historical circumstances change. Is it not possible that another less horrible but equally profound transformation in the way that people and nations get along with each other, or fail to, is yet to come? If, for example, increasingly economically important non-human intelligences decided that they would rather not be owned by anyone? The other possibility is that some may see civilizational collapse as a price worth paying for the Utopia they might build in the rubble – or may just like to see the world burn.

Schadenfreude nihilists (n)

The Great Depression offers momentary relief according to the author because:

A. it is a rare example of a recession reducing inequality.

B. it is not one of the four causes of large-scale levelling. → True

C. financial crises increase inequality.

D. it led to a universal increase in minimum wages

Politicians ↕ Businesspeople

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World wars contributed to income equality in all the following ways EXCEPT:

A. income and property taxes were on the ascent.
B. physical damage to goods and inflation adversely affected affluence.
C. trade union memberships led to a rise in wages.
D. wars provided a strong case for soaking the rich

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Which of the following, if true, will weaken the author's argument about catastrophic levelling?

A. The threat of a nuclear war that could potentially wipe off entire civilizations is unreal.

B. We do not have enough medical technology to restrict breaking out of epidemics.

C. There has been an increase in the overall standard of living since the Second World War.

D. We can't deny the possibility of relative values of land and labour getting upset by large-scale epidemics.

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The author thinks political reforms are ineffective because:

A. political reforms do not target the less privileged.
B. they increase inequality as much as they decrease it.
C. they are not intended to really bring about reforms.
D. land reforms and debt-relief are ineffective unless accompanied by violence

Distractr

Passage 2

40 mins

hegemonic
Eurocentric

Sweeping → Generalising

2 × 8 = 16 mins

16 min

3 RC / 4 RC

10 mins per RC

4 mins

30 + 10

RC

VA

Context / Background / Passage

7
28
4

Context for the Q

6

Q

Context 7 - 8

argument

Answer

keypt

Contexts

One of the great unexplained wonders of human history is that written philosophy first flowered entirely separately in different parts of the globe at more or less the same time. The origins of Indian, Chinese and ancient Greek philosophy, as well as Buddhism, can all be traced back to a period of roughly 300 years, beginning in the 8th century BC.

These early philosophies have shaped the different ways people worship, live and think about the big questions that concern us all. Most people do not consciously articulate the philosophical assumptions they have absorbed and are often not even aware that they have any, but assumptions about the nature of self, ethics, sources of knowledge and the goals of life are deeply embedded in our cultures and frame our thinking without our being aware of them.

Yet, for all the varied and rich philosophical traditions across the world, the western philosophy I have studied for more than 30 years – based entirely on canonical western texts – is presented as the universal philosophy, the ultimate inquiry into human understanding. Comparative philosophy – study in two or more philosophical traditions – is left almost entirely to people working in anthropology or cultural studies. This abdication of interest assumes that comparative philosophy might help us to understand the intellectual cultures of India, China or the Muslim world, but not the human condition.

This has become something of an embarrassment for me. Until a few years ago, I knew virtually nothing about anything other than western philosophy, a tradition that stretches from the ancient Greeks to the great universities of Europe and the US. Recently and belatedly, I have been exploring the great classical philosophies of the rest of the world, travelling across continents to encounter them first-hand. It has been the most rewarding intellectual journey of my life.

My philosophical journey has convinced me that we cannot understand ourselves if we do not understand others. Getting to know others requires avoiding the twin dangers of overestimating either how much we have in common or how much divides us. Our shared humanity and the perennial problems of life mean that we can always learn from and identify with the thoughts and practices of others, no matter how alien they might at first appear. At the same time, differences in ways of thinking can be both deep and subtle. If we assume too readily that we can see things from others' points of view, we end up seeing them from merely a variation of our own.

To travel around the world's philosophies is an opportunity to challenge the beliefs and ways of thinking we take for granted. By gaining greater knowledge of how others think, we can become less certain of the knowledge we think we have, which is always the first step to greater understanding.

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Comparative philosophy is left to people working in anthropology or cultural studies because:

A. there is no interest left in comparing philosophical traditions.

B. it is important to understand the intellectual cultures of India, China or the Muslim world.

C. human condition is more related to anthropology than to universal philosophy.

D. study of different philosophical traditions are thought to throw light on cultures rather than on humanity.

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The author feels that we can get to know ourselves if:

A. we do not overestimate how much unites or separates humanity.

B. we do not overestimate how much all philosophies have in common.

C. we do not overestimate the deep and subtle differences in our thinking.

D. we do not overestimate the perennial problems others faces in life.

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Which of the following is a study the author is likely to advocate?

A. A study that determines the similarities between philosophical traditions.

B. A study that determines the differences between philosophical traditions.

C. A study that compares various philosophical traditions.

D. A study of the salient features of Eastern philosophical traditions.

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The philosophical assumptions absorbed by people who do not consciously articulate them are associated to:

A. the ways in which people worship, live and think about big questions.

B. moralities, knowledge and the purpose of life.

C. the cultural assumptions deeply embedded in our philosophies.

D. assumptions we consciously adopt to frame our thinking.

New

Articles

30s

20s

3 sections

Commonalities

S & W

Rodha

Level of RC

Topic Tests

PYPs
GMAT
OGs
LSAT
RCs

Thank you ☺

Argument

P. + A → C

Story

IRC

Q1

a

B

Y

a)
b)
c)
d)