20244352

**Q**

**Explain how Rawls's principles of justice can be interpreted so as to make them more left-wing (that is to say, more economically egalitarian) or more right-wing (that is to say, less economically egalitarian), and offer one reason supporting whichever interpretation you find more attractive (setting aside the question of what Rawls himself intended).**

**A**

First, we have Rawls’ left leaning interpretation of his work. Rawls focuses on how to distribute wealth most fairly as to make the person worst off have the highest gain in wealth possible — while maintaining the preceding monetary hierarchy. This is known as the Difference Principle. As for how to possibly implement this scheme, Rawls imagines a Property-Owning Democracy based on Liberal Socialism — notably *not* welfare state capitalism — where macro-economic policy would be enacted in order to distribute wealth more fairly. these policies include taxes on gifts and inheritance as to limit the concentration of wealth within families, or limits on campaign spending/donations. Specifically, the limit on political campaign finances insulates the political system from the free market, allowing it to offer fair and equal opportunity for all those who want to participate in politics. Moreover it levels the playing field in terms of who has influence over politicians, as it should be their constituents rather than wealthy businesses. The government would also invest a large sum into public works, education, social insurance, and welfare as to be able to offer a strong social-economic cushion to fall back on. furthermore, in Rawls’ proposed scheme, the government would put in place macro-economic policy that would aim to achieve full employment, which may include government subsidized labour or other socialist policies. In essence, a left interpretation of Rawls’ principles of justice would create a social democracy that would have a high tax rate in exchange for government regulation and intervention in the economy so as to provide fair and equal opportunity to all citizens.

On the other side of the coin, we have people like Tomasi who interpret Rawls’ work from a conservative perspective. Tomasi’s interpretation of the distribution principle is not to distribute wealth so that the worst off have the most gain, but rather focuses on maximizing long term growth for the worst off. That is, to sacrifice equality in the present for larger potential income in the future. The way Tomasi would propose doing this is by implementing an economic policy of “democratic lassiez-faire,” which prioritizes the freedom of the market. research from the Fraser Institute suggests that the more ‘free’ a given economy is, the faster it grows. moreover, data suggests that aggregate economic growth is correlated with growth in those who are the worst off. In ideal conditions, this policy has been shown to increase the wealth of the worst off, more so than in the liberal interpretation, but does not address the huge wealth inequality that is still present. In terms of labour, the conservative interpretation of Rawls’ theory calls for policy that would promote freedom of contract rather than fair and equal opportunity, in order to intervene in the economy as little as possible. The theoretical argument that conservatives make for this hands-off approach to capitalism is that they see economic rights to be just as fundamental as rights to property or liberty. One clarification to make is that this conservative interpretation of Rawls still promotes a welfare system, just a less extensive one. Finally, it is important to note that conservatives do not equate this system of “free market fairness” to the older one of “trickle down economics,” as it puts in place checks and balances to assure that the market is both free *and* fair. In summary, the conservative interpretation of Rawls’ work is one of a market democracy with democratic lassiez-faire policy that allows the market to be free and as a result have a larger growth rate that benefits the worst off.

If I had to choose one of these systems of government to live under, I believe I would choose the liberal interpretation for a simple reason: if one lives in a state where there is a vast wealth inequality, then the rich would have a large passive, coercive effect on both citizens and government. this would be an unstable configuration that would eventually collapse into a form of oligarchy where the rich used their wealth and influence to remove the measures put in place to protect the poor .

20244352

**Q**

**Explain how the concept of liberty can be used to argue for equalizing economic redistribution (or for other social policies commonly labelled as progressive), and offer one criticism of such arguments.**

**A**

One way to legitimize equalizing economic distribution in terms of liberty is Berlin’s ideas of poverty and unfreedom. According to Berlin, its possible that if a person does not have the means to afford something that is legal to purchase — a piece of cheese, a private island, a university education — then they have as little freedom than if purchasing these things were banned by law. This is not to say that someone of a similarly vulnerable state, like someone born to be in a wheelchair, lacks freedom the same way as a person with lesser means does. The key difference is that one having a lack of money is due to others having more, and as such, they are coerced by these people; infringing on one’s liberty. Poverty can only equate to unfreedom only if it is caused by other humans or social arrangements.

Furthermore, one could apply the concept of liberty to not only the poor, but also those who may not be in poverty, but lack the adequate conditions for the full utilization of their liberty. Someone who is half naked and illiterate has no use for political freedom or non intervention from the government. This problem of liberty could effectively be solved by better funding for public and social services.

Finally there is the problem of passive coercion. In a given situation where there is a very wealthy person and a worse off one, the wealthy person would have a certain degree of influence over the other merely because of the wealth disparity. Moreover, they can use their wealth to coerce this person even more directly, like a bribe or a gift. This infringement on liberty *could* only affect one person, but in reality, wealthy people are not intent on coercing the man on the street. Instead, the wealthy person would much rather coerce a celebrity or politician who has influence over millions and as such, could coerce those millions into being governed by laws chosen for them by a wealthy few. A solution to this may not be redistributing wealth, but merely insulating politics from wealth by closely restricting the amount that is able to be donated to or spent on political campaigns.

As a rebuttal to these claims I will first address the principle of poverty as unfreedom. Firstly, while I believe its true that being in poverty is an unfreedom, I do not believe it is coercion by other people simply because money is essentially controlled by everyone as the economy is an open one. Therefore, if one were to define being coerced as having another human being involved, then any transaction or amount of wealth would be caused by coercion as long as one were poor. On the point of adequate conditions for freedom, while I believe its true that something like political freedom is quite useless for someone without adequate prerequisites to function in society; I also believe that if one were given freedom to an extent where they did not need to properly function in society, then they have all the freedom they could ever need. Finally, on the topic of coercion by wealth, the idea that one can influence another using wealth is a well known political strategy. The problem here is that, if one were to limit the money that could be funneled into a political campaign then one would also be infringing on the liberty of a politician to accept money to run for office, but it would also infringe on the wealthy persons liberty to express their opinion; albeit in a coercive way in its self.

20244352

**Q**

**Explain what you think are the two most important objections to making reparations for historic injustice (by which I mean injustices committed in previous generations), and how advocates of reparations attempt to overcome these objections. In order to keep the question manageable in scope, you need only identify the two most important objections to reparations, and the most important responses to these two objections.**

**A**

Firstly, in opposition to Nozick’s principle of rectification, Waldron states that it is unnecessary and possibly unconstructive to attempt to restore the counterfactual. Waldron has three distinct reasons for this. First is the problem of indeterminacy which essentially states: because of how long it has been since the injustice was committed, the information pertaining to it may be incomplete or non-existent, making reparations possibly illegitimate. Second is the problem of free will which says: attempting to approximate the counterfactual can be imprecise, as the amount of people involved is proportional to the free will exercised in the system. Similarly, free will makes an action occurring much less predictable and the counterfactual exponentially more difficult to approximate. Lastly is the problem of non-identity: if the injustice were to have never occurred, then the course of time would have been completely altered and the children who are affected by the injustice may not have been born, and thus the counterfactual cannot be fulfilled. it is for these reasons that Waldron disapproves of historic reparations. However, it is Waldron’s belief that groups are so affected by historic injustice that merely returning what was taken would be sufficient to rectify the previous discrimination as it is effectively direct reparations.

Waldron’s second objection to Nozick’s argument was that, perhaps a group’s land who’s was stolen a century ago lacks the connection that they one had to it and thus do not have a legitimate claim over it ­— relative to those currently inhabiting it. This is partially based on Locke’s theory of property — more specifically, appropriation — that states that one can appropriate something ‘owned’ by nature by enmeshing one’s self with it through labour. For example, by Waldron’s ideas one could argue that descendants of settlers have more claim over the ancestral lands stolen by Europeans than the descendants of native people, as Europeans have put more labour into the land — such as buildings and infrastructure — than their native counterparts. It is the loss of connection by natives that legitimizes the claims of the Europeans’ and thus reparations need not be made.

To address Waldron’s aversion to counterfactual reparations, Sanderson rebuts this reasoning with some of his own. His first response was simply that courts use counterfactual analysis often in cases as to assess damages, and thus thee is precedent to do so with historic injustice. His second response was simply that counterfactual analysis is unnecessary. This is because if land was stolen from a person, no matter if they would have sold their land or given it away — as finding the counterfactual may insinuate — the descendants of this person should still be given back the land. This is because, no matter what would have happened if the land wasn’t stolen, it was and thus should be given back to the original owners so the *can* sell it, instead of just assuming they would.

Sanderson’s second rebuttal was to Waldron’s theory of diminishing entitlements. Waldron effectively argues, in the words of professor Andrew Lister: “use it or you lose it”(W8L1). And although there is some precedent in common law for things like this — known as “adverse possession” — they require that they were passively acquired and cannot be done so forcibly; which in the case of Europeans, they did. moreover, Sanderson argues that European settlers cannot claim the land in the Americas simply because it was empty as, that would imply leaving your house in the morning would mean you lose the rights to your house, which is utterly absurd.