Nussbaumer Role Sheet

**Core Beliefs**

You are a proponent of Martha Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach to justice as outlined in her essay, “Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice.” This paper is the foundation of your beliefs, your thinking, and your behavior. Sometimes it may be pretty obvious how Nussbaum’s view requires you to speak and act. Other times, however, it may be unclear how to apply her view to current political issues. In such cases, you will need to decide for yourself what Nussbaum’s view requires you to say or do. So long as your speech and actions don’t contradict Nussbaum’s view, you will be living up to your role.

The basic idea of your approach is that *there are 10 central capabilities to which each person is entitled*. Nussbaum offers a Kantian rationale for this idea: people have “dignity” or intrinsic moral value, which entitles them to being treated as ends-in-themselves and never as mere means (i.e., with respect), where to treat them in this way is to secure the 10 fundamental capabilities for them. Since each person is entitled to these 10 capabilities, justice demands that everyone have them, and it’s a necessary condition of a just society that these 10 capabilities are secured for everyone. You therefore endorse a Kantian form of moral equality: each person is equally entitled to the 10 central capabilities because they each have dignity. You also endorse a clear requirement of a just society: the 10 central capabilities must be secured for everyone.

According to Nussbaum, justice demands that we have at least the following capabilities:

(1) *Life:* we should be able to live a human life of normal length rather than dying prematurely or before life isn’t worth living.

(2) *Bodily health:* we should be able to have good health along with adequate nourishment and shelter. (3) *Bodily integrity*: we should be able to move about and be secure against violent assault; and we should have opportunities for sexual satisfaction and reproductive choice.

(4) *Senses, imagination, and thought*: we should be able to use the senses, imagine, think, and reason in ways informed and shaped by adequate education; we should be able to think, speak, and practice religion freely; and we should be able to experience pleasure and avoid pain.

(5) *Emotions*: we should be able to love and grieve, and to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger.

(6) *Practical Reason*: we should be able to envision a good life and plan well for our own lives.

(7) *Affiliation*: we should be able to live with and show concern for others, and to interact with others and imagine their situations; and we should be able to live with self-respect and dignity, and without humiliation or discrimination.

(8) *Other species*: we should be able to live with and care for other animals, plants, and nature.

(9) *Play*: we should be able to laugh, play, and enjoy recreational activities.

(10) *Environmental control*: we should be able to participate effectively in political activities that govern our lives (political control); and we should able to hold property and seek employment on an equal basis with others, to live without unwarranted search and seizure, and to work as a human being and enter into meaningful relationships with other workers (material control).

Your core values of freedom, equality, and respect are likely to appeal to your peers, and your capabilities secure many basic rights and freedoms that all three major factions and at least most other indeterminates will endorse as well (e.g., the right against violent assault), so all of these points of commonality are good to utilize when trying to strike up agreements or forge alliances with others. Like the Utilitarians and the Uniform Liberals, you believe in the necessity of the welfare state. In fact, you favor a strong or extensive welfare state because people are entitled to adequate nutrition, shelter, and good health.

Though your peers will likely agree with the idea that people should be treated with respect, they might disagree with you on what it means to treat people with respect. Your idea of what it means for people to be respected—that they each have secured the 10 central capabilities—requires a lot of material and institutional support that gives people abilities that they wouldn’t have on their own, and this probably requires a rather large and extensive governmental body that significantly intervenes in our lives, which will probably not sit well with the Small Government Faction.

**Major Goals**

Your major goal is to secure as much as possible the 10 central capabilities for everyone. Compromises in line with this goal are acceptable, and you can introduce your own legislation to promote this goal. Your first vote will be on whether to raise or lower national welfare provisions, and even though you’ll favor a strong welfare state given that, for you, people are entitled to adequate nutrition, shelter, and good health, you’ll have to figure out which policy option is called for by your goal of securing the 10 central capabilities. The second vote will likely be on immigration policy, while the third vote will likely be on minority rights, so in each case you’ll need to figure out and endorse whatever policy option, in your judgment, does the best job of promoting your goal.

Unlike some other characters, you have a separate issue of concern. The United Nations will soon review its Human Development Index (HDI), an international ranking of countries according to their level of development. The notion of development that the HDI has traditionally employed is based on capabilities, reflecting the involvement of Amartya Sen. The review, however, means there is a real possibility that that may change. You believe that the HDI should be not be revised but rather should continue to be broadly based on the notion of capabilities. It will be a major victory for you if you can convince the assembly to pass a resolution, written by you, stating as much. The purpose of doing so will be to send a message to the UN in the hope of influence its review.

Note that your resolution does not need to outline the particulars of the HDI in any detail: your concern is with the philosophy of its overall approach. So long as you can convince the assembly to endorse your broad philosophy as it pertains to the HDI, you will have achieved a significant personal victory. But be warned: there may be other players in the game who want the HDI to take a different approach. Remember that you can bargain with factions and other indeterminates, possibly voting to support a measure of theirs in return for their support of yours.

More information on the HDI is available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev>. See in particular the section, “Intellectual and Historical Underpinnings.”

**Tips and Strategies**

Although you favor an extensive welfare state to secure the 10 central capabilities to which people are entitled, it’s not always clear what policy your goal of securing these capabilities endorses. The indeterminacy of what your goal calls for other than trying to secure the 10 central capabilities gives you flexibility and is what makes you a true indeterminate on the game’s central issues.

As a follower of Nussbaum, you have the potential for a wide range of alliances. Like Anderson, you endorse Sen’s Capabilities Approach to justice. Like the Utilitarian, you care about access to welfare. Like all of the three major factions, freedom and equality are core values. Like the Uniform Liberals, you favor the welfare state. Try to find these kinds of commonalities with your peers and use them, if possible, to convince them to support your policy decisions. The better you know the different perspectives of your peers, the better you can convince them, using their own ideas, to agree with your policy decisions. Despite your similarities with the Small Government Faction, they are likely to be your biggest challenge because your view calls for a rather extensive government—one that ensures everyone access to adequate nutrition, shelter, and health care—to secure the 10 central capabilities for all. Accordingly, you would do well to study the Small Government Faction’s (i.e., Nozick’s and Hayek’s) foundational principles and ideas closely so that you will be ready to try to convince them, on their own terms, to agree with your policy decisions.

**Primary Essay:**

Martha Nussbaum. “Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice.” *Feminist Economics* 9.2-3 (2003), 33-59.

**Victory Objectives**

The assembly endorses your HDI proposal: two points

The assembly votes on your HDI proposal (without passing): one point

The assembly endorses an HDI proposal other than yours: minus one point

The assembly passes a resolution on a topic or topics other than the HDI endorsing one or more items on your list of central human capabilities: one point per resolution