Austin Gray

Philosophy 335

Assignment 6

In the second chapter “The Family: Beyond Justice?” in Susan Okin’s book *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, Okin considers how justice should be applied to the gender-structured traditional family. She considers the ideas and arguments from Michael Sandel’s and Allan Bloom who at the time had popular books on the topic. She challenges the claim that the family should be outside the realm of justice because a family should consist of members bound to a higher virtue than justice could require; as was the claim of Sandel. She challenges this notion base on history and evidence that was new at the time that showed that the concept that families are bound by a higher virtue seems to not be true in the majority of cases. As she is exploring the gender roles in the traditionally family and how it is not just she challenges the claim showing that the concept of a higher virtue has failed in the past, by giving example to an 18th century family and a scenario where the wife of a family were to ask for her fair share of the family’s belongings. In addition to this she presents evidence that was coming out showing that a great deal of physical and mental abuse was done within a family that was often serious or fatal. Okin states that to revert to an account of the family as being bound by a “higher virtue” than justice would be grossly ahistorical, and would not accound for the fact that the “higher virtue” is a false ideology that creates an injustice.

This shows that for a traditional liberal that justice should be equal for everyone and that justice should be the baseline for all groups regardless of their stature. Okin’s writing explicate her idea that in order for the family to be just it must allow for the spreading of the burden of all family matters across its participants, whether child rearing, working, cooking, etc. For liberalism this must be held true for all sectors of a society for it to be a just society.