



John Rawls and Deliberative Democracy (sample)

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A Reluctant Geek Academic Guide

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Author's Notes

This guide is for all those who have an interest in democracy, but it should prove especially useful for students who are grappling with the finer points of John Rawls's political thought. If you enjoyed this ebook, look out for *Jürgen Habermas and Deliberative Democracy*, *John Dryzek and Deliberative Democracy*, *Deliberative Democracy Basics*, *Deliberative Democracy Essentials* and *Online Narrative: Interactivity and Storytelling on the Internet*. All of which are available through Amazon, The iBookstore, Smashwords, and all good ebooks vendors.

Rawls and Deliberative Democracy

Rawls's deliberative democracy theory draws heavily from liberal political thought. He argues that the deliberative process need only apply to problems of a constitutional nature or of fundamental political importance. This restriction requires that only citizens who are involved in constitutional or governmental matters be included in political deliberation—namely, judges in courts of law, political candidates, or government officials. Consequently, Rawls's deliberative democracy theory encourages a passive form of citizenship in that the majority of citizens exercise political power only periodically, during government elections.

An Ideal Constitutional Democracy

Rawls's deliberative democracy theory derives from his conception of an ideal constitutional democracy. He articulates his theory of deliberative democracy when he attempts to answer the question, 'what would a reasonably just constitutional democracy be like under reasonably favourable historical conditions?' (Rawls, 1999, p. 11) He labels this ideal a 'realistic utopia' and argues that a deliberative democracy and a well-ordered constitutional democracy are one and the same,

Here I am concerned only with a well-ordered constitutional democracy— a term I used at the outset— understood also as a deliberative democracy. The definitive idea for deliberative democracy is the idea of deliberation itself. When citizens deliberate, they exchange views and debate their supporting reasons concerning public political questions. They suppose that their political opinions may be revised by discussion with other citizens; and therefore these opinions are not simply a fixed outcome of their existing private or non-political interests. It is at this point that public reason is crucial, for it characterises such citizens' reasoning concerning constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice (1999, p. 137).

Three elements form the core of Rawls's theory. The first and defining element is the idea of public reason, which establishes a common principle for deliberation. The second is a constitutional framework that establishes the necessary regulatory institutions. The third, a general acceptance of the idea of public reason, establishes a foundation of commonality within pluralistic societies. In addition, Rawls argues that the only way to assure a deliberative democracy is to meet a further three conditions (1999, p. 139). First, the funding of elections must be public. Second, there should be allowances made for orderly and public deliberation of the issues under consideration. These deliberations should not depend upon funding that could taint the deliberation, whether public or private. Third, Rawls argues that the public should be educated in the basic processes and procedures of constitutional democracy, and have access to information about problems requiring political deliberation. By arguing that a deliberative democracy is an ideal constitutional democracy, Rawls adopts a liberal orientation for his deliberative democracy theory, and establishes structures and institutions usable by citizens who are rational individuals.

Rawls uses the principle of reciprocity, which describes the relationship between free and equal individuals who are also reasonable and rational, to establish the liberal foundations of his theory

A citizen engages in public reason, then, when he or she deliberates within a framework of what he or she regards as the most reasonable political conception of justice, a conception that expresses political values that others, as free and equal citizens might also reasonably be expected reasonably to endorse. Each of us must have principles and guidelines to which we appeal in such a way that this criterion is satisfied (1999, p. 140).

He argues that a family of political conceptions of justice, all of which have three main characteristics, gives the content of public reason. The first characteristic is comprised of the rights, freedoms and opportunities usually associated with a constitutional democracy. The second is the appropriate level of protection for those rights, freedoms and opportunities from conceptions of the general good. The third is the means by which all citizens can access these rights, freedoms and opportunities. Therefore, if citizens are free and equal and the society is just, an individual citizen is engaging in public reason when that citizen sincerely believes he or she is acting within a framework that he or she can reasonably consider fair and just, and that others, also free and equal citizens, could reasonably be expected to endorse. Citizens within Rawls's deliberative

democracy, therefore, have rights, freedoms and protections that support political deliberation. However, the problem of large pluralistic societies means that Rawls needs to introduce measures that can account for irreconcilable differences between individuals and groups within the polity.

The Idea of Public Reason

In order to establish a commonality between participants in political deliberation within a community, Rawls introduces the 'idea of public reason'. At its most fundamental, the idea of public reason establishes the basic moral and political values that exist between citizens and government, and between citizens and other citizens

The idea of public reason specifies at the deepest level the basic moral and political values that are to determine constitutional government's relation to its citizens and their relation to one another. In short, it concerns how the political relation is to be understood. Those who reject constitutional democracy with its criterion of reciprocity will of course reject the very idea of public reason. For them the political relation may be that of friend or foe, to those of a particular religious or secular community or those who are not; or it may be a relentless struggle to win the world for the whole truth. Political liberalism does not engage those who think this way. The zeal to embody the whole truth in politics is incompatible with an idea of public reason that belongs with democratic citizenship (1999, p. 132).

Citizens involved in political deliberation, or judging those who are involved in political deliberation, use the idea of public reason as the 'source' of their reason. Essentially, the idea of public reason is to replace any other doctrine of truth or right when the individual is involved in political deliberation. The commonality achieved by the idea of public reason, therefore, is the commonality of citizenship. Individuals involved in conducting or judging political deliberation do so in their capacity as citizens, and deliberation becomes an activity undertaken in this capacity. While the idea of public reason replaces other doctrines of truth or right when the individual is involved in political deliberation, it does not mean that other doctrines of truth or right cannot inform or influence the idea of public reason. For example, the former Australian Health Minister and now leader of the Australian Liberal Party, Mr Tony Abbot, is a Catholic, but if he is involved in political deliberation and wishes to adhere to the idea of public reason, he must adopt the reasoning of the Australian public.

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About The Author

Dr Hercules Bantas has been teaching and reading political science for the better part of a decade. It is his opinion that he is too often immersed in some weighty tome or other, the authors of which *always* use one thousand words where one hundred words would suffice. It was while juggling no less than three weighty tomes by the same author and trying to understand what the fellow was trying to say that the idea of The Reluctant Geek Guides was born. He is well aware that publishing clearly written and unambiguous guides to important ideas in the human sciences is frowned upon in some circles, but he's going to do it anyway. Despite his well documented grumpiness, Hercules claims to like people and can be contacted by email at [reluctantgeek\[at\]iinet.net.au](mailto:reluctantgeek[at]iinet.net.au).

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Deliberative Democracy Basics (sample) (2010)

This guide covers the basics of deliberative democracy by canvassing a spectrum of theories on the subject. It explains what is unique about deliberative theories of democracy, what they all have in common, as well as how they differ. An excellent introduction to an emerging stream of democratic theory.

Understanding Essay Writing: A Guide to Writing Essays by Someone Who Grades Them (Sample) (2010)

An informative guide on how to write a good essay (written by someone who has graded a heck of a lot of them), it contains essay writing strategies, helpful tips, and a step-by-step process guide. Learn how to get the highest grade possible for your work and avoid the mistakes that so many students make.

Jurgen Habermas and Deliberative Democracy (sample) (2010)

Jurgen Habermas is one of the most influential thinkers of our time. This easy to understand guide summarises his theory of deliberative democracy and covers many of the central concepts such as communicative reason, communicative power, and the ideal speech community. A must for students of Habermas and those with an interest in contemporary democratic thought.

John Dryzek and Deliberative Democracy (sample) (2010)

John Dryzek uses a radical definition of citizenship to outline a transnational public sphere where politics occurs at one remove from the institutions of government. This concise, clearly written guide examines Dryzek's arguments including key concepts such as the de-traditionalisation of societies through globalisation, and the transnational public sphere.

Understanding John Rawls: Justice as Fairness (excerpt) (2010)

This guide explains Rawls's concept of 'justice as fairness'. It covers such topics as the two principles of justice, the principle of fairness, and the difference principle, as well as examining some of the criticisms levelled at Rawls's arguments.

Understanding Plato: 'The Symposium' (sample) (2010)

This guide examines Plato's discussion of love in *The Symposium*. It covers all the speeches, culminating in Alcibiades's drunken homage to Socrates, and examines the moral dimensions Plato attaches to love, as well as key concepts such as Common and Heavenly love.

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Understanding Kant: Concepts and Intuitions (sample) (2011)

This guide examines Kant's theory of knowledge, specifically his arguments for separating human thought into concepts and intuitions. Based on the *Critique of Pure Reason*, this guide covers his critique of empirical and rational thought, and explains key concepts such as a priori judgements, analytic and synthetic judgements, and the difference between pure and empirical concepts.

Understanding Descartes: I am, I exist (2011)

In *Meditations on First Philosophy*, René Descartes uses rational thought to argue that his essence exists in his thoughts alone. He reasons that the mind and body are distinct and separable, and that the mind, as the originator of thought, is what defines the person. This guide will outline the reasoning Descartes' uses in establishing his theory of knowledge that he argues is necessary to form a 'proper foundation' for the sciences and move it away from the medieval systems that were the prevailing orthodoxies of the time.

Understanding Freud: The Unconscious Mind (2011)

A concise guide to Freud's theory of the unconscious mind as outlined in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. Topics covered include the role the unconscious plays in 'parapraxes', the dream-works, neurotic diseases and symptoms, and its central part in psychoanalysis.

Accounting Fundamentals: Financial Statements and the Accounting Equation (Sample) (2011)

This study guide covers the fundamental accounting concepts that form the foundations of the discipline. Using easy to understand language, it deals with basic assumptions, the role and structure of financial statements, and the relationship between assets, liabilities and owner's equity in the accounting equation.

Accounting Fundamentals: The General Journal and the Ledger (sample) (2011)

This study guide explains the roles played by the General Journal and the Ledger in the accounting recording process. Using easy to understand language, it deals with journalizing transactions, posting to the ledger, and the preparation of a trial balance.

Accounting Fundamentals: Adjustments and Closing the Books (sample) (2011)

There are several reasons why an account may need adjustment - to correct an error, for example, or to update a balance before preparing financial reports. However, the nature of accounting requires that every adjustment must be transparent, verifiable, and justifiable. In other words, anyone looking through the accounts should be able to easily identify an adjustment to an account and understand why it was necessary. This guide explains when it is permissible to adjust an account, and how to make that adjustment. It explains the time period assumption, the accrual basis of accounting, as well as the procedure used to 'close the books' at the end of an accounting period.

Love Lust and Petty Crime (Chapters 1 and 2) (2012)

Emmet Storch was an unemployed sponger who thought he had no calling in life. All that changed when he landed a job in the call centre at the monolithic Star Insurance where, from the very first day, he was magnificent. It was as if the very essence of insurance ran through his veins and he and his telephone were as one.irate policyholders found comfort in his soothing words; recalcitrant contractors became polite and respectful.

It would have been perfect if not for his lecherous and treacherous hormones.

A humorous look at love and lust in the iAge where consumerism runs rampant and integrity can go and get stuffed.

Accounting Fundamentals: Inventories and Retail Operations
(Sample) (2012)

Retail operations and the accounting tools used to deal with them are the focus of this essay-length study guide. Arranged in three sections - inventory control methods, accounting for retail operations, and cost flow methods - it explains and demonstrates a range of concepts including perpetual and periodic inventory systems, FIFO and LIFO inventory costing methods, and gross profit.

Virtually Real (Chapter 1) (2012)

Otto was having trouble relating to people, which is why the virtual world of Sword of Valour was so appealing. Here was a world where excitement replaced tedium, where you could kill annoying individuals, and where the level cap kept you from growing old. It seemed like virtual heaven. Sadly, it wasn't. In *Sword of Valour*, you could be whoever you wanted to be. What was puzzling was that everyone seemed to be exactly the same as they were in the real world. The same hang ups, the same egos, the same bloody mindedness. The only real difference, as far as Otto could tell, was that if you killed someone, instead of rotting, he or she complained. It was enough to make a conservative young man unsheathe the virtual daggers and go rogue. A tale about who we think we are, who everybody else thinks we are, who we really are, and who we wish we were.



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