

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

The Value of Political Philosophy

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Rawls, J. (2001). [Section 1]. In E. Kelly (Ed.) *Justice as fairness: A restatement* (pp. 1–5). Belknap Press.

Questions

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. John Rawls considers four roles for political philosophy:

- The practical role (section 1.1),
- The orientational role (section 1.2),
- The reconciliatory role (section 1.3), and
- The realistically utopian role (section 1.4).

What exactly are each of these roles? Are these compelling reasons to take a course, like this, on Political Philosophy?

2. Rawls suggests (in section 1.3) that a contemporary democratic society is neither a community nor an association. Why is that?
3. What does Rawls mean by “the fact of reasonable pluralism” (p. 3, 4)? Do you agree with Rawls that this is an avoidable fact about contemporary democratic societies?

Rawls also seems to believe that this fact is hard for many people to accept. Why is that? Do you agree?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.