**PART 1:** Rawls’ Realistic Utopia Reconstruction

***Sub-argument 1:***

1a: §1.4 (4) “Political philosophy [is] realistically utopian… probing the limits of practicable political possibility.”

1b: §1.4 (4) “Reasonable pluralism limits what is practicably possible under the conditions of our social world.”

**Sub-conclusion 1i**: Reasonable Pluralism will be part of a realistically utopian society.

1c: §1.3 (3) “Part of [Reasonable Pluralism] is the fact of profound and irreconcilable differences in citizens' reasonable comprehensive religious and philosophical conceptions of the world, and in their views of the moral and aesthetic values to be sought in human life.”

**Sub-conclusion 1ii:** Citizens in a realistically utopian society will always have differing beliefs that are workably compatible.

***Sub-argument 2:***

2a: §1.1 Ideal society is a democratic society.

2b: §2 “Justice as fairness should serve as a guide for what a democratic society should perform and value.” (5)

**Sub-conclusion 2i:** Ideal society is outlined through the concept of Justice as Fairness.

2c: §12.3 “Justice as fairness is a form of political liberalism.” (40)

2d: §12.3 Political liberalism answers that the conception of justice must be a political conception…political power is legitimate… [when citizens are] reasonable and rational… [and] so long as there is at least rough agreement here, fair social cooperation among citizens can, we hope, be maintained. (41)

**Sub-conclusion 2ii:** Justice as fairness requires reasonable thought and rough agreement between persons which will maintain his social order.

**Combined Sub Conclusions 1 and 2:** Ideal society which operates through Justice as Fairness requires citizens to have reasonably compatible differences in beliefs.

**Final Conclusion**: Ideal society is realistically utopian.

**PART 2:** Rawls’ argument for why his society is realistically utopian is sprinkled throughout the entire text, implicit, and immense. So, in the argument I focus on just one aspect—reasonable pluralism is a requirement for both a realistic utopia and in his society. The most important parts of the text are where he defines his terms because that allows for the flow of the premises without needing to make major inferences. Further, to guarantee proper flow, I add sub-conclusions to remove any ambiguity. In the first sub-argument, I identified that a major part of realistic utopia as opposed to true utopia is the difference in the opinions and beliefs of the citizens, which he calls Reasonable Pluralism. With one of the major factors of realistic utopia identified, the goal is to find his argument and where it requires reasonable pluralism. So, with the second sub-argument I show that his ideal society (his argument) is a democratic society based on the concept of Justice as Fairness (as is the title of the text). The final step to the argument is simply to find where he implies that Justice as Fairness requires reasonable pluralism which he outlines in §12.

I almost went into the arguments and proofs of his two principles of justice, and further, the importance of the veil of ignorance. As I wrote the proof, I realized that was unnecessary— although it would add additional context and explain further what he believes it would also blow up the scope of the argument resulting in poor flow and confusion. In terms of leaving out words or sections, I only found myself replacing words to turn snippets of a sentence into a proper sentence. The only other moment was 2d— the paragraph would have been incredibly long and confusing without cutting it down.

**PART 3:** In this section I will argue whether Ursula Le Guin would agree with the specific parts of my reconstructed argument of John Rawls. As they are purely speculative, “Le Guin’s” responses will not have direct textual reference— I will be using the general argument that is presented in “The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas” (Omelas), and use textual reference for the comparison in Part 4.

Upon the very first line, 1a, I think Le Guin would not agree with the notion that political philosophy should be pursuing any sort of pseudo-utopia. The argument that Le Guin attempts to make in Omelas is that a pseudo-utopia is only pseudo-; there will be pieces to it that are bad (if not awful). This is why she would say that political philosophy should not be pursuing utopia. Further, I think that Le Guin would say that reasonable pluralism is anything but a limit— it is that which enables a proper society. As to the first conclusions, while Le Guin’s society would also have citizens with “differing beliefs that are workably compatible” she would not want that to be a utopia of any sort. The second part of the argument would have the same thoughts— Le Guin would agree that diversity of thought is important but not that it would lead to a utopia. Part 4 will explain these comparisons further.

The last thing I have yet to touch on are Rawls’ two Principles of Justice which are important to the comparison although they did not appear in the reconstruction. I do think Le Guin would agree an ideal society would have that each person has an indefeasible, equal claim to basic liberties (Rawls, 42) and that everyone should have the same ability to gain office or high positions. However, I do not think she would want social and economic inequalities to be the reason the preceding is possible, nor would she believe that they could exist to benefit the least-advantaged member of society (Rawls, 42-43).

**PART 4:**  In this section I will explain that Ursula Le Guin’s beliefs about Omelas are not compatible with John Rawls’ argument that a realistically utopian just society (of which he would define his society) is ideal. In “The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas” Le Guin outlines what appears to be a true utopia but upon learning of the child in constant suffering we learn that it is a pseudo-utopia— which is framed in a very dark way. In Omelas, upon learning of the suffering child Le Guin writes that “[the ones who find him] may brood over it for weeks or years. But as time goes on they begin to realize that even if the child could be released, it would not get much good of its freedom,” (Le Guin, 4). This is where I primarily identify the incompatibility since I see that as the “reasonable” side of the “reasonable pluralism.” The members of the society that stay in Omelas are convincing themselves to stay in the society even though their initial ethical beliefs are not compatible with the suffering of the child (therefore merging into the pseudo-hivemind of rough agreement (Rawls, 41)). Further, Le Guin outlines how the citizens, upon learning of the children, know they are happy at the sake of the suffering of others; they know they are breaking their ethical code (Le Guin, 4). She implies that only those that walk away, escaping the benefits that come from the suffering of the child, are sticking to their ethical code and escaping the society that uses the extreme inequality of the child to benefit the rest of Omelas. Rawls’ society requires everyone to bend their moral code to ‘roughly agree’ and proceed to thrive in their realistic utopia while Le Guin’s society would not.

**PART 5:** I think I agree with Rawls only to the same extent Le Guin would agree with Rawls as I identified in Part 4. Many of the premises of the arguments that Rawls makes I agree with (like the importance of pluralism and equal rights for citizens). However, I often find a few of the premises lead to conclusions that I find much less compelling. For example, in his pursuit of the best outcome for the least advantaged group he does not care about extreme economic disparity— his preference for distribution of wealth is as follows:

(A: 400, B: 400, C:11) > (A:10, B:10, C:10)

While this does conceptually give the best conditions for the lowest class it also outlines Le Guin’s disagreement as it is a model of Omelas. In my eyes, comfort hinging on the relative extreme discomfort of others is not conducive to a thriving and just society. Working hard and suffering together with those around you to build up a society may be less comfortable for some, but it is not fair, and it is not just. Rawls’ model, and the city of Omelas, describes the USA much better than I wish it did. The rich get richer while the poor cannot find their footing (even if they are maybe better off than poverty in some other countries). The way to leave Omelas or even to destroy it, the way I wish to go, is to redistribute and to assist, to raise up the poor and the disadvantaged, and to do everything we can to work towards goals together.

Works Cited

Le Guin, Ursula K. " The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas.”

Rawls, John. Justice as Fairness: A Restatement. Edited by Erin Kelly, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.