

Difference and Inclusive Democracy: Iris Marion Young's Critique of the Rawlsian Theory of Justice

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Abstract

Whose responsibility is justice? John Rawls's social contract theory is anchored on the idea of impartiality. I will argue, using Iris Marion Young's politics of difference that an impartial starting point may not work in view of hegemonic positions in the social hierarchy which gives undue advantages to those who are in positions of power. Brian Barry's notion of desert is not fair insofar as it neglects the concrete historical situations that people may be born into. For Young, democratic inclusion means sensitivity to the concrete situated and historical contexts that people are born since addressing structural injustice means favoring the marginalized and oppressed. But beyond Young, I would argue that social justice deems as imperative that we hold people fully accountable for structural abuses. As an improvement of Young's position, it is my position that structural reform is meant to advance the claim that people who are disadvantaged in society deserve more than others.

Keywords: Iris Marion Young, difference and inclusive democracy, John Rawls, Justice

Introduction

The basic liberties that people enjoy, e.g. 'freedom of speech,' 'freedom of assembly,' 'freedom of religion,' etc., under democratic rule, characterize the beauty and value of our social and political existence. Nothing is more beautiful than the fullest enjoyment of these liberties, for they truly define for us our moral worth as persons. The very purpose of society is the realization of that moral ideal where each human being is able to realize most fully the basic meaning of his humanity. In a well-ordered society governed by just laws, rules, and policies, where people are able to truly enjoy their basic rights and entitlements, peaceful co-existence will serve as the very background for the actualization of the pursuit of happiness that each person will seek in his life.

John Rawls, the venerable mentor to thinkers such as Thomas Nagel, Martha Nussbaum, and Thomas Pogge, is often considered as the most important American political philosopher of the 20th century. Rawls revived political philosophy after the publication of *A Theory of Justice* in 1971. From then on, there have been many excellent criticisms on the Rawlsian formulation of a liberal theory of justice (Nozick 1974; Sandel 1982; Walzer 1983; Taylor 1985; Pogge 1989; Young 1990; Sen 1992; Dworkin 2000; Young 2000), notably on the normative content of the two principles of justice. Yet, these criticisms do not downplay the greatness of the work of John Rawls. Rather, they amplify the profound ideas that Rawls have reflected upon.

However, this writer humbly finds that less attention has been given to the liberal theory's purportedly egalitarian starting point. It is for this reason that this study is being undertaken. The inability of the liberal tradition and its various formulations to address the problem of massive social and economic inequalities in many societies raises numerous questions on Rawls's theory. Specifically, the questionability of the abstract and ahistorical nature of the original position is at the heart of this investigation. This

writer will argue that the normative justification for the Rawlsian starting point is insufficient to address the problem of structural injustices because it is indifferent to the actual contexts or situations of persons in any given society.

The philosophical itinerary of this inquiry will not seek to offer an alternative theory of justice to that of Rawls. Instead, it will attempt to refine the procedural requirements¹ in the Rawlsian starting point and reconstruct its normative content in order to include situated and historical contexts. It will revise the ahistorical nature of the Rawlsian 'original position', using the context of a 'politics of difference', by taking into account the reality of unfair 'positional differences' in society.²

The basic contention of this study is that an impartial starting point will never guarantee the equitable distribution of 'primary social goods'. In a way, the Rawlsian original position is only good on paper because it fails to recognize the truth of oppressive socio-economic structures, deep-seated cultural bias and other obvious 'positional differences' in the society, as found for instance in the 'social division of labor' (Young 1990; Young 2002), which according to Iris Marion Young, will prevent the pursuit and realization of a just socio-economic order.

¹ John Rawls indicates that his position is limited to a political conception of justice and does not appeal to a more comprehensive moral doctrine or metaphysical justification. He says, "justice as fairness starts from within a political tradition and takes as its fundamental idea that of society as a fair system of cooperation over time from one generation to the next." See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 14.

²According to Carol Gould, "it has become commonplace in political theory to criticize liberalism for its abstract universality and abstract individualism, in which differences other than those of political opinion are ignored and overridden and assigned to the private sphere. But the alternative theoretical framework in which differences would be adequately recognized and effectively taken into account in the public domain remains undeveloped and problematic." Carol Gould, "Diversity and Democracy: Representing Differences," in *Democracy and Difference*, edited by Seyla Benhabib, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 171.

The Rawlsian Concept of Justice

In his version of the social contract theory, Rawls writes in *A Theory of Justice*, that “justice is the first virtue of the institution, as truth is in systems of thought.”³ The subject of justice, according to Rawls, is the basic structure, or “the way in which the major social institutions distribute the fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation.”⁴ This means that the distribution of fundamental rights and duties and the division of advantages in society are a basic function of the state (Rawls 1999; Rawls 2001). In the Rawlsian conception of liberal justice, the dispensation of this very important function rests on one important conceptual tool as mentioned above – the idea of impartiality.

The notion of ‘impartiality’ is grounded in the intuition that ‘just arrangements’ can be realized in an ‘initial position of equality’ (Rawls 1999; Rawls 2001; Cohen 2004; Kymlicka 2002). In such an intuitive formulation, the crucial point is the assertion that the Rawlsian ‘veil of ignorance’ will ensure that the choice of principles will favor nobody (Rawls 1999; Kymlicka 2002; Cohen 2004). According to Joshua Cohen, the initial position of equality is designed in such a way “in order to reflect the idea that citizens have the capacity to cooperate among themselves on fair terms, to choose their own ends and to pursue the ends that they have set for themselves.”⁵ For liberals, this starting point serves as

³ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, revised ed., (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 3.

⁴ See Ibid, 6. In her essay, “Justice, Equality and Human Worth,” Rosario Espina asks, “Is justice sought for its intrinsic value or because it improves the condition of those who do not have enough?” This question is crucial insofar as it directs us to the basic end or purpose of a just social arrangement. For Espina, “the problem is not unjust distribution, but the poverty caused by unjust distribution.” See Rosario Manzares-Espina, “Justice, Equality and Human Worth,” in *PHAVISMINDA Journal*, Volume 7, May 2008, 62

⁵ Joshua Cohen, “The Importance of Philosophy: Reflections on John Rawls,” in *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 2004: 23 (2), 115.

basis in the establishment of a fair system of exchange and political interaction.

The Rawlsian ‘social contract theory’ proposes a conception of justice that is committed to both individual rights and to an egalitarian ideal of just distribution.⁶ The liberal tradition asserts that the primary role of justice is to protect the liberty of the individual which defines his moral worth as a person. As such, Rawls writes that “each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override.”⁷ Fundamentally, this means that the respect for the basic liberties of the individual has a special priority and must not be restricted in the name of the common good.⁸ The basic liberties that each person is expected to enjoy, from the point of view of the liberal tradition, cannot be sacrificed or set aside in favor of social welfare or even for the benefit of the majority (Rawls 1999; Kymlicka 2002).

The egalitarian ideal in the Rawlsian theory of justice is achieved exclusively by means of the ‘difference principle’ which, according to Rawls, requires that any and all forms of “social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and attached to positions and offices open to all.”⁹ For Rawls, the ‘difference principle’ intends to optimize the ‘economic expectations and advantages’ for the worst off who may not have the same set of capacities or competencies as compared to others by reason of the natural lottery (Rawls 1999; Kymlicka 2002; Cohen 2004).

⁶ Ibid, 114

⁷ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 3

⁸ In his own formulation, Rawls intends to show that each individual possesses the same amount of primary social goods and has the same entitlements as that of others. He writes, thus, that “each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others.” See Ibid, 53.

⁹ Ibid.

An individual, on the basis of his intelligence, talent or skill, can pursue a life plan and enjoy the same as long as it is not to the detriment of another. In this regard, the achievement of his goals or his acquisition of resources must never be at the expense of other people. Someone who is able to accumulate wealth through his profession, including his engagements in business and enterprise, possesses a moral obligation to the state. He is duty-bound to contribute to the basic welfare or well-being of others by means of paying taxes. The state is tasked to distribute the same to improve the lives of disadvantaged people or the worst off in society. According to Will Kymlicka, the moral ideal of liberal equality means that justice is served “not by removing all inequalities, but only those which disadvantage the worst off.”¹⁰

A Question on the Idea of Impartiality

More than four decades after the publication of Rawls's *magnum opus*, the question with respect to the important and critical relation between social justice and democracy in a world characterized by a plurality of beliefs and truth commitments remains to be eagerly debated by moral and political philosophers, theorists, and policy makers. The prevalence of widespread impoverishment and harsh inequalities in many societies indicates that the two most important ideals of democracy – ‘justice’ and ‘equality’ – have remained just mere ideals. The inability of Third World nations to escape the poverty trap, some of whom are embroiled in various internal conflicts and the threat of secession, somehow render as highly questionable the problematic and abstract presuppositions of Rawlsian liberalism. Nevertheless, Rawls remains prophetic: “A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how

¹⁰ Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 55.

efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust.”¹¹

It can be argued that the deficiencies of the liberal tradition may well come from the fact that its account of the rational and atomic individual does not fully reveal the whole picture in actual life situations given the different contexts of culture, the plurality of religious beliefs and differences in the political traditions of people, all of which influence the democratic order or the lack of it in any given society. As Charles Taylor puts it in his epoch-making essay, “The Politics of Recognition,” the basic idea of “democracy has ushered in a politics of equal recognition, which has taken various forms over the years, and has now returned in the form of demands for the equal status of cultures and genders.”¹² According to Kymlicka, what this means for Taylor is that “people will not respect the claims of others unless they are bound by shared conceptions of the good, unless they can identify with a politics of the common good.”¹³ The communitarian position, in this regard, puts to question the liberal view of impartiality that eliminates the context of culture and history in determining the principles of justice.

So, what is wrong with liberal impartiality? Chantal Mouffe explains that liberal impartiality is arrived at by means of the ‘veil of ignorance’ in order to “preclude the knowledge of citizens’ comprehensive conceptions of the good and to force them to proceed from shared conceptions of society and person.”¹⁴ If indeed such an objective, grounded in the political conception of justice, will enable peaceful coexistence and mutual advantage among citizens,

¹¹ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 3.

¹² Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 27.

¹³ Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, 253.

¹⁴ Chantal Mouffe, “The Limits of John Rawls’s Pluralism,” *Theoria*, March 2009, 4

how come inequality persists between and among people in society?

Iris Marion Young's 'Politics of Difference'

The reality of oppression puts into question the ideal of liberal impartiality. One of the most important criticism comes from the writings of Iris Marion Young, an American thinker and feminist, most noted for her important work on the 'politics of difference'. Young defines oppression in people as "some form of inhibition of their ability to develop and exercise their capacities and express their needs, thoughts and feelings."¹⁵ In the 'social division of labor', injustice happens because some people are put at a disadvantaged position due to some socio-cultural practices which hinder them from actualizing their potentials as persons. Undeserved inequalities once again point to the deficiencies of Western liberal democracy.

This study seeks to use Young's 'politics of difference' not as an adverse reaction to but as a refinement of the liberal theory of Rawls. As a political theorist, Young proposed a critical approach in understanding the relationship between justice and democracy. The first chapter of her *Inclusion and Democracy* begins with these unforgettable words: "Democracy is hard to love."¹⁶ Democracy, often characterized in the representative form of governance, is anchored in the capacity of people to take part in the affairs of the state, for instance, in the choice or election of leaders and the design of institutions meant to serve the interest of the public. The interest of the public refers to the collective good that serves the welfare of each individual being a member of society.

¹⁵ Iris Marion Young, "The Five Faces of Oppression," in *Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy*, eds. Thomas Mappes and Jane Zembaty, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 335.

¹⁶ Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 16

The ideal of a democratic system which reflects the free will of the people is difficult to actualize, but not impossible. While both believe in the value of democratic institutions, Young and Rawls have two distinct approaches to the establishment and design of the basic structure of government. In contrast to the method of Rawls, Young's 'politics of difference' duly recognizes from the beginning the point that "people differently positioned in structural processes often have unequal opportunities for self-development, access to resources, to make decisions both about the conditions of their own action and that of others or to be treated with respect or deference."¹⁷ The truth of a people's colonial past, the realities of socio-economic persecution that people have dealt and are dealing with, and the truth of cultural bias, all point to structural injustices that cannot be done away with in favor of an 'abstract', 'ahistorical', 'imagined' or 'hypothetical' situation when one seeks to establish the norms for social cooperation.

This study thinks that the abstract starting point of Rawls must be abandoned. To work this out, it will attempt to use the context and experiences of minorities¹⁸, the concept of gender equality and the situation of persons with disability, in order to elaborate the normative and moral justifications for a collective or a shared responsibility for social justice. This writer will argue that the basic structure, to be difference-sensitive, must be immediately partial to or that it must always favor the worst off in the initial position of equality. The basic principles of social justice cannot be blind or neutral to undeserved differences. Young's framework, which she calls the 'politics of positional

¹⁷ Iris Marion Young, "Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference," in *Multiculturalism and Political Theory*, eds. Anthony Simon Laden and David Owen, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), 64.

¹⁸ By description, the on discussion minority rights, "portrays the system as a balance of power among overlapping economic, religious, ethnic and geographical groupings." See William Connolly, *Democracy, Pluralism and Political Theory*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 15.

difference,' does offer an important critical tool in analyzing the broad spectrum of 'exploitation', 'marginalization' and 'powerlessness' in society, three forms of the five forms of oppression that she has expounded in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.¹⁹ By theorizing on the basis of 'positional difference', her analysis yields substantial reasons and meaningful explanations as to why inequality persists in many liberal democracies.²⁰

The Rawlsian starting point begins from an imagined or fictional situation. For this reason, Young argues that it can be naive to structural injustices (Young 2000). Positional differences in society can result to demeaning circumstances for those who belong to the margins of society, making them the subject of humiliation by others. In view of such, it will be argued by this writer that socio-political arrangements must not be imaginary but should be grounded in real life contexts. Young's approach, as contrasted to that of Rawls, begins not with a hypothetical or abstract starting point but with situated contexts. In this sense, Young duly recognizes the reality of particular or specific instances of injustices which make manifest the fundamental problem of structural oppression.²¹ Indeed, one cannot realistically conceive of a theory of justice if society does not address prevailing structural injustices. Young says that "impartial reason is detached: reason abstracts from particular experiences and

¹⁹ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 39-63.

²⁰ Carol Gould raises some basic questions with respect to the issue of recognizing differences as a starting point. For instance, she says, "What differences ought to be recognized, and why these rather than others? Which differences should be ignored, and which would it be pernicious to recognize? What would it mean to recognize differences in political or, more generally, in public or institutional contexts, and what is the normative rationale for this recognition?" See Carol Gould, "Diversity and Democracy: Representing Differences," 171.

²¹ See Alison M. Jaggar, "Comparing John Rawls's Method of Ideal Theory with Iris Marion Young's Method of Critical Theory," in *Dancing with Iris: The Philosophy of Iris Marion Young*, eds. Ann Ferguson and Mechtchild Nagel, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 95-101.

histories that constitute a situation.”²² From the vantage point of Young’s ‘politics of difference’, the establishment of just institutions must always consider the reality of the human condition if we are to truly remedy social and economic injustice. Thus, it is Young’s contention that our conception of a just society cannot be insulated from deeply embedded cultural behaviors which an impartial starting point proposes to set aside. Young explains that “blindness to difference disadvantages groups whose experience, culture, and socialized capacities differ from those of the privileged groups.”²³

Revisiting the Idea of Impartiality

Let us revisit the argument in the original position in order to examine more closely the idea of impartiality. Rawls employs the use of ‘the veil of ignorance’ in the original position as a device to ensure that no one is in a privileged place to take advantage of others in choosing the principles of justice. According to Brian Barry, Rawls maintains that “these are principles that would be chosen by rational actors in an original position where they did not know certain things about themselves.”²⁴ The point as may be found in the Rawlsian conception of justice is that “they are the principles that rational and free persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamentals of the terms of their association.”²⁵ Barry argues that what a theory of justice as impartiality demands are principles and rules that are capable of forming as basis of free agreement among people seeking agreement on reasonable terms.²⁶ Barry contends further that the many facets or contexts of cultures in the

²² Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 100

²³ *Ibid.*, 164

²⁴ Brian Barry, *The Liberal Theory of Justice*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 2.

²⁵ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 11.

²⁶ Brian Barry, *Justice as Impartiality*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 11.

world today should not in any way lead us to abandon our moral commitment to liberal equality (Barry 1973; Barry 1995). Barry is in the presumptuous opinion that liberalism will always work using its egalitarian precepts, notably the priority of liberty and equal opportunity, in achieving socio-economic equality. Keith Dowding explains that for Barry, social cooperation should come to mean that “no special treatments, rights or benefits need to be meted out to different groups in society.”²⁷ For Barry, justice as impartiality is all about merit.

This study will argue against Barry’s position. The basic point is that structural inequalities prevent the meaningful realization of social and economic justice, as actual conditions might show. In fact, this is so because the ‘lexical priority’ of human liberty, in the actual scheme of things, will naturally put at an advantage those who are born at the top of the social hierarchy. Because it lacks regard for ‘positional differences’ in the social hierarchy, it can be said that the veil of ignorance wrongly assumes that all people will always act in a rational and reasonable way.²⁸ In the liberal tradition, according to Mouffe, being rational and reasonable means that people are willing to embrace the principles of political liberalism.²⁹ Yet, given the reality in the

²⁷Keith Dowding, “Are Democratic and Just Institutions the same?,” in *Justice and Democracy*, eds. Keith Dowding, Robert Goodin and Carole Pateman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 22.

²⁸Rawls has conceived of these two attributes as the characteristics of the ideal of democratic citizenship. Here, it must be emphasized that Rawls is clear that the central organizing idea of justice as fairness in the tradition of political liberalism “is developed together with two companion fundamental ideas: one is the idea of citizens (those engaged in cooperation) as free and equal persons; the other is the idea of a well-ordered society as a society effectively regulated by a political conception of justice. See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 14. It is in this sense that ‘comprehensive’ metaphysical doctrines must be set aside in favor of values that are strictly political. See *ibid*, 156.

²⁹ See Chantal Mouffe, “The Limits of John Rawls’s Pluralism,” 4. Jurgen Habermas explains that “given an indissoluble pluralism of pre-political values and interests that are at best aggregated with equal weight in the political process, politics loses all reference to the normative core of a public use of

world today, reasonableness is hardly the case, knowing the existence of incorrigible groups and other powerful interest groups who position themselves in an unfair manner. Indeed, this writer contends that one cannot really do away with cultural or religious biases against people by way of an impartial original position. People are deeply rooted in an unfair social hierarchy and they can be affected by bad conditions which may actually impede the development of society as a whole. In view of this, the idea of impartiality as a starting point is impractical.

Understanding 'positional difference' is important because impartiality for Young is in fact impossible.³⁰ In view of this, there are four humble tasks that this study intends to fulfill. What follows is an initial attempt to bring them into light praying that they are worth of a philosophical inquiry.

Inclusion as the Normative Content of a 'Politics of Difference'

Firstly, this study intends to expound the meaning of inclusion as the normative content of Young's 'politics of positional difference' by way of situating questions of justice in concrete historical contexts. For instance, we can mention the fact that historically, powerful empires have done great harm to people in their colonized territories.³¹ The Philippines is not a stranger as to how colonialism, cultural imperialism and the domination of an elite ruling class oppress and demean many Filipinos as a people. In this

reason." See Jurgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Deliberation," in *Democracy and Difference*, 23.

³⁰ See Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 103

³¹The colonial history of the Philippines contributes to the inability of the state to perform its mandate to the people. This is carried over as power is transferred from the colonial masters to the ruling elites. According to Patricio Abinales and Donna Amoroso, "state weakness is due in part to a history of state capture by sectoral interests. The rural poor demand land reform – indeed the country's productive capacity depends on it – but powerful landed elites oppose it." See Patricio Abinales and Donna Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 2.

regard, a realistic starting point for social cooperation should take into consideration difference in identity, or people's distinct 'otherness', which should determine the nature and moral design of a just social cooperation in the basic structure. It must be the case that a society to be truly fair to all should be built with due recognition of the historical and situated experiences of a people.

This writer thinks that a 'difference-blind' starting point results to the impotence of our social and political institutions in terms of delivering to the people what they expect from the basic structure. Clearly, there are those who are in positions of authority who will simply pass on the torch of power to their children without giving any due regard to the democratic process of fair and free elections. Moreover, Young's analysis of deep structural injustices points to the fact that corruption in government does not only indicate the weakness of the electoral culture, but also the failure of our basic institutions in safeguarding the common interests of people. If our socio-political institutions veer away from democratic procedures that are meant to protect the weak, then some people at the very top of the socio-economic ladder will naturally use their position in order to take advantage of others.

Secondly, a further point that this study seeks to advance is the analysis of the important relation between social justice and democracy. How does true democracy work in a difference-sensitive society? In order to find our answer to this, we have to develop the meaning of Young's 'relational deliberative democracy' which essentially is about openness to difference or identity. Democracy, or the very procedures that the state and civil society³² use as means of

³²By civil society, Rawls refers to what he calls the 'background culture', which includes the academe, the church and other non-public institutions. In the above description of democracy, we take it to include its 'deliberative' role. In Rawls conception of democracy, he limits discussions on the moral ends of the state to public reason, as 'reason' of 'rational' and 'reasonable' citizens. By

discussing, analyzing and solving socio-political problems, is instrumentally crucial in the realization of a just society. Indeed, the liberal form of democracy requires that people come to terms toward each other on the basis of reasoned judgments.

But someone who does not have the power of reason can be impoverished in so far as it eliminates his power to voice out his protest against oppression and abuse. Young is aware of the limits of the state and in fact argues that the formalities of democratic procedures can actually prevent people from expressing dissent and a hostile yet legitimate or valid complaint. The rigid protocols and difference-blind procedures in the public sphere, often portrayed through the various deceptive formalities and the bureaucratic nature of the state, exclude real democratic participation.

Thirdly, the normative content of democracy under Young's 'politics of difference' must be clarified. The basic idea herein is that for democracy to be meaningful for the worst off it must truly empower ordinary people. The collective unity of the marginalized is crucial in order to mitigate or if not eliminate the ills of an elitist political culture. Empowering ordinary people among the minorities, women and persons with disability, is what genuine democratic inclusion is all about. Understanding this more fully is crucial in concretizing Young's critical approach toward political theory. This writer will argue that it is only by means of diverting power away from those who control it that real accountability can be imposed on the part of elected leaders. The transformative role of political power will only have meaning if it is diffused into channels which primarily serve the interest of the public and not ill motives of the ruling few. In this regard, Young's 'politics of difference' proposes a relational deliberative model which for her allows the possibility of inclusion (Young 2000). She says:

'rational' and 'reasonable', he means that citizens are both free and equal. See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 216-218.

“Participants in the deliberative model offer proposals for how to best solve problems or meet legitimate needs and so on, and they present arguments through which they aim to persuade others to accept their proposal.”³³ Following this model of inclusive democracy, Young argues that “a democratic decision is only legitimate if all those affected by it are included in the process of discussion and decision making.”³⁴ What this means is that genuine public consultation is important in a democracy, otherwise people will be misrepresented and will be deprived of the right to express their opinion on public issues that affect their lives.

For instance, in explaining what ‘powerlessness’ means, Young writes that “most people do not participate in making decisions that affect the conditions of their lives and actions, and in this sense, people lack significant power.”³⁵ The need for enlightened people participation is crucial in order to realize the instrumental value of democracy. This means that we have to go beyond merely requiring the attendance of people in assemblies. As a matter of norm, their voice must be heard. In truth, without the actual voice of ordinary citizens in policy discussions, they will remain disadvantaged and deprived of their just entitlements.

Fourth and lastly, this study will use Young’s notion of ‘shared responsibility for justice’ (Young 2011) as a framework for the relationship between inclusive democracy and human development. Many people suffer because they are pushed into the margins of society. Without inclusive political participation, people in an impoverished society can never flourish. But whose responsibility should it be? One vital task that this philosophical itinerary will do is to clarify the distinction between one’s personal and the shared

³³ Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, 22

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23

³⁵ Iris Marion Young, “The Five Faces of Oppression,” in *Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy*, eds. Thomas Mappes and Jane Zembaty, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 341

responsibility for justice. This study will also advance the idea that structural reforms in the basic institutions of government will require the latter, the proper norm of which this paper will attempt to elaborate. A huge challenge lay ahead of us in so far as “in the real world some people and groups have significantly greater ability to use democratic processes for their own ends, while others are excluded and marginalized.”³⁶

A very crucial contribution that this study seeks to make and expound is the link between the ‘politics of difference’ and development theory. Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum have developed important theoretical discussions on the relationship between justice, democracy and development. Without the concrete contributions of Sen and Nussbaum to political theory, the ‘politics of difference’ will not have some practical value to policy makers, political leaders and development workers. It is in this regard that this study will attempt to synthesize and connect Young’s ‘politics of difference’ in a very concrete way to the concept of human development as found in the various political writings of Sen and Nussbaum in order to highlight the former’s huge contribution to the moral analysis of society and its political structures.

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³⁶ Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, 17

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