***Rawls, “Idea of Public Reason” §§1-4,7,8***

I***ntroductory remarks***

what does Rawls mean by saying that “the way a political society [formulates its plans, puts its ends in order and makes decisions] is its reason”?

explain the reference to non-public reasons in your own words.

explain the three ways in which public reason is public.

in your own words, explain the important last paragraph in the introductory remarks. In particular: why don’t we want it to be a matter of law that citizens honor the demands of public reason?

***The Questions and Forums of Public Reason***

on p. 215, Rawls asks “Why would it ever be admissible to go outside its range of political values?”. What do you think political values are? Can you give some examples? Would those mentioned in the [Preamble to the US Constitution](http://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/preamble) qualify?

to what questions do the limits of public reason apply and why? (HINT: what is a constitutional essential is)

to which fora do the limits of public reason apply and why? (HINT: what do you think Rawls means by the phrase “background culture”?)

what does Rawls mean by calling courts the exemplar of public reason? is Rawls right that they should be exemplars? based on your research do think Justice Scalia was an exemplar of public reason? do you think all of those whom you thought President Obama might put forward for Justice Scalia’s seat would observe them?

***Public Reason and the Ideal of Democratic Citizenship***

what makes public reason seem paradoxical?

the liberal principle of legitimacy is very important. explain the principle in your own words.

consider now the duty of civility:

what does the duty require?

what are its grounds? how do these grounds help us to see that “the apparent paradox of public reason is no paradox?”

is Rawls right citizens of a good society would honor the duty of civility?

what is the “common view of voting” that Rawls rejects on p. 219? is he right to do so? does his rejection imply that people cannot “vote their pocketbooks”? (See also p. 243)

***Non-Public Reasons***

what is “the background culture”?

in your own words, explain the only full paragraph on p. 221.

explain the distinction between public and non-public authority on pp. 221-22. why isn’t it just as difficult to leave the religion in which one was raised as the society in which one was born? if they are equally difficult to leave, is Rawls right to distinguish them?

***The Content of Public Reason***

what are the three characteristics of a liberal conception of justice given on p. 223? why do they qualify a conception of justice as liberal?

what are the three characteristics of a political conception of justice given on the same page? why do they qualify a conception as political?

why should a conception of justice “include, besides its principles of justice, guidelines of inquiry that specify ways of reasoning and criteria for the kinds of information relevant for political questions”?

Rawls says on p. 225 that “we want the substantive content and the guidelines of inquiry of a political conception, when taken together, to be complete.” why would we want that?

explain what Rawls calls “the point of the ideal of public reason” on p. 226. why is having such a “framework” so important?

***Apparent Difficulties with Public Reason***

If public reasons support more than one answer to a political question, how are we to settle the matter?

why should citizens be able to explain their votes to one another by appealing to a reasonable balance of political values?

Suppose I think, with St. Thomas Aquinas, that human laws derive their authority from their relationship to the natural law laid down by God.

why shouldn’t I appeal to natural law, or to God’s will as revealed in scripture, when arguing about and voting on the legality of abortion or of physician-assisted suicide, or a society’s duty to care for its poor?

if I argue about these matters in using public reasons, am I thereby being insincere?

in *Veritatis Splendor*, §36, John Paul II said that “moral norms belonging to the sphere of the natural moral law” are “universally understandable and communicable.” if he is right, is the natural law itself a source of public reasons? why or why not?

read Rawls’s footnote on p. 243 with some care. what, exactly, is Rawls saying there? can there be an argument in public reason that would support a categorical prohibition on abortion? if so, can you lay one out?

***The Limits of Public Reason***

what is the difference between the inclusive and the exclusive view of public reason?

why may citizens introduce their religious views into political argument in a “nearly well-ordered society”?

explain Rawls’s argument for the conclusion that “the abolitionists and the leaders of the civil rights movement did not go against the ideal of public reason”. (p. 251) Do you find his argument persuasive?

when we are thinking about what argument to offer for or against some public policy, should we really ask ourselves “how our argument would strike us presented in the form of a supreme court opinion”? (p. 254) why or why not?

take a moment to read Abraham Lincoln’s admirably brief [Second Inaugural Address](http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres32.html). Do you think Rawls is right to say that it does not violate the limits of public reason? what if our next president delivered something like it in January, 2017?