

2023 Autumn Admission for Eikei University of Hiroshima
(Selection of International Students/
Integrated Selection of Japanese Students in English)
Second Window

Short Essay Question

The following passages from Julian Baggini's 2005 book *The Pig That Wants to Be Eaten: And 99 Other Thought Experiments* present the idea of 'Fair Inequality'. There are different positions in these passages, and each position has its own supporting arguments. Read the passages and respond to the question.

John and Margaret went shopping to buy Christmas presents for their three sons: Matthew, aged fourteen, Mark, who is twelve, and Luke, ten. The loving parents always tried to treat their children equally. This year, they had budgeted to spend £100 on each of them.

For once it looked as if their shopping would be trouble free, for they soon found what they were looking for: handheld PlayBoy games consuls* at £100 each. Just as they were about to take three to the checkout, John noticed a special offer. If you bought two of the new, top of the range PlayBoyPlusMax consuls* at £150 each, you would get an original PlayBoy free. They could spend the same amount of money and get superior goods.

'We can't do that,' said Margaret. 'That would be unfair, since one of the boys would be getting less than the others.'

'But Margaret,' said John, excited at the thought of borrowing his sons' new toys, 'how can it be unfair? This way none of them gets a worse gift than he would have done, and two of them do better. But if we don't take the offer, two of the kids are worse off than they would otherwise be.'

'I want them all to be equal,' replied Margaret.

'Even if it means making them worse off?'

Source: *A Theory of Justice* by John Rawls (Harvard University Press, 1971)

Many hold equality to be desirable, but few now accept that equality is to be pursued at all cost. This is because there seems to be something wilfully perverse about achieving equality by levelling down. We could easily make everyone equal simply by making everyone as poor as the poorest person in society. But that seems obviously to be a foolish thing to do because it doesn't help anyone. The poorest remain just as poor as they were and everyone else is harmed.

However, just because we accept that it may not always be worthwhile to impose equality, that doesn't mean we should simply accept all inequality without question. What we need to ask is when inequality is acceptable. John's explanation to Margaret about why they should treat their sons differently provides one answer. Inequality is

permitted when no one is worse off as a result, but some people are better off.

This is very similar to what the political philosopher John Rawls called the 'difference principle'. In essence, this says that inequalities are permitted only if they are to the benefit of the least well off. However, it is not clear whether this applies to Matthew, Mark and Luke. Under the original gift plan, they form a classless micro-society in which each is the best and worst off. The plan to get the PlayBoyPlusMax deal does indeed make two of the least well off better off, but it is no help at all to the other one. So is it true to say that the plan is to the benefit of the least well off as a whole?

Of course, there are important differences when the principle is applied in the political and familial arenas. In society at large, John's argument seems intuitively persuasive. Within families, however, there may be reasons to place a higher priority on equality, since in very small groups, inequalities are felt more keenly and can lead to tensions.

This same consideration, however, does extend to the political domain. For one reason to be against inequality is precisely the effect it has on social cohesion and the self-esteem of the poor. As social psychologists have pointed out, even though materially people are no worse off if their neighbours get rich at no financial cost to themselves, psychologically they can be harmed by their increased awareness of the wealth gap between them. Seeing equality and inequality solely in material terms could thus be a terrible mistake, both in politics and in families.

Julian Baggini. (2005). *The Pig That Wants to Be Eaten: And 99 Other Thought Experiments* (p. 259-261). Granta

*The original text used “consuls,” but this can be clarified as “consoles.”

Question

The above story poses a simple hypothetical case of inequality, but there are many actual inequalities in societies around the world. In each context, some of these inequalities may be considered fair, while others may be considered unfair. Introduce one real inequality relevant to the area or community in which you live or belong and discuss its fairness or unfairness.

You may prepare the essay according to the "Detailed Instructions" on the next page.

Detailed Instructions

- The following is a model outline for your essay. Include each element in the order indicated here. Note that section titles for these elements are **not** required.
- The length of the essay must be within two A4-size pages with 12pt font in the university template (not counting the list of references).

Elements	Contents and points of preparation
Introduction	Explain the subject or purpose of your essay and indicate what you will be discussing.
1) Explanation of the relevant issue in your area or community	Provide the necessary background and current status of the issue you are addressing, supported by data and examples.
2) Comparison of more than one position on an issue	Explain a comparison of more than one different position/opinion and their respective arguments on the issues discussed in 1).
3) Your own ideas about the issue	Express your ideas on the issue discussed in 1) and your ideas on the positions/opinions and arguments discussed in 2).
Conclusion	Summarize your entire essay by reflecting on the subject or purpose you set forth in the Introduction. Do not include new data or assertions in the conclusion.
References	List any references, documents, websites, etc. that you have cited. You do not need to follow a specific style guide, but please present the list of references in a consistent manner.

Evaluation Criteria

The University will evaluate essays based on the following criteria.

Items	What We Evaluate	Admission Policy
Basic Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the essay within the specified page limit? • Is the designated form used? • Does the essay follow the assignment instructions? • Is it written in an easy-to-read style with appropriate grammar and spelling? 	-
Attitudes and Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the essay provide appropriate cases related to the issue and explain the situation and issues using appropriate materials? • Does the essay provide more than one different perspective and appropriately compared the opinions and arguments of each side? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad vision • Strong interest in inquiring about various cultures, histories, societies both at home and abroad, and international relations
Academic Abilities and Their Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the essay express their own ideas based on different positions and viewpoints? • Is the essay logical and persuasive? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic academic skills • Willingness to learn • Positive attitude toward studying with a sense of purpose and a vision for the future • Positive attitude toward actively communicating with others
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the essay express an appropriate understanding of the problems that exist in society and an attitude of facing and tackling them as one's own personal matter? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to strengthen one's ability • Willingness to contribute to society • Positive attitude toward taking initiative and involving others in addressing various challenges
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originality and creativity 	-