

JOHN RAWLS: RETICENT SOCIALIST

This book is the first detailed reconstruction of the late work of John Rawls, who was perhaps the most influential philosopher of the twentieth century. Rawls's 1971 treatise, *A Theory of Justice*, stimulated an outpouring of commentary on "justice-as-fairness," his conception of justice for an ideal, self-contained, modern political society. Most of that commentary took Rawls to be defending welfare-state capitalism as found in Western Europe and the United States. Far less attention has been given to Rawls's 2001 book, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. In the *Restatement*, Rawls not only substantially reformulates the "original position" argument for the two principles of justice-as-fairness, he also repudiates capitalist regimes as possible embodiments. Edmundson further develops Rawls's non-ideal theory, which guides us when we find ourselves in a society that falls well short of justice.

WILLIAM A. EDMUNDSON is Regents Professor of Law and Philosophy at Georgia State University College of Law. He is the author of *Three Anarchical Fallacies* (1998) and *An Introduction to Rights* (2012) and editor of *The Duty to Obey the Law* (1999) and *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Law and Legal Theory* (2004). He is also the series editor of the Cambridge Introductions to Philosophy and Law.

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The long dominance of the idea that ‘philosophy is one thing and history of philosophy is another’ is now visibly coming to an end. Or is this too optimistic an estimate?

— Hilary Putnam (1997, 201)

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For Lee

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