2.3 Optional theme: political philosophy

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 30 marks**

KEY WORDS political philosophy • social contract • justice • veil of ignorance • difference principle • negative liberty • positive liberty

Objective

Study the optional theme **political philosophy** : why we should obey the state (**social contract**), what **justice** requires, and how far the state may limit **liberty** .

You must be able to:

- compare the social contracts of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau
- explain Rawls' veil of ignorance and the difference principle
- explain Nozick's entitlement theory
- explain negative and positive liberty
- evaluate a theory of justice with a case

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

■ The social contract

thinker	state of nature	the contract
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651)	a "war of all against all"; life "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short"	give power to a strong sovereign for safety
John Locke (1689)	natural rights to life, liberty and property, but no fair judge	a limited government that protects rights; people may resist a tyrant
Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762)	people free, but society makes them unequal	rule by the "general will" of all citizens

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■

John Rawls (1971): choose principles behind a **veil of ignorance** , not knowing your sex, class, talents or beliefs. He argued you would choose (1) equal basic liberties and (2) the **difference principle**: inequalities are allowed only if they benefit the least advantaged. **Robert Nozick** (1974): a distribution is just if it came about by just steps (fair acquisition and free transfer). Taxing earnings for redistribution is "on a par with forced labour".

■ **Liberty**

Negative liberty: freedom *from* interference. **Positive liberty**: freedom *to* act, having the real ability to do things (Isaiah Berlin, 1958).

Worked example. Society A: everyone earns 30. Society B: the poorest earn 40, the richest 100. Rawls' difference principle prefers B, because its least advantaged (40) are better off than in A (30), even though B is less equal.

2 Practice

2.1 Distinguish **negative liberty** from **positive liberty**, with an example of each. [2]

2.2 Three societies have these incomes for their poorest and richest groups: X (25, 25), Y (35, 90), Z (30, 150). Which does Rawls' difference principle choose, and why? Which might Nozick accept? [3]



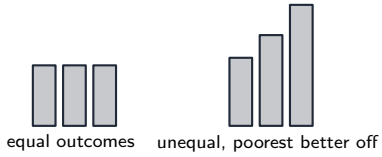
2.3 Compare the views of **Hobbes** and **Locke** on the state of nature and its consequences for government. [4]

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2.4 Explain Rawls' **veil of ignorance**, and evaluate **one** objection to it. [6]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 *(Optional theme style.)* "A just society is one that guarantees equal outcomes for all." Discuss. [15]



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