Quotation:

“For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many” (p.3).

Comment:

The first quotation comes from the first page and it highlights some of what we have been talking about regarding “The One’s Who walked Away from Omelas” where there is one injustice that allows for the rest of the people to be happy. However, we had been asking, and I also addressed this in my midterm, if such a thing is right; if one injustice is justified because it allows for the greater good to benefit or succeed. Rawls seems to think that “each person possess an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society cannot override” (3). Thus, he says that because of this everyone has the right to be the ones benefitting and not the ones sacrificing. I think this is interesting because it means that justice isn’t a right, its intrinsic to every person; more of something holy than it is something political. Rawls insinuates that injustice is only permissible when it prevents a worse or larger injustice. He defines society as a “cooperative venture for mutual advantage” which I think is interesting, and though not necessarily wrong or different from something I would think, it assumes that all people in the society are working toward the same thing, or at least mutual benefits. However, I don’t think this is entirely true but Rawls does offer that there can be a conflict of interest when it comes to the distribution of the society’s duties/burdens/benefits, etc. I think, too, that Rawls comment on how even though everyone may agree to uphold justice, there is often differing ideas of what this means. Like in “The One’s Who walked Away from Omelas,” different citizens justify the suffering of the child in various ways and to varying degrees. Though I think Rawls has nice ideals and theories, I also think it’s impossible for a society to have a shared conception of justice because too many people will put themselves in a more favorable position; perhaps, except those who have been forced to face more burdens previously.

Question:

How does this theory of Justice fit into what we have discussed already in class?