

Reconsidering Rawls' Liberalism, and Greening Democracy: A Critical Assessment of Liberalism's Ability to Address Climate Crisis

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This paper explores the intricate relationship between the climate crisis and classical liberalism, specifically through the lens of John Rawls' political philosophy. In the context of the climate crisis, we assess the applicability of Rawls' principles, with a particular focus on the so-called 'circumstances of justice.' Rawls' philosophy is not without its limitations, primarily due to its normative nature and anthropocentric perspective. Furthermore, the climate crisis doesn't neatly fit into what Rawls defines as 'the circumstances of justice'—the conditions from which principles of justice are derived. To address these challenges, we propose a post-human liberalism, a framework that broadens the concept of 'human' to include all members of the ecosystem. This approach advocates for global democracy and international cooperation, placing a strong emphasis on the fundamental principle of coexistence. In conclusion, this paper underscores the pressing need for posthuman liberalism in the face of the climate crisis. Such a philosophy would redefine the relationship between humans and nature, adopting a holistic ecosystem perspective and promoting the crucial value of coexistence as we strive to address this critical global challenge.

Keywords: Climate Crisis, Rawls, Liberalism, Posthuman, Postdemos, Posthuman Liberalism

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1. Introduction

The climate crisis is among the most pressing challenges of our time, with far-reaching consequences that threaten life on Earth. Scientific consensus has unequivocally confirmed the anthropogenic nature of climate change, attributing it to human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes. As a response to climate change, there has been a growing interest in Rawls' liberal theory as an alternative. Scholars such as P. Clements have explored the potential of Rawls' original position and theory of international justice, respectively, in providing normative frameworks for tackling climate change. While Rawls' theory offers a more effective approach to the climate crisis compared to neoliberalism, it is important to acknowledge that it may lead to a narrow view of the crisis, which fails to recognize its complexity and the need for a comprehensive strategy that involves the active participation of all individuals. Moreover, Rawls' emphasis on protecting human beings presupposes a list of inviolable basic freedoms based on liberal principles. Liberalism is a human-centered thought that strictly distinguishes the public and private sectors and creates a space between the public and the individual, making the individual indifferent to public issues. Liberalism's anthropocentrism poses a threat to human beings

and ignores the non-human world's value. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, it is crucial to recognize the limitations of Rawls' liberalism-centered political philosophy in addressing the situation. In Chapter 2, previous studies on how Rawls' theory can respond to climate change are briefly introduced. In the next chapter, Rawls' Political liberalism's limitations are analyzed critically from the point of view of previous studies, highlighting how helpless Rawls' liberalism is in coping with climate change. In the last chapter, an alternative political philosophy is introduced to address the limitations of Rawls' theory.

2. Rawls and Climate crisis

The theory of Justice and fairness is a seminal liberal political theory that was developed by the American philosopher John Rawls, who published his main work at the end of 1971. A theory of justice is based on the idea of fairness and it is Rawls' attempt to define an objective and reasonable standard of fairness. The theory has two main principles, which are the liberty principle and the difference principle. The liberty principle states that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of basic

liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all. The difference principle states that social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged member of society, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. Therefore, many scholars such as Russ Manning, Paul Clements, John Töns, and Andrew Dodson believe that Rawls' philosophy is appropriate for constructing the theory of climate justice during the climate crisis era (Manning 1981; Clements 2015; Töns 2022; Dodson 1999). Rawlsian philosophy includes intergenerational justice, international justice, justice for people with disabilities, and what belongs to animals and the rest of nature (Rawls 1993, 21). Thus, scholars such as Paul Clement tried to discover alternative concepts that could respond to the climate crisis through Rawls' theory. In this chapter, I will examine the theory of Rawls and the previous studies on the climate crisis.

First of all, scholars who try to construct climate justice through Rawls's theory focus on the concepts in *A Theory of Justice*. They think that Rawls' concepts such as "primary goods," "the veil of ignorance," and "basic liberties" are very useful in constructing climate justice. According to Clement, Rawls's theory of justice could be employed in developing foundations for a critical theory of climate justice, and we could generate an ideal of climate justice from Rawls's original position (Clements 2015, 488). As you know, The core

principle of the original position consists of the veil of ignorance. 'Ignorance' means that you do not know how the outcome of the agreement will affect the parties. In other words, the veil of ignorance means a state in which it is not known whether it will benefit or damage oneself to be derived from rules or laws set by consensus. The following is the part where Rawls describes the ignorance of the veil.

It is assumed, then, that the parties do not know certain kinds of particular facts. First of all, no one knows his place in society, his class position, or social status; nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence and strength, and the like. Nor, again, does anyone know his conception of the good, the particulars of his rational plan of life, or even the special features of his psychology such as his aversion to risk or liability to optimism or pessimism (Rawls 1999, 118).

Clement says Rawls' concept of "the veil of ignorance" should be applied to the international community to achieve international agreements without knowing whether the parties will be relatively safe or vulnerable to the climate crisis. He argues that if global society forms representatives with individuals considering the interests of the victims of the climate crisis, not the national level, they will choose an action for climate justice in international consultations. As for the reason why representatives should be formed at the personal

level, not at the national level, Clement believes that it is difficult for the government to properly represent the interests of victims of the climate crisis. According to Clement, The most extreme victims of climate change are likely to be relatively marginalized and powerless, and may even be members of what Rawls calls "burdened societies" and their governments cannot be trusted to represent their interests effectively in international negotiations (Clements 2015, 188). In the veil of ignorance of the climate crisis, The parties to the negotiations are aware of the dangers to people in developing countries due to the climate crisis and the situation of climate refugees who do not enjoy basic freedoms. Therefore, Clement states that parties to the Convention to Respond to Climate Change - representatives of individuals, not representatives of countries - will make choices that are in the best interest of the least beneficiary based on the 'differential principle' and 'minimum maximization principle', and these choices will lead to action for the climate. The following is Clement's explanation of how Rawls' theory can respond to climate change.

Following the procedure from TJ(A theory of Justice), the agents do not know the stage of civilization of the persons they represent, but if these persons happen to live in our time, at this stage of climate change, then these obligations and requirements obtain. Since threats from increasing atmospheric

CO2 face both present and future generations, the main significance of taking account of justice to future generations in the climate justice OP is to reinforce or strengthen overall imperatives to limit climate change and address its harms (Clements 2015, 491).

Currently, the Climate Change Convention consists of people representing each country. Therefore, they represent the positions of governments in each country and do not consider the threat of climate change victims. However, according to Clement, Rawls's original position is much more efficient in analyzing the problems facing these countries to exclude their interests and is very useful in addressing climate refugee issues and building climate justice. In addition, Manning presents a theory that can respond to the climate crisis, focusing on other concepts presented by Rawls in *A Theory of Justice*. Rawls believes that the primary goods that we need to function in society are liberty and security. He argues that if a society cannot provide these goods to its citizens, it violates their basic needs. The basic needs principle is a part of Rawls's theory of justice. Rawls believes that it is not enough for a society to provide citizens with their material needs; it must also ensure that they have the liberty and security to fulfill their other potential wants and needs. Therefore, Manning applies Rawls's theory to the climate crisis based on the method of expanding Rawls's concept of primary

good(Manning 1981, 160). According to Rawls, the primary goods are rights, liberties, opportunities, and income and wealth. It seems evident that in general, these things fit the description of primary goods. They are social goods in view of their connection with the basic structure; liberties and opportunities are defined by the rules of major institutions and the distribution of income and wealth are regulated by them (Rawls 1999, 79). Manning combines environmental elements with Rawls' concept of primary good. It's about including the same environmental elements in the equality of opportunity that Rawls says. In other words, just as opportunities in a liberal society should be given the same to everyone, so should environmental resources. Rawls says that the primary good is the basic means by which people can enjoy life, and he argues that the way to achieve this is by ensuring that everyone has access to the means of life. Manning, thus, combines Rawls' concept of the primary good with environmental elements in order to create a comprehensive theory of social justice (Manning 1981, 160). In addition, Clark Wolf attempts to respond to climate change by expanding the 'basic needs principle' mentioned by Rawls in Political Liberalism. In other words, Wolf tries to construct intergenerational justice by containing environmental elements in the concept of 'basic needs' presented by Rawls (Wolf 2009, 351). Rawls says the following about the basic needs principle:

In particular, the first principle covering the equal basic rights and liberties may easily be preceded by a lexically prior principle requiring that citizens' basic needs be met, at least insofar as their being met is necessary for citizens to understand and to be able fruitfully to exercise those right and liberties. Certainly any such principle must be assumed in applying the first principle (Rawls 1996, 7).

Rawls says that in Political Liberalism, 'basic needs principle' can precede the principles of justice, especially the first principle of justice.¹⁾ The reason why Rawls says that the 'basic needs principle' can precede the principle of justice is the primary goods are preconditions for fundamental rights and freedoms. Thus, Wolf applies this principle of Rawls to future generations. In other words, we must construct climate justice from this perspective, as the fulfillment of the basic needs of future generations takes precedence over the less basic needs of current generations and the use of resources for the rights and freedoms of current generations. The following is Wolf's argument for how Rawls's theory can be used for intergenerational justice.

The articulation of a needs principle with lexical priority over the other principles of justice has especially important

¹⁾ The first principle of justice that Rawls says in *A Theory of Justice* is as follows: "each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others" (Rawls, 1999, p. 53).

implications for Rawls's discussion of intergenerational justice. In particular, such a principle implies a strict limit on the kinds of intergenerational trade-offs justice will permit when the interests of present and future persons are in conflict. If needs have priority over other human interests, then it must be impermissible to promote the less basic interests of some at the expense of the needs of others. A generation-neutral needs principle would prohibit such trade-offs between generations as well as among contemporaries. Thus it will be impermissible to promote the less basic interests of members of the present generation if this would compromise the needs of future generations (Wolf 2009, 369).

According to Wolf, the problems of the climate crisis are a context for applying the theory of intergenerational justice. Future generations will be influenced by our present actions, and we need to decide whether we are prepared, or obliged to bear burdens or endure costs for their sake. Intergenerational justice has important implications concerning climate change and climate policy (Wolf 2009, 370). The parties in Rawls' "veil of ignorance" do not know which generation they belong to. However, they are aware of the 'priority of basic necessary principle'. Therefore, in the era of the climate crisis, the principle of justice that can be derived from this 'Original Position' is as follows.

1) Present generations have to protect later generations from the risks that might make them much worse off than earlier

ones.

2) Climate policy has to protect future generations from serious harms including those suffered when people are unable to meet their basic needs (Wolf 2009, 375).

Rawls' philosophy, which is from 'A Theory of Justice to 'Political Liberalism', seems to be a very useful theory of climate crisis in consideration of climate refugees in the worst situation and thinking about future generations. With climate catastrophe and global warming, becoming one of the most serious problems that concern people around the world and bring great risks to modern civilization, Rawls' philosophical theory of justice is being tested in real life. His political theory doesn't only apply to domestic affairs but also has great significance in global issues like environmental protection and climate change. However, it is doubtful whether Rawls's philosophy of ethics and justice can provide a suitable alternative to the climate crisis along with the limitations of liberal humanism and anthropocentrism. These doubts arise from the inherent limitations of both Rawls's philosophy and liberalism itself. It's essential to assess whether climate justice can genuinely be derived within Rawls's framework and whether liberalism inadvertently worsens the climate crisis. What Clement, Manning, and Wolf overlook is that we face an urgent climate emergency and this crisis is already unfolding. In recent years, a number of authors have criticized Rawls's

philosophy of ethics and justice. Specifically, they have argued that it is doubtful whether Rawls's philosophy of ethics and justice can provide a suitable alternative. In the next chapter, I will assess whether Rawls's theory can adequately respond to the climate crisis from a critical point of view.

3. Limits of Rawls' Climate Justice

The climate crisis is a global phenomenon that has been unfolding over the past several decades. It is urgent, and it will require considerable changes in our ways of life. The urgency and scale of the problem should not be underestimated. Moreover, the issue of climate change presents intricate challenges of justice, complicated by the asymmetrical relationships between the parties involved. The importance of time in matters of justice is highlighted by climate change, emphasizing the transgenerational nature of this critical issue (Andina, 2023, p. 125). Climate change underscores the significance of intergenerational justice more than any other context, making it particularly difficult to address. Rawls's philosophy has a limitation in that it fails to consider the temporal asymmetry inherent in the generational definition of the climate crisis. Therefore, it is essential to broaden our

understanding of justice beyond Rawls's framework to address the complex and intergenerational nature of the climate crisis. But most of all, Rawls' theory of justice shares the basic premise of liberalism, so there is a limit to how effective his theory will be in responding to the climate crisis. Therefore, I will examine the limitations of Rawls' philosophy on the climate crisis from two perspectives.

1) The Circumstances of Justice

The circumstances of justice are the conditions that make justice a virtue of human beings and their political institutions. These include the possibility of mutual benefit from cooperation and conflict over the terms of cooperation. In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls described the parties to an agreement in a hypothetical contract as mutually disinterested. He drew explicitly on Hume's account of the circumstances of justice for this conceptualization (Lister 2005, 667). According to Hume, moderate scarcity of resources and our limited beneficence, or confined generosity, are the circumstances that explain the possibility, or origin, of rules of justice governing property and promise-keeping. The necessity, or obligatory nature, of obeying those rules may be made intelligible to us by appealing to these two circumstances (Hume 1995, 188). Thus, Rawls accepts Hume's theory and refines it, explaining

the core of the circumstances of justice as follows:

I often stress the condition of moderate scarcity(among the objective circumstances), and that of conflict of interests(among the subjective circumstances). Thus, one can say, in brief, that the circumstances of justice obtain whenever persons put forward conflicting claims to the division of social advantages under conditions of moderate scarcity. Unless these circumstances existed there would be no occasion for the virtue of justice, just as in the absence of threats of injury to life and limb there would be no occasion for physical courage (Rawls 1999, 110).

Rawls emphasizes conflicts of interest in situations where there are not enough resources to go around. This may sound ironic because a conflict of interest is typically seen as an obstacle to justice (Tebble 2020, 7). According to Lister, The circumstances of justice are that which give rise to a need for agreement on the principles of institutional choice. The second point in particular seems to suggest the Humean view that social conflict is conflict over the division of scarce, commonly but selfishly valued goods (Lister 2005, 682). In other words, the circumstance of justice means that “natural and other resources are not so abundant that schemes of cooperation become superfluous, nor are conditions so harsh that fruitful ventures must inevitably break down” (Rawls 1999, 110). To sum up, the circumstances of justice are “the

condition of moderate scarcity understood to cover a wide range of situations” (Rawls 1999, 110). As a condition for pursuing justice, Rawls' theory presents a hypothetical situation involving social conflict and establishes the need for a consensus among members of society regarding how to distribute scarce goods and these circumstances reflect the general situation we experience in our daily lives. In other words, Rawls' condition for deriving social justice from the original position is not an emergency or exceptional situation, but one in which we generally live.

Therefore, Many scholars consider Rawls' philosophy to be a suitable theory to respond to the climate crisis because they believe that overcoming the climate crisis is key to reducing carbon dioxide emissions, which requires international consensus. In fact, the climate crisis is in its earliest phase as a serious issue of international diplomacy. In a situation in which international conflicts over carbon dioxide emissions are intensifying and justice is needed to resolve these conflicts, it is true that John Rawls's theory of justice seems useful. However, it is doubtful whether the climate crisis situation satisfies Rawls's criteria for 'the circumstances of justice'. As you know, the climate crisis confronts us with our most urgent and greatest challenges today (Brooks 2013, 9-12). This crisis threatens nonhuman species with extinction - and our survival as well. The climate is changing, and the developed world will be seriously impacted as will developing countries. Challenges

posed by this change cannot be avoided or ignored (Brooks 2022, 3). James Hansen, director of NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, argues that if global warming continues as it is now, business-as-usual will bring about the collapse of major ice sheets by the end of the century. This would cause sea levels to rise by several meters and would lead to climate zones becoming different from what they are today. Additionally, rapid warming would lead to a substantial increase in species extinction (Hansen 2007, 3). Warming has already occurred, and the effects of that warming have set off a series of feedback loops that are driving Earth past its tipping point. Even if we stopped all emissions today, additional warming is already locked in by carbon dioxide already released into the atmosphere (Hansen 2008, 9).

Rising sea levels, extinct species, and human deaths due to abnormal weather events all these facts prove that the current climate crisis is an emergency situation and not something that can be ignored. In other words, the climate crisis is an urgent and exceptional situation and a situation of crisis that humans have never experienced. Anthropogenic climate change is a global process that is already affecting the lives and well-being of millions of people worldwide, causing serious damage to crops and infrastructure and endangering human health and it will continue to do so for generations to come (Moellendorf 2015, 173). Climate change will be the most consequential challenge to global society and especially to agriculture in the

coming decades (Manale 2023, 45A). These facts mean that the climate crisis is not a state of adequate shortage of resources, a state of abundant goods, or a condition that requires justice due to the mass production of various conflicts. In other words, the climate crisis does not correspond to what Rawls calls a situation that requires social justice, that is, 'circumstances of justice'. Rawls' concept of the "Circumstances of Justice" posits a set of conditions assumed to exist in a just society, which includes basic resources, equal opportunities, and the absence of systemic inequalities. This framework assumes a stable environment and a steady supply of resources. Climate change, however, disrupts these assumptions by causing unpredictable weather patterns, water scarcity, and food insecurity, among other environmental challenges. These disruptions can exacerbate existing inequalities and make it more difficult to achieve justice. Moreover, Rawls' conception treats society distributively, taking into account the autonomy and right to satisfaction of each of its members (Choptiany 1973, 146). Therefore, Rawls' theory, which constructs justice from a distributive point of view based on appropriate deficiencies and conflicts, is difficult to apply to the problem of climate change.

2) Anthropocentrism and Basic needs principle

John Rawls's influential political philosophy, as outlined in *A Theory of Justice and Political Liberalism* has been widely studied and debated in the field of political theory. However, Rawls's theory has been criticized for its anthropocentric perspective, which prioritizes the interests and well-being of human beings above all other forms of life. This chapter will critically examine the limitations of Rawls's philosophy from the perspective of anthropocentrism. It sounds like a tautology, but liberalism is a thought that has freedom at its core, and the subject of that freedom is only human beings and freedom is the ability to exercise one's rights without interference or constraint. This includes freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of religion, among others. Freedom is also closely linked to the concept of individual autonomy, which refers to the ability of an individual to make choices and act according to their own values and beliefs. In a democratic society, the government has a responsibility to protect the rights and freedoms of its citizens. This means that individuals should be free to exercise their rights without fear of retribution or discrimination. In turn, individuals also have a responsibility to respect the rights and freedoms of others. Overall, the relationship between freedom, human beings, and rights is a complex and dynamic one. However, at its core, it emphasizes the importance of human beings themselves. At

the heart of liberalism is the belief in individual freedom and human rights, which means that it is a system of thought centered on the individual. Rawls is also a representative of liberal thought and has worked throughout his career to articulate its theoretical foundations (Berkowitz 2002, 60). This means that Rawls, within the tradition of liberalism, also retains the character of anthropocentrism that liberalism has. Anthropocentrism is a belief that humans are the most important and central fact in the universe and This is divided into three categories.

(1) Perceptual anthropocentrism (which characterizes paradigms informed by sense data from human sensory organs)

(2) Descriptive anthropocentrism (which characterizes paradigms that begin from, center upon, or are ordered around Homo sapiens)

(3) Normative anthropocentrism (which characterizes paradigms that constrain inquiry in a way that somehow privileges Homo sapiens and which characterizes paradigms that make assumptions or assertions about the superiority of Homo sapiens, its capacities, the primacy of its values, its position in the universe, and/or make prescriptions based on these assertions and assumptions) (Mylius 2018, 159).

Rawlsian political philosophy, firmly rooted in the liberal tradition, falls within the realm of the second and third tenets of anthropocentrism. This philosophical framework is

principally preoccupied with the concept of human rationality, positioning Homo sapiens as its central focus and according to them a privileged status based on this cognitive faculty. Rawls's philosophy, like most liberal philosophies, is based on human cognition and rationality. His theory of justice is based on human public reason, human desire, and human consensus. For example, Rawls distinguishes between humans and animals by attributing moral personality exclusively to humans. This perspective has led many to believe that Rawls's concept of moral personality excludes animals from consideration (Baldwin 2023, 2). Above all, Rawls's arguments are based on Homo sapiens. According to Rawls, the veil of ignorance, which he imposes on individuals in the original position, serves as a mechanism to ensure that the principles they agree upon are determined autonomously, free from any biases or preconceived notions that could arise from their particular circumstances or social position (Levine 1974, 49). In the mechanism by which Rawls derives the two principles of justice, Homo sapiens is the protagonist while other species are excluded from consideration. This means that animals and other species are not taken into account in the decision-making process. Rawls' later works propose that political liberalism is an outcome of human rationality, as he argues that individuals can use their reasoning capacities to devise a fair and just political system that respects the rights and freedoms of all members of society. According to Rawls'

theory, the subject of the agreement, the purpose of the agreement, and the subject of rights are all limited to Homo sapiens, which means that privilege is also restricted to this species. Consequently, Rawls' philosophy is unavoidably anthropocentric, much like other liberal philosophies that prioritize human interests and values over those of non-human animals and the natural world.

Rawls's anthropocentric thinking emphasizes the interests and welfare of both present and future human generations. However, his "basic needs principle" could be criticized for potentially overlooking the needs of non-human species and ecosystems, which are essential to the flourishing of life on Earth. While Rawls acknowledges the interdependence of human beings and the natural environment, his framework primarily focuses on human needs and well being. Critics argue that this limited perspective may lead to unsustainable practices and neglect the long-term ecological consequences of human actions. In sum, Rawls' anthropocentric thinking and political philosophy can be criticized for its potential lack of consideration for non-human species, which have intrinsic value and deserve ethical consideration. This raises broader questions about the scope of justice and the moral duties of human beings towards other forms of life on earth. As you know, due to anthropocentrism, the human population has dispersed so widely and grown to such an extent that it has exerted tremendous selection pressures on almost every form

of life on Earth. The technological prowess of human societies has enabled them to rapidly extract and exchange vast amounts of natural resources with one another in a feverish, never-ending stream (Burchett 2014, 119). However, The notion that humans are the central focus of our approach to the world, with the underlying assumption that the planet's purpose is solely to satisfy human needs and desires, is becoming increasingly untenable. This anthropocentric perspective is ultimately self-defeating as it disregards the interconnectedness of life on earth and the essential role of non-human species and ecosystems in sustaining our planet. Rawls' philosophy shares the anthropocentric limitations of liberal philosophy, and his 'basic needs principle' is similarly restricted by its failure to account for non-human species. As such, it may not be a suitable alternative theory in the current era of the climate crisis, where an ecologically centered approach is increasingly recognized as essential. The following chapter will explore alternative philosophical perspectives that can effectively address the present day climate crisis, surpassing the constraints inherent in Rawlsian thought.

4. Alternative Political Philosophy in the Era of Climate Crisis

The reality of climate change is already upon us, and we can no longer deny its scientific evidence and the resulting impact. While it may be too late to reverse the damage, we still have a choice to take action and mitigate the consequences. We must acknowledge that we have agency in this situation, and we should take advantage of every opportunity to make a positive impact (Brooks 2022, 15). Given the lack of political will to address the climate crisis, it is crucial to explore alternative political philosophies that can effectively tackle this global challenge (Kempe et al. 2021, 42). Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to undertake a critical examination of the notion of an alternative political philosophy that goes beyond Rawlsian political philosophy and liberalism. The objective is to effectively address the urgent issue of climate change. To accomplish this, we will explore how post-humanist principles can offer a comprehensive perspective for tackling climate change.

According to Ferrando, posthumanism originated from postmodernism, initially through the revolutionary dissection of the concept of the “human being” (Ferrando 2019, 25). This intellectual and political initiative began in the late 1960s as a means of deconstructing the humanistic tradition, but it later

developed into an epistemological undertaking in the 1990s. Posthumanism is a critical examination of discriminatory attitudes towards different species, which can be traced back to the hierarchical structures of “humanism”. Posthumanism is perceived as following in the footsteps of postmodernism, which was a movement that raised doubts about the reliability of our most cherished views. Posthumanism shares with postmodernism a skeptical attitude toward established ways of thinking about ourselves and the world we inhabit (Phillips 2015, 63). Hence, posthumanism challenges the very notion of “humanism,” which has been regarded as a cornerstone of our values. Humanism, which places humanity at the center of our concerns and values, has been the prevailing paradigm in societal discourse for centuries. This perspective emphasizes our uniqueness and superiority over other forms of life and has enabled us to achieve great heights of technological and scientific progress. However, this approach has also led to many unintended consequences, such as environmental degradation and resource depletion. In particular, it can be argued that the ongoing climate change is a direct result of this particular mode of thinking. Therefore, if we wish to overcome the catastrophic effects of climate change and minimize its damage, we must consider liberalism from the perspective of posthumanism. To confront the existential threat of climate change, we must embrace a posthumanist perspective that recognizes the interconnectedness of all life

forms and seeks to build a more just and sustainable world for all. Liberalism has always presupposed a modern subject that devalues the other, with liberalism itself being exclusively human. However, it is now imperative that liberalism recognize these "others" as subjects of freedom and include them in the discourse of liberty. In light of environmental and social challenges facing the world, it is no longer viable to view freedom and human flourishing as independent from the well-being of nonhuman inhabitants or the planet itself. Nonetheless, we should not discard liberalism, as it remains a valuable political and philosophical framework for safeguarding against various forms of tyranny. To avoid the risk of fundamentalism and potential violence during the climate crisis, it's essential to expand, rather than abandon, liberalism. Therefore, we should explore the integration of liberalism and posthumanism to reaffirm the value of liberalism. In order to incorporate the "others" that have been devalued within the framework of liberalism, we must undertake the following steps.

Firstly, posthuman liberalism must aim to deconstruct and expand the concept of "human beings." It is crucial to acknowledge that the definition of human beings is not fixed and does not solely refer to *Homo sapiens*. Rather, it is a generative concept that is marked by an atypical identity and is constantly evolving. The concept of "human beings" must be re-evaluated in light of new scientific discoveries and changing

social values. By expanding our understanding of what it means to be human, we can develop a more inclusive and compassionate liberalism that recognizes the inherent dignity of all life forms. Throughout the history of liberalism, the definition of human beings has largely been centered around the physical aspect of the human body. However, as our understanding of human nature continues to evolve, there is a growing need to broaden the definition of human beings beyond just their physical bodies and to consider the full range of factors that contribute to human flourishing and well-being. According to the posthuman liberal perspective, humanity cannot be viewed as a collection of individuals possessing Homo sapiens bodies. Instead, humanity must be conceived as a complex network comprising all the "peripherals" associated with human existence. This entails recognizing that humans are interdependent with animals, machines, and ecosystems as well as social institutions such as gender and race that these various entities collectively form the network that constitutes humanity. In this sense, posthuman liberalism views humanity as a multi-faceted network of diverse entities extending beyond the traditional biological and physical aspects of human existence. In other words, it recognizes that humans are defined not only by their biological make-up but also by their relationships with each other and with their environment. This recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependence of different entities is crucial for

comprehending the complexities of contemporary societies including the climate crisis and promoting a more nuanced understanding of the human experience. Through this thought, we can find an alternative that can go beyond the climate crisis. In order to minimize climate disasters that have already begun, we must modify the basic premise of human beings and ecology. Liberalism must transcend the limitations of conventional 'human' thinking and move beyond symbolic dichotomies such as 'us/them', 'civilization/barbarism', 'subject/object', and 'natural/artificial'. Only by doing so can we hope to address the urgent challenge of the climate crisis.

Secondly, In this era of rapid technological advancements, our understanding of politics and democracy must evolve as well. The traditional concept of "demos" as a collection of individuals with shared interests and values has become outdated. It fails to account for the emergence of new forms of life and intelligence that may not fit within these categories. That is why we need to embrace a new framework of "post-demos" to understand the political landscape of the 21st century. This framework recognizes the interconnectedness of all forms of life and intelligence and acknowledges that they cannot be neatly categorized or compartmentalized. It requires us to shift our thinking about the role of individuals and communities and embrace a more holistic approach to democracy. Since democracy emerged in Athens, the concept of "demos" has been defined as the citizen body, the mass of

citizens, and all ordinary people (Carter 2010, 48-49). However, this definition is no longer sufficient. It fails to account for the fact that our planet is facing an unprecedented ecological crisis that requires a new way of thinking about democracy. The old borders and legal frameworks that defined the power of the "demos" are no longer sufficient to address the challenges we face today. The crises confronting inhabitants of Earth, including the climate crisis and the evolution of artificial intelligence, transcend the borders and legal confines of individual sovereign states. No single country can effectively manage these challenges; they must be approached with a global ecosystem perspective. Hence, there is a pressing need for a novel viewpoint that extends beyond the conventional border-centered demos perspective. What we require is a new 'demos' outlook that surpasses the limitations of current geographical frameworks. 'Post-demos' recognize that we are all part of a vast ecological network that transcends borders and legal frameworks. It acknowledges that our rights and obligations extend beyond our immediate communities and require us to think and act globally. This new framework offers us the opportunity to reimagine democracy in a way that is more inclusive, more sustainable, and more responsive to the challenges we face today. So far, the political system of democracy has not been implemented globally, and the sovereignty of democratic entities has been confined within national borders. However, the rights and obligations of

Post-Demos, a new political entity, surpass these limitations. Post-Demos seeks to establish global democracy and expand the rights of climate refugees globally. As we stand at the brink of a new era in human history, we must ask ourselves: what kind of democracy do we want to create? Do we want to cling to the outdated notions of the past, or do we want to embrace a new vision of post-demos that acknowledges our interconnectedness and our shared responsibility for the future of our planet? The choice is ours, but the consequences of our decision will be felt for generations to come.

Democracy has been defined as a system of governance in which individuals make collective decisions on an equal basis. From a functional perspective, democracy has been widely accepted as the most rational way to reach decisions that bind all members of society. The legitimacy of democratic processes stems from the fact that citizens have a stronger obligation to abide by laws made through these processes compared to laws made by other governance mechanisms. However, these mechanisms have been seen to be powerless in the face of the global climate crisis, and at times have even delayed action by assigning blame for the crisis. Democracy must now be redefined from the perspective of post-human liberalism and the new sovereignty of post-demos. These innovative political and philosophical changes are entirely possible. The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that institutions, states, and citizens can act quickly and radically in

times of crisis. Therefore, it is crucial to adopt a similarly bold response to the climate crisis, especially given the lack of political will to address it (Sultana 2022, 118). Furthermore, the study by Dedeoğlu and Zampaki highlights the valuable insights provided by posthumanism into ecological issues and its potential to facilitate the promotion of alternative sustainable practices (Dedeoğlu & Zampaki 2023, 33). In addition, climate change is a structural injustice demanding a theory of political responsibility (Sardo 2023, 26). Therefore, we must consider democracy from a posthuman perspective. In other words, democracy should not only be seen as a system of governance for decision-making but also as a system of governance to sustain the global ecosystem and mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis.

5. Conclusion

Liberalism has been recognized as a groundbreaking political philosophy that has broken down feudalistic traditions and bestowed individuals with inalienable rights. However, the same economic growth and comfort brought about by liberalism have contributed to the global climate crisis. As a

result, a new political philosophy is necessary to address this unprecedented challenge, and the works of John Rawls have been brought to the fore. Rawls' political philosophy has been evaluated as having the potential to respond to the climate crisis and provide an alternative to classical liberalism. Rawls' concept of the "original position" introduced in *A Theory of Justice* has been suggested as a useful principle in international negotiations, and his philosophy of intergenerational justice has been considered as an alternative approach to future generations and climate justice. For instance, Clement has applied Rawls' "veil of ignorance" to the international community to formulate an international agreement that prioritizes states vulnerable to climate change, highlighting the potential of this alternative political philosophy for the climate weak. Furthermore, Rawls' principle of equal opportunities has been proposed as a viable framework for climate justice. Just as opportunities must be distributed equitably to all, environmental resources should be allocated in the same manner, forming the basis of climate justice. The concept of the "Basic Needs Principle" presented by Rawls also incorporates environmental factors, providing a framework for generational justice and a possible solution to the climate crisis.

However, Rawls' political philosophy is not without limitations, as it shares the inherent drawbacks of classical liberalism. The logical contradictions within Rawls' philosophy

make it debatable whether it is an adequate response to the climate crisis. Justice Rawls presents requires a situation that calls for justice, which is a scenario of scarcity and resulting conflict, a normative situation. However, the climate crisis is already underway, and our current reality demands action to minimize its effects. Rawls' political philosophy is anthropocentric in nature, similar to that of Kant's philosophy, which considers all species other than Homo sapiens as "others," granting humans superiority and reinforcing human dominance over nature. Rawls' philosophy shares the limitations of classical liberalism and may even exacerbate the climate crisis rather than serve as an alternative theory in response to it. While rights-oriented liberalism poses certain challenges, it is not devoid of advantages. Liberalism plays a crucial role in mitigating the potential risk of the climate crisis discourse turning fundamentalist and violent. Hence, my intention is to modify liberalism rather than discard it. Thus, it is imperative to create new liberalism and democracy that go beyond anthropocentrism. We must construct a post-human liberalism that redefines the "human" as a network of all members of the ecosystem and recognizes all members of the connected ecosystem as new sovereigns, post-demos, with rights and obligations beyond borders for the sake of global democracy. The climate crisis demands a radical transformation of society as a whole, and revising liberalism and democracy is the first step in addressing this global issue.

This is a global problem, and the solution must be founded on the principle of coexistence.

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박성진 *

본 연구는 기후 위기와 자유주의 사이의 복잡한 관계를 존 롤스의 정치철학을 통해 고찰하며 그 한계에 대해 살펴보는 것을 목적으로 한다. 또한 기후 위기 상황에서 롤스의 이론에 현실적 대안이 될 수 있는 개념을 제안한다. 롤스의 철학은 규범적 성격과 인간 중심적 관점으로 인해 기후 위기 대응에 한계가 있는 것이 사실이다. 게다가 현재 인류가 직면하고 있는 기후 위기는 롤스가 전제하는 ‘정의의 여건’, 즉 정의의 원칙이 도출되는 조건에 부합하지도 않는다. 따라서 여기서는 자유주의가 가진 한계를 극복하기 위해 ‘인간’의 개념을 생태계의 모든 구성원을 포함하도록 확장하는 ‘포스트휴먼-자유주의’와 민주주의의 주체를 생태계 네트워크 전반으로 확대하는 ‘포스트데모스’라는 개념을 제안한다. 이 접근법은 공존이라는 기본 원칙에 중점을 두고 글로벌 민주주의와 국제 협력을 지지한다. 아울러 인간과 자연의 관계를 재정 의하고, 총체적 생태계의 관점을 채택하며, 중대한 글로벌 과제를 해결하기 위해 정치적 주체에 대한 재성찰을 요구한다.

주제어: 기후 위기, 롤스, 자유주의, 포스트휴먼, 포스트데모스, 포스트휴먼 자유주의

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