

Name: Martins Debbie

College: Social And Management Sciences

Department: Political Science

Matric number: 17|sms08|015

Assignment: Read the chapter on John Rawls and write short explanatory notes on his first principle, second principle: Distributive Economic Justice, The Original Position, and Summarise John Rawls idea of Justice.

Rawls's theory of **justice** revolves around the **adaptation** of two fundamental principles of **justice** which would, in turn, guarantee a just and morally acceptable society. The first principle guarantees the right of each person to have the most extensive basic liberty compatible with the liberty of others.

Rawls contends that the most rational **choice** for the parties in the original position are two principles of justice: The first guarantees the equal basic rights and liberties needed to secure the fundamental interests of free and equal citizens and to pursue a wide range of conceptions of the good.

**Rawls's first principle** confirms widespread convictions about the importance of equal basic rights and liberties. Two further features make this **principle** distinctive. **First** is its priority: the basic rights and liberties must not be traded off against other social goods. The resultant theory was challenged and refined several times in the decades following its original publication in 1971. A significant reappraisal was published in the 1985 essay "[Justice as Fairness](#)", and a subsequent book under the same title, within which Rawls further developed his two central principles for his discussion of justice. Together, they dictate that society should be structured so that the greatest possible amount of liberty is given to its members, limited only by the notion that the liberty of any one member shall not infringe upon that of any other member. Secondly, inequalities – either social or economic – are only to be allowed if the worst off will be better off than they might be under an equal distribution. Finally, if there is such a beneficial inequality, this inequality should not make it harder for those without resources to occupy positions of power – for instance, public office.<sup>[1]</sup>

John Rawls's second principle of **justice** has two parts. The first part, fair equality of opportunity, requires that citizens with the same talents and **willingness** to use them have the same educational and economic opportunities regardless of whether they were born rich or poor. the second principle of justice, which is made up of the *opportunity principle* and the *difference principle*. The difference principle and how it is meant to operate as an element of the basic structure is illustrated in detail, and supplemented with an example of how it might be applied to a hypothetical society. What the opportunity principle entails and why its lexical priority over the difference principles might be agreed to in the original position are described. Differences in different social regimes are considered in terms of how well they would satisfy Rawls's criterion.

His Second Principle focused on equality. Rawls realized that a society could not avoid inequalities among its people. Inequalities result from such things as one's inherited characteristics, social class, personal motivation, and even luck. Even so, Rawls insisted that a just society should find ways to reduce inequalities in areas where it can act.

By "offices and positions" in his Second Principle, Rawls meant especially the best jobs in private business and public employment. He said that these jobs should be "open" to everyone by the society providing "fair equality of opportunity." One way for a society to do this would be to eliminate discrimination. Another way would be to provide everyone easy access to education.

The most controversial element of his theory of social justice was his Difference Principle. He first defined it in a 1968 essay. "All differences in wealth and income, all social and economic inequalities," he wrote, "should work for the good of the least favored."

Later, when he wrote *A Theory of Justice*, he used the phrase, "least-advantaged members of society" to refer to those at the bottom of economic ladder. These might be unskilled individuals, earning the lowest wages in the society.

Under the Difference Principle, Rawls favored maximizing the improvement of the "least-advantaged" group in society. He would do this not only by providing "fair equality of opportunity," but also by such possible ways as a guaranteed minimum income or minimum wage (his preference). Rawls agreed that this Difference Principle gave his theory of social justice a liberal character.

Finally, Rawls ranked his principles of social justice in the order of their priority. The First Principle ("basic liberties") holds priority over the Second Principle. The first part of the Second Principle ("fair equality of opportunity") holds priority over the second part (Difference Principle). But he believed that both the First and Second Principles together are necessary for a just society.

The **original position** is a central feature of **John Rawls's** social contract account of justice, "justice as fairness," set forth in *A Theory of Justice* (TJ). The **original position** is designed to be a fair and impartial point of view that is to be adopted in our reasoning about fundamental principles of justice. In the original position, the parties select principles that will determine the basic structure of the society they will live in. This choice is made from behind a **veil of ignorance**, which would deprive participants of information about their particular characteristics: their ethnicity, social status, gender and, crucially, Conception of the Good (an individual's idea of how to lead a good life). This forces participants to select principles impartially and rationally.

As a thought experiment, the original position is a hypothetical position designed to accurately reflect what principles of justice would be manifest in a society premised on free and fair cooperation between citizens, including respect for **liberty**, and an interest in reciprocity.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

In the state of nature, it might be argued that certain persons (the strong and talented) would be able to coerce others (the weak and disabled) by virtue of the fact that the stronger and more talented would fare better in the state of nature. This coercion is

sometimes thought to invalidate any contractual arrangement occurring in the state of nature. In the original position, however, representatives of citizens are placed behind a "veil of ignorance", depriving the representatives of information about the individuating characteristics of the citizens they represent. Thus, the representative parties would be unaware of the talents and abilities, ethnicity and gender, religion or belief system of the citizens they represent. As a result, they lack the information with which to threaten their fellows and thus invalidate the social contract they are attempting to agree to.

#### In summary John Rawls idea of Justice

In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls begins with the statement that, "Justice is the first virtue of social institution," meaning that a good society is one structured according to principles of justice. Rawls asserts that existing theories of justice, developed in the field of philosophy, are not adequate: "My guiding aim is to work out *A Theory of Justice* that is a viable alternative to these doctrines which have long dominated our philosophical tradition." He calls his theory-aimed at formulating a conception of the basic structure of society in accordance with social justice-justice as fairness.

Rawls sets forth to determine the essential principles of justice on which a good society may be based. He explains the importance of principles of justice for two key purposes: first, to "provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society"; and secondly, to "define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens" of society. He observes that, by his definition, well-ordered societies are rare due to the fact that "what is just and unjust is usually in dispute." He further notes that a well-ordered and perfectly just society must be formulated in a way that addresses the problems of "efficiency, coordination, and stability."