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**QUESTIONS**

1. John Rawl's First Principle

2. The Second Principle: Distributive Economic Justice;

3. The Original Position

4. Summarise John Rawls Idea of Justice

**John Rawl's First Principle**

John Rawl a philosopher who was born and brought up in Baltimore. Marlyland, he graduated from Princeton University and served in the army afterwards during the Second World War. John Rawl’s first principle being “Theory of Justice” (equal basic liberties) provides a convincing account of basic rights and liberities, and their priorities. In this theory, John Rawl tries to provide a moral theory alternative to utilitarianism and it addresses the problem of distributive justice.

Rawls's theory of justice also claims that for every individual citizen, there are two fundamental capacities or powers correspondingly two higher-order interest in the realization of those capacities

1. An interest in being able to formulate and live according to some particular conceptions of the good.
2. An interest in exercising one’s ‘sense of justice’ and being motivated by it, providing others to do so as well.

The notion of the two powers of the citizen include the idea of a democratic society where citizens are both equal and free. The grounding idea behind Rawl’s work is that the citizens are equal; they are equal in having reached what might be called the same minimum threshold.

For Rwals all liberties should be listed amongst the basic constitutional rights. These basic liberties and rights are not founded on basic/natural rights. Rather Rwals says ‘the foundation is in the conception of the person and of social cooperation most likely to be congenial to the public political culture of a modern democratic society.’

We thereby arrive at Rwals principle of justice which states that ‘each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme for all; and in this scheme the equal political liberties and those liberties are to be guaranteed their fair value.

**The Second Principle: Distributive Economic Justice**

Rawl believes that an absolute equality of opportunities with respect to such starting point can never be achieved. He developed the idea of democratic equality of opportunity which are as follows:

1. The taking of remedial steps, conscientiously, to reduce the initial differential in advantages that accurse to individuals, arbitrarily from their starting points in life. To the central idea of this is to try to make people seem less unequal at which when they enter into adult life as citizens and as workers and to also ensure that everyone there has the basic capabilities that are required to be a contributing member of the society.
2. Rawl calls this new idea the ‘difference principle’ the principle of everyone’s continual benefit, which is compelled by the idea that where there are several mutually improving options available, we should choose that option which most reduces the resultant inequality in outcomes.

**The Original Position**

The original position is one of the central features of John Rawls’s social contract account of justice which is designed to be a fair and impartial point of view that is to be adopted in our reasoning about fundamental principles of justice. While in the original position, we are supposed to imagine ourselves in the position of free and equal persons who jointly agree upon and commit ourselves to principles of social and political justice. The main distinguishing feature of the original position is “the veil of ignorance” which is to ensure impartiality of judgment, the parties are deprived of all knowledge of their personal characteristics and social and historical circumstances. They do know of certain fundamental interests they all have, including general facts about psychology, economics, biology, and other social and natural sciences.

Rawl envisioned two main roles for the original position.

1. The first is to serve as a screening device for the candidate principles
2. The second is to rank the remaining eligible candidates after the preliminary screening has been accomplished.

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. The second principle provides fair equality of educational and employment opportunities enabling all to fairly compete for powers and positions of office; and it secures for all a guaranteed minimum of the all-purpose means (including income and wealth) that individuals need to pursue their interests and to maintain their self-respect as free and equal persons.

In conclusion of the original position, a certain amount of role playing is allowed; individuals are allowed to assume certain standpoints and then to consider how things will play out in the deliberations.

**Summary of John Rawls Idea of Justice**

A Theory of Justice (1971), by John Rawls, is described as” one of the most influential works in moral and political philosophy written in the twentieth century,” - Samuel Freeman. John Rawls’s Idea of Justice is attempt to formulate a philosophy of justice and a theoretical program for establishing political structures designed to preserve social justice and individual liberty. Rawls writes in reaction to the then predominant theory of utilitarianism, which posits that justice is defined by that which provides the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Rawls proposes a theoretical person who, shrouded in a veil of ignorance, must design a just society without foreknowledge of his or her own status in that society. Rawls asserts that from this objective vantage point, which he calls the original position, the individual will choose a system of justice that adequately provides for those positioned on the lowest rungs of society. The individual will do so because he or she may end up in such a disadvantaged position and will want to be adequately provided for. Rawls draws from earlier theories of political philosophy that posit a social contract by which individuals implicitly agree to the terms on which they are governed in any society. Rawls concludes that such a social contract, formulated from the perspective of the original position, will guarantee a just society without sacrificing the happiness or liberty of any one individual.

Rawls also addresses issues of liberty, social equality, democracy, and the conflict of interests between the individual and society.

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