1. In this first principle, Rawls claims that for every individual citizen there are two fundamental capacities or powers and correspondingly, two 'higher-order interests' in the realization of those capacties. Thus, each person has, over that person's entire life. (i) an interest in being able to formulate and live according to some particular conception of the good and (ii) an interest in exercising one's 'sense of justice' and being motivated by it, providing others do so as well i.e. each person has, over that person's entire life, an interest in living cooperatively with fellow citizens, on terms of mutual respect and reciprocal benefit, under a unified and stable scheme of basic political and economic institutions organized by a shared set of principles of justice which each citizen can affirm.

The notion of the two powers of the citizen is understood to include the idea that in a democratic society, citizens are both equal and free. Hereperson is conceived as having two powers at a sufficient level to be able to be a fully contributing member of society over that person's entire adult life or at least, the working years. In having these powers at some such level, all the citizens are on the same footing. This, then, is the grounding idea behind Rawls's notion that the citizen are equal; they are equal in having reached what might be called this same minimum threshold level.

He uses the idea of the two powers and the corresponding interests of the citizen to ground his elaboration of the concrete basic liberties that each citizen is to have equally. He identifies which 'liberties' which ways of acting or of not being injured should be among the basic constitutional rights, or among the most weighty,such rights, by considering what he calls 'two fundamental cases'. Thus, those liberties that are part of or a means of achieving the first interest (the sense of justice interest) constitute the second of the 'two fundamental cases'.

Rawls offers liberty of conscience and freedom of personal association as examples of liberties justified under the first interest (the conception of the good interest). The argument here is simply that people would not be able to have or live according to their own particular determinate conception of the good, whatever it was, and in particular would not be able to revise any such conception, without liberty of conscience or freedom of personal association.

He offers freedom of political speech and of assembly as examples under the second interest (the sense of justice interest). The main argument here, then, is simply that people could not live cooperatively with fellow citizens, on terms of equality and mutual respect, under a unified and stable scheme of democratic political institutions without having a practice of free political speech in place there. And the same could be said about liberty of political association and assembly.

Thus we arrive at Rawls's first principle of justice; '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 (e.g. the right to vote and to campaign), and only those liberties, are to be guaranteed their fair value'.

2. In his second principle of distributive economic justice, his account begins with the fact that people have different natural endowments and are born into and grow up in different social circumstances. No one can be said to be responsible for these factors in their own case. Nonetheless, factors such as natural endowment and intial social circumstance are not negligible; they powerfully affect a person's life prospects, advantagously for some and disadvantageously for others. Indeed, they may be the main sources of inequality between people.

Rawls's argument sets out from this point. He first develops the idea of ' democratic' equality of opportunity conceived as (i) the taking of remedial steps, conscientiously, to reduce the initial differential in advantages that accures to individuals, arbitrarily, from their starting points in life. State-supported primary and secondary education (of good quality and at no cost to the individual student) would be an example of such a step. The leading idea here is to try to make people somewhat less unequal at the point where they actually enter into adult life, as citizens and as workers. And to make sure that everyone there, so far as possible, has the basic capabilities required to be contributing members of society. Rawls believes that an absolute equality of opportunity with respect to such starting points can never be achieved. And it is precisely where fundamental equality in starting points is not fully and strictly achieved, or cannot be, that concern for reducing the inequality of resultant outcomes is in order.

Thus, Rawls introduces a further idea to complement equality of opportunity (point i above) and complete the line of argument. Rawls call this new idea the 'difference principle'; it adds two further remedial steps to the picture; it adds (ii) the principle of everyone's continual benefit, which in turn is constrained by the idea that, where there are several mutually improving (that is, efficient) options available, (iii) we should choose that option which most reduces the resultant inequality in outcomes (as measured in terms of average income over a five-year period, say) between topmost and bottom-most groups. The object of this three-step process is to reduce, ideally to minimize, the gap between persons by taking account of both starting points and end results.

I believe the argument just sketched becomes logically conclusive if we make certain simplifying assumptions. We must first assume, as does Rawls, that we are starting from a hypothetical point of strict equality between people. This 'zero point' does not, of course, describe the way things actually are; rather, it is used merely to orient and clarify our thinking. And, secondly, we must assume that so long as the benefit of the least well-off group could possibly be higher, that of the other groups could also be higher, right on up to the optimum or goal point. The object of this second assumption is to identify a zone or context in which the procedure (the repeated pattern described earlier) can operate, with full effec, to achieve its intended end.

With these two assumptions in place, we have completed our account of Rawls argument for his second principle of justice, the principle of distributive economic justice. It remains now only state that principle succinctly; 'social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions; first, they are to be attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society'.

3. Rawls's contractarian method of justification is very complex. I will be able to mention only a few of its main features here. One feature that is often emphasized and that rawls continued to include even in his later writings is that the 'parties' to the contract are placed (in what he calls the 'original position') behind a thick veil of ignorance. Here they are instructed in their subsequent reasoning to ignore their own particular traits (traits that distinguish them from most or, at least, many other people), to be unaware of their society's place in history or in institutional evolution, and so on.

Other features are important as well. The parties understand that they are deciding about principle of justice (principles for distributing certain primary goods such goods as liberties, opportunities, income, and wealth to individuals) and that they will have to live, for their entire lives, under the principles they have selected.

Rawls envisions two main roles for the original position. In its first role the original position is to serve as a screening device for the candidate principles, that is, principles taken from a short list of main, historically available theories of justice such as plato's republic, various versions of utilitarianism, and so on. Here the features of the original position as a checklist against which the candidate principles are to be measured and to be assessed. This brings us to the second main role of the original position; to rank the remaining eligible candidates, after the preliminary screening has been accomplished. In performing this second role, of ranking, the parties rely on the balance of reasons (determined in light of assessments that could be reached in the original position) to decide which of the remaining eligible candidates is best. If they can do so unanimously, there should be no real doubt about that particular ranking.

And , for a second example, the mutual benefit part of the earlier argument would gain strong endorsement behind the veil of ignorance, especially if we assumed a starting point of strict equality. Now, a third example. Where persons have an equal status (as parties to the deliberation) and each has equal claim to shares of primary goods, then the parties (as representing such persons in the original positions) would prefer a mutually beneficial outcome that reduced the difference in income between the topmost and bottom-most group over one that increased that inequality.

Now, let us turn to the second main function of the original position construct, to the ranking of the competing candidate principle that remain eligible after screening. Here we encounter the most memorable argument from A Theory of Justice, chapter 3 (the chapter devoted to the original position), the famous maximin argument. As should be expected, this argument actually presupposes and builds on the arguments allowed and the assessments reached, in the screening process, for the various candidate principles there.

4. The point, then, is that Rawls's theory is not, on its own terms, an acceptable or accredited theory of critical moral justification. For the screening procedure it employs does not satisfy its own goal; of wielding a set of objectively based considerations for fairly assessing rival principles of justice. A second criticism, a lesser one, is that Rawls never succeeds in making an adequate case for the priority of the first principle (elements that include policies designed to achieve fair equality of oppoortunity, in all its aspects, and to achieve fair equality of opportunity, in all its aspects, and to achieve maximization of the level of goods and services available to the least well-off income group). Of course, there have been many other criticisms of Rawls's book than the two i have mentioned, because the book has been widely discussed, favourably and unfavourably. Over the years Rawls responded to many other criticisms. Indeed , Rawls appears to have become dissatisfied with the shape his theory had taken in 1971 and had retained for about a decade afterwards. He began to rethink that theory. Beginning with his Dewey Lectures in 1980, he began to reconfigure his entire justificatory account. A number of important changes have occured as he has moved further from positions he had occupied in A Theory of Justice.