Azuokwu Lilian Chikaodili Amauche.

Political science department

300 level

Pol 304- history of political thought II

**ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.**

**Read the full chapter on John Rawls and write short explanatory notes on:**

1. **John Rawls’s first principle (equal basic liberties):**

Rawls’s ***theory of justice*** wasn’t able to meet up with his objectives as he claimed which was to provide a 'convincing account of basic rights and liberties, and of their priority', but he was able to get his objective successfully imprinted on the minds of his audience after years by successfully providing arguments for his first principle of justice which was the principle of equal basic abilities during his lectures.

He claims that for every individual citizen there are two fundamental capacities and, also, two 'higher-order interests' in the realization of those capacities. And they are;

* An interest in being able to formulate and live according to some particular conception of the good
* An interest in exercising one's 'sense of justice' and being motivated by it, providing others do so as well.

The notion of the two powers of the citizen is to explain and to also include the idea that in a democratic society citizens are both equal and free. Each person is seen as having two powers at a sufficient level to be able to be a fully contributing member of society having these powers at some levels; all the citizens are seen as on the same footing. This is the foundation behind Rawls’s notion that all citizens are equal; ‘they are equal in having reached what might be called this same *minimum* threshold level. Rawls also gave an example by saying that liberties such as freedom of personal association should be included in the first interests while freedom of political speech and assembly as second interests.

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'

1. **The second principle (distributive economic justice):**

Rawls believes that as a result of some people’s natural talents or based on their class or social circumstances, inequality can arise. And he proffered a solution which was to reduce some of the opportunities that were given to those who have more than the others before they all enter adulthood so that everyone would be equal at some point. And to also make sure that everyone there, as far as possible, has the Basic capabilities required to be contributing members of society.

Rawls also believes that we should always choose that opinion that greatly reduces the inequality among the citizens. He firmly believes that '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'

1. **The original position:**

Rawls view on the original position is where he claims that *parties* are left behind a ‘*thick veil*’ of ignorance where they ignore the traits that makes them different thereby ignoring their positions in the society, their societies place in history or even their institutional revolution. The point of the metaphor of the veil is to indicate that the parties should remove sources of bias and irrelevancy from their deliberations.

In simplest terms the original position is an arena for deliberation and decision about principles of justice; its various features are meant to frame and constrain the debate about such principles. 'The idea of the original position is to set up a fair procedure so that any principles agreed to will be just'

According to Rawls there are two main roles for the original position. The first being that; 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 serve as a checklist against which the candidate principles are to be measured and to be assessed.

The second main role of the original position is 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.

1. **Summary of John Rawls Idea of Justice:**

In Rawls’s ***theory of justice,*** he believes that all citizens are equal. He placed so much emphasis in fairness and equality. He even suggested that the haves should be stripped of opportunities that could tend to lead the society towards inequality. He solely stood for an equal society where ignorance of one’s talents and position in the society is not encouraged and everyone is working together in their best capabilities and positions to keep the society together. He also believes that all liberties and rights of the state that are granted towards the citizens should be screened and made for everyone to enjoy and not just some opportune people. The main objectives he seeks to explain is to provide a 'convincing account of basic rights and liberties, and of their priority',