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QUESTION 1

JOHN RAWL’S FIRST PRINCIPLE

Rawls first principle was on justice, the aim of Rawl’s “theory of Justice” was to provide a compelling account of basic human rights liberties and their priorities, although this was not achieved until after ten years or so. According to Rawl there are 2 fundamental capacities, one is an interest in being able to formulate and live according to some particular conception of the good and the second is an interest in exercising one’s ‘sense of justice’ and being motivated by it, providing others to do so. Each person desires to live cooperatively with other people in the society with reciprocal respect and benefits, under a functional and secure political and economic institution put together by shared principles of justice that all citizens can attest to. Rawl’s also believed in the idea that all citizens are equal, and that they are equal in the minimum threshold level. Rawl’s also suggests liberty of conscience and freedom of personal association as examples of liberties enjoyed under the first interest, his argument here suggested that without this freedom people will not be free to make the choice of what they considered as good. Freedom of political speech and assembly as examples under second interest. In the second interest, according to Rawls without the presence of freedom of political speech and assembly people will not be able to live peacefully in a society on terms of equality and mutual respect under democratic political institutions. For Rawls all liberties are to be considered as human rights, these rights and the constitutions that contain them are founded on ‘basic rights’.

QUESTION 2

THE SECOND PRINCIPLE: DISTRIBUTIVE ECONOMIC JUSTICE

To Rawls, his account of his second principle was sounder than the first account. In the second account, Rawls believes that people are born into and grow in different social circumstances, no one can be held accountable for their societal circumstances, despite this the circumstances in which one grows up cannot be ignored as they play a great role in the life of such said person, it might be at an advantage to some people while it may be a disadvantage to others, hence the reasons why they remain a source of inequality between people in the society. He sets up the idea of “democratic equal opportunity” which means reducing to the barest minimum the initial differences that happen to divide the society from the starting point of their lives. He also believes that total equality of opportunities in respect to starting points cannot be achieved, where this not achieved Rawls suggest to complement ‘equality for opportunity’, he calls this idea’ the difference principle’ it adds other steps to the process (i) the principle of continual benefit, where severally benefitting opportunities are available to everyone in the society. (ii) We should choose the option that reduces the resultant inequalities in outcomes the most. The difference principle can be represented as proceeding through a series of stages. Rawl’s second principle of justice is the principle of distributive economic justice.

QUESTION 3

THE ORIGINAL POSITION

Rawl’s contractarian method of justification is very multiplex, one major feature that is often stressed and even continuously used by Rawl’s in his later writings is that the ‘parties’ to the contract are placed in what Rawl’s refers to as the original position behind a thick veil of ignorance. Another feature is that the parties understand that they are deciding about principles of justice and that they live for their entire lives that the principles that they have selected. He goes further to explain what he calls the “publicity requirement”, this means that all principles should be clear and nothing should be hidden and everything accounted for. Rawl’s envisioned two main roles for the original position.in the first principle is meant to function as a screening device for candidate principle. The total idea of Rawl’s first two principles would do well in the construct of the original position, the construct would be able to hold up under the constraints that have been stressed there. The idea of the original position is to set up a fair procedure so that any principles agreed to will be just. The second main role of the original position is to rank the remaining eligible candidates. One can easily identify with the maximin very fast due to the fact that right behind the veil of ignorance there exists a high degree of uncertainty, due to this occurrence, individuals may feel the need to set up principles for themselves since they do not know what exactly will be behind this veil, so they take veto power upon themselves so that the worst situation turns into the best of a bad lot that is of the set of the worse outcomes that may occur. In the ranking of the eligible candidates, this argument actually presupposes and builds on the arguments allowed and the assessments reached, in the screening process, for the various candidate principles here. Rawl’s theory and the discussion is merely the scratch of the surface, but these two theories have tended to dominate the debate and have had the lion’s share of attention.

QUESTION 4

SUMMARISE JOHN RAWL’S 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 principals 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.”