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**Level: 300**

**Assignment questions: 1) John Rawls First Principle**

**2) The Second Principle: Distributive Economic Justice**

**3) The Original Position**

**4) Summarize John Rawls Idea of Justice**

**SOLUTION**

John Rawls was born February 21, 1921 in Baltimore, Maryland, United States. He died in November,24, 2002, Lexington, Massachusetts. He was an American political and ethical philosopher, best known for his defense of egalitarian liberalism in is major work, A Theory of Justice. The first principle is often called the greatest equal liberty principle, and it is mainly concerned with the distribution of rights and liberties which should be embodied in the constitution. The first principle affirms that each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of basic rights and justice. Rawls identifies the following equal basic liberties: political liberty, (the right to vote and hold offices, especially in the case of women), liberty of conscience and freedom of thought, freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of the person which entails freedom from psychological oppression and physical assault and dismemberment, the right to hold personal property as well as freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept of rule of law. John Rawls stated two basic capacities that the individuals should possess over their lives. First, each person should know that they have the capacity to form, pursue and revise a good conception of the good. Second, each individual understands him or herself to have the capacity to develop a sense of justice and a generally effective desire to abide by it. With these two fundamentals, the group will know how to deliberate to design a social structure during which will be of maximal advantage to each person.

Also, there’s the second principle which applies primarily to economic institutions. This principle has two parts. The first part is fair equality of opportunity, requires that citizens with same taklents and willingness to use them have the same educational and economic opportunities regardless of whether they were born rich or poor. “In all parts of society there are to be roughly the same prospects of culture and achievement for those similarly motivated and similarly”. Second is the principle of ‘the difference principle’, which regulates the distribution of wealth and income. It allows inequalities of wealth and income lead to a larger social product; higher wages can cover the costs of training and education and can also provide incentives to fill jobs that are more in demand. The difference principle allows inequalities of wealth and income, so long as these will be to everyone’s advantage, and specifically to the advantage of those will be worst off. What the difference principle really requires is that any economic inequalities have to be to the greatest advantage of the disadvantaged. The difference principle is partly based on the negative thesis that the distribution of natural assets is undeserved. The fact that citizens have different talents and abilities can be used to make everyone must get the same shares. The fact that citizens have different talents and abilities can be used to make everyone better off. In a society governed by the difference principle, citizens regard the distribution of natural endowments as a common asset that can benefit all. Those better endowed are welcome to use their gifts to make themselves better off, so long as their doing so also contributes to the good of those less well endowed. The difference principle therefore expresses a positive ideal, an ideal of deep social unity.

Furthermore, the original position is a main feature of John Rawls social contract account of justice, ‘JUSTICE OF FAIRNESS’ in theory of justice. The original position aims to move from abstract conceptions to determinate principles of social justice. It does this by translating the question; what are fair terms of social cooperation for free and equal citizens? Into the question of, what terms of cooperation would free and equal citizens agree to under fair conditions? The move to agreement among citizens is what place Rawls justice as fairness within the social contract. The main strategy of the original position is to construct a method of reasoning that models abstract ideas about justice so as to focus their power together into their choice of principles. So Rawls conceptions of citizens and of society are built into the design of the original position as justified because they will see how it embodies plausible understandings of citizens and society, and also because this outcome confirms many of their considered convictions about justice. The original position is a fair situation in which each citizen is represented as only a free and equal citizen. The design of the original position therefore models the ideas of freedom, equality and fairness. For instance, equality and fairness are modeled in the original position by making the parties who represent real citizens symmetrically situated: no citizens representative is able to threaten any other citizen’s representative, or to hold out longer for a better deal. The most striking feature of the original position is the veil of ignorance, which prevents arbitrary facts about citizens from influencing the agreement among their representatives. The veil of ignorance is to ensure impartiality judgement, the parties are deprived of all knowledge of their personal characteristics and social and historical circumstances.

Lastly, the moral force behind the principle of theory of justice is based on hypothetical contract by emphasizing contracts over consequences the theory tries to avoid the dilemma of treating moral agents as a means to an end instead of using the model of an actual contract, for example, the United States constitution, the theory uses the concept of a hypothetical contract which is more resisting to the exploitation of knowledge and bargaining power. Theory of justice asks us to put ourselves behind the veil of ignorance as a thought experiment, so that we eliminate personal features and imagine ourselves in a conscious state before being born. This state known as the original position tries to bring us closer a position of equality. In this position, we should ask ourselves, what sort of position would I want to be born into? This draws on a sort of joint rationality and helps us to find common ground. The third component of the theory of justice can be thought of as speculation of what would be chosen by rational actors in the original position. John Rawls theory of justice revolves around the adaptation of two fundamental principles. The first principle guarantees the right of each person to have the most extensive basic liberty of others, while the second principle states that social and economic positions are to be open and to everyone’s advantage.