**NAME**: Minka Eleanor Salka

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**ASSIGNMENT**

1. John Rawl’s first principle
2. The Second Principle: Distributive Economic Justice
3. The Original Position
4. Summarize John Rawl’s Idea of Justice

**INTRODUCTION**

In light of the passing decades, many contributions have been made to political philosophy and political thought, thereby shaping issues man undergo in life. Rawl was no different from other philosophers and their contribution to the already existing knowledge as his idea and principles took the same form in creating a political thought as it was shaped by time, personality and crises and circumstances he was being born and brought up into.

A political thought is the logical and conscious inquiry into the problem of man and society. This is the study of the questions concerning power, justice, rights, laws and other issues pertaining to governance. The contribution of political thought to our life is that these thoughts can shape the way we address issues in our own time. In the nature of political thought, all product of political thought are influenced by: firstly, the time the thought is produced, secondly, the personality of the thinker, and lastly, the place and events that influences the thinking. This means that a political thinker is a product of his time, social and political crises shaping his thought including John Rawl.

In shaping of Rawls political thought, the time, was of Second World War (1939-1945) a period of crises and struggle for power. When realism; the play of power politics (realpolitik) was the dominant system in the international arena. In the quest for solution then was the adoption of liberal tradition and its characteristics (free trade, freedom of equal rights, democratic political systems, constitutional regimes, the principle of national self-determination etc.) which has successfully kept the world up till date from any form of world conflict and disasters. The liberal tradition and its characteristics is everything that Rawl stands for. It’s apparent to claim that the period of Second and Post Second World War is “the time” which shaped Rawls political thought.

Secondly, being the personality of the thinker, Rawl grew up in a family of discipline, lived a fulfilled life, as his parents knew the importance of education and made sure Rawl attained the best they could over which went a long way in contribution to who he turned out to be. The education received by Rawl influenced his personality a great deal. This enabled Rawl to differentiate what is right and what was wrong, what is fair and unfair, the need to challenge the hegemony of utilitarianism and support political liberalism. Rawls personality as a political thinker is strictly liberal, in Rawl was a man standing strongly for the safeguarding of individuals rights, the need for equal freedom for all, which states his strong will towards the liberal tradition.

Thirdly, the events occurring in Rawls journey as a political thinker to the formation of political thought namely: war, the period of renaissance; an era of reborn, transitional period, liberalization brought to limelight, were all participants in guidance towards the forming of his political thought.

John Rawl as a political thinker built upon his political thought with the following contents: the first principle on liberty, rights, and democratic institutions all present for the development of the conception of good life and requiring a sense of justice, contributed more to his first principle was the creation of his second principle with argument on distributive economic justice through the development of an ideal democratic equality of opportunity for all individual and a three step process to complete his line of argument. He then asserts that all these arguments and principles have a designed arena for its decision making in a stage known as the original position.

All these mentioned above constitutes of John Rawls journey to political thought and political philosophy and his addition and criticisms to the already existing knowledge.

**BIOGRAPHY**

John Rawls was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on 21 February 1921; his father was a lawyer and his mother a chapter president of the League of Nations voters. He got married to Margaret Warfield Fox of Baltimore in 1949, who was and artist, as inspired by her husband, she made many portraits of him. They had two sons and two daughters. He had an educationally filled life as he did not miss any level in education (elementary school, middle school, college) as his parents could offer the best they could.

His interest in political philosophy even to the obtainment of a Ph.D. degree and Professorship came to limelight in Princeton University as introduced by Norman Malcolm; a student of Ludwig Wittgenstein's and he recorded his first writing on the “Problem of Evil”. Furthering, he was offered a full professorship at Harvard, where he stayed for his teaching career till his retirement. He received many honorary awards such as: doctorates from Oxford and Harvard, the Rolf Schock Prize in Logic and Philosophy, awarded the National Humanities Medal by President Clinton amongst others.

JOHN RAWL’S FIRST PRINCIPLE

**Introduction**

In light of Rawls view, it’s crucial for man to have liberty over anything man deems fit. It is evident to not that not only at liberty sake but it should be a basic right that should be given to man and it should be shared amongst all men, equally, in a fair and politically speech.

Four basic key words in the first principle of John Rawl are: “liberty” (freedom) to exercise “rights” (standard civil rights), with the presence of one sense of “justice” (equality) in a “democratic society”. The relationship between these four terms is key in John Rawls first principle, as he establishes the fact that it’s not just only the attaining of these rights (e.g. Right to vote, right to not be assaulted, right to campaign), but will to act on this right liberally, the need to make it equal (justice and fairness), in a full swing practiced under a democratic form of government and society (democratic constitutions and institutions). Therefore bringing an end to unjust and unequal practices, restrictions and bondages, authoritarianism and utilitarianism and more on promoting the affairs of man for a better and fulfilled life.

Rawl asserts the claims that for every individual citizen these are two fundamental capacities and key interests that ought to be possessed by an individual. More so, there are also two 'higher-order interests needed present for the realization of those capacities. Rawls first principle was on the insight he had towards two (2) key interests namely: the “conception of good”, and the “sense of justice”.

Firstly, each person should have an interest to form and live according to some particular conception of the good. For Rawl, the meaning of his first interest (-good life) that is the conception of good living is the argument that without the perception of freedom of conscience and the free will of personal association, that people would not be able to have or live according to their own particular determinate conception of good life. The conception of freedom and concept of personal association are examples of liberties of good life amongst others.

Secondly, is the interest of exercising one sense of justice, being motivated by it and cooperating with their fellow citizens on terms reciprocal, mutual and are acceptable to all 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 second interest being the “sense of justice”, as Rawls highlighted the freedom in political speech and freedom of assembly as examples of the second interest. In explanation, Rawl argument is simply a call for the high presence for the practice of free political speech. He argues 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, created the urge for the rise of a society or a system of government where the conceptual good and a sense of justice to be taken in full participation. A democratic society where citizens are both equal and free was grasped by Rawl in his research without any form of doubt, as it was a preferable fit in comparison to other forms and society. In a democratic society, each person is conceived as having the 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 citizens are equal: they are equal in having reached what might be called this same minimum threshold level.

JOHN RAWL’S SECOND PRINCIPLE: DISTRIBUTIVE ECONOMIC JUSTICE

**Introduction**

Being timid and doubtful on his first principle of justice, Rawls idea in his second principle settled in confidence and surety, which was not only effective but sustainably sound. The advent of John Rawls political philosophy resurrected in World War 2 (1939-19450) in need of place of law and conditions necessary to sustain it in society. It was a renaissance era (era of reborn) which generated serious thinking among historians. Thus, Rawl received the social contract tradition to formulate a consensual theory of distributive justice.

Rawl is of the belief that individual’s natural gifts talent and skills are born out of circumstance owing to the contributions made by different social circumstances as people find themselves been born and grown-up in the society. It’s observed and very much evident that these natural gifts given to individuals and circumstances one is born into affects a person’s life prospects. It can be advantageous for one and disadvantageous for the other. Indeed, they may be the main sources of inequality between people.

Rawls argument in the second principle is marked, as firstly Rawl develops and perceives the idea for democratic equality of opportunity which is the taking of steps in combined effort to reduce the perceived differences amongst individuals. The main idea Rawl seeks to point out is to limit the hierarchy of individuals (rich and poor, have and have not) to a more equal level, so that when grown, reaching the adult stage, he/she should be able to be a great contributor to society as a citizen and a worker in the society. Further to compliment the idea of equality of opportunity and to complete the line of argument, Rawl introduces a new idea which he refers to as the “difference principle”; this comprises of two (2) further steps to the picture; it adds “the principle of everyone's continual benefit”, which in turn is constrained by the idea that, where there are several mutually improving options available, and lastly, we should choose that option which most reduces the resultant inequality in outcomes (as measured in terms of average in- come over a five-year period, say) between the 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.

Rawl listed and designed this set of ideas for the precise and highlighted specification of the difference principle. The difference principle can now obtain full representation, through the three step process of which each step have the aim of achieving equality of opportunity (same advantages, same disadvantages) by firstly giving standard mutual benefit (unbiased) and secondly, reduces the differences in the result between the topmost and bottom most group. This process is being continued until its peak where there can’t be further improvement.

Assumptions have been made to make Rawls idea logically conclusive. 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. The object of this second assumption is to identify a zone or context in which the procedure can operate, with full effect, to achieve its intended end. With these two assumptions in place, we have completed our account of Rawls's argument for his second principle of justice, the principle of distributive economic justice. It remains now only to 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'.

THE ORIGINAL POSITION

**Introduction**

The original position was created by John Rawl as an ideal arena for his first and second principle in a setting for structuring the competition between both principles. Rawls main discussion of the original position is found in his work “A Theory of Justice”, 1971. John Rawls method of justification is seen as complex. As he uses the metaphor “veil” as he suits bests to explain his justification and the term “parties” to describe his sustainace team for secure and just principles. 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'.

In Rawls view of the original position, he sees it as a medium in which the parties to the agreement are placed behind a thick veil of ignorance. For Rawl, the term parties used in his justification are the board for taking decisions about the principles of justice such as: the principle of distribution of goods such as income, wealth, amongst others and living their lives under these selected principles. These principles must be selected clearly, understandable to all and the parties would be held accountable for any upshot in the coming times.

As he uses the metaphor “veil” in an effort, seeking to best describe the situation, that the parties should remain unbiased, and remove any form of less importance from their negotiations, thoughts and judgments, this is what Rawl referred to as the public requirement. According to Rawl, the unanimity requirement can be seen as a set of principles after being revised and looked upon from different perspectives ought to be acceptable to persons in each of those perspectives.

Rawl stages two main roles for the original position, firstlyis 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 the first original position. 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 to clear doubts about that particular ranking.

SUMMARIZE JOHN RAWLS IDEA OF JUSTICE

John Rawls idea of justice stems from his view on the unfairness of utilitarianism. He sought to establish and teach philosophy the fact that human beings are instilled with affections, interest and goals, with the aim of achieving a purposeful life. He thought neither took seriously the idea that ultimately people are individuals with distinctive projects and interests and affections, and their own lives to lead. He particularly disliked the idea that either version of utilitarianism would allow that the vital interests of some individuals could be sacrificed, so long as the total or the average of well-being was maximized. His theory of justice was designed to prevent this from ever happening

Rawls idea of justice stems from two (2) principles he created: the first and the second principle of which he gave more support and confidence to the second principle. The first principle in the search for justice in concern to liberties, right, democratic societies and the concept of good life all falling down to create the second key term in the first principle the sense of justice; the sense to belong, to cooperate, to mingle, to be reciprocal and the sense to fairness and unbiased. The second principle, being equal in circumstances, in advantages, in disadvantages and mostly an ideal democratic equality of opportunity for all with a three-step process in achieving this equality.

A most common shared characteristic among both principles of justice is its marked effort towards achieving a desired aim which is “an ideal justice”.