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DEPARTMENT: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY.

LEVEL: 300

ASSIGNMENT: Read the Chapter on Rawls (Full Name is: John Rawls) in the Political Thinkers, edited by David Boucher and Paul Kelly (eBook sent on whatsapp) and write short explanatory notes on:

**1. John Rawl's First Principle: Equal basic liberties**

Rawls believed that forever individual in the society there are basically the fundamental capacities, two higher-order interests in realizing those capacities. These are:

i) An interest in being able to formulate and live according to some particular conception of the good.

ii) An interest in exercising ones sense of justice and being motivated by it, providing others to do so as well. Explaining further, he believes that every person during the course of their lives has an interest in coexisting with fellow citizens based on mutual respect and reciprocity of these values under certain political institutions with strong values and principles that every other citizen abides to.

He gives the notion in his two power idea under the first interest to explain that in a democratic society all citizens are equal and all have equal concrete basic liberties. The major argument is that people in the society would not be able to exist and interact having their own definition and determination of the concept of the good without liberty of conscience or freedom of personal association. The main argument of the second interest is that people cannot live cooperatively with other citizens on terms of equality and mutual respect without being able to practice free political speech in place there. He gives freedom of political speech and of assembly as examples for this second interest.

Some liberties fall under neither the two fundamental cases but are still necessary for those that fall under the cases. So then, Rawls believes that all the liberties specified should be counted among the fundamental constitutional rights. These liberties and rights are not founded on basic right, rather according to Rawls; they are most likely to be congenial to the political culture of a modern democratic society.

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

Unlike the first principle, Rawls stated this principle to contain some things that could cause inequality among people living in a particular society. He states here that people have natural endowments and grow up in different circumstances and situations which no one is particularly responsible for as you cannot determine the living circumstance you are born in. but these circumstances nonetheless can be advantageous for some and disadvantageous for others and they could indeed be the cause of major inequality among people. He believes that absolute equality of opportunities in life is impossible thus he introduces an idea to complement equality of opportunities which he refers to as the difference principle which adds two further steps to the argument:

i) Taking of remedial steps to reduce differences in the advantages differs in individuals from their starting points in life for instance state supported schools i.e. public schools both private and public would be an example of such.

ii) The principle of everyone’s continual benefits where there is a belief that there are efficient options still available.

iii) We should choose the option that reduces resultant inequalities in outcomes between the topmost and bottom groups.

The argument of the second assumption is to identify a zone or a context in which the procedure can operate with full effect to achieve its intended end.

3)  **The Original Position.**

This method of justification by Rawls was a complex one. It contained several features that helped to explain it further.

1. Parties to the contract are placed behind a veil of ignorance, where they are instructed to ignore their particular traits that distinguish them in society, to be unaware of their actual place in society. This metaphor was to indicate that people involved in the contract should remove sources of bias from their interaction and deliberations.
2. The parties understand that they are deciding about the principle of justice and that they will also have to live for their entire lives under the various principles they have selected.

In short, the original position is simply giving room for deliberations and decisions about the principles of justice. The idea is to set up a fair procedure so that principles agreed to will be just.

Basically Rawls debate for each of his two principles would fare well in the original position. In the veil of ignorance and its degree of high uncertainty, each individual thinks that since they don’t know how or where they might end up, they should set things up in the principles they selected with each having a veto so that the controllable outcomes for everyone is best of the worst. It is these particular outcomes as determined by these principles, which the maximum argument then chooses between.

In the original position, ascertain amount of role playing is permitted of individuals. People here are allowed to assume certain roles and then consider how things will play out in the deliberation of these parties. Where one took strict equality in starting points as a benchmark and remained behind the veil of ignorance would be a disadvantageous deviation, were they on the losing end and hence would veto such decisions.

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

Rawls theory of justice revolves around the adaptation of two fundamental principles of justice which would, in turn, guarantee a just and morally acceptable society. The first principle guarantees the right of each person to have the most extensive basic liberty compatible with the liberty of others. A key problem to Rawls is to show how such principles would be universally adopted and here the work borders on general ethical issues.  He introduces a theoretical “veil of ignorance” in which all the “players” in the social game would be placed in a situation which is called the “original position”. Having only a general knowledge of the facts of “life and society”, each player is to abide based on their moral obligation. By denying the players any specific information about themselves it forces them to adopt a generalized point of view that bears a strong resemblance to the moral point of view.

The principle of justice still has some problems to it. His theory seemed to rule out from serious consideration certain rival candidates to his own principle. The theory is on its own terms an acceptable theory of moral justification for the method of screening procedure it employs does not satisfy its own goal.

Another problem the principle has is that Rawls never succeeds in making a good case for the priority of the first principle of justice over the second. In more recent publications.

Rawls seems concerned with the problem of assuring political stability in a pluralist or multicultural social environment.

Regardless, these principles promote equality among all. Each individual has the same basic liberties and opportunities. Each individual has a moral obligation to accept the existence of every other human being. In doing so, all people become equal in their position and desires. We are equal in that each has the basic powers of choice and on acting on a sense of justice. The responsibility of procedure and growth relies on each and every individual his/her self. By doing so we may create a level playing field. Is this a form of pure competition? It would seem so. Competition in that what is desired must be achieved by one and desired by many perhaps. A benefit of competitive circumstance is the betterment of all parties involved as they must evolve in order to surpass one another.