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**Question**

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

1. John Rawls First Principle: Rawls’ 1980 dewey lecture and his 1982 Tanner lecture provided or rather explained his first principle which was about equal basic liberties. In these lectures Rawl claims that for every individual citizen there are two fundermental capacities or powers or rather two high order interests in the realization of those capacities, there are; an interest in being able to formulate and live according to some particular conception of good and 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 understood to include the idea that in a democratic society citizens are both equal and free. Rawls uses the idea of the two powers and the corresponding interests of the citizen to ground his elaboration of the concrete basic liberties that each citizen is to have equally. Thus we arrive at Rawls’ first principle of justice which says that each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal rights and liberties, which is compatible with the same scheme for all.

2. The Second Principle; Distributive Economic Justice: Unlike the first principle, Rawls thought that the account and formulation of his second principle of justice, as found in a theory of justice (1971), was substantially sound. Rawls’s account on this principle begins with the fact that people have different natural endowments and are born into and grow up in different social circumstances. Therefore, no one can be said to be responsible for these factors on their own case. He develops the idea of democratic equality of opportunity conceived as; the taking of remedial steps to reduce the initial differential in advantages that accrues to individuals, arbitrarily, from their starting points of life, the principle of everyone’s continual benefit, which is in turn is constrained by the idea that, where there are several mutually improving options available.

It remains 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 secondly, they are to be the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society.

3. The Original Position: Rawls's conceptions of citizens and society are still quite abstract, and some might think innocuous. The *original position* aims to move from these abstract conceptions to determinate principles of social justice. It does so by translating the question: “What are fair terms of social cooperation for free and equal citizens?” into the question “What terms of cooperation would free and equal citizens agree to under fair conditions?” The move to agreement among citizens is what places Rawls's justice as fairness within the social contract tradition of Locke, Rousseau and Kant.

The 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 onto the choice of principles. So Rawls's conceptions of citizens and of society are built into the design of the original position itself. Rawls's intent is that readers will see the outcome 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 on specific issues.

The original position is a thought experiment: an imaginary situation in which each real citizen has a representative, and all of these representatives come to an agreement on which principles of justice should order the political institutions of the real citizens. This thought experiment is better than trying to get all real citizens actually to assemble in person to try to agree to principles of justice for their society. Even if that were possible, the bargaining among real citizens would be influenced by all sorts of factors irrelevant to justice, such as who could threaten the others most, or who could hold out for longest.

The original position abstracts from all such irrelevant factors. The original position is a fair situation in which each citizen is represented as only a free and equal citizen: each representative wants only what free and equal citizens want, and each tries to agree to principles for the basic structure while situated fairly with respect to the other representatives. The design of the original position thus models the ideas of freedom, equality and fairness. For example, fairness and equality are modeled in the original position by making the parties who represent real citizens symmetrically situated: no citizen's 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. As we have seen, Rawls holds that the fact that a citizen is of a certain race, class, and gender is no reason for social institutions to favor or disfavor her. Each representative in the original position is therefore deprived of knowledge of the race, class, and gender of the real citizen that they represent. In fact, the veil of ignorance deprives the parties of all facts about citizens that are irrelevant to the choice of principles of justice: not only facts about their race, class, and gender but also facts about their age, natural endowments, and more. Moreover, the veil of ignorance also screens out specific information about what society is like right now, so as to get a clearer view of the permanent features of a just social system

4. Summarise John Rawls Idea of Justice: My aim is to present a conception of justice which generalizes and carries to a higher level of abstraction the familiar theory of the social contract as found, say, in Locke, Rousseau, and Kant." In order to do this, we are not to think of the original contract as one to enter a particular society or to set up a particular form of government. Rather, the guiding idea is that the principles of justice for the basic structure of society are the object of the original agreement. They are the principles that free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association. These principles are to regulate all further agreements; they specify the kinds of social cooperation that can be entered into and the forms of government that can be established. This way of regarding the principles of justice I shall call justice as fairness. Thus we are to imagine that those who engage in social cooperation choose together, in one joint act, the principles which are to assign basic rights and duties and to determine the division of social benefits. Men are to decide in advance how they are to regulate their claims against one another and what is to be the foundation charter of their society. Just as each person must decide by rational reflection what constitutes his good, that is, the system of ends which it is rational for him to pursue, so a group of persons must decide once and for all what is to count among them as just and unjust. The choice which rational men would make in this hypothetical situation of equal liberty, assuming for the present that this choice problem has a solution, determines the principles of justice.