**NAME: OLUKOYA OLUWATOMI ONYEKACHI**

**MATRIC NO: 17/LAW01/228**

**POL304 ASSIGNMENT**

**Question**

**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 Rawls’s First Principle;**

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

**3. The Original Position;**

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

1. **THE FIRST PRINCIPLE: EQUAL BASIC LIBERTIES**

Rawls claims that for every individual citizen there are two (2) fundamental capacities or powers and correspondingly two (2) higher order interests in the realization of those capacities. Thus each person has, over that person’s entire life:

1. An interest in being able to formulate and live according to some particular conception of the good and
2. An interest in exercising ones 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. In having the powers at some level, all the citizens are on the same footing which is the grounding idea behind Rawls’s notion that all citizens are equal; they are equal in having reached what might be called the same minimum threshold level. Rawls identifies which “liberties” should be among the basic constitutional rights or among the most weighty such rights by considering wat he calls ‘two fundamental cases’. Thus, those liberties that are part of a means of achieving the second (the sense of justice interest) constitute the second of the 'two fundamental cases’.

Thus we arrive at Rawls’s first principle of justice; ‘Each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme for all; and in this scheme the equal political liberties and only those liberties are to be guaranteed their fair value.

1. **THE SECOND PRINCIPLE: DISTRIBUTIVE ECONOMIC JUSTICE**

Rawls believed that people had different natural endowments and are born into and grow up in different social circumstances. No one can be said to be responsible for these factors in their own case. Nonetheless, factors such as natural endowment and initial social circumstance are not negligible, they powerfully affect a person’s life prospects, advantageously for some and disadvantageously for others. Indeed, they may be the main sources of inequality between people. He developed the idea of democratic equality of opportunity, conceived as;

1. The taking of remedial steps to reduce the initial differential in advantages that accrues to individual, arbitrarily, from their staring points in life
2. The principle of everyone’s continual benefit, which in turn is constrained by the idea that, where there are several mutually improving options available
3. We should choose that option which most reduces the resultant inequality in outcomes between the topmost and bottommost groups.
4. **THE ORIGINAL POSITION**

Rawls had developed a contractarian method of justification, one of its main features is that the ‘parties’ to the contract are placed in (what he calls the original position) behind a thick veil of ignorance. Here, they are instructed to ignore their own particular traits, to be unaware of their actual place in society, to be unaware of their society’s place in history or institutional evolution and so on. The point of the metaphor of the veil is to indicate that the parties should remove sources of bias and irrelevancy from their deliberations.

Rawls envision 2 main roles for the original position;

1. To serve as screening devices for the candidate principles. Here the features of the original position serve as a checklist against which the candidate principles are to be measured and assessed
2. To rank the remaining eligible candidates, after the preliminary screening has been accomplished.