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**Course: IRD 320**

**The First Principle: Equal Basic Liberties;**

Rawls's theory of justice revolves around the adaptation of two fundamental principles of justice which is supposed to guarantee a just and morally acceptable society. He gave two principles which include: the first principle guarantees the right of each person to have the most extensive basic liberty compatible with the liberty of others. The first principle of equal basic liberties is to be embodied in the political constitution, while the second principle applies primarily to economic institutions. One of the major problems Rawls had is to show how such principles would be universally adopted, and how 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 about the facts of "life and society," each player is to make a "rationally prudential choice" concerning the kind of social institution they would enter into contract with. This first principle affirms that all citizens should have the familiar basic rights and liberties: liberty of conscience and freedom of association, freedom of speech and liberty of the person, the rights to vote, to hold public office, to be treated in accordance with the rule of law, and so on. 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. "Moral conclusions can be reached without abandoning the prudential standpoint and positing a moral outlook merely by pursuing one's own prudential reasoning under certain procedural bargaining and knowledge constraints." Rawls also offers liberty of conscience and freedom of personal association under the first interest and offers freedom of political speech and of assembly. Each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all. Rawls's first principle confirms widespread convictions about the importance of equal basic rights and liberties.

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

In this second principle Rawls thought that the account and formulation of his second principle was substantially sound. He started by explaining how people have different natural endowments and are born into and grow up in different social circumstances. He further went on to talk about the natural endowments and initial social circumstance are not negligible but rather they affect a person’s life both in good and bad ways and feels it is one of the major reasons for inequality between people. Rawl argues and develops the idea of democratic equality of opportunity which basically involves the idea of trying to make people somewhat less equal at the point where they actually enter into adult life as citizens and as workers. Rawl believes that absolute equality can never be achieved and because of this further brings in another idea which is meant to complement equality of opportunity and calls it ‘the difference principle’ and it adds two remedial steps to the picture; (1) the principle of everyone’s mutual benefit and (2) choosing the option which reduces the resultant inequality in outcomes. Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions:

1. They are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity;
2. They are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle). (*JF*, 42–43)

Rawls's second principle of justice has two parts. The first part, fair equality of opportunity, requires that citizens with the same talents 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 endowed” (*JF*, p. 44). The second part of the second principle is the difference principle, which regulates the distribution of wealth and income. The difference principle is partly based on the negative thesis that the distribution of natural assets is undeserved. A citizen does not merit more of the social product simply because she was lucky enough to be born with the potential to develop skills that are currently in high demand. Yet this does not mean that everyone must get the same shares.

**The Original Position:**

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 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 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. 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. An interesting 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. More over 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. The veil of ignorance situates the representatives of free and equal citizens fairly with respect to one another. No party can press for agreement on principles that will arbitrarily favor the particular citizen they represent, because no party knows the specific attributes of the citizen they represent. The situation of the parties thus embodies reasonable conditions, within which the parties can make a rational agreement. Each party tries to agree to principles that will be best for the citizen they represent. There are also some assumptions that make the hypothetical agreement determinate and decisive: the parties are not motivated by envy (i.e., by how much citizens besides their own end up with); the parties are not assumed to be either risk-seeking or risk-averse; and the parties must make a final agreement on principles for the basic structure: there are no “do-overs” after the veil of ignorance is lifted and the parties learn which real citizen they represent.

**A Summary Of John Rawls Idea Of Justice:**

Rawls's theory of "justice as fairness" takes the form of a social-contract theory. Historically, philosophers such as Locke, Rousseau, and Kant advocated founding societies on the basis of an agreement, or contract, which specified the principles of the government. In justice as fairness, the foundational idea is not specific principles but rather the conditions under which people arrive at these principles. These conditions are for a hypothetical situation known as the "original position." Persons in the original position hold a meeting to choose the principles that will specify the basic structure of society. The persons in the original position are rational, mutually disinterested, and under a "veil of ignorance." This veil of ignorance creates a condition of equality that ensures personal bias will not influence their choices. The persons are rational, meaning they wish to pursue "the most effective means to given ends." Their mutual disinterest means they are not moved by benevolence but rather seek to advance their own interests, whatever those may be.

Rawls asserts that these limitations ensure the persons in the original position will agree on only principles that are fair. These fair principles, in turn, will act as instructions for the creation of a truly just society. He argues that the persons under the veil of ignorance will first choose a principle that "requires equality in the assignment of basic rights of duties." Second, they will choose a principle specifying that "social and economic inequalities" are just only as long as they benefit all members of society, but especially the "least advantaged" members. While societies and individuals almost always have some concept of justice, there is usually disagreement between their various conceptions of justice. In other words, everyone agrees it is important to uphold justice, but there is much disagreement about the specific principles that define what is just and what is unjust. This lack of agreement on what constitutes justice is no trivial matter. A society's structure reflects its conception of justice, and so the idea of justice has significant effects on the life of each citizen. When there is a shared public conception of justice in a society, that society is said to be well ordered.