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ASSIGNMENT: JOHN RAWL’S FIRST PRINCIPLE, THE SECOND PRINCIPLE (DISTRIBUTIVE, ECONOMIC JUSTICE), THE ORIGINAL POSITION, SUMMARISE JOHN RAWLS IDEA OF JUSTICE.

 Rawl contends that the most rational choice for the parties in the original position are two principles of justice. The first guarantees the equal basic rights and liberties needed to secure the fundamental interest of free and equal citizens and to pursue a wide range of conceptions of the good. even with this john admitted that he did not successfully achieve his objective until ten years later.

Rawl in his lectures claimed that for every individual citizen , that there are two fundamental capacities or power and two order higher interests in realization of these capacities which includes “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 to do so.

The 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. The first principle accords these rights and liberties to all citizens equally. Unequal rights would not benefit those who would get a lesser share of the rights, so justice requires equal rights for all, in all normal circumstances.

Rawls's first principle confirms widespread convictions about the importance of equal basic rights and liberties. Two further features make this principle distinctive. First is its priority: the basic rights and liberties must not be traded off against other social goods in essence, Citizens' equal liberty must have priority over economic policy.

The second distinctive feature of Rawls's first principle is that it requires fair value of the political liberties. The political liberties are a subset of the basic liberties, concerned with the right to hold public office, the right to affect the outcome of national elections and so on. For these liberties, Rawls requires that citizens should be not only formally but also equal. That is, citizens who are similarly endowed and motivated should have similar opportunities to hold office, to influence elections, and so on regardless of how rich or poor they are.

Rawls second principle begins with the fact that people have different natural endowment 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. However, some of these factors are responsible or the main causes of inequality amongst people that is natural endowment and initial social circumstance are not negligible, they affect a person’s life either as an advantage or a disadvantage. He then develops the idea of ‘equality of opportunity’ which explains that for instance the general idea of equality of opportunity is that the political economy of a society distributes positions that confer special advantages and these should be open to all applicants with applicants selected by merit. The merits of the applications for a position should track the degree to which the applicant's hiring or selection for interaction would boost the fulfilment of the morally innocent purposes of the association as weighted by the association's bosses. The more general formulation of the notion of merit allows that an economic firm might legitimately base its decisions on nonmarket values without engaging in wrongful discrimination that violates equality of opportunity rightly construed.

Rawl’s final specification was the difference principle , the difference principle can be represented, as proceeding through a series of stages, each one of which embodies a conscientious effort at achieving equality of opportunity and each one of which repeats the same theme, that is first satisfy the standard of mutual benefit and then reduce differences in outcome between the top most and the bottom most groups. This continues until it reaches an optimum stage, with this process differences have been minimized without making any group worse off in the process and those at the bottom have their greatest benefit.

THE ORIGINAL POSITION

The original position is a central feature of John Rawls’s social contract account of justice, “justice as fairness”. The original position is designed to be a fair and impartial point of view that is to be adopted in our reasoning about fundamental principles of justice. In taking up this point of view, we are to imagine ourselves in the position of free and equal persons who jointly agree upon and commit themselves to principles of social and political justice. The main distinguishing feature of the original position is “the veil of ignorance” to ensure impartiality of judgment, the parties are deprived of all knowledge of their personal characteristics and social and historical circumstances. They do know of certain fundamental interests they all have, plus general facts about psychology, economics, biology, and other social and natural sciences. The parties in the original position are presented with a list of the main conceptions of justice drawn from the tradition of social and political philosophy, and are assigned the task of choosing from among these alternatives the conception of justice that best advances their interests in establishing conditions that enable them to effectively pursue their final ends and fundamental interests. Rawls contends that the most rational choice for the parties in the original position are two principles of justice: The first guarantees the equal basic rights and liberties needed to secure the fundamental interests of free and equal citizens and to pursue a wide range of conceptions of the good. The second principle provides fair equality of educational and employment opportunities enabling all to fairly compete for powers and positions of office; and it secures for all a guaranteed minimum of the all-purpose means (including income and wealth) that individuals need to pursue their interests and to maintain their self-respect as free and equal persons.

JOHN RAWL’S IDEA OF JUSTICE

Rawls constructs justice as fairness around specific interpretations of the ideas that citizens are free and equal and that society should be fair. He sees it as resolving the tensions between the ideas of freedom and equality, which have been highlighted both by the socialist critique of liberal democracy and by the conservative critique of the modern welfare state. Rawls holds that justice as fairness is the most egalitarian, and also the most plausible, interpretation of these fundamental concepts of liberalism. He also argues that justice as fairness provides a superior understanding of justice to that of the dominant tradition in modern political thought: utilitarianism. ustice as fairness aims to describe a just arrangement of the major political and social institutions of a liberal society: the political constitution, the legal system, the economy, the family, and so on. Rawls calls the arrangement of these institutions a society's basic structure. The basic structure is the location of justice because these institutions distribute the main benefits and burdens of social life: who will receive social recognition, who will have which basic rights, who will have opportunities to get what kind of work, what the distribution of income and wealth will be, and so on.

The form of a society's basic structure will have profound effects on the lives of citizens. The basic structure will influence not only their life prospects, but more deeply their goals, their attitudes, their relationships, and their characters. Institutions that will have such pervasive influence on people's lives require justification. Since leaving one's society is not a realistic option for most people, the justification cannot be that citizens have consented to a basic structure by staying in the country. And since the rules of any basic structure will be coercively enforced, often with serious penalties, the demand to justify the imposition of any particular set of rules intensifies further.

In setting out justice as fairness, Rawls assumes that the liberal society in question is marked by reasonable pluralism as described above, and also that it is under reasonably favourable conditions: that there are enough resources for it to be possible for everyone's basic needs to be met. Rawls makes the simplifying assumption that the society is self-sufficient and closed, so that citizens enter it only by birth and leave it only at death. He also confines his attention mainly to ideal theory, putting aside questions such as those of criminal justice.