

**NAME: ARA - BORNU ZIKANUBARI VICTORY**

**DEPARTMENT: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY.**

## **JOHN RAWL'S THEORY OF JUSTICE**

**FIRST PRINCIPLE:** In this principle, "each person is to have equal claim to a scheme of basic rights and liberties that is the maximum consistent with the same scheme for all". The basic rights and liberties of democratic citizenship, such as the right to vote; the right to run for office in free elections; freedom of speech, assembly, and religion; the right to a fair trial; and, more generally, the right to the rule of law. These liberties are all required to be equal by the first principle, since citizens of a just society are to have the same basic rights.

**SECOND PRINCIPLE: DISTRIBUTIVE ECONOMIC JUSTICE:** "Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:

- (a) To the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and
- (b) Attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity".

Part "a" of the second principle is referred to as the difference principle while part "b" is referred to as the equal opportunity principle. Part a principle requires that any unequal distribution of social or economic goods i.e. wealth, must be such that the least members of society would be better off under that distribution than they would be under any distribution consistent with principle 1, including an equal distribution. (A slightly unequal distribution might benefit the least advantaged by encouraging greater overall productivity.)

The second ideal is meritocracy, understood in a very demanding way. According to Rawls, fair equality of opportunity obtains in a society of opportunity obtains in a society when all persons with the same native talent (genetic inheritance) and the same degree of ambition have the same prospects for all success in all completions for positions that confer special economic and social advantages

## **THE ORIGINAL POSITION**

Rawls belongs to the social contract tradition, although he takes a different view from that of previous thinkers. Specifically, Rawls develops what he claims are principles of justice through the use of an artificial device he calls the Original position;

in which, everyone decides principles of justice from behind a veil of ignorance. This "veil" is one that essentially blinds people to all facts about themselves so they cannot tailor principles to their own advantage:

"...no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does anyone know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like. I shall even assume that the parties do not know their conceptions of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance."

According to Rawls, ignorance of these details about oneself will lead to principles that are fair to all. If an individual does not know how he will end up in his own conceived society, he is likely not going to privilege any one class of people, but rather develop a scheme of justice that treats all fairly. In particular, Rawls claims that those in the Original Position would all adopt a maximin strategy which would maximize the prospects of the least well-off.

"They are the principles that rational and free persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamentals of the terms of their association."

Rawls bases his Original Position on a "thin theory of the good" which he says "explains the rationality underlying choice of principles in the Original Position". The agreement that stems from the original position is both hypothetical and ahistorical. It is hypothetical in the sense that the principles to be derived are what the parties would, under certain legitimating conditions, agree to, not what they have agreed to. Rawls seeks to use an argument that the principles of justice are what would be agreed upon if people were in the hypothetical situation of the original position and that those principles have moral weight as a result of that. It is ahistorical in the sense that it is not supposed that the agreement has ever been, or indeed could ever have been, derived in the real world outside of carefully limited experimental exercises.

## **JOHN RAWL'S IDEA OF JUSTICE**

The original position is the appropriate initial status quo which insures that the fundamental agreements reached in it are fair. This fact yields the name "justice as fairness". It is clear then, that one conception of justice is more reasonable than another, or justifiable with respect to it, if rational persons in the initial situation would choose its principles over those of the other for the role of justice. Conceptions of justice are to be ranked by their acceptability to persons so circumstanced. Understood in this way the question of justification is settled by working out a problem of deliberation: we

have to ascertain which principles it would be rational to adopt given the contractual situation. This connects the theory of rational choice with the theory of justice.