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## Rawls's Two Principles of Justice: Citizens, Social Cooperation, and the Basic Structure

Eriko HANAGATA

Rawls's two principles of justice are 1) the principle of equal basic liberties and 2) the principle which specifies the conditions under which social and economic inequalities are acceptable: a) there must be fair equality of opportunity in the society and b) the inequalities are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged. 2b) is called the difference principle. Although the famous difference principle tends to be discussed in isolation, each principle has important distributive effects. We need to pay attention to the roles of each principle to get the whole picture of Rawls's account on distribution. The first principle assures that citizens have equal basic liberties in the formal sense (except for the political liberties whose "fair value" is to be guaranteed) and that those basic liberties have priority. The means to exercise those basic liberties are guaranteed through the second principle. The two principles together enable people to act as free and equal citizens in the society. It should also be noted that Rawls's focus was on the basic structure of society. Thus the principles do not require the goods to be distributed after the fact but secure the background justice for social cooperation.

This essay aims to clarify how the principles work together and establish the fair terms of cooperation between citizens enabling them to participate in the social, economic and political life of the society.