

The republic amidst the social contract: an in-depth review of the society

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The Society in both works by Plato, *The Republic* and Rousseau's *Principles of Political Right* portrays a set of virtues, principles and norms that serves as the basis for its foundation. Both societies aim for the common good. The cited works both commenced with an exploration to delineate the groundwork of a society. It seems that both authors try to unravel and ponder the basic principles in a society. Plato tried to unleash this by inquiring with other individuals until he arrives at a satisfying answer (1-31). On the other hand, Rousseau embarks his examination of politics by contemplating the source of the authenticity of political sovereignty (1-8).

The Book 1 of *The Republic* by Plato aims to face two challenges by defining what justice is and why should the individuals in a society be just (1-31). On the other hand, the Book 3 of the *Social Contract or Principles of Political Right* by Rousseau elucidate the administrative powers of government in terms of motivation and power: Every free action is produced by the concurrence of two causes; one moral, i. e. the will which determines the act; the other physical, i. e. the power which executes it... The body politic has the same motive powers; here too force and will are distinguished, will under the name of legislative power and force under that of executive power (1-4).

The Book 1 of the *Republic* by Plato depicts the perfect community termed as utopia and the erudition of the Guardians that aid in the explanation of concepts revolving in the society. On the other hand, the Book 3 of the *Social Contract or Principles of Political Right* by Rousseau highlights the attempt to differentiate the Government and the Sovereign which comprises the administrative power in the Society. Though both works center on the

society and its principles, each work has its different perspectives regarding the society which can be in comparison or in contrast with one another. First, justice is the focal point in the Republic. Second, the government and its forms were tackled by Rousseau in the Social Contract. The Republic shows a variety of characters seen in the society. First is the typical rich and well-respected elder of the city named Cephalus. He is also the host of the group, and the first to offer the meaning of justice. Cephalus acts as the spokesman for the Greek tradition. His description of justice is an attempt to articulate the basic Hesiodic conception: that justice means living up to your lawful obligations and being truthful. Socrates setbacks this formulation with a counter example: giving back a weapon to an insane man. You owe this man his weapon in some sense if it belongs to him legally, and yet this would be an unwarranted act, since it would endanger the lives of others. So it cannot be the case that justice is nothing more than revering legal obligations and being law-abiding (Plato 1-4). On the other hand, Cephalus' son Polemarchus, the stereotyped son in a society depicts justice as owing your friends help while owing enemies mischief. Though this definition may seem diverse from that suggested by Cephalus, they are closely associated. They share the essential necessity of bestowing to each what is due and of conferring to each what is suitable and fitting. Like his father's view, Polemarchus' view on justice signifies a widespread element of thought—the attitude of the ruthless young politician—whereas Cephalus' definition denoted the standpoint of the established, old businessman. However, Socrates divulges many discrepancies in this view. He pointed out that, for the reason that, our conclusion pertaining to friends and enemies is

unsound; this credo will command us to cause detriment to the noble and lend a hand to the wicked. People are not at all times allies with the most righteous individuals, nor are our adversaries always the malevolent persons of the society. Socrates indicated that there is some confusion in the thought of hurting people through impartiality (5-11). The definition of the two characters proved unsatisfactory for Socrates as shown by his contradicting views on each opinion. Another personality in the society endeavors to provide another explanation of what justice is and that is Thrasymachus. Justice, he says, is nothing more than the advantage of the sturdier and tougher. Though Thrasymachus declares that this is his viewpoint, it is not really meant as a description of justice as much as it is an alienation of justice. He is saying that it does not pay to be impartial. Moral behavior toils effort to the benefit of other people, not to the person who acts fairly. Thrasymachus presumes here that justice is the aberrant limit on our innate yearning to possess more. Justice is a custom compelled on us, and it does not benefit us to adhere to it. The sensible thing to carry out is disregard justice completely (11-12). On the other hand, Socrates pointed out that Thrasymachus is promoting the thought of injustice as a virtue which is contradicting for he believes that injustice cannot be linked with virtue since it is associated with wisdom. Therefore, Socrates is still not contented with Thrasymachus' answer (12-22). Finally, all the characters agreed that justice is a virtue of the soul and the integrity of the soul is the health of the soul and hence, justice is gratifying (22-31). The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right by Rousseau tackles on the contrary, the three different forms of government namely, democracy, aristocracy and monarchy. Democracy is

the kind of government where all or almost all the citizens are magistrates; aristocracy, where less than half are magistrates; and monarchy, where few or one are magistrates. However, there is not one unanimously excellent form of government. Rousseau gave emphasis that the bigger the population of a state, the fewer leaders there should be. Hence, hefty states are best fitting to monarchy, medium to aristocracy, and small to democracy. Though Rousseau personally preferred democracy, Rousseau articulates ambivalence toward democracy as well as monarchy. While he elucidates his concerns about monarchy's perilous effectiveness and probability for fraud and bribery, he also states, "there has never been a true democracy, and there never will be." Only small states with uncomplicated and unmotivated citizens could remain unwavering under equal rule. Overall, though simpler forms of government are preferable to Rousseau, he proposes that merging forms of government may dispel the powers of the government comparative to the Sovereign (1-8). In conclusion, the virtues and principles of people are really the groundwork of every society. Each member of the society may have its own views and perspectives and attempt to adapt whatever viewpoint or form of government that would be advantageous for the common good of the society in general. As depicted in the works cited, the individuals in the society may agree or contradict each other with certain standpoints, but what is crucial is to exert effort towards aiming the same purpose of working for the common good. Works Cited Jowett, Benjamin. *The Republic* by Plato. Cosimo Inc.: New York, 2008. Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*. Kessinger Publishing, 2004.