

Jean jacque rousseau's essay



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Born on June 28, 1712 in Geneva, Jean-Jacques Rousseau was an abandoned child who in a lifespan of 66 years, evolved into one of the greatest philosophers of all times and a man who substantially pioneered the great French Revolution with the magic of his writing. He is the man who is responsible for the birth and developmental growth of the liberal, conservative and socialist theories.

Some of the most impressive and inspirational works of the eighteenth century belonged to this great writer. The Confessions, Reveries of a Solitary Walker, and Julie, ou la nouvelle Heloise are some the finest works ever produced. He is admired for his tremendous contribution in to politics and political philosophy. Rousseau was also known to be an efficient composer and a great student of music.

Most certainly though, Rousseau's best work ever was The Social Contract, a masterpiece that depicts and outlines with almost razor sharp precision, the basis for a legitimate political order within a framework of classical republicanism. Published in 1762, the classic was effectively the most influential work of Rousseau that drew new lines and incorporated a new dimension of political philosophy into the western air of the eighteenth century. Political and Social Inequalities, arising out of feudalism were the first and foremost cause. The nobles and clergy were benefitted from special privileges. They hardly had to pay taxes. The plight of the common people was pitiable as they neither had he authority nor the choice in political affairs.

They worked hard and had to pay heavy taxes. This was the cause of their discontentment with the privileged sections. Louis XVI was unsuccessful in improving the financial position. Hence by 1789, the government was bankrupt. The Parisians, who endured the bad harvest, burst out their fury by attacking the Bastille prison.

The Fall of Bastille paved way to the French Revolution. It spread out to other parts of France. The thoughts and writings of Enlightenment philosophers like Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau became prevalent. More over the American Revolution instigated the French to go against monarchy.

The monarchy ultimately shattered and brought great instability leading to the French Revolution. One of the foremost political philosophers of the French Enlightenment, the Baron de Montesquieu (1689??? 1755), was significantly influenced from the works of Locke. Montesquieu most significant work, *The Spirit of Laws* (1748), undertook and detailed on several ideas that Locke had pioneered. He stressed the significance of the rights of human beings and division of power.

Montesquieu trusted that environmental conditions affect behavior and response and thus accomplished that governments situated in different climates should be attuned consequently. Voltaire spent a period of exile in England during which he was introduced to the works of Locke and Newton. The two thinkers had a profound impact on the young Voltaire, who became wildly prolific in the years that followed, authoring more than sixty plays and novels and countless other letters and poems. The treatise develops the ideas and values shared by an earlier work called the *Economie Politique*.

Most famous are the words in the very beginning of the book that almost amazingly yet very aptly describe the most pitiable state of the man's self in his family and society.

As Rousseau begins the treatise with the most magical words he ever wrote, "Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains. One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they" (Jean Jacques Rousseau Book 1), he brings into mind, almost immediately, a perfect picture of the society and the state of politics of his time. With an opening as provocative and inspiring as this, he describes the countless ways the civil society suppressed and chained man's most natural and obvious birthright to live and think and die freely. Rousseau believes that the civil society fails to bring or create equality and individual liberty, two of the most fundamental rights promised to man as he was led into the society. He writes that all men have entered a social contract, a contract that is solely designed to satisfy mutual preservation of their own selfish needs and claims and that the only legitimate political authority is the authority consented to, by all who agree to be governed by a government as such.

He takes the discussion into the societies of ancient times and says, "of all societies, the only one that is natural, is the family: and even so the children remain attached to the father only so long as they need him for their preservation." (Jean Jacques Rousseau Book 1) He believes that even the relation between a father and his children is as superficial motivated, in need for each other. He calls the relation as a mere convention or a formality and affirms that this natural bond is dissolved as quickly as the need is quenched. He thus engulfs the father and his children into a symbiotic

sphere of mutual requirement and need, a sphere that primarily forms the basis of his theory of social contract. Thus the social contract he describes in this context is a mutual contract or an unsaid agreement between the father and the children. The children, released from the obedience they owed to the father, and the father, released from the care he owed his children, return equally to independence.

And if the family is preserved, in the form of the father, mother and children, it is yet a mere convention. In his description of the social contract, he aptly presents the family as the most primitive model political society of the time. His analogy describes the ruler corresponding to the father, and the people to the children. Rousseau updates the reader of the views and descriptions of the greatest philosophers that preceded him. He talks of Grotius and Hobbes denying the establishment of all human power in favor of the governed, quoting slavery as a prime example.

Thus presenting Grotius's idea of the human race belonging to a hundred men, rather than a hundred men to the human race, Rousseau moves on, depicting the human species to be divided into herds of cattle, with the ruler of each keeping guard to devour them. Interpreting the views of Philo, Rousseau perceives that a shepherd, belonging to a class superior to his flock, is not too different than the ruler who being the shepherd of men is superior to his people and thus portraying Emperor Caligula who reasoned that the kings were gods, or that men were beasts. Again speaking of what Aristotle viewed, he confirms that nothing in this world could be more certain than the fact that a man born in slavery is born for slavery. He says that slavery is cruel enough to take everything from the slave, even the

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desire of to escape, slowly but surely making him learn to love his servitude. He thus concludes that the first slaves were made by force while the rest were merely a result of fear, saying, ??? If then there are slaves by nature, it is because there have been slaves against nature??? (Jean Jacque Rousseau Book 1)Rousseau??? s concept of the sovereign is his social contract is remarkable.

He believes the sovereign to be effectively the collective grouping of all people who by their consent enter into a civil society. He describes the sovereign as a function of the unified wills of individuals. Defining the general will as the collective need of all to provide for a universal good, Rousseau is affirmative of the fact that the sovereign as a whole expresses the general will of all the people. This is clear as he writes ??? there can be no doubt that Adam was sovereign of the world, as Robinson Crusoe was of his island, as long as he was its only inhabitant; and this empire had the advantage that the monarch, safe on his throne, had no rebellions, wars, or conspirators to fear??? (Jean Jacque Rousseau Book 1) This general will that Rousseau talks, carries a vital function of providing information about the creation and depletion of the laws of the state.

Rousseau perceives that although all laws must uphold and maintain equality and oneness among the people of the state, the particulars of such norms can be prepared and designed and modeled differently, conducive to different circumstances. Thus he concludes that although these laws owe their origin and existence to the general will of the sovereign as a collection of unified wills of the people, there has to be a government that must bear the responsibility of taking care of carrying out the executive function of

enforcing these laws, monitoring the day-to-day functioning of the state. He formulates an idea of a government as being of several different forms, including monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. The form of government that ought to rule the state, according to Rousseau, is decided as a function of the size and characteristics of the state.

He further believes that all these governing forms carry different attributes and disadvantages. He speaks, ??? The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty???. (Jean Jacque Rousseau Book 1) Thus he believes that right to be the most strong of all lies on a fundamental principle. In his support for a monarchical form of government, Rousseau claims that force is what eventually decides who??? ll become the ruler and who will be ruled. He gives a real life example as he says, ??? All power comes from God, I admit; but so does all sickness: does that mean that we are forbidden to call in the doctor? A brigand surprises me at the edge of a wood: must I not merely surrender my purse on compulsion; but, even if I could withhold it, am I in conscience bound to give it up? For certainly the pistol he holds is also a power. ??? (Jean Jacque Rousseau Book 1) So he maintains that if there??? s opportunity to become strong and subsequently the ruler of the state, the occasion must not be let to perish but must be perceived as the best way to form the government.

He further believes that there is no such concept of people or rulers being right or wrong, rather what matters are who produces a stronger force. He makes his point very clear to the reader when he declares monarchy as potentially the strongest always. He believes that this form of the

government is specifically suitable to hot climates and sometimes necessary in all states in times of crisis. He defines aristocracy as a rule by the few that is according to him the most stable and preferable form of government in most circumstances. However, Rousseau observes that the government and the sovereign will often possess a relation marked by friction and inconvenience, mostly because he believes that the government stands the chance of occasionally deciding against the general will of the people of the state. He states that the sovereign must organize into periodic and regular assemblies that would determine the general will and also would in the process develop and enhance awareness and responsibility in the people towards this general will.

He urges that an individual's vote must be more a function of his own conception of the general will rather than his personal interests and motives. This he believes is the most important characteristic of a truly healthy state. Rousseau presses that it is as vital and crucial that these assemblies are attended and the people of the state exercise their sovereignty doing so. He underlines his view that in situation when the process is curbed or representatives are chosen instead of themselves, sovereignty and unity is lost drastically.

Most importantly, Rousseau foresees that the conflict between the government and the people's sovereign may me and the government may at times be litigious, he also advocates for the existence of a judicial body such as a or court, that would aptly and impartially strive to mediate conflicts developing not only between the sovereign and the government but among the people as well. In the context of social injustices and ailments

such as slavery and racism, Rousseau develops an opinion that one will feel changed drastically after his time. He perceives alienation as only an allotrope of submission. He thus does believe that any man who becomes the slave of another does only sell himself.

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The thoughts and writings of Enlightenment philosophers like Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau became prevalent. More over the American Revolution instigated the French to go against monarchy. The monarchy ultimately shattered and brought great instability leading to the French Revolution. In his account of slavery and other such social customs that the people perceive and name illnesses and injustices, he observes that no man ever has an inborn natural authority over others and that force does not create right. However, he feels and concludes that these conventions do ultimately form the basis of all legitimate authority among men. He

maintains that renouncing liberty is as good as renouncing the truth of being a man, or rather submitting one's rights to live like a human. For Rousseau therefore, for someone who renounces his all, remuneration surely unlikely.

He thus underlines that removing all liberty from the will is equivalent to removing all morality from the soul's actions. References <http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon.htm>