

Essay on rousseaus origin of inequality

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



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According to Jean Jacques Rousseau, two different kinds of inequality exist in a human society. There is natural and moral inequality. Natural inequality as the name suggest is as a result of nature. Here, things like differences in mind quality, age, bodily strength and health are at play to cause inequality. However, Rousseau believes that moral inequality also known as political inequality is instigated by men themselves. This may include privileges enjoyed by some people at the expense of the rest. For example, being wealthier, more powerful or even influential.

Rousseau however was never concerned with natural inequality but interrogates moral inequality. He posits that moral inequality is widespread in civil societies. This he argues results into disparities in power and wealth. Rousseau is very cynical of the civil society and believes that it's a trick played on the weak by the powerful so as to maintain their wealth and power.

He traces the evolution of man socially from the state of nature to the current modern society. He says that man in his earliest solitary state possessed the drive for individual preservation and was naturally compassionate and very pitiful. Because of compassion for one another, men began to live together in groups and eventually formed a clan. He says that at this point, man began to experience family love which he believes was the source of utmost happiness experienced by humanity.

This coming together however, led to the development and growth of metallurgy, agriculture and consequently the emergence of private property and the concept of division of labor. As a result of division of labour,

dependency also emerged as man needed the other to survive. This however, contributed to the emergence of conflict and economic inequalities in society.

Population pressure later forced man to associate and interact more closely with one another. As a result, man underwent a psychological or a mental transformation and thus began to hold high the opinion of others as a necessity for their self esteem. According to Rousseau, the social contract which led to the establishment of the modern state was the suggestion of the affluent and the powerful who played a trick on the general populace to surrender their liberties and rights to them and hence instituted inequality in human societies.

Rousseau also offers an explanation as to how the desire to appear valuable before other men came to undermine individual integrity in a society characterized by interdependence and hierarchy.

The inequality in Tunisia

Tunisia is one of the countries in North Africa that has experienced countrywide chaos in the recent past. The chaos characterized by protest finally led to the ouster of the then sitting president. The chaos was mainly as a result of widespread inequality in the country; the gap between the rich and the poor in the Arab country being too high. This therefore led to soaring food prices, high cost of living and high rates of unemployment. The citizens expected the government to provide for their basic necessities which was not the case. (Elizabeth, 20)

While those in high offices in the civil service enjoyed good standards of living, those down the ladder lived in squalor. The president and his

lieutenant convinced the people to stop protesting as their plight would be looked into, the people continued to realize economic difficulties.

In Tunisia just like other modern states, specialization and division of labor is the norm. However, there are other careers that are more rewarding than others. As a result, some people are relegated to lower status despite being educated. A good example is the case of a graduate who burnt himself to death since he could not secure any job opportunity.

Analysis of the Tunisian situation from the perspective of Rousseau

Tunisia has a system of government to which the people looked upon the state for the provision of basic necessities such as food. However, this has not been the case. This is similar to Rousseau's theory where the rich tricked the proletariat to surrender their liberties to them thus the beginning of social inequality. The Tunisian government appeared to be playing a trick on the people to stop protest as their predicament would be looked into.

However, this has been the situation since time immemorial. Just like in Rousseau's theory, there is a hierarchy in government with those at the bottom being the poor while those at the top being the powerful and most affluent.

Secondly, just like Rousseau's concept, in Tunisia every person had a right to private property as a result, others especially those in high offices in the civil service, politicians and cabinet ministers. As a result of this there was widespread inequality with a few people being extremely rich and the majority being very poor.

Just like in Rousseau's theory of inequality, there was division of labour and

interdependence in Tunisia. As a result those whose services were not recognized as important are the poor while those who can offer their services for better pay become the affluent in society.

The sufficiency of Rousseau's political philosophy in the Tunisian case

Rousseau's theory of the origin of inequality seems very applicable to the situation in Tunisia. The beginning of inequality was the establishment of a government and the hierarchy that comes with it. Key figures, especially the political elite, do not care about the plight of those at the bottom of the social class, thus inequality.

Though charged with the responsibility of managing public resources on behalf of the people, the government is disappointed not only by being concerned with their own but also being poor managers of public resources. As a result, unemployment, increased food prices and generally high cost of living emerged.

The existence of the institution of private property has also widely contributed to the state of inequality in Tunisia. Because one is not limited on the amount of wealth he or she can acquire, the affluent people who are at a higher hierarchy in government have continued to amass wealth while those in the lower social order continue to become poorer. As a result, the social inequality in Tunisia has been hitting all-time highs and even led to violent protest against the incumbent government.

Division of labor and specialization, which in turn led to interdependence, has also caused inequality in Tunisia. Because of specialization, different people have pursued different fields, especially in academics. However, some fields

are more lucrative than others thus the people in society can never be the same.

Rousseau's theory of inequality thus is a perfect theory for explaining the sources of inequality even in the modern state.

Work cited

Elizabeth, H. Tunisia leader flees and Prime Minister claim power. New York: New York Times. 2011 print.