

# Rousseau government society



Jean Jacques Rousseau, once said, “ Man was born free, but everywhere he is in chains.” In Rousseau’s version of the social contract one discovers the meaning of this quote. What is meant by Rousseau’s quote ‘ Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.’ is that every person is born is born free, but in the world he becomes tied and not free. That freedom is in the state of nature, rather that there is no such thing as freedom in society.

Rousseau’s social contract basically necessitates that man is bound to a social contract with a government not because he wants to be but because he cannot return to the state of nature. Man is bounded to others and once you have been socialized you cannot become unsocial. Rousseau in this agrees with the Locke’s belief that man is a social creature.

Rousseau also believes that man has the right to revolt against an unjust government. He believes the ties of man to a government are much less than that of Locke. Society would not just end if man destroyed government. It would continue even without government. However, only the majority or general will of the public has the right to over throw government because only they have the power to do so. Not because of the government but because of man himself. It is hard for a government to make men obey it without them being a citizen.

“ Nothing is less in our powerful than the heart and far from commanding we are forced to obey it.” Is a quote from Rousseau that suggests man is at the mercy of his heart, just as man is at the will of society. He ignores all thought that man is at the will of his government. He instead believes that there are other powers at work, and government is not one of them. Society creates

peer pressure; the heart creates value and moral debate inside one's self. It seems that man is more at the mercy of other things than they are at the mercy of government; more government is at the mercy of man.

Government has to find a way of making man obey it rather than the heart of man.

“ I prefer liberty with danger than peace with slavery.” In this quote Rousseau is questioning government and its authority when slavery is permitted. He insinuates that why would man obey government when government is at the mercy of man? What makes a man obey his government? It seems that Rousseau is saying that man is slacking on his duties in society, refusing to take a stand against the government. The reason that really comes to mind is the status quo. It is comfortable as compared to the unknown because man is afraid of the unknown, as he is afraid of death. Man obeys government because he is afraid of the unknown.

Which leads into Rousseau's thoughts on the unknown. Through the quote ‘ Absolute silence leads to sadness. It is the image of death.’ we see that man relies on others to keep himself sane. If he didn't have other people he would spend too much time questioning his existence and man fears his existence. As the saying goes you can take man out of the wild but you can't take the wild out of the man. Man and his state of nature are the same. Man in the state of nature had fears; man still continues to fear even though he is out of nature, because he fears going back to the state of nature.

Just as Locke did before him, Rousseau claims that man is a social creature. It is for the reason that man is afraid of the state of nature. “ Every man has

the right to risk his own life in order to preserve it. Has it ever been said that a man who throws himself out the window to escape from a fire is guilty of suicide?" This is Rousseau's expression of what the state of nature had been like. However he again gives the impression to that he is saying the state of nature is still in man. It never leaves.

" Force does not constitute right... obedience is due only to legitimate powers." This is Rousseau's implies here that government is given its power by man, and when man loses faith in his government than man has the duty to disobey the law. Rousseau continually defines the difference through out his social contract between being a citizen and being a subject. A subject is someone who obeys the government but doesn't believe the government is a high power. A citizen is a person who obeys the law and puts it at a high power. Rousseau divides the sphere of the private and public. Rousseau seems to deem that the government has control of everything in public.

" To renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties. For he who renounces everything no indemnity is possible. Such a renunciation is incompatible with man's nature; to remove all liberty from his will is to remove all morality from his acts." This is the thought that man has to have freedom, and the government has to provide it for if you remove freedom from man than there is no morality and virtue left in man, and therefore even less morality left in the government.

The society in Rousseau is corrupt, but to eliminate morality and virtue in man by removing his freedom only makes it worse. Man will disobey society

when denied his rights. Its almost like he predicted Martin Luther King Jr.'s and other African- American's acts to gain rights in the US. He seems to believe the same thing as King that man has an obligation to over thrown an unjust government. Rousseau seems to see it has happening even before it happens therefore tries to warn governments against taking away man's rights. Which leads us to our final thought from Rousseau.

“ Virtue is a state of war and to live in it we have always to combat with ourselves.” This is Rousseau's way of stating man is corrupt by nature and that in order to be just and virtuous man has to force it upon himself. Men have to struggle within themselves to be virtuous. This is even truer with the government. The government is made up of corrupt men and in order for the government to be virtuous the men within the government have to be struggling within themselves to be virtuous. If even one man is not combating himself to be virtuous than all thoughts of a virtuous government are lost.

All though we may never be able to fully understand the intentions of those from the past we can analyze them. Today we analyzed Rousseau, his social contract, and what he seems to believe of man and government. We learned that man is always afraid but to truly be virtuous we have to combat ourselves, and that man's fears keep them bound to the government but it will not permanently keep them in agreement with the state. In closing I leave you with one thought. It is man who creates government, government who undoes man, and man who undoes government, and virtue that destroys man.

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