

Introduction to Western Political Thought
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Lecture No. 18
Rousseau – I: Intro & Social Contract

Hello and welcome friends. Today, we will study a new thinker Rousseau. And on Rousseau, we are going to have two lectures. In the first lecture, today, we are going to focus on his life, his major contributions and important treatises. And in the second part, we will focus on his views on human nature, 'state of nature' through his texts, *Discourses on Inequality* and *Social Contract*.

In the second and concluding lecture on Rousseau, we will particularly focus on his idea of 'general will'. We will look at the critical engagement with works of Rousseau and how his work was interpreted by different thinkers in different century. The image of Rousseau in the eighteenth century was different from the nineteenth and twentieth century. That we will discuss in the second or concluding lecture on Rousseau, before we look at the overall contribution of social contract, tradition in the history of western political thought.

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➤ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, like Hobbes and Locke, was part of social contract tradition. But he was also someone who ruthlessly criticized modern civilization. He was a theorist of popular sovereignty who admired the republic form of government in which each adult would directly and actively participate in the legislating or governing the political community.

➤ Rousseau was a strong votary for liberty, equality, and direct democracy. His philosophy inspired the French revolution in 1789. However, many of his ideas were regarded as contrary to the enlightenment and progressive traditions in Europe. There was a growing belief that science and human reason or rationality would make societies/communities better off. Contrary to this, Rousseau argued about the corrupting influence of society or culture on individuals.

➤ Rousseau led a very adventurous and wandering life. Almost a self-taught person, he had developed interests in a variety of subjects such as music, drama, plays, education, politics, philosophy, and botany. However, the central concern of his writings and philosophy was how to create a political community in which human beings can live a free and equal life.

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If you look at Jean Jacques Rousseau, he was like Hobbes and Locke. He was a part of a tradition that we call the social contract tradition. It was based on the idea that human beings on their own would voluntarily come into contract with others and they constituted a political community. And the legitimacy of that community was based on the idea that human beings had voluntarily through contract with equal members agreed to be a part of that political community.

And that agreement or contract compelled the individual to have obligations to laws of that

community or order of that sovereign as in Hobbes. So, Rousseau was like Hobbes and Locke as part of the social contract tradition in the western political thought. He was someone who was ruthlessly critical of some of the modern ideas or enlightenment projects, and beliefs in human reason, rationalities, and science.

He was a social contract tradition thinker. But he was someone who was ruthlessly critical of modern civilization and human beliefs in reason and rationality as a way forward for humanity. He was a theorist of popular sovereignty. That means the ultimate power and authority rest with the people themselves and not in their representative whether in the parliament or executive organ of the state. But the real authority and power should reside with the people. He was a theorist of the popular sovereignty in that sense who admired the republican form of government in which each adult would directly and actively participate in legislating or governing the political community. So, Rousseau's ideas on government or how to legislate and what should be the basis of legitimacy were based on his republican notion. That form of government was legitimate in which every adult citizen directly and pro-actively had participated in legislating.

And once they participate in the legislation, they have the obligation to follow that legislation. Thus, they were ruled by themselves and not by other bodies or institutions or through a kind of representative form of government. Rousseau was very critical of that mode of democracy which argued about a representative form of government. He wanted a direct participatory model of democracy in which each citizen would participate both in legislating the laws and rules that govern the society or particular society.

Rousseau was a theorist of popular sovereignty with very strong argument for the republican form of government. He was a strong votary of the foundational ideas of modern state or government and these were the ideas of liberty and equality. The whole progress of modern state in society was towards the attainment of equality of liberty. And as we have discussed in Plato or Aristotle, there was the hierarchy in the society. What was different from the classical or medieval notion of thinking? Is that in modern times, the central idea or primary ambition of human beings or the communities that is the nation-state is to achieve equality among all its members.

Now, it is hard. But that is the objective of modern state. That is the legitimacy of modern state that it strived towards achieving equality among its members and then ensuring each member have liberty to lead the life they like. So, Rousseau, in that sense was the strong votary of study of liberty, equality and direct form of democracy, not indirect or representative model of democracy. His philosophy inspired the French revolution in 1789 if you recall the slogan of French revolution was liberty, equality, and fraternity. They wanted to create a new kind of political structure that would be

different from the ancient regime based on hierarchy of process.

Rousseau had inspired the French revolution. However, many of his ideas and we will discuss particularly in the first discourse, he wrote on 'Art and Science' was regarded as contrary to the enlightenment and progressive tradition in Europe. Rousseau was developing his thought or philosophical position in a time, when there was this new belief among the scholars, thinkers, and the populous at large that reason and rationality would lead to progress and enlightenment in the society.

However, many of the ideas that Rousseau put forward was regarded as contrary to that of enlightenment and progressive traditions in Europe, particularly, his romantic ideas of pre-modern societies, where human beings were more free and their nature was good and moral. Whether as the science and arts, and exclusive belief in the reason and belief have led to the moral corruption of human beings. There was this belief that science and human reason or rationality would make societies or communities better off.

And that is the very foundation of modern civilization or modern society where we think through reason and rationality, we can make our society more prosperous, progressive which would be more free and equal. In contrast, to that Rousseau argued about corrupting influence of society or culture on individual and that we will discuss later. And then the whole project in the social contract for Rousseau was how to create a society, where men would be as free as they were before the formation of society. And in that sense, he was very passionate or critical of exclusive belief or faith in reason and rationality, and critic of religion.

In Rousseau's thought and personal life, it might come across where he was very critical of atheist. Because he thought like Locke that without faith in religion or god, men's loyalty or ideas could not be trusted. Rousseau developed a kind of contrary enlightenment particularly the one which focused exclusively on reason and rationality as the way forward for humanity. He regarded that how that led to the moral corruption among mankind.

Rousseau personally led a very adventurous and wandering life. Almost a self-taught person. He had developed interest in a variety of subjects and these subjects were like music, drama, plays, education, politics, philosophy and later on, botany and zoology as well. However, in his interest, the central concern was how to create a political community in which human beings could live a free and equal life. In his other words as well particularly on education or his discourses, the central concern in social contract for which he was so famous and that led to a contradictory interpretation by the conservatives and the radicals.

So, the central concern in all his works more so in the social contract was how to create a political community or political society, where each individual would lead a life free or equal as it was before the formation of state and society. Rousseau was critical of the prevalent moral corruption in his times, guided by this idea of reason and rationality. It led men to moral corruption, treacherous behavior, and Rousseau's inequality or hierarchies. Rousseau wanted to create a society where there would be equality and liberty for everyone.

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778): Brief Bio-Sketch

Everything is good when it springs from the hands of our Creator; everything degenerates when shaped by the hands of man. - Rousseau, *Emile*

- Rousseau was born into a Calvinist family in Geneva on June 28, 1712. His father was a watchmaker. Rousseau's mother died ten days after his birth. Initially, he lived in the care of his father Isaac Rousseau, who introduced him to the greatest Greeks and Romans and their republican traditions through Plutarch's *Lives of the Roman Emperors*. However, it was short-lived, and subsequently, he lived in the custody of a puritanical aunt.
- In 1722, as a teenager, Rousseau fled Geneva and worked as an apprentice to a notary and later to an engraver. Soon he left the job and started living under the protection of Madame de Warens. It is under the guidance of Warens that Rousseau took keen interest in music, education, and philosophy. He also renounced Calvinism and converted to the Roman Catholic church. However, he took great pride in his citizenship of republican Geneva. He was suspicious of the atheists whom he regarded as untrustworthy.
- In Paris, Rousseau first began to establish himself as a music composer. He also befriended great philosophes like Denis Diderot (1713-1784), with whom he had a close friendship for the next fifteen years. He also contributed two essays on *Music* and *Political Economy* in the *Encyclopedia* edited by Diderot and others.

If you look at the personal life of Rousseau, let us begin with this foundational characteristic of Rousseau's thought through this statement which he wrote in *Emile*. A text on education and how to educate a child? Not through the systematic schooling system which robbed the child of his natural abilities or talent. But how to create a child more autonomous or independent in terms of thinking. Rousseau wrote in this text everything is good when it springs from the hands of our creator. That is god. However, everything degenerates when shaped by the hands of man.

All kind of artificial construct, therefore, Rousseau was very critical of and he wanted to reassert the savage kind of romantic notion of that savage life without any ties, anxieties, or industry, where human beings lived a natural life, a freer life from all kinds of social ties or moral corruption that prevailed in the society that was artificially constructed. So, this led to a number of romantic movements in Europe as well.

Rousseau was born in to a Calvinist family in Geneva on June 28, 1712. His father was a watch maker and his mother died 10 days after his birth. Initially, he lived in the care of his father who introduced him to many Geeks and Romans works, and their republican traditions particularly though Plutarch's *Lives of the Roman Emperors*. However, this care by the father was short-lived

and subsequently, he lived under the custody of a puritanical aunt.

In 1722 as a teenager, Rousseau fled Geneva and worked as an apprentice to a notary and later on to an engraver. Soon, he left this job and started living under the protection of Madame de Warens. It was under the guidance of Warens that Rousseau took keen interest in music, education, and philosophy. And in this way, Rousseau had a very fascinating childhood or adulthood, where he was almost a self-taught person and took interest in variety of subjects on education, music, composition, and plays. He wrote some novels which was popular in his time.

So, it was under the guidance of Warens that Rousseau took keen interest in music, education and philosophy. He renounced Calvinism and converted to Roman Catholic Church. However, he took great pride in his citizenship of republican Geneva. Because it was a small polity which operated on the republican principle. Although, it was the executive organ which had more power in the decision making. Yet in the assembly, each adult member in Geneva was supposed to participate and contribute in decision-making.

The ideal for Rousseau, therefore, was a kind of polity where every adult member of society would directly participate and he took a great pride in his citizenship of republican Geneva rather than monarchy such as in France, Russia and Italy. He was suspicious of atheist whom he regarded as untrustworthy. In Paris, Rousseau first began to establish himself as a music composer. He befriended great philosophers like Denis Diderot with whom he had a close friendship for the next 15 years.

He contributed two essays on 'Music and Political Economy' and in 'Encyclopedia' whose objectives were to collect the knowledge that is worth collecting and it was edited by Diderots and many others in which Rousseau first began to reflect on 'Music or Political Economy' and developed his interest in philosophical writings and not just literally plays or novels.

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- For a brief period in 1743-44, Rousseau worked as a secretary to the French ambassador in Venice. There he had the first-hand experience of how politics shaped every sphere of human life. And it was here that he developed a very keen interest in politics, which is reflected in all his works but most exquisitely in the *Social Contract*.
- Rousseau's popularity across Europe was based on an essay – '*Discourse on the Arts and Science*' (also known as the 'First Discourse') that he wrote for the *Academie de Dijon*. This essay deals with the question of whether progress in arts and science advanced or corrupted morality. Rousseau argued that the advancement in science and art corrupted the god and moral nature of mankind. It has made them weaker both physically and mentally in comparison to their forefathers. This essay was an instant hit. But it also led to acrimonious relationships with many of his former friends and enlightenment thinkers who found his arguments contrary to enlightenment.
- Rousseau gradually developed a distaste for city life and retreated into the countryside. In the 1750s, over the decades, he produced his masterpieces, such as the '*Second Discourse*', aka '*Discourse on the Origins of Inequality among Men*' (1755), *Emile* (1762) – a treatise on education, *Social Contract* (1762). Among these, the *Social Contract* is his most famous work, which exhibits his philosophical positions, and ideally, it should be read together with his '*Discourse on Inequality*'.

For a brief period in 1743 and 44, Rousseau worked as a secretary to the French ambassador in Venice, Italy. And he went to Italy before, when he was living under the custody of Madame Warens to study philosophy and develop his educational abilities. Here, in Venice, he had firsthand experienced of how politics shaped every sphere of human life. And from then on, he began to seriously think about how to create a polity which would enable every individual to live the life to the fullest as a free and equal member in the community rather than a life of hierarchy or inequality or subordination of men by other men.

So, it was in Venice that he had this firsthand experience of how politics shaped every sphere of human life and the prospect that he had. If a society or a community have a good polity, it will increase the chances of individual and their life prospects whether if the polity in a country or a society is bad or immoral. It would have corrupting influences on the individuals and citizens. So, he developed a keen interest in politics that was reflected in all his works, including, *Discourses* or education treaties, *Emile* and it was most exclusively articulated in the social contract.

Rousseau's popularity across the Europe was based on an essay, he wrote for that 'Academie de Dijon'. This essay is titled as 'Discourse on the Arts and Science' which is also known as the 'First Discourse'. Now, this essay dealt with this question that whether progress in arts and science advanced or corrupt morality or corrupted morality or advanced the morality. That was the question post by this academy. In this essay, Rousseau dealt with this question whether science or arts or progress in science and arts advanced or corrupted the morality in the human society.

Rousseau argued that the advancement in science and arts corrupted the good and moral nature of mankind that he draws from the historical examples. So, he mixed a comparison between Greek

city-states like Athens and Sparta. And Sparta was more dynamic or stable republic than Athens. Precisely, because in Sparta, the focus was on military virtue or citizen's participation in the governance rather than exclusive focus on arts and culture in Athens which according to Rousseau led to its destruction and gradual development of empire. Rousseau argued that arts and science, and the progress in arts and science had made individuals ideal.

It made them weaker both physically and mentally in comparison to their forefathers. This essay of Rousseau was instant hit which made him popular across the Europe. But it also led to acrimonious relationships with many of his old colleagues and enlightenment thinkers who found his arguments contrary to the enlightenment project. So, the argument of his romantic beliefs in society before the focus or exclusive focus on the development of arts and culture.

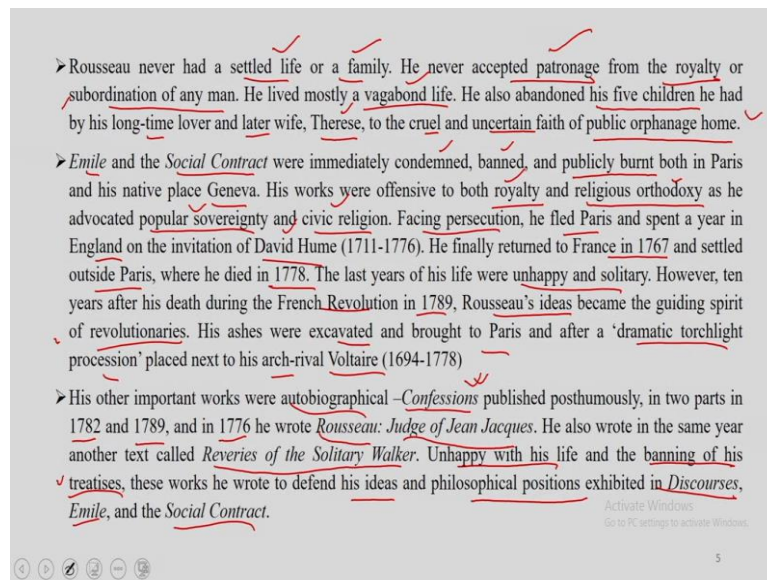
So, many of the enlightenment thinkers argued that through the cultivation of arts and science, and refinement of human sensibilities overall society would progress and become better off. In contrast, to that Rousseau argued that led to treacherous behavior or moral corruption of human beings and robbed them of their good moral nature which was there in the 'state of nature' or before the cultivation of arts and science.

He was a kind of subverting the exclusive focus on reason and rationality, and cultivation of human nature and corrected through art and science. This was very problematic for many lettermen thinkers who argued that Rousseau believed in a culture or society, where the ignorance or lack of arts and science or the knowledge of arts and science led to a kind of a tyrannical regime or the absolutist monarchies. Rousseau was unaware of those facts and did not believe in the human capacity to create a better polity or economy or society through art and science. That was the whole purpose of enlightenment project.

This essay, although established Rousseau as the popular philosopher across Europe, but it also leads to many acrimonies relationship with his old friends and particularly, critics from the enlightenment thinkers. Rousseau gradually developed a distaste for the city life and retreated into the countryside. In 1750s, over the decades, he produced his master pieces such as Second Discourse titled as *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality among Men* (1755) and *Emile* (1762) were treatises on education and social contracts (1762).

So, among these the social contract was most famous work which exhibited his philosophical positions and ideally, this social contract should be read with his *Discourse on Inequality*. And this relationship we will see in a moment.

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Rousseau in his personal life never had a settled life or a family. He never accepted patronage from anyone royalty or subordination of anyone. His relationship with many of his patrons was therefore somewhat problematic or led to acrimonies relationships. He had many patrons. But he did not take them as a kind of support or gratitude for their patroness. In fact, he refused patroness from the royalty and believed in his own self abilities or freedom to lead the life which was invasive in many of his philosophical treaties such as the *Social Contract* or *Emile*.

He lived mostly a vagabond life free from the ties of family or community. He abandoned his five children that he had by his long time lover and later wife, Therese, to the cruel and uncertain faith of public orphanage home. That led to many criticism of Rousseau about his responsibilities towards his own family or children. *Emile* and *Social Contract* were immediately condemned, banned and publicly burnt both in Paris and his native place, Geneva. And from there, Rousseau began a more wanderer life moving from place to place and city to city before settling in the countryside in France.

So these two works of Rousseau, *Social Contract* and *Emile* was offensive to both the royalty or class based hierarchy that existed in France or in many other monarchies, and the religious orthodox. Rousseau accused Christian religion of creating man who believed in the other worldly. Therefore, they did not participate in creating better life in this world or becoming a good citizen of the republic. He was offensive towards the monarchy. Because of his focus on the popular sovereignty. That means, the power and authority should reside with the people.

And people were the basis for legitimacy of any rule when they directly participated in its legislation or governing. So, that focus on popular sovereignty in Rousseau led many monarchies or supporters of royalty being critical of Rousseau's work. Similarly, his focus on the civic religion, a

new form of religion where citizens of a political community is called as 'a people'. Thereby, the individuals self-merging with the collective self. And that he argued in this argument on the 'general will' which we will discuss in the next lecture.

These two ideas of popular sovereignty and civic religion led royalty and religious orthodoxy becoming fiercely opposed and critical to Rousseau's thought and argument. That led to the condemnation of his work, public burning, and immediate ban of its publication. So, facing persecution there was a threat to his life or arrest. So facing that threat, he fled to Paris and spent a year in England on the invitation of other philosopher, David Hume. He was the ascots philosopher who wrote on how experience help us in developing the knowledge about the society.

His empiricist in that sense was facing persecution. He fled Paris and spent a year in England on the invitation of David Hume. Whether Rousseau had the tendency of being suspicious to his colleagues, he had many love and hate kind of relationship with his former colleagues. And particularly, Walter and his long term associate Diderot became critical of Rousseau's position or philosophical arguments. In England, Rousseau felt that David Hume was part of the international league Melanie, his contribution or philosophy which led to condemnation, banning, and burning.

He finally, therefore, returned to France in 1757 with a tacit understanding that he would not participate further in writing the radical treaties or arguments that would be inimical to their existing political structure. He returned to France in 1767 and settled the odd side Paris in the countryside where he died in 1778. And there was speculation that he committed suicide. But there was argument that he died peacefully.

We are not sure. But the larger argument about his death was he died peacefully based on the testimony of his wife and long term associate. What was sure that Rousseau's life or particularly last years of his life was very unhappy and solitary. However, 10 years after his death during the French revolution 1789, Rousseau became a kind of hero. And his works, particularly, *Social Contract* became instant hit. Because of its focus on the popular sovereignty and civic religion that shaped the politics in France after this revolution.

So, 10 years after his death during the French revolution in 1789, Rousseau's ideas became the guiding spirit of revolutionary. Jacobians and many others draw their lessons from the writings of Rousseau. It became this text was widely read across Europe and influenced many thinkers including Marx Kant which we will do later in this course. So, his essays were excavated and brought to Paris after a dramatic torchlight procession and placed next to his arch-rival Voltaire. His other important works were mostly autobiographical one, *Confessions* which was widely read that is

published posthumously, in two parts in 1782 and 1789.

And in 1776, he wrote another text which is titled as *Rousseau: Judge of Jean Jacques*. So, he wrote in the same year, another text called *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, where Rousseau presented 10 talks that he had with himself. In most of these texts, his autobiographical text such as *Confessions* and the *Rousseau: Judge of the Jean Jacques* and the *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. He tried to defend his philosophical positions. So, unhappy with his life and many of the decisions that he took, and the banning of his treatises like the autobiographical works of Rousseau was written to defend his ideas and philosophical positions as exhibited in *Discourses*, *Emile* and the *Social Contract*. So, these texts remained widely read even today and it influenced many other political thinkers or philosophers such as Kant and Karl Marx.

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Social Contract: The Formation of Body Politic

Man was born free and is everywhere in chains.
- Rousseau

- The central concern or primary objective of Rousseau in the *Social Contract* was to 'find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before'.
- Thus, the *Social Contract* begins with a proposition as to how men could live as freely and equally in society as they are born in the state of nature. Rousseau's ideas on human nature could be traced to his discourses. In the *First Discourse on Arts and Science*, he argued that 'our unlettered forbears were brave, honest, politically loyal, and public-spirited; their overeducated descendants are feeble, dishonest, treacherous, and selfish'. This he continued in the *Second Discourse*, however, with one distinction, that is, the root cause of moral corruption in society is not art and letters but property or wealth.
- According to Rousseau, early men lived an animal-like existence. He was a solitary creature. His association with others were casual, episodic, and need-based. They had no family, no fixed abode, and no community. In this state, men, according to Rousseau, had two natural sentiments – self-love or *amour de soi* and pity or compassion. Human beings lived their life freely, without ties and industries.

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Now, we will focus particularly on this text, *Social Contract* and the formation of *Body Politics*. That is the major text which we are going to focus. But of course, when we discuss about his views on human nature and 'state of nature' and why there was a need to create a new form of political community or political society, we need to engage with his *Discourses*. So, the philosophical position that he took in the first discourse, where he argued that development and progress in art and science had correcting influence on the individual. It was the guiding spirit in a sense. But it was further developed in the second discourse on the origin of inequality among men and fully articulated in a more comprehensive and systematic manner in the *Social Contract* for which he is so famous.

The *Social Contract* began with this famous statement that 'man was born free and is everywhere in chains'. So, naturally, for Rousseau, men were free from all ties, from all kinds of industries for all

kind of attachments. Only in the society, their freedom was curtailed and tied to many chains due to family, and social expectations. All these have corrective influences on the inherent good and moral nature of men. This text, *Social Contract* began with this statement and then he tried to unravel the process through which one could create a political community that would again make it possible for men to live as free as they were before being put in chains by the society or community.

So, the central concern or primary objective of Rousseau in the *Social Contract* was to find a form of association that would defend and protect the whole common force, the person and the goods of each associate and while uniting himself with all, might still obey himself alone and remained as free as before. That was the whole purpose of writing the *Social Contract* to argue that how in the 'state of nature', human beings were free from all kinds of ties. But the real or genuine freedom one could experience in the society.

The civil or moral freedom were different from the freedom that human beings had in the 'state of nature'. Its realization was possible only in the political society or when human beings lived with others in association with others. And in that sense, he was continuing with Aristotle's idea of 'Zoon Politikon', the man is the social animal. So, Rousseau, argued that the purpose was to how to create a kind of associational life, where each would be part of the whole, and the whole would ensure that each properly and person were protected.

And this relationship of each with all and all with each was fully developed in his notion, 'general will' that we are going to do in the next class. But here, it is important to understand that the freedom for Rousseau was very different from this ideal or liberal conception of freedom that deals with the negative idea or positive conception of freedom, where it was seen as the procession of the individual. In his personal life, he or she was free to do whatever she or he thought is right thing to do.

For Rousseau, the freedom could be experienced in association with others, in living the associational life in community, where the self, merged with the larger self or collective self of community. And thereby, the collective self would protect the individual self and individual self would collect and live for the protection of collective self. And that kind of direct patriotic intimate relationship with the self and community, he imagined in this *Social Contract* which would make it possible for individuals to live the life as free as they enjoyed before the society or corrupting influence of society that made their nature worst and corrupt.

In Rousseau, what we had was a controversial idea on freedom where he argued to the extent that human beings could be forced to be free. Human beings might not know what is freedom and

therefore, it is the obligation of society or community to force individuals to be free and that we will discuss, how it leads to a totalitarian thinking in the twentieth century and many critics of Rousseau's 'general will'.

His idea of freedom was based on self-living or living in association with the collective self. Thus, the *Social Contract* began with a proposition as to how man could live as freely and equally in the society as they were born in the 'state of nature'. So, man was born free. But in the societies, he is everywhere in chains. The purpose was how to create a political structure that would allow men to live as freely and equally as they lead in the 'state of nature'. Rousseau's ideas on human nature could be traced to his Discourses, the first and more importantly the *Second Discourses*.

In the first Discourse on arts and science, he argued that our unlettered forbears were brave, honest, politically loyal and public-spirited. However, they were overeducated, descendants, or feeble, dishonest, treacherous, and selfish. And that is the critic to the prevailing societies or behaviors of human beings in city life such as in Paris. This idea that he articulated in the first discourse, he continued in the second discourse, to understand what created the condition of unfreedom?

In the first discourse, he argued that it was the advancement in science and letters that made the human being weak, feeble, immoral, dishonest or treacherous, and selfish. Whereas their unlettered or uneducated forefathers were public-spirited, honest, and loyal. In the second discourse, however, the reason for such inequality or moral corruption among the mankind he considered property or the wealth as reason for moral corruption in the society.

In the second discourse, the distinction with the first discourse was that instead of arts and letters and he regarded property as the main reason. Property in the sense of private property, when one man occupied a part of land and made other people believed that part of land belonged to them and that led to the everlasting controversy or crisis. The whole question of protecting the private property through laws and institutions of state.

This idea, however, partly shifted the thinking of Karl Marx that he developed to the next level which we will discuss, when we will study Karl Marx. But in the second on inequality, Rousseau argued that how in the society, moral corruption was the result of private property or wealth. So, according to Rousseau, early men lived an animal-like existence. He was a solitary creature, living on his own abilities both physical and mental, and his association with others were casual, episodic and need-based such as for hunting.

Thus, association with other men was very limited, need-based, and episodic. It was not permanent as in the family, or society, or community. They had no family, fixed abode or community. In this

state, men according to Rousseau had two natural sentiments – one is self-love ‘o amour de soi’ and pity or compassion. These two sentiments governed human behaviors in the early states or ‘state of nature’. The first emotions that governed their behavior was their self-preservation and care for self. And they have the pity and compassion for others.

That means, those strangers who suffer some calamities or physical deformities, there is a kind of universal in mankind of pity or compassion for others as well. Although, most of the actions are guided by self-care or self-preservation. Human beings are capable of extending his compassion and pity to other individual as well. So, human beings in the early state or ‘state of nature’ lived their life freely without ties and distress, where there is no speech and language. And life was more care free, according to the will of nature.

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➤ His views are very different from the Hobbesian state of nature. Hobbesian human nature, according to Rousseau, was based on the bourgeois urban life of London or Paris. It does not characterize the natural man. Instead, it is based on the socialized behavior of men, which Hobbes took as natural.

➤ Rousseau, in contrast, depicts a natural man without the corrupting influence of society or culture as good and innocent. In comparison to animals, humans have a long period of immaturity and dependency on their parents. However, because of free will and the capacity of self-improvement, which Rousseau calls *perfectibilité*, human beings have transformed the conditions of their existence.

➤ However, the institution of private property and distinction of ‘mine’ and ‘thine’ led to inequality in the society and its further consolidation through the institution of laws and state. These institutions, although it gives the illusion of working in the interest of all, actually further and protects the interests of few.

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His views were very different from the Hobbesian ‘state of nature’. And if you recall, Hobbesian ‘state of nature’ was constantly at war of each against all. It was the state of permanent war or fear that was nasty, brutish, and short which could not allow any kind of industry, prosperity or a civilized life. In contrast, to that kind of Hobbesian human nature which according to Rousseau was based on this bourgeois urban life of London or Paris. There is kind of C. B. Macpherson critic to the social contract traditions characterization of human nature or ‘state of nature’. Rousseau argued that this characterization of Hobbesian nature as nasty, brutish, and short was based on his observation or bourgeois urban life in London or Paris. It did not characterize the natural men.

Natural men, according to Rousseau, was good or moral. Only in the society and community through socialization, man becomes corrupt and his whole purpose in *Emile* and his philosophy on education was how to prevent the corruptive influence of community or society on the inherent

natural good and moral nature of men. Instead, Rousseau argued that this idea of Hobbesian human nature was based on the bourgeois urban life of London or Paris. It did not characterize the natural men. Instead, it was based on the socialized behavior.

Thus, the human beings acquired certain behaviors through socialization which Hobbes took as natural. Therefore, according to Rousseau, the Hobbesian characterization of human nature was bourgeois or the artificial socialized behavior of the human beings and not their natural disposition. Rousseau in contrast depicted a natural man without the corrupting influence of society or culture as good and innocence. However, he did not argue. It was virtuous. So, the idea of virtuosity comes with society whereas in the 'state of nature', there is no society, association, ties, family. Therefore, there were no bonding.

So, there is no question of virtuosity or virtuous action there. However, the human nature in the 'state of nature' was inherently good and moral. He lives according to his own abilities and patience. But he did not want to do harm to others or enslave others as we see in the civilized society and civilized is within the court, according to Rousseau's understanding of civilization and society. It actually corrupted the inherently good and moral nature of men.

Rousseau, further, wrote, in comparison to animals, human had a long period of immaturity and dependency on their parents. In comparison to the animal's child, human child was more vulnerable in the initial stage of his or her life and needs care, and are dependent on their parents. However, because of free will and capacity for self-improvement which Rousseau called perfectibility. Human beings had transformed the conditions of their existence. That is the development in arts and science.

In comparison to animals what distinguishes human being is their capacity to transform themselves. Their will or free will or question of choice where other species on the planet continue to live their life as they lived throughout the millennium. But human beings in the same period of time have transformed the conditions of his life. And that is something which he calls perfectibility. Human being's capacity to improve himself or herself. However, in the prevailing conditions of France or the industrial society, he regarded the modern men or civilized men as morally corrupt. It was based on inequality which did not give freedom and equality to majority of population.

And his whole project was how to create a political society or community that would enable freedom and equality to each member of the political community and not just few. So, there was differentiation between the animal and other species, and human beings. Their ability to self-improvement. However, the institution of private property led to the understanding of mine versus

thine, created a kind of acrimonious relationship between human beings. That means, those who were propertied and those who did not have would be constantly at the loggerheads.

So, in the pre-modern and the hierarchical division in the society, where few at the top would enjoy all the luxury and majority at the bottom would suffer all kinds of anonyms. This institution of private property and distinction of 'mine and thine' led to inequality in the society and its further consolidation through the institution of laws and state. Therefore, Rousseau was critical of natural laws. Theorists argued that law and state worked for the benefit and welfare of all. That is the legitimacy of modern state.

However, Rousseau, argued that in a society based on the private property distinguished those who had the property and who did not or cannot create conditions for free and equal living for each citizen. It laws, state, and institutions works only for few. However, it gives the illusion of the welfare of all. And this idea was developed by Karl Marx later. However, in a more radical sense.

These institutions, although, it gives the illusion of working in the interest of all further protects the interests of few in the society. Rousseau argued that a society could not be free, when one person had the means and resources to buy the majority in that society through economic means or resources. To create a society of free and equal citizens, the economic inequalities where one man has the purchasing power to buy the rest of them. That society cannot be free or equal or just.

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➤ Thus, for Rousseau, the question was how to create a political community that would allow the individual to live as freely 'as before' among the equals members in the society. For him, then, the problem was what gives anybody legitimate right to impose rules upon everyone in the society? In other words, why should we obey the rules?

➤ Being a theorist of popular sovereignty and republican form of direct democracy, Rousseau envisaged a kind of small political community like Geneva where each citizen would participate in the governance and legislation. Thus, helping in constituting what he calls the 'general will' of the community, which would be binding on each member of the community.

➤ Rousseau outlines how an individual could live the life of liberty and equality in the political community under the same law which they themselves legislate. Kant further developed this idea as *Categorical Imperative*. According to Rousseau, attainments and protection of liberty and equality among men should be two primary objectives of every political system and its legislation. Rousseau further argues that men could realize true civil and moral freedom in the political society where the state treats every citizen as sovereign. He was also critical of the British Parliamentary system and representative form of governments.

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Thus, for Rousseau, the question was how to create a political community that would allow the individual to live as freely as before. That is before the formation of society and among the equal members in the society. For him, the problem was what gives anybody legitimate right to impose rules upon everyone in the society. That is the central question or problem in Rousseau's thinking that what kind of rule would be a legitimate rule and have the authority to command obligation from the rest of population or in the society.

In other words, why should he obey the rules? And this is the question of political obligation as we have discussed that unlike monarchy, the political obligation was not based anymore in the social contract tradition or the divine right theory. That is the god that has divine authority to the king and the king on the earth is the representative of god. Therefore, people as subject must obey the command of the king.

Prior to the modern social contract tradition, the theory of political obligation was based on this god given right of the king that enables the people or majority of people to obey the commands or order of the king. However, the *Social Contract* exhibited how political obligation was something given by the people themselves and not by any other authority. The whole legitimacy of the political organization, government, state or sovereign were based on the consent of people.

Rousseau dealt or engage with this question of political obligation, where his theories stated what kind of political authority would be a legitimate political authority. Or on what grounds, political authority could legitimately command the obligation or expect the obligation from the people and why we should obey the rules? And the rules, here, one has to understand were not for the protection of individual interest or personal interest of few. But the interest of the community and

how that rules would come about was the question of 'general will', when the rules were legislated by the people themselves.

And it was based on the 'general will' that would create a society which would enable the individuals to live freely and equally without any hierarchy or inequalities between man and man. And pro-actively participate in the collective life of the community. So, be a theorist of popular sovereignty. That means, the power and authority resides with the people. All forms of legitimate authority were derived from the people. Even in modern democracies, all forms of government and authorities were exercised in the name of people. So, if you look at the constitution of modern democracy, it begins with preamble which says, we the people of India, or we the people of USA or any other nation-states.

Being a theorist of popular sovereignty and republican form of direct democracy, democracy according to Rousseau was not legitimate or did not create the condition of freedom, when it is governed by the representative of people in some form of indirect manner. There they did not exercise freedom in true sense. Freedom was realized and exercised when individual themselves participated directly in the decision-making or legislating in the community. Thus, being a theorist of popular sovereignty and republican form of direct democracy, Rousseau envisaged a kind of small political community.

This form of direct democracy or republican form of government was not possible in a large society. Where it was impossible for human beings to sit together, to discuss on the common affairs corruptively. Some kind of representatives or indirect form of government in the modern democracy such as India, US or UK, they ruled or governed themselves through their representatives. And they elected their representatives periodically in episodic manner.

Thus, the participation of citizen in governing the nation-state or the political community was limited to the election and Rousseau did not favored that form of democracy. So, to have a republican or direct form of democracy, he envisaged a kind of political community which would be a small political community, a face to face community. For instance, Geneva was a model, where each citizen would participate in the governance and legislation. Thus, helping in constituting what he called 'general will'. On 'general will', we are going to have one lecture that would be the next or concluding lecture on Rousseau.

This 'general will' was the controversial idea in Rousseau. It had been interpreted differently by different thinkers in different century. However, this 'general will' was the idea based on the will of everyone. When individuals or each citizen in the community directly participated in the legislation

and thereby helped in developing this 'general will' or constituting this 'general will' of the community that would be binding on each member of the community. In the *Social Contract*, he envisaged a kind of political community which would be governed by 'general will'. And the 'general will' was something based on the participation of each individual.

When they work or guided by the interest of the community and not by their personal interest and more on this, we will have in the next lecture. Rousseau outlined how an individual could live the life of liberty and equality in the political community under the same law that they themselves have legislated. The idea of popular sovereignty, direct democracy, and the question of freedom and equality are based on this idea that human beings are governed by their own laws. Thus, no other authority or representative body governs them. The whole question of sovereignty resides with the people.

He outlined how an individual could live this life of liberty and equality in the political community under the same law which they themselves legislated. Kant, further, developed this idea as *Categorical Imperative*, where we will discuss, when we discuss in Immanuel Kant. According to Rousseau, the attainments and protection of liberty and equality among men should be two primary objectives of every political system and its legislation. So, the laws and legislation of their state or political system are to ensure freedom and equality for each and not just for few in a property or private property based society, where laws and state protects the interest of the few and not many.

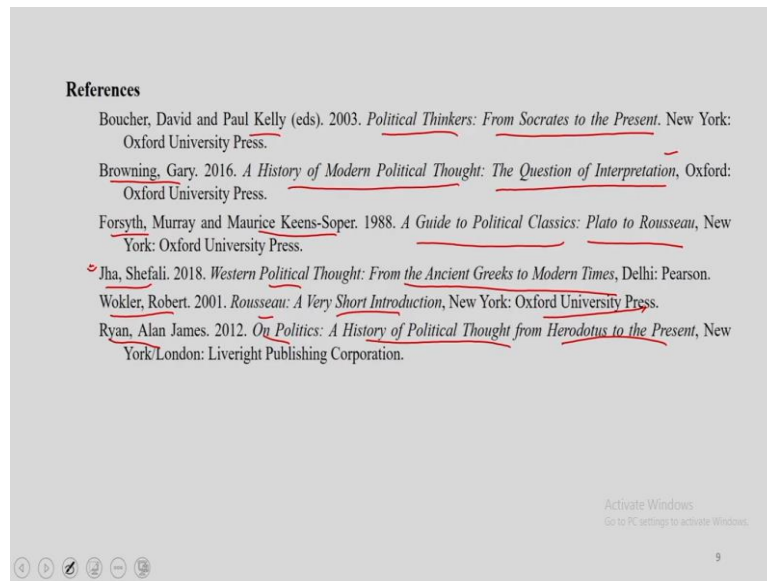
Rousseau envisaged a kind of political system which would not only ensure the freedom and equality of each. But how to protect them. That is the true purpose of political community or political system or a state and its legislation, according to Rousseau. He further argued that men could realize true civil and moral freedom only in political society, where state treats every citizen as sovereign. So, in this kind of direct republican mode of government, when each citizen participated in the decision-making or making of legislation, a state treats them as sovereign.

So, they were not subordinated to the will of other man. Because the rules that govern them were something which he himself helped to legislate through 'general will'. He was critical of British parliamentary system and representative form of government that Rousseau argued. They did not give individual freedom to actively participate in the functioning of society or community or in realizing the true civil and political freedom in society.

That is all in the lecture today, on Rousseau's personal life and his views on 'state of nature', human nature and social contract. We will discuss on 'general will' and critic to many of his political or philosophical positions in the next lecture. We conclude, Rousseau, by briefly summarizing the

contribution of social contract tradition in the western political thought.

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For this lecture, today, you can refer to some of these texts like David Boucher and Paul Kelly's, *Political Thinkers: From Socrates to the Present*. Gary Browning's, *A History of Modern Political Thought: The Question of Interpretation* is the good interpretation of Rousseau's thought in different centuries. Murray Forsyth and Maurice Keens-Soper's text is again a very good text on political philosophy, particularly, his views contained in the *Social Contract*. So, you can refer to this text, *A Guide to Political Classics, Plato to Rousseau* and Shefali Jha's text remains one of the references in this course, *Western Political Thought, From the Ancient Greeks to the Modern Times* you should refer to.

You can also read this small booklet by Robert Wokler, *Rousseau: A very Short Introduction*, published by the Oxford University Press, and James Alan Ryan's, *On Politics: A History of Political Thought from Herodotus to the Present*. So, these are some of the texts which you should refer to understand more about Rousseau, his personal life and views in the *Social Contract*. That is all for today. Thanks for listening. Thank you all.