

**J.J. ROUSSEAU AND THE THEORY OF THE GENERAL WILL:  
AN INTRODUCTION**

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**ABSTRACT:** The article introduces Rousseau's central theory, the general will, and his body politic. It suggests that Rousseau is the radical democrat and uses a conflict theory but without having a dialectical methodology. His emphasis on equality over freedom or his definition of freedom in relation to equality makes him a sort of prelude to Marxist socialism. His radical republican democracy covers a holistic approach to the relation between state and society and individual, which requires a collectivism that differentiates his theory from other liberal branches of democratic theory.

**Key words:** state of nature, contract, general will, body politics, democracy, public, nation, patriotism, equality, virtue, morality

**OVERVIEW:** Rousseau (1712-1778) is born as the son of a watchmaker in Geneva where Calvinist doctrine is influential. Puritanism gives him both libertarianism and all sorts of thoughts as regards equality, modesty and sensitivity towards primitivism. Geneva has also a tradition of city-state, which would be a model of an ideal political unity for him (Senel, 1986). That his ideal political territorial unit was city-state is the one reason "why his political philosophy never articulated closely with contemporary politics". He never envisaged a national or state level and he did not link his theory to the concrete problems of politics. He was not a nationalist but his ideas influenced the nationalism. He also rejected cosmopolitanism of the natural law school as "merely a pretext for evading the duties of a citizen" (Sabine, 1961; 581).

In his youth, he reads Plutarch, who presents Sparta as a society of equality and his Legislator Lykurgos mentioned in the book. Rousseau lived in Venice and Paris and met Diderot in 1745. Sabine attributes Rousseau's pessimism to his residence in Paris in which he observed poverty, exploitation, luxury, political despotism. In the face of this sort of "perverted society, Rousseau idealized a simple society "which is in a just mean between primitive indolence and civilized egoism" (Sabine, 1961; 584). In 1750 he wins a prize with his *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* by which Rousseau criticises the drawbacks of civilisation and the rationalism of *Enlightenment* (Senel, 1986).

In *The Art and Sciences*, Rousseau claimed that, Sabine says, "in short, intelligence is dangerous because it undermines reverence; science is destructive because it takes away faith; reason is bad because it sets prudence against moral intuition. Without reverence, faith, and moral intuition there is neither character nor society". For Kant, "Rousseau had first revealed to him the surpassing value of the moral will as compared with scientific inquiry". Kant later on, started a new division between science and the moral world. Science would belong to the phenomenal world (Sabine, 1961; 578).

He writes his *On Political Economy* for *Ancyclopedia*. Therein he first mentions the concept of the *General Will*. At the same year, his *Sources of Inequality among Men* is published. In

this book, Rousseau represented a “counter discourse” towards the modern political thought. His observation of historical transition, which was only a change from equality to inequality, from freedom to chains made him doubt the idea of progress, which is nothing but alienation and becoming dependency process. Whereas Hobbes looks at negatively the natural state in order to legitimize the present civil society, Rousseau makes the inverse. He imagines a positive state of nature to criticize the civil society (Akal, 1990; 129).

In 1761, in his *New Sun*, he writes on the freedom of men and the salvation of women and criticises aristocratic morality. In 1762 his celebrated book *The Social Contract or the Principles of Political Right* and *Emily* are published. Because of the latter book, Rousseau leaves from Geneva for Germany and then he goes to England near David Hume. He returns to Paris in 1770 and there he studied on the constitutions of Poland and Portuguese. He begins his *Confessions* but dies without completing it in 1778 (Senel, 1985; 453-55).

The method was the “scientific method” mainly developed by him. Kant would later on proclaim Rousseau as the “Newton of the moral world” (Hamilton, 1992; 42).

Rousseau had a critical position within the Enlightenment tradition. What the demarcation line between him and the other seems to be in an understanding of the human development in history and his understanding of the state of nature and the nature of man, whose definitions produce different results about the pasts and present of man. But as we shall see below, Rousseau was also a product of Enlightenment. He believed in the ideas of freedom, uniformity of human nature and secularism of his fellow. His departing point from this tradition was mainly related with the understanding of individuality, cosmopolitanism, with the crude belief on the progress of humanity and the unconditional belief towards the *reason* in the social organisation.

He believed that “the universe is changing all the time: we cannot know all the ways of Nature (i.e. of God), so our conscious reason cannot tell us all about them. Our tendency to rationalize, then, only too often leads us away from the truth, since our personality has become corrupted. Naturalism or uncorrupted instinct is the sure guide to truth. And uncorrupted instinct is the well-spring of the General Will in the ideal State”. Rousseau “bases his hopes on a development of the feelings of men rather than upon their capacity for intellectual development” (Roche, 1974; 72-3).

**STATE OF NATURE AND THE NATURE OF MAN:** Main question of the *Discourse on Inequality among Men* was to define “what really is natural and what is artificial in human nature”. Answer was that sociability comes from “feeling” not “reason” “except to the perverted man suffering anywhere is directly painful”, Man was good by his nature. Assumed natural egoism comes not from nature but only exist in a “perverted society” (Sabine, 1961; 583).

Rousseau idealises primitive societies as the results of the speculations about natural state conditions, the myth of Golden Age and the travellers’ reports on the Indians in the time. Primitive society seems to him as a condition in which inequality, exploitation of man by man and luxury and immorality are absent. However, this information about the primitive social condition was not supported with anthropologic studies and hence remained only as a speculation. In fact, these definitions are used for the critique of the existing civil society. What Rousseau tries to demonstrate is that a coexistence of the merits of the past and the utilities of the civil society could be possible (Senel, 1985; 456).

In the book, Rousseau “does not envisage the origins of society in a contractual agreement”. The evolution of the ‘unnatural man’ is from the very first connected with the introduction of

social relations". "It is only a legitimate, political society that has its origin in a contract, whereas social cooperation (or competition) precedes any contractual arrangements". In this sense, Rousseau is the first theorist to disconnect the "civil society" from "political institutions". In addition, he thinks that "reason involves a relationship to other people, without which it is ineffective" (Rapaczynski, 1992; 373).

*Freedom* Rousseau attributed to man in the state of nature is in fact not a freedom in social sense but "independence". In the state of nature, Rousseau sees that there is a balance between "will" and "power" of men. This balance is destroyed in society. And Rousseau tries to rediscover it. For this, two solutions appear; individual and collective action. The first refers demands to minimize the corruption and to set the limits to desires at the expense of individuals. And by doing so, man can decrease interpersonal dependency relations. The second solution focuses upon a new "ethos" for the relationship between citizens. In both cases, destroyed balance between will and power was assumed to be restored. Personal dependency is the causes of all moral problems for Rousseau while dependency on the subjects concerns nothing moral. The first solution is seen as impossibility since there is a society. For this reason, Rousseau moves toward the collective solution. Community creates an "equal dependence" for all and with it, "no one depends on the other to any greater extent than the other depends on him". If so, a new equilibrium, as existed in natural state, of will and power can be recreated in the social state as long as "justice and equality are kept in harness" (Barnard, 1989; 129-32).

In Rousseau's state of nature, man can be distinguished from animals as regards his capability of making choice between different behaviours and in terms of his evolving nature. In this state, man has not any duty or responsibility towards anybody and for this reason there is not bad or good, justice or injustice. Briefly he has not yet in respect to other any inequality, which is to in time be created by the civilisation, because there is not property but a natural equality and natural freedom produced by this equality. Consequently, in this natural state, men have nothing to destroy his natural goodness and natural virtues. Rousseau himself makes clear that there has never been such a state of nature but only a construction possible to understand the existing situation (Senel, 1985; 457).

Unlike John Locke, Rousseau does not acknowledge presence of the private property in the state of nature and unlike Thomas Hobbes he does not observe any constant personal hostility among men in the state of nature. What Rousseau does is to distinguish the social and natural, in fact. Both property and war belong to the social and cultural stage of human development. "War, then, is not a relation between man and man, but a relation between state and state, in which individuals are enemies only by accident, not as men, nor even as citizen, but as soldieries, not as members of the fatherland, but its defenders" (SCPPR, 1974;17).

Rousseau follows his nature-culture dichotomy (I will call this Rousseau's *root dichotomy*) in the context of force and consent. The first refers to the natural, the latter to social. But, how natural is transformed into social? He says that natural physical inequality of power is consolidated through political formation of right and duty: "The strongest man is never strong enough to be always master, unless he transforms his power into right, and obedience into duty". In addition, he opens his root dichotomy through necessity (results in force and obedience) and freedom (includes morality, will and duty):

"Force is a physical power; I do not see what morality can result from its effects. To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will". "If it is necessary to obey by compulsion, there is no need to obey from duty". "If force constitutes right, the effect changes with the cause". "Let

us agree,...that might does not make right, and that we are obliged to obey only legitimate power. Thus my original question ever recurs" (SCPPR, 1974;11).

Accordingly, if the war does not stem from the nature itself, it "confers no right except what is necessary to its end". In this sense, slavery and right (Grotius legitimises the connection), for instance, are mutually exclusive concepts (SCPPR, 1974;19). Unlike Hobbes, Rousseau does not accept that "might is right". Similarly, natural right of the individual to use force against an enemy who attacks his property, as assumed by Locke, cannot be explained in Rousseau's argument that the right cannot be derived from might. Because Rousseau links the right to legitimacy in a wider political context, which seems to be what I can call "a voluntary obedience", "a consensual slavery". I suggest that this sort of conception will always rescue us from extreme, different, and hence contradictory interpretations of Rousseau's theory of the general will.

His root dichotomy (nature - culture) logically follows the legitimate-illegitimate authority. In the case of slavery, he says that, "since no man has a natural authority over his fellow man, and since force is not the source of right, conventions remain as the basis of all legitimate authority" (SCPPR, 1974; 13).

But, here, he uses natural qualities of man very instrumentally for his purposes. The *force* and *necessity* belong to the natural condition, as *liberty* and *morality*, as the attributes of will of man, are put forward as the natural characteristics. In fact, Rousseau says that both force and consent, necessity and freedom are inherited from nature. The only demarcation line between natural and social is the *convention* among the men, not freedom or necessity *per se*. Also, it is seen that even the "rights" and "duties" belong to the quality of men, *humanity*: In addition we see from the passage below, the *will* is embedded in freedom and is required for moral actions:

"The renounce one's liberty is to renounce one's quality as a man, the rights and also the duties of humanity. For him who renounces everything there is no possible compensation. On such renunciation is incompatible with man's nature; for *to take away all freedom from his will is to take away all morality from his actions*. In short, a convention which stipulates absolute authority on the one side and unlimited obedience on the other is vain and contradictory" (SCPPR, 1974;15) (*emphasise mine*)

Rousseau sees liberty as a quality coming from the nature of man. But, the reverse of it, slavery, does not originate with the natural condition since there is not yet settled property relationships and there is no natural hostile relationship among men, as well as peaceful ones, since men has not yet reached durable social integrity. By doing so, Rousseau preserves the positive conception of the state of nature and the nature of man in the manner that Hobbes rejects, and omits the state of war which Locke locates between the state of nature and civil society" (SCPPR, 1974;15).

Slave-master relationships within the context of war will be more significant if such a relationship is transferred in the subject-king level.

**NEGATIVE TRANSITION TO THE CIVIL SOCIETY:** According to Polin, says Akal, in *Discourse on Inequality* Rousseau divides the human development of inequality into seven stages: in turn from the beginning; a solitary state and natural wealth; first progress and first barriers; an age of childhood of humanity; adolescence of humanity; iron age or property and working age; a state of war; the age of the contractual societies. If simplified, in retrospect, civil stage, state of war, age of adolescence, tribal state, and the first state which is the fictitious state of nature (Akal, 1990; 130). The last stage is a sort of contractual and

legitimizes all equalities. The aim of *The Social Contract* is to restore this negative contract and to replace it with a better one.

State of war had a social division of labor and property and hence an inequality. In this sense, it is different from Hobbes's one. Rousseau in this study (*Discourse on Inequality*) was concerned with how the property emerged and then how to insert it into the origin of the civil society. Only in this way, civil society could be derived from the state of war. Natural interpersonal hostility that Hobbes sees in the state of nature was in fact caused by this institutional inequality. On the other hand, the final contract did not lead into freedom of man but only chains since it was a slaying contract, in fact (Akal, 1990; 131-3).

For Rousseau, property is the main source of the wars and crimes in history. It ends the peace of the natural state. But, peace only comes through the rising inequality among men by establishing a master slave relationship. Danger of the war is compensated for a consensual slavery. It is because men, in the absence of experience, could not have foreseen all defects of the political formation in their future. As a result, men themselves established the institution of the property and inequality (Senel, 1985; 458).

**POSITIVE TRANSITION TO THE CIVIL SOCIETY:** As for the transition from state of nature to the civil society, we face two different explanations in *Inequality* and *The Social Contract*. In the former, property and the civilisation - metallurgy, armament, agriculture - dissolves the natural equality and freedom and lead into the civil society. But, in the latter, transition occurs through a social contract. The former explains the negative results while the latter does not completely ignore the positive aspects of development of civil society. The seeming contradiction between two sorts of explanation can be understood in a way that the former aims to explain the historical development while the latter seeks for a theoretical revealing of the question (Senel, 1985; 457-8) and proposes a positive transition through a conscious formation of the political society. This is the aim of *The Social Contract or the Principles of Political Right*.

Rousseau thinks that "entering a political society" is neither for the sake of individual security nor a fact of compromise since "political association rests on the acceptance of a form of interaction with other men in which no one stands to lose and everyone stands to gain", as observed by Rapaczynski: "how to form a form of association ...under which each individual, while uniting himself with others, obeys no one but himself, and remains as free as before" (1992; 374).

In the contractual alternative of transition to the civil society, Rousseau wants to demonstrate that freedom and equality of the natural state could continue in the civil state. The contractual transition does not follow the conspiracy theory of the *Inequality among the Men* in which property owners played the decisive role by recruiting the poor for their security and properties. But, what was proposed therein was that increasing needs and civilisation develop side by side; similarly evolution and property mutually produce each other. The development of property results in the conflicts. However, conflicts cannot be eliminated by simple force but only by rights. The force cannot provide the stable and secure conditions and may be destroyed by a far more powerful force (Senel, 1985; 459).

Men finally decide to end up the war condition with peaceful order through a social contract among them. They aim both to preserve their natural freedom and to end the wars in the natural state by putting themselves under the rule of a Sovereign. They accept its necessity but they do not want to give up their natural freedom to it. Compromise between this consensual obedience to the sovereign and their unwillingness to alienate their freedom is, in fact, provided by their total obedience to the society (Senel, 1985; 459).

From the state of nature to the civil state there occurs a remarkable change in man. Justice replaces the instinct and a morality is inserted into his actions. Not only his actions and compatibility is expanded but also, “feelings are ennobled”. “Stupid and ignorant animal” becomes “intelligent being and a man”. He substitutes “civil liberty” and property for his “natural liberty” (SCPPR, 1974; 31). The former is limited by “the strength of the individual” while the latter is constrained by “the general will” (SCPPR, 1974; 33).

In the civil state, “moral freedom... renders man truly master of himself; for the impulse of mere appetite is slavery, and obedience to a law one prescribes to one’s self is freedom” (SCPPR, 1974;33).

**ABSTRACT CONSTRUCTION OF THE CIVIL STATE:** At the beginning of *The Social Contract*, the family is introduced as the primitive sort of political society and the constitution of civil society is explained through a comparison with the state and the family (“The earliest of all societies, and the only natural one”).

If the parents and mature children want to live together, this occurs only by convention and such a voluntary association implies that there is a “common liberty”, as “a consequence of man’s nature” (SCPPR, 1974; 7).

**THE BODY POLITIC:** Among his early works, *On Political Economy* (from now on, *PC*, 1974) explained his political theory most clearly. His notion of the general will had been also used in Diderot’s article about Natural Law in the same volume of *Encyclopaedia*. Whoever invented the term is not known but Rousseau “made it his own”. The thoughts in the article would be later on developed in *the Social Contract*. The article saw the government a simple instrument of the general will, which also establishes the moral standards for the members of the “corporate self” having this “general will”. Therein, previous ideas directed to the conventional thoughts of the time are repeated as a mere likeness did not form a social body but for this sociality “only a psychological or spiritual bond” was required. He likened the society a “living organism”. Every society had a “general will” and a great society was composed of small societies rather than individuals. But, despite an existence of the general will, “patriotism” was suggested as the main of the all virtues since social solidarity was weak (Sabine, 1961; 585-6).

In the article, Rousseau saw the state as a “great family” whose authority “can be founded only on convention” through which “the general administration is established only to secure individual property” (*PC*, 1974; 254). He said there that public interests and the law should have a “natural force” and should be differentiated from the personal interests and the passions of the rulers and that public economy and private economy are different subjects. He called public economy “government” and named “the supreme authority” as “Sovereignty” (*PC*, 1974; 256).

**THE GENERAL WILL OF THE BODY POLITIC:** What the philosophy towards which Rousseau attacked is was “the systematic individualism” attributed mainly to John Locke. This philosophy overemphasized the individual selfishness and self interests, and sees the community as “essentially utilitarian”, “in itself it has no value though it protects values”. This tradition also went back to Hobbes, against him Rousseau “thought the pertinent objection that the state of war attributed to the individual men in a state of nature really belongs to ‘public persons’ or ‘moral beings called sovereigns’ and that “Men fight not as detached individuals but as citizens or subjects” (Sabine,1961; 580).

Here is the theory of the general will which was indeed the most powerful instrument for Rousseau to challenge the most fundamental problem of liberalism: “the problem of alienation and social atomization”. It was thought that “men are fully constituted, autonomous, and self-enclosed entities before they come to make any political arrangements among themselves”. “Before the creation of political society they are already ... rational agents”. They have also a capability as a moral agency with the exception of Hobbes’s understanding. Moral self-sufficiency is realized through property ownership (Locke) and the meaning of life is the self-preservation. Social organization is cooperation between “autonomous agents”. Individual was “no longer bound by any obligation to the community”. These theories were based on the natural law school which did not see “active participation in politics as indispensable to a meaningful life”. On the other hand, for Rousseau, society was “not a pragmatic but a moral creation”. The more importantly, the society was not only an answer to the certain problems but also “it *itself is the answer*” (Rapaczynski, 1992; 371-3).

The most of the support for Rousseau to attack individualism came from Plato, since Plato’s philosophy included “the conviction that political subjugation is essentially ethical and only secondarily a matter of law and power” and “the presumption, implicit in all the philosophy of the city-state, that the community is itself the chief moralizing agency and therefore represents the highest moral value” (Sabine, 1961; 580-1).

About the meaning of the general will, these definitions are the common observation: “It is disputable that Rousseau ever gave a clear-cut, final answer, or that any one of his commentators has ever answered it for him to the complete satisfaction of the others. In one chapter of *the Social Contract*, it means “a decision o by numerical majority”, in *Projet de Constitution pour la Corse*, “majority decision is *per se* the only right and legitimate one”, in *Economie Politique*, we face “a fairly clear admission of the difficulty of recognizing the General Will, by remarking that to distinguish between the will of the individual or that of a limited group, on the one hand, and the General Will, on the other, one should possess such a degree of enlightenment as can accompany only ‘the most sublime virtue’ ”, “it is necessary only to be just in order to follow the General Will”, “It is ‘right reason’ in the stoic sense”, “‘the voice of nature’, since nature and reason ‘never find themselves in contradiction’ ” (Roche, 1974; 69-70).

Sabine argues that the contract theory of the general will in *the Social Contract* has several paradoxes. The first is that the term contract is meaningless in terms of his criticism of natural man. He used the term just because of its popularity. His theory of contract was not related with the “rights and powers of government”, which was not the subject of a contract but only instrument of people. Secondly, the imaginary establishment of the society was not based on the contract because the individual rights and liberties was supposed to be absent outside the community or a group of which they are the members. Citizens did not make the community and had no right against it. The community was not formed by “an aggregation” but was “an association”, “a moral and collective personality”. Sabine says that “the word contract was about as misleading as any that Rousseau could have chosen” (Sabine, 1961; 587).

Another paradox was that Rousseau could not show that individual man gains much more as being a member of the community as compared with his isolated condition. He thought that the state of nature was a “chimera” and isolated man had nothing to bargain in return for the values that society presents. On the other hand, his observation that man is “everywhere in chains” meant the social burdens only in the sense that he refers to the bad communities, which in fact are not communities. In this sense, Sabine observes that Rousseau comparison

is not between bad and good communities but between the community and the absence of the community (Sabine, 1961; 588).

Although organic totality of the body politic could be mechanically imparted, Sabine is very correct to see that only within the living organism of the community, to life is attributed a meaning and the inevitable comparison ought to be between community and non-community. Nevertheless, Rousseau is related with the communities in which the general will is materialised and a higher moral order is established. Phenomena of the will demonstrate that this animal has also a morality, which defines its laws of motion" (PC, 1974; 257).

**Social Contraction of the General Will:** The notion of the general will fulfils two functions in structure of Rousseau's theory; first, it creates integration, second, it preserves independence of each part. Each becomes a part of the whole through the emergence of the general will (Senel, 1985; 460). If we use social language; after the establishment of social contract, it is taken for granted that each member of the society, obeying to the general will, obeys only to himself. "To find a form of association which may defend and protect *with the whole force of the community* the person and *property of every associate*, and by means of which each, coalescing with all, may nevertheless obey only himself, and remain as free as before" (SCPPR, 1974;23) (*emphasis added*).

In the social form, the natural liberty of man is ensured and provided with the solution the social contract creates; an aggregation of the forces and a form of association. In fact, liberty is protected through the protection of person and associative properties by the community force. Men "have no other means of self-preservation than to form by aggregation a sum of forces,...to put them in action by a single motive power, and make them work in concert" (SCPPR, 1974; 23).

Natural liberty is replaced with "the conventional liberty" through which "the total alienation to the whole community of each associate with all his rights" realizes. By this, an equal condition for all is created. When alienation is materialised "without reservation", the emergent union will be perfect. Otherwise, natural state continues and the association leads to a tyranny. The social contract (here Rousseau calls social "pact") "reduces itself to the following terms: Each of us puts in common his person and his whole power under the supreme direction of the general will; and in return we receive in a body every member as an indivisible part of the whole" (SCPPR, 1974;23-5).

The social pact constitutes the body politic and gives this public person its will. Body politic seems to meet all the concepts of *the state, the sovereign, the power, the people, the citizens, the subjects* in their relations to passivity, activity, and to the context of other associates or individuals and subjugation to the laws. Here, we can conclude that state or sovereign, people or citizens and even subjects demonstrate the different forms, attitudes and attributes of the body politic. The adjective which is given to the body politic does not imply any preference in negative or positive manner but only reference points.

**Will:** Particular *versus* General or Private *versus* Public: As for the inter-state relations, "the will of the state" is not general but particular. In addition, when Rousseau applies the principle of will to the internal relations within the "political society", which is "composed of other smaller societies of different kinds, each of which has its interests and its rules of conduct" (*Political Economy, from now on PC*, 1974; 257), he conclude that *will* of the association (small society) is *general* for its members and *particular* for the society.



Moreover, for this possible conflict between the particular will of the small society and that of the greater one, Rousseau argues that between the personal interest and the duty there is an inverse ratio and as a result argues that “the most general will is always the most just also, and that the voice of the people is in fact the voice of God”. Nevertheless, to do so, there should *not* be a condition in which “the people is seduced by private interests, which the credit or eloquence of some clever persons substitutes for the those of the State; in which case the general will *will* be one thing, and the result of the public deliberation another” (PC, 1974; 258).

If the private interests penetrate into the State, there emerges spontaneously both a division between the State and the public and a division between the general will and the public deliberation. For this very reason, the government of the people should always rule in the direction of the general will (PC, 1974; 259).

Rousseau observes some motives for the union of man through the means of civil society and he says that “you will find no other motive than that of assuring the property, life, and liberty of each member by the protection of all”. He already connects the notion of will, to freedom and property: “if any constraint can be laid on my will, I am no longer free, and that I am no longer master of my property, if anyone else can lay a hand on it” (PC, 1974; 260).

In the case of a particular will contrary to or divergent from “the general will” (SCPPR, 1974; 29), Rousseau saw this man as such: “he would be willing to enjoy the rights of a citizen without willing to fulfil the duties of a subject. The progress of such injustice would bring about the ruin of the body politic” (SCPPR, 1974; 31).

Here Rousseau mentions the terms, “common good” and “common interest” in relation to “the general will” and “sovereignty”. He argues that *sovereignty* cannot be represented since it is “only a collective being” and *the will* cannot be transmitted, unlike the power. Even if “the sovereignty can be represented by itself alone”, it is exercised by “the general will”, and which “can only direct the forces of common good”. The definition of common good can be found out in the common points of the different interests, which create the “social bond”. The private interests, and hence “the particular will naturally tends to preferences, and the general will to equality” (SCPPR, 1974; 39).

From here, we can conclude that the general will does not exclude the particular wills and that “it is solely with regard to...common interest that the society should be governed”. The general will relate to the government and the maintenance of the society. It puts the public person, the sovereign, into motion in favour of public interests and common good. It should be paid attention that very tendency of the general will is towards equality and the existence of the general will in whatever kind depends on the sovereignty which can not be represented. And, a simple obedience of the people implies that there is “a master” but (SCPPR, 1974; 39) no *Sovereign* and no *body politic*. Nevertheless, “This does not imply that the orders of the chiefs cannot pass for the decisions of the general will, so long as the Sovereign, *free to oppose them*, refrains from doing so. In such a case the consent of the people should be inferred from the *universal silence*” (SCPPR, 1974; 41) (*Emphasise added*).

The fact that the people do not reject the decisions though they are “free to oppose” implies a tacit consent. Here, it is sure that Rousseau leaves the door open for the possible abuses of the individual exercise of the general will since *a freedom of opposition does not mean a capability of opposition* and *universal silence may have been caused by incapability*.

Logical Impossibility of the *Double Supreme Will*: It is a tautological statement to say that collective will is not collective when it is divided. It is sure that sovereignty implies supremacy by its nature. In this sense, there cannot be more than supremacy. In addition, we have seen that it cannot be represented because it is a collective body having a collective will.

“But our statesmen”, says Rousseau, “not being able to divide sovereignty in its principles, divide it in its objects; they divide it into force and will, into legislative power and executive power”, by doing so, “They make the Sovereign a fantastic being, formed of connected pieces”. If the sovereignty is “that of the body of the people”, it “constitutes law”; on the other hand, if it is that of a portion, not being general but divided, it is “at most a decree” (SCPPR, 1974; 41).

The law and the application of the law is different since the latter is “a particular act which determines the case of the law” (SCPPR, 1974; 43). Only the “declared will” of the Sovereign in the form of general will refers to law. But, “a particular will, or an act of magistracy” does not create the law.

As Rapaczynski observes, Rousseau distinguishes the “political law”, which is universal, and law, which affects each differently. The first relates to the public interest and the general will and the reaches to the logic of social bond (1992; 376).

Rousseau does not suggest that either Sovereignty can be divided, nor can its unique means of exercise, the general will. In real politics, it is hard to reveal that such a general will express itself without avoiding its impairment. The general will is every where and should be hence nowhere. How can this absoluteness realise? I will try to give a possible answer to this seeming metaphysics now.

**CONCRETE EXPRESSIONS OF THE GENERAL WILL:** If “The general will is always right” and sets the “standard of right”, Sabine asks “who is entitled to decide what is right?” (1961; 592). A good answer in Rousseau is observed in a commentary, as such: “‘the right’ and ‘wrong’ that apply to political decisions are moral and not pragmatic terms. And this moral rightness consists in the merging of individual wills into one universal will that eliminates the isolation and alienation of each person in the fraternal bond of the community”. In this sense, when Rousseau says that the general will is always right, this does not mean that it is pragmatically so. Rousseau thinks that “people are very often wrong in the pragmatic sense” and for this reason he thinks that they “need a wise legislator to guide them and why even the best states finally disintegrate” (Rapaczynski, 1992; 376). Accordingly, Barnard observes that Rousseau believes that “both the individual and the collectivity need guidance; both must be made to bring will into conformity with reason” (Barnard, 1989; 135).

It has been just demonstrated that the law is the only possible expression of the general will and it is not the act of legislative power of the government in its narrow sense. The most *elitist* and even *divine* form of *legalism* is thus suggested to us:

“A superior intelligence would be necessary who could see all the passions of men without experiencing any of them; who would have no affinity with our nature and yet know it thoroughly; whose happiness would not depend on us; and who would nevertheless be quite willing to invest himself in ours; and lastly, one who...could labour in one age and enjoy in another. It would require gods to give laws to men” (SCPPR, 1974;63).

The legislator of Rousseau does not sit in any state office and its role is not what the legislative power of the government does in the law making process. It is neither government (“magistracy”) nor Sovereignty (SCPPR, 1974;65). It is understood that the legislator is the founding father of the republic, the body politic or the state in Rousseau’ terminology.

While Rousseau suggest that the Sovereignty should not be divided, he rejects both the concentration of the governmental powers in one had and the more importantly the substitution of the legislative power for the Sovereignty. In the former case, he observes that even in the case of legislator: “if he who rules men ought not to control legislation, he who controls legislation ought not to rule men; otherwise his laws... being ministers of his passions, would often serve only to perpetuate his acts of injustice, he would never able to prevent private views from corrupting the sacredness of his work” (SCPPR, 1974; 65).

In the latter case, he recalls the Rome, which “saw all the crimes of Tyranny... through uniting in the same hands legislative authority and Sovereign power” (SCPPR, 1974; 67). Rousseau said above that the Sovereignty cannot be represented but can only represent itself. From the above example, we understand that Sovereign power as a body, in whatever form it behaves does not matter, must not directly represent itself and not fulfil the function of legislation. The reason is clear that if it makes the laws for itself, it may also execute them for itself. I can conclude that in Rousseau’s theory, there is no place for a direct popular democracy (if we use the term of popular sovereignty). But is this an inconsistency? I will answer later on.

Rousseau accepts only the representative democracy provided that equality in the society is existed. In this general equality, the general will may be represented in the parliaments. Otherwise, mechanisms of representation operate in favour of the riches. Nevertheless, for the general will to be able to emerge, the representative democracy is not essential. Moreover, if a party in the society rules the society in the direction of the common good, it means that it represents the general will, even when the majority is against itself. In this case, the solution is embedded in the meaning of the social contract, which implicitly ensures that the society makes the disobedience obey the general will, so that they could be made free (Senel, 1985; 462).

The authority of the legislator does not come from “force” or “reasoning” but from a “different order, which can compel without violence and persuade without convincing”. “The great soul of the legislator is the real miracle which must give proof of his mission” (SCPPR, 1974; 69). After the presentation of this *secular God*, it is not surprising that is why Rousseau puts forward the relationships between politics and religion: “in the origin of nations, one serves as an instrument of the other” (SCPPR, 1974;71). The religion is observed as a tool in the nation *building* or *salvation* politics. The role of the religion in this process makes him remember Machiavelli, who had stated that:

“It is true, there never was in a nation any promulgator of extraordinary laws who had not recourse to God, because otherwise they would not have been accepted; for there are many advantages recognised by a wise man which are not so self-evident that they can convince others” (*quoted in Machiavelli’s Discourses on Titus Livius, Book I, chapter XI, SCPPR, 1974;69*).

Government Puts the General Will in Action: Rousseau says that every “free action” has a moral and physical cause. The moral one means a will to determine the action, and the second refers to the execution of it. In the body politic, the will takes the name of legislative power while the action implies the executive one. There should be a co-operation between them. The legislative power can belong to the people alone whereas the execution “cannot

belong to the people generally as Legislative or Sovereign; because that power is exerted only in particular acts” (SCPPR, 1974; 93).

The citizens are the members of the body politic, of the State and hence they are the Sovereign. But also, they have rights and duties coming from the convention, the social pact. This is what Rousseau says at the beginning; “*free as before*”. Individuals come together and make themselves in a new form through the social contract. They become a body. Each is a part of the body politic. There is no division between the individual and the public person, the Sovereign. What is located between two is only the government of the state a part from legislative (already belongs to the people) and executive powers (a mere instrument of the people).

What government does is that it “receives from the Sovereign the commands which it gives to the people” (SCPPR, 1974; 95). It should be noted that the people is not the Sovereign itself. The latter cannot be reduced to the former. It is because the sovereign is the collective existence of the people which is composed of individuals but is not the totality of the individuals, something more than it. It is a body peculiar to itself. For example Rousseau argues that if we have ten thousand citizens, “each member of the state has as his share only one ten-thousandth part of the sovereign authority, although he is entirely subjected to it” (SCPPR, 1974; 97).

The result is that a large population of the citizens leads the Sovereign to increase and cause the state enlarge and diminish the liberties, and that heterogeneity leads into the repressive use of the power.

So the statement of that “There should be equality between...the power of the Government...and...[the] power of the Citizens, who are Sovereign in the one aspect and subjects in the other” (SCPPR, 1974; 95) can be translated into those statements: There should be an qualitative ratio between the particular wills and the general will and be an optimum largeness of the state for the liberties and be an optimum population of the citizens for the effective government.

Rousseau accepts that there are many possible forms for the State and the government and says that “geometrical precision has no place in moral quantities” (SCPPR, 1974; 99). He does not attribute the Sovereign power to the “Magistrates or *Kings*, that is, *Governors*”; and this “body as a whole bear the name *Prince*” (SCPPR, 1974;95); “the dominant will of the prince is, or ought to be, only the general will, or the law; its force is only the public force concentrated in itself” (SCPPR, 1974;101).

Here, the general will is presented as the law. The Prince as a body of “governors” is either required or supposed to behave in the direction of the general will. Otherwise, the Prince creates a condition in which there appear two sovereigns since the particular will dominated the general will and demanded obedience to it. In other wards, the Prince behaved in an inconsistent way, to say, to the general law of the body politic, or in narrow sense, to the law of the state.

The members of the magistracy may have three sorts of “wills”: “the will peculiar to the individual”; “the corporate will”; and finally “the will of the people, or the sovereign will” in relation with the state and the government. Rousseau observes that the most active government is that of the single person since “the corporate will” *will* be in the highest level of concentration. However, this does not mean that a unity of Government and legislation is proposed; the Sovereign and the Prince and all Citizens and Magistrate result in the fact that “the corporate will, confounded with the general will, will have no more activity that the

latter, and will leave the particular will in all its force". In this case, the government loses its activity and strength (SCPPR, 1974; 103-5).

Rousseau is well aware of the competition and gap between egoism and altruism. Nevertheless, he argues that even the most corrupt individual "does not extinguish in him the general will, but eludes it" even if he "desires the general welfare for his own interest". In fact, "The gap...is... solved by the evolution of the General Will", which "is the outcome of 'enlightened self-love' ". And Rousseau did not leave this moral development for the General Will to the "unaided or loosely organized individuals". "In submitting himself to the General Will, man is submitting his lower to his higher self, conquering appetite and obeying conscience", "only when thinking as part of the mass can the individual be trusted to act equitably and impartially" (Roche, 1974; 84).

This ethics of citizenship is another consideration in Rousseau's political theory in the context of education and the *civil religion*, and here we are not related with it.

In Locke, principle of majority is a "pragmatic solution to the problems of legislation whereas in Rousseau, it is related with the fact that "no minority is protected *qua* minority" (Rapaczynski, 1992; 377) and the individual's position towards the society as moral agency of himself.

Acceptance that will of the majority is the General Will is expressed only in the absence of associations within the State and upon the condition that public deliberation takes place among equal and independent citizens". "That the General Will, to be truly such, ought to be general in its objects as in its essence: that it ought to spring from all, to apply to all" (Roche, 1974; 82-3).

The first convention which, at the beginning of the political social constitution, supposes an unanimity within the plurality of opinions, is put forward as a legitimate foundation upon which minority submits to the majority decision. But when there is a sharp difference between the majority and minority, despite minority submission, Rousseau reserves the principle of plurality established by the convention at the beginning. Minority is preserved but wanted it to obey the majority to be consistent with the first convention. It is sure that here we are introduced an implicit ethical behaviour.

A danger of the majority decision in favour of a king, or any master seems to be *actually* prevented by observing a sharp qualitative difference between "multitude" and national society, between "subduing" and "ruling" (SCPPR, 1974; 21)

But, unanimity of consent is required only for one law, which is the social pact. If there is an opposition in the time of this pact, this does not mean that the contract is invalid. But it means only that the opponent excluded himself from the contract. They are "the foreigners among the citizens". For Rousseau, that was the wrong question: "How are the opponents free and yet subjects to laws to which they have not consented?" One who is both citizen, since we previously excluded the foreigners, and opponent, "consents to all the laws, even to those which are passed in spite of him" because "[t]he unvarying will of all the members of the State is the general will; it is through that they are citizens and free" (SCPPR, 1974; 181).

In the assembly of people, "from the counting of the votes is obtained the declaration of the general will". If the result is opposed to one's opinion, this demonstrates that he was "mistaken". Rousseau supposes that "all the marks of the general will are still in the majority; when they cease to be so, whatever side we take, there is no longer any liberty" (SCPPR, 1974; 181-3). It seems that the vector as the sum of the various opinions moves the

body and its own politic and for this reason, every one should accept the direction of the vector since he had participated at the beginning to the political games of the body.

What the people think is not always the same as the general will but it is never corrupted but only deceived. So there may be difference between the popular will and the general will. What the authority is to define this possible difference is not presented by Rousseau. The possible answer may be that there is not such an authority since the Sovereignty of Rousseau is not something external to the people and the general will. Authority is in fact a transformation of the relations between the state and the individual through the transformation of the political culture of the citizen. As a commentary stated, Rousseau created a “new conception of the State and the individual” and he aimed to bridge “the gap between egoism and altruism”. With him, “the individual loses himself in the State”, which is “the true source of morality and law; to it the individual owes those qualities that make him human”. So, Rousseau’s Social Contract assumed a “transformation of the individual” (Roche, 1974; 76).

Will of all and the General Will: The general will is the same with the will of man who is truly enlightened and completely purged of all selfishness”, “the will, for example, of the Stoic or the fully developed *Emile*” (Roche, 1974; 72).

Rousseau, it seems so, understands the general will as a vector in the faces of numerous particular forces. It shows the resultant direction. Hence, it is not derived by the arithmetical sum of the individual forces because their directions vary.

This lack of clarity for the definition of the general will opens the door to the different sorts of government as long as the common good will be realised. A minority or a whole society, or even a member of the society may be the Sovereign in order to represent and execute the general will. It is already this slippery conception of it may render Rousseau a totalitarian or a democrat (Senel, 1985; 461).

In Rousseau, particular associations between the State and the Citizen are disregarded since they prevent the direct relation between them. So to speak, they put the barriers for the medium through which the citizens become the state and the state becomes the citizens. Rousseau tries to surpass the ruled-ruler division within the society. The associations organise the particular interests and prevent the general will to be dominant in the body politic. Accordingly, the State is not accepted to be captured by the particular interests (SCPPR, 1974; 47).

However, if any, numbers of the particular interests in the State should be increased so that they lose their power, and the people must be educated to not fall into deceptions. “But if there are partial association, it is necessary to multiply their number and prevent inequality....There are the only proper precautions for ensuring that the general will may always be enlightened, and that the people may not be deceived” (SCPPR, 1974; 47).

Patriotism: People do not unite politically for the sake of likeness or agreeing. And similarly, wills of the individuals do not move towards naturally the general will. Similarities help them to be people but they “fall short of creating a collective purpose, a general will”. But, “To experience a culture as a common culture, people must be conscious of shared interests and shared objectives. Only then does a culture become a political habitat if people are made to feel that public objectives are also their own individual concerns, for only then do they truly view themselves as interdependent parts rather than as independent wholes”. It was this role the Legislator “to persuade them that what they gain through agreement”. So, for

citizenship not “sentiments of affinity” but “reasoned agreement” was required (Barnard, 1989; 142).

A complementary to the citizenry is “patriotism”; he says that “the greatest miracles of virtue have been produced by patriotism” (PC, 1974; 267).

Community Control and the Property: The public possession was “more secure and more irrevocable, without being more legitimate, at least in respect to foreigners”. The state, with regard to its members, is owner of all their property by the social contract, which, in the state, serves as the basis of all rights”. Here, while Rousseau opens the door for state or public acquisition of individual properties, he acknowledges the private property as long as certain conditions are provided as follows; that “a land must not yet be inhabited by one”; that “a man must occupy only the area required for his subsistence”; that “he must take possession of it...by labour and cultivation, the only mark of ownership which, in default of legal title, ought to be respected by other” (SCPPR, 1974;35).

Nevertheless, the right of individual over his property is “always subordinate to the right which the community has overall; otherwise there would not be stability in the social union, and no real force in the existence of Sovereignty”. This ultimate control of the community is the basis of the whole social system through which “moral and legitimate” equality by “convention and legal right”, despite strength and intellectual inequality, replace “natural equality” and “physical inequality imposed over men by nature” (SCPPR, 1974;37).

Community for Rousseau is something which “lives its own life, fulfills its own destiny, and suffers its own fate”. It has “a will of its own, ‘the general will’ (*volonte generale*)” (Sabine, 1961; 589). “The general will...represented a unique fact about a community, namely, that it has a collective good which is not the same thing as the private interests of its members” (Sabine,1961; 588). “Rousseau moved back and forth at will between his own theory of the general will and the indefeasible individual rights which ostensibly he had abandoned”. Sabine argues that the definition of the individual rights in the context of society and the common good “signifies nothing about what individual rights a well-regulated community will give to its members”. Liberty is only something which is required by “the general good”. There are “no indefeasible rights in defiance of the general good” and hence “there are no individual rights at all” (Sabine, 1961; 590).

Sabine argues that even though Rousseau’s theory overemphasizes the community and decreased the importance of government”, which was a mere agent of the sovereign people, the fact that the sovereignty of this sort cannot be represented and corporate body cannot express its will, the exaltation of the community as such implied to give a more authority to “its spokesmen”. Indeed it meant that the inevitable increase in the strength of the “parties and factions, which Rousseau thoroughly detested” (Sabine, 1961; 593). Robespierre, being the leader of the revolutionary government, spoke to the National Convention in 1794: “Our will is the general will” (quoted in Sabine, 1961; 591).

Equality: “As society degenerates, the General Will, although not destroyed, becomes increasingly difficult to discover”. “With the growth of inequality, the body politic degenerates; unity and patriotism, devotion to corporate aims and purposes decrease; selfish, individual and particular interests come to occupy the minds of citizens to the exclusion of the general interest in varying degrees. The General Will ceases to be the will of all” (Roche, 1974; 78-9). For a lawful order, which follows the general will, Rousseau suggests an equality of fortunes among the citizens: “It is on the middle classes alone that the whole force of the law is exerted; they are equally powerless against the treasures of the rich and the penury of the poor” (PC, 1974; 270).

City State: The ideal political unit in his mind is a city state in which, because of the equality assumed in wealth and communication regarding with the social questions, particular wills coincide with the general will. In such an ideal state, be it by the majority consent or the unanimity, all decisions made by the community can easily take the consent of the each member of the community as regards their concordance with the general interest. This consent means that the individuals obey themselves by obeying to the general will (Senel, 1985; 461-2).

We have seen that for the individuals of the state, citizens, to follow the laws which are established under the principles of the general will, Rousseau have many ideas from the inserting patriotism into them to the establishment by the government an equal economic condition in which middle classes is dominant. But the public education occupies a critical position among the other entire comfortable environment for the body politic.

Both *On Political Economy* and *The Social Contract* started with the discussion of the family and the *great family*, that is, the State. The family is now changed into the State. The children are made the citizens of it. And, the mother becomes motherland. The Home becomes the country. Love of the brothers and sisters are transformed into fraternity. Rousseau's notion of the general will, indeed, is the fundamental principle for not only the establishment of the laws of the State, but, the more importantly, a framework for which all sort of social, political and cultural transformation are pre-required.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS:** In the present article, I have tried to demonstrate that the theory of the general will produced by Rousseau signalled an end to the liberal theory of individualism which developed from Hobbes to Locke. The liberal theory as such had established itself against the ground of the subject of the middle age. And now, in the case of Rousseau, a theory of community establishes itself against the foundation of liberal notion of individual. In Hobbes, all individual powers were transferred to the Sovereign. In Locke, all authority delegated to the state and all other things remained in the hands of individuals as natural rights. The former destroyed the individual in favour of the Leviathan while the latter created a gap between individual and community, and between individual and the state. Nonetheless, each of the theories reduced every political phenomenon to the individual atom. Now Rousseau discovered the community which can not be reduced to the individual atoms since the former was not a mere arithmetical sum of individuals but a new entity, which in fact produces individuals in real sense, as citizens. However, it may at the beginning seem that in Rousseau there emerged a gap between the community and the citizen. It does not seem like so; because Rousseau diffused all power into the cells of the community and theoretically overthrown the division between the state and the individual and make both of them the same community, which is what he calls "body politic". However, this merging of the power and the individual required a immense moral, political and cultural development of the citizen a part from mere intellectual and economic development. And this merger could be possible only in the base of social and economic equality. His theory of the general will focus upon this merging, which needed a radical individual and social transformation in character.

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