

The Theoretical Perspective and Strands of the Social Contract as Espoused in the Works of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau: It's Effects on the Contemporary Society

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Abstract

It is an undeniable fact that the Social Contract theory developed at the transition period from feudalism to capitalism, whereby the feudal system – which is based on absolutism and the absolute right of kings -- was being fought. The theory came as a means of explaining and justifying the existence of governments, and that government should emerge from the will of the people. It is not, therefore, surprising that in democracies, one hears about the government of the people, by the people and for the people. The Social Contract -- as espoused by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau, as three dynamic thinkers, and also by a few other modern philosophical thinkers -- is a convention between men that aims to discard the proverbial “State of Nature”, whereby people are to live without government or written laws. With his famous phrase, Rousseau, in fact, says it best when he has often been quoted as pointing out that "man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains". Hobbes and Locke agree very much with Rousseau, hence they underscore in unison that modern nations do repress the physical freedom that is our birthright as human beings, and that we do nothing to secure the civil freedom for the sake of which human beings enter into civil society. Contextually, these thinkers have concretely confirmed that legitimate political authority does stem from only a social contract that can be agreed upon by all citizens of a nation for their mutual survival or preservation. Later, the theory became an impetus for as well as reflected in the English Revolution, the French Revolution and the American Revolution, which led to the declaration of American independence.

Keywords: Social Contract, Good Will, Democracy, State of Nature, Feudalism, Society, Government, Absolutism and Liberalism

1.0: INTRODUCTION

Indeed, we plan to complete this very important research paper-- which includes a multifaceted works of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau -- by very promptly researching to have an understanding of the definition for the concept of Social Contract as discussed in the 6th edition of the Ebenstein Text. To do justice to this current probing topic, we also plan to provide a brief historical perspective or overview of Social Contract, especially with an emphasis on the analysis of Social Contract discussed by Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, respectively. Additionally, we plan to research and get very convincing facts to use in making a comparison of the lofty ideas of the foregoing three thinkers about Social Contract. Finally, it is our plan to conclude this researched paper with a discussion of the strands, if any, of these thinkers' ideas that have found their way into our contemporary society. The Social Contract -- as espoused by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau, as three dynamic thinkers, and also by a few other modern philosophical thinkers -- is a convention between men that aims to discard the proverbial “State of Nature”, whereby people are to live without government or written laws. With his famous phrase, Rousseau, in fact, says it best when he has often been quoted as pointing out that "man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains". Hobbes and Locke agree very much with Rousseau, hence they underscore in unison that modern nations do repress the physical freedom that is our birthright as human beings, and that we do nothing to secure the civil freedom for the sake of which human beings enter into civil society. Contextually, these thinkers have concretely confirmed that legitimate political authority does stem from only a social contract that can be agreed upon by all citizens of a nation for their mutual survival or preservation.

Furthermore, the social contract theory expresses two fundamental ideas to which the human mind always clings when it comes to the value of liberty; the idea that "will" and not "force" is the basis of government; and that the value of justice or the idea that "right" and not "might" is the basis of all political society and of every system of political order. In fact, the theory seeks to explain the formation of societies and governments. Despite the great variations on some points, the Social Contract theory mainly focuses on the voluntary consent that people give to the formation of the government. Moreover, the theory denotes an implicit agreement within a nation (or state) with respect to the rights and responsibilities of the citizenry within the nation (or state).

2.0: BRIEF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL CONTRACT:

The philosophical ideas of the Social Contract are attributed to such great thinkers as Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and, more recently, John Rawls, who espoused his own theories about the topic in the second half of the 20th Century. However, it is shown conclusively that the use of social contract as a definite concept in political and legal contexts can be traced back to the Italy's Marsilius of Padua (1270-1343); he was the individual historical figure, who fought against the supremacy of the church.¹ He ideally developed the idea that the people – who constitute the electorate in all societies -- are the source of all political power, and that every government is by mandate of the people, and that it operates with their consent. It is not, therefore, surprising that in democracies, one hears about the government of the people, by the people and for the people.

It is an undeniable fact that the Social Contract theory developed at the transition period from feudalism to capitalism, whereby the feudal system – which is based on absolutism and the absolute right of kings -- was being fought. The theory came as a means of explaining and justifying the existence of governments, and that government should emerge from the will of the people. The theory was, as a result, conceived and subsequently espoused by thinkers to challenge the system of absolutism that existed among monarchies of the period. Later, the theory became an impetus for as well as reflected in the English Revolution², the French Revolution³ and the American Revolution, which led to the declaration of American independence⁴.

3.0: ANALYSIS OF THE THEORY OF SOCIAL CONTRACT

3.1: AN ANALYSIS OF THE THEORY OF SOCIAL CONTRACT AS ESPOUSED BY THOMAS HOBBS:

⁵Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) was an English Philosopher, whose theory of social contract, espoused in the mid-17th century, appeared for the first time in the *Leviathan*, which was published in the year 1651 during the Civil War in Great Britain. In essence, Hobbes' legal theory was based on the Social Contract, prior to which Hobbes argued that man lived in the "State of Nature". He further explained that man's life, in such state of nature, was one of fear as well as selfishness. Furthermore, the renowned English Philosopher underscored that man lived in a chaotic condition of constant fear, and that man's life in the State of Nature was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.

In philosophical sense, Hobbes as well postulated that man has a natural desire for security and order, which included the order to secure self-protection and self-preservation, and that to avoid misery and pain, man should have the desire to enter into a contract. To Hobbes, the idea of self-protection and self-preservation are inherent in man's nature, and that in order for humans to achieve it, they involuntarily surrendered all their rights and freedoms to some authority by this contract in order to command obedience. Due to the contract, the mightiest authority is to protect and preserve their lives and property. This led to the emergence of the institution of the "ruler" or "monarch", which shall be the absolute head.

In Hobbes' contention, the people had no rights against the authority or the sovereign and, as a result, the authority or sovereign is to be obeyed in all situations irrespective of how bad or unworthy he might be. Perceptibly, Hobbes placed moral obligations on the sovereign, who shall be bound by natural law, hence it can be deduced that Hobbes was the supporter of absolutism. In the opinion of Hobbes, the law is dependent upon the sanction of the sovereign, and that the government without sword are but words and of no strength to secure a man at all.

Hobbes went to the extent of reiterating that civil law is the real law because it is commanded and enforced by the sovereign. Therefore, he supported the principle, which claimed that "Might is always Right". Indeed, from the foregoing premises of human nature, Hobbes went on to construct a very provocative and compelling argument for which people were expected society to be willing to submit themselves to political authority. He did this by imagining persons in a situation prior to the establishment of society, indeed the State of Nature. Hobbes impels subjects (i.e. human beings) to surrender all their rights and, instead, vest all liberties in the

¹ FRIEDMANN, W. (1999). *Legal Theory*, Universal Law Publishing CO. PVT. LTD, India, 1999

² English Revolution also called the Puritan Revolution, general designation for the period in English history from 1640 to 1660. It began with the calling of the Long Parliament by King Charles I and proceeded through two civil wars, the trial and execution of the king, the republican experiments of Oliver Cromwell, and, ultimately, the restoration of King Charles II

³ French Revolution, major transformation of the society and political system of France, lasting from 1789 to 1799. During the course of the Revolution, France was temporarily transformed from an absolute monarchy, where the king monopolized power, to a republic of theoretically free and equal citizens

⁴ Declaration of Independence, document in American history used by the 13 British North American colonies to proclaim their independence from Great Britain. The Declaration of Independence was adopted in final form on July 4, 1776. It can be divided into three parts: a statement of principle concerning the rights of man and the legitimacy of revolution, a list of specific grievances against England's King George III, and a formal claim of independence

⁵ Ebenstein, W. and Ebenstein, A. (1976). *Great Political Thinkers: Plato to the Present*. 6th edition. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. ISBN: 0-15-507889-5

sovereign for the preservation of peace, life, and prosperity of the subjects.

While Hobbes further argued that all law is dependent upon the sanction of the sovereign, he emphasized that all real law is civil law, which was the law commanded and enforced by the sovereign, and that it is instituted a worldwide for nothing else but to limit the natural liberty of particular men, in such a manner as they might not hurt but to assist one another, and to join together against a common enemy. Finally, in perusing the literature of Ebenstein, we learned that individualism, materialism, utilitarianism, and absolusions are interwoven in the theory of Hobbes' espousal of the Social Contract.

3.2: ANALYSIS OF THE THEORY OF SOCIAL CONTRACT AS ESPOUSED BY JOHN LOCKE:

¹John Locke (1632-1704) was an English Philosopher and, to my surprise, also a Physician, who was widely respected as one of the most influential of the Enlightenment Thinkers, and he was as well regarded as the "Father of Liberalism". Most certainly, from what I have learned, Locke's theory of Social Contract is different from that of Thomas Hobbes. Locke did also begin his argument that man lived in the State of Nature, but his concept of it generally is different from the Hobbesian theory. For example, Locke's view of the state of nature is not as miserable as that of Hobbes. To him, it was reasonably good and enjoyable, but that man's accumulated property was not secure. Also, Locke considered the State of Nature as a "Golden Age", and that all were equal and independent in the "Golden Age", although this does not mean however that it was a state of license. To him, the State of Nature was a "State of Liberty", whereby persons are free to pursue their own interests and plans, free from interference and, because of the Law of Nature and the restrictions that it imposes upon persons, it is relatively peaceful.

It is, indeed, a fact that the property plays an essential role in Locke's argument for civil government and the contract that establishes it. According to him, private property is created when a person mixes his labor with the raw materials of nature. To a large extent, one can underscore that property is the linchpin of Locke's argument for the social contract and civil government because it is the protection of their property, including their property in their own bodies that men seek when they decide to abandon the State of Nature. Very importantly, Locke considered property in the State of Nature as insecure because of three conditions: they are the absence of established law; the absence of an impartial Judge; and the absence of natural power to execute natural laws.

To a great extent, Locke recognized and theorized that man, in the State of Nature, felt the need to protect his property and for the purpose of protection of such property, man entered into the Social Contract. According to Locke, humans or men did not surrender all their rights to one single individual, but that they surrendered only the right to preserve or maintain order and enforce the law of nature. He further argued that individuals retained with them the other rights, that is; the right to life, liberty, and estate because these rights considered natural and inalienable of men.

Finally, in perusing the literature of Ebenstein, we learned that Locke, in fact, made life, liberty, and property, his three cardinal or focal points, which greatly dominated or influenced the Declaration of American Independence in 1776.

3.3: AN ANALYSIS OF THE THEORY OF SOCIAL CONTRACT AS ESPOUSED BY JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU:

²Jean Jacque Rousseau (1712-1778) was born in Geneva of French ancestry, whose political and philosophical views influenced the Enlightenment in France, where he grew up. According to Rousseau, the Social Contract is not a historical fact but a hypothetical construction of reason. Prior to the Social Contract, he observed that the life in the state of nature should be considered happy, and that there was to be equality among men. Rousseau theorized that, as time passed humanity, however, faced certain changes. His further argument was that as the overall population increased, the means by which people could satisfy their needs also change.

Very importantly Rousseau claimed that the invention of private property constituted the pivotal moment in humanity's evolution out of a simple, pure state into one that characterized by greed, competition, vanity, inequality, and vice. To him, the invention of property constituted humanity's "fall from grace" out of the state of Nature. For this purpose, they surrender their rights not to a single individual but, instead, to the community as a whole, which Rousseau termed as the "general will".

According to Rousseau, the original freedom, happiness, equality, and liberty, which existed in primitive

¹ Ebenstein, W. and Ebenstein, A. (1976). *Great Political Thinkers: Plato to the Present*. 6th edition. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press . ISBN: 0-15-507889-5

¹ Micklethwait, J. and Wooldridge, A. (2014). *The Fourth Revolution: The Global Race to Reinvent The State*. New York: Penguin Group Press, ISBN:978-1-59420-539-2

² Ebenstein, W. and Ebenstein, A. (1976). *Great Political Thinkers: Plato to the Present*. 6thedition. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press . ISBN: 0-15-507889-5

societies, prior to the espousal of the Social Contract, was lost in the modern civilization¹. He emphasized that through the contract, a new form of social organization, which is the nation or the state, was formed to assure and guarantee rights, liberties, freedom and equality. In fact, the essence of the Rousseau's "General Will" is that State and Laws were the product of the "General Will" of the people. He highlighted that the State and Laws are made by it and, if the government and laws do not conform to the general will, they would be discarded.

Above all, Rousseau favored people's sovereignty, but his natural law theory is confined to freedom and liberty of the individual. Finally, Rousseau's social contract theory inspired the French and American Revolutions, which also gave the impetus to radical nationalism. He based his theory of Social Contract on the principle mentioned earlier that, indeed, "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains".

4.0: A BRIEF COMPARISON OF THE THEORY OF SOCIAL CONTRACT AS ESPOUSED BY THOMAS HOBBS, JOHN LOCKE, AND JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU:

Hobbes asserts that without subjection to a common power of rights and freedoms, men are necessarily at war. However, Locke and Rousseau held contrary views, as they set forth the view that the state exists to preserve and protect the natural rights of its citizens; and that when governments fail in that task; citizens have the right and sometimes the duty to withdraw their support and even to rebel. Again, Hobbes' view was that whatever the state does is just. After all, to him, the entire society is a direct creation of the state or nation, and that it is also the reflection of the will of the ruler.

According to Locke, the only important role of the state is to ensure that justice is seen to be done, but Rousseau's view is that the state or nation must, in all circumstances, ensure the freedom and the liberty of individuals. In addition, Hobbes' theory of Social Contract supports absolute sovereignty without giving any value to individuals, while Locke and Rousseau collectively support individuals more than the state or the government.

Furthermore, to Hobbes, the sovereign and the government are identical, but Rousseau makes a distinction between the two. He rules out a representative form of government. But, Locke does not make any such distinction. In the final analysis, it is important to point out that Rousseau's view of sovereignty was a compromise between the constitutionalism of Locke and the absolutism of Hobbes.

4.1 Historical Relevance of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Rousseau's Social Contract Theory on Contemporary Society

4.1.1 Thomas Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes, rejects the early democratic view, taken up by the Parliamentarians, that power ought to be shared between Parliament and the King. He argues, radically for his times, that political authority and obligation are based on the individual self-interests of members of society who are understood to be equal to one another, with no single individual invested with any essential authority to rule over the rest, while at the same time maintaining the conservative position that the monarch, which he called the Sovereign, must be ceded absolute authority if society is to survive. Hobbes' political theory is best understood if taken in two parts: his theory of human motivation, Psychological Egoism, and his theory of the social contract, founded on the hypothetical State of Nature. Hobbes sought to provide a theory of human nature that would parallel the discoveries being made in the sciences of the inanimate universe. His psychological theory is therefore informed by mechanism, the general view that everything in the universe is produced by nothing other than matter in motion. According to Hobbes, this extends to human behavior. Human macro-behavior can be aptly described as the effect of certain kinds of micro-behavior, even though some of this latter behavior is invisible to us. From Hobbes' point of view, we are essentially very complicated organic machines, responding to the stimuli of the world mechanistically and in accordance with universal laws of human nature.

In Hobbes' view, this mechanistic quality of human psychology implies the subjective nature of normative claims. 'Love' and 'hate', for instance, are just words we use to describe the things we are drawn to and repelled by, respectively. So, too, the terms 'good' and 'bad' have no meaning other than to describe our appetites and aversions. Very importantly, he bickered that moral terms do not, therefore, describe some objective state of affairs, but are rather reflections of individual tastes and preferences. According to Hobbes, the justification for political obligation is this: given that men are naturally self-interested, yet they are rational, they will choose to submit to the authority of a Sovereign in order to be able to live in a civil society, which is conducive to their own interests. Hobbes argues for this by imagining men in their natural state, or in other words, the State of Nature.

In the State of Nature, which is purely hypothetical according to Hobbes, men are naturally and exclusively self-interested, they are more or less equal to one another, (even the strongest man can be killed in his sleep),

¹ Micklethwait, J. and Wooldridge, A. (2014). *The Fourth Revolution: The Global Race to Reinvent The State*. New York: Penguin Group Press, ISBN:978-1-59420-539-2

there are limited resources, and yet there is no power able to force men to cooperate. Given these conditions in the State of Nature, Hobbes concludes that the State of Nature would be unbearably brutal. In the State of Nature, every person is always in fear of losing his life to another. They have no capacity to ensure the long-term satisfaction of their needs or desires. Hobbes theorized that no long-term or complex cooperation is possible because the State of Nature can be aptly described as a state of utter distrust. Given Hobbes' reasonable assumption that most people want first and foremost to avoid their own deaths, he concluded that the State of Nature is the worst possible situation in which men can find themselves. It is the state of perpetual and unavoidable war.

Toward this end, Hobbes argues that the situation is not, however, hopeless. Because men are reasonable, they can see their way out of such a state by recognizing the laws of nature, which show them the means by which to escape the State of Nature and create a civil society. In Hobbes' reflections, morality, politics, society, and everything that comes along with it, all of which Hobbes calls 'commodious living' are purely conventional. Prior to the establishment of the basic social contract, according to which men agree to live together and the contract to embody a Sovereign with absolute authority, nothing is immoral or unjust - anything goes. After these contracts are well established, however, then society becomes possible, and people can be expected to keep their promises, cooperate with one another, and so on. The Social Contract is the most fundamental source of all that is good and that which we depend upon to live well.

It is very important to note that the contemporary human choice is either to abide by the terms of the contract, or return to the State of Nature, for which Hobbes argued that no reasonable person could possibly prefer. In the nutshell, Hobbes summarized that the necessity of an absolute authority, is in the form of a Sovereign, followed from the utter brutality of the State of Nature.

4.1.2 John Locke

John Locke argued that the State of Nature, or the natural condition of mankind, is a state of perfect and complete liberty free from the interference of others. Locke explicitly theorized that a state wherein there is no civil authority or government to punish people for transgressions against laws, is not a state without morality. Adding to that, he described such State of Nature as pre-political, but it is not pre-moral. Very importantly, he explicated that persons are assumed to be equal to one another in such a state, and therefore equally capable of discovering and being bound by the Law of Nature. According to Locke, the Law of Nature is the basis of all morality, which is given to us by God, commands that we not harm others with regards to their "life, health, liberty, or possessions"¹. Locke argued that because we all belong equally to God, and because we cannot take away that which is rightfully His, we are prohibited from harming one another. So, the State of Nature is a State of liberty where persons are free to pursue their own interests and plans, free from interference and, because of the Law of Nature and the restrictions that it imposes upon persons, it is relatively peaceful.

The State of Nature therefore, is not the same as the state of war, as it is according to Hobbes. It can, however devolve into a state of war, in particular, a state of war over property disputes. It is important to note that Locke's State of Nature is the State of liberty where persons recognize the Law of Nature and therefore do not harm one another; rather the state of war begins between two or more men once one man declares war on another, by stealing from him, or by trying to make him his slave. Furthermore, he explained that because in the State of Nature there is no civil power to whom men can appeal, the Law of Nature allows them to defend their own lives, thereby killing those who would bring force against them. John Locke underscored that one of the strongest reasons that men have to abandon the State of Nature by contracting together to form civil government is the fact that, the State of Nature lacks civil authority, so once war begins it is likely to continue.

Meanwhile, property played an essential role in Locke's argument for civil government and the contract that establishes it. According to Locke, private property is created when a person mixes his labor with the raw materials of nature. So, for example, when one plows a piece of land in nature, and makes it into a piece of farmland, which produces food, then one has a claim to own that piece of land and the food produced upon it (This led Locke to conclude that America didn't really belong to the natives who lived there, because they were, on his view, failing to utilize the basic material of nature. In other words, they didn't farm it, so they had no legitimate claim to it, and others could therefore justifiably appropriate it)².

Given the implications of the Law of Nature, there are limits as to how much property one can own: one is not allowed to take more from nature than one can use, thereby leaving others without enough for themselves. Because nature is given to all of mankind by God for its common subsistence, one cannot take more than his own fair share. Property is the linchpin of Locke's argument for the social contract and civil government because it is the protection of their property, including their property in their own bodies that men seek when they decide to abandon the State of Nature. Because Locke did not envision the State of Nature as bleakly as did Hobbes, he can visualize conditions under which one would be better off rejecting a particular civil government and

¹ John Locke: *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*. Yale University Press (2003)

² John Locke: *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*. Yale University Press (2003)

returning to the State of Nature, with the aim of constructing a better civil government in its place. It is therefore both the view of human nature, and the nature of morality itself, accounted for the differences between Hobbes' and Locke's views of the social contract.

4.1.3 Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Rousseau has two distinct social contract theories. The first was found in his essay, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, commonly referred to as the Second Discourse, and is an account of the moral and political evolution of human beings over time, from a State of Nature to modern society. As such it contains his *naturalized* account of the social contract, which he saw as very problematic. The second is his normative or idealized theory of the social contract, and is meant to provide the means by which to alleviate the problems that modern society has created for us, as laid out in the *Second Discourse*.¹

According to Rousseau, the State of Nature was a peaceful and quixotic time. People lived solitary, uncomplicated lives. Their few needs were easily satisfied by nature. Because of the abundance of nature and the small size of the population, competition was non-existent, and persons rarely even saw one another, much less had reason for conflict or fear. Moreover, these simple, morally pure persons were naturally endowed with the capacity for pity, and therefore were not inclined to bring harm to one another.

As time passed, however, humanity faced certain changes. As the overall population increased, the means by which people could satisfy their needs had to change. People slowly began to live together in small families (nuclear system), and then in small communities (isolated slums). Divisions of labor were introduced, both within and between families, and discoveries and inventions made life easier, giving rise to leisure time. Such leisure time inevitably led people to make comparisons between themselves and others, resulting in public values, leading to shame and envy, pride and contempt. Most importantly however, according to Rousseau, was the invention of private property, which constituted the pivotal moment in humanity's evolution out of a simple, pure state into one, characterized by greed, competition, vanity, inequality, and vice. For Rousseau the invention of property constitutes humanity's 'fall from grace' out of the State of Nature.

Having introduced private property, initial conditions of inequality became more pronounced. Some have property and others are forced to work for them, and the development of social classes begins. Eventually, those who have property notice that it would be in their interests to create a government that would protect private property from those who do not have it but can see that they might be able to acquire it by force. So, government gets established, through a contract, which purports to guarantee equality and protection for all, even though its true purpose is to fossilize the very inequalities that private property has produced. In other words, the contract, which claims to be in the interests of everyone equally, is really in the interests of the few who have become stronger and richer as a result of the developments of private property. This is the naturalized social contract, which Rousseau views as responsible for the conflict and competition from which modern society suffers.

The normative social contract, argued for by Rousseau in *The Social Contract* (1762), is meant to respond to this sorry state of affairs and to remedy the social and moral ills that have been produced by the development of society. *The Social Contract* begins with the most oft-quoted line from Rousseau: "Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains" (p. 49). He further argued that humans are essentially free, and were free in the State of Nature, but the 'progress' of civilization has substituted subservience to others for that freedom, through dependence, economic and social inequalities, and the extent to which we judge ourselves through comparisons with others. His theory of "*The Social Contract*" seeks to address: how can we be free and live together? The most basic covenant, the social pact, is the agreement to come together and form a people, a collectivity, which by definition is more than and different from a mere aggregation of individual interests and wills. This act, where individual persons become a people is "the real foundation of society"².

Through the collective renunciation of the individual rights and freedom that one has in the State of Nature, and the transfer of these rights to the collective body, a new 'person', as it were, is formed. The sovereign is thus formed when free and equal persons come together and agree to create themselves one more as a single body, directed to the good of all considered mutually. So, just as individual wills are directed towards individual interests, the general will, once formed, is directed towards the common good, understood and agreed to collectively. Included in this version of the social contract is the idea of reciprocated duties: the sovereign is committed to the good of the individuals who constitute it, and each individual is likewise committed to the good of the whole. Given this, individuals cannot be given liberty to decide whether it is in their own interests to fulfill their duties to the sovereign, while at the same time being allowed to reap the benefits of citizenship. They must be made to conform themselves to the general will, they must be "forced to be free"³.

For Rousseau, this implies an extremely strong and direct form of democracy. One cannot transfer one's will to another, to do with as he or she sees fit, as one does in representative democracies. A key implication of

¹ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. (1987). *The Basic Political Writings*. (Trans. Donald A. Cress) Hackett Publishing Company (1987).

² Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. (1987). *The Basic Political Writings*. (Trans. Donald A. Cress) Hackett Publishing Company (p.56).

³ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. (1987). *The Basic Political Writings*. (Trans. Donald A. Cress) Hackett Publishing Company (p.64).

this is that the strong form of democracy which is consistent with the general will is also only possible in relatively small states. The people must be able to identify with one another, and at least know who each other are. They cannot live in a large area, too spread out to come together regularly, and they cannot live in such different geographic circumstances as to be unable to be united under common laws. The philosophical question to be asked in this contemporary era is: Could the present-day U.S. satisfy Rousseau's conception of democracy? It could not. Although the conditions for true democracy are stringent, they are also the only means by which we can, according to Rousseau, save ourselves, and regain the freedom to which we are naturally entitled.

Rousseau's social contract theories together form a single, consistent view of our moral and political situation. We are endowed with freedom and equality by nature, but our nature has been corrupted by our contingent social history. We can overcome this corruption, however, by invoking our free will to reconstitute ourselves politically, along strongly democratic principles, which is good for us, both individually and collectively.

5.0. CONCLUSION

Several strands of these dynamic philosophical thinkers in general and also of the Social Contract have found their way into our contemporary society. They include Hobbes' concept of absolutism, which is found among totalitarian leaders throughout the world; they include monarchies and military leaders, who come to power through the barrel of the gun or *coups d'état*. The works of Hobbes have been adopted enormously by the Africans. Of course, Democracy is a priceless need or necessity, as examples can be taken from Burma (now called Myanmar) and other developing nations, whose dictators are now in search of democratic rule. Furthermore, as argued by Hobbes, today various sovereign nations and rulers seek to exercise absolute authority, which is against the rule of law because absolute power, in one hands or authority, easily brings arbitrariness, as absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Another interesting strand that society has embraced is Locke's concept of State of Nature, which shows clearly that any conflict with regard to property always leads to havoc in any society, but we still see such conflicts. That is why several societies are in chaos due to everlasting conflicts with regard to property, including border conflicts and wars over mineral rights. Above all, Locke's concept of laissez-faire touches on societies that are welfare oriented. The works of Locke have been adopted by United States of America. In this context, we should remember societies that undertake or establish welfare states. Then, there is as well Rousseau's concepts of state, law and the government, which were used interchangeably. In modern governance, all of these ingredients exist and, as the assignment confirms, society has adopted several of these qualities, for better or for worse. One may end by pointing out that even though a government can be overthrown, what cannot be so displaced is the state; hence a state can exist even when there is no government in place.

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