

TERM PAPER 2

ITB227E POLITICAL THEORY

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4. Define the term 'Amour Propre' as used by Rousseau and discuss its value for political theory.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concept of amour propre, or "self-love," is a complex and nuanced idea that has played a significant role in the development of political theory. This term, which is translated from French as "self-love," is used by Rousseau to describe a form of self-esteem that is based on comparing oneself to others and on the recognition and respect of others. He contends that this type of self-love is a natural and necessary aspect of human existence, but can also be dangerous when it becomes excessive or is based on false comparisons.

Rousseau's theory of amour propre is rooted in his belief that human beings have a natural inclination to compare themselves to others and to seek the recognition and respect of others. This desire for recognition and respect is driven by a natural need for self-esteem and self-worth. However, this desire can also lead to feelings of envy, jealousy, and competition, and can ultimately lead to conflict and inequality. The concept of amour propre is distinct from the concept of true self-love, which is based on the acceptance and love of oneself, regardless of the opinions and actions of others. True self-love is a healthy and positive form of self-esteem, whereas amour propre is based on the desire for recognition and respect from others and is dependent on the opinions and actions of others.

In "The Social Contract," Rousseau argues that the formation of civil society and the development of a sense of common good is necessary to regulate and control the negative effects of amour propre. He contends that the desire for recognition and respect from others is what motivates individuals to come together and form a social contract, in which they give up some of their individual freedom in exchange for protection and security. This social contract forms the basis of civil society, and it is through this contract that individuals can achieve the recognition and respect that they desire.

Furthermore, Rousseau believed that laws and institutions must be established to promote the common good and to regulate the negative effects of amour propre. He argued that laws and institutions must be designed to prevent individuals from seeking recognition and respect at the expense of others, and that they must be designed to promote equality and fairness. This is a key aspect of his political theory, as it highlights the need for a balance between individual desires and the needs of society as a whole.

Rousseau's theory of amour propre has important implications for political theory, as it highlights the role of individual human nature in shaping social and political structures. It also

stresses the importance of balancing the desire for individual recognition and respect with the need for a society that promotes the common good. In his view, amour propre can be a powerful motivator for individuals to come together and form a social contract, but it can also lead to conflict and inequality if it is not properly regulated.

One thing that could be added is the connection between amour propre and the concept of "honor" in Rousseau's work. Honor is also an important aspect of amour propre and it is defined as the respect, admiration and reputation that an individual can have in society. In many of his works, Rousseau emphasizes that human beings have an innate desire for honor, which is rooted in the natural human desire for recognition and respect. He argues that honor is a powerful motivator that can lead individuals to make sacrifices for the greater good, but it can also be used as a tool for manipulation and oppression.

Additionally, it could be noted how Rousseau's concept of amour propre relates to the idea of 'general will'. The general will is a concept developed by Rousseau, which refers to the will of the people as a whole and is distinct from the will of any individual or group. It is the general will that governs the social contract and establishes laws and institutions that promote the common good. Rousseau argues that amour propre can be directed towards the general will, by which individuals can strive for recognition and respect from others while also promoting the common good.

Lastly, it could be interesting to point out how Rousseau's theory of amour propre has been received and interpreted by other philosophers and political theorists. Some have criticized Rousseau's emphasis on amour propre as being too individualistic, while others have argued that it is too optimistic about the ability of laws and institutions to regulate human nature. Nevertheless, it is clear that his concept of amour propre has had a lasting impact on political thought and continues to be a subject of debate and discussion among scholars.

In conclusion, Rousseau's concept of amour propre is a complex and nuanced idea that has played a significant role in the development of political theory. It highlights the role of individual human nature in shaping social and political structures and the importance of balancing the desire for individual recognition and respect with the need for a society that promotes the common good. It is an important contribution to political theory and highlights the need for laws and institutions that promote the common good and regulate the negative effects of amour propre. Overall, it can be said that Rousseau's concept of amour propre presents a unique and insightful perspective on the human condition and its implications for political theory.

REFERENCES

- THE SOCIAL CONTRACT, Jean-Jacques Rousseau
- ROUSSEAU ON AMOUR-PROPRE, N. J. H. Dent and T. O'Hagan