

Modern Politics and Government.

Assignment #1

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Social Contract was written in the 18th century and still is one of the most influential works in political philosophy. Rousseau's basic premise was that governments should be formed (i.e. elected) rather than having kings and queens. His belief was that society should be based on shared decision-making and the common good. This point-of-view always sparks the "idealism vs realism" debate since people always argue how in systems like these, the decisions that are made don't necessarily represent the collective will of the people.

Positives

The positives of his ideology is that he talks against monarchy and says that someone should be in power only if the people under his/her rule agree to it. So all in all, he basically supports democracy when he presents his idea of 'General Will'. All this works if people actively participate and take interest in the formation of the government. He emphasizes that all citizens should be fully engaged in developing a society where they are not just subjects but active members of the society. People from different backgrounds live together and it is crucial for them all to voice their opinions so that the society is fair for everyone. He presents a vision where all people work together collectively, for the common good. This ensures that the laws, policies, customs and traditions reflect the 'many' and not the desires of the 'few'.

Negatives

Rousseau's ideas are great to read about but the real world is very different. According to Rousseau, the general will of the people is always right but he doesn't take into account the corrupt people who claim to represent the ~~real~~ will of the people. If we dive deeper into his views we start to see that he doesn't believe in representative democracy either, meaning that people (individuals) shouldn't be elected (i.e. no representatives). This might have been possible in the 18th century but is not applicable, considering how many people collectively form a country now. ~~Since he advocated democracy to the smallest to the smallest point he nation~~ He also doesn't talk about conflict resolution. The world we live in now is very diverse and we can't just assume that people will naturally align with the "general will".

General Will vs Will of All

General Will basically represents the collective will of the people rather than their individual interests.

For example, a law that forces people to take care of the environment. Now, collectively this is good for all people however it doesn't align with industrialists who have manufacturing plants.

Will of All basically represents the sum of interests of individual people. For example, different cities might lobby for funds to be spent only on their infrastructure. This might be beneficial for that specific city but might not address broader societal needs or collective needs of the country.

General Will Possible?

In theory, general will sounds like an ideal situation however there are a lot of practical challenges that arise when dealing with real-world, modern & complex politics. Political leaders are often influenced by their own personal interests, the majority public is misinformed and conditioned to support policies that do not serve their best interests. Therefore we can say that in today's complex, inter-dependent modern world, general will is somewhat unattainable.

My Opinion

I personally believe that we should keep striving towards 'general will' since we're all people. The world will only become better if we keep striving to make it a better place. However history has shown us how ~~a~~ undernourished, real world democracies are. All the world leaders are puppets, who are acting ~~towards~~ against the will of the people. History has been a witness of how majorities have always oppressed minorities, while rewriting history to portray themselves as just and fair. Elections won by people who are influential and have funding rather than ~~the~~ those who have the best goals and policies. Most people don't really know or don't even bother to care about the political situation of their country. These people who do care are mostly misguided and misinformed by the mass media (which again is controlled by money). So all in all, the world is not in a good place right now however as humans, it is our duty to keep working harder and keep trying to make the world a safer and better place.