

The Generation of Slavery and the Realization of Freedom

-- A Text Interpretation of Rousseau's Free Thought

Xiaohua Guo

Party School of Meizhou Municipal Committee, Meijiang District, Meizhou, Guangdong
514000, China

Abstract

In *On the Origin and Basis of Human Inequality*, Rousseau discussed the historical process of human society developing from the state of nature to the state of civilization, and explained the causes of slavery. In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau creatively put forward the idea of "general will", and constructed a new contractual society based on it, and put forward the scheme of realizing human freedom. The discussion on the causes of slavery and the re-realization of freedom together constitute Rousseau's thought of freedom.

Keywords

Rousseau; Slavery; Freedom; General Will.

1. The Generation of Slavery

In *On the Origin of Human Inequality*, Rousseau first demonstrated the equality and freedom of human beings in the state of nature through the method of tracing to the source. Later, Rousseau made a detailed analysis of the evolution of human slavery and inequality. In this process, Rousseau drew the conclusion that human's self-improvement ability was the root cause of slavery and equality by comparing different changes in the evolution of human beings. Rousseau believed that people have an innate capacity for self-improvement. For this kind of ability, Rousseau argues that: "however, in addition there is a distinction between the two obvious characteristics is indisputable, this trait is self improvement ability, with the help of the environmental impact, continue to promote the development of all other ability unceasingly, and the ability to both exist in person, there is also a whole species". [1] Rousseau believed that it was this capacity for self-improvement that led to human slavery. In response, Rousseau said: "If we have to admit that this special and almost infinite capacity is the root of all human miseries; It is this faculty which, by the action of time, removes man from the primitive state in which he spent his peaceful and simple years; It is this power which, through all ages, has made man manifest his wisdom and error, his wickedness and his virtue, and which has finally made him the tyrant of man himself and of nature, which is not so sad for us." [1] p84 Rousseau only pointed out that the ability of self-improvement is a kind of ability that is different from animals and common to all mankind, but he did not summarize the specific ability of self-improvement. Through the analysis of the book "*On the Origin and Foundation of Human Inequality*", the author believes that this self-improvement ability refers to nothing more than the following two abilities: one is the ability to acquire social morality, the other is the ability to use and create technology. In short, the former refers to a kind of emotional rationality, while the latter refers to a kind of instrumental rationality.

1.1. Emotional Rationality Leads to Human Slavery

According to Rousseau's analysis, in the initial state of nature, people are not morally conscious of each other. "At first, it seems that human beings, in their state of nature, have no moral

relation to each other, nor any recognized obligations, so that they can be neither good nor evil, neither vice nor virtue." [1] But because people have the emotional rationality mentioned above, it determines that people's moral consciousness is bound to gradually awaken. "The savage has in his instinct all that he needs to live in the state of nature; He has what is needed in society only in his gradually developed reason." [1] As for the awakening of moral consciousness, Rousseau stated that "as a result of the repeated contact between people and animals and between people, the consciousness of certain relationships will naturally occur in the human mind". [1] In a relatively long period of time, with the emergence of language, family life and small community life, people's moral consciousness has been greatly increased. The most significant change in this process is the perception of the difference between oneself and others. This feeling is called self-esteem. As for self-esteem, Rousseau said, "The first sense of self-esteem comes from the first observation of oneself." [1] Self-esteem is the first step for the development of emotional rationality. With the further development of emotional rationality, people will have complex emotions such as self-love, vanity, jealousy and revenge.

Why do these rich emotions lead to slavery and inequality? Rousseau believes that once a person has the moral consciousness of you and me, it will make the heart of egoism expand and ego desire expand. Therefore, when people enjoy the convenience brought by self-interest, they will pursue it more and more. And because of insatiable and limited resources, so when people see others more comfortable than their own, it is easy to envy or even revenge psychology, between people, between the state of war is inevitable. "Finally, the unending ambition, motivated less by real necessity than by a fever for the accumulation of one's own superior wealth, produces in all men a sinister malice to the detriment of others and a secret jealousy. This jealousy is particularly insidious, because it is in order to achieve its goals, often wear a mask of hypocrisy. In a word, there is competition and friction on the one hand, and conflict of interests on the other hand. Everyone always hides the heart of self-interest at the expense of others." [1] In this process, the beautiful pattern of original equality and freedom was broken, and slavery and inequality appeared. As Rousseau himself outlined: "in fact, there was all this barbarian and social people so difference, the real reason is: barbarians lived his own life, while social panic, all the day know only lives with the opinions of others, also can say that their views on the meaning of his survival is rooted in the judgment of others". [1].

The awakening of moral rationality in people's capacity for self-improvement makes people selfish and vain, and over time becomes one of the sources of inequality and slavery. "In short," Rousseau wrote, "the reader will understand how the heart and the passion of men change their nature for the worse, without knowing it." [1] This is the best summary of Rousseau's interpretation of human slavery from the perspective of moral rationality.

1.2. Instrumental Rationality Leads to Human Slavery

Instrumental rationality is an important concept used by Frankfurt School to criticize modern society. Holheimer, the early representative of Frankfurt School, believed that reason has subjective and objective, and instrumental reason belongs to subjective reason. As for the connotation of instrumental reason, he comments that this kind of subjective reason is "the ability to estimate the possibility and therefore the right means to achieve the specified end". [2] Through Holheimer's introduction to instrumental rationality, it can be seen that instrumental rationality is a pragmatic-oriented ability that focuses on the use of technology. According to Holheimer's analysis of instrumental rationality, since this subjective form of instrumental rationality cannot reflect the origin of the world and the spiritual world of human beings, it is easy to become a kind of power will to pursue external interests. Therefore, instrumental rationality bears the mark of pragmatism, and the pursuit of various external purposes is its nature. Since it has given up autonomy, truth, understanding and pursuit of goodness, it is impossible to give due consideration to human practices and human survival,

and it has no significance to human liberation and important principles of ethics and politics. [2] From Holheimer's analysis, it can be known that instrumental rationality tends to make people enslaved.

As mentioned above, among people's ability to improve themselves, Rousseau believes that people also have the ability to use and create technology. Therefore, in order to focus on agriculture, the invention of various technologies is necessary. [1] From Rousseau's analysis, it can be determined that the ability he said focuses on technology and has a strong pragmatic tendency. According to Holheimer's understanding of instrumental rationality above, it can be seen that the ability mentioned by Rousseau is a kind of instrumental rationality. How does this instrumental rationality lead to human inequality and slavery? According to Rousseau, instrumental rationality enables people to use and create a variety of new tools and technologies. Therefore, in the initial state of nature, people can easily obtain the material materials needed for survival by relying on it. With the continuous enrichment of material materials, family and even group life gradually appeared. And by something like chance, there was a great development in the tools and techniques of labor in early society. [1] The continuous updating of production technology stimulated the emergence of the division of labor and Commodity Exchange, which greatly contributed to the emergence of the concept of private ownership. The concept of private ownership constantly urges people to pursue more external objective interests. In the process, the rich occupy the poor and make the poor lose their freedom.

To sum up, Rousseau believed that the awakening of people's instrumental rationality made material wealth greatly increase. In the psychological state of comparison between people, the amount of objective interests has become the basic standard to measure the value of people. In this process, people are no longer satisfied with the original values based on self-satisfaction, but evaluate their own value based on the standards of others [1], and constantly pursue external goals as the ultimate goal. It is in this process that people's inner world and transcendental spirit are submerged and people become enslaved by materials. Thus, the awakening of instrumental rationality makes people enslaved.

2. The Realization of Freedom

In the Social Contract, Rousseau first believes that the past society is based on deception and violence, so it must be replaced by a new social contract. The new social contract has the following characteristics: with the general will as the core and the government's management in accordance with the law as the basic element, it realizes freedom and equality through citizens' voluntary obedience to the general will or external coercion.

2.1. The Inevitable Transition to a Free Contractual Society

Rousseau believed that the previous social contract was based on deception [1], which was strongly maintained with the backing of violence. Rousseau commented on this kind of contract: "In the end, it is essentially an invalid and self-contradictory contract to stipulate absolute authority on one side and unlimited obedience on the other." [3] Therefore, in the past society, there were always some people who only enjoyed rights but did not fulfill obligations, while most people took heavy responsibilities but had no rights at all. But the true spirit of contract should be that each member has equal rights and obligations. "I regard the establishment of political organizations only as a true contract between the people and their elected leaders, agreeing to observe the laws laid down therein, which form the bond of their union." [1]. Therefore, the previous social contract was unjust, deprived of freedom and suffering from inequality. Most people could choose not to obey this contract.

It can be seen that the irrationality of the past contract determines that the situation of inequality and slavery cannot be maintained, which inevitably leads to the collapse of the natural state. As Rousseau said, "I imagine that man has reached a point when the obstacles to his existence in the state of nature outweigh in their resistance the strength which each individual can use for his own survival in that state. The primitive state could no longer be maintained; And the human race will disappear if it does not change its way of living." [3] Therefore, there must be a transition from the state of nature to the state of society, and in the process of transition, the social contract must be re-established.

In Rousseau's opinion, since the history of human civilization is a history of gradually increasing slavery and inequality, and human beings are free in nature, it is necessary to end slavery and inequality, and the real freedom and equality exist in the contract society. Here, it is necessary to clarify Rousseau's understanding of the social state of contract. Rousseau believed that any social state in which individuals pursue their own interests and public happiness is trampled is not a contractual society. "He who pursues self-interest at the expense of his sense of justice is unhappy. Any new community formed through a social contract must find a way to deal with the fact that in society in general it is the self-interest of people, or of certain groups, that keeps people apart from each other." [6] Because of the selfishness and violence of the past, the conditions of human life in the past do not deserve to be called contract society. As Strauss analyzed, "The contractual society cannot be built on the basis of natural power, and nature only governs self-interests. Nature is too inferior to understand contract society, and the study of nature shows that it cannot be used as a standard, at least not as a standard of society." [4].

In Rousseau's opinion, the establishment of a contractual society is the fundamental premise for the realization of human freedom. As for the fact that contract society makes man free, Rousseau wrote: "From the state of nature into the state of society, human instinct produces a most remarkable change; Instinct is replaced by justice in their actions, and their actions are given an unprecedented moral character." [3] "What man loses by the social contract is his natural freedom and his unlimited right to all that he desires and can attain; What he has gained is the freedom of society and the ownership of all that he has." [3].

Since only in a contractual society can people be free, the next question is how to make a social contract. As Rousseau says, "to look for a combination of form, can make it by force of all common defender of the and guarantee for each combination of personal and wealth, and as a result of this combination makes every combined with all that a person with the combination of individual and really just obey the himself, and still like in previous freely". [3] And how can true freedom and equality be realized in such a contractual society? Rousseau replied, "Each of us, in all his own strength, is under the supreme guidance of the common good, and we accept each member of the community as an inalienable part of the whole." [3].

Rousseau also gave three reasons for this: "Because, in the first place, everyone gives himself completely, so that conditions for all people are the same, and conditions for all people are the same, no one wants to make it a burden on others." "Secondly, since the transfer is not reserved, the union will be as perfect as possible, and each entity will have no further claims." "Finally, since every man gives himself out to all, he gives himself out to no one; And since from any union man may obtain the same rights which he himself has given to him, he obtains an equivalent of all that he has lost, and a greater power to preserve what he has." [3].

From these accounts, it is simply understood that the key to the realization of freedom lies in the obedience of the individual to the highest general will in a contractual society. So you have to know what the general will is.

2.2. General Will is the Core of Contract Society

Rousseau did not have a clear description of the general will in the Social Contract, which brought great inconvenience to the understanding of the general will by later generations. In

response, Sabine criticized Rousseau, saying, In the Social Contract, Rousseau's use of the theory of the general will seems to be contradictory. This was partly because of the vagueness of his ideas, but also, it seems, because he had the orator's taste for counterarguments that seemed absurd but might yet be true." [5] To this end, Rousseau's interpretation of the general will in different situations must be integrated. Here is one of Rousseau's rare statements about the general will: "The general will looks only at the public good, while the general will looks at the private good, and the general will is only the sum of individual wills. But apart from the cancellation of the positive and negative of these individual wills, the remaining synthesis remains the general will." [3] "If the State is a moral personality whose life lies in the union of its lives, and if it is concerned with its own preservation, then it must have a common and coercive power to promote and arrange its constituent parts in the best interest of the whole". [3].

We can see that Rousseau understands the general will in terms of the organism. In Rousseau's opinion, the general will is a moral personality, is a reflection of the public happiness of the ego. It always harmonizes the components as a whole. The general will is the brain of the state (the contract society), which has its own extraordinary reason to ensure that its parts always act correctly. General will is abstract, in order to realize human freedom under the general will must rely on the concrete system setup. In short, it is how to ensure that the general will is always correct and how to embody the general will in reality. Therefore, Rousseau explained his legal thought and government system design.

For law, Rousseau regards it as the representative of universal justice, a kind of perfect rationality. "When I say that the object of law is always universal, I mean that the law considers only the community and abstract actions of the subjects, and never individual people or individual actions." [3] It can be seen that the law mentioned by Rousseau is not a specific law, but a universal abstract law. In this regard, Leo Strauss also commented: "Rousseau's laws are substantive laws, they are as definite as the laws of nature." [7] According to Rousseau, only this type of abstract method can embody the general will. Since law can embody reason and can be made public through visible terms, the general will is a kind of reason that embodies public happiness. Therefore, Rousseau believes that the public will can be shown in reality through law, and law is the most appropriate carrier of the public will.

But how should laws of the general will be made? Can it be put to a vote in a civic assembly? Rousseau's answer is no. Because in Rousseau's opinion, "individuals are blind and limited by various limitations. Many people actually do not know what is good for them and want to be happy but do not necessarily know what happiness is, so everyone cannot participate in such a big and difficult thing as legislation". [2] Then who should be the law maker? Rousseau's answer was that of a brilliant legislator. As for the characteristics of this legislator, Rousseau said: "The legislator is in all respects a special person in the state." "He is able to transform every individual, whose self is a complete and isolated whole, into a part of the greater whole, from which the individual derives his life and being in a certain way; Can change the quality of people, make them strengthen; To replace the physiologically independent life to which every man is entitled in nature with a moral life as part of the whole." [3] It can be seen that such God-like figures are the makers of laws. But in Rousseau's view, even with such a prominent figure, there are objective conditions that must be met in order to make a law. These objective conditions are the traditional spirit of custom. "To make a new people can enjoy a sound political criterion and follow the fundamental law of the national etiquette, and he must pour fruit as cause, make originally should be a system of social spirit turned over the system itself is the highest, and make people before the law, can be due to the law to form should be the way". [3] This ancient spirit contains people's longing for order, voluntary obedience to the law, collective values and other aspects. For Rousseau, these are the inborn conditions that enable people to pursue

freedom and submit to the general will. Therefore, only good legislators with good ancient spirit, the real law can be made.

After the enactment of laws reflecting the public will, the law must be well implemented. Therefore, Rousseau put forward his own design of government system. As Strauss puts it, "Since the sovereign can legally make laws only about general objects, the application of the law to specific acts and individuals is not within its purview, but to the government". [4] Therefore, the core function in Rousseau's opinion is to carry out the law that embodies the general will. But the government itself does not have the power to create the general will. The government merely acts as an intermediary between citizens and the general will. For this reason the government only has the power to enforce the law, it is only an instrument of governing a contractual society. In Rousseau's view, in addition to performing the core function of law enforcement, the government must also shoulder the responsibility of controlling the special will of citizens. Because Rousseau believed that any private or partisan private will tends to dissolve the general will. Therefore, the government should also be responsible for the prohibition of private interests. Of course, Rousseau also realized that the government also has its own special will, and this special will can be against the general will. The government must be strong enough to control the particular will of its citizens, but not so strong that it controls the general will and the law. [4] "The same thing happens when the members of a government separately usurp powers which can only be exercised by them collectively; It's also illegal, and it creates even more chaos." [3] So for the corrupt government, Rousseau believed that citizens have the right to overthrow.

Now to sum up the basic conditions and internal logic necessary for a contractual society to operate according to the general will. First of all, general will exists a priori. It exists in every community. It only needs to be discovered without being created. In the second place, most people cannot discover the general will by themselves, and this task can only be entrusted to a great legislator who is like a god. Third, the general will can only be shown in reality through laws enacted by legislators. But the promulgation of laws depends not only on the outstanding individual talents of the legislators, but also on some ancient spirit of the community which already exists. Finally, laws that reflect the will of the general public must be implemented in reality, and this task is left to the government to complete. And the government itself should not only abstain from the emergence of private will, but also avoid its own corruption.

2.3. Obedience to the General Will Make People Free

After explaining that the general will exists in concept and is actually operable, Rousseau must answer why people realize freedom under the general will. All this must be analyzed from Rousseau's understanding of freedom. To this end, Rousseau first distinguished natural freedom, social freedom and moral freedom.

Natural freedom: "In the natural state of man, man is free because his will is not governed by others, and he is only subject to his own desires and relations with nature, and his will is not governed by natural forces." [8] Social freedom: "In the social state, human freedom is no longer expressed as the willful freedom without any constraints, but as the obedience to the law".

It can be seen that the real freedom in Rousseau's eyes can only be the moral freedom in the contract society. In this regard, a thinker commented, "Rousseau said that it is because of the existence of society that 'justice replaces instinct and gives people a moral behavior that they did not have before'. 'Society has made him no longer a stupid and unimaginative animal, but a wise creature and a human being.' Without society, there is no measure of value by which to judge happiness." "In Rousseau's new state, citizens will not constantly wonder whether they have given up too much of their natural freedom for the benefits of a contractual society. They will be completely free." [6] Because in Rousseau's opinion, the contract society itself has a kind of morality. This kind of morality is an innate transcendental existence, which has the ability to

make the citizens living in it jointly pursue public happiness. Therefore, only in the existence of this kind of moral contract society, human freedom can be truly realized. The realization of human freedom is embodied in the realization of the individual with the social morality Rousseau said, that is, under the guidance of the general will to realize the unity of social freedom and moral freedom. How can true freedom be achieved in a contractual society based on the will of the general public? The answer, as described above, is to achieve the unity of social and moral freedom.

From the perspective of social freedom, it is to ensure the equality and independence between people and ensure that there is no interdependence between people. Rousseau's first approach to this state of affairs was to give away all wealth and rights, to participate equally in the contract, and to share the same rights and duties conferred by the law (the law subject to the general will). The second approach is to eliminate the possibility of wealth disparity between people. "As far as wealth is concerned, no citizen can be rich enough to buy another, and no citizen is poor enough to sell himself." [3].

From the perspective of moral freedom, since the general will is essentially the moral personality that is always correct, it is free for citizens to voluntarily obey the guidance of the general will. Here Rousseau emphasizes the importance of self-consciousness, which is embodied in obedience to one's own reason (conscience), similar to achieving a conscious balance between self-interest and altruism. But for those citizens who do not consciously obey the general will, he can only be forced to achieve his moral freedom. "Whoever refuses to submit to the general will, the whole shall compel him to do so." [3] Forcing people to be free is only a necessity. Therefore, in Rousseau's opinion, realizing people's moral freedom mainly relies on citizens' conscious obedience to the general will. This kind of conscious obedience can be cultivated through civil religion and square politics.

For civil religion, Rousseau wrote: "civil religion is a citizens' is the declaration of faith, the terms of the manifesto should be stipulated by the sovereign, these terms are not strictly as a religious dogma, but as a social emotions, and these terms and conditions should be simple, clear, without explanation and interpretation:" (1) positive terms: There is a merciful, all-powerful, and wise God; The happiness of the positive; The punishment of bad people; The social contract and the sanctity of law. (2) Negative clause: intolerance is prohibited. [3] It can be seen that Rousseau believed that religion must be subordinated to politics, and the core function of civil religion lies in cultivating citizens' loyalty to the community, teaching them to form various virtues, and enabling them to consciously realize the unity of social freedom and moral freedom in a contractual society. Of the politics of the square, Rousseau wrote: "We have many public festivals, let us have more. Under the blue sky, in the open atmosphere, in the middle of the square, set up a spear surrounded by flowers, gather the people there, and you have a festival, nothing better than that." [9] It can be seen that Rousseau very much hoped that citizens could cultivate a kind of noble sentiment like patriotism and collectivism through dense square gatherings, so that people could have a heartfelt love for the community. This makes citizens consciously realize the unity between social freedom and moral freedom.

To sum up, the realization of freedom depends on the voluntary obedience of citizens and the external coercion from the contract society.

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