Rousseau and Locke on Social Inequality

Posted on January 10, 2020

View this essay online:
https://academic-master.com/rousseau-locke-social-inequality/

Social Inequality and the Philosophical Debate Over Human Difference

Research studies show the world has been facing differences since human society arose. Almost in all communities of the world, people are facing different kinds of differences, whether these inequalities are social, political, economic, health, property legal or civic equality, gender inequality, etc. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a great Western thinker, philosopher, and writer of 18 century, has insight into the root causes of inequalities in society. In his social theories, “Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men,”he very beautifully elaborated that man is born naturally free; no one has authority to govern him. In his writing, Rousseau elaborated that a”state of nature” was people having quiet, idyllic, introverted, unsophisticated lives. Nature was entertained their few needs. The richness of natural resources and low population made the society less competitive, and in addition, there was less communication among people. They couldn’t communicate with each other. As a result, there were fewer conflicts and wars.

Being close to nature made the people simple and pure nature, and they didn’t have harmful feelings for others. But with the passage of time, human being face certain changes in the community. Technological development made health issues resolved People gradually began to live together in families and then in lesser societies. Inventions made life easier people enjoyed their leisure time. This leisure time certainly created people to make differences between themselves and others, and as a result, moral values get violated, leading t people to feel jealous of each other and property holders to feel proud of their wealth. In addition, Rousseau explained that the invention of private property had a negative impact on human society a people of pure hearts very quickly turned into materialistic (Rousseau, 1755/1992).

Locke, Property, and the Natural Rights of Individuals

John Locke was a great English philosopher. According to Locke, Men are born free, and he does not need to seek a license to live their lives with others. Furthermore, he highlighted that the state is supposed to be a land of free, not a land of a license, because it is ruled over by the law of nature, which everyone is obliged to obey. Locke places the right to life, on the same level as the right to

possessions, health, and liberty. While the right not to be harmed in one's life or authority might have seemed undisputable to Locke's readers, the right not to be harmed in one's possessions might have seemed less so.

Locke shared that "God gave the earth and its fruits in common to men for their use. The problem he faced was to explain how commonly available resources can become legitimate private property which excludes the right of other men".

John Locke's writing shows that the State of nature, although a state wherein there is no civil authority or government to punish people for disobedience against laws, is not a state without ethics. The State of Nature is pre-political, but it is not pre-moral. Persons are anticipated to be equal in such a state and, therefore, similarly able to determine and be bound by the Law of Nature. The Law of Nature, which is, in Locke's view, the basis of all morality and given to us by God, commands that we not harm others with regard to their "life, health, liberty, or possessions. Locke mentions in his write-up 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 the State of Liberty where persons are free to pursue their interests and plans, free from interference and, because of the Law of Nature and the restrictions that it imposes upon persons (Locke, 1689/1988).

Rousseau, Nature, and Competing Views of Equality

If we made a comparison of Locke and Rousseau theories of the state of nature already differ regarding ethics, stuff, and liberty. Locke believes that men are born with morality natural in tInm. In them, Rousseau says that people are born with no ethics and only follow their instincts and appetites. He claims that in the state of nature, his first law is to see to his protection clearly indicating the lack of liberty in people.

Locke stated that property is a natural right and can be acquired by labor; Rousseau, on the other hand, states that in the state of nature, men do not own property. Finally, Locke claims that in the state of nature, men have freedom and liberty. In opposition, Rousseau states that even in the state of nature, men are slaves to their desires. He proposes that it is impossible for a man to be free.

Contemporary Inequality and the Continuing Relevance of Both Thinkers

Today, we live in a very deep and very painful society where most people are suffering from all sorts of inequalities. These unequal varieties are raging health to political disability. Billions of people living in extreme poverty cannot even fulfill their basic needs: health, education, gender equality, right to

vote, and food. Only developed countries are given the privilege to have facilitation of life. If we compare the scenario today with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theory of Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men," it is best suited.

Due to a rise in population in developing countries, where private property holders enjoy a luxurious life, and most of the people lead a pathetic life of injustice, poverty, etc. Those who have wealth, directly and indirectly, control the lives of other people and make the decisions for them.

Due to injustice prevailing in these societies, especially in Middle East countries, Asian Muslim countries and Africa, people are facing war and have lost their lives.

Economic Systems, Gender, and Unequal Social Outcomes

Some economic systems are also responsible for the creation of inequalities in soci. Fors for example, in the Capitalism system, profit revolves only around those who invest, and other beneficiaries are completely ignored, and they fail to get profit.

So there, the world should introduce an economic system in which the common man should benefit. Gender discrimination is another setback in our societies where girls are not encouraged to go to school and participate in politics; as a result, the critical element of our society fails to play its part in the development of our community.

In our unequal society, due to poverty, people suffer from chronic mental illness that leads them to drug addiction. Eventually, drug addiction causes more social issues in society, and the society's moral values get destroyed and become a reason for more social evils. This evil builds more pressure on the community.

People having wealth get good health facilities rest of the enormous population of the society is unreachable, and the dating ratio of infant rates is high in these different corporations. Women are also suffering from various diseases and have lost their lives. So, the resources should be equally distributed and shared by those who are rich.

Resources

1." Social Contract Theory | Internet Encyclopedia Of Philosophy." *Iep.utm.edu*. N.p., 2017. Web. 18 Apr. 2017.

2. "John Locke Vs Jean Jacques Rousseau. Essay – 1693 Words – Brightkite.Com". *Brightkite.com*. N.p., 2017. Web. 18 Apr. 2017.

References

Rousseau, J.-J. (1992). Discourse on the origin of inequality (D. A. Cress, Trans.). Hackett. (Original work published 1755) https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/11136

Locke, J. (1988). Two treatises of government (P. Laslett, Ed.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1689) https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7370