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## Implications of Jean Jacques Rousseau's 'Chains' and its Impediment in Society and Nation Building

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### Abstract

According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the human being was born free but yet everywhere in chains. It is quite evident that Rousseau does not use the word "chain" to mean the physical chain of the individual as in the case of a dog that is chained down to avoid movement. Rather, Rousseau uses the word "chain" to mean the many impediments to human freedom. Most of these impediments are the products of the distorted transition from the state of nature to the civil society. The distortion of the transition of man from the state of nature to civil state introduced injustice in the society and thereby enchained mankind. This chain of injustice not only stifles the natural propensity in the individual to grow but also ensures political instability and absence of development because individuals are now thinking only for themselves and not for the community. Rousseau, not only condemned the negative change the society created in the individual who began to seek for recognition for himself from others, but was equally critical of the excessive exploitation of the natural resources that was also the product of the advancements in the art and sciences. To return to the kind of civil society envisaged by Rousseau, the task of this work attempts to examine the many elements of this enchainment and impediment of the human person in society and arguing for a reversal of the situation through the building of an inclusive society. There is need to do away with the corruption of man, wickedness, inequality, injustice and domination of evil in society. Individuals have to be reeducated to begin to think in terms of the good of the community rather than just for their personal self-interest- the root of pride and selfishness. The General Will must be restored.

**Keywords:** Rousseau, Chain, Inequality, Civil Society, Poverty

### Introduction

The opening statement of Rousseau 'The Social Contract' man is born free yet everywhere in chains summarizes his whole

philosophical system. With this statement, Rousseau assert that modern states repress the physical freedom that is man's birthright, and do nothing to secure the civil freedom for

the sake of which humans enter into civil society. Rousseau uses the chain to mean the many impediments to human freedom. Most of this impediments are the products of the distorted transition from the state of nature to civil society and they includes, social decay and the impact of the arts and sciences, social inequality, deficient education, injustice in society, human slavery, corruption, bad leadership and poverty.

Rousseau outlined how the civil society failed to achieve its objectives and if anything, put every man in chains. It was meant to make man discover his full potentials and produced a very remarkable change in the human being by substituting justice for instincts in his conduct and giving his actions the morality they had formally lacked. Moving from the discourse on the Arts and Sciences 1750, to the discourse on the Origin and basis of Inequality 1755, to The Social Contract 1762, Rousseau showed how man moved from the state of autonomy in the state of nature to the modern condition dominated by inequality, dependency, violence and unhappiness. The distortion of the transition of man from the state of nature to the civil state introduced injustice in the society and thereby enchained mankind. This chain of injustice not only stifles the natural propensity in the individual to grow but also

ensures political instability and absence of development because individuals are now thinking only for themselves and not for the community. The desire to have value in the eyes of others came to undermine personal integrity and authenticity in society was marked by hierarchy. As a result of this, the human being that was born free now became everywhere in chains. A society pervaded by injustice see nothing wrong with vices such as public and institutional injustice, crime, fraud, corruption, among others and embraces them wholeheartedly. To return to the kind of civil society envisaged by Rousseau, there is need to do away with injustice in society.

### **I. Social Decay and the Impact of the Arts and Sciences**

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was very emphatic in accusing the arts and the sciences as being responsible for the corruption of nature and for distorting the transition from the state of nature to the civil state where individual freedom would have still been sustained. Rousseau had a fundamental problem with social institutions, particularly, that of property arising from the development of the arts and the sciences. He not only condemned the negative change they created in the individual who began to seek for recognition

for himself from others, he was equally critical of the excessive exploitation of the natural resources that was also the product of the advancements in the arts and sciences.

The notion of the moral neutrality of science has been widely defended. Scientists have always presented themselves as disinterested servants of the truth, merely supplying the society with facts and tools they need. This group of scientists argues that the universe in its benign indifference is as it is regardless of what is thought to be right or wrong and it would seem not to pick sides in moral disputes. There is no doubt that science including, the arts uses knowledge of the natural world to inform or empower humanity, however, what human beings do with the knowledge and power remains up to them.

That is the problem. The most common critiques of the sciences and the arts are critiques of the uses of technology. The present age of technology exposes certain applications of science and the arts as tools of manipulation, degradation or destruction. Yuval Levin writes that:

Any westerner would recognize the image of Dr. Frankenstein's monsters gone wild and we have become accustomed as

well, to the specter of the nuclear mushroom cloud, the dread of biological or chemical attack, and the stench of industrial pollution. We have learned the hard way that Daedalus, the mechanic, can be a dangerous character. We also know that otherwise beneficial technologies can open up troubling ethical questions, and that these will only grow more vexing in the coming years as biology and chemistry before it.<sup>1</sup>

The moral challenge of the sciences and the arts reaches far beyond the challenge of new technologies. This is more apparent when one considers that scientists are far more than mere investigators and toolmakers. Modern science is a huge and authentic human endeavor. In its work, it employs the best and the brightest in every corner of the globe, and its modes of thinking and reasoning have come to dominate the way mankind understands itself and its place. This is why Levin maintains that "We must therefore judge modern Science not only by its material products, but also and more so, by its intentions and its influence upon the way humanity has come to think. In both these ways, science is far from morally neutral."<sup>2</sup>

This is very much in tune with Rousseau's line of thought when he argues that in place

of the natural self-love which the individual felt in the state of nature, the acquisition of property which came with the development of the arts and sciences instilled in man pride which made him think of himself as greater than the other. Rousseau writes, "man is born free and he is everywhere in chains. One may think himself the master of others and still remains a greater slave than they."<sup>3</sup> A society's understanding of the foundational good necessarily gives shape to its politics, its social institutions, and its sense of moral purpose and direction. How one lives has a lot to do with what one strives for.

The sciences and the arts were meant to serve the good of mankind. It was not conceived as a morally neutral quest after facts. But Francis Bacon writes, the nature of things betrays itself more readily under the vexations of art than in its natural freedom.<sup>4</sup> Founded in the seventeenth century as a reaction to the frustrations with the literal philosophies of European scholars, the modern scientific project aimed to improve the condition of the human race, relieving suffering, enhancing health and enriching life. Levin captures this succinctly when he cites Francis Bacon, a father of the modern scientific project arguing that the search for knowledge driven solely by a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite would be

misguided and inadequate, and that the fine aim of a genuine science should be the glory of the Creator and the relief of man's estate.<sup>5</sup>

However, even if this was the original aim of science, it was lost. It was lost as man assimilated a negative change in the transition from the state of nature, which writers like Hobbes agree could happen at any stage in the life of any state when there is the absence of law, to the civil state. Even Francis Bacon had admitted that the mechanical arts are of ambitious use, serving as well for hurt as for remedy. The logic now in use serves rather to fix and give stability to the errors which have their foundation in commonly received notions than to help the search for truth. So it does more harm than good.<sup>6</sup> But he also admonished that if the debasement of the arts and sciences to purpose of wickedness, luxury, and the like, be made a ground of objection, let no one be moved thereby for the same may be said of all earthly goods: of wit, courage, strength, beauty, wealth, light itself and the rest. Anything can be turned into evil in the hands of evil men. With the distortion of the transition from the state of nature to the civil and the acquisition of pride as a trait, a quest for status and a motivation for action, men became corrupted. In the corruption of man, the science and the arts became tools of

wickedness, injustice, inequality, domination and evil. In this, the science and arts became a curse to man and his society.

## **2. Social Inequality**

There are different perspectives to the understanding of inequality. However, the inequality that is of utmost interest here is social inequality which also has different ramifications. Social inequality occurs when resources in a given society are distributed unevenly, usually through the adoption of modes of allocation that respect specific patterns or along lines of socially defined categories of persons. These resources include natural, social and economic resources and when these resources are unevenly distributed, it contributes to social status. Norms of allocation can also affect the distribution of rights and privileges, social power, access to public goods such as education or the judicial system, adequate housing, transportation, credit and financial services such as banking and other social goods and services.<sup>7</sup>

Inequality in the society is a product of human pride; a product of that distortion in the transition from the state of nature to the civil society. Rousseau writes: "Astronomy was born from superstition; eloquence from ambition, hate, flattery and falsehood;

geometry from avarice, physics from vain curiosity; all even moral philosophy, from human pride."<sup>8</sup> Rousseau believed that people in the state of nature were innocent and at their best. Man was free, wise and good. Man was corrupted by the unnaturalness of science. It was civilization that enslaved and corrupted man and made him unnatural. For Rousseau, a proper society had no place for blame, criticism, judgment, companion with others and the destruction of worth among men. Rousseau felt it was wrong to make these distinctions because this makes people unequal.

Today, social inequality is found in every society. While many societies all over the world claim that their resources are distributed on the basis of merit, available information show that the distribution of resources often follows delineations that distinguish social categories of persons on the basis of other socially defined characteristics. For example, social inequality is linked to racial inequality, gender inequality and ethnic inequality as well as other status characteristics and these forms can be related to corruption.<sup>9</sup>

According to Charles Walker, social inequality is shaped by a range of structural factors such as geographical location or

citizenship status and are often underpinned by cultural discourses and identities defining for example, whether the poor are 'deserving' or 'undeserving'.<sup>10</sup> Even though in simple societies, that is, societies that have very few social roles and status differentiations, social inequality may be limited. In today's world, most of our populations live in more complex than simple societies; and as social complexity increases, inequality tends to increase along with a widening gap between the poorest and the wealthiest members of the society.<sup>11</sup>

The world today is permeated by different kinds of inequalities including gender inequality, where certain sexes are denied certain rights and privileges; racial and ethnic inequalities where people cannot aspire to certain offices because they are of a different stock; age inequality where one's age grouping becomes a serious impediment to a right or privilege which the one thinks he/she is fit for; even inequalities in the delivery of services like health, education, politics, among others. In most societies, respect for social status is core and integral and this in no small way impedes the wellbeing of a large segment of the society.

Social status is accorded to persons on at least two bases, namely - ascribed characteristics

and achieved characteristics. Ascribed characteristics are those characteristics over which the individual has little or no control. They may be present at birth or assigned by others. Achieved characteristics on the other hand are those which one earns or can choose. While examples of earned characteristics include sex, skin colour, eye shape, sexuality, gender identity, parentage and status of parents, examples of achieved characteristics are level of education, mental status, leadership status and others. Scott Sernau writes that in most societies an individual's social status is a combination of ascribed and achieved factors. In some societies also only ascribed statuses are considered in determining one's social status and there exists little to no social mobility and therefore, few paths to more social equality.<sup>12</sup>

It is highly regrettable that a society which was supposed to ensure greater individual freedom, while maintaining the equality which human beings shared in the state of nature could turn out to become a war zone where so many things happen to place some individuals to some advantages over others. In the society today, power, wealth, social status, caste, sex, ethnicity, among others create greater opportunities for others while standing as serious impediments to some

others. This is not the society of Rousseau's social contract.

### 3. Deficient Education

It is widely agreed that children are born helpless and need the care and guidance of adults into their teens and often beyond. More importantly, children need to learn how to live harmoniously in society. Education has been seen in different lights by different thinkers. For some, education began in prehistory, as adults trained the young in the knowledge and skills deemed necessary in their society. In pre-literate societies this was achieved orally and through imitation. Story-telling passed knowledge, values, and skills from one generation to the next.

As cultures began to extend their knowledge beyond skills that could be readily learned through imitation, formal education developed. For a working definition here, education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. Educational methods include storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, and directed research. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves.<sup>13</sup> Education can take place in formal or informal settings and any experience that has a formative effect on the

way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational.

The methodology of teaching is called pedagogy. Individual purposes for pursuing education can vary. Understanding the goals and meaning of educational socialization processes may also differ according to the sociological paradigm used. The early years of schooling generally focus around developing basic interpersonal communication and literacy skills. This lays a foundation for more complex skills and subjects. Later, education usually turns toward gaining the knowledge and skills needed to create value and establish a livelihood.<sup>14</sup>

Historically, the mission of schools has been to develop in the young both the intellectual and moral virtues. Concern for the moral virtues such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for others has been the domain of moral education. Every enduring community has a moral code and it is the responsibility and the concern of adults or those in authority to instill this code in the hearts and minds of its young. Since the advent of schools and formal education, it has been expected to contribute positively to the moral education of the young.

In Igbo traditional system for instance, the informal education of children involved mainly the inculcation of moral values and necessary skills for survival and social order. Fafunwa had opined that; "society used to accord priority to the inculcation of values of social responsibility, political participation, job orientation and spiritual and moral uprightness in the citizens."<sup>15</sup> The achievement of individuals was largely determined by how well he put into practical application the value systems mentioned above. The words of Ozigi gave credence to the above viewpoint;

There was a traditional form of education which had existed in our own societies, as in other societies, for centuries. This type of education formally and informally imbibed a lot of cultural values, norms, traditions and beliefs system of societies on our children and these had helped them to know how to produce things needed for the well-being of the society.<sup>16</sup>

Even when formal education was introduced, it was also supposed to be founded on moral education, after all, the education then was primarily used to teach the Bible in religion and the Bible is embedded with moral codes. However, the colonialists were distracted by

other interests including politics and commerce and they took moral education for granted.

Rousseau believed and advocated for education from nature in which the state must control all schooling because the objective of schooling is to develop citizens who will align with the general will in all their dealings. Rousseau believed in the perfectibility of man hence he should be educated so that he would not want to do evil. For Rousseau, part of the reason for the distorted transition from the state of nature to the civil society was the distortion of the education process. Once the system was corrupted by pride and other factors thereafter, the pupil who was supposed to be led through the teacher's disguised intention and the enabling conditions to equate his own will with that of the tutor, towards identifying his own will with the general will, was corrupted.

Rousseau did not deny that men need cultivation to overcome feebleness and to develop intelligence and judgment. He understands education to come from three sources: "from nature, from men, or from things."<sup>17</sup> These three sources must "coincide and lead to a common goal" if the individual is to become well-educated, yet not all of the



sources educate man in the same manner. Education from nature acts independently of man's actions. Education from things depends on man only in a limited extent. Only education from man is entirely in his control. "Since the three educators must be mixed together for a perfect result"<sup>18</sup> Rousseau contends that nature, which man cannot control, must determine the course of the other two in cultivating children. Thus, he justifies naturalism as a guide to education.

However, on a critical note, Rousseau's philosophical ideas on the education of children were very risqué and created quite the uproar. His philosophy was also not gender neutral. Rousseau believed females were to be educated to be governed by their husbands. They were to be weak and passive, brought up in ignorance and meant to do housework. Males were to be educated to be self-governed, and the philosophies in *Emile* essentially only pertained to males in society. He believed that the private sphere depended on the naturalized subordination of women for both it and the public political sphere to function. Ironically, one of his main beliefs in *Emile* that would not have been scandalous in Rousseau's day would clearly be seen as sexist in today's society.

The corruption of the system made the tutor to teach the pupil what and how he/she wishes; it made the pupil to see the tutor and the society (general will) from the corrupted perspectives of the parents and the tutor. And the moral education that Rousseau envisaged was lost. However, Rousseau believes that the only way to return the society to its original natural course is through moral education. Rousseau writes, "Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Maker of the world but degenerates once it gets into the hands of man."<sup>19</sup>

Moral education refers to the education that help children to acquire those virtues or moral habits that will help them individually live good lives and at the same time become productive and responsible members of their communities. Thus, moral education should contribute not only to the lives of the pupils as individuals, but also to social cohesion of the community. Horace Mann, the 19<sup>th</sup> century advocate of the common schools, worried by the widespread drunkenness, crime, and poverty during the Jacksonian period in which they lived, strongly advocated for moral education.

Mann was also very troubled by the waves of immigrants flooding into cities, unprepared for urban life and particularly unprepared to

participate in democratic civic life, hence he saw free public schools as the ethical fabric of the society. In his twelfth and final report to the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1849, he stated that if children, age four to sixteen could experience "the elevating influence of good schools, the dark host of private vices and public crimes, which now embitter domestic peace and stain the civilization of the age, might, in 99 cases in every 100, be banished in almost all societies of the world."<sup>20</sup>

There seems to be no doubt that in almost all societies of the world, education is increasingly losing the moral element. With increasing attention being paid to poor and dwindling academic performances, the situation of moral education is worse off. More so, in an increasingly secular globalizing world, the term "moral education," which has a religious tinge has made many uneasy, hence the term "character" seems more appealing. The word "character" emphasizing the forming of good habits and the elimination of bad ones, seems to have struck a popular chord. Most universities and academic institutions of the world now award their degrees and certificates to candidates who have been found worthy in character and learning. However, whether it is called "moral

education" or "character education", distorted education is part of the reason the transition from the natural state to the civil state failed for Rousseau and still remains a major problem in the civil state, while a return to moral education remains the only way to rescue the situation the already corrupted society.

#### **4. Injustice in Society**

Injustice is a derivative of the word "justice" and it may not be completely tenable to discuss injustice without relating it to justice. It is also a widely agreed position that the understandings of justice differ from culture to culture, as cultures are usually dependent upon a shared history, mythology and/or religion. Each culture's ethics create values which influence the notion of justice. Although there can be found some justice principles that are one and the same in all or most of the cultures, these are insufficient to create a unitary justice apprehension. Justice is the legal or philosophical theory by which fairness is administered.<sup>21</sup>

Doctrines and intellectual positions on justice run deep in the history of philosophy. In his dialogue Republic, Plato uses Socrates to argue for justice that covers both the just person and the just City State. Justice is a proper, harmonious relationship between the

warring parts of the person or city. Hence, Plato's definition of justice is that justice is the having and doing of what is one's own. A just man is a man in just the right place, doing his best and giving the precise equivalent of what he has received.

According to the egalitarian tradition or notion, justice can exist only within the parameters of equality. This basic view can be elaborated in many ways, according to what goods are to be distributed - wealth, respect, opportunity - and who or what they are to be distributed equally among - individuals, families, nations, races, species. Egalitarian theories are typically less concerned with discussing who exactly will do the distributing or what effects their recommended policies will have on the production of the goods, services, or resources they wish to distribute.

Commonly held egalitarian positions include demands for equality of opportunity, though equality of opportunity is often defended by adherents of non-egalitarian conceptions of justice as well. Some variants of egalitarianism affirm that justice without equality is hollow and that equality itself is the highest justice, though such a formulation will have concrete meaning only once the main terms have been fleshed out. At a

cultural level, egalitarian theories have developed in sophistication and acceptance during the past two hundred years. Among the notable broadly egalitarian philosophies are socialism, left-libertarianism, and progressivism, which propound economic, political, and legal egalitarianism, respectively.

Injustice on the other hand is a quality relating to unfairness. Widely used in Western philosophy and jurisprudence, injustice is very commonly seen as either the absence or the opposite of justice.<sup>22</sup> The sense and experience of injustice is a universal human feature, though the exact circumstances considered unjust may vary from society to society. Although, some acts of nature can arouse some sense of injustice, however, it is usually considered in relation to human action such as misuse, abuse, neglect or malfeasance that goes uncorrected.

Injustice is one of the bi-products of the distorted transition from the state of nature to the civil state. Rousseau argued that in the state of nature, individual human beings were equal, free and good. Even though social interaction was limited, yet everyone saw the other as equal and none looked at the other with a sense of superiority or inferiority. However, once the natural self-love was

replaced by pride and man began to acquire property and expand their possessions beyond the reach of others, injustice emerged with man taking another in slavery, subjugation or subordination.

Injustice in society is very pervasive. Even among philosophers and writers, while justice and injustice may be interdependent, it is injustice that is a primary quality. Von Hayek agrees when writes that while it is hard to directly define or even perceive justice, it is easy to demonstrate that injustice can be perceived by all.<sup>23</sup> von Hayek maintains that the earliest known thinker to state that injustice is the primary quality was Heraclitus, whose views were shared by others after him including Aristotle. A common cause of injustice is human selfishness which is the sign of the pride that replaced the natural self-love of the natural order. Judith Shklar, citing Plato in the *Republic*, avers that people will often commit acts of injustice when they calculate that it is in their interest to do so.<sup>24</sup> For Plato, the highest reach of injustice is to be deemed just when you are not. Although human injustice is not always caused by the attempt to gain unfair advantage or malice, it may also be simply the result of flaw in human decision making.

That injustice is a major challenge of the modern society cannot be in doubt. Welsen Ekiyor writes that since independence in Nigeria in 1960, the country has continuously been confronted with among other things, the problem of a weak and unjust social structure resulting in widespread social injustice.<sup>25</sup> Ekiyor continues that part of the resultant effects of this weak structure include unjust public institutions and social ethic, religious and political crises due mainly to a lack of social cohesion, political integration and an unfair principle of distribution of income, resources, goods and burdens in society. This condition of affairs not only makes political stability and development difficult but also stifles the natural ingenuity of the people to grow. Thus, a very serious poverty and underdevelopment of the people in addition to a complete absence of liberty and rights have become institutionalized. This has in advertently led to a warped and distorted sense of justice in the society.

This is exactly what Rousseau was talking about when he argued that man was born free and everywhere now in chains. The distortion of the transition of man from the state of nature to the civil state introduced injustice in the society and thereby enchained mankind. This chain of injustice not only stifles the natural propensity in the individual to grow

but also ensures political instability and absence of development because individuals are now thinking only for themselves and not for the community.

A society pervaded by injustice see nothing wrong with vices such as public and institutional injustice, crime, fraud, corruption, among others, and embraces them wholeheartedly. To return to the kind of civil society envisaged by Rousseau, there is need to do away with injustice in the society. Individuals have to be reeducated to begin to think in terms of the good of the community rather than just for their individual self-interest - the root of pride and selfishness.

## **5. Human Slavery**

The distortion of the transition from the state of nature to the civil order engendered slavery into the society; with the development of property and conscious accumulation of wealth. Human beings began to see fellow human beings as commodities and means to ends rather than as ends in themselves. There was not a price on human beings in a lot of perspectives - to be sold and bought for so many uses including cheap labour, source of pleasure, among others. This is the source of human slavery. Slavery has existed for thousands of years, but economic and social forces have

enabled its resurgence in the past few decades by increasing people's vulnerability.

Among these factors are population explosion, mass emigration, corruption, discrimination, and others. In the contemporary world, a population explosion has tripled the number of people in the world, particularly in developing countries, leaving many people economically vulnerable. There are mass movements of people from impoverished areas of the world to the developed parts of the world in search of livelihood. Corruption of governments in different parts of the world have not only led to waste and stealing of resources that would have been used to provide for the people's welfare, but have also allowed slavery in many respects to go unpunished. Also, social inequality creates widespread economic and social vulnerability based on factors such as gender, race, tribe and caste.

The chain of slavery, poverty, class, sect are really a mark of ugliness on the face of this beautiful world. Slavery has been chasing mankind since the stone stage. Albeit slavery has become an unacceptable phenomenon in our civilized world but unfortunately, many nations are enslaved under the foreign domination even in the twenty first century. The third World is bond by the chains of

slavery imposed on it by the economically developed countries in different forms. Racial discrimination is another thorny chain in which mankind is enslaved. Man is born free but so-called civilized society enslaves him to the chain of superior or inferior race consciousness. This division is not limited to hatred but takes man to the butchery of genocide.

Sometimes the passion of patriotism exceeds the limits and injures the sense of righteousness of nations that they fight wars with one another. The chain of jingoism hurts the feelings of other nations. Man is also enslaved in the chains of poverty, ignorance, superstitions etc. All men in all nations are born with freedom but they lose it when they are subjected to economic disparity. Hierarchical structure of society is the chain in which man is enslaved even in the twenty first century. A newly born baby does not know that society will push him to acute destitution and he will be unable to come out of the slavery trap. Poverty, clamped on man drives him to darkness and many other social evils.<sup>26</sup>

In the past few decades, "trafficking in persons" or in other words "human trafficking" has been used as umbrella terms for activities involved when someone holds

another person in compelled service. Human trafficking is the trade in humans, most commonly for the purpose of sexual slavery, forced labour, or commercial sexual exploitation for the trafficker or others." Human trafficking can occur within a country or across national borders may be for purposes of providing a spouse in the context of force marriage or the extraction of organs or tissues, including for surrogate purposes. Human trafficking generated an estimated \$7 billion to \$9.5 billion *per annum* as of 2004.<sup>28</sup> Louise Shelley agrees, stating that human trafficking is thought to be one of the fastest-growing activities of trans-national criminal organisations.<sup>29</sup> Human trafficking is a serious violation of human rights as well as a violation of personhood.

Modern examples of human slavery is sex trafficking - a situation when an adult is coerced, forced or deceived into prostitution. Sex trafficking can also occur within debt bondage, as women and girls are forced to continue in prostitution through the use of unlawful "debt" purportedly incurred through their transportation or recruitment, which exploiters insist must be paid up before they can be free. There is also the tragic case of child labour. This involves the sale and trafficking of children and their entrapment in bonded and forced labour. Indicators of

forced child labour include - situations in which the child appears to be in the custody of a non-family member, who make the child perform work that financially benefit someone outside the child's family and does not offer the child the option of leaving.

Human slavery is the worst violation of the human person. It not only stifles the human being's natural inclination to grow and develop, it negates his freedom, his equality and demeans human dignity, and this includes the dignity of the one who enslaves. This may be why Rousseau argues that even those who exploit and enchain others are also in chains. And to free humanity, everyone must be compelled to be free.

## **6. Corruption and Bad Leadership**

Although corruption, like most other social concepts is difficult to define, and this may also be why it is difficult to curb, but there is no doubt it is a sign of a depraved humanity. It is because, man lost the link and relationship to the other person, on the grounds of which he was supposed to think and act in accordance with the common good, that he began to think only of himself. It is because man thinks only of himself and his own wellbeing that he could act to appropriate what is for the common good for himself alone. It is because man has become

selfish and the General Will has broken down that one would act to steal from the commonwealth; a debasement that was not even possible in the state of nature.

Corruption, some say, is endemic in all governments. One of the first charges leveled at the previous regime by the leaders of the coup in the less developed country is "corruption." And generally the charge is accurate. One type of reaction to this among observers is highly moralistic and tends to see corruption as evil. J.S. Nye defines corruption as a behaviour which deviates from formal duties of a public role, because of private gain regarding personal, close family, private clique, pecuniary or status gain. It is a behaviour which violates rules against the exercise of certain types of duties for private gains regarding influence.<sup>30</sup> Transparency International sees corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.

For Bello-Imam, corruption is a dishonest or illegal behaviour, especially of people in authority.<sup>31</sup> Lipsent and Lenz see corruption as effort to secure wealth or power through illegal means - private gain at public expense, or a misuse of public power for private benefit.<sup>32</sup> Oladimeji and Oladimeji have identified some forms of corruption as - political corruption, bureaucratic corruption,

electoral corruption and financial corruption.<sup>33</sup> In all the above definitions and descriptions of corruption, one thing that stands out is that corruption is common with people in leadership or authority.

The word corruption according to Ejiogu E. Amaku in his book *"The Problematic of Human Dignity in Africa"* is associated with the latin verb *corrumpere* meaning "to break, to proceed, to destroy, to ruin, and to bring to naught. He defines corruption from the social point of view as a grave form of injustice. He went further to say that a corrupt person uses his/her public position to take advantage of common good. A corrupt person employs his/her authority in public office to convert public goods to his/her own profit or to the profit of his/her family members. Also difining corruption, J. C Ekei in Ejiogu E. Amaku's book *"The Problematic of human dignity in Africa"* writes, that corruption in its general sense, "implies misusing ones office foe a private gain or foe unofficial end. In other words, it means taking advantage of ones public office to favour ones personal goal or gain. It is simply diversion of a collective good in favour of individual gain.<sup>34</sup>

Leadership is an evasive concept and this may be why good leadership has remained elusive in many societies of the world,

particularly the developing world. Leadership represents a complex form of social problem solving.<sup>35</sup> In any human organisation, there are bound to be problems because people have numerous needs which compete for limited resources to solve. Leadership is therefore concerned with how the demands of the people are met in just and fair manner and this involves politics and the allocation of resources. Leadership has also been seen as the skill of and process of getting results through others. Good leaders build good teams to be able to get across a variety of situations.

It has been widely argued that the problem of most developing countries like Nigeria is bad leadership and corrupt leadership. Ogoma Ebun observes that "it seems the leaders of the country deliberately deny the people what belongs to them, and keep them in the state of poverty and want so as to kill the morality in them, thereby making the people to always be at their beck and call.<sup>36</sup> The leaders that are in place in so many countries of the world today are leaders who have no feelings or respect for those they lead. They have no sense of responsibility and are mostly motivated by the opportunity to enrich themselves through the public purse. In their criminal self-enrichment, they abandon the people in poverty and in that state of abject



poverty, it is idle to expect people to be moral and law-abiding citizens.

Bad leadership and corruption is a terrible menace for humanity. Denis Venter writes that the general perception is that, Africa needs strong, dedicated and self-confident leaders who must be creators of great ideas, command loyalty of their people, and be totally committed to the development of their countries.<sup>37</sup> But, these are the leaders most societies, particularly developing countries like Nigeria lack. And this is the major reason the countries underdeveloped in spite of the natural resources available to the people. These natural resources are often exploited and the proceeds stashed in private bank accounts in foreign countries with the help of international collaborators. The ensuing abject poverty reduces the citizens to conditions akin to what is applicable in the Hobbesian state of nature. The ordinary citizens now fight for the crumbs in an atmosphere of survival of the fittest. In which case, corruption defines such society at every level. To be able to return to the civil society envisioned by Rousseau, what is needed is to get everybody to again begin to think and act in terms of the general will. Skillful, visionary and capable leadership is the key to the reforms that Africa needs.

## 7. Poverty

Poverty could be said to be the condition of general scarcity, dearth or the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions. Ricardo Sabates conceives poverty as a multifaceted concept which includes social, economic and political elements.<sup>38</sup> Poverty can be absolute or relative poverty. Absolute or abject poverty which can also be seen as destitution refers to the lack of means necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter over an area and for reasonable long period of time. Relative poverty on the other hand, takes into account individual social and economic status compared to the rest of the society.

Beyond these literary definitions of poverty, poverty is well defined in the homes and streets of most countries of the world. Poverty is defined in the ordinary man on the street who has no cloths to cover himself, no food to eat, no money to access even the minimal healthcare, no home to live in and sometimes, not even clean water to drink. In most societies, there is no need defining poverty because poverty is written on almost every face one confronts. That is how pervasive poverty is in the world today.

Poverty in most cases is poverty in the midst of plenty. Poverty is still a function of the distortion of the transition from the state of nature to the civil state.

There was no lack in the state of nature according to Rousseau; men were happy, free and at peace. The social contract was to lead to a better society; human beings were supposed to become better in the fulfillment of their potential; they were think together, act together and still feel as free as though they were obeying only themselves. However, men became selfish, proud and corrupted; the General Will was destroyed and because some coveted all that was available to themselves alone, others live in lack and want. This is not the social order that Rousseau envisaged.

Poverty has different aspects including economic and social aspects. Economic aspects of poverty focus on material needs, typically including the necessities of daily living, such as food, clothing, shelter, or safe drinking water. Poverty in this sense may be understood as a condition in which a person or community is lacking in the basic needs for a minimum standard of well-being and life, particularly as a result of a persistent lack of income. The increase in poverty runs parallel sides with unemployment, hunger, and higher

crime rate. The social aspects of poverty links conditions of scarcity to aspects of the distribution of resources and power in a society and recognizes that poverty may be a function of the diminished "capability" of people to live the kinds of lives they value. The social aspects of poverty may include lack of access to information, education, health care, or political power.<sup>39</sup>

The causes of poverty include changing trends in a country's economy, lack of education, high divorce rate which causes feminization of poverty, having a culture of poverty, overpopulation, epidemic diseases such as AIDS and malaria, and environmental problems such as lack of rainfall.<sup>40</sup> However, one of the main causes of poverty is lack of money. Close to 75 percent of people in the world are in poverty, as they live off \$2.50 or less in a day.<sup>41</sup> Poverty continue to remain a menace to the whole world as long as some people retain greater access to the means of livelihood when there are so many who do not have any access whatsoever. This is sign of the breakdown of the General Will and the commonwealth. Every effort must be made to build the commonwealth once again by reviving the General Will.

## Conclusion

The human being was born free but yet everywhere in chains. In the state of nature according to Rousseau, men were happy, free and at peace. The social contract was to lead to a better society; human beings were supposed to become better in fulfillment of their potential; they were together, act together and still felt as free as though they were obeying only themselves. However, men became selfish, proud and corrupted; the General Will was destroyed and because some coveted all that was available to themselves alone, others live in lack and want. This is not the social order that Rousseau envisaged.

The distortion from the state of nature to the civil order engendered slavery into the society with the development of property and conscious accumulation of wealth. As a result of this, human beings began to see fellow human beings as commodities and means to an end rather than ends in themselves. Rousseau was of the view that societies negative influence on man centers on its transformation of amour de soi, a positive self love into amour amour proper or pride. Amour de soi represents the instinctive human desire for self preservation combined with the human power of reason. On the

other hand, amour proper is the artificial and encourages man to compare himself with others. There is need to do away with corruption and go back to the state of nature

## Endnotes

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