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**A Common Thread: How similar are Rousseau and Marx's
understandings of inequality and how do they differ in their
prescriptions for creating a more just society?**

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INTRODUCTION

Rousseau and Marx have long been considered political philosophers that seem to share commonly held positions with regards their understandings of humanity and society. What follows is an attempt to appreciate the common thread that seems to run through their work, none more so than their critiques of classical liberalism and the values that came to be associated with it as well as the impact this ideology has on the legitimisation of material inequality, as opposed to the formal equality that is recognised under classical liberal systems. Both Marx and Rousseau argue for the insufficiency of formal equality and as such formulate alternative accounts, particularly as they relate to their respective understandings of liberty.

However, that is not to say that the aim of this work is to evaluate the influence that Rousseau had on the ideas of Marx, though this may be implicit, but rather it is intended as a comparative and analytical framework from which to comprehend their common ground, particularly as far as equality is concerned, the ensuring of which is considered a primary aim of their ideal associations here, alongside and often related in complex ways to liberty. For the most part the focus will be on the writings of Rousseau and Marx themselves where the evidence used will attempt to elucidate their philosophical and methodological similarities, and indeed differences. Further literature will also be consulted insofar as it adds to the debate and particularly where the meaning of concepts are contested.

The first two chapters seek to understand Rousseau and Marx's perceptions of the failings of classical liberalism, beginning with a rough sketch of the political and economic principles that this endorses, placing emphasis on egoism and the problems that the functioning of such an order creates in society which is considered to be mutually interdependent. Their respective criticisms of classical liberalism, as well as their

understandings of the nature of civil society will be the theoretical foundation from which to understand the similarities and differences in their respective philosophies. The consequences vary for both philosophers but they seem to share a belief that classical liberal ideology in such a society leads to a loss of freedom and certainly of any form of material equality where men are forced into dependence on one another. The championing of property, wealth and commerce is a consequence of the liberal hegemony, where self-interest and belief in laissez-faire principles leads to all manner of societal ills and the appraisal of men simply as consumers or indeed as commodities in the form of manual wage labour.

Chapter III attempts to understand their differing prescriptions- that is, their ideal state- for ending these societal ills, for restoring equality and liberty. Both writers recognise the necessity to do away with the vestiges of the old order which requires a reframing of the national psyche away from individualism and towards a commonality, essentially recognising within their states the mutual interdependence, a recognition that is lacking in the liberal system and which consequently leads to exploitation and huge disparities in wealth. This is achieved in different ways for Rousseau and Marx but a transitional phase that places unlimited power into the hands of the Lawgiver and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat respectively, are necessary to allow society to undergo the required changes for the realisation and effective functioning of a new, community based system.

Chapter IV seeks to assess the value of each writer's prescription and how far it really seems to address the problems of their critiques of liberalism, that is, how far equality and liberty are considered to have been achieved and any additional problems their ideal states bring up with respect to these things. Furthermore, there is an engagement here with the totalitarian critiques leveled at both Rousseau and Marx as framed from a liberal perspective, asserting that both ideals, where they attempt to realise liberty, actually limit freedom in unacceptable ways. However the origin of such criticism places value on the principles of self-interest- which both writers attempted to transcend- and therefore must be treated with caution. Nonetheless there are still some troubling practical issues where both ideals seem to leave themselves open to the possibility of abuses, where they appear to fail to offer adequate processes to institute a functioning association.

CHAPTER I: A CRITIQUE OF CLASSICAL LIBERALISM

Central to both Rousseau and Marx's political philosophies are a deep dissatisfaction with the respective political theories that came to dominate what we may call 'enlightened' states. The Enlightenment sought to use reason to find rational bases on which to build a legitimate government, beyond outmoded understandings that imbued supposed Godly authority, paternal authority or power by force/might as acceptable platforms from which to build states and distribute power. This era erupted in social contract thought that posited that consent was a necessary precondition to legitimate political establishment. Hobbes' *Leviathan* painted a picture of man as inherently selfish and destructive, where in the state of nature, which is essentially a state of war, life is 'nasty, brutish and short' and the social contract is a means to the end of self-preservation (Hobbes, 1985: 186). John Locke's *Two Treatise on Government* contains much of the liberal canon, where men seek to unite 'for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties and estates' in a world where men are selfish, but not necessarily destructive (Locke, 1997: 71). The preservation of property is the most fundamental purpose to the unifying of men in society, and as such, his social contract is also a consideration based in self-interest. The works of Adam Smith during this period sought to praise free-markets as the superior form of economic relations that allow for the equal dignity of individuals where 'market exchanges occur between independent equals who pursue their respective interests...through mutually advantageous, respectful free exchange', essentially arguing that protectionism should no longer be considered an effective way of ordering the economy and that rational individuals would not trade unless it was mutually advantageous (Darwall, 1999: 145). He laid the philosophical foundations of the legitimisation of a capitalist economic order based on the liberal values of rationality and self-interest.

Closely associated with Locke are the concepts of natural law- what we may a theory of

inherent 'rights'- and individualism, as opposed, perhaps, to the idea of individual responsibilities to society (Peardon, 1997: xiii). Building upon such principles then, classical liberalism sees the world as an aggregation of partial individuals, where the state is the neutral arbiter of disputes and liberty is defined negatively with the implication that government action is may be considered as unwelcome intervention, particularly in economics (Ellenburg, 1976: 36, 38). All groups in such a system are voluntary, not reflecting a community spirit as such but representing a commonly held interest. Thus society's most basic unit is considered to be the individual who is entirely independent, autonomous and partial; he owes no responsibility toward any other beyond respect for the law which he helps to construct, and for which he sacrifices some natural liberty for the purpose of self-preservation and 'natural' entitlements. Some additional emphasis is placed on the impact of what Smith would call 'sympathy', an inward feeling that to some extent prevents one from hurting another; but it is by no means compulsory, simply reflecting a common humanity which is evident in the weight classical liberal thought gives to perfect rights and obligations, where 'sympathy' is an imperfect obligation, not enforceable by law and dependent only upon individual inclination. These liberal assumptions are at the fore of both Rousseau's and Marx's critiques.

Rousseau's critique may be understood on the basis of three interrelating factors. First, and arguably the foundation of the following criticisms is his belief that society as an aggregation of self-interested individuals is a myth. Civil society is artificial and in it there is mutual interdependence that to some extent allows for exploitation. Second is his understanding of the nature of the social contract, the cunning plan of the privileged to maintain their accumulations. This involved the use of law to entrench their supremacy. A third example of Rousseau's disdain for the impacts of civil society is his championing of the General Will. Partial wills should be subordinated to the General Will, the common good should always be kept in mind and the people are sovereign. This idea leads on to what we may broadly call Rousseau's republicanism. If we are mutually interdependent, we should have a duty towards each other and the state where it should be 'the commitment of the body of the nation to provide for the maintenance of the humblest of its members' (Rousseau, 1987: 122) In this sense, instead of laws being instituted to protect those who have most to lose and instead of the state becoming an external and

coercive force, the sovereign will will always be of the people. In this way such interdependence does not result in exploitation through dependence.

‘Society no longer offers...anything more than an assemblage of artificial men and factitious passions which are the product of all men’s new relations and which have no true foundations in nature’ (Rousseau, 1984: 135). As Rousseau understands it, in the state of nature we were both free and independent. There is no state of war (that is, until nascent society) as man comes across man infrequently and natural pity for one’s own species prevents the threat of violence. Although it is no secret that he does romanticise man in this state as truly free, his belief in the individual does not carry through in the same way to the establishment of civil society. As men begin to unite, the establishment of nascent society does away with freedom through the necessity of dependence, particularly in terms of the division of labour (prefiguring Marx), as man becomes subjected to ‘his fellow man, men of whom he has become the slave...even in becoming their master; for if he is rich he needs their services; if he is poor he needs their aid’ (Rousseau, 1984: 119). This results in a system where one must interest another in working for his benefit which results in deviousness and the treating badly of those he needs but will not serve his interest. So while individuals consider themselves to be independent and partial beings who only have a responsibility to serve their own desires, we are nonetheless forced to seek the service of others to fulfil certain needs- civil society from the very beginning is a socially dependent society. Yet the establishment of inequalities, particularly through property, law and the division of labour, opens the way for huge disparities of wealth where people become ‘poor without having lost anything’, and there is no sense of collective responsibility for others beyond one’s own partiality and any remaining compassion (Rousseau, 1984: 119-20). Yet the wellbeing of one is entirely tied up in the well-being of all others. As Ellenburg describes, ‘artificial individuals are men indebted to one another, to their public life. And together, in unity or disorder, artificial individuals always remain a political whole, an entity of mutual indebtedness and organic connection’ (1976: 52). In this way the idea of the autonomous individual is an irresponsible myth, which results in the loss of liberty for all, the privileging of the few and the wretchedness and oppression of those who do not possess the qualities that are favoured in these new relations. For Rousseau liberalism is

deceptive insofar as it paints the individual as the sovereign being yet it fails to acknowledge the transition into civil society as one that is inherently social and interdependent and it is this disguised dependence working in parallel with an ideology of individualism that leads to the loss of the freedom of the state of nature and the beginnings of inequalities.

Rousseau describes the social contract as a contrivance of the rich man under pressure to protect his riches and ‘the most cunning project that ever entered the human mind’ (Rousseau, 1984: 121). While to unite under pretences of the protection and security of all and their goods brought with it some universal benefits, vitally it gave new and enshrined powers to the rich. Indeed, it ‘transformed adroit usurpation into irrevocable right and for the benefit of a few ambitious men subjected the entire human race henceforth to labour, servitude and misery’ (Rousseau, 1984: 122). It is clear here that Rousseau does not consider property as something we have an inherent right to. Furthermore, in his estimation it is apparent that the right to property was one that sought to specifically benefit those few ambitious men, entrenching a conception of the good that is at its very foundation particular. ‘Are not the advantages of society for the powerful and the rich?...And is not the public authority entirely in their favour?’ (Rousseau, 1987: 133). For him, by the particularity of the nature of such an assumption, it is illegitimate insofar as it negates freedom derived from independence.

The third criticism we may discern from Rousseau’s concept the General Will, and what we may call his republicanism, is where liberalism understands the state and legislative powers to be something of a coercive force, a force of intervention that is outside of the people and imposed upon it. Where liberalism understands the social contract as giving up a small amount of freedom to preserve other freedoms, it may then be understood as a calculation of self-interest and personal benefit; this is not sufficient for Rousseau. Rousseau through the General Will places the state and its laws instead as something of the people, where it alone guarantees their freedom to the extent that each person is able to shape the law that they are subject to, where they come to love and respect it. It is the means through which they implement the common good and the means through which, with private wills in conformity with it, virtue will come to reign. Rousseau’s social

contract is different to Hobbes' and Locke's where consent is used to legitimise a representative or sovereign outside of the people; for Rousseau the sovereign is and always must be the people, one reason why Rousseau is often heralded as a great democrat. Nonetheless, such a system would involve benefits in that it allows men to remain free and receive the advantages of civil society, of security and the mutually interdependent community without having to suffer the ills that he must under the slavery of liberal and/or partial systems. However, such a system also entails duties and responsibilities from the citizen, the overall system must pertain to the common good. Instead of a neutral arbiter of conflicting interests, men come to see the true value of their association, in their part in the whole, in their understanding of the common good. This relationship between man and state, or man as sovereign, reinstates virtue, where 'it is not good enough to merely get what you want in order to be free, you must also want the right things', you must seek the common good (Harrison, 1993: 53).

However, virtue in a Rousseauian sense is a contested term with both moral and political implications. James Miller has emphasised the moral dimension, based on limiting our wants and possessing a conscience with reflective capacity that pertains to self-rule. This involves tempering our passions, judging what we feel to be in accordance with what is good and acting on such judgements. If we are able to conquer our passions we are able to act according to reason and conscience and we thus possess virtue (Miller, 1984: 179-80). Andrew Levine's understanding by contrast takes on a more political aspect. His understanding of Rousseau's virtue is simply 'the subordination of one's own interests to the interests of one's community', that is, submitting oneself to the General Will (1987: 58). These two concepts are easily reconciled as to temper our passions, our particular interests, is both the realisation of virtue and the exercise of the General Will, so the General Will in and of itself is an exercise of virtue where we consciously reflect on our wants but also consider them in the context of the good of the community and where 'to be governed by appetite alone is slavery', that is, slavery to our passions rather than the freedom gained through rationality, which may only be achieved when passions become subordinate (Rousseau, 1968: 65). Levine explains that in submitting to the interests of one's community, virtue for Rousseau is an 'essentially social concept fundamentally opposed to egoism in all its varieties', where 'virtue is the General Will become flesh'

(1987: 58-59). So in the concept of virtue again, there is apparent interdependence, it is the existence of other citizens with different desires and an awareness of the body of people as an organic whole that makes Rousseau's concept of virtue conceivable, where virtue is only possible within civil society.

Marx is equally perturbed by the effects of liberal individualism, but where liberty takes on a different meaning. For his critique, the idea of the species-being takes precedence. Free and conscious material production, i.e. the ability to produce freely without the liberal economic concepts of wage labour and extraction of surplus value is the essence of man's activity and freedom. Species-life takes place in civil society but with the impact of capitalism and liberal ideology 'the sphere in which man functions as a communal being is degraded and subordinated to the sphere in which man functions as a partial being' (Marx, 1994a: 46). For him the concept of the public/private divide and the individual as the basic unit has no grounding in history where man is a universal being and progresses in a community, it is a development of the bourgeoisie that is projected back onto history to justify their exploitative system that privileges them alone and degrades all others. In such a society, every man 'has value as a sovereign being...but this is man in his uncultivated, unsocial aspect...corrupted by the entire organisation of our society...alienated' (Marx, 1994a: 41). Thus by neglecting his social aspect, he denies his very nature; individualistic man is not man as he truly is and the development of the free-market means that he will not know true freedom. This is not to imply that Marx did not appreciate individuality but that, where partial interests reign, there is no possibility of realising it. Alienation for Marx becomes an object of oppression, denying freedom and individuality as the market comes to dominate all relations.

Like Rousseau, Marx is critical of the concept of right, where, rather than being objective and universal, it is the product of civil society and an entrenching of egoism. Marx understands rights as a means to securing man's 'private interests and his private will, separated from the community', however they are and can only be rights exercised in community with others, so to allow certain interests to dominate, the community is sacrificed for the sake of blind self-interest (Marx, 1994a: 46). While the concept of rights implies the securing of freedoms for all, really it just exacerbates the privilege of

the bourgeoisie who, as we see in Rousseau's critique, use them to entrench the existing order, their privilege as property owners and placate those who do not benefit by making it appear as if they do. Furthermore, the rights of egoistic man are reflected in state apparatus, which becomes a bourgeois instrument to facilitate their supremacy. In a wider sense, the state throughout history has been considered an instrument for any dominating class, not just the bourgeoisie, and built on the economic base of the division of labour are the legal and political superstructures that allow property owners to live off the labour of others and at the same time present such relations as right.

The liberal creed of the neutral arbiter is another bourgeois façade where 'the executive of the modern state is but a committee for the managing of common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie', where the modern government is not legitimate because ideologically it denies all people an expression of their human nature and species-being, allowing the masses of workers to grovel at subsistence for the benefit of the few (Marx and Engels, 2002: 221). Nonetheless, Marx's understanding of liberalism is not a simple one, in his understanding of historical materialism, capitalism is the necessary state before the final revolution and the transition into a classless society where man can reassert his species-being. This is because it represents a level of productive capacity through technological advances that theoretically and when redistributed accordingly, would remove scarcity, making communism possible and indeed desirable.

While for Rousseau particular interests and right based on such are not legitimate because it does not recognise the interdependence of the community, Marx sees both a more general and more complex picture of history that is nonetheless premised on the conception of man as an inherently social being. The idea of man as individual is natural for Rousseau but only in the context of the state of nature, where men progress into civil society, they become dependent on one another and this dependence is exploited by the wealthy, especially insofar as the political system legitimises this. Marx by contrast does not characterise man as individual, he is and must always be considered as a communal being, and to this extent he cannot be extrapolated from his social aspect. Nonetheless, for both philosophers liberal individualism is a myth that benefits the privileged and allows for a vice-ridden society. The liberal creed does all it can to deny the existence of

the community, it deliberately fragments man, atomises him, pits one against the other in competition, to the extent that natural compassion is stifled and the privileged exploit this system and other human beings to serve their own self-interest. Under this yoke there is no liberty and no possibility for the realisation of individuality.

For Marx freedom comes about when economic dependence, which manifests itself in the capitalist stage as exploitation is no longer necessary, achieved through the communal ownership of property and thus the communally owned act, product and profit of labour, to the extent that man's species-activity may be freed and labour is not a means but an end. But this activity is only possible with increased and recognised mutual interdependence to a new scale where all must contribute to communal life, which is facilitated by a whole new political system. For Rousseau we may paint a very similar picture. Freedom is only created when men are no longer dependent on others. But again, it is only realisable when every person commits himself to every other through the social contract and only the act of alienating oneself to the community can make man independent. Essentially, they both seek to remove the disjuncture of the ideology of individualism and the reality of interdependence that liberalism seems to construct and manipulate; if man lives in an interdependent society, this needs to be recognised and used to create a more cohesive political association, where both ideology and reality come together.

CHAPTER II: ON PROPERTY, WEALTH AND COMMERCE

Property, wealth and commerce are central to the liberal self-interest. Arguably it is the freedoms to acquire these things as man functions within a society allowing for comparison, that results in the avarice of humanity within civil society (as opposed to his natural inclinations) in a dual system where the enjoyment of them depends upon the lack of them for others. Rousseau believed that the value placed on such things in civil society led to comparison, pride and ultimately corruption of the citizen who no longer considers his duty to the state but only his duty to himself. Man must become something he is not in order to succeed and this pertains to the degeneration of the virtuous which should be at the very heart of the character of the legitimate state. Marx was similarly critical of these things, particularly represented the key values of the bourgeois state. The championing of property, wealth and commerce under liberal systems led to exploitation, to wage labour and ultimately the denial of man's true nature.

In Rousseau's understanding the gradual transition into civil society led to the opportunity for comparison where pride and ambition began to stir. For Rousseau, this had an impact on both the personality traits that were considered as desirable, and thus human worth, and on possession of commodities where 'each began to look at the others and to want to be looked at himself; and public esteem came to be prized...and this was the first step towards inequality and at the same time pride' (Rousseau, 1984: 119). People began to prize things that did not pertain to virtue. If one is not in possession of certain qualities he must feign them and civil society becomes merely an association where partial interests reign and 'one no longer dares to appear as one is', where 'suspicions, offences...betrayal, will constantly hide beneath this evil and deceitful veil of politeness' (Rousseau, 1997: 8). In a word, we become corrupted, virtue goes unrecognised and individuality disappears as the art of pleasing is reduced to principles, 'a vile and deceiving uniformity prevails in our morals, and all minds seem to have been

cast in the same mould' (Rousseau, 1997: 8). To be respected in civil society, successful even, human characteristics in a sense are put through a process of commodification and men assigned value based on agreeable rather than useful talents.

Furthermore, increasing consumerism and subsequently the desire for things- what Rousseau would call luxury- is increased through comparison and contributes to both inequality and man's artificiality. Rousseau questions us 'what will become of virtue when one has to get rich at all cost?', where man is appraised and only worth to the state what he consumes (Rousseau, 1997: 18). The liberal assertion of neutrality refuses to promote any conception of the good life, in asserting the right over the good virtues no longer have a place, exploitation and inequality take over and man becomes both self-serving and proud (Sandel, 1999: 210). Essentially, the prevailing conception of the good life in liberal society is the freedom to accumulate, including power and privilege, which can be purchased. What is more, the hegemony of liberal principles makes this entirely legitimate. In contrast, the Republic has a higher aim where 'the word finance is the word of a slave' and 'the citizens do everything with their own hands and nothing by means of money'; citizens enact their responsibility toward each other beyond an inclination toward sympathy (Rousseau, 1968: 140).

Adherence to liberal values results in a society where 'if one sees a handful of powerful and rich men on the pinnacle of grandeur and fortune, while the crowd below grovels in obscurity and wretchedness, it is because the former value the things they enjoy only to the extent that the others are deprived of them' (Rousseau, 1984: 133). This is no good life; there is no virtue here, just hateful competition and avarice where one necessarily can only be happy when the other is not, where 'with money one has everything except morals and citizens' (Rousseau, 1997: 19). Man feels no duty to his state and no duty to his fellow man; he likes to see him wretched because it heightens his sense of superiority. In a society that holds such values and is mutually interdependent, both exploitation and inequality become rife where 'citizens allow themselves to be oppressed only so far as they are compelled by blind ambition...they agree to wear chains for the sake of imposing chains on others in turn' (Rousseau, 1984: 132).

In terms of property, what we get from Rousseau is changeable. In the *Discourse on*

Inequality he is scathing, the development of property leads to servitude and misery. In the *Discourse on Political Economy* he seems more favourable towards it, particularly as an instrument for guaranteeing the relationship between man and state. *The Social Contract* seems to allow for elements of both, which has led to some analyses of Rousseau as an ideologist of the petty bourgeoisie, but I would argue that the conditional nature ownership means that this is not so. By uniting with the community all goods become public goods. Each individual has a right to the security of certain lands that must be respected by others, as the trustee of the public property, but with some key provisos to maintain equality and civic unity. In giving up his lands to the community, he assures himself lawfully of them but ‘the right of any individual over his own estate is always subordinate to the right of the community over everything’, so while certain property rights must be respected, they are not absolute (Rousseau, 1968: 68). Furthermore, the claimant can hold no more than he needs for subsistence and he must actively cultivate the soil rather than own it ceremoniously. Bertram has described Rousseau’s thoughts as a condition where ‘the sovereign power is used to ensure a dispersal of holdings such that all have sufficient property for their needs and none have too much’ (2004: 95). This limits the arising of particular wills, ensuring independence and thus freedom. It also limits possibility for comparison which leads to pride. So while Rousseau allows for private property in the social contract as lawful, it is highly regulated, conditional and theoretically dissimilar from liberal property owning rights like those of Locke.

For Marx, the value assigned to money takes over all things. As man produces for the owners of the means of production he becomes alienated from his labour, the product of his labour and his fellow man with whom he competes. Market forces transform the whole process of production into something alien to him, and although such a system is born of mankind, it ceases to be controlled by mankind through the championing of free trade; it becomes hostile to him. Where man and his labour are commodified, the concept of money transfers man’s personal worth into exchange value (Marx and Engels, 2002: 222). This represents a more developed system of exploitation through extraction of surplus value where man is no longer appraised on his projection of agreeable talents, or indeed any type of individuality, it goes further and personal talents no longer even matter. The process of industrialisation means that man is appraised on his productive

capacities; he is a commodity to be used by the owners of the means of production, who profit simply through their use of man's labour. This is an arrangement where money takes on a power of its own, where individual essential powers have no capability and 'the extent of the power of money is the extent of my power', thus to be rich is to wield power you have no right to (Marx, 1978d: 103). As such, 'money is the estranged essence of man's labour and existence' (Marx, 1994a: 54). It symbolises his value in society and denies him the chance of living as a species-being, he becomes the slave of money and of those few who possess it where the 'increasing value of the world of things', where there is profit to be made, 'proceeds in direct proportion to the devaluation of the world of men' (Marx, 1978a: 171).

Furthermore, increasing consumerism and the profit associated with it results in new wants that need to be satisfied through international trade relationships. So the increasing desire for new things that only the wealthy are able to afford leads to the spreading of the bourgeois order across the world, the increase of capital, the growth of the proletariat and consequently exploitation. Thus 'in the place of old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction' (Marx and Engels, 2002: 223-4). Where Rousseau believes such consumerism is detrimental to virtue, to the good life, Marx understands it as allowing for increasing exploitation based upon self-interest, of alienation and of the denial of man from living as a species-being. However, we may choose to understand Marx's conception of species-life as an understanding of the good life where he may be both at one with and part of nature, to together create a totality where he consciously expresses himself in objective works derived from the natural world. Santilli has argued that 'the articulation of the concept 'species-being' constituted a restoration of man to his fundamental and proper sphere of existence, of life itself', for what can the concept of the species-being be but the good life, where freedom and individuality are allowed to prosper in contrast to exploitation, alienation and slavery to the bourgeoisie and their money (1973: 76). Communist society would then be an attempt to allow man to transition from modern society to one that is prosperous enough to allow him to widen and to enrich his existence.

Marx, similarly to Rousseau, recognises that the enjoyment of wealth by the few

necessarily depends upon the lack thereof for the majority. Marx says 'private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths' (Marx and Engels, 2002: 237). Property is only to be enjoyed by the few, indeed it only functions to the extent that the working class are excluded from its enjoyment and are forced to such a level of poverty that they must sell their labour. Its possession, with emphasis on the means of production, acts to formulate relations whereby one gains everything with little expense and the other gains nothing but subsistence, with the expense of their whole productive efforts. Man must estrange himself to the point where his species-activity, otherwise the source of his liberty, must be dedicated to 'a means to his physical existence' and nothing more (Marx, 1978a: 77).

So both philosophers recognise that in liberal civil society, personal worth is reduced to what other people make of it, not necessarily anything of inherent worth, only so much as partial individuals can make use of. Both Rousseau and Marx champion their concepts of freedom which are negated by the acceptance and legitimisation of inequality in society and, more notably for Marx, the exploitation that occurs. The division of labour signifies a mutual interdependence across society and these dependent relationships are manipulated by those that have in order to exclude those that have not, in terms of wealth, but also as Rousseau sees it, in terms of personal merit. Indeed, as Volpe has articulated, the championing of 'personal merit' by Rousseau assumes inherent worth in individuality which is similarly articulated in Marx's work and in his idea of the species-being, where the 'proportional division of the product of labour in communist society among all the ('different') individuals...is itself only destined to represent the historical fulfilment of the Rousseauian demand for personal merit' (Volpe, 1978: 19). But for both our philosophers there is a recognition that this kind of individuality can flourish only if there is some attempt at levelling inequality and increasing universal freedom, so economic and political life is not reduced simply to what a man has and what he can do with it but rather to more, where the value of the whole is worth far more, due to its capacity to create freedom, than the sum of its parts.

CHAPTER III: THE IDEAL STATE

So we have established the problems that both Rousseau and Marx have identified with liberal politics, most notably that they entrench material inequalities through the acceptance of property as a natural right. To this point, there are remarkable similarities between their respective analyses. They both subscribe to the idea of an interdependent community that liberal individualism denies in order to justify privilege for the few. Both writers are concerned with both liberty and equality as the legitimate ends of their ideal states, where each one works in a dual system to create the other. Where Rousseau opts for a strong republican state that must re-negotiate its thinking away from partial interests and toward a cohesive community concerned with public good, Marx prefers the withering away of such an institution as it is conceived of in bourgeois right in favour of more localised communal associations and the communal ownership of property. However, in order to get to these new institutions both Marx and Rousseau recognise the necessity of a transitional phase that will act to instill the new principles of their free establishments, they both require new ways of considering the political association in order to create good citizens, and this process is symbolised by the lawgiver and the dictatorship of the proletariat respectively.

In Rousseau's estimation inequality comes about through the acceptance of self-interest as a legitimate foundation of political union. His task then is to set about finding a solution where equality, freedom and virtue are able to flourish. This solution is found in the concept of the General Will. The General Will, as opposed to the aggregation of the will of all, is derived from the society's common interest, and what is the public good, it requires a special way of thinking where 'they should all think from the standpoint of the people thought of as a collective entity' - an inalienable and indivisible whole (Harrison, 1993: 57). It is not a case of competing interests; one must submit himself to the idea of the common good before making decisions. Through this process, the citizen gains liberty

as he, along with every other citizen, makes the law for himself, he is sovereign and the laws are 'but registers of what we ourselves desire' (Rousseau, 1986: 82).

Furthermore, man must only will things that may be prescribed equally, which acts to subdue particular wills to the General Will, 'it should spring from all and apply to all', where private interests must be renounced if they cannot be realised universally (Rousseau, 1986: 75). While the people, through the General Will, are sovereign, a government, which is the legitimate executor of the executive power is necessary but only as the implementer of the decisions of the sovereign. In this way, it is not a government as we know it, partisan and self-interested, it is merely an instrument of the General Will. Corporatism in Rousseau's state does not exist 'there should be no sectional associations in the state', the link between man and state is direct (Rousseau, 1986: 73). The men that make up this government will be elected by lot, that is, chosen at random. For him holding power in the state is not a privilege but a burden, a civic duty that is 'a heavy responsibility, so that it cannot justly be imposed on one man rather than the other'.

Rousseau tells us 'from the deliberations of a people properly informed, and provided its members do not have any communication among themselves, the great number of small differences will always produce a General Will and the decision will always be good' (Rousseau, 1986: 73). This had led some readers of Rousseau to suggest a relation, if not similar logic, to Condorcet's 'Jury Theorem' that posits that if each citizen is well informed, has a better than 50:50 chance of being correct and makes a decision independently, as the number of citizens increases the probability of their decision as a whole being right increases (Bertram, 2004: 109-110). In this sense the General Will may be considered an epistemic tool to reaching the good.

Despite this theory, while 'the general will is always rightful and tends to the public good...it does not follow that the deliberations of the people are always equally right' (Rousseau, 1986: 72) Rousseau's acknowledges the possibility that the people may be misled and what they assume to be the General Will in fact is not. His troubling solution to this problem is the lawgiver, he is an enlightened being who must guide the General Will in the early years of the association in order to foster a sense of commonality of

goal, a collective identity, in a transitional period between men as they are, corrupted by experience of liberal societies, of self-interest and hierarchy, into the new state where they must adjust themselves to become good and moral citizens (because only good citizens can arrive at the General Will). Although he has no legislative powers, it is his job to 'frame a system of laws that will serve as a constitutional framework for the new political order' where the people must ratify them (Bertram, 2004: 137).

Rousseau recognises some further difficulties associated with reframing the whole process of human interaction, in subduing partial interest to that of the common good. Education is prescribed in order to facilitate this transition. In the *Discourse on Political Economy* Rousseau explains the need of education to instill in the people the principles necessary to be good citizens, to change their modes of thought that have been corrupted, where it may be 'too late to alter our natural inclinations when...habit has joined with self-love' (Rousseau, 1987: 125). He tells us, 'if they are trained early enough...not to perceive their own existence except as part of the state's own existence, they will come to identify themselves in some way with this larger whole' (Rousseau, 1987: 125). Thus re-education has a primary role in creating the conditions necessary for his ideal state. Presumably, after this process, perhaps after the passage of a generation, when citizens have been socialised in order to conceive of themselves in this way, the lawgiver is no longer necessary.

Marx's conception of the ideal state is difficult to ascertain. Engels tells us that and replace competition with cooperation, where 'branches of production are operated by society as a whole – that is, for the common account...and with the participation of all members of society' (Engels, 1969). In this system, private property becomes communally owned and goods will be distributed according to common agreement so no one person is able to benefit over any other, either through ownership or exploitation. Such goods are not redistributed uniformly which would pertain to inequality but instead 'to each according to his needs' (Marx, 1978b: 530). In the higher phase of communist society man's species being and thus his freedom is realised where 'labour has become not only a means of life but life's primary want' and the individual is able to develop all-round (Marx, 1978b: 530). Marx also reassures us that 'under collective ownership the

so-called people's will disappears to make way for the real will of the cooperative', so the veiled idea of bourgeois right is done away with and an association with a much greater end is instituted, as is the natural conclusion to his theory of historical materialism.

For Marx, the state is and can only be the facilitator of the interests of the dominating class. As such, his prescription is entirely radical. The immediate answer is violent revolution, although later Marxist thought revises this to the extent that it may be possible through increased suffrage for the process to begin democratically. Nonetheless, it is necessary for the workers to take hold of the state, of the legitimate use of coercive power, in order to wrangle from the bourgeoisie the means to begin the change. After the seizure of power a transitional period- the Dictatorship of the Proletariat- is necessary in order to set about the reordering of societal relations. This period is key to the shift to communism as the bourgeoisie are expected to become reactionary in a last-ditch attempt to restore their egoistic order. During this period, the state, which represents these bourgeois liberal principles, must come to be smashed. It is no use seizing existing state machinery as it is constructed entirely around bourgeois specifications which are not sufficient to fit the workers' purpose, it is 'thus in every respect, economically, intellectually and morally still stamped with the birth marks of the old society' (Marx, 1978b: 529). This idea, incidentally, is one of the key lessons Marx understood as a result of the Paris Commune of 1871.

It is assumed that while reactionary elements are expected to respond to the workers seizure of power, the movement to a communist system is ultimately for the good of all, allowing for freedom and the flourishing of man without the distinction of competing classes, where the 'emancipation of the workers contains universal human emancipation' in a system where cooperation leads to the end of scarcity and the competitiveness that this creates (Marx, 1978a: 80). Essentially, like Rousseau's lawgiver, it demands unlimited political power to fulfill its purpose in instituting the new political/social/economic system, and, where it takes more of a totalitarian aspect, engender a new way of thinking that sees this new system as good. Where the one class only exists in opposition to the other, with the removal of private property, the smashing of the bourgeois state and the reorganisation of society, class divisions will cease to exist

and the state as we know it will wither away. It is not simply set free, the workers' government is not intended to stay as one but 'freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it', and until this happens the dictatorship must remain.

Although what we get from Marx's ideal is somewhat vague, there are nonetheless some significant similarities to Rousseau's ideal in some important respects, particularly in process. Competing interests are no longer the basis of political association, both freedom and equality, although in different respects, are realised through developing the sense of community, the collective conscience, and there is a transitional period where elements of the old order must gradually be removed, the realisation of which has been charged with dictatorial aspects. This process reflects the necessity to remove the psychological and institutional hegemony of liberal/capitalist modes of thinking, to remove the ascendancy of what C. B. Macpherson has since come to call possessive individualism, where consumerism- buying and selling- has come to be considered the core of human nature, instead of things of greater value, like rationality, conscious reflection and morality.

CHAPTER IV: THE REALISATION OF EQUALITY?

So how far has equality been realised? In their search for equality both Rousseau and Marx have been accused of totalitarianism and where their prescribed systems attempt to institute true human freedom, but in practice they may seem to enforce new forms of restrictions that deny liberty. However this is tricky terrain and while many such criticisms are legitimate, freedom in this respect may well be based in previous concepts of partial/bourgeois interest, applied from a liberal perspective of individual right and so it is difficult to consider objectively the implications of such thought. An important question to ask at this point is how far and whether these new political associations create more problems than they are able to solve. Are despotic means, if this is indeed what they are, justifiable prescriptions to establishing a new and just order?

Does Rousseau realise equality in his ideal? Volpe has argued that his call is for formal equality based in the idea of the General Will as ‘moral conscience’ and can be nothing more than what he calls ‘religious egotism’, absorbing ideas of ‘traditional Christian individualism’, so from his perspective Rousseau’s understanding of equality falls short of that of scientific socialism which demands social equality in the act of communal life (Volpe, 1978: 24). By extrapolating from Rousseau’s ‘abstract man’, with natural rights codified into law, he believes that Rousseau does not understand man in the context of the historical society of his species, on top of which he accepts the division of labour and is thus an ideologist of the petty bourgeoisie, allowing for the functioning of material inequalities. However, I might argue that this is not necessarily the case.

The idea of the General Will and Rousseau’s concept of virtue which is closely related is a complex concept that attempts to do much. We have already seen that, regardless of Rousseau’s thoughts about the inherent rights of natural man, he has a belief in the interdependence of human society as it progresses into civility, just as Marx does. With

the General Will, in recognising each person as an indivisible part of the whole with an equal share of sovereign power, formal equality is acknowledged, which along with political say, also has value as a symbolic characteristic of equality that many states at Rousseau's time of writing were in no way committed to. But does it go any further than this?

We know that Rousseau has argued that it is the duty of all citizens to protect those most vulnerable. We have also seen in the General Will that the people are trained to think of themselves as a single entity, and to respect the whole; this entails consideration for one's fellow citizens. In the *Discourse on Political Economy*, Rousseau tells us that 'it is one of the most important items of business for the government to prevent extreme inequality of fortunes, not by appropriating treasures from their owners but by denying everyone the means of acquiring them', and we know that in his social contract extensive material inequality is regulated (Rousseau, 1984: 124). This does not simply pertain to formal equality, or even redistribution of wealth, Rousseau wishes for a system that denies the possibility of extreme inequality of fortunes at its very root by preventing the means for this to happen. Such inequalities lead necessarily to dependence and for Rousseau, dependence results in slavery, in the denial of freedom. So while Rousseau does not conceive of society necessarily in terms of economic classes, he is sensitive to the processes that allow for extreme inequalities, particularly as they relate to property ownership. Furthermore, through the social contract, each man engages in 'the total alienation by each associate of himself and all his rights to the whole community' where 'the conditions are the same for all, it is in no one's interest to make the conditions onerous for others', thus the mechanism of the General Will also functions to make it against personal interests to will inequalities because universality always applies.

But we may go further than this, into the theoretical functioning of the General Will. Rousseau's state is the people's state. The psycho-social aspect of the readjustment of thinking patterns, re-education, universality, 'forced to be free', the law-giver and the civil religion function simultaneously to reframe the system where each person sees their own good in the common good, effectively removing their egoism, and if this is successful, then theoretically there is no adequate justification for massive inequalities of

fortune beyond permissible matters, which we could translate perhaps into ‘to each according to his needs’. There is no reason to assume, given all that Rousseau wrote in his discourses, that he would be short sighted enough to allow for formal equality and nothing more.

However, many of these devices, which allow for the functioning of his ideal, are the ones that have been criticised for their despotic undertones, to the extent that perhaps liberty is undermined. Where citizens are forced to be free we are told that they have been mistaken about the General Will. In the spirit of the common good, for one man to follow his partial interests- particularly by disregarding the law- to guide him represents the degeneration of the state. Where the General Will is sovereign all must submit to it as they would their own selves. But what Rousseau is trying to limit here, as we can see from the discussion of virtue in Chapter I, is vice and what Affeldt has termed ‘bad citizenship’ (1999: 302). To ensure an effectual body politic, one must constrain himself to the just laws he has created for himself but also submit himself to the idea of the common good. Thus he must be forced to conform to the moral law- the General Will, which alone can ensure his moral and political freedom and independence- by the use of the coercive force of the state that each member tacitly agreed to the utilisation of, had any member been in contravention of the laws. In order to receive the benefits of the state, one must also take an equal part in the civic duties. So while the term may not be so contradictory if we adapt to Rousseau’s way of thinking, it may still seem to represent an element of totalitarian control where thought independent of consideration of the General Will is punishable. This means that minorities who misunderstand the General Will may come to be consistently disregarded, to which point we may have to ask why they are compelled to obey, though he would argue that in conforming to the General Will, they are getting what they really want through peaceful coexistence with the whole community in a society that must be mutually interdependent (Bertram, 2004: 194-5).

The lawgiver and civil religion are also tricky concepts of Rousseauian formulation, but equally necessary it seems for the functioning of the new state. The lawgiver sees through the transition to a new mode of thinking, but his role involves not the use of force or reasoned arguments but instead to ‘persuade without convincing’, setting up social

institutions with the social spirit imbued into them before the social spirit has even come into being, what we may call a civic consciousness. His role, it seems, is a difficult one. In order to create this society and social spirit, he must not be a product of it, he must have an ability of sublime reasoning, he must be charismatic and inspiring, essentially much of the power of the state lays in the hands of a single person of apparently super-human qualities with the only check being that he does not have any legislative powers beyond structuring the constitutional framework. Certainly the lawgiver is considered as one of the more elusive Rousseauian conceptions and many conceive of him as an easy answer to the problems that Rousseau encounters on his theoretical journey. Nonetheless, in Ellenburg's understanding of the lawgiver, his uniqueness prevents even temporary infringement of liberty, implying that the very nature of this man means that he is above the possibility of totalitarianism (Ellenburg, 1976: 252-253). But his very uniqueness makes him inconceivable, where does he come from, how does he come to possess this sublime virtue?

The civil religion seems to be a further attempt to engender virtuousness in the good citizen. Of his five conditions which are intended to express the social conscience, most of which affirm the existence of God and the afterlife, is the fourth which is 'the sanctity of the social contract and the law' (Rousseau, 1968: 186). People are not obliged to affirm these articles but must be banished as a result, 'not for impiety but as an antisocial being', with the implication that to deny them is to lack the characteristics necessary for good citizenship (Rousseau, 1968: 186). If he professes to believe them but then acts as if he does not, he is to be put to death for lying before the law. So here we can see the absolute dedication that each man must commit to the General Will and the legislation that it produces, to the extent that man may worship it although he need only believe it, he is banished if he refuses and is killed if he deceives, such is the value that Rousseau imports to it. But the civil religion and the impact of re-education that was discussed in the previous chapter have been criticised for their apparent attempt at indoctrination, and while it is clear where this criticism comes from, it is also apparent that in liberal systems affirming self-interest as legitimate, we are essentially already indoctrinated into the belief of the goodness of many of these classical liberal principles and the only sufficient way to substitute such principles to ones that may well pertain to freedom and greater

material equality is to transfer dedication from self to dedication to the community, and these methods represent a convincing way of facilitating this change.

Does Marx realise equality? The little information he gives us makes it difficult to answer this question. Indeed the lack often results in turning to the history of the practice to find an answer, which is not entirely sufficient. We know that the withering away of the state marks the end of both classes and politics and that what remains is a non-coercive administration concerned with the ordering of the new economy. So how are people who continue to dissent to be dealt with? There is no discernable comparative Marxist solution to Rousseau's forced to be free, if the state is non-coercive, what is to be done? Perhaps because of the transitional phase, the restructuring of society, the end of the state, politics and classes, people become more cohesive, harmonised and more concerned with one another's well-being, much like Rousseau's citizens, without even a definitional awareness of the functions of such things that have been phased out. But to assume that this would do away with all kinds of dissent implies that communist society operates in a vacuum without the possibility of comparison to any other form of society where all such things exist and may be highly valued. This is likely more of a problem post-modernisation, than it was at Marx's time of writing, although it would have been significant then. Certainly the 'iron curtain' assumes as necessary some form of isolation although to what end may be disputed, but alas we turn to practice.

Marx has been accused further of totalitarianism predominantly because of the idea of the dictatorship. While the reasons behind this are self-evident the dictatorship was by no means the perceived end of the process. The assumption is that a dictatorship of the proletariat is necessarily the working people using force against the bourgeoisie. However, while the workers through force must institute the transformation to communist society, as this very process takes place, Marx tells us it will become less necessary. In the higher phase of communist society, class antagonisms no longer have an outlet in politics or economics. The very idea of class itself is founded on the relations between different societal strata, with competing yet interdependent relations, and by controlling these relations, theoretically classes will cease to exist. In this sense, although the beginning implies this, the end is not a case of one group terrorising all others into

submission, this is contrary to Marx's conception of the state as a vehicle for class interests and his belief that the proletarian revolution marks the end of all antagonisms; it is a society where such groups do not exist and equality and liberty may be realised as a result.

Furthermore, it may be suggested that Marxism, through the centralisation that the dictatorship necessitates, leaves the budding communist society incredibly vulnerable to manipulation by party leaders, who simply wield state machinery to their own ends. The idea of the strong and decisive leadership was endorsed in Marx's diagnosis of the failure of the Paris Commune where its lack contributed to the failure of the movement. This has been problematic as it has led to damaging interpretations of Marxist thought, especially in practice, that use coercion and terror and treat any dissenters as enemies of the state. However, when Marx refuses to give us answers to these practical issues, it is difficult to ascertain the appropriate ways of dealing with such things, making it all too easy to resort to totalitarian answers.

Nonetheless, in theory, in a communist society, there is not a minority of oppressors wielding disproportionate power; the ruling class effectively becomes the majority of the population for the first time in history. Although certain state machinery needs to be wielded to rigid specifications, this is to prevent the possibility of the re-emergence of classes and the exploitation that it entails. With the realisation, through such means, of the full and free species-activity of man, it is hoped that the telos of the state, and indeed the people, is realised where they are able to remove all scarcity (which is arguably the cause of most competition and antagonism) and exercise their labour not for subsistence or indeed profit but with freedom and economic security, where man will flourish.

So while totalitarianism may be perceived from a liberal perspective to be part of the functioning of both Rousseau and Marx's ideals, it is important not to judge them by the standards of an ideology so flawed that they sought both to eradicate and transcend it. Particularly as it was becoming so pervasive that a whole new consciousness was prescribed by both writers to achieve these new and community based political associations. However, infinitely more disconcerting are the questions that remain unanswered, the viability of the lawgiver, the integrity of the dictatorship of the

proletariat, that while theoretically are possible, seem open to abuses that are fundamentally difficult to check, which will doubtless have significant consequences for the functioning of both liberty and equality in both systems.

CONCLUSION

So how similar are Rousseau and Marx's understanding of inequalities? Perhaps Marx, like Volpe, would argue that Rousseau does not go far enough, perhaps his prescriptions for a more just society are focused too much on freedom and not enough on equality, where equality is only a necessary condition for greater freedom by limiting dependence rather than being valued in and of itself. Perhaps the use of the state of nature to understand natural man does recognise man outside of the social relations in which he develops, leading him to draw very different conclusions to Marx. However, the historical period over which both writers are dealing with accounts to some extent for the differences, where Rousseauan thought is 'historically exhausted by the bourgeois revolution', as may be evident in their differing prescriptions (Volpe, 1978: 19). But I would argue that this view undermines the value of Rousseau's insights and indeed the value of his ideal outcome which does not necessarily produce an answer that is insufficient in answering Marx's problems.

We see in Marx and Rousseau some very similar elements in a broad range of their thought. Firstly their critique of liberal hegemony, the understanding of man as individual in civil society being mistaken, with the relationship of every man to another through the division of labour giving rise to mutual interdependence and subsequently the possibility for exploitation. It is this exploitation, based on atomized, egoistic man that allows for extreme inequalities and these are not permissible for either writer in a legitimate state. However, it is important to note that for Marx, the movement to the ideal is not a matter of implementing something new and better, it is simply a matter of unavoidable history, as the proletariat grows and begins to exert more force through its increasing consciousness, communism is not necessarily an ideal state but an inevitable one. But history has not born this out. So treat it as an ideal we will.

The commonality of their criticism of classical liberalism lies in their essential understanding of society as mutually interdependent in an association painted from a perspective that sees individual man imbued with inherent rights as the most basic unit. This leads to an egoistic order attempting to operate in a system of human dependence which results in huge disparities in wealth, that is, material inequality, exploitation and consequently a lack of liberty. However differences are evident in these respective analyses. For Rousseau man is naturally independent and in his social aspect is largely artificial; his attempt to create a more just system is based on reconciling this individual aspect within civil society. For Marx in contrast, man in his social aspect is natural and this is the only legitimate way to consider him where he cannot be abstracted from the community. These differing views account to some extent for the differing prescriptions we derive from each writer.

For Rousseau, liberty has its origins in man being able to answer to himself alone, without the necessity of dependence on others, which interplay with the idea of comparison and pride to distort man and his inclinations and leads to a system where self-interest predominates. For Marx, freedom is closely related to work, where free and conscious material production is at the heart of man's unique characteristics. Only in conditions where man is able to realise his species-being is freedom possible and the use of wage labour based on subsistence to extract surplus value for the capitalist represents brutal exploitation of the working class. In this sense freedom for both writers is very different but they both turn to the exalting of the community to realise it where they must commit to their fellow men within the association to enable a system that allows for freedom. Certainly Marx's understanding of this seems more pure where each member of the community commits himself in more social and economic, rather than political terms. For Rousseau, the impetus appears to be more upon the possibility of functioning as an individual without a necessary dependence on the inclinations of others. However this hinges on the universality of legislation which to some extent allows for equality in a fundamentally political sense but also reaches into the economic and social too.

Rousseau's lawgiver in the social contract and Marx's dictatorship of the proletariat represent the transitional elements from one mode of political association to another, where both writers recognise the requirement for the partial nature of the old order to be stamped out, to be removed and reshaped, involving a complete re-framing of existing thought and institutions. For Rousseau, this task comes down to the individual- the lawgiver- whereas for Marx it comes down to the whole proletariat, or indeed their leadership, where some critics have levelled the accusation of the possibility of the abuse of power, either in terms of dictatorship or tyranny of the majority. But while the aims of these two components seem to be similar, in some ways they set about achieving very different aims, the lawgiver is strengthening the social conscience and fortifying the republican state whereas the dictatorship sets about dismantling the bourgeois state and decentralising power into more local associations.

Nonetheless, the similarities between these two great philosophers, despite their differences, point to a common thread that unites them. While their concepts of freedom are very different, they both turn to the community in order to solve the ills of classical liberal ideology, to end exploitation extracted through civil society which is essentially interdependent. They recognize the need for whole new political associations that exalt the community as the only body through which freedom and equality may be realized and while some criticism is directed at the means with which they seek to achieve this, it seems unfair to criticise their ideals with the political philosophy that they sought to eradicate. Nonetheless neither ideal is entirely convincing, and many questions remain about the viability of both systems. However, that has not lessened the impact that either philosopher has had in the history of politics.

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