

Prediction of China's Future Democratic Development From the Perspective of Rousseau

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ABSTRACT

Rousseau's general will theory has an important significance on today's political society. However, the establishment of the sovereign guided by the general will has formed the opposition between the general will and the will of all. Whether the general will can "rise" as the will of all and how to get it has become the key to the formation of social contract. This article analyzes Rousseau's theory and the French revolution, and then predicts China's future democratic development from the perspective of Rousseau.

Keywords: *Democratic Development, collective will, general will, Hong Kong protest, French revolution*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the Hong Kong government announced the revision on February 13, 2019, the situation in Hong Kong has become increasingly complicated and unstable. Since June, the Hong Kong opposition and some radical forces have held numerous peaceful rallies, in an effort to block further amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance. The chaos is reminiscent of the Demonstrations and protests that erupted in Paris during the Enlightenment. Not coincidentally, these two groups of protesters, different in time and era, actually played the banner of "resistance against dictatorship" and advocated that they were both in the "interests of the people." This paper puts perspective back hundreds of years ago through Rousseau's "general will," "public will" thought which has been recognized as the theoretical basis of the French Revolution. It analyzes the conditions needed for China's democratic reform. This paper is intended to give some ideas for the further realization of democratic reform in China.

2. ROUSSEAU'S DISCRIMINATION IN THE GENERAL WILL, THE PUBLIC WILL AND THE COLLECTIVE WILL (WILL OF ALL)

Rousseau first put forward the concept of "general will" when defining the social contract in chapter 6 of the first volume of the Social Contract. He believed that human beings had lived a free and isolated life in the primitive state of nature. While as the continuous development of productive forces and the appearance of private ownership, human beings were faced with various obstacles and the natural state could not be sustained any more. In order to get rid of this existential crisis, people can only cooperate with each other and conclude a contract, that is, "each union and its own all rights are transferred to the whole collective" to

form a political community[1]. The will of this political community is the general will. The general will is the application of sovereignty. Once declared, it is called an act of sovereignty and constitutes law. It always takes the public interest as refuge and is the supreme power guiding the operation of the whole country. In order to facilitate readers to grasp the connotation of the general will, Rousseau further distinguishes the general will from individual will, general will and group will. He points out that the individual will is the will of the citizens.

"In fact, every individual, as a man, may have an individual will, contrary to or different from the general will which he has as a citizen." "And the sum of the individual wills is the will of all, but the sum remains the general will, except the offsetting of the positive and the negative among the individual wills." [2]

There is a great difference between the general will and the public will; The general will focuses only on the common good, while the public will focuses on the private good. From what raised by him, one can clearly see that the general will is the sum of individual wills, which may contain private interests, but the public will only considers the public interests. For the former, the political propositions of individuals are in conflict with each other, while the latter represents the public interest of the community, which constitutes the essence of the community. "In the political hierarchy, the other names for the general will and the public will are the collective will and the special will." [3] This distinction is marked by the state, the collective, and the individual, as well as the distinction between the general will, the special will, and the individual will. The transition of human beings from illegitimate society to just society means that the general will has been realized in social relations. The social convention can really come true because the general will appears in every member of the community. In other words, when the individual will is fully aware of the power of the universal will in reality, and fully recognizes and contributes to the general will, then the individual is likely to become an integral part of the community.

3. ROUSSEAU'S THEORY AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Before the French Revolution, French society had been gradually immersed in Rousseau's ideology -- almost everyone was talking about Rousseau. After the revolution, despite the Jacobins, famous leaders such as The Gironds, Bouzeau, Madame Rolland, even the French high statues —former court dignitaries all talked about and read Rousseau. The Rousseauian fever does not start from Rousseau's political philosophy, but from the worship and moral ideal.

The Jacobin revolutionary dictatorship of terror was not a predetermined and planned thing, but coming into being after several stages of development. From the paraphrase of Rousseau's doctrine to the beginning of the Revolution to Jacobin dictatorship and then Robespierre. This clue leads to totalitarian democracy through the pursuit of direct democracy, and its logical intermediary is the "general will" in Rousseau's sense. The basis of this general will is the benevolence of moral appeal, and the subject of this morality is "the people". And then it comes to a question: by what means does the "people" produce the pure general will? Through the people themselves -- direct democracy. The revolutionaries wanted to build a moral ideal on earth. At this point, Rousseau's thought of expressing the general will and establishing sovereignty in the people through direct democracy began to be implemented. The "people" as a whole gradually moved towards the altar. "Let the people speak, and the voice of the people is the voice of God, the voice of reason, and the voice of the common good." [4]

The popular will produces the constitution, but it is higher than the constitution. For the factions of the French Revolution, it was an expression of a long-held distrust of privilege and government, an attempt to defend liberty permanently through the common will. But it is contradictory empirically. Because it takes the Constitution as a guarantee of freedom and establishes an authority on it that is not subject to any constraints, and it necessarily eliminates the possibility of a balanced politics. This creates an extremely dangerous political paradox. As a direct political consequence, France has had five constitutional crises in just 15 years, starting in 1789, with five constitutions of 1791, 1793, 1795, 1799 and 1804. This, in turn, "provided an early indication of the legitimacy of the subsequent suppression of the opposition by the revolutionary courts." [5] The French Revolution was a timely retelling to Rousseau. The fact that the law is translated into political practice fully shows that the law is fragile in the face of unconstrained public opinion. In the practice of revolution, especially after the Jacobin dictatorship, the general will and the idealized appropriation of the general made the expression of abuse fall into the land of perdition and finally turn to its opposite.

4. THE CONFLICTS AND DEBATES ON UNDERSTANDING ROUSSEAU'S THEORY

After the conclusion of the understanding of Rousseau's theory and the examples of the misinterpretation of Rousseau's ideas in the French Revolution, a certain discussion on the operability of the theory can be made. The conflict in academic circles mainly lies in the following points: First, Rousseau holds that the general will has the supreme authority, and the whole will force the disobedient to obey. Some scholars believe that it is easy to evolve into the suppression of personality, so that individuals can only exist for the collective, and transfer all their own to the collective. "The general will of both is manipulated and exploited by people." [6] Because the general will is supreme, there is no defined standard. Although Rousseau guarantees that the general will will not make mistakes, it does not prevent some people from saying that their will is the general will. Once the general will is manipulated, nothing can not be done under its name. This is also the starting point for Talmon and others to criticize Rousseau. In the name of the general will and by passing off personal interests as public interests, a dictatorship with the appearance of "people's sovereignty" can be established. These scholars believe that the mistakes of the French Revolution are due to Rousseau's general will. The doctrine that contradicts them says that Rousseau is referring to the privileged class. That is to say, Rousseau's general will should exclude Particularism rather than individualism. Some scholars believe that Rousseau's general will emphasizes the generalization of "will", which is related to the theological debates of his era. For, in Rousseau's view, God does not favour some and alienate others, but saves the "general will" of all, a tortuous reflection of human society's demand for law to be universal rather than specific. To sum up a little bit, Rousseau is an idealist, he is a theorist rather than a political practitioner, he is better at destruction than construction. The significance of Rousseau's thought to modern national political life lies in the idea and thought rather than the actual political planning and design. Although the thought of general will he put forward has the defects of idealism and vagueness, the thought of popular sovereignty based on the thought of general will provides the theoretical basis for the people to resist tyranny.

5. THE REALITY OF THE PROTEST IN HONG KONG THROUGH ROUSSEAU'S THEORY

More than once during the Hong Kong protests, protesters have made the case that they represent the "general will". But according to what have been mentioned before, the general will, by its very nature, makes sovereignty inalienable, indivisible and unrepresentable, and can only be exercised by the people themselves. Rousseau does not deny the priority of individual freedom, but believes that individual freedom can only be truly realized in the political

community. Taking individual free will as the logical starting point of his political structure, he formed the general will through the unique association contract, but the general will, due to its own purity and supremacy, must be enforced by coercion.

Thus, the general will dominates everything and has absolute power, and difference will be obliterated in the supreme General will, and diversity tends to the same. The priority of individual liberty is reduced in the general will; Specifically, Rousseau believes that the public will produce process is the process of overcome self-imposed and meaning, the individual will always inequities, damaging public will, so "would not become a dead letter in order to make the social convention, it contains such a silently provisions -- this is the only thing to make other provisions with power -- or anyone refuses to obey the general will, all will force him to obey the general will. In this way, private will is completely swallowed by the general will, and personal space is thus lost. And when Rousseau overcame his private will with the general will, the party system was duly outlawed. The general will and the resulting popular sovereignty can only appear in the form of abstractness and integrity, which means that the people move from behind the political scenes to the front.

But what the recent event have already seen and proved is that the so-called "general will" in the process of protest has not really reached the idea of "unity". Different protest groups in Hong Kong also have different views on the changes. There is no unified trend of the "general will" among the various groups. In short, the protesters in Hong Kong could definitely not interpret themselves as the "general will".

6. THE PRACTICALITY OF ROUSSEAU'S THEORY IN CHINA

One will naturally have such a question -- under the general trend of modern and modern democratization in China, does Rousseauian democratic thought still have any soil to flourish?

First of all, from the perspective of Chinese history, there is a deep idea of the supremacy of imperial power in Chinese traditional culture, and power dominates everything. All these are contrary to the modern spirit of right and contract. In ancient China, the government was not the affirmation or protector of the "individual", nor would it recognize the value, dignity and freedom of the individual. The individual is the object of passive domination and enlightenment, and the social significance of the individual does not exist. Therefore, Rousseau's idea of sovereignty in the people was almost imperceptible in ancient China. However, if one carefully observe the various works, public opinion has played an important role in the thousands of years of feudal rule in China. The overthrow of the Qing Dynasty can be said to be the most powerful manifestation of modern China's rejection of feudal autocratic rule and embrace of modern democratic politics. In the transition period of the replacement of the old and the new, western democratic

thought was the main source of the absorption of the nascent Republic of China. Similarly, the thought of public opinion was also directly affected by western democratic thought. In modern China, the theory of "public opinion" was mainly integrated in the three People's Principles put forward by Dr. Sun Yat-sen. "I wish to be a Republic, as the heart of the whole nation." "The final success or failure of political change depends on the turn of public opinion." [7]Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles was the beginning of modern Chinese democracy. In the new historical period of China, the idea of "the supremacy of civil rights" is gaining more and more popularity. The major reforms made by generations of Chinese politicians all profoundly express the public will of the Chinese people and represent the common interests of the overwhelming majority of the people.

Rousseau's "general will" is the will of the political community established by the individual through the conclusion of a social contract. It is a kind of moral personality so it is always fair. Rousseau tried to solve the legitimacy problem of political power through "general will" by building the state on the basis of the general will and clarify the relationship between individuals and collectives. Because of the complexity of Rousseau's general will theory itself, people's evaluation of Rousseau has various attitudes. On the one hand, Rousseau mentioned if the people can fully understand the situation and have discussions, there would be no collusion between citizens; Then there is always the possibility of a general agreement arising out of a large number of small differences, and the outcome of the discussion could always be good. But when factions are formed, the will of each such group becomes the general will to its members, and the individual will (the will of all) to the State;

On the other hand, from the perspective of "prisoner's paradox" in modern game theory, we can see Rousseau's paradox of "general will" and "the will of all" more easily. For what the prisoner's paradox is all about is proving that a group of people has a common interest. If guided only by each special interest, it may eventually backfire, leaving neither the common interest nor the special interest fulfilled. Here we can recognize more clearly that the contradiction of Rousseau's theory system. While actually thinking in terms of Rousseau's subjective purpose, he's in deed the pioneer of democracy. However, since Rousseau always took the monism of value rationality as the basis and ultimate goal of his political construction, instrumental rationality was always in a state of absence. The structural imbalance between the two was fully reflected by the theory of general will, which was the ultimate source of the differences in interpretation of Rousseau's theory.

7. CONCLUSION

How to achieve the balance between the supreme pursuit of value rationality and the institutional design of instrumental rationality so that the general will in the real sense can be implemented in the actual political operation is the problem that modern China should seriously consider. With the

development of Chinese society, the call for "democracy" has become increasingly louder, such as the protests in Hong Kong.

Paying attention to the expression of public opinion, China's politicians should also take an objective and rational view of public opinion. They should not only according to China's national conditions but also have the dialectical understanding of Rousseau's "general will". What may probably follow is a combination of ideological and political education, using the content and method of the "general will" finally widely spread in the various social strata, and guide the social public will which is conform to the will of the state. Enabling the civil to better reach a consensus, so as to promote social harmony and the all-round development of socialist modernization construction, will be the predictable future of Chinese domestic politics.

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