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## Rousseau and Freire: The Case for Freedom and Humanization

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### Abstract

In this paper, we engage with and against Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Paulo Freire's educational thoughts on freedom and humanization. This is borne out of the need to interrogate their commitments to the field of philosophy and humanity. The essence of Rousseau and Freire's philosophical parlance in this paper is to examine possible implications on teacher and adult education programs. Hence, we considered Rousseau's thoughts on the state of nature, the general will and the common good and the necessity for freedom. Equally, we took into account Freire's position for and against freedom, humanisation and dehumanization. We conclude this paper by proposing that both Rousseau and Freire are great contributors to knowledge yet their educational ideas are not beyond some reflections.

**Keywords:** Freedom, Humanization, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Paulo Freire

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### 1. Introduction

The point of exploration is to look at the ideas of freedom, responsibility, humanization, and dehumanization in the light of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Paulo Freire's (1921-1971) philosophical parlance. The two, renowned philosophers, Rousseau and Freire, were chosen to be the push of this examination for their commitments to the fields of philosophy and humanity. Also, I conceive Freire's notion of pedagogy and Rousseau's concept of education as sharing identical nuances in combining both theory and practice in an agency that immerses the learner in deep learning. While educational practices liberate the individual, it also shields such an individual from the corrupt influences of society.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was known to be an enthusiastic lover of freedom and individual autonomy who attempted to challenge the monarchical values and social structures<sup>1</sup> during his time, hence the *raison d'être* of Rousseau being alluded to as a precursor of the French Revolution. He focused on the realization of individual freedom in the political society by reconciling freedom and order, combined with his emphasis on the subject's freedom. Rousseau leaves room for the freedom of subjects by making them inseparable parts of the body politic. For Watt, Rousseau additionally presents his state as an organization in all sciences, in all arts, and in every virtue,<sup>2</sup> hence, he appears to unite all the subjects under the common good and attempted to give those subjects active roles and freedom in a political state.

<sup>1</sup> Starobinski, Jean. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1988). *Transparency and Obstruction*, 22, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

<sup>2</sup> E.D. Watt. (1981). *Rousseau Rechauffee-Being Obligated, Consenting, Participating, and Obeying only Oneself. The Journal of Politics*, 43(3), 715.

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Rousseau further tended to freedom past some other issues of political way of thinking and clarified how man in the state of nature is blessed with an enviable totality of freedom. This freedom is complete for two reasons. First, a natural man is physically free since he is not obliged by a repressive state apparatus or overwhelmed by his kindred men. Second, he is mentally and profoundly free since he is not enslaved to any of the artificial needs that characterize modern society. This second feeling of freedom, the freedom from need, makes up an especially keen and revolutionary component of Rousseau's philosophy. Rousseau believed modern man's enslavement to his own needs was responsible for all sorts of societal ills, from exploitation and domination of others to poor self-esteem and depression; hence man is born free and everywhere he is in chains.<sup>3</sup> Though Rousseau did not lay emphasis on the concept of responsibility, what remains tenable is his demeanor to reality, of which the concept of responsibility can be grasped.

Paulo Freire, on the other hand, is also considered important in this study owing to his advocacy for a revolutionary pedagogy for both developing and industrialized countries. An analysis of Freire's writings reveals an intriguing philosophical journey that underscores existentialist themes, some of which correspond with Rousseau's views, such as freedom, inter-subjectivity, authenticity and dialogue. Based on his personal encounter, he also established themes such as humanization and dehumanization that would be of utmost importance to this paper. Considering the numerous works and writings of Paulo Freire (1970), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, marked a defining moment in his thoughts, and according to Freire, the theory of pedagogy cannot be understood apart from his philosophical principles. Hence:

Pedagogy cannot do without a vision of man and of the world. It formulates a scientific humanist conception that finds its expression in a dialogical praxis in which the teachers and learners together, in the act of dehumanizing reality, denounce it while announcing its transformation in the name of the liberation of man.<sup>4</sup>

Without a doubt, many topical elements in the domain of humanism and liberalism are established in the writings of Freire considering his vision of humans and reality, dialogic praxis, teacher-student relationship, social analysis, and interaction, as well as human liberation. It is in this view that the themes of humanization and dehumanization are considered apposite for this paper. The themes identified by Rousseau and Freire shall be further discussed for better illumination.

## 2. Rousseau's Thoughts on the State of Nature

Rousseau's thought experiment on the state of nature produces some interesting insights into our moral psychology and the social mediation of identity, as well as offers some provocative claims about the nature of human culture. Furthermore, Rousseau's impact on ensuing political theory has been substantial, in bearings that may appear to be astounding, given the concentration in the first and second discourses on the individual and the value of independence.

Rousseau sees natural man as naturally good due to the calmness of their passions. For Rousseau, self-love is the origin of all our passions, in this way Rousseau, proposes that the root of life is not a negative relation to the other but positive affection for oneself and for simply being.<sup>5</sup> For him, a man in the state of nature does not harm another one unless he is in danger of losing his life,<sup>6</sup> and he also says that 'since the state of nature is that in which care of our self-preservation is the least prejudicial to the self-preservation of others, that state was consequently the best suited to peace and the most appropriate for the Human Race'.<sup>7</sup> In other words, Rousseau makes natural men specialists who are good both for themselves and for others.

For Rousseau, early *life in society* 'must have been the happiest and most durable epoch' in human history.<sup>8</sup> In *The Social Contract*, one finds this thought even more profoundly and emphatically stated, where Rousseau argues that entrance into the civil state results in the transformation of the human being 'from a stupid, limited animal into an

<sup>3</sup> Yigit, Pervin. (2007). *The Question of Freedom in Political Philosophies of Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 13, A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University.

<sup>4</sup> J.L. Elias. and S.B. Merriam. (Eds.). (2005). *Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 14, Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Florida.

<sup>5</sup> Melzer, Arthur M. (1990). *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau's Thought*, 20, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

<sup>6</sup> Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. (1992). *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality (Second Discourse)*; Roger D. Masters. and Christopher Kelly (Eds.), *Polemics; and, Political Economy*, xvi, University Press of New England, Hanover, NH.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>8</sup> Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. (2011). *Basic Political Writings*, ed. David Cress (Ed.), 74, Hackett, Cambridge.

intelligent being and a man.<sup>9</sup> Although in both passages, Rousseau considers the potential for abuse and corruption to be a significant concern, the exit from the state of nature also eventuates in the development of the human faculties and the acquisition of moral liberty, 'which alone makes man truly master of himself. Hence 'for to be driven by appetite alone is slavery, and obedience to the law one has prescribed for oneself is liberty'.<sup>10</sup>

Freire, on the other hand, holds that a unique understanding of our nature and our telos serves as the foundation of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Humans are by nature imperfect, according to Freire,<sup>11</sup> making us flexible creatures without a predefined goal or horizon. We must therefore work to be more present in the narrative we create for ourselves because restlessness, which is a result of our incompleteness, is what moves us.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. The Necessity of Freedom for Rousseau

Rousseau believed that a good government must have the freedom of all its citizens as its most fundamental objective. *The Social Contract* specifically is Rousseau's endeavour to envision the form of government that best affirms the individual freedom of all its citizens, with certain constraints inherent to a complex, modern, civil society. Rousseau recognized that as long as property and laws exist, individuals can never be as totally free in present-day culture as they are in the state of nature, a point later echoed by Marx and many other communist and anarchist social philosophers. Regardless, Rousseau strongly believed in the existence of certain principles of government that, if enacted, can afford the members of society a degree of freedom that at least approximates the freedom enjoyed in the state of nature. In *The Social Contract* and his other works of political philosophy, Rousseau devoted himself to outlining these principles and how they may be given articulation in a practical present-day state. From this perspective, it could be inferred that Rousseau contended a democratic state where freedom becomes the priority but is anchored on the general will of the state. Sadly, the well-known perspectives of individuals that we alluded to as public opinion is by and large not the assessment of the lion's share but rather that of the minority who discover their ways and thoughts to the outside world.

For Rousseau, to prevail with regards to figuring out which societal institutions and structures contradict man's natural goodness and freedom, he must first define the 'natural'. Rousseau strips away all the ideas that centuries of development have imposed on the true nature of man and concludes that many of the ideas we take for granted, such as property, law, and moral inequality, actually have no basis in nature. For Rousseau, modern society generally compares unfavourably to the 'state of nature'. As Rousseau discusses in the *Discourse on Inequality* and *The Social Contract*, the state of nature is the speculative, prehistoric place and time where people lived uncorrupted by society. The most important characteristic of the state of nature is that people have complete physical freedom and are at liberty to do essentially as they wish.

It has been argued that despite the fact that his notion of freedom was obviously something he thought was extremely essential, Rousseau's grounds for arguing that the people should set the rules, that is, that they must write their own laws in person, are less than persuasive. That said, the state of nature additionally conveys the disadvantage that people have not yet found rationality or morality. In various works, Rousseau then again underlines the advantages and deficiencies of the state of nature, yet overall he reveres it for the physical freedom it grants individuals, permitting them to be unrestricted by the coercive influence of the state and society. In this regard, Rousseau's origination of the state of nature is completely more positive than Hobbes' conception of similar thought, as Hobbes, who originated the term, viewed the state of nature as basically a state of war and savagery.<sup>13</sup> This difference in definition indicates the two philosophers' differing views of human nature, which Rousseau viewed as essentially good and Hobbes as essentially base and brutal.<sup>14</sup> Rousseau acknowledged that although we can never return to the state of nature, understanding it is fundamental for society's members to more fully realize their natural goodness.

Rousseau incorporates an investigation of human needs as one component in his comparison of modern society and the state of nature.<sup>15</sup> For Rousseau, 'needs' result from the interests, which make individuals desire an object or activity. In the state of nature, human needs are strictly limited to those things that ensure survival and reproduction,

<sup>9</sup> Rousseau (2011), *Op. cit.*, 167.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Freire, Paulo. (1982). *Pedagogia do Oprimido*, 35, Paz e Terra, Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>13</sup> Hobbes, Thomas. (1998). *De Cive, or on The Citizen*, 54, Richard Tuck, and Michael Silverthorne (Eds.), Cambridge University Press.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau. (1712–1778). *Themes, Arguments, and Ideas* <http://sparknotes.com/philosophy/rousseau/themes> (Accessed June 8, 2021).

including food, sleep, and sex. By contrast, as cooperation and division of labor develop in modern society, the needs of men multiply to include many nonessential things, such as friends, entertainment, and luxury goods.<sup>16</sup> As time goes by and these sorts of needs increasingly become a part of everyday life, they become necessities.<sup>17</sup> Although many of these needs are initially pleasurable and even good for human beings, men in modern society eventually become slaves to these superfluous needs, and the whole of society is bound together and shaped by their pursuit. As such, unnecessary needs are the foundation of modern ‘moral inequality’, in that the pursuit of needs inevitably means that some will be forced to work to fulfil the needs of others and some will dominate their fellows when in a position to do so.<sup>18</sup>

Rousseau’s origination of need, and particularly the more artificial types that dominate modern society, are a particularly applicable element of his philosophy to the present time. Given the gigantic abundance that exists in a country, for example, Nigeria and the degree to which consumerism is the main thrust behind its economy, Rousseau’s bits of knowledge ought to incite reflection for anybody concerned about the ways in which the Nigerian culture nurtures a population of people increasingly enslaved by artificial needs. Connected to Rousseau’s overall endeavor to see how modern life contrasts with life in the state of nature is his specific spotlight on the question of how authentic the life of man is in modern society. By *authentic*, Rousseau basically implies how intently the existence of present-day man mirrors the positive ascribes of his natural self. Not surprisingly, Rousseau feels that individuals in modern society commonly carry on or generally live quite inauthentic lives.

In the state of nature, man is free to simply attend to his own natural needs and has not many events to relate with others. He can simply ‘be’, while modern man must often ‘appear’ as much as ‘be’ so as to deviously realize his ridiculous needs.<sup>19</sup> The whole arrangement of artificial needs that oversees the life of civil society makes authenticity or truth in the dealings of individuals with each other practically unimaginable. Since people are continually attempting to mislead as well as rule their compatriot to understand their own individual necessities, they seldom act in a credible route towards their kindred individuals. Considerably and more damningly, the way that modern people organize their lives around artificial needs implies that they are inauthentic and untrue to themselves also. For Rousseau, the origin of civil society itself can be traced to an act of deception, when one man designed the idea of private property by encasing a land parcel and persuading his basic neighbors ‘this is mine’, while having no honest premise at all to do such. Given this reality, the modern society that has sprung forward from this act can be only inauthentic profoundly.

Further to that, Rousseau accepts that the questions of why and how individuals are normally equal and unequal, on the off chance that they are unequal by any means, are central to his bigger philosophical enquiry. To form his critique of modern society’s problems, he must reveal that a significant number of the forms of inequality endemic to society are indeed not natural and can thusly be remedied. His decisions and bigger line of thinking in this contention are spread out in the *Discourse on Inequality*, yet the essential claim of his argument is that human inequality as far as we might be concerned doesn’t exist in the state of nature. Truth be told, the lone sort of regular imbalance, as indicated by Rousseau, is the physical inequality that exists among men in the state of nature who may be more or less able to provide for themselves based on their physical attributes.

Appropriately, every one of the inequalities that are recognized in modern society is portrayed by the presence of various classes or the mastery and abuse of certain individuals by others. Rousseau terms these sorts of inequalities *moral inequalities*, and he commits quite a bit of his political way of thinking to recognize the ways by which a just government can try to topple them. By and large, Rousseau’s contemplations on inequality, just as his radical assertion of the idea that all men are overall equal in their natural state, were significant motivations for both the American and French Revolutions.

#### 4. Rousseau’s General Will and Common Good

Perhaps the most difficult and quasi-metaphysical idea in Rousseau’s political philosophy is the principle of the general will.<sup>20</sup> As Rousseau clarifies, the general will is the will of the sovereign, or all the people together, that aims at the common good—what is best for the state as a whole.<sup>21</sup> Although each individual may have their own particular will that expresses what is good for them, in a healthy state, where people correctly value the common good of all over their own personal good, the amalgamation of all particular wills, the ‘will of all’, is equivalent to the general will.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

In a state where the vulgarities of private interest prevail over the common interests of the collective, the will of all can be something quite different from the general will.<sup>23</sup> The most substantial indication of the general will in a solid state comes as law. To Rousseau, laws ought to consistently record the aggregate longing or general will of individuals and ought to be universally applicable to all members of the state. Further, they should exist to guarantee that people's individual freedom is upheld, accordingly ensuring that individuals stay faithful to the sovereign consistently. The shortcoming in the contemplations of Rousseau however lies in the fact that there could be personal wills that are yet not ensured in the midst of the general will that has the wills of all.

Notwithstanding, Rousseau established that the aim of the political state is the preservation of the citizens,<sup>24</sup> subsequently, natural men want to stay away from an unsecured environment of the state of nature and approach secured conditions, ensured through an agreement in a civil society<sup>25</sup>. In Rousseau's state, there is an exchange of personal force for a right which is guaranteed by social union<sup>26</sup> therefore natural man prefers being a part of a civil association for well-being of himself and that of the community. In his theory, Rousseau legitimize entering into a society and the existence of a common power before justifying political obligation which is the product of voluntary association<sup>27</sup>. He underlines verifiable guarantees while discussing the transformation to a civil association since the state is meant for the individuals.

The end of Rousseau's state is justice and the common good, and for that reason, his aim is to conceive such a body politic in which each person obeys his own will while obeying the will of the commonwealth.<sup>28</sup> Unlike Hobbes' sovereign with absolute power and rights, Rousseau's sovereign provides equality of rights and justice and becomes the guarantor of freedom. Rousseau puts great emphasis on the freedom and free will of the subjects and he also argues that, for an individual, in order to recognize his true being and freedom, he should obey the general will<sup>29</sup>. Whereas, for Freire, learners' common good would amount to the emancipation toward critical consciousness.

Citizens achieve civil freedom limited by general will and moral values after entering into society and becoming masters of themselves which is possible only 'by obedience to laws'<sup>30</sup>. At the point when citizens submit to the laws that contribute to their freedom, they don't comply with anybody but just their own free will<sup>31</sup>. Rousseau claims that 'each of us puts his person and his entire power under the supreme direction of the general will'<sup>32</sup>. As a result, it can be argued that Rousseau tries to establish a commonwealth by reconciling individual freedom and political freedom.

Rousseau defines human beings as distinct from other sentient beings by virtue of two essential characteristics, namely, human freedom and perfectibility<sup>33</sup>, which are already present in the state of nature. Hence the question: what are the features of human freedom in the state of nature? And how can a human possess a faculty of perfectibility without possessing the category of morals? Remember that the moral conception is one of the products of the social world in Rousseau's account and that solitary human beings would have no sense of moral duty, just as they would lack all other categories of judgement.

Rousseau has been described by some scholars as 'the author of a totalitarian political theory'<sup>34</sup> and it is no wonder that Bertrand Russell claimed that 'Hitler is an outcome of Rousseau'<sup>35</sup>. Such an assessment clearly points to the arguments presented in Rousseau's essay *On the Social Contract*, published in 1762, principally the view presented there that the citizen of a polity must identify absolutely with the infallible general will of the state, and that whoever refuses to obey the general will must be 'forced to be free'<sup>36</sup>. Further, the quality of freedom that Rousseau attributes to human beings in the state of nature does not sound like freedom worth having.

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. (1994). *Social Contract; Discourse on the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero; Political Fragments; and, Geneva Manuscript*, 185, Roger D. Masters, and Christopher Kelly (Eds.), University Press of New England, Hanover, NH.

<sup>25</sup> Yigit, Pervin. (2007). *Op. cit.*, 15.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>30</sup> Rousseau, *Op. cit.*, 142.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>33</sup> Jean-Jacques, Rousseau. (2011), *Op. cit.*, 53.

<sup>34</sup> David, Wooton. (2011). 'Introduction' to Rousseau's *Basic Political Writings*, x, David Cress (Ed.), Hackett, Cambridge.

<sup>35</sup> Bertrand, Russell. (1945). *A History of Western Philosophy*, 685, Simon and Schuster, New York.

<sup>36</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau. (2011), *Op. cit.*, 127.

One could argue that in his views about the general will and common good, Rousseau made an error because he saw people, not as ends in themselves, but as means to greater objectives. His complete contempt for human rights immediately contradicts conventional Western individualism, leaving his ideal society stuck in a moral limbo.

Importantly, it does not seem to offer a basis for the radical reconfiguration of the world affected by entrance into this contract with other consenting human beings<sup>37</sup>. Other than the impulsive aversion to suffering, which Rousseau terms the natural virtue of pity, and from which all other social virtues derive, it is hard to see just what freedom a human being is supposed to possess. Indeed, as quoted above, Rousseau ultimately suggests that true freedom is only a *result* of the binding together of individuals into society, but freedom is also a necessary precondition of the founding of the society. True human freedom would have to be self-legitimizing, and self-authorising, in order to offer sufficient ground for the developmental account that Rousseau wants to offer: the liberty that Rousseau describes as ‘obedience to the law one has prescribed for oneself’<sup>38</sup>. This is a thought that German Idealism (e.g., Fichte, Kant, Hegel) will take to be the central problem of modern philosophy — it is also this line of thinking that results for Russell<sup>39</sup> in the terrific destruction of the Second World War, at the hands of totalitarian empires.

Also, Rousseau’s abstract conception of the general will raises some provoking questions. The first is, how can we know that the will of all is really equivalent to the common good? The second is, assuming that the general will exist and can be expressed in laws, what are the institutions that can accurately gauge and codify the general will at any given time? Tackling these complex dilemmas occupied a large portion of Rousseau’s political thought, and he attempts to answer them in *The Social Contract*, among other places.

In Rousseau’s political theory, the state, consent, and general will provide freedom. According to Rapaczynski, even Rousseau’s paradox of being forced to be free is understood as contributing freedom because when individuals are forced to obey their reason in the civil state, they are forced by the community, which makes their moral agency free<sup>40</sup>. However, some authors argue that individuals in Rousseau’s theory appear to be coerced by the sovereign<sup>41</sup>. In fact, freedom in his theory does not mean to do whatever you want to do but it means to control your desires and passions. Rousseau gives dominant power and the right to subjects to revoke any government. For him, the supreme power is the legislative will that is the will of the subjects. Grimsley claims that Rousseau holds a democratic view of sovereignty and defends that ultimate political authority can be safely left in the people’s hands<sup>42</sup>. That is to say, Rousseau as a defender of individual liberty tries to eliminate the gap between sovereign and subjects. In his theory, the sovereign does not appear to be independent, absolute, and repressive in power. However, some authors claim that when the sovereign of Rousseau directs and guides subjects to induce them to obey the general will and the common good, individuals’ free will loses its importance. Therefore, Rousseau makes all individuals prototypes obeying the general will, not their wills<sup>43</sup>.

Until Rousseau’s time, the sovereign in any given state was regarded as the central authority in that society, responsible for enacting and enforcing all laws. Most often, the sovereign took the form of an authoritative monarch who possessed absolute dominion over his or her subjects. In Rousseau’s work, however, sovereignty takes on a different meaning, as sovereignty is said to reside in all the people of the society as a collective. The people, as a sovereign entity, express their sovereignty through their general will and must never have their sovereignty abrogated by anyone or anything outside their collective self. In this regard, sovereignty is not identified with the government but is instead opposed to it. The government’s function is thus only to enforce and respect the sovereign will of the people and in no way seek to repress or dominate the general will.

Rousseau’s account of the universal will, according to Bertram, is plagued by “unclearities and ambiguities”.<sup>44</sup> The main conflict, he argues, involves a democratic view of the general will as merely what the state’s residents have voted

<sup>37</sup> This entry was posted in Close Reading, Empire and Its Ruins 2016-19, Thinking About Course Texts, Thinking About History, Thinking About Philosophical Methodology on November 7, 2016 <https://sites.uci.edu/humcoreblog/2016/11/07/rousseau-and-the-nature-of-human-freedom/> (Accessed on June 5, 2021).

<sup>38</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), *Op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> Bertrand, Russell. (1945), *Op. cit.*, 685.

<sup>40</sup> Rapaczynski, Andrzej. (1987). *Nature and Politics: Liberalism in the Philosophies of Hobbes*, 262, Locke and Rousseau, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

<sup>41</sup> J.P. Plamenatz. (1968). *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation*, Oxford University Press, London; M Hocutt. (2003). *Compassion without Charity, Freedom without Liberty: The Political Fantasies of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The Independent Review*, 8/2, 165-191.

<sup>42</sup> Grimsley, Ronald. (1973). *The Philosophy of Rousseau*, 95-96, Oxford University Press, London.

<sup>43</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), *Op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> Bertram, Christopher. (2012). *Rousseau’s Legacy in Two Conceptions of the General Will: Democratic and Transcendent. The Review of Politics*, 74(3), 403-19. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23263382>.

upon collectively and a view based on abstract values that embody hegemonic or even majority choices. Insofar as democratic processes may serve as the beginning point for identifying the ideas that serve the common good, the contradiction is neither dichotomous nor catastrophic. The general will should therefore ultimately be broadly applicable and have an equal influence on everyone. Bertram argues further that it is unlikely that the effects of the laws will be the same for everyone in a state whose residents have a broad variety of lifestyles and jobs, a significant amount of multiculturalism, or a substantial level of economic disparity.

## 5. Paulo Freire on Humanization and Dehumanization

Seeing from the arguments of Rousseau, it would be recalled that he emphatically stressed the importance of freedom and how it ought to be achieved in the body politic of a state. Unlike Rousseau, Freire was not much concerned with the process but rather with what happens when human subjects are not free or liberated, hence what he called oppression. His *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was informed by a particular vision of human nature and our teleos, which emphasize that man is by nature unfinished and hence the incompleteness makes man an open being without a predetermined vision or horizon.

For Freire, the problem of humanization has always been from an axiological perspective owing to humankind's central problem that now takes on the character of an inescapable concern<sup>45</sup>. Freire in the first chapter of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* espoused that the concern for humanization that takes the lead to dehumanization is not only of ontological possibility but also of historical reality<sup>46</sup>. By this, Freire believes that both concepts, humanization and dehumanization are viable possibilities for the unfinished man who is not in the oblivion state of his or her consciousness. Freire believes that both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives for humans and that the former, humanization, is the people's vocation, which is constantly negated and thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of the oppressors. Thus, humanization presents us with the yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice, and their struggle to recover their lost humanity.

Freire's pedagogy does not focus on the process but rather on what happens when the human is not free and cannot *be more*, which is what Freire means by oppression: the inability to *be more* that leads humans to *be less*<sup>47</sup>. Since our vocation is to *be more*, to *be less* is a form of dehumanization; it is a state in which we are unable to write our own stories, trapped in a system that compels us to act according to alien desires. The oppressed is instrumentalized, a tool for the oppressor's own desires, and when a person is a tool and does not act according to their own desire, they are not making their own stories. For Freire:

Dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a *distortion* of the vocation of becoming more fully human. This distortion occurs within history; but it is not an historical vocation. Indeed, to admit of dehumanization as an historical vocation would lead either to cynicism or total despair. The struggle for humanization, for the emancipation of labor, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women as persons would be meaningless. This struggle is possible only because dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact, is *not* a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed<sup>48</sup>.

This explains the need for a pedagogy of liberation, capable of creating a communicative structure that will dissolve the chains of the oppressed. Although liberation might seem to start by showing the oppressed their chains, Freire's pedagogy is more complex and insightful showing that the trapped or oppressed must release themselves, by emancipating through a collective process, using dialogue as the key. Hence:

This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. In order to have the continued opportunity to express their 'generosity', the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well... True generosity lies in striving so that these hands — whether of individuals or entire peoples — need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world. This lesson and this apprenticeship must come, however, from the oppressed themselves and from those who are truly in solidarity with them<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Freire, Paulo. (1970b), 1, *Op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> Freire, Paulo. (1982). *Education as the Practice of Freedom* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). In *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 1-84, Continuum, New York, NY.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Freire, Paulo. (1982). *Op. cit.*, 1-84.

Dialogue, to Freire, is the exercise of hearing not only one's experience but others' experiences of the world, which might not come easy. It is a key form of action and agency, the means not only for understanding but also for transforming the world<sup>50</sup>. Dialogue, in this view, is described as inherently critical, which in its form emerges from the collective objective, and moves from inertia to action. Freire believes that this reveals the world for what it is; identifies the 'limit situations' in which the oppressor impedes the oppressed from acting freely, and provides a roadmap to action<sup>51</sup>.

For Freire, dialogue is not a view or position encompassing two human beings who want to reassure each other of their own views, rather it is one that bridges different visions of the world to build a comprehensive and communal worldview. Ultimately, the aim or goal is to pronounce the world together for the emancipation of all. To arrive at this collective worldview, individuals disclose their backgrounds and stories. Some people will have specific knowledge that, when shared, will produce more impact on others. This commitment ensures that neither the subjective nor the objective aspects of education are ignored and that the individual is respected as much as the collective. In fact, respect for each individual's subjective knowledge and experience is crucial on the path towards a collective and more objective comprehension of the world<sup>52</sup>.

Through dialogue, we learn to search for everyone's freedom, and this implies not only respect and empathy but also the capacity to project the future. While animals have a timeless view of the world, the human being is historical. Conscious of past and future, and the place they occupy in the world and in time, humans are not condemned to the present. Our actions can be informed by a collective image of the future. Apparently, Freire's view of humanity is both historical and relational considering the result of an unfolding social process. Though the relations among human beings could often be oppressive, Freire sees human relations as the key to collective liberation. Since humans are historical and relational, it is impossible to change the structures of oppression at an individual level. And this is why, rather than utopian, Freire's theory is relevant and necessary<sup>53</sup>.

## 6. Paulo Freire on Freedom

Freire does not romanticize the world but foresees that the oppressed, who have internalized the values of the oppressor and fear of freedom, will initially resist overcoming the structures of oppression. When the oppressed turn into an oppressor, nothing fundamental changes, even within themselves. The only way to really *be more* is by committing to liberating everyone and moving beyond a world in which there are oppressors or oppressed. To complement the need for freedom, Freire presents us with the following questions:

Who is better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society?  
Who suffers the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation?<sup>54</sup>

Obviously, the oppressed are in the best position to understand the effects of oppression or what an oppressive society is, or the need for liberation because of their relation with reality. Invariably, for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not in seeking to regain their humanity, which is a way to create it, become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both.

For Freire, one of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed is *prescription*, and prescription represents the imposition of one individual's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness<sup>55</sup>. In this regard, Freire noted that the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor<sup>56</sup>. The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom.

Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility. Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion. For Freire, he believes that:

To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity.

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>54</sup> Freire, Paulo. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum, New York, NY.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

But the struggle to be more fully human has already begun in the authentic struggle to transform the situation. Although the situation of oppression is dehumanized and dehumanizing totality affecting both the oppressors and those whom they oppress, it is the latter who must, from their stifled humanity, wage for both the struggle for a fuller humanity; the oppressor, who is himself dehumanized because he dehumanizes others, is unable to lead this struggle<sup>57</sup>.

The oppressed in this case will encounter the duality in their innermost being, and this might afford them the conflict in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, and in their power to transform the world<sup>58</sup>. For Freire, however, to attain the authenticity of their existence, there is a need to surmount the dilemma and oppression that confront them (the people) in their sense and belonging to the world, hence they must create a new man who is liberated from the shackles and struggles of their former self. With this in mind, freedom becomes evident and humanization, not dehumanization, becomes achievable.

Rousseau and Freire both advocate for the establishment of free subjects as well as participation in the public freedom required for reforming society. It may be said that Freire has a more radical goal in mind when it comes to society and a dual view of freedom, whereas Rousseau is more radical in approach when it comes to the person and his freedom. Freire's criticism of a banking idea of education coincides with Rousseau's idea of the child as an active and independent learner. As a result, they both challenge the goals and delivery of education and the conviction in people's capacity for involvement and participation in politics and social issues is one striking similarity between Freire's and Rousseau's thoughts. This is clear from the sort of curriculum and pedagogy they promote, as a learner's social milieu has a significant impact on both their learning and reality as well as their level of consciousness. The two thinkers consequently advocate for an educational setting that encourages students to participate in their learning and recognize the root causes of oppressive conditions. Hence, at the core of their agitations lies the consciousness of either their environment or their reality. In order to achieve the goals of education, it is crucial that individuals actively participate in the sociopolitical decisions that affect their lives because politics has been found to have a significant impact on all facets of human life.

## 7. Conclusion

The thrusts of this paper, as earlier stated, are to give a critique of Rousseau's concepts of freedom and responsibility and Freire's concept of humanization and dehumanization.

It is imperative to reiterate that the thoughts of Rousseau lies in understanding freedom in the light of general will. For him, the general will encompasses the wills or opinions of all in the form of law, backed up with sovereignty which resides in the subjects. However, this paper observes some inconsistencies in achieving the wills of all in the general will. The general will, being the will of all, does not guarantee personal will as some wills might be different from the other, hence one would have to be forced to be free and this might not be ideal in a body politic. Seeing the implication of Rousseau's arguments in adult education, it would be noteworthy to establish that the wills of all might be a variation from achieving the needs of adult learners. Though this can be an achievable feat in teacher-centered programs, where the needs and interests of all the learners are covered and synthesized to be the needs of all, however, this might not be in tandem with learners' centered or adult education programs where emphasis on contents is built around the need(s) of each learner. Though the kind of education, posited by Rousseau in his book, titled *Emile*, is child-centered that focuses upon the conscious needs of the child<sup>59</sup>. In this vein, this study strongly anticipates a place of becoming where humans are guided to achieve self-actualization, hence the reason for Freire's philosophy on humanization<sup>60</sup>.

Freire's philosophy is guided by the notion that humans are motivated by a need to reason and engage in the process of becoming. Freire's focus on humanism is centred on his curiosity about the cognitive capacity of humans to shape their experiences and achieve personal and collective self-actualization, thus developing their full humanity. Humanism is a central component of Freire's worldview and is essential to understanding Freirean philosophy. Having

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Peter, Collins. (1976). *Rousseau's Philosophy (or Philosophies?) of Education*. *The Irish Journal of Education*, 2, 51-80.

<sup>60</sup> To become more fully human, men and women must become conscious of their presence in the world as a way to individually and collectively re-envision their social world.

interrogated the thoughts of Paulo Freire, it is evident to infer that Freire's humanist approach evolved over time through the influence of an eclectic array of intellectual traditions, including liberalism; Marxism; existentialism; radical Catholicism; phenomenology; progressive education; developmentalism; feminism; and critical race theory. It can also be said that Freire was influenced by Christian humanism and Marxist humanism. The former, Christian humanism is an approach that promotes the worth of human beings and asserts that humans strive to become more fully human in unity with others, despite impediments to humanization such as injustice, exploitation, and oppression while Marxist humanism can be seen as a 'focus on systemic violence and structural inequalities with unlocking the humanistic potential of human beings'<sup>61</sup>. Through Marxist humanism, Freire denounces oppressive political, social, and educational structures, and he announces the power of the oppressed in reclaiming their full humanity<sup>62</sup>.

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