

The significance of reason is discussed both in John Locke's, *The Second Treatise of Civil Government*, and in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's, *Emile*. However, the definitions that both authors give to the word "reason" vary significantly. I will now attempt to compare the different meanings that each man considered to be the accurate definition of reason.

John Locke believed that the state "all men are naturally in ... is a state of perfect freedom" (122), a state in which they live "without ... depending upon the will of any other man" (122). It is called the "the state of nature," and it is something that is within us at birth. The state of nature is a law made by God, called the Law of Reason. This law gives humankind liberty, freedom, and equality and stresses that no man "ought to harm another in his life, liberty, or possessions" (123). According to Locke, the law of reason is the basis of man as well as society. It restrains men from infringing on the rights of others. In this state, there is no need for a central authority figure to govern the actions of people, for it is the people, themselves, who impose the "peace and preservation of mankind" (124). One can have perfect freedom as long as one does not disturb others in their state of nature; in this "state of perfect equality ... there is no superiority or jurisdiction of one over another" (124). Men, thereby, have the power to "preserve the innocent and restrain offenders" (124) and punish those who transgress against them and disturb their "state of nature." Thus, all men are their own "executioner[s]" in the law of nature," or the Law of Reason.

While all men are in charge of their own will according to the Law of Reason in which they are born, some men do, in fact, break or reject this law, which causes them to enter into a state of war with the others. People reject the law of nature for many reasons, especially when their ideas and opinions differ. When people reject the law, two things can happen; the first is that one could enter into a state of war with someone else, and the other is that one could choose to enter into a state of society. It is reason that ultimately leads a person into the state of society through a social contract.

In these societies, it is reason, the law of nature, which governs mankind. Reason is not flexible because it is God's law and it is set in stone. This reason gives you the social contract, leading to life, liberty, and happiness. To Locke, it is crucial for men to enter into the social contract as soon as possible. Since we are born into the state of nature in which the law of reason governs us, it is easy for us to enter into society when we are young. This is because that very society is based on reason, not upon feelings or intuition. When men leave their state of nature and conform to society and the government, they give up their right to punish others, as they see fit. Instead, the social contract exists to protect people from those who transgress by inflicting due punishment to offenders through the force of the government. Since every person mutually agrees to live amongst the rules of the contract, it protects the good of the majority. The government thus works to benefit the good of the people.

The best kinds of government, Locke believed, are absolute monarchies, because they don't take their citizens out of the state of nature. Societies, in fact, are in a form of the state of nature, themselves, so people don't have to give up their "rights" to reason by entering into the social contract. Reason still exists where conformity flourishes. It doesn't diminish but is actually enhanced by the merging of natural law (fundamental law) and positive law (the law of the majority of others).

John Locke believed that conformity is what enhances society. His ideal was for everyone to be fully integrated into the social contract. In order to accomplish that, Locke stressed that parents need to teach their children how to labor early on. Children must learn abstract reasoning as soon as possible so they can leave the state of nature and enter into society.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, on the other hand, believed that the "self" was more important than society. Reason is a tool which helps us to develop self-sufficiency and teaches us good versus bad. It is the arbitrator of sentiment and senses, things which, to him, were much more plausible than reason, itself. Children are filled with an abundance of imagination and creativity, and their senses guide them through their daily lives. Rousseau believed that a child's sensations "are the first materials of knowledge" (64), for things which derive from the senses are easy to perceive. This is what inspires a child to want to learn and to want to cultivate his/her reason. It is easier, he suggests, to show a child something than to teach him something that he/she cannot fully comprehend. As the saying goes, "the unexamined life is not worth living."

To Rousseau, experience and hands-on learning would be far more instrumental in a child's life than reason. It is necessary to force a child "to learn by himself" (207), not from another person's idea of what reason should or should not be. It is far better, he believed, for a child to know a few things which he/she could call "truly his [her] own" (207), than to know several things only partially without fully understanding them. Rousseau thought that by developing a child's nature (or the cultivation of his/her reason), less emphasis would be put on the development of the senses. And to him, it was the senses which were far more critical in a child's life.

Rousseau felt that humankind should steer away from society. It is far more important for us to listen to the self than to adhere to authority. To him, it was society which was affecting the children, causing them to be more demanding, ego-centric, less appreciative, more selfish, dependent on others, and ungrateful. These problems, in turn, led to deeper psychological disorders, such as insecurity complexes, lack of empathy, and lack of trust in others. Rousseau suggested that if parents stop restricting their children and let nature take its course, their children would have less problems in the long-run. Parents also must give their children more freedom to explore and keep them within the "state of nature" as long as possible; this will make children more independent and self-sufficient and lead them more quickly towards self-efficacy and individualism. These qualities were Rousseau's ideals, a far contrast with Locke's, which was based upon conformity within society through a social contract.

Since living within society is fairly unavoidable, Rousseau said that it is crucial to know how to live with others and how society, itself, works. It is important for the grown child to learn about the passions of others so he/she can prevent being deceived in the future by others. People must learn not through abstract reasoning, but through concrete reasoning, which allows them to recognize their limits, wills, and desires. Imagination would not be encouraged by Rousseau because it leads to creativity and technology, things which, inevitably, cause change. And in order for society to remain stable, change is simply not possible.

Rousseau saw something wrong with 18th-century society and morals. He suggested that we should stay away from conformity and binding ourselves into societies for as long as possible. But Locke did not feel this way. He thought that society was necessary to preserve the law of reason. To him, entering into the social contract should be done as soon as possible. Independence and freedom were less important to Locke than they were to Rousseau. Reason was less important to Rousseau than to Locke. The significance of reason, therefore, would be far more important to John Locke than to Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

