

Reading Questions: Rousseau III, *Social Contract*

1. What happens to a citizen's liberty when the size of the state increases? What does this suggest about Rousseau's conception of liberty?
2. What makes a government democratic according to Rousseau?
3. What things are presupposed by a democratic government but are difficult to unite? Does this indicate that Rousseau has an outmoded conception of democracy?
4. Why does Rousseau think that aristocracy "direct[s] the public force in less strict a conformity with the rule of the general will" and that, in monarchies, "Everything moves toward the same end...but this is not that of the public felicity...?"
5. Why is it challenging "to know whether a given people is well or poorly governed" according to Rousseau? Do we face the same problem today?
6. Why does Rousseau want only small states?
7. Why are deputies or representatives inconsistent with a legitimate political order?
8. What happens to the general will when private interests enter politics? Is it destroyed?
9. How does Rousseau justify majority rule? That is, how can we be both free and forced to conform to wills that are not our own?
10. What is the question that is asked of citizens when they go to the vote in the assembly? Why does this question matter?
11. The chapter on civil religion got Rousseau into considerable trouble with the governments of several countries, including most notably France, where he had lived and made his reputation. What *specifically* do you think most disturbed Rousseau's contemporaries and those in authority about this chapter?
12. What is Rousseau's biggest complaint about Christianity?
13. Is Rousseau's "purely civil profession of faith" consistent with the freedom of conscience?