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Developing a Methodology to Evaluate Various Parameters of the General Interest as Defined in Political Philosophy of J. J. Rousseau

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The “social contract” is the most famous philosophical text of Zac Jacques Roussos, which was to influence the intellectual and political movement of the 18th century. By publishing the “social contract” or “Civil Law Principles” in 1762, Rousseau, presenting his theory of the state and seeking the foundation of civil society, attempts to expose the conditions of a stable and just state by putting freedom as a precondition for law and the common good must be lawful. A central place in its political theory is the concept of general will, which is in the general interest (otherwise the common good) and on which the idea of a favored constitutional state is based. We estimate approximately the size of the external economy by the method of the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM). The Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) is a survey-based technique, frequently used in Experimental Economics, especially useful for the valuation of non-market resources/goods/services, and cultural heritage objects (of aesthetic, historic, scientific, or social value), such as conservation of monumental remains and preservation of the physical and anthropogenic environment.

Keywords: “social contract”, Experimental Economics, Contingent Valuation Method, willingness to pay (WTP), willingness to accept (WTA)

Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau begins by saying that a guarantee of the existence of the state can only be a unanimous convention, called a social contract. This is an underlying and lasting contract that binds all the people of a political community and which, in order to be fundamental (i.e., to legitimize the political situation) must be a contract of each one with one’s self, other with everyone. In addition, one of the key points of Rousseau’s differentiation from Locke and the Hobbes, for which the social contract is borrowed as a subordination to the sovereign, is one. The meaning of the “social contract” lies in the fact that it transforms the isolated individual, the simple arithmetic unit into a collective body, which immediately acquires its unity, its ego, its life, and its will. Characteristically, he notes,

> To find a form of community that protects and protects with all the shared power the person and goods of each member, so that everyone, as he joins with all, obey rather than himself and remains as free as before ... (Wokler,2012)

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In the context of the symbolic, creative interpersonal entity, a union act, “each one puts together his face and all his power under the ultimate guidance of the general will”, assigning his rights and the privilege of the physical state in order to gain political freedom—anyone who refuses to obey the will, will be compelled to obey it from the whole body (Wraight, 2008).

For the most part, the purpose of establishing the state and the guiding principle of society is the common interest. In order to achieve this (the public-general interest), each individual submits his or her individual will to the general—citizenship requires a kind of degeneration, which is to replace his personal interest with the public. Each member desires the general good because it also serves his private interest as these are clearly interrelated and if a member leaves his personal interest, it will cause the destruction of the entire collective political body on which he wishes to stand. On the one hand, the general will by its very nature necessarily favors the good of everyone; on the other hand, for everyone, deeper than his personal interests, there is the common interest (Simpson, 2006).

The general will, which stems from the agreement of the body with each of its members and which stems from all and applies to all, is approached by Rousseau abstractly and algebraically, in the sense that it is not a sum of particular wills but a “sum of differences”, through which the common interest is determined. According to its distinctive wording, “if you remove from the individual wills the extra and the mutually eliminated, the rest of the will will remain as a rest”. Besides, what generalizes the will is less the number of votes and more the common interest that unites them. As it has been pointed out, the “social contract” has no foundation other than the general interest, which goes back to an inviolable rule in which the dominant, inalienable, and indivisible general will, as approached as follows, as one of its constituents of a favored state (Wokler, 2012).

The General Interest and Social Welfare

From the conceived “social contract” and the general will, as the product of the union of forces and wills, the collective and simultaneously moral person of the state, which is the dominant power, is constituted. At a time (18th century), which, especially in France, the term “sovereign” is the same as that of the king or the absolute monarch, Rousseau defines the entire political body and the general will of that. Although “social contract” refers to forms of government, monarchy, aristocracy and democracy are in fact forms of democracy, since the power of the state stems from popular sovereignty, that is, the sovereign is the people and only the people. Thus, the sovereignty of the people can not be expropriated or divisible, being direct and not subject to the principle of representation, since, according to Rousseau, the civil liberty of citizens is conferred on it. Rousseau also opposes the feudal institution of representation and is in favor of a political system in which dependence on persons replaces the equal relationship of all citizens with the law. Thus, in the state, popular sovereignty is necessarily enshrined in law, in the sense that it is nothing more than an expression of its will, that is to say of the general will, which reflects the common interest and to which all citizens indiscriminately to obey. The fact that the general will is above the law is also demonstrated by the fact that the will of a citizen, if it expresses the general will, is enough for the adoption of some laws (Simpson, 2006).

Moreover, a prerequisite for the preservation of sovereignty and hence the safeguarding of the common interest is the removal of the antithesis between the latter and that of the general will, and the particular purpose of each act. This lifting requires finding a body that will be established between the citizens and the sovereign, which will ensure the correspondence, communication, and balance between them. This is what the body calls

the government, which is responsible for the order of the people's sovereignty, it safeguards the political freedom of its members and ultimately guarantees political legitimacy. As it has been worded correctly, "if we knew how to achieve justice without mediation, we would not need either the government or the laws; but for the people who are not gods, the maneuvers are inevitable. The basic term of the Rousseau state is that the government faithfully and precisely executes those adopted by the ruling political body and representing the general will, laws—otherwise, the executive function is fully under the law and mediates only as an intermediate body between him and popular sovereignty, also becoming controllable by the political body at all times (Wokler, 2012).

In this context of the favored constitution of the state, where fundamental popular sovereignty and the imprinting of its general will on the law are highlighted, the equality of rights and the concept of justice that it entails are highlighted. The power of the state lies in the alienation of individuals from their right to their natural state, in order for them to be "returned" as political rights. Within the political class, it is impossible to maintain the individual as the prime of nature's feelings, but a grid of protection for this and its rights is being developed. Struggling fiercely against the social inequality born of the invention of private property, Rousseau points out that the terms of the "social contract" are equal to everyone and obeying individuals in this and other laws does not obey anyone but their will. Consequently, the state built under the "Social Contribution" state ultimately ensures and promotes the very freedom of its members, since each individual loses the negative qualities of natural freedom, the possibility of harming the other; he defrails his political freedom and security through collegiality. Furthermore, Rousseau observes that even a properly organized constitution can not guarantee the proper functioning of the state, but requires a political religion that strengthens the feelings of civic citizenship and which aims at forming capable and faithful citizens to defend themselves the general interest (Simpson, 2006).

It is stated that in the favored constitutional state of Rousseau, the people are free and dominant, provided that their will, which they submit to the common good, is incorporated into the law which is faithfully applied by the rulers. The rudely favored constitutional state is constituted on the basis of the mutual commitment between the collective political body and each of the citizens, according to which the former is bound to each of its members and the citizen to the whole of the collectivity, because only through this is equality achieved to freedom and security in existence, which are the necessary conditions of the supreme purpose of the individual, namely the achievement of bliss. In essence, the State of Zac Jacques Rousseau governs the general interest, otherwise society is ruled by always the highest common good that leads to the liberation of the individual (Wokler, 2012).

Methodology

From the above it can be concluded that for Rousseau the major terms of legitimacy and stability of a regime are contained in the notion of general will expressed by the people as a sovereign body. Decisions of general will apply as laws, since they express the general-common interest of the people. In the general interest, general will is not meant without freedom and equality, which are non-negotiable terms and at the same time determines the content of the favored constitutional state (Papageorgiou, 2005). In spite of the above critical remarks on totalitarianism, this rustic arrest, which undoubtedly combines the concepts of social contract, general will, and popular sovereignty, marked the "Social Contribution", "Gospel of Enlightenment", and "Manifesto of the French Revolution". Rousseau attempted to establish a new political science, no longer a

model of mathematics, but a model of experimental physics coupled with the science of law. It may well be considered a precursor of the perceptions that led to the Declaration of Human Rights and the democratic proclamations of the French Revolution (Breidert & Hahsler, 2006).

In the favored constitutional state of Zac Jacques Rousseau, every human being remains as free as before, but now he is protected under the law and under the law. The environment is characterized as a public good (Wertenbroch & Bernd, 2002). Public goods are goods that provide benefits to society as a whole or part of it, usually regardless of whether individual people are willing to pay to have these benefits. All entities, be it individuals or businesses or public organizations, have some financial resources with which they seek to achieve specific goals (e.g., maximizing profits) (Anderson, Dipak, & Pradeep, 1993).

Over the last three decades, there has been increased interest in developing methods for assessing the preferences (of experts, stakeholders, members of communities/organizations, independent people) of the quality of public goods (Miller, Hofstetter, Krohmer, & Zhang, 2011). Among these, the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) is often applied to: (i) financially evaluate environmental projects or projects/activities (planned or in operation) with significant environmental impact and (ii) assessing environmental damage, incidents which aggravate environmental quality. This method is largely based on the assessment of: (i) willingness to pay (WTP), which is the maximum amount of money a person would be willing to pay, sacrifice,or exchange a public good; and (ii) willingness to accept (WTA), which is the minimum amount of money a person would be willing to accept in order to leave a good. WTP is limited by income, while WTA is potentially unlimited. The suitability of WTP or WTA depends on the prior distribution of property rights and the direction of the change being considered (Breidert & Hahsler, 2006).

The Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) is a research-based technique, often used in experimental, and is particularly useful for the valuation of non-commercial resources/goods/services and objects of cultural heritage (aesthetic, historical, scientific, or social value), the preservation of the natural and anthropogenic environment and, in general, the assessment of Ruussian general interest as it expresses in monetary units the expression of the general will. If WTP and WTA are evaluated at the same level of utility, they must be the same, but empirical evidence consistently indicates that WTA may exceed WTP by one order of magnitude (Breidert & Hahsler, 2006).

Therefore, the WTP provides a purchase price related to the valuation of the proposed profit of the good, while WTA provides a sale price related to the valuation of the proposed loss of the good. According to Clasical Economic Theory, there must be no significant difference between WTP and WTA, provided that: (i) there are no transaction costs, (ii) there is perfect information about goods/services and corresponding prices, (iii) a methodological tool, i.e., a market that creates a true revelation of preferences (Anderson et al., 1993).

One implementation of the Contingent Valuation Method has been to restore the natural environment to the weathered ecosystem of Lake Kastoria in Northern Greece. Maintaining/restoring the natural environment often involves excessive costs (payable by people through taxation) and is a source of additional income for both the state and people because of tourism. Since the assessment of this good can not be done on market terms, we apply a modified version of the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) used in Experimental Economics to explore the importance people attached to this asset and how much it is willing to pay to support activities related to the conservation/restoration of Kastoria Lake in Northen Greece. Dependences on the willingness to pay (WTP) are: (i) external anecdotes, (ii) expectations of property value increases as a result of rehabilitation, (iii) the opinion of the interviewed about the time and money spent on visiting the lake, (iv) the

time and money that the interviewees spent visiting the lake, as well as other dependencies (Varian, 1992).

The survey sample was 51.25% of women and 48.56% of men, the majority of whom were between 26 and 35 years of age, as young people were more willing to participate in the survey. 25.7% were university graduates while 37.50% were high school graduates. The majority of the participants were in the middle class and had a full-time job. About 50% of respondents live or work in close proximity to the Lake. However, the average willingness to pay (WTP) does not differ depending on proximity or distance. Given the extensive coverage of the issue by the media in recent years, most people were well aware of the problems of the lake. When asked to rate the level for the need to protect the lake on a scale of three points (much, quite, and slightly), 97.3% placed it in the upper tier and only 5% at the lowest.

This research examines, among other factors, the attitude of the public towards the general environmental problems of the area and the benefits that would result from the restoration of the ecosystem of the lake. The majority of interviewees attribute the responsibility for environmental degradation to the failure or limited capacity of the state and local authorities, while supporting all proposed remedial actions that we proposed, with 69.03% giving high priority to organic farming to reduce chemical infections. The participants were also asked to determine the amount of money between six specific alternatives and a seventh open option that everyone was willing to pay for 12 months to help maintain or even improve the lake's situation, that sponsorship given by the government and local authorities would remain the same. The percentage of all respondents who expressed willingness to pay any amount was 90%. The average willingness to pay (WTP) was € 13.16, while € 5 was the most common.

Discussion

The physical state of man is unknown and indeterminate. Once a person decides to organize in a society, he assigns the rights that nature has inspired him and concludes the social contract of collective living. Society is governed by the pursuit of the general interest, which is the expression of the general will and aims at maximizing social prosperity. The Contingent Valuation Method and the Experimental Economics tools can help quantify the value of general good as appropriate (public good, external economy, etc.). Thus, a methodological tool for the quantification of some concepts of Political Philosophy is proposed in order to objectively maximize the social prosperity of achieving maximum efficiency and fair distribution of financial resources.

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