The Social Contract
By Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

The Social Contract outlines Rousseau's views on political justice, explaining how a just and legitimate state is to be founded, organized and administered. Rousseau sets forth, in his characteristically brazen and iconoclastic manner, the case for direct democracy, while simultaneously casting every other form of government as illegitimate and tantamount to slavery. Often hailed as a revolutionary document which sparked the French Revolution, The Social Contract serves both to inculcate dissatisfaction with actually-existing governments and to allow its readers to envision and desire a radically different form of political and social organization. (Summary by Eric Jonas)


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