**Group 1**

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT (1762)

FROM CHAPTER VI: “THE SOCIAL COMPACT”

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712-1778)

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| I suppose men to have reached the point at which the obstacles in the way of their preservation in the state of nature show their power of resistance to be greater than the resources at the disposal of each individual for his maintenance in that state. That primitive condition can then subsist no longer; and the human race would perish unless it changed its manner of existence.But, as men cannot engender new forces, but only unite and direct existing ones, they have no other means of preserving themselves than the formation, by aggregation, of a sum of forces great enough to overcome the resistance. These they have to bring into play by means of a single motive power, and cause to act in concert.This sum of forces can arise only where several persons come together: but, as the force and liberty of each man are the chief instruments of his self-preservation, how can he pledge them without harming his own interests, and neglecting the care he owes himself? This difficulty, in its bearing on my present subject, may be stated in the following terms:“The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before.” This is the fundamental problem of which the Social Contract provides the solution…. | These clauses [of the “Social Contract”], properly understood, may be reduced to one—the total alienation of each associate, together with all his rights, to the whole community; for, in the first place, as each gives himself absolutely, the conditions are the same for all; and, this being so, no one has any interest in making them burdensome to others….Finally, each man, in giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody; and as there is no associate over which he does not acquire the same right as he yields others over himself, he gains an equivalent for everything he loses, and an increase of force for the preservation of what he has. If then we discard from the social compact what is not of its essence, we shall find that it reduces itself to the following terms:“Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.” This text is from the Everyman’s Library edition, published by E.P. Dutton in 1950. Translated by G. D. H. Cole. |

*Answer the following questions based on the text above in complete sentences.*

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| What do you think Rousseau means by the “state of nature” (paragraph A)? |  |
| In paragraph C, Rousseau asks “how can [the individual person] pledge [his forces] without harming his own interests, and neglecting the care he owes himself?” How does he answer this question? Do you agree? |  |
| In Paragraph E, what does Rousseau mean when he writes that “each man, in giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody”? According to the text, why would an individual give himself to “nobody”? |  |
| What is the advantage to being what Rousseau calls “an indivisible part of the whole”? |  |