

Source: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 1762

[The] general will is always rightful and always tends to the public good; but it does not follow that the decisions of the people are always equally right. We always want what is advantageous but we do not always discern it. The people is never corrupted, but it is often misled; and only then does it seem to will what is bad. ... [The] general will studies only the common interest while the will of all studies private interest ...

From the deliberations of a people properly informed, ... the great number of small differences will always produce a general will and the decision will always be good. But if groups, sectional associations are formed at the expense of the larger association, ... when one of these groups become so large that it can dominate the rest, the result is no longer the sum of many small differences, but one great divisive difference; then their ceases to be a general will, and the opinion which prevails is no more than a private opinion.

That if the general will is to be clearly expressed, it is imperative that there should be no sectional associations in the state, and that every citizen should make up his own mind for himself

[The] general will derives its generality less from the number of voices than from the common interest which unites them - for the general will is an institution in which each necessarily submits himself to the same conditions which he imposes on others