

SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

My Ishmael is a sequel to the earlier work of Daniel Quinn 'Ishmael'. The book focuses majorly on the relationship between Ishmael and another yet-unknown pupil. Teenager Julie Gerchack appears to be much younger than what many readers would perceive as a perfect pupil for an erudite educator like Ishmael. She happens to possess a plausible strength that many would view as being way beyond her years. She is drawn to Ishmael more for escape than for enlightenment. This can be explained by the simple fact that, she was being brought up by a divorcee mother who happens to be obese, an alcoholic, and a full-time employee. For this reason, she doubles up as a devoted child at home preoccupied by household chores and a school girl. The purpose of this paper is to discuss Daniel Quinn's perspective of the social contract theory as depicted in the book 'My Ishmael'.

When you critically look at the book My Ishmael, one realizes that it employs a Socratic dialogue style between its main characters. Both writers tend to disagree with the perception that social contract is "the original source of justice". During Julie's first meeting with Ishmael, she appeared to be a lot pessimistic about the present state of affairs in her environment. She appeared to be more interested in running away from her misfortunes and tough living conditions. To her, the world seemed like a dark place dominated by evil. For instance, she points out terrorists bombing airplanes, people destroying the environment, and those walking into learning institutions with guns. She tends to hold the belief that, human beings are cursed and not in a position to live their lives to their maximum potential without causing destruction to the earth (Quinn, 1998).

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In response, Ishmael mentions to her that the entire situation is generally out of man's capability to offer a solution. Therefore, mother culture suggests that, humans just have to go on coexisting in this manner for as long as they can. He suggests that, "the crux taker culture is based on one practice: the storage of food under lock and key" (Quinn, 1998). This means that, it is only when essential resources are held by a few hands that the rest of the population can work to acquire their portion. As their conversation comes to an end, she starts to get perspective to various issues regarding her society or rather the world. In her heart, she obviously felt confused and embarrassed of the misery she felt about the world. Her dialogue with Ishmael helped her clear off her mind some of her worries and view their place in their environment more objectively.

It is evident that Julie approached Ishmael with the perception that man was responsible for much of the world's predicaments. However, after her interaction with Ishmael she felt differently. Just like Socrates who decided to stay in Athens even though, he had the choice to live, Julie feels like she is obliged to stay and view her place in the world more objectively. Just like Socrates, Quinn tends to disagree with the perception that social contract is "the original source of justice."