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ROUSSEAU'S SCIENTIFIC BAGATELLE

by

FIONA MILLER, B.J., B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Political Science

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

May 5, 1994

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submitted by

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

Chair, Department of Political Science

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Abstract

I focus on Jean-Jacques Rousseau as a scientist. Concentrating on his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, I examine Rousseau's science of introspection. I see Rousseau's *Discourse* as a call for introspective meditation, as an invitation to the state of nature as the state of basic human consciousness. I argue that Rousseau's natural man is the personification of human meditation. Natural man must be taken as really existing as he offers the best argument for the existence of human freedom, and for the necessity of securing freedom through political means. I argue that interpretations of Rousseau as a thinker interested in the natural sciences and attempts to draft him into a particular interpretation of the tradition of western thought are misguided. I argue that the facts strewn through the *Discourse* are rhetorical, intended to prove the natural freedom of man to those readers who would not accept Rousseau's invitation.

It is in bagatelles that nature comes to light.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau,
Emile or On Education, Book IV.

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INTRODUCTION

The greatest tribute to the art of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's writing is the variety of interpretations it has spawned. Interpretations have ranged from Rousseau as romantic to Rousseau as proto-revolutionary.¹ In this thesis I will focus on the strain of interpretation that presents Rousseau as a political scientist. I will argue, concentrating on the *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, or *Second Discourse*, that Rousseau was a political scientist who was interested, not in the natural sciences, but in the human science of introspection. I will argue that Rousseau believed that politics should serve to allow the human being to be free in order to enjoy the sentiment of his existence. I will also argue that Rousseau was the sort of political scientist who believed in the possibility of philosophy, that he believed that to secure the sphere of freedom which allowed man's enjoyment of his existence ensured not only the freedom of

¹ Kennedy Roche calls attention to Rousseau's "romantic conception of the proposed political ideal. [Rousseau] has been called Janus-faced because he at once looked back to the golden legend of a remote past and forward to a great *idée-force* of the future; romantic, extreme nationalism." Roche, *Rousseau, Stoic and Romantic*, (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1974), p. 1. Hannah Arendt stresses Rousseau's influence over the French Revolution as the mentor of Robespierre. Arendt, *On Revolution*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 59-114.

all individuals, but also the necessary conditions for the coming into being of the philosopher.

I have chosen to concentrate on the *Second Discourse*, because this work articulates and exemplifies Rousseau's approach to science. The *Discourse* asks what experiments would be necessary to know natural man, and proceeds to demonstrate the needed experiment, by detailing a state of nature which represents nothing more, and nothing less, than the method and the findings of Rousseau's own scientific introspection. It is a work, I will argue, in which Rousseau puts natural science into the service of individual freedom. The *Discourse* is also a work that has been interpreted as being scientific in a more physical sense, that is, the state of nature has been interpreted as an actual historical state and Rousseau's attempts to know it have been seen as informed by the methods of natural science. I will address this interpretation as it appears in the work of Roger Masters and Marc Plattner.'

Rousseau's science involves the method of meditation and introspection which he sets forth in the *Second Discourse*. It can be seen as both a criticism and a

² I will look at Roger D. Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); Masters, "The Structure of Rousseau's Political Thought," in *Hobbes and Rousseau*, eds. Maurice Cranston and Richard S. Peters, (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), pp. 401-436; and Marc F. Plattner, *Rousseau's State of Nature An Interpretation of the Discourse on Inequality*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1979).

replacement of the unbounded, despotic, science of the Enlightenment. Rousseau's science shows that he was serious in writing beyond his century. As a science of self-knowledge, of introspection, his science, its method and its finding, would remain valid as long as humans continued to be able to enjoy the sentiment of their existence.

In his *First Discourse*, Rousseau took science seriously enough to argue that the sciences, along with the arts, had corrupted morals. In his *Second Discourse*, treating two different views of science, Rousseau puts science into the service of individual freedom. He does this in two ways. Firstly, he used scientific rhetoric, evidence drawn from sources considered in his day to be scientific, to argue for individual freedom as authorized by nature. Secondly, he presented in the *Second Discourse* his own introspective experiment, putting forward a science based in the individual. What his experiment indicated was a sphere of individual freedom that could be guaranteed only by the individual's consent to a human law which universally governed the individual's community. This science was a science that could preserve politics, because it was a science that kept the individual within himself and led to the recognition that individual freedom, defined as the absence of dependence on another personal will, could only be secured by consent to arbitrary, or fortuitous, custom and law.

Rousseau saw that only a science that directed attention inward would be capable of keeping individuals within their own limits. This science is not a political science, but rather a science that allows the possibility of politics. The science lauded by the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment was a science that extended and attenuated the human towards boundless knowledge of particulars.³ Rousseau wanted to promote a science that privileged a sort of human wisdom over unbounded knowledge. It was not

³ Michael Oakeshott has written an excellent characterization of *philosophisme* which echoes many of Rousseau's criticisms of Enlightenment thinking. Oakeshott characterizes the *philosophe* as having a limitless, indiscriminate, desire for, and confidence in, knowledge, as someone who "does not know what it is to be perplexed...only... what it is to be ignorant" and as someone who believes it is better to make than to see an order in the world. He writes:

The *philosophe* believes in knowledge in a way which we find difficult to understand - we who have long ago lost this confidence. And he can exist only when there is a certain rude copiousness about the supply of knowledge which permits no suggestion of a limit. His is an inventive, ingenious, mildly perplexed and easily satisfied mind; there is vitality but no discrimination. All knowledge appears equally significant; and there is so much to be learned that there is neither time nor inclination to stay and learn anything profoundly. One thing leads to another before it has itself been exhausted; and when every suggestion is followed, it is impossible to follow one suggestion far.

The *philosophes*, writes Oakeshott, made no real contribution to knowledge and are important to us because of their "general view of life by means of which they succeeded in making themselves at home in the world." They made themselves at home by keeping themselves busy, and, in opposition to Rousseau's natural man, always outside themselves. Michael Oakeshott, "The new Bentham," *Rationalism in politics and other essays*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991), pp. 138-140.

important for man to know the colour of the sand at the bottom of the sea; it was important that man know how to be good to the people with whom he lived.

In discussing the *Second Discourse*, I will focus on two possible ways of interpreting it as a scientific work. On one level, I will show, the *Discourse* itself and not anything suggested in it, is Rousseau's true experiment. He offers the *Discourse* as an example of his own experiment in introspection. This experiment involves Rousseau's reader in a form of "analysis" in which the reader divests himself of conventional particularities and joins Rousseau in a return to the state of nature. In this experiment, the state of nature is a state of inner tranquillity, or state of consciousness, in which human nature is revealed to be the freedom of enjoying the sentiment of existence. This analytic stage of the experiment is followed by a synthesis which involves the reader in an education concerning the genesis of the passions.

On a different level, Rousseau can be interpreted not as performing an experiment, but as suggesting experimentation, as suggesting an approach to knowing natural man through natural science. This interpretation, which sees Rousseau's state of nature as historical, finds Savage man to be the basic analytic unit and is supplemented by a synthesis in the form of Rousseau's "hypothetical history."

I believe Rousseau designed his work to be able to be read on both levels. I believe he intended his more philosophical readers to read the *Discourse* on the first level. Because Rousseau privileged first-hand experience above all other experience, he believed that only by duplicating the experiment represented by the whole *Discourse* could the reader be truly convinced of the importance of the freedom of natural man and so of the importance of working towards a political system which would safeguard that freedom.⁴ Because freedom was at stake, Rousseau also designed the work to be read at the second level. This level, full of facts supplied by sources other than the real experiment at hand, seems designed to persuade readers who would not follow Rousseau's example. These readers would only be persuaded that it was right to attempt to approximate the freedom of natural man in society if that freedom was shown to them as real in an actual, or physical, sense. Even without the advances in science, particularly anthropology, that have made Rousseau's 'facts' look so foolish,⁵ this level of interpretation breaks down under scrutiny because it represents a historical account and so an account that would be no longer relevant to contemporary

⁴ See "How We Know" in Chapter Six.

⁵ See Masters, *Political Philosophy*, pp. 431-432, and Arthur M. Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man, on the System of Rousseau's Thought*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 51, note 3.

politics. I believe Rousseau foresaw this breakdown, as he was its designer, and hoped that it would lead the reader to a new interpretation of the text, and not to the assumption that Rousseau himself had failed. If the reader were capable of bringing such scrutiny to bear on the text, and if the reader were not blinded by his own *amour-propre*, he should, on returning to the text, have been able to see it as a experiment in itself. He should have been, and should be, led to perform this experiment by and in himself, having come to see this action as the only possible avenue to knowledge of natural man that he will be able to trust.

Rousseau used Enlightenment science, evidence drawn from the science of his day and from one of its sources, travel accounts, to rhetorically support his claim that "natural man" was a being who was free, that is, self-sufficient or independent of other beings. In his attempt to prove his claim, he offered the evidence he had gathered by himself, through his introspective science. He offered his discovery, through introspection, of himself as a "man of nature" as his proof of natural man and that man's freedom.⁶ Rousseau wanted his scientific rhetoric to persuade those people who would not follow his

⁶ Rousseau, *Rousseau Judge of Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 1, eds. R.D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, trans. Judith R. Bush, C. Kelly, and R.D. Masters, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1990), pp. 53, 147, 158, 159, 214, 216. (especially p. 214.)

introspection. Those people who would follow his method he did not need to persuade, for they would see and feel for themselves, and be convinced.

Rousseau's scientific method took him to a state in which man lived within himself. This state, devoid of historical particularities, devoid of everything except the sentiment of existence, is Rousseau's true state of nature and it remains as real today as ever. Natural man is therefore, natural, because he reflects the nature of human consciousness. I shy away from saying that natural man reflects human thought or reason because thought and reason have come to represent the application of human consciousness to the world.⁷ Rousseau's natural man reflects the meditative method used to locate him and is

⁷ Also note that in the *Second Discourse* self-consciousness seems to precede reason:

Everyone began to look at everyone else and to wish to be looked at himself, and public esteem acquired a value. p. 175; p. 169.

Only after man has left the 'best state,' developed agriculture and metallurgy, and interdependence, do we find:

...all our faculties developed, memory and imagination brought into play, vanity interested, reason become active. p. 180; p. 174.

We develop self-consciousness first through feeling, and only reinforce it through reflection. [I will be using, primarily, the translation of the *Second Discourse* as found in: Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses Together with the Replies to Critics and Essay on the Origin of Languages*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, (New York: Harper and Row, 1986). I will also be consulting the original French text in: Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes III*, ed. Gagnebin and Raymond, (Paris: Editions Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1964). My citations will record page numbers from the Gourevitch translation and the Pléiade edition respectively. Quotations from the *First Discourse* will be taken from Gourevitch's translation.]

naturally quiet.⁸

Rousseau's method of introspection leads directly to his conclusion that man in the state of nature is a solitary, independent, being, living within himself. Rousseau meditates. Natural man is the personification of his meditation. This direct link between his method and his results does not make his findings any the less valuable. His method is meditation. In meditation he finds a model of freedom. In politics, he hopes to secure this freedom to live at one with oneself, in a harmony analogous to the harmony of meditation. This freedom differs from person to person in accordance with their natural differences. An Emile's home within himself, for instance, might be less broad, less accommodating for inner travel, than that of a Rousseau, but both will find a similar contentment or tranquillity in being at home. Rousseau's preoccupation with freedom is his preoccupation with securing the possibility of the inner enjoyment of the sentiment of existence, the enjoyment of consciousness, a sphere that also, by its nature, leaves room for the coming into being

⁸ Consider the difference between the goodness of Rousseau's natural man and Goethe's *Faust*. "While Rousseau's goodness goes together with abstention from action, with a kind of rest, Faust's goodness is unrest, infinite striving, dissatisfaction with everything finite, finished, complete, 'classic.'" Leo Strauss, "The Three Waves of Modernity," in *Political Philosophy: Six Essays by Leo Strauss*, ed. Hilail Gildin, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), p. 94. Goethe's *Faust* is one of the consequences of the radicalization of Rousseau's conception of the will.

of the philosopher.

In arguing for my interpretation, I will argue against the interpretation, by Masters and Plattner, of Rousseau's state of nature as an actual historical state and against the political implications that follow from this interpretation. To treat Rousseau's state of nature as an actual historical state discovered through the methods of modern natural science is to ignore Rousseau's claim that nature is "invincible" and to deny the usefulness of the state of nature in the present.⁹ I will argue that Rousseau's state of nature represents a human nature that is a constant, that natural man is the personification, not of Rousseau's meditation in particular, but of human meditation in general. I will argue that the *Second Discourse* invites us to meditate along with Rousseau, and that in this way it is an argument, that we will make for ourselves, for freedom. In educating us in the nature of our meditation it teaches us our own nature.

A historical-scientific interpretation denies that the state of nature can hold any relevance for present political theory. Its denial is threefold. Firstly, if the state of

⁹ "But if the legislator ... adopts a different principle for the one arising from the nature of things.... the State will not cease to be agitated until it is either destroyed or changed, and invincible nature has regained its dominion." Rousseau, *On the Social Contract with the Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy*, ed. Roger D. Master, trans. Judith R. Masters, II, xi, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), p. 76.

nature is seen as a purely historical state, a state buried in the past which no longer bears on the present, it becomes irrelevant in discussions of contemporary politics. If the state of nature is seen as a discussion, not of what human nature continues to be, but of what it once was, it can be of no more than an antiquarian interest for present political theorizing. This is clearly not how Rousseau himself considers the state of nature in Part II of the *Discourse*. He uses man's inner tranquillity in the state of nature as a natural standard against which to judge the hectic, living-outside-oneself of modern man. Only if human nature, as revealed in Rousseau's state of nature, has an abiding existence as real can it serve as this natural standard. Understanding the state of nature as purely historical, as a state which shows a human nature that has since become something different, robs the state of nature of its potential as a present-day natural standard.

Secondly, if Rousseau's state of nature is seen to depend on his science, on for instance, his anthropology, it fails to be credible, and therefore useful, once that science is seen to be false. If his science is seen as both the key to his findings and as wrong, his theory fades into irrelevance vis-à-vis contemporary politics. From this perspective, Rousseau's state of nature becomes little more than a quaint sketch drawn with the aid of an immature, natural science. Rousseau himself becomes quaint as we

picture him reading through travellers' accounts, accepting ludicrous tales as being as real as the plants he observed so carefully, with his own eyes, before placing them in his herbarium.

Thirdly, to see Rousseau's approach as standing or falling with the strength of his scientific evidence encourages the reader to dismiss his state of nature without considering that Rousseau may have been serious about science in a different more abidingly relevant way. I will argue that Rousseau was not only aware of the danger of popularizing science but also that he was aware of the danger of a science that took people away from studying themselves. He took science very seriously. He took it, so to speak, to heart.

Plattner and Masters see Rousseau as a political scientist. To view Rousseau in this way may be useful from the perspective of setting Rousseau into a particular interpretation of the tradition of western thought. Seen as a political scientist, Rousseau can be placed in a modern scientific tradition from Bacon, through Descartes, Hobbes and Locke. While this interpretation may be useful in helping us to understand our situation today, I believe it is unfaithful to Rousseau. This interpretation ignores the depth of Rousseau's criticism of the Enlightenment, and leads to what I believe is a misunderstanding of his 'solutions' to the modern crises that, having arisen from

modern science, threatened politics and political virtue. Although Rousseau's attack on the Enlightenment, in his *First Discourse*, the *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*, is not a complete condemnation, it indicates a profound uneasiness with the popularization of modern science and the impact of this popularization on human politics and freedom. Rousseau criticised the popularization of science, not science itself.¹⁰ He wrote that "Those whom nature intended as her disciples had no need of masters." Rousseau lauds Bacon, Descartes and Newton as "Preceptors of Mankind" and writes: "If a few men are to be allowed to devote themselves to the study of the Sciences and the Arts, it must be only those who feel the strength to go forth alone in their footsteps, and to overtake them."¹¹ Rousseau was, then, serious about science, while solicitous of its potential to undermine allegiance to the customs, morals, manners, and law that constituted the cohesive strength of a political community. His anxiety does not disappear from his work after the *First Discourse*. The tension between science and politics remains one of the themes of Rousseau's work.

My argument will proceed as follows. First I will describe some of the claims that Rousseau was treating

¹⁰ Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1950), pp. 259-261.

¹¹ Rousseau, *First Discourse*, pp. 25-26; p. 29.

natural science seriously. I will begin by addressing the work of Masters and Plattner and attempt to explain why they believe it is important to view Rousseau's work as scientific (Chapter One). Next, I will discuss the scientific background of his time and Rousseau's relationship to changes in scientific method (Chapter Two). I will then present my own interpretation of the *Discourse* as an experiment of introspection directed towards knowledge of natural man. I will show how Rousseau designed his method to mirror the analytic/ synthetic distinction espoused by Enlightenment scientists while offering a science of his own (Chapters Three, Four, Five). I will then show how Rousseau privileged principles over facts in the presentation of his arguments in the *Discourse* (Chapter Six). I will present evidence to support the view that Rousseau did not intend his ostensibly scientific evidence to be taken seriously. Rather, I will argue, he used his 'factual' evidence to persuade those readers he could not convince to follow his meditative experiment that the findings of his meditation were correct (Chapter Seven). I will discuss how Rousseau uses other 'facts,' garnered from travel tales and history books, in a way which suggests he was dubious of their truth. (Chapter Eight). After having made my case against a historical-scientific reading, and for a reading that sees natural man as an abiding, natural, standard, I will discuss the political implications of this

standard referring to the Epistle Dedicatory of the *Second Discourse*, and briefly to *On the Social Contract* and *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (Chapter Nine).

CHAPTER ONE - ROUSSEAU AS SCIENTIST

In this chapter I will discuss the reasons why Roger Masters and Marc Plattner believe it is important to interpret Rousseau's account of the state of nature as an account grounded in modern natural science. I will then discuss two problems incident on this interpretation. Both problems involve freedom. These problems, I will argue, although they stem logically from a historical-scientific reading of the state of nature, do not stem logically from Rousseau's *Second Discourse*. I will suggest that Rousseau saw both of these problems and accounted for them in his philosophy.

There are two reasons why Masters and Plattner read Rousseau's account of the state of nature as a scientific account. The first reason is that a reading of the state of nature as scientific opposes a reading of it as purely hypothetical. The second reason seems to be that, understood scientifically, Rousseau fits much better into a particular reading of the modern tradition.

Plattner writes that the state of nature is usually interpreted in one of three ways: as an attempt to portray "as accurate as possible a picture of the historical conditions of the first men"; as "a purely hypothetical or suppositional construct, whose relation to the actual

historical situation of the first men is utterly irrelevant"; or as revealing that Rousseau was "confused or undecided" himself on the status of that state.¹² To support the view that the state of nature is not a hypothetical state, Plattner footnotes Leo Strauss. Strauss wrote:

If Rousseau's account of the state of nature were hypothetical, his whole political teaching would be hypothetical; the practical consequences would be prayer and patience and not dissatisfaction and, wherever possible, reform.¹³

Plattner states that the status of the state of nature "is of fundamental importance for understanding the *Second Discourse*", without being specific about his reasons for reading it as a work grounded in modern natural science.¹⁴ He argues for a factual interpretation on grounds of Rousseau's allusions to Buffon, and of his calls for experimentation.¹⁵ He dismisses Rousseau's references to the state of nature as hypothetical on the grounds that they were designed to protect him from ecclesiastical censure.¹⁶

I do not believe Rousseau was confused regarding one of

¹² Marc Plattner, *Rousseau's State of Nature*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1979), p. 17.

¹³ Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 267, n. 321.

¹⁴ Plattner, p. 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-21.

the crucial elements of his philosophy, nor that he intended the state of nature to represent a factual account of the state of nature, nor that he viewed it as "purely hypothetical". On the last point I agree with Strauss. I do not agree however that the choice of interpretations is limited to "historical," "purely hypothetical," or "confused." I believe Rousseau's account of the state of nature was meant to represent a real but not a physical state. I believe it was meant to present the state of natural, unperturbed human consciousness. If Rousseau's political philosophy is tied to an account of the state of nature which stands or falls with the validity of his science, and if "the development of modern science has been cruel to Jean Jacques" as Masters quite accurately notes, then his philosophy would have little to say to us today.¹⁷ I believe it still speaks to us.

Masters, like Plattner, sees Rousseau's state of nature as a historical state.¹⁸ He suggests that Rousseau's relevance to our age lies not in his political philosophy but in his attempts to wrestle with the difficulties of political philosophy in an age of science. He uses what he

¹⁷ Roger D. Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 430. Masters discusses Rousseau's *Discourse* in light of modern anthropology: *Ibid.* 430-437.

¹⁸ Roger D. Masters, "The Structure of Rousseau's Political Thought," in *Hobbes and Rousseau*, eds. Maurice Cranston and Richard S. Peters, (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), note 12, p. 405.

sees as Rousseau's allegiance to modern natural science as a way to place Rousseau more firmly with the 'moderns' in a particular interpretation of the tradition of western thought. Masters writes that "Rousseau's thought provides a clear example of the 'typically modern' predicament".¹⁹ The predicament in which Rousseau and all moderns are caught, is most deftly summed up, writes Masters, by Strauss. The modern problem is: to define man's natural end once modern natural science seems to have destroyed the teleological view of the universe and of man. The "victory of modern natural sciences" over teleological science leads to two opposite conclusions:

According to one, the nonteleological conception of the universe must be followed up by a nonteleological conception of human life. But this 'naturalistic' solution is exposed to grave difficulties: it seems to be impossible to give an adequate account of human ends by conceiving of them merely as posited by desires or impulses. Therefore, the alternative solution has prevailed. This means that people were forced to accept a fundamental, typically modern dualism of a nonteleological natural science and a teleological science of man.²⁰

If no human end is given, "desires or impulses" become the guiding factor of human life. These desires, if they are seen as originating in arbitrary will, offer no account or reason for human activities. If a human end is given but teleological science is discredited and usurped by modern

¹⁹ Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, p. 430.

²⁰ Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p. 8.

natural science there remains no link between the human and natural sciences. In the former case, there are no claims to be validated. In the latter case, reason, as modern natural science, is no longer seen as able to validate a society's ends.²¹ Neither case suffices. A society suffering under either situation is in crisis, because, either way "modern man no longer knows what he wants...he no longer believes that he can know what is good and bad, what is right and wrong".²²

Masters writes that Rousseau's thought epitomizes the dilemma of modernity because "it is based on an acceptance of modern natural science and a rejection of hedonist political orientations."²³ Masters discusses the intellectual background of Rousseau's age in his introduction to Rousseau's *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*. He points to the "naturalistic and secular philosophies of Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke" as a "major factor in the intellectual background of Rousseau's thought."²⁴ He notes that Bacon, Descartes,

²¹ Strauss, "The Three Waves of Modernity," in *Political Philosophy*, p. 82.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 81.

²³ Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, p. 430.

²⁴ Masters, Introduction in *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts (First Discourse) and Polemics in The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 2, eds. by Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, trans. Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters, and Christopher Kelly and Terence Marshall, (Hanover, NH:

Hobbes and Spinoza are all mentioned in the *First Discourse*. Eschewing classical philosophy and theology, these figures sought an alternative ground for social and political justice; Masters writes:

The alternative was found in nature, both in the sense of physical nature as the source of all ideas (Hobbes's materialism and Locke's epistemology) and in the sense of an individualistic, presocial status as the reference point for natural law (hence the importance of the 'state of nature' for Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke). By adopting such radical bases for their philosophical speculations, the seventeenth-century philosophers hoped to avoid the uncertainties of traditional metaphysical disputes.⁷⁵

In the eighteenth century, Masters writes, the *philosophes* continued the criticism of "the Great Tradition":

Optimistic and sceptical all at once, critical of the prejudices and narrow-mindedness of those established in power, the *philosophes* believed that the mass of men could be 'enlightened' by the spread of education and sound reasoning.... Once the erroneous beliefs of the age had been swept away, a more rational, just, and happy society could be established.⁷⁶

Masters addresses Rousseau's ambiguous relationship to the *philosophes*, his contribution to the *Encyclopédie*, his friendship and then broken friendship with Diderot, and, of course, the anti-Enlightenment argument of the *First Discourse*. Masters concludes:

University Press of New England, 1992), p. xii.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. xii-xiii.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

Nevertheless, Rousseau's *Second Discourse* is based upon the principles introduced by Hobbes and Locke, who may be considered among the founders of the modern political perspective.²⁷

He reiterates: "Within the *First Discourse* itself, Rousseau praises modern thinkers such as Bacon, Newton, and Descartes."²⁸ Discussing Rousseau's originality, Masters writes:

Rousseau's originality thus lies in his attempt to combine a view of human nature derived from moderns like Hobbes and Locke with a view of history derived from ancients like Plato and Aristotle. ... And while sharing the ancients' skepticism toward radical historical progress, Rousseau modifies it by presenting scientific principles that show how to construct a legitimate and free government, at least in some instances.²⁹

In writing that Rousseau derives his view of human nature from Hobbes and Locke, Masters must mean, not that Rousseau see humans in the state of nature, as passionate (Hobbes) or rational (Locke), but that he see them as predictable, as able to be controlled through applied political science, that he sees, with Hobbes and Locke that human nature can be ultimately reduced to matter and motion. Masters can then slot Rousseau into a modern tradition of political theory based on the view of human nature as mechanistic.

Plattner is not explicit regarding the implications he sees following from a scientific reading of the *Discourse*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

He comes closest to discussing why his interpretation is important in discussing Rousseau's "low view of human nature." Rousseau's view of human nature, writes Plattner, leads him to criticize civil society. Civil society is not natural. Questioning the worth and necessity of civil society, Plattner writes, leads to two responses:

The first and more obvious response is the condemnation of all civil society... in the name of nature and of individual freedom. The implications of this position are simply anti-political. But the Rousseauian premises outlined above may also lead to another response, one that is emphatically political, and that leads not to turning one's back on political society, but to the attempt to perfect political society.³⁰

Plattner uses his interpretation to support the idea that Rousseau believed a science of politics was possible. Rousseau, Plattner suggests, thought that men could be transformed, scientifically, into "true citizens who will prefer the common good - that is, by making them into genuinely social men."³¹ Plattner concurs with Masters that Rousseau should be placed firmly in the tradition of modern political theory which sees modern political theory destroying itself in its attempts to be scientific.

Rousseau, once drafted into this interpretation of the modern tradition, can be used to show the failure of modern political thought. Masters writes: "Rousseau tried to

³⁰ Plattner, p. 131. This "first and more obvious response" is of course explicitly ruled out by Rousseau in *Second Discourse*, Note IX, p. 213; p. 207.

³¹ Plattner, p. 132.

discover a means of returning to the classical practice of political and social life, on the presumption that the good for man can be defined with reference to his nature."³² This attempt, Masters argues, ultimately failed because Rousseau's use of modern natural science revealed to him a human nature that lacked any specific content. Because, however, Rousseau attempted to define man's nature through science, Masters argues, "the weakness and strengths of Rousseau's philosophical system illuminate the continuing questions of political philosophy."³³ The key question that continues to haunt political philosophy is how to account for itself if both politics and philosophy have been subsumed by modern science.

If Rousseau is seen to be under allegiance to modern natural science, he cannot be seen as attempting to account for the existence of the political philosopher. At most, a scientific Rousseau can be seen as accounting for the political scientist. This is the first problem connected to a reading of Rousseau as scientific. But Rousseau can be seen as offering an account of the political philosopher, that is, of himself. If Rousseau is seen as practising his own science as a science of introspection, he can be seen to be attempting to safeguard a sphere of intellectual freedom

³² Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, p. 420.

³³ *Ibid.*

and activity which is the condition of the existence of at least the *promeneur solitaire*, possibly of the philosopher, and certainly of everyone's enjoyment of his or her sentiment of existence. Rousseau works to secure freedom as the necessary but not sufficient condition of the philosopher, as well as the condition for a general enjoyment of inner sentiment, of tranquillity of the mind. For Rousseau, freedom is the end as it is the beginning of human existence. If Rousseau can secure, in an ideal political system, the conditions for the existence of the philosopher, nature, perhaps, will supply the rest.

Because Masters views Rousseau's political philosophy as overlaid by science, he does not see Rousseau as even making an attempt to leave room for and to account for political philosophy or the political philosopher. He sees Rousseau as a modern who believes he can reduce political philosophy to a all-inclusive science of politics. Masters seems, to me, too anxious to draft Rousseau into the modern project of a political science, and too dismissive of Rousseau's opposition to the Enlightenment.

The second problem which arises for Plattner and Masters, due to their interpretation of the state of nature as a historical state discovered through the means of natural science, is that Rousseau's treatment of freedom becomes problematic. Masters, for example, appears disappointed that Rousseau was not a better political

scientist and seems to lament Rousseau's preoccupation with freedom. Freedom throws a sabot into the human machine, making a political machine virtually impossible. Freedom throws a swerve into man's predictability. Yet Rousseau states clearly that the human being is more than a machine. Rousseau writes:

I see in any animal nothing but an ingenious machine.... I perceive precisely the same thing in the human machine, with this difference that Nature alone does everything in the operations of the Beast, whereas man contributes to his operations in his capacity as a free agent.³⁴

Masters does not appear to believe that, for Rousseau, some things cannot be reduced to matter and motion. Masters writes of Rousseau's use of the idea of "invincible nature" and suggests that, if only Rousseau's science had been more rigorous or accurate, Rousseau would have been able to offer the kind of scientific politics he had wanted to:

Why, then, does Rousseau claim that nature is 'invincible' and that the works of men are 'always less perfect than those of nature'? Modern natural science has not always led to this conclusion; on the contrary, much of the scientific and technological effort of the last two centuries has aimed at the mastery of nature, as if to deny Rousseau's assertion.

In the last analysis, it appears that Rousseau's conception of nature is not, properly speaking, either scientific or rational.³⁵

Masters suggests that Rousseau made a mistake by having his philosophical system privilege sentiment over reason and

³⁴ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 148; p. 141.

³⁵ Masters, "Structure," p. 435.

that his intent was to be more scientific. Masters writes: "The underlying difficulty of Rousseau's position is nowhere more evident than in his concept of freedom."³⁶ However, Rousseau's attention to freedom, Masters concludes, destroys his political science:

Despite his efforts, Rousseau failed to create a theory without metaphysical implications, and this is precisely why the *Social Contract* is rarely understood as an attempt to establish a science that is both practical and theoretical.³⁷

Masters does not conclude that Rousseau intended his political philosophy to be non-scientific, in the sense of the natural sciences, and open to the concept of freedom. Masters concludes that Rousseau wanted to be scientific, but that he failed.

Plattner dilutes Rousseau's treatment of freedom by arguing that it is perfectibility, not freedom, that is most important for Rousseau. Before discussing how Plattner argues this, it is necessary to briefly review Rousseau's own argument in the *Second Discourse*.

Rousseau writes that man differs from the beast by being a free agent. The beast is bound by instinct; man is not. Rousseau adds that because an animal, like a man, has senses, it has ideas and, "up to a point it even combines its ideas".³⁸ From this, he concludes:

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 435-436.

³⁸ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 148; p. 141.

...it is, then, not so much the understanding that constitutes the specific difference between man and the other animals, as it is his property of being a free agent. Nature commands every animal, and the Beast obeys. Man experiences the same impression, but recognizes himself free to acquiesce or to resist; and it is mainly in the consciousness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul exhibits itself: for Physics in a way explains the mechanism of the senses and the formation of ideas; but in the power of willing, or rather of choosing, and in the sentiment of this power are found purely spiritual acts about which nothing is explained by the Laws of Mechanics.³⁹

Rousseau had begun Part I of the *Discourse* by considering "only Physical Man." The quotation above is the beginning of Rousseau's attempt "to view [man] from the Metaphysical and Moral side."⁴⁰

Plattner writes that it was Rousseau's fear of persecution and his belief in the political need for a civil profession of faith that led him to give this "appearance of upholding a kind of dualist metaphysics by suggesting that human liberty proves the spirituality of the human soul."⁴¹ Plattner adds: "For in itself, the argument that human thought can be explained mechanistically, while human choice is purely spiritual, is clearly untenable."⁴² Plattner contends that understanding and freedom are linked, and so

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 148; pp. 141-142.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 147; p. 141.

⁴¹ Plattner, p. 44. I think Plattner overstates Rousseau's fear of persecution as a factor influencing his rhetoric in the *Second Discourse*. See Chapter 3.

⁴² Plattner, p. 44.

that ultimately, for Rousseau, freedom can be subsumed under a mechanistic science. To support his contention, he cites Jean Castillon, who had a response to Rousseau's *Discourse* published in 1756, and refers us to the profession of faith of Rousseau's Savoyard Vicar in the *Emile*.

Plattner cites Castillon:

Liberty, [Rousseau] says, shows the spirituality of the soul. Our choice is often ruled by reasons (*motifs*) that certainly are perceived by the principle which wills, since they influence its determinations. Thus the spiritual soul is also capable of thinking. Therefore it is pointless to suppose a thinking being different from the spiritual soul....⁴³

Plattner's choice of quotation muddies the issue. Firstly, Rousseau did not say that liberty "shows the spirituality of the soul," as Castillon writes, but rather "it is mainly in the consciousness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul exhibits itself". Consciousness of liberty, not liberty itself is the key to any exhibition of the soul's spirituality. Secondly, Plattner and Castillon equate Rousseau's "understanding" with "thought". Rousseau suggests that "understanding" need not be anything more than basic ideas stemming from sense impressions and the combinations of these ideas that beasts and beast-like man could make. Thought, with the element of instrumental reason with which Plattner and Castillon imbue it, is not

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 45; cited from Jean de Castillon, *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes pour servir de réponse au Discours que M. Rousseau, Citoyen de Genève, a publié sur le même sujet*, (Amsterdam, 1756), pp. 43-44.

the same as this understanding.⁴⁴ Thought is a later development.⁴⁵

Plattner's use of the Vicar's profession to discount the dualism between understanding and freedom is also strange as he has just told us:

...Rousseau distances himself from the ideas expressed in the 'Profession of Faith' by putting them in the mouth of a fictional character. And at the conclusion of the vicar's statement of the principle of his 'natural religion,' Rousseau, speaking in his own voice, indicates that he sees 'hosts of objections' that could be made.⁴⁶

The third prong of Plattner's offensive against the idea that Rousseau was serious about freedom is to write that: "Even in the *Second Discourse* itself, Rousseau acknowledges the problems that beset this peculiar sort of

⁴⁴ The gap between understanding and choosing can perhaps be best understood by considering the Stoic concept of assent. For the Stoics, animals and man share impulses, but humans differ in the impulse is always accompanied by a mental act of assent; for instance: a dog who smells a hare immediately wants to chase it; a hungry man who sees a hare on the other hand does not, according to the Stoics immediately want to chase it. The human must "first entertain and assent to the presentation 'that the hare is something to be chased'." Whereas sensations could be the basis of perception or understanding, human freedom would involve the assent to impulses or choice. See: F. H. Sandbach, *The Stoics*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), p. 60.

⁴⁵ Consider Rousseau's description of the savage as a child and his distinction between "*sensual or childish reason* [which] consists in forming simple ideas by the conjunction of several sensations" and "*intellectual or human reason*" which "consists in forming complex ideas by the conjunction of several simple ideas." See: Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom, (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 158.

⁴⁶ Plattner, p. 43.

dualism."⁴⁷ He cites Rousseau:

But if the difficulties surrounding all these questions should leave some room for dispute of this difference between man and animal, there is another very specific quality that distinguishes them and about which there can be no dispute: the faculty of self-perfection.⁴⁸

Plattner also footnotes Rousseau's comment in Note X that the monkey, as a species "lacks the faculty of perfecting itself which is the specific characteristic of the human species".⁴⁹ While Rousseau states that perfectibility is the most indisputable distinctive quality separating man from beast, it is not clear that Rousseau therefore intends freedom to be left out of account. Rousseau writes "if" the difficulties "should" leave room for dispute.⁵⁰ He does not write that they necessarily should or do leave room for doubt. Is freedom not something we feel, or something that we have the potential to feel or be conscious of?

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45; citing from Pléiade, p. 142.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note X, p. 217; p. 211.

⁵⁰ Plattner's translation is the same as that in Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality (Second Discourse) Polemics and Political Economy*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 3, eds. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, trans. Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Master, Christopher Kelly and Terence Marshall. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992), p. 26. Gourevitch translates the phrase "But even if the difficulties surrounding all these questions left some room for disagreement....". p. 148. The original reads: "*Mais, quand les difficultés qui environnent toutes ces questions, laisseroient quelque lieu de disputer....*" in which the verb tense indicates the conditional nature of the sentence. Pléiade: p. 142.

Rousseau's comment in Note X seems closer to supporting Plattner's point, but could not perfectibility itself be based on human freedom from instinct which allows man, eventually, to stand back, compare, learn and develop? Perfectibility, which leads to reason and consciousness, and so, to consciousness of freedom, could be the specific human characteristic without discrediting the existence of freedom. Rousseau can be seen as saying that it is not so much freedom that is specific to humans as the consciousness of freedom which depends on the development of the faculty of perfectibility. Under this interpretation, freedom, although it can not be submitted to a mechanistic or scientific explanation, would remain an important element of Rousseau's philosophy.

I believe it is necessary to see Rousseau's treatment of freedom as one that will not allow freedom to be subsumed by perfectibility which, Plattner notes, "Rousseau never states to be inexplicable by the laws of mechanics."⁵¹ I also believe that downplaying freedom is a logical consequence of interpreting Rousseau's account of the state of nature as a scientific account.

In my interpretation of the *Second Discourse*, I will attempt to show that Rousseau is serious about his state of nature, that is, that he attempts to prove it in a way that depends on a science of introspection, a science which

⁵¹ Plattner, p. 46.

Rousseau sees not as the pathway to an entire knowledge of the universe, but as the route to a salutary human wisdom. I will also try to show that the freedom Rousseau discovers through his introspection, the freedom that he brings to consciousness through performing the experiment that is the *Second Discourse*, is the ideal of his enterprise. It is this freedom, which is our consciousness of a human existence faced with a world, or our sentiment of existence, that Rousseau wants to preserve from destruction. The sentiment is destroyed in a world which keeps human consciousness divorced from itself. The human being must be allowed the oneness of living within himself, like the Savage man who "breathes nothing but repose and freedom".⁵² Rousseau contrasts this sort of state to that of sociable man. He writes:

...sociable man, always outside himself, is capable of living only in the opinion of others and, so to speak, derives the sentiment of his own existence solely from their judgement.⁵³

This disposition, leads to:

...forever asking of others what we are, without ever daring to ask it of ourselves, in the midst of so much Philosophy, humanity, politeness, and Sublime maxims, we have nothing more than a deceiving and frivolous exterior, honor without virtue, reason without wisdom, and pleasure without happiness.⁵⁴

⁵² Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 198; p. 192.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 199; p. 193.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Rousseau saw science, as pursued by the *philosophes*, as enforcing the separation of consciousness and self. By seeking outside oneself after knowledge of all kinds like a child gathering seashells by the shore, the scientist was on an infinite journey and would never return to himself to find his home within himself.⁵⁵ Because he saw the problem posed by this endless and indiscriminate quest for knowledge, Rousseau offered his *Discourse* as an alternative science. Rousseau designed his *Second Discourse* as an experiment which, if we deigned to follow its procedure, would take us back to the state in which we could know ourselves, that is we would no longer be '*hors d'état de nous connaître*.'⁵⁶ This state involves a disposition of the soul.⁵⁷ If the experiment succeeds it will engender a

⁵⁵ Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 171-172. Rousseau discusses the need for an organizing principle to guide the pursuit of science. The child by the sea, picking up armfuls of shells only to have to drop them in order to pick up new ones, is Rousseau's analogy to a scientist lacking a principle. He writes: "But if you look at science in itself, you enter into a bottomless sea, without shores, full of reefs. You will never get away." *Emile*, p. 171. A principle seems to have been lacking for Enlightenment scientists who seemed to desire knowledge for knowledge's sake. See Oakeshott, "The new Bentham," p. 138-140. See my introduction, note 5.

⁵⁶ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 129; p. 122. -that is, that we would no longer 'be unable to understand ourselves', or, literally, that we would no longer 'be out of the state in which we could understand ourselves.'

⁵⁷ In his *Dialogues*, Rousseau writes that he hoped to provoke certain dispositions of the soul. In this work, the character, "Rousseau," attempts to defend "J.J.," or the real-life Rousseau, the author of Rousseau's works. "Rousseau" has a generic Frenchman, "the Frenchmen," read Rousseau's works in order to better judge "J.J." Consider

consciousness of our sentiment of existence, and of a strange freedom. We will see that we are beings with a nature that is largely undefined. We will see that the world surrounding us is largely conventional. We will see that the possibility of the enjoyment of our sentiment of existence can only be preserved if we affirm traditions, customs and laws that are consistent with a political regime that will allow our independence from other particular people, by making us all equally bound by the law.

the following words of "the Frenchmen" to "Rousseau" regarding the works of "J.J.":

...consulting myself both during these readings and as I finished them, I examined as you desired the dispositions of soul into which they placed and left me, judging as you do that is was the best means to penetrate through to that of the Author when he wrote them and the effect he proposed to produce.

Rousseau, *Rousseau: Judge of Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*, p. 209.

CHAPTER TWO - METHOD: ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

In this chapter I will discuss Rousseau's approach to discovering natural man in light of the science of his time. In particular, I will broadly sketch the attitudes towards the still developing method of the natural sciences, focussing on views of analysis and synthesis both as tools of discovery and instruction. In this chapter I will argue that Rousseau remained faithful to an older view of method which insisted on the complementary nature of analysis and synthesis and which stressed the power of synthesis over analysis in the communication of one's meaning to a potentially refractory audience. In the following two chapters I will show how Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, although it remains an experiment based in thought and not on the senses, can be seen as mirroring the science of his day by including levels of analysis and synthesis.

Rousseau writes that the knowledge of man is the least advanced of all knowledge. He does not say that man is the least studied. Rather, he writes:

What is more cruel still is that, since every progress of the human Species removes it ever further from its primitive state, the more new knowledge we accumulate the more we deprive ourselves of the means of acquiring the most important knowledge of all, and that, in a sense, it is by dint of studying man that we have made it impossible for us to know him.⁵⁸

We have lost our innocence, our ability to look at ourselves without being blinded by the mass of knowledge and errors we have built up. We have studied man but have failed to secure our method from error, or worse, we have presumed to be correct. In a letter to Voltaire, Rousseau wrote:

Let us seek the first source of society's disorders, and we will find that all of men's ills come far more from error than ignorance, and that what we do not know at all harms us far less than what we believe we know. Now what method is more certain to rush from mistake to mistake than the frenzy to know everything?⁵⁹

Our confidence in our new knowledge deprives us of a better method for the study of ourselves. Because we think we know we have ceased to ask how we know. The sense in which our studies have been a failure lies not in the fact of our studying but in the way, or method, of our studying. Our new knowledge, the product of "passion that believes its reasons and the understanding that hallucinates," has made us appear falsely to ourselves.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 129; pp. 122-123.

⁵⁹ Rousseau, Letter to Voltaire, September 10, 1755, in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau Discourse on the Origins of Inequality (Second Discourse) Polemics, and Political Economy*, (Hanover: 1992), p. 106.

⁶⁰ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 129; p. 122.

Where was this "new knowledge" coming from and if the method responsible for it was flawed, what method was Rousseau suggesting should replace it? The efforts of the men (and some women) of letters of the Enlightenment were the source of the new knowledge. D'Alembert wrote:

Our century is called...the century of philosophy par excellence. ... If one considers without bias the present state of our knowledge, one cannot deny that philosophy among us has shown progress. Natural science from day to day accumulates new riches. Geometry, by extending its limits, has borne its torch into the regions of physical science which lay nearest at hand. The true system of the world has been recognized, developed, and perfected....⁶¹

The new method of scientific inquiry, which Rousseau believed was accumulating such specious wealth involved an emphasis on experimentation and on "analysis"; it involved breaking down complex ideas or phenomena into their simplest, constitutive, parts.

Rousseau did not ignore his day's fascination with scientific analysis. Instead, he performed his own analytic experiment. Rousseau's emphasis on introspection, on the importance of knowing one's self, led him to an analysis, of his own interior. This analysis forms the basis of his state of nature as portrayed in the first part of the *Second Discourse*. The second part of the *Discourse* offers

⁶¹ Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951), pp. 3-4, citing D'Alembert, "Elements de Philosophie," in *Mélanges de Littérature, d'Histoire et de Philosophie*, 1759, vol. IV, pp. 3-6.

Rousseau's synthesis, a completion or construction based on his prior analysis. Rousseau's experiment is complicated by his concern that his findings be accepted. This concern lies behind the dual nature of Rousseau's experiment. Rousseau builds from his basic findings in two different ways. On the one hand, he offers an elaboration of his findings in describing an imagined Savage and builds a synthesis which reveals the development of human passions. On the other hand, he offers a picture of a Savage which he bolsters with 'facts' and then uses as the basis for his synthetic, hypothetical, history.

ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

Rousseau's experiment, and his way of communicating, reveal his insights into the concepts of analysis and synthesis, and their inter-relation. Rousseau shows his awareness of both the complementary nature of analysis and synthesis - which seems to have been glossed over by the Enlightenment scientists' emphasis on analysis - and the different strengths of each method in putting forth one's views.⁶²

Analysis and synthesis had been discussed as concepts

⁶² Scientific practice seems to have weakened the emphasis on analysis held in theory, due to the nature of inquiry itself. Approaches that would have been termed synthetic in earlier times were subsumed under "analysis" in Rousseau's time. See the definition of "Analysis" offered by the *Encyclopédie* cited below.

of inquiry at least as early as Plato. The distinction between the analytic and synthetic methods appears in Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He writes:

Let us also not forget that arguments from principles differ from those which lead to principles. Plato, too, was right when he raised this problem and inquired whether the right way to proceed is from the principles or towards the principles, e.g., whether in a stadium the right procedure is from the judges to the goal or vice versa.⁶³

Aristotle alludes to the Greek race track which was shaped like a U. The starting and finishing line, the same line, and the judges were positioned at the open end of the U. At the opposite end of the U was a marker around which the runners turned on their way back to the judges.⁶⁴ It was, then, neither right, nor wrong, to run to or from the judges. Moving in both directions was necessary, at different times. Aristotle was affirming that both arguments to and arguments from principles are of value, but that their difference must be recognized. Geometry, for instance, lends itself to arguments from principles. The student can grasp the definition of a triangle without any need for prior convincing. Matters of ethics are not so

⁶³ Aristotle, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. and trans. H. Apostle, (Grinnell, Iowa: Peripatetic Press, 1984), 1095a30-1095b, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Martin Ostwald, ed. and trans. *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1962), p 7. n. 12.

simple.⁶⁵ Aristotle continues:

One should begin, of course, from what is familiar; but things are familiar in two ways, for some are familiar relative to us while others are familiar without qualification. Probably we should begin from things which are familiar relative to us.⁶⁶

Hippocrates Apostle explains the difference between "familiar relative to us" and "familiar without qualification" in this way:

Things familiar relative to us are things as first known by us chronologically, and they are usually known through their accidents and confusedly. ... Things familiar without qualification, on the other hand, are things which are known as they are after analysis, and such knowledge of them is scientific and is used in a science.⁶⁷

The issue concerns the difference between a type of pre-scientific or pre-philosophical knowledge and scientific or philosophic knowledge. Aristotle opts to begin his teaching of ethics with that which is "familiar relative to us" that is, with that which his students think they know. On the basis of the student's knowledge, Aristotle will construct the principles of ethics. But Aristotle wants to make sure his job is not impossible. He has a blueprint. The above quotation from Aristotle continues:

⁶⁵ Hippocrates Apostle, ed., trans. *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, (Grinnell, Iowa: Peripatetic Press, 1985), p. 209.

⁶⁶ Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1095b2-4, p. 4.

⁶⁷ Apostle, p. 209.

Accordingly, he who is to listen effectively to lectures concerning noble and just things and, in general, to subjects dealt with by politics should be brought up well in ethical habits; for the beginning [here] is the fact, and if this fact should appear to be adequate there will be no further need of the why of it.⁶⁸

In ethical teaching, beginning with what we think we know and building from there to principles only makes sense if what we know has already been informed by those principles. That is, the idea of a whole, the ethical community of the student, bears upon the particulars of what that student professes to know. Analysis, as starting with what is familiar to us in a relative way, the way put forward by Aristotle in this section of the *Ethics*, only makes sense from the perspective of an already completed synthesis. Aristotle refers the student who has not had the requisite education in ethical habits to Hesiod, who will offer him a different sort of synthetic story and will tell him that "the man/ Who neither for himself can think nor, listening,/ Takes what he hears to heart," is useless.⁶⁹

Descartes also discusses the difference between the analytic and the synthetic methods in his *Meditations, Second Responses*. Descartes' discussion gives a fuller account of what to do if one's student, or reader, has not been prepared to "listen effectively" to one's speeches.

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1095b4-7, p. 4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1095b11-12, citing Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 295-7.

Descartes discusses the distinction between the analytic and synthetic method in light of which better satisfies the philosophical student and which should be used to convince the refractory student. Descartes writes:

Analysis shows the true way by means of which the thing in question was discovered methodically and as it were *a priori*, so that if the reader is willing to follow it and give sufficient attention to all points, he will make the thing his own and understand it just as perfectly as if he had discovered it for himself. But this method contains nothing to compel belief in an argumentative or inattentive reader; for if he fails to attend even to the smallest point, he will not see the necessity of the conclusion.⁷⁰

To convince a contentious or inattentive reader a different method is needed. Descartes continues:

[Synthesis] demonstrates the conclusion clearly and employs a long series of definitions, postulates, axioms, theorems and problems, so that if anyone denies one of the conclusions it can be shown at once that it is contained in what has gone before, and hence the reader, however, argumentative or stubborn he may be, is compelled to give his assent.⁷¹

He adds:

However, this method is not as satisfying as the method of analysis, nor does it engage the minds of those who are eager to learn, since it does not show how the thing in question was discovered.⁷²

Descartes also discusses the appropriateness of each method

⁷⁰ René Descartes, "Second Set of Replies" in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume II*, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 110-112.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

to different subjects:

The difference [between using synthesis in geometry and metaphysics] is that the primary notions which are presupposed for the demonstration of geometrical truths are readily accepted by anyone, since they accord with the use of our senses. Hence there is no difficulty there, except in the proper deduction of the consequences, which can be done even by the less attentive, provided they remember what has gone before. ...

In metaphysics by contrast there is nothing which causes so much effort as making our perception of the primary notions clear and distinct. Admittedly, they are by their nature as evident as, or even more evident than, the primary notions which the geometers study; but they conflict with many preconceived opinions derived from the senses which we have got into the habit of holding from our earliest years,....⁷³

Rousseau will distinguish himself and his scientific method from the Enlightenment approach to science by seeing the importance of a complementary analysis and synthesis as did Aristotle and by believing, like Descartes, that it could be important to communicate one's findings synthetically to readers who refused or were unable to follow one's analysis.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

ENLIGHTENMENT VIEWS ON METHOD

Typically, in the seventeenth century, the pursuit of philosophical knowledge began in thought, despite an increased interest in experimentation. The pursuit would begin from the highest being and the highest certainty and knowledge would then be derived or deduced.¹⁴ Truth was the product of a complicated concatenation of logical propositions. No part of the chain meant anything by itself. The system gave the meaning. Experimentation, involving great trust in the senses, was beginning, however, to become part of the reasoned approach to knowing nature as early as the seventeenth century. The laws of nature were no longer to be derived from logical arguments based on theological grounds but could be discovered through experiments which brought knowledge of the particularities of the Book of Nature, whose author was still assumed to be God.¹⁵

Only in the eighteenth century, did the idea of experimentation actually come to hold sway, and then only in theory. In practice, scientific methods changed more slowly. In the eighteenth century, it became widely held that deduction and proof from highest logical principles was no longer adequate. The systematic rigour and thoroughness

¹⁴ Cassirer, p. 6.

¹⁵ Thomas L. Hankins, *Science and the Enlightenment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 3.

of Descartes, Malebranche, Leibniz and Spinoza were not forgotten but were pushed aside in favour of a new method and a more modest goal. Philosophy would not seek to explain everything, but to explain more things. It would deal less with overarching systems and more with detailed knowledge of particulars.⁷⁶ Rousseau's approach is peculiar in that, after analyzing the human heart, he develops principles which make the particularities of natural science, travel, and history irrelevant. Philosophy, in the eighteenth century, was to be based on the method of the natural sciences. The eighteenth century turned, although more slowly in some quarters than others, away from Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and towards Newton's "Rules of Philosophizing."⁷⁸

The popularization of Newton, and of his works, also led to an emphasis on starting one's scientific investigations with analysis. Newton was the Enlightenment's biggest hero of natural philosophy. Newton had solved the 'riddle of the planets.' His ideas were published widely throughout Europe and he was lauded for his scientific achievements. His effect on the actual method of natural philosophers was not as broad as his effect on people's thinking. His name became a symbol for political

⁷⁶ Cassirer, p. 7.

⁷⁷ See Chapters 7 and 8.

⁷⁸ Cassirer, p. 7.

and social reform while his scientific writings offered ambiguous advice. His works contained no clear description of a method and were interpreted in ways that diverged radically. The Marquis de l'Hopital (1661-1704) interpreted Newton as a rationalist, characterizing his laws of motion as *a priori* deductions of pure thought. Dutch physicists interpreted him as an rigorous empiricist.⁷⁹ Nicolas Malebranche praised Newton but remained faithful, in his *Recherche de la Vérité*, to the philosophy of rationalism stressed by Descartes.⁸⁰ If Newton's work was unclear in its practical advice for experimentation, it was clear in its praise of "analysis" as the most trustworthy method for discovering knowledge. Newton's method began with "analysis". Ernst Cassirer writes:

[Newton] does not begin by setting up certain principles, certain general concepts and axioms, in order, by virtue of abstract inferences, to pave the way to the knowledge of the particular, the 'factual.' Newton's approach moves in just the opposite direction. His phenomena are the data of experience; his principles are the goal of his investigation.⁸¹

The eighteenth century not only embraced Newton 'method,' but generalized it, extending its application beyond mathematics and physics into all realms of thought. The embracing of analysis as the true path to knowledge

⁷⁹ Hankins, p. 9.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸¹ Cassirer, p. 7.

triumphed at the middle of the century, the time of Rousseau's *Second Discourse*.⁸² Voltaire writes, in his *Traité de Métaphyiques*:

We must never make hypotheses; we must never say: Let us begin by inventing principles according to which we attempt to explain everything. We should say rather: Let us make an exact analysis of things.... When we cannot utilize the compass of mathematics or the torch of experience and physics, it is certain that we cannot take another step forward.⁸³

In the seventeenth century, analysis and synthesis had been considered two separate methods. Analysis was seen solely as a method of discovery; synthesis as a method of proof.⁸⁴ In the eighteenth century, France was dominated by the *Logique de Port-Royal* which appeared in at least twenty editions between 1700 and 1760.⁸⁵ The *Logique* outlined analysis as useful for discovering the truth and synthesis as useful in communicating it. In this it reiterated the advice of Descartes on how to communicate one's ideas to a hostile, or inattentive, reader. D'Alembert, a mathematician, in his *Essai sur les Eléments de Philosophie*, writes that, in logic and in mathematics,

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸³ *Ibid.* citing Voltaire, *Traité de Métaphyiques*, chapters II and V.

⁸⁴ Hankins, p. 20.

⁸⁵ Giorgio Tonelli, "Analysis and Synthesis in XVIIIth Century Philosophy Prior to Kant," in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, Vol. XX, No. 2, 1976, p. 185.

analysis is the method of discovery and synthesis the method of communicating the discovered truth.⁸⁶

Etienne Bonnet de Condillac argued that the best method of searching for truth and the best way of communicating any findings was through the use of the analytic method. Condillac expected opposition to his work's emphasis on the analytic method, but he hoped to counter opposition by having his readers follow his method and confirm his results for themselves. He does not seem to have taken his expected opposition as a potentially serious problem. He offered no pleasing prelude to his exposition by which to prepare the reader to accept his work. He wrote that he expected a better reception among the ignorant rather than the intellectually prejudiced. He was not interested in writing past prejudices in order to convince. His hope to convince seems to have rested on the hope that his readers would trace the progression he outlines in his *Essai*. Once willing, they would, he believed, easily be able to follow his experiment through from the simplest ideas to the more complex. He does not explain how he expects to generate this willingness. Perhaps he had faith that the scientific character of his day was in truth more interested in genuinely knowing than his comments concerning intellectual prejudices would suggest.

Condillac acknowledged that the synthetic method, as a

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

method of teaching, could have practical success. He asks how arithmeticians have come to have such accurate ideas and he concludes that it is because:

...knowing in what manner they are framed, they are always able to compound or decompound them, in order to compare them according to their relations. It is by reflecting on the formation of numbers, that they have found out the rules of combinations.⁸⁷

He then writes:

Such as have not made this reflexion [on the formulation of numbers], may calculate as exactly as others, because the rules are sure; but not knowing the reasons on which they are founded, they have no idea of what they are about, and are consequently incapable of discovering new rules.⁸⁸

Mathematics, Condillac wrote, gained its insights through analysis, but often taught its insights, the rules discovered by looking at the relations of mathematical units, using a synthetic explanation. It often conveyed its rules unaccompanied by the formulation of the rules which originated from analytic findings. In mathematics, synthesis was an adequate teaching method, but only because the rules taught had a secure foundation. Even in

⁸⁷ Condillac, Etienne Bonnet de Condillac, *An Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge (1756) Being a Supplement to Mr. Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*, trans. T. Nugent, (Gainesville, Fla: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1971), p. 304. Although this *Essai* was not published until 1756, Rousseau most likely knew much of what it contained if even half of what he writes in his *Confessions* on his relations with Condillac is true. *Confessions*, Book VII, trans. J.M. Cohen, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 324.

⁸⁸ Condillac, p. 304.

mathematics however, to be able to discover new rules, the student would have to understand the basis of his of her original knowledge. Anyone working in a field less exact than arithmetic would not even be able to trust professed rules but would be thrown towards analysis as the only sure method of solidly grounding any possible knowledge.

Condillac therefore privileged analysis both as a method of discovery and as a method of instruction in fields other than mathematics. Condillac did show, in his actual approach, that both analysis and synthesis have a role to play in scientific inquiry; one arrived at the simplest ideas and then one examined the relations between the ideas and groups of the ideas to discover how the understanding worked.⁸⁹

Condillac's view of analysis is echoed in the article "Analyse, en Logique" by the Abbé Yvon which appeared in

⁸⁹ Tonelli, p. 190.

the first edition of the *Encyclopédie*:

Analysis is what is called in the schools the method to be followed in order to discover the truth; it's also called the method of resolution. By this method, one proceeds from the compound to what is more simple (...). But, as this definition is not quite exact, we shall replace it with another. Analysis consists in retracing the origin of our ideas, in developing their generation and in making different composition and decompositions in order to compare them with each other in all respects. Thus, analysis, is the true secret of discoveries. It has this advantage upon the synthesis, that it always offers a few ideas at a time, and always in the simplest order (...). It is not through general principles that it searches after truth, but always through a kind of calculus, i.e., by composing and decomposing notions in order to compare them (...) with the discoveries in view (...). Therefore, it is clear that it is the only method capable of conferring evidence for our reasonings; it follows, that it is the only [method] to follow in the search after truth, and also in the manner of instructing others; which [method] is ordinarily attributed to synthesis.⁹⁰

Showing the influence of Condillac and of Locke, this definition of analysis links it to the retracing of the origins of our ideas and our comparison of different ideas and combinations of ideas. It also indicates a change in the attitudes towards instructing others. It seems however that this attitude is predicated on a belief in the tractability of one's student. The student is assumed to want to and to be able to follow the teacher step by step through an analytic procedure.

Rousseau did not seem to have assumed tractability in his readers. He also insisted on the interconnected roles

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

of analysis and synthesis. It is interesting that Rousseau's *Emile*, who Rousseau tells us is no prodigy, is taught through synthesis while he is made to think he is performing analysis. Rousseau writes:

There is a dispute about the choice of analysis or synthesis for studying the sciences. It is not always necessary to choose. Sometimes one can use both resolution and combination in the same researches and guide the child by the method of instruction when he believes he is only analyzing. Then if both were used at the same time, they would serve as reciprocal proofs. Starting at the same time from the two opposite points, without thinking he is traveling the same road, he would be quite surprised to meet himself, and this surprise could only be very agreeable. I would, for example, want to take geography by its two extremes and join to the study of the globe's revolutions the measurement of its parts, beginning with the place where one lives. While the child studies the celestial sphere and it thus transported into the heavens, lead him back to the division of the earth and show him first his own habitat.⁹¹

In discussing Rousseau's use of analysis and synthesis in education, Allan Bloom notes:

Beginning with the part, or what is first or most knowable to us, is impossible without some concept of the whole, at least the whole of human knowledge accessible to us. And this is evident from the actual philosophic procedures of a Descartes or a Plato, or from the empiricism of Locke and Condillac known to Rousseau.⁹²

In the next section I will begin my argument that Rousseau's *Second Discourse* was, in the spirit of the age, a scientific discourse in that it offered an analysis that

⁹¹ Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 171.

⁹² Bloom, ed. *Emile*, Note 4, p. 487.

aimed to show natural man by the light of the first and simplest operations of the soul. I will also argue that Rousseau was concerned with the question of how best to communicate the findings of this analysis. He was concerned not only with those people who were willing and able to follow him in his meditations, but also with those who were either unwilling or unable to follow him. In this, he returned to the advice of Descartes which was to communicate via synthesis if the reader was unwilling to follow one's analysis without prejudice.

CHAPTER THREE - CLEARING THE LAB BENCH

As an exercise in method, Rousseau's *Second Discourse* sets out its procedure in the Preface which begins with a reference to the Delphic injunction to know one's self and concludes with the injunction, from the Stoic poet Persius, to learn one's place in the world. These two injunctions form the parameters of Rousseau's experiment. Knowing oneself involves a close look, an analysis, of who and what one is. Knowing one's place in the world involves knowing the world at least well enough to feel at home; it means that one has performed or seen the synthesis of the world's features well enough to be able to deduce where one fits in.

The object of Rousseau's experiment, the object of his search for knowledge in the *Second Discourse*, is natural man. Natural man is the man who is uncovered in the *Discourse*. Rousseau's method is simple. He meditates. He looks into himself. His preparation, however, is complicated. Before he can proceed with his experiment, Rousseau must do several things. He must show that natural man exists, that something natural persists in man. He must show that there is a state of nature, or natural state.⁹³

⁹³ Note that the term "Natural state" does occur in the text, once. Towards the end of the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau writes that "By thus discovering and retracing the forgotten and lost roads that must have led man from the Natural state to the Civil state... any attentive Reader

Finally, he must indicate how he is going to learn about this state. He will rule out natural science and rule in meditation.

PREPARATION #1: GLAUCUS

In the Preface to the *Discourse*, Rousseau calls the knowledge of man the "most useful and least advanced of all human knowledge." He characterizes the question of the Academy as one leading to the question of knowing man himself.⁹⁴ He asks: "For how can the source of inequality among men ever be known without first knowing men themselves?"⁹⁵ To know men themselves Rousseau sets out "to disentangle what [man] owes to his own stock from what circumstances and his progress have added to or changed in his primitive state", to "disentangle what is original from what is artificial in man's present Nature".⁹⁶ This disentangling is Rousseau's first act of "decompounding," or of analysis. The task of stripping away the effects of society is daunting. In his *Confessions*, Rousseau wrote:

cannot fail but be struck by the immense distance that separates these two states." p. 197; p. 192. I believe it is important that Rousseau uses the language of space [l'espace immense] not the language of time. The state of nature lies within, not in the past.

⁹⁴ The Academy's question is: "What is the origin of inequality among men, and whether it is authorized by the natural Law." *Second Discourse*, p. 137; p. 129.

⁹⁵ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 129; p. 122.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129; p.122 and p. 130; p. 123.

Amidst so many prejudices and simulated passions, one must be a skilled analyst of the human heart to disentangle the true feelings of Nature.⁹⁷

In the Preface to the *Second Discourse*, he is simplifying the terms of the Academy's question, or, as he writes: "reducing it to its true state."⁹⁸ He likens the human soul to the statue of Glaucus "which time, sea, and storms had so disfigured that it less resembled a God than a ferocious Beast". Rousseau writes that the human soul has been:

...altered in the lap of society by a thousand ever recurring causes, by the acquisition of a mass of knowledge and errors, by the changes that have taken place in the constitution of Bodies, and by the continual impact of the passions....⁹⁹

When one looks for the soul:

...instead of a being always acting on certain and unvarying Principles, instead of the Celestial and majestic simplicity with which it had been endowed by its Author, all one still finds is the disfiguring contrast of passion that believes it reasons and the understanding that hallucinates.¹⁰⁰

The human soul, Rousseau argues, has "changed in appearance to the point of being almost unrecognizable." In his time, the human soul has come to resemble a ferocious beast that mistakenly believes it reasons and understands.

Importantly, Rousseau describes the soul's disfigurement as

⁹⁷ Rousseau, *Confessions*, p. 504.

⁹⁸ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 130; p. 123.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 129; p. 122.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

making it "almost unrecognizable". Rousseau, looking for the original beneath the barnacled cover of the statue of Glaucus finds a soul that has remained a constant despite changes in appearance. Without such a constancy, how, one wonders, can Rousseau allude to a being acting on "certain and unvarying Principles" and endowed by a "Celestial and majestic simplicity"? Beneath the barnacled cover Rousseau sees both man's primitive or original state and man's nature residing safely through the ages within his soul.¹⁰¹ Were Rousseau to indicate that this simplicity is to be found only in the past, in a state of nature which can never be recaptured, one could believe he is just asserting the image of simplicity as a lament. But Rousseau uses this image of simplicity, tranquillity and freedom as a standard for judging present human society. He contrasts this image with the hectic, confused, miserable and enslaved state of the sociable man of his day. He must believe his standard is real and applicable in the present, that human nature,

¹⁰¹ I agree with Masters here that it is interesting to note that while Plato uses the image of Glaucus to bolster the image of the immortality of the soul Rousseau uses it to indicate a primitive state of man. I would argue further however, that Rousseau finds man's true nature in his primitive state and that this nature remains a constant, immortal, so to speak. Humans are not defined by Rousseau, by their reason, for example, but by their capacity to develop it and other potentials. Human nature is so minimal that humans are highly manipulable precisely because of their nature, not because they lack a nature. See Masters, ed. *Discourse on the Origins*, (Hanover 1992), note 12, p. 178; and Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom, (New York: Basic Books, 1968), Book X, 611.

whatever it is, however minimal, has not changed in a way that makes the standard of man in the state of nature morally useless in contemplating modern life.

Rousseau does argue that humans have changed. They have, for instance, developed reason in society. Reason however, is not, for Rousseau, natural to human beings. He defines human nature not as rationality but as potentiality. Reason, highly corruptible, and a development dependent on society, rather than on nature alone, represents for Rousseau both an indisputable harm and a questionable benefit to mankind. For Rousseau our nature is defined more by what it allows than by what it necessitates. We have the capacity for perfectibility and we have the potential for falling back below the mark above which perfectibility raised us. Our perfectibility will allow us to leave the brute stupidity of the state of nature, but it will not change the basis of our nature, our limits as defined by our nature's simplest components.

In discussing the disfigurement and altered appearance of the human soul, Rousseau muses that some people may have remained longer in the original state of nature.¹⁰² He suggests, but does not say, that the original of the human soul is still to be seen. Rousseau does not boldly assert that he has seen the original. He writes instead:

¹⁰² Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 130; p. 123.

Let my readers therefore not imagine that I dare flatter myself with having seen what seems to me so difficult to see. I have initiated some arguments; I have hazarded some conjectures, less in the hope of resolving the question than with the intention of elucidating it and reducing it to its true state. Others will easily be able to go farther along the same road, though it will not be easy for anyone to reach the end.¹⁰³

Rousseau's readers should not imagine that he flatters himself for having accomplished a difficult task. Rousseau knows the risks, and the insincerity of flattery. He is not flattering himself, and he has perhaps not seen natural man but he has sensed natural man within himself.

Rousseau suggests in other works that he is a natural man or a man of nature. In his *Confessions*, Rousseau will write: "My purpose is to display to my kind a portrait in every way true to nature, and the man I shall portray will be myself."¹⁰⁴ In *Rousseau Judges Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*, two characters, "Rousseau" and "the Frenchman" discuss "J.J." who is described as the author of Rousseau's works. After reading "J.J."s works "the Frenchman" says:

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Rousseau, *Confessions*, p. 17.

Where could the painter and apologist of nature, so disfigured and calumniated now, have found his model if not in his own heart? He described it as he himself felt. The prejudices that did not subjugate him, the factitious passions to which he was not prey did not hide from his eyes as they did from others those original traits so generally forgotten or misjudged. These traits so novel for us and so true once they are traced could still find, deep in people's hearts, the attestation of their correctness, but they would never have sought them out themselves if the historian of nature hadn't started by removing the rust that hid them. A retired and solitary life, an active taste for reveries and contemplation, the habit of looking within oneself and seeking, in the calm of the passions, those original traits that have disappeared in the multitude, could alone enable him to rediscover them. In short, a man had to portray himself to show us primitive man like this....¹⁰⁵

In a footnote to the text, Rousseau suggests that he is unknown by the French in general because of his "primitive" nature. He writes:

I don't know two Frenchmen who could succeed in knowing me, even if they desired to do so with all their heart. The primitive nature of man is too far removed from all their ideas.¹⁰⁶

Natural man is difficult to see, but Rousseau has at least felt his existence within himself, within his imagination.

¹⁰⁵ Rousseau, *Dialogues*, p. 214.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 147. It is not clear whether the "Rousseau" of the text and Rousseau are the same person. "Rousseau" seems to be a character although he bears a striking resemblance to the actual Rousseau. The text in which "Rousseau" speaks is preceded and followed by notes by Rousseau himself. I believe the footnotes are also by Rousseau and not his character. This makes them perhaps as trustworthy, but not more trustworthy, as his words in the *Confessions*. We should remember Rousseau's motto 'to consecrate one's life to truth' and also that he delivers his truths in many forms.

PREPAFATION #2: THE STATE OF NATURE

Once Rousseau has established that natural man exists, he tracks him to his habitat to observe him better. Rousseau's task is to find the original in "man's present Nature."¹⁰⁷ Somewhere in man's present nature his original persists. To show the original more clearly, Rousseau offers his view of the state of nature. Rousseau has told us that "it is by dint of studying man that we have made it impossible for us to know him." Literally, he told us: "*c'est en un sens à force d'étudier l'homme que nous nous sommes mis hors d'état de le connoître*".¹⁰⁸ We have put ourselves out of the state in which we could know man. Rousseau's remedy for our situation is to take us back into the state of nature. He does this in describing his state of nature:

...a state which no longer exists, which perhaps never did exist, which probably will never exist, and about which it is nevertheless necessary to have exact Notions in order to accurately to judge of our present state.¹⁰⁹

This is a state, Rousseau insists, which we can know. It does not now exist although it may or may not have once existed. Perhaps most intriguingly, this state may exist in the future; its future existence is possible, although, Rousseau says, not probable. Above all, Rousseau tells us

¹⁰⁷ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 130; 124.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 129; [Pléiade] p. 122.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 130; p. 123.

that to judge our present state we must have exact notions of the state of nature which may be nothing more than an imaginative construct.

Rousseau's use of "perhaps" to describe the state of nature as one that "perhaps never did exist" is ambiguous. The interpretation of Rousseau's state of nature is greatly affected by how one believes Rousseau meant the word "perhaps." If he wrote it only to elude censure, he means that the state of nature, as he describes it, did exist. If not, if he meant to include it, he meant to cast doubt on the status of his state of nature. I believe it was Rousseau's intent, with his "perhaps" and his "hypotheses," to cast his state of nature into doubt. By promoting doubt, he promotes thought and allows himself to present his state of nature in two ways. One presentation is of the state of nature as an imaginary construct, a state that exists in the imagination and so, in one sense, never existed. The other presentation is of the state of nature as a factual, historical, state. Doubt is the first gateway through which we must pass before reaching the state of nature. It is the first step back towards a defining characteristic of the real state of human nature, towards the conscious enjoyment of the sentiment of our entire existence, our ability to engage in reverie.

Because Rousseau wrote under the possibility of censorship, some commentators argue that Rousseau included

the "perhaps" as an attempt to avoid ecclesiastical censure. They argue that the state of nature is to be seen as an actual historical state and that Rousseau's "perhaps" is said out of prudence.¹¹⁰ Man, under Christian orthodoxy, was created in a state of grace. In his commentary "On Genesis," Calvin, for example, had offered this description:

In the mind perfect intelligence flourished and reigned, uprightness attended as its companion, and all the senses were prepared and molded for due obedience to reason; and in the body there was a suitable correspondence with this natural order.¹¹¹

Rousseau places his creation, his imagined man, into a state of nature in which man begins at the level of the beasts. Seen as a historical state, Rousseau's state of nature would be seen in opposition to Christian doctrine. Those who say that Rousseau used his "perhaps" purely out of prudence imply that what Rousseau really wanted to say, but what he felt he could not safely say, was that the state of nature, as he conceived it, had once existed, that is that it should be seen as a historical state. While Rousseau may have used this "perhaps" as protection against religious censure, it seems unlikely. He knew that writers could be jailed for their views and he knew the common convention of appealing to hypotheses in order to better equivocate under

¹¹⁰ Plattner, pp. 18-20. In addition see Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, pp. 116-118.

¹¹¹ John Calvin, "On Genesis" from the "Commentaries" in *On the Christian Faith*, ed. John T. McNeill, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), p. 131.

questioning by the authorities. He also knew that writers often seemed to be jailed not because of their ideas, but because they had offended well-known and well-placed people. Rousseau had visited Diderot in jail at Vincennes in 1749 where Diderot had been sent by a *lettre de cachet*.¹¹² Rousseau commented on Diderot's *Lettres sur les aveugles* which had been published shortly before Diderot's imprisonment:

...[they] contained nothing blameworthy except for a few personal allusions, which shocked Mme. Dupré de Saint-Maur and M. de Réamur, and for which he was confined in the keep of Vincennes.¹¹³

While Rousseau is, in this comment, almost certainly exaggerating the pernicious effects of society members' *amour-propre*, it is likely that there was some truth to his claim. It must also be noted that he was, in 1753-4, writing under a new censor, Chrétien Malesherbes, not the censor under whom Diderot had written. Malesherbes, responsible for censorship between 1750 and 1763, was known to sympathize with the *philosophes*.¹¹⁴ It is possible that

¹¹² John Lough, *An Introduction to Eighteenth Century France*, (New York: David McKay Co., 1960), p. 310.

¹¹³ Rousseau, *Confessions*, p. 325. Consider also, Rousseau's attribution of some of his "misfortunes" to the "misunderstanding" of the Duke de Choiseul of Rousseau's praise of him in *On the Social Contract*. See: *On the Social Contract*, ed. R. Masters, trans. J. Masters, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), III, vi. p. 89, and Masters, note 86, p. 147; and Rousseau's own note in *Dialogues*, p. 237.

¹¹⁴ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation, The Rise of Modern Paganism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), pp. 6, 26, and 141.

Rousseau did not feel as great a need for ambiguity as he would have only a few years earlier.¹¹⁵ In sum, Rousseau's "perhaps" was probably more than an ecclesiastical shield. It also served, importantly, to cast doubt on the status of the state of nature.

Rousseau did not want to say unequivocally, I believe, that the state had existed nor that it had never existed. Rousseau had to imply that the state of nature had existed because only through a physical proof would he be able to convince the partisans of natural science to believe his claim about human nature. Rousseau implied the state had perhaps never existed because, in a sense, it never had, physically existed, and, in another sense, it was an abiding state.

Above all, Rousseau seems to have wanted to cast doubt on the status of his state of nature. In the Exordium, he casts doubt on the 'factual' existence of the state of nature. He writes:

¹¹⁵ Victor Goldschmidt suggests the threat of the censor has been overplayed. He cites a French ambassador to the effect that Montesquieu would not have been placed on the index had it not been for 'local circumstances.' He writes that Pufendorf had worked to enlarge the area for theorizing by drawing a distinction between theological and moral/legal realms in his *Droit de la nature et des gens* and he writes that the Abbé de Condillac was able to note in his *Essai*, published in 1756, that a philosopher must seek to explain things through nature not by relying on extraordinary explanations, a proud plea on behalf of philosophy, against established religion which did not attract the wrath of the censor. V. Goldschmidt, *Anthropologie et Politique*, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1974), p. 128-9.

Let us therefore begin by setting aside all the facts, for they do not affect the question. The Inquiries that may be pursued regarding this Subject [the state of nature] ought not to be taken for historical truths, but only for hypothetical and conditional reasonings; better suited to elucidate the Nature of things than to show their genuine origin, and comparable to those our Physicists daily make regarding the formation of the World.¹¹⁶

This quotation, coming directly after mention of the "writings of Moses" is interpreted by many in the same way as Rousseau's "perhaps". It is seen as indicating that Rousseau means to set aside theological facts in order not to inflame ecclesiastic opposition.¹¹⁷ Surely the phrase "to elucidate the Nature of things" coupled with Rousseau's later use, as one model for his state of nature, of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, *The Nature of Things*, a book proscribed as atheistic, would inflame the fires Rousseau is said to be quenching. Alone, this phrase indicates only the direction of Rousseau's investigation. Supported by the use of *De rerum natura*, it becomes tongue in cheek. Rousseau

¹¹⁶ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 139; pp. 132-133.

¹¹⁷ This is a highly debated issue. Morel, Masters, Plattner say the facts in question are solely the theological facts. Vaughn, Goldschmidt, Gourevitch, disagree. Jean Morel, "Recherches sur les sources du Discours de l'inégalité," in *Annales de la Société J.-J. Rousseau*, Vol. 5, 1909, p. 136; Masters suggests this in *Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, p. 118; Plattner, p. 19; C.E. Vaughn, *The Political Writing of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), Vol 1, p. 13, note 3; Goldschmidt, pp. 125-126; Gourevitch, p. 25.

may tip his hat to the church, but he does not take it off.¹¹⁸ Victor Gourevitch writes that we would be correct to see Rousseau as casting aside biblical facts in the *Exordium*. He argues that we would be wrong, however, to extrapolate from Rousseau's setting aside biblical history that he means to be factual, or historically accurate, in his presentation of the state of nature. Gourevitch argues that the state of nature defined as the state preceding civil society or civil institutions did in fact exist and that this is the state in which the Savages, of whom Rousseau has read in the travellers' tales, live.

Gourevitch adds:

But a state without - and conceivably prior to - any acknowledged authority, rules, covenants, or moral relations, and hence without - or prior to - artifice or convention of any kind may well not ever have existed; it certainly does not now exist; and it is unlikely to exist hereafter. Human life may always, everywhere, necessarily, be a mixture of the natural and the artificial or conventional, and it may be perfectly 'natural' that this be so. In order to know the state of man free from such artifice of convention, one is therefore compelled to conjecture.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Heinrich Meier, "The Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men On the Intention of Rousseau's Most Philosophic Work," in *Interpretation*, Winter 1988-89, Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 214. Meier writes:

De rerum natura, proscribed as 'atheistic,' is nowhere mentioned by name in the *Discours*. When the heathen epoch of the *novitas mundi* is passed off as the 'happiest and most durable epoch,' Christianity emerges as a decline, as one of the 'steps towards the decrepitude of the species.' p. 214.

¹¹⁹ Victor Gourevitch, "Rousseau's Pure State of Nature" in *Interpretation*, Fall 1988, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 34.

Rousseau's phrasing is ambiguous enough to hold out the possibility of the state of nature having existed, a possibility Rousseau later seems to discount by writing that:

...if the Writings of Moses are granted the credence owed them by every Christian Philosopher, it has to be denied that, even before the Flood, Men were ever in the pure state of Nature, unless they by some extraordinary Occurrence relapsed into it: a Paradox most embarrassing to defend, and altogether impossible to prove.¹⁷⁰

This passage does not discount the possibility of the state of nature having existed. Rousseau, whatever his exact views on religion were, was not the paragon of Christian Philosophers. In addition, it can be argued that by some extraordinary occurrence man had fallen back into the state of nature. Rousseau, therefore, holds out the possibility that the state of nature existed. Rousseau wanted people to believe what he discovered in his state of nature. To believe him, they would have had to have accompanied him in his meditations, or to believe he had proved, the state of nature, through natural science. To encourage belief, Rousseau appealed to natural science, as the reigning rhetoric of the day. If Rousseau had simply presented the state of nature as a hypothetical construct his argument would have lacked the rhetorical power it gained from its scientific sheen. The scientific character of the *Second Discourse* can be seen, however, to be no more than rhetoric.

¹⁷⁰ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 139; p. 132.

Rousseau had a greater interest in proving psychological principles and in demonstrating the existence of human freedom and perfectibility than in preparing physical experiments and cataloguing travellers' reports. What is most important to his argument is not whether or not the state of nature existed historically but rather that its historical existence is "altogether impossible to prove" and that as a heuristic device it can reveal something about human nature that is crucial to know.¹²¹

PREPARATION #3: SPECIFYING THE TYPE OF EXPERIMENT

That the state of nature existed or will exist is questionable; that we understand it is crucial. Rousseau writes:

[T]o make solid observations on this subject, would need even more Philosophy than might be thought; and a good solution of the following Problem does not seem to me unworthy of the Aristotles and Plinys of our century.¹²²

Rousseau states the problem as:

¹²¹ Rousseau's state of nature and his hypothetical history both rely on the soundness of his principles which exempts him, he says at the end of Part I of the *Discourse*, from expanding his reflections about, among other things, "the impossibility of on the one hand rejecting certain hypotheses without, on the other, being in a position to attach to them the certainty of facts". *Second Discourse*, p. 169; p. 162.

¹²² Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 130; p. 123.

*What experiments would be needed in order to come to know natural man; and by what means can these experiments be performed within society?*¹²³
[italics in the original]

Rousseau suggests, in his other works that such experiments cannot be performed in society, but that they can be performed in the imagination or, more to the point, in works of the imagination. The education of Emile can be seen as such an imaginative experiment. Rousseau also has Bomston and Wolmar discuss their experiments involving the education or/and testing of Saint-Preux in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.¹²⁴ Rousseau does not expect solid observations. To make them, he has said, one would need "more Philosophy than might be thought" or, "more Philosophy than is generally thought".¹²⁵ The need, Rousseau suggests, is not for physical experimentation, but for increased thought. The need is for more thought, more philosophy, than is generally thought. We may "easily be able to go farther along the

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Book V, Letters III and IV, trans. Judith H. McDowell, (University Park: University of Pennsylvania, 1968), pp. 391-392. Fiction would be the appropriate domain to attempt the mating of Orang-outangs and society ladies which Rousseau discusses in Note X, [Note J in Masters' (New York: St. Martin's, 1964) translation], but, even if he could get that fiction past the censor, the "crudest observers" would probably be left unsatisfied. *Second Discourse*, p. 217; p. 211.

¹²⁵ The first quotation in this sentence is from p. 130 [trans. Gourevitch]; the second, from p. 13 [trans. Masters, (Hanover: 1992)]. They are alternative translations to what appears in the Pléiade edition as: "*Il faudroit même plus de Philosophie qu'on ne pense*". p. 123.

same road" than Rousseau but, unlike Rousseau we may not only have difficulty reaching the end, but we may find ourselves further from understanding man by having left the domain of thought to venture into the world that surrounds us.¹²⁶ We must, to understand man, study him properly.

After stating the problem, Rousseau writes:

Far from undertaking to solve this Problem, I believe that I have meditated upon the Subject sufficiently to dare answer in advance that the greatest Philosophers will not be too good to direct these experiments, nor the most powerful sovereigns to perform them; a collaboration which it is scarcely reasonable to expect, especially in conjunction with the sustained or rather the successive enlightenment and goodwill needed by both parties in order to succeed.¹²⁷

To expect an answer to his question involves a twinning of philosophy and power, a coincidence whose rarity is perhaps made most evident in Plato's discussion of the philosopher king in *The Republic*, a discussion which forms part of the construction, in speech, of an imaginary regime. Although Rousseau twins philosophy and power in his works - Emile's tutor is wise and able to manipulate both his student and his environment, the legislator is wise and founds a polity - he never explains or accounts for how these wise men attained either their wisdom or their power. The chasm between the Geneva Rousseau lauds in his Epistle Dedicatory,

¹²⁶ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 130; p. 123.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* This collaboration is made even more unlikely, according to Rousseau, given the isolation of the philosopher from the rest of the species. *Ibid.*, p. 162; p. 156.

with its wise and powerful magistrates, and the Geneva that existed attests to Rousseau's knowledge that his ideals were not to be found ready made in the world.¹⁷⁸ Rousseau only realized his rare ideals in fiction.

After Rousseau has established the abiding existence of something like a natural man beneath the appearance of impassioned social man, after he has established the state of nature, once existent or not, as the realm in which he will seek natural man, and once he has suggested that natural science experiments will not be part of his approach, Rousseau is ready to proceed to his own experiment of introspection. He will investigate the questions of natural man by performing experiments in thought, experiments of the imagination.

¹⁷⁸ That Rousseau was aware that his panegyric would hardly withstand a close look at the fractious politics of his home city does not seem to need proof. Masters discusses the irony of Rousseau's dedication in his notes. [Masters, *Discourse of the Origins*, (Hanover: 1992), pp. 177-178.]

Of Geneva, Rousseau writes:

The noble ideal of liberty exalted my spirit, while at the same time the thought of equality, unity, and gentleness of manners moved me to tears, and inspired me with a keen regret that I had lost all those blessings. How wrong I was, and yet how natural was my mistake! I imagined that I saw all this in my native land, because I carried it in my own heart.

Confessions, p. 141.

CHAPTER FOUR - ANALYSIS

The point of this chapter is to show how Rousseau reaches natural man through his thought experiment. It will also show how Rousseau analyzes man to uncover man, that is, it will show how Rousseau's method, although it does not begin with the senses as would the method of a Condillac, is still in some ways scientific.

Rousseau's experiment begins in the Preface of the *Second Discourse*. His analysis begins with meditation of which he writes in the Preface:

...meditating on the first and simplest operations of the human Soul, I believe I perceive in it two principles prior to reason, of which one interests us intensely in our well-being and our self-preservation, and the other inspires in us a natural repugnance at seeing any sentient Being, and especially any being like ourselves, perish or suffer.¹²⁹

These are Rousseau's first findings. He finds them not by leafing through scientific treatises, travellers' accounts or history books, not by looking without, but by looking within himself. Rousseau's approach takes its cue from meditation. His experiment begins and ends with his reading of himself. The *Discourse* is the journal of this experiment. It elaborates the experiment's findings and implications.

¹²⁹ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 132; pp. 125-6.

The idea of reading oneself was by no means a new one. Hobbes had told his readers. "*Nosce teipsum, Read thy self.*"

The point was:

...to teach us, that for the similitude of the thoughts, and Passions of one man, to the thoughts, and Passions of another, whosoever looketh into himself, and considereth what he doth, when he does *think, opine, reason, hope, feare, &c.* and upon what grounds: he shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts, and Passions of all other men....¹³⁰

According to Rousseau, however, Hobbes was not able to read himself properly because he saw himself, and all others, as enmeshed in passions which were only brought about by society. For Rousseau, Hobbes was one of the philosophers who had tried to reach the core of human nature, but had failed in his attempt. Rousseau writes: "The Philosophers who have examined the foundation of society have all felt the necessity of going back as far as the state of Nature, but none of them has reached it."¹³¹ All of them, he writes, "continually speaking of need, greed, oppression, desires, and pride, transferred to the state of Nature ideas they had taken from society; they spoke of Savage Man and depicted Civil Man."¹³² The philosophers of whom Rousseau speaks have been identified as Grotius, Pufendorf, Locke and

¹³⁰ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 82.

¹³¹ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 139; p. 132.

¹³² *Ibid.*

Hobbes.¹³³

Rousseau's reading of himself is different. His meditation leads him into a state of nature in which he is unaffected by passions inspired by society. Rousseau's mediation works to strip away society to find natural man. In reporting his findings, of principles anterior to reason, Rousseau is using the word meditate for the third time in his *Discourse*. He had used the word to describe his approach in the Epistle Dedicatory and he had used it to describe his alternative to undertaking to solve the problems of which experiments would produce knowledge of natural man.¹³⁴ Rather than undertaking to solve those problems, he wrote, he would "meditate." The word itself would have drawn attention to itself in a world still very much concerned with Descartes. Descartes had written:

[In metaphysics] ... only those who really concentrate and meditate and withdraw their minds from corporeal things, so far as is possible, will achieve perfect knowledge of [primary notions]. Indeed, if they were put forward in isolation, they could easily be denied by those who like to contradict just for the sake of it.

¹³³ Jean Starobinski's notes in Rousseau *Oeuvres complètes* III, p. 1301.

¹³⁴ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 119; p. 111; p. 130; p. 124.

This is why I wrote 'Meditations'.... In so doing I wanted to make it clear that I would have nothing to do with anyone who was not willing to join me in meditating and giving the subject attentive consideration. For the very fact that someone braces himself to attack the truth makes him less suited to perceive it, since he will be withdrawing his consideration from the convincing arguments which support the truth in order to find counter-arguments against it.¹³⁵

Like Descartes, Rousseau, in his experiment is withdrawing his mind from corporeal things. The man he will see sleeping underneath the oak is in his imagination. Also like Descartes, Rousseau was aware that some people may have been bracing to attack his meditations or imaginations. At the very least, he had small hope that his *Discourse* would win the Academy's prize.¹³⁶ This awareness suggests a reason why his meditations did not appear in the *Discourse* unaccompanied, but found themselves complemented by discussion of science, travel and history. This discussion does not annul the validity of the meditations. Surrounded by persuasive rhetoric, Rousseau's meditations are still there to be found.

Although aware that not everyone may want to join him in his meditations, Rousseau gives clues to those who might want to know how to join him. He leads us to the state of

¹³⁵ René Descartes, "Second Set of Replies," pp 110-112.

¹³⁶ Rousseau, *Confessions*, p. 363. Also note that within the page of text describing his thoughts on the *Discourse* he calls them, twice, "meditations". *Ibid.*, p. 362.

nature. If we can put ourselves back into the state of nature, if we can strip ourselves of our conventions, we will find ourselves ready to follow Rousseau in his meditation. Rousseau suggests how a pre-societal state might be reached in the Exordium. He writes that he is asked to examine "what Mankind might have become if it had remained abandoned to itself". Rousseau continues:

Since my subject concerns man in general, I shall try to speak in a language suited to all Nations, or rather, forgetting times and Places in order to think only about the Men to whom I Speak, I shall suppose myself in the Lyceum of Athens, repeating the Lessons of my Masters, with such men as Plato and Xenocrates for Judges, and Mankind for an Audience.¹³⁷

In assigning himself mankind as an audience, Rousseau begins his analysis of man by stripping him of the particularities of his nation, and his history. He is demonstrating the process to be used to arrive at a 'man' whose meditations will correspond with Rousseau's own as natural man. Regardless of his land or his opinions, "Man" is asked to listen.

Here is your history such as I believed I read it, not in the Books of your kind, who are liars, but in Nature, which never lies. Everything that will have come from it will be true: Nothing will be false but what I will unintentionally have introduced of my own.¹³⁸

Rousseau's *Discourse* will be phrased so as to speak to all nations, including Geneva, and France equally. He will

¹³⁷ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 140; p. 133.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

forget times and places and he will present a history. This seems to be a reiteration of the "setting aside all the facts" of which Rousseau wrote in the previous paragraph. The purpose of this forgetting, he writes, is so as to think only of the men to whom he speaks. Which men are these? Rousseau says he speaks to all mankind. He speaks moreover to all mankind as divorced from religion, nation, time and opinions. He speaks, therefore, to man in general, that is to what is general or common in man. He speaks to the "natural man," the man discovered after forgetting times and places, the man to whom nature had bestowed qualities which his education and habits had depraved but which they had not been able to destroy.¹³⁹

Once he has told us who we are as proper addressees of his discourse, Rousseau begins to show us to ourselves. He takes us to the state of nature. Rousseau never offers one clear, precise and detailed description of his state of nature. He offers ambiguous descriptions of various states of nature interspersed throughout the *Discourse*. He uses various adjectives to describe what are described as different states of nature. Rousseau writes of the pure state of nature, and of the genuine state of nature as well as referring to a state he describes simply as man's primitive state or condition. We come to know the states of nature primarily through coming to know who inhabits the

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

states. Rousseau does not spend time describing the configuration of ancient forests or pristine plains but describes instead the state of the man who inhabits the world. It is not clear, however, who these inhabitants are.

In Part I of the *Discourse*, we meet various inhabitants of the state of nature. I will focus on who these inhabitants are, how Rousseau comes to know them and what they can tell us about the state of nature. The inhabitants include "man" in general, natural man, Savage man, and one of many Savage men. There are problems, however, in assuming that these inhabitants are the same, exclusively different or that they inhabit the same state of nature. To properly understand Rousseau's state of nature and what it can teach us we must be careful to distinguish between its different inhabitants. In discussing "man" Rousseau seems to concentrate on distinguishing him from animals. "Natural man" appears as the object to be uncovered in the *Discourse* but is mentioned infrequently. Savage man appears as the chief player but he seems to be a rather selective composite of various sources, drawing primarily the travellers' tales to fit an image Rousseau seems to have already in mind.

"Man" is the first being whose existence in the state of nature Rousseau discusses. It is not, in name, natural man nor is it Savage man who debuts in Rousseau's account of the state of nature. It is man in general: "Man". It is Rousseau's audience as described in the Exordium, that he

first describes. He opens Man's history with its protagonist described not in terms of something or someone who appears foreign to the Man who is listening to Rousseau's address but in terms of Man's own present, physical, existence. Rousseau writes:

... I shall assume that [man] was always conformed as I see him today, walking on two feet, using his hands as we do ours, directing his gaze over the whole of Nature, and with his eyes surveying the vast expanse of Heaven.¹⁴⁰

In this way, Rousseau closes the distance between his addressee and the picture he initially paints. The listener, man in general, is invited to see, along with Rousseau, himself.

Rousseau has assigned himself the outer object of his study - man as he sees him in his day. Next, he strips that being of any supernatural gifts and of any "artificial faculties he could only have acquired by prolonged process".

Having reduced man to "such as he must have issued from the hands of Nature," Rousseau finds himself presented with an image. His method has provoked his imagination and he comes to "see" the animal he imagines. Rousseau "sees" this animal "beneath an oak, slaking his thirst at the first Stream, finding his bed at the foot of the same tree that supplied his meal".¹⁴¹ Rousseau has brought himself to imagine natural man.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141; p. 134.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142; p. 135.

Contrasting man, in general and of the savage form, to the beasts is one of Rousseau's methods for defining man, in the state of nature, and out of it. Man, in Rousseau's first description, is an animal. That being Rousseau sees asleep at the foot of the tree which supplied his supper looks like what we think of as a man but, stripped of his spiritual and social gifts he is "an animal less strong than some, less agile than others, but all things considered, the most advantageously organized of all."¹⁴² At first, man seems to be differentiated from the other animals by his lack of instinct, a lack for which man's unique faculties can compensate. Rousseau writes:

Men, dispersed among [the animals], observe, imitate their industry, and so raise themselves to the level of the Beasts' instinct, with this advantage, that each species has but its own instinct, while man, perhaps having none that belongs to him appropriates them all, feeds indifferently on most of the various foods (V) which the other animals divide among themselves, and as a result finds his subsistence more easily than can any of them. ¹⁴³

Man is then from the beginning described as a being who enjoys a freedom animals do not have. Animals are bound by their instinct but man, who lacks, perhaps, instinct is not bound by nature to stay within certain boundaries.

Rousseau first describes man's lack of instinct as an advantage. This lack allows man a wider variety of food and

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 141; pp. 134-135.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 142; p. 135.

therefore makes it easier for him to feed himself. When Rousseau comes back to this issue, this advantage has disappeared. Only six pages later, Rousseau writes:

I see in any animal nothing but an ingenious machine to which nature has given senses in order to wind itself up and, to a point, protect itself against everything that tends to destroy or to disturb it. I perceive precisely the same thing in the human machine, with this difference that Nature alone does everything in the operations of the Beast, whereas man contributes to his operations in his capacity as a free agent. The one chooses or rejects by instinct, the other by an act of freedom; as a result the Beast cannot deviate from the Rule prescribed to it even when it would be to its advantage to do so, while man often deviates from it to his detriment.¹⁴⁴

At first freedom is a boon because it makes sustenance easier for man. At first, imitating the animals' industry in order to provide himself with food, man benefits from his lack of instinct. Then we find that the animals find protection in following their instinct. To lack instinct then becomes a potential danger. When protection or safeguarding one's place in the scheme of nature becomes the problem, man's lack of instinct means that man becomes his own enemy. In the place of an instinct which, satisfied, would cease to push man to consume, man has a will and the will has no instinctual stopping point. Man's freedom to deviate from 'the Rule prescribed' to him makes him free to court dangers the animals cannot. Rousseau's example of man's deviation runs as follows:

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 148; p. 141.

...thus dissolute men abandon themselves to excesses which bring them fever and death; because the Mind depraves the senses, and the will continues to speak when Nature is silent.¹⁴⁵

Man in the state of nature, Rousseau tells us, is not sick. He is robust, healthy and non-fevered. His mind is limited and has not had the chance to deprave his senses. His disadvantageous deviation, his dissoluteness, is then the result of society, not a disadvantage that could have impinged upon man in the state of nature where man seems to have been mostly involved, at least in the early stages, with only observing and imitating the animals. The key to controlling the will of man would be to control his environment, to keep it as close as possible to the state of nature.¹⁴⁶ Even without, perhaps, an instinct, Savage man can protect himself, by fighting or by fleeing. This suggests that man's lack of instinct becomes a danger only once he becomes a part of society. Although he desires to survive, man does not, instinctively, do what is best for his survival. His will bids him survive but he does not know how. This is the condition for the possibility of society. Man would only have entered something so prejudicial to his health if he had not been able to foresee

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ This would be done not physically ["A conclusion in the style of my adversaries...". Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note IX, p. 213; p. 207.], but psychically by having people bound by human laws as they are by the laws of nature.

the consequences.¹⁴⁷

The danger inherent in man's lack of instinct is compounded by the other unique feature in man that sets him apart from the animals: his perfectibility. Rousseau asks:

Why is man alone liable to become an imbecile? Is it not that he thus returns to his primitive state and that, whereas the Beast, which has acquired nothing and also has nothing to lose, always keeps its instinct, man, losing [again] through old age or other accidents all that his perfectibility had made him acquire, thus relapses lower than the Beast itself?¹⁴⁸

There is a dual danger implicit in man's perfectibility. Perfectibility is potentially dangerous in that it threatens man's natural goodness which is manifest in his peace or tranquillity in the state of nature and because it threatens to lift man up to a point from which his fall would be devastating. If man remains an imbecile he will, for Rousseau, remain naturally good, calm, and will not be able to regret his days as a genius. Rousseau writes:

¹⁴⁷ This link, between the danger inherent in man's lack of instinct, his desire to preserve himself and the formation of society, is played out in its broader ramifications in Rousseau's other writings. In *On the Social Contract*, Rousseau writes that mankind came together to form the social compact in order to preserve themselves. This bid for preservation, once it results in society also, as Rousseau argues in the *Second Discourse*, results in an ineluctable decline once society had forged the chains of dependence among men.

¹⁴⁸ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 149; p. 142.

It would be sad for us to be forced to agree that this distinctive and almost unlimited faculty is the source of all man's miseries; that it is the faculty which, by dint of time, draws him out of that original condition in which he would spend calm and innocent days; that it is the faculty which, over the centuries, causes his enlightenment, and his errors, his vices and his virtues to arise, and eventually makes him his own and Nature's tyrant (IX).¹⁴⁹

It would be sad, but it is not clear that we are forced to agree that man's faculty of perfecting oneself is the source of all his miseries. Rousseau's writes in Note IX that "man suffers almost no evils but those he has given himself".¹⁵⁰ But did man give himself his own faculties? It may be that perfectibility offers man all the opportunities by which to make himself miserable. Man is then not responsible for his faculties but for what he does in the sphere of action they allow him. Note IX, referred to in the above quotation, discusses much that Rousseau had discussed in his *First Discourse*: the problems man runs into when he begins to develop his intelligence, his arts and sciences. Despite the negative tone, Rousseau never offers a blanket denunciation of society. His interest is to weigh the benefits and disadvantages of society. While he always highlights the disadvantages, he never denies the benefits. In a letter to Voltaire, he writes:

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Note IX, p. 207; p. 202.

And if it is true that all human progress is pernicious for the species, the progress of the mind and of knowledge that enlarges our pride and multiplies our errors soon hastens our misfortunes. But a time comes when the evil is such that the very causes that gave birth to it are necessary to prevent it from becoming larger. It is the sword that must be left in the wound for fear that the wounded person will die when it is removed.¹⁵¹

Rousseau is not ready to praise as a beneficent being that person who first suggested to the inhabitants of the Banks of the Orinoco to forcibly insure the imbecility and happiness of their children. He is less hesitant to decry, as the antithesis of Aristotle's beneficent being, the person who first founded a political body.¹⁵² His denunciation of society always contains some ambivalence.

The other instances in which Rousseau discusses "man" in the generic sense rather than as Savage or as natural man involve man's natural asociability. After discussing the possible origins of language, Rousseau writes:

¹⁵¹ Rousseau, Letter to Voltaire, I, in *Discourse of the Origins of Inequality*, ed. R. Masters and C. Kelly, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992), p. 106.

¹⁵² "...the one who first constituted [a city] is responsible for the greatest of good." Aristotle, *The Politics*, ed. and trans. Carnes Lord, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984), 1252a30-31, p. 37.

...it is at least clear from how little care Nature has taken to bring Men together through mutual needs and to facilitate their use of speech, how little it prepared their Sociability.... Indeed, it is impossible to imagine why, in that primitive state, man would need another man any more than a monkey or a Wolf would need his kind, or, assuming that need, to imagine what motive could induce the other to attend to it, or even, if he did, how they might agree on terms.¹⁵³

In his primitive state, man was not drawn to live with other people. He had no fixed dwelling. Rousseau writes:

...in this primitive state, without Houses or Huts or property of any kind, everyone bedded down at random and often for only a single night: males and females united fortuitously, according to chance encounters, opportunity, and desire...".¹⁵⁴

Without fixed dwellings and with man and woman being unable to remember each other once they had left each other's sight, the family could not exist. Families are not natural Rousseau argues:

The mother at first nursed her Children because of her own need; then, habit having made them dear to her, she nourished them because of theirs; as soon as they had the strength to forage on their own, they left even the Mother; and since almost the only way to find one another again was not to lose sight of one another in the first place, they soon were at the point of not even recognizing each other.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 158; p. 151.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153; p. 147.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

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Man was, in his primitive state, truly solitary.¹⁵⁶

Rousseau learns about man by contrasting and comparing him to the beasts. Man is not bound by instinct because he can go to excess. Man has a faculty of self-perfection which distinguishes him from the beasts. Man is asocial because, like the monkey and the wolf, or so Rousseau claims, he has no natural need for other men.

Rousseau also discusses Savage man as an inhabitant of the state of nature. In preparation for a discussion of the evidence Rousseau presents for the Savage man, I will offer a picture of what the Savage man in the *Discourse* is like. Then, I will examine how Rousseau accounts for his description. After discussing Savage man I will comment on Rousseau's distinction between the solitary and the sociable Savage, that is, between "Savage man" and "Savage men".

Rousseau asserts that the Savage man is strong and robust, rarely frightened, sturdy, agile and courageous. Savage man lives dispersed among the animals. He is healthy due to his immunity from society and the ills it necessarily promotes. Alone, idle and always near danger, he is a light sleeper, attuned to the needs of his preservation, ready for

¹⁵⁶ As opposed to "solitary" but living with a wife and children, or mother-in-law, as the case may be. (See Rousseau's description of himself as "solitary" while living with his wife and her mother in *Confessions*, p. 384.) The turn from solitude to society comes not with the establishment of the family, but with the "moment one man needed the help of another [man]," ["d'un autre"]. *Second Discourse*, p. 177; p. 171.

attack and defence.¹⁵⁷ He is in this image, like an animal. Rousseau writes:

Savage Man, left by nature to bare instinct alone, or rather, compensated for any lack of instinct by faculties capable of making up for it at first, and of afterwards raising him far above nature, will then begin with purely animal functions: (X) to perceive and to sense will be his first state, which he will have in common with all animals. To will and not to will, to desire and to fear, will be the first and almost the only operations of his soul until new circumstances cause new developments in it.¹⁵⁸

Because Savage man has limited understanding, because he is deprived of "every sort of enlightenment" he also has limited passions. He experiences only the "simple impulsion of nature".¹⁵⁹ His limited knowledge severely limits his desires:

...the only goods he knows in the Universe are food, a female, and rest; the only evils he fears are pain, and hunger....¹⁶⁰

He, in his limitations, is at peace:

¹⁵⁷ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 142; p. 136/ p. 149; p.136/ p. 145; p.137-8/ p.147; p. 140.

¹⁵⁸ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 149; pp. 142-143.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150; p. 143.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 150; p. 143.

His imagination depicts nothing to him his heart asks nothing of him, His modest needs are so ready to hand, and he is so far from the degree of knowledge necessary to desire to acquire greater knowledge, that he can have neither foresight nor curiosity.... His soul, which nothing stirs, yields itself wholly to the sentiment of its present existence, with no idea of the future,....¹⁶¹

His mind is "heavy and stupid."¹⁶²

The key characteristic of Savage man in the state of Nature is that he has no need of his fellow men. Dining on the nearest acorns, quenching his thirst at the closest stream and finding rest at the foot of the oak that supplied his supper, Savage man is self-sufficient, not because of incredible capacities but because of his limited needs; "his desires do not exceed his Physical needs".¹⁶³ Desiring only what he knows and knowing only what is in his power to possess, Savage man has a calm soul and a limited mind.¹⁶⁴ Savage man is: "subject to few passions and self-sufficient".¹⁶⁵ His tranquillity, which is the result of his self-sufficiency, allows him to enjoy the sentiment of his existence.

Savage man's is only self-sufficient, however, in relation to other men. To satisfy his sexual desire he

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151; p. 144.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 152; p. 145.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 150; p. 143.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Note XI, p. 221; p. 214.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 166; p. 160.

needs a woman. Sex is the only need that brings two humans together and it brings them together only fleetingly. Savage man was also limited to "Physical love." He was immune to the passions of love which arose only in society. Rousseau's picture of Savage man is of a man with peace of mind, primarily because his mind is so limited, so, as yet, undeveloped. He is also a man incapable of taking offense, if his peace is ruffled, because he has yet to develop pride and has yet to become aware of the wilfulness of others.

Rousseau writes:

Savage man, once he has supped, is at peace with all of nature and a friend to all of his kind,. Must he sometimes contend for his meal? He never comes to blows without first having compared the difficulty of prevailing with that of finding his sustenance elsewhere; and since pride has no share in the fight, it ends with a few fisticuffs; the victor eats, the vanquished goes off to seek his fortune, and everything is once again at peace....¹⁶⁶

This is Rousseau's picture of Savage man. Where does it come from? Rousseau defines his Savage man in four basic ways. He contrasts him to the beasts; he contrasts him to civil man; he uses the descriptions of travellers; and he develops him in his thought.

In the Exordium, Rousseau wrote that he would use the Beings that surrounded "man" as one of the bases of his conjectures. This could mean other men, or other animals. In the second part of the *Discourse*, the part in which

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Note IX, p. 209; p. 203.

relations among men play a greater role, these relations become part of Rousseau's way of seeing what man is. In painting the portrait of Savage man, as well as defining "man" in general, in Part I, Rousseau uses animals in contrast to humans. Man begins as an animal, but is also distinguished from the animals on the basis of his lack of instinct and his perfectibility. Savage man too is described as beginning as an animal. Rousseau writes that "Savage man ... will then begin with purely animal functions...".¹⁶⁷ Like an animal, Rousseau's Savage man does not fear death. Rousseau writes:

...the only evils [Savage man] fears are pain, and hunger; I say pain, and not death for an animal will never know what it is to die, and the knowledge of death and of its terrors was one of man's first acquisitions on moving away from the animal condition.¹⁶⁸

The quotation referring to the Savage beginning with purely animal functions contains reference to Note X. It is within this note that Rousseau muses on the possibility that some beings spotted by travellers are not animals. Rousseau wonders:

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 149; pp. 142-143.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 150; p. 143.

...whether various animals similar to men, which travelers have without much observations taken for Beasts, either because of some differences they noticed in their outward conformation, or merely because these Animals did not speak, might not indeed be genuine Savage men whose race, dispersed in the woods in ancient times, had had no occasion to develop any of its virtual faculties, had not acquired any degree of perfection, and was still in the primitive state of Nature.¹⁶⁹

Rousseau is pointing out how basic his conception of human nature is, if it is to encompass even these seemingly bestial beings.

One of the key features shared by Savages and animals, appears to be the uniformity of their lives. Rousseau writes of the Savage man:

The spectacle of nature becomes so familiar that he grows indifferent to it. Forever the same order, forever the same revolutions; he lacks the wit to wonder at the greatest of marvels; and it is not to him that one would turn for the Philosophy man needs in order to observe what he has seen every day.¹⁷⁰

Towards the end of the first part of the *Discourse*, Rousseau writes:

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 215; p. 208.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151; p. 144.

Now if one compares the prodigious variety of educations and ways of life that prevails in the different orders of the civil state with the simplicity and the uniformity of animal and savage life, where all eat the same foods, live in the same fashion, and do exactly the same things, it will be evident how much smaller the difference between man and man must be in the state of nature than in the state of society, and how much natural inequality in the human species must increase as a result of instituted inequality.¹⁷¹

Such uniformity allows Rousseau's Savage man to remain *bête*. Fortuitous events, much less a concatenation of them, have yet to impinge on Savage man's consciousness, because, his consciousness remains undeveloped.

Savage man is compared to civilized man throughout the *Discourse*, especially towards its conclusion and in Note IX. The comparison is one between a state of peace and one of frenzy and is based on the "inmost heart and inclinations" of Savage and civilized man.¹⁷² In Note IX, Rousseau turns our attention "to what goes on in the recesses of men's hearts" and bids us "reflect on what must by the state of things in which all men are forced to caress and to destroy one another...".¹⁷³

Rousseau also uses travellers' tales in setting forth his picture of Savage man. His use of the tales is highly selective and seems to centre on an image Rousseau has already formed. I will deal with Rousseau's use of travel

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 167; pp. 160-161.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 198; p. 192.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, Note IX, p. 208; p. 203.

tales in Chapter Eight. Here, I would like to focus on the main reason the travel tales can be of no use to him in describing a solitary Savage man.

The travellers' tales cannot support Rousseau's claims regarding man in his primitive state, or a primitive Savage, because that speak only of "Savage Peoples" who have already left this state.¹⁷⁴ Rousseau stresses the importance of this distinction. He writes:

...it is for want of drawing adequate distinctions between ideas and noticing how far these Peoples already were from the first state of Nature, that many hastily concluded that man is naturally cruel and that he needs political order in order to be made gentle, whereas nothing is as gentle as he is in his primitive state....¹⁷⁵

Man is, Rousseau has argued, naturally solitary, naturally asocial. Once man becomes sociable, he changes. "Men," Rousseau writes in Note IX, "are wicked; a sad and constant experience makes proof unnecessary; yet man is naturally good...".¹⁷⁶ Heinrich Meier has noted that, although Rousseau blurs the distinction between the solitary and the sociable savage, the distinction appears to be important in understanding Rousseau's philosophy. Meier writes:

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 176; p. 170.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Note IX, p. 208; p. 202.

Rousseau uses the adjective sociable exactly three times in the *Discours*: in becoming sociable, man becomes a slave, he becomes evil, he henceforth only knows how to live in the opinion of others.¹⁷⁷

Once man becomes sociable, it becomes harder, but not impossible to find natural man beneath the layers of appearance and passions veiling him.

The "natural man" is the man Rousseau tells us he wants to know. To know natural man is the ultimate object of the *Discourse*. The term "natural man" is used, however, only five times in the *Discourse*. It is used twice in the Preface, once in Part I at the end of that section, once in Note IX, and once in Note XI.

In the Preface, Rousseau establishes natural man as the

¹⁷⁷ Meier, "The *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundation of Inequality Among Men* On the Intention of Rousseau's Most Philosophical Work," *Interpretation*, Vol. 16 (Winter 1988-9), p. 215. Meier uses his own translation of the *Discourse* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1984). The words he italicizes are quotations. The references in Gourevitch's translation of the *Second Discourse*, are: "As [man] becomes sociable and a Slave, he becomes weak...." p. 146; p. 139; "...it remains for me to consider and bring together the various contingencies that...make a being wicked by making it sociable...." p. 168; p. 162; and "sociable man, always outside himself, is capable of living only in the opinions and others...." p. 199; p. 193.

object of inquiry for his *Discourse*.¹⁷⁸ In Part I, Rousseau writes that he has shown "that perfectibility, the social virtues and the other faculties which Natural man had received in potentiality could never develop by themselves", that without the "fortuitous concatenation of several foreign causes," the natural man, would have "remained in his primitive state".¹⁷⁹ This is all he tells us of natural man in the main text of the *Discourse*. Rousseau does not use the term again in the body of the text.

In Note IX, Rousseau accuses a "famous Author", of making a conclusion concerning man based on Civil man and not Natural man.¹⁸⁰ From his examination of Civil man the famous author concluded that, as the evils of human life outweighed the goods, life was a poor gift. Rousseau objects. If the author had gone far enough back, "to Natural man," he would have reached different result. Rousseau suggests twice in this note that the way back to natural man is by looking within ourselves.

The first suggestion that the reader turn to

¹⁷⁸ Rousseau asks what experiments would be necessary to know natural man. Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 130; pp. 123-124. It is of natural man that Rousseau says we must know in order to know which laws best suit his condition; "...as long as we do not know natural man," Rousseau writes, "we shall in vain try to ascertain either the Law he has received or that which best suits his condition." *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 168; p. 162.

¹⁸⁰ Gourevitch suggests the author was perhaps Maupertuis, author of *Essai de philosophie morale* (1749), *The First and Second Discourses*, p. 352.

introspection is made in the case of Rousseau offering two different ways of looking at the situation of civil man. On one hand, Rousseau writes:

...one considers man's tremendous labors, so many Sciences fathomed, so many arts invented, so many farces employed; abysses filled, mountains razed, rocks sundered....¹⁸¹

On one hand, he writes, one considers the physical world, the world of nature and how it has been physically changed by human will. On the other hand: "...one inquires with a little meditation into the true advantages that have resulted from all this for the happiness of the human species." Comparing man's tremendous labours, observed through their effects on the world, and man's happiness, felt through meditation, "one cannot but be struck by the astounding disproportion there is between these things".¹⁸² If we do back to natural man, by meditating, we learn what the famous author would have learned: that we have only ourselves to blame for the evils which afflict us civil men, that life, as received from nature is good and will kept us happy as long as we remained satisfied.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note IX, p. 207; p. 202.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Compare this to: "Henceforth it is up to yourselves alone not, indeed, to provide for your happiness, ...but to make it long-lasting by the wisdom of using it well" in the Epistle Dedicatory, *Second Discourse*, p. 124; p. 116. One of the ways of using it well, Rousseau implies in the next sentence is to: "...return to the depths of your Heart and consult the secret voice of your conscience."

The second suggestion of introspection comes further on in Note IX. Rousseau writes:

Let us therefore look through our frivolous displays of beneficence to what goes on in the recesses of men's hearts, and reflect on what must by the state of things in which all men are forced to caress and to destroy one another....¹⁸⁴

Again, he is suggesting we use our inner-most feelings to judge the state of civil society, just as he uses man in the state of nature, modelled after his own heart, to criticize civil society at the end of the *Discourse*.¹⁸⁵

The last use of the term natural man occurs in Note XI. The reference to the Note appears in the text as Rousseau discusses the development of the passions. The Savage man, Rousseau writes, experiences only the passions that arise "by the simple impulsion of nature". In Note XI, Rousseau writes:

That seems most evident to me, and I cannot conceive where our Philosophers would have arise all the passions they attribute to Natural man. With the single exception of the Physically necessary, which Nature itself requires, all our other needs are needs only by habit, prior to which they were not needs, or by our desires, and one does not desire what one is not in a position to know.¹⁸⁶

Natural man does not have the plethora of passions other philosophers ascribe to him. This seems "most evident" to

¹⁸⁴ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note IX, p. 208; p. 203.

¹⁸⁵ See *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199; pp. 192-194.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Note XI, pp. 220-221; p. 214.

Rousseau and he "cannot conceive" where these passions would arise. He seems to be, after Hobbes, reading himself, and finding a different, much more limited set of natural passions. Questioning the other philosophers' description, he then asserts that our only needs are "needs only by habit, prior to which they were not needs, or by our desires, and one does not desire what one is not in a position to know."¹⁸⁷ Having limited the needs of natural man to physical needs, Rousseau continues the note:

Whence it follows that, since, Savage man desires only the things he knows, and knows only the things the possession of which is in his power or easy to achieve, nothing must be so calm as his soul and nothing so limited as his mind.¹⁸⁸

In this note Rousseau seems to reason from himself - 'it seems to him most evident' - to natural man and then to savage man. He uses Savage man as a support and not as the basis of his reasoning. Natural man comes first; savage man, second.

The infrequent mention of "natural man" in the *Discourse* suggests that the 'men,' in general and of the single or social Savage variety, described in the *Discourse* are not originals but copies, or imaginative extrapolations of natural man. When natural man comes up he seems to issue from Rousseau's imagination, he seems to be the result of Rousseau's introspection and only, once he has been given a

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 221; p. 214.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

solid form, does he become either "man," "Savage man," or one of a "Savage People." Natural man seems to be the personification of Rousseau's meditation. He is self-sufficient; he is free. The other men are merely copies of an original Rousseau has found within.

CHAPTER FIVE - THE DOUBLE SYNTHESIS

In Part I, Rousseau analyzed man, placing him in the state of nature. Rousseau's findings can be looked at in two ways. He can be said to have discovered man as living in an actual and abiding state of nature in which every particular man finds himself upon birth, although only such men as Rousseau have the wherewithal to see and feel it. Conversely, he can be seen to have set forth man as a denizen of an actual historical state of nature, supported by pseudo-scientific evidence, that existed but that will never exist again. The first view is based on a true analysis performed through introspection and meditation. "Man" or man in general is the elaboration of this analysis. He is not an invention that is simply believable. He is provable to anyone who would join Rousseau in his experiment. "Man," unlike the Savage man of the pure state of nature, truly exists. The second view is not a true analysis, it is not a reduction or 'decompounding,' but rather a picture of a "Savage man" which is itself the product of Rousseau's introspection described in such a way as not to contradict carefully chosen extracts from travellers' reports, described in such a way as to be believable.¹⁸⁹ In Part II, Rousseau offers two syntheses

¹⁸⁹ Regarding the travellers' tales, see Chapter Eight.

which correspond to these two basic views, of man and Savage man. Man forms the basis of a 'history' showing the development of human passions, the development of *amour de soi* or self-love into *amour-propre*. Savage man is the basis of a conjectural history, showing the development political society, the development of Savage man into Civil man. Both syntheses or histories are designed to communicate the same message: man is most free when he most closely approximates man in the state of nature, and is enslaved in society.

Rousseau cannot show one without the other.¹⁹⁰ It is society and man's growing awareness of it or entry into it that sets the limits and possibilities of the development of his passions. By showing a history Rousseau can show this development. The history is a tool, a story in which, like all good stories it doesn't matter so much what happens as why and why the events matter. I will try to distinguish Rousseau's history of morals, the synthesis built on his principles of the development of the passions, from his history of politics, the synthesis which begins with Savage man, to show that Rousseau's privileged the former as the

¹⁹⁰ Rousseau writes in the *Emile*:
 Society must be studied by means of men, and men by means of society. Those who want to treat politics and morals separately will never understand anything of either of the two. We see how men, in attaching themselves at first to the primary relations, ought to be affected by them and what passions ought to arise from them. We see that it is by the progress of the passions in turn that these relations are multiplied.
 Rousseau, *Emile*, pp. 235-236.

key to insights into both the individual and society. By privileging the synthesis of passions over the synthesis of history, Rousseau shows he is more interested in his state of nature as a state that is pre-passionate (in the case of a young individual) or divorced from the passions (in the case of a mature individual living within himself), rather than as a historical state.

Towards the end of Part I of the *Discourse*, Rousseau does three things to prepare for Part II. He writes of the conjectures he will make in Part II; he says his last explicit word to the judges he assigned himself in his Exordium; and he sets out the tasks he will tackle in Part II.¹⁹¹

Setting out his two tasks at the end of Part I, Rousseau writes that, having proved the virtual imperceptibility of inequality in the state of nature, "it remains for me to show [Inequality's] origin and its progress through the successive developments of the human Mind."¹⁹² While tracing the progress of a phenomenon, in this case inequality, through the successive developments of the human Mind can of course be seen as a historical undertaking, as in Hegel's *Phenomenology* for instance, it does not have to be. Better works to consider in relation

¹⁹¹ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, pp. 168-169; pp. 162-163.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 168; p. 162.

to this point would be Rousseau's *Emile* or his *Confessions*, in which Rousseau traces the development of an individual human being. In Part II, he will trace the effect of man's increasing awareness of his increasing inequality and show how this is related to the development of his passions.

Setting out his other task, Rousseau writes, that, having shown that man's development depended on chance events:

...it remains for me to consider and bring together the various contingencies that can have perfected human reason while deteriorating the species, make a being wicked by making it sociable, and from so remote a beginning finally bring man and the world to the point where we now find them.¹⁹³

This will become Rousseau's history of the rise of society.

SYNTHESIS A - THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PASSIONS

In the genuine state of nature, man is guided by his sole natural passion : self-love.¹⁹⁴ He lives in inner tranquillity. This inner tranquillity, which allows man to be at one with himself and to enjoy his existence, is the epitome of freedom for Rousseau. It is a freedom from factitious and factious passions that keep us outside our

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ Rousseau writes:

The source of our passions, the origin and the principle of all the others, the only one born with man and which never leaves him so long as he lives in self-love - a primitive, innate passion, which is anterior to every other, and of which all others are in a sense only modifications. Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 212-213.

selves, and a freedom from dependence on the will of others. Rousseau sets forth inner tranquillity as the state that is ideal for man.¹⁹⁵ It is not an ideal state buried in the past but an ideal Rousseau will seize for himself in *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*.¹⁹⁶ The lesson of Rousseau's synthesis of the passions in Part II is to show that this tranquillity is not restricted to pre-rational man.

By understanding the genesis of our passions we can learn how to re-enter a tranquil state of consciousness like the one enjoyed by man in the state of nature. This synthesis starts with that state and progresses as man's awareness of others increases. As society develops, the

¹⁹⁵ He does this not only in the *Second Discourse*, but also in *On the Social Contract* - the legislator is a man without passions: "The discovery of the best rules of society suited to nations would require a superior intelligence, who saw all of men's passions yet experienced none of them..." (*On the Social Contract*, II, vii, p. 67.) - and in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, trans. Judith M. McDowell, (University Park: University of Pennsylvania, 1968). - Wolmar is the man without passions. Julie quotes her husband as calling himself a "man without passions". *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, p. 295. He also describes himself as without passions in his *Confessions*, after his body's "revolution" at Les Charmettes: "This accident, which might have killed me altogether, only extinguished my passions; and I thank Heaven every day for this beneficial effect which it had on my soul. I can well say that I did not begin to live until I looked on myself as a dead man." *Confessions*, p. 218.

¹⁹⁶ Rousseau: "...and here I am, tranquil at the bottom of the abyss, a poor unfortunate mortal but unperturbed, like God Himself." *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth, (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p. 5.

passions increase in number and in strength. By showing us that passions are artificial, that they are not natural, Rousseau shows us that we are ourselves responsible for them. The key to the inner tranquillity of man lies in the control of his self-love, in stemming the growth of *amour-propre*. Because we can control the growth of our passions, we can begin the journey towards tranquillity of mind.

This is the path Rousseau himself followed in Part I to arrive at the state of nature. If we interpret the state of nature, not as a historical state, but as an actual state of consciousness we, even as beings who have developed self-consciousness in society, can journey back to enjoy self-consciously the tranquillity of that state. By stripping away the conventions that bind us we can imaginatively re-enter the state of nature and fill it with our selves and our enjoyment or sentiment of existence, with our selves and our love of our selves.

In the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau traces the development of *amour-propre*, from its roots in self-love to its full, extended, and relative sense. He links man as he appears in his various guises in the state of nature to man in society. Man in his primitive state is "a free being whose heart is at peace and body in health..."¹⁹⁷ He is solitary, limited to his self-love, and easily satisfied. Savage man demonstrates that man, as he issues from the

¹⁹⁷ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 158; p. 152.

hands of nature, as he is born, is not riven by passions. Savage man has sluggish passions. His passions are calm.¹⁹⁸ Rousseau writes:

...since Savage man desires only the things he knows, and knows only the thing the possession of which is in his power to easy to achieve, nothing must be so calm as his soul and nothing so limited as his mind.¹⁹⁹

The mind of savage man is limited because Savage man has not become accustomed to making comparisons. It is making comparisons that allows man to develop his mind, to develop society and to develop his passions.

Savage man makes only one comparison in the state of nature. He compares himself to the animals.²⁰⁰ This comparison is linked to self-preservation. It does not serve to create new passions but to quell one. It teaches the Savage man not to live in fear. In Part I this comparison seems to be the only comparison of which Savage man is capable. He is incapable of making comparisons between himself and other humans.²⁰¹

Part II sets "nascent man" and his faculty for comparison in a state of nature which is different from the state Rousseau presented in the first part of the *Discourse*. Mankind has multiplied and men have been forced away from

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 163; p. 157 and p. 160; p. 154.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Note XI, p. 221; p. 214.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143; p. 136.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 164; p. 158 and p. 226; p. 219.

the abundant, fertile, paradise of Rousseau's first state of nature into different and more difficult lands.²⁰² Guided by his desire for self-preservation, man learned to make the comparisons necessary for his survival. He learned to compare "as need required".²⁰³ These comparisons teach him not only that he should not be afraid of the animals but also to be aware of his superiority: "The new enlightenment that resulted from this development increased his superiority over the other animals by acquainting him with it."²⁰⁴ By comparing himself to other beings, man looks at himself for the first time. Forced by circumstances to look at himself repeatedly, he begins in the account of Part II to notice what he sees, his superiority to other animals, and to feel proud:

That is how his first look at himself aroused the first movement of pride in him; that is how, while he was as yet scarcely able to discriminate ranks, and considered himself in the first rank as a species, he was from afar preparing to claim first rank as an individual.²⁰⁵

When families are established and men and women have begun to live together in fixed dwellings, another great advance in making comparisons comes about. The young men and women of different families begin to visit one another.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 171; p. 165.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 172; p. 166.

They grow accustomed to attend to different objects and to make comparisons; imperceptibly they acquire ideas of merit and of beauty which produce sentiments of preference. The more they see one another, the less they can do without seeing one another still more. A tender and sweet sentiment steals into the soul, and at the least obstacle becomes an impetuous frenzy; jealousy awakens together with love; Discord triumphs, and the gentlest of all passions receives sacrifices of human blood.²⁰⁶

Mankind has begun "to grow tame"; "relations expand, and bonds tighten." Men have learned to compare, and to prefer. Preference has created love. Frustrated preference has produced jealousy, wounded self-love. The passions multiply.

Practised in making comparisons, man seems unable to cease making them. Customs develop that encourage comparisons:

It became customary to gather in front of the Huts or around a large Tree: song and dance...become the amusement or rather the occupation of idle men and women gathered together. Everyone began to look at everyone else and to wish to be looked at himself, and public esteem acquired a value. The one who sang or danced best; the handsomest, the strongest, the most skilful, or the most eloquent came to be the most highly regarded, and this was the first step at once toward inequality and vice: from these first preferences arose vanity [*la vanité*] and contempt on the one hand, shame and envy of the other; and the fermentation caused by these new leavens eventually produced compounds fatal to happiness and innocence.²⁰⁷

In a previous stage of the state of nature men enjoyed equal treatment under the nature. All people lived under

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 175; p. 169.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

impersonal and impartial laws; gravity and rainfall affected everyone similarly. Even the theft of one's breakfast by a stronger person was looked upon as a natural occurrence; everyone presumably, at some time of their life had to put up with the active whim of the stronger. This was the "genuine state of nature" in which *amour-propre* did not exist.²⁰⁸

As soon as the esteem of others acquired a value, everything changed. The inequalities that had existed but which had been "scarcely perceptible" now became apparent. Men began to notice when they were being treated differently than others. By looking at others, each person became conscious of both his own looking and of being looked at. Each person's self-love demanded that the attention of others should reflect the attention his own self-love told him he deserved. This led to problems:

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, Note XV, p. 227; pp. 219-220.

As soon as men had begun to appreciate one another and the idea of regard had taken shape in their mind, everyone claimed a right to it, and one no longer could with impunity fail to show it toward anyone. From this arose the first duties of civility even among Savages.²⁰⁹ Rousseau, *Emile*, pp. 213-214.²¹⁰

Self-love became distracted. Having learned of the existence of other selves, man ceased to be satisfied with his own approval of himself and sought approval from others.

At this stage, *amour-propre*, proper, still does not seem to have developed. This stage is both cruel and the "best for man."²¹¹ It is best for man because it allows him to enjoy society without being dependent on other men to supply his needs. At this stage men can still fend for themselves and so cannot be oppressed through their needs. They are still independent, and can now be conscious of their happiness. They can be idle, occupied only with "song and dance."²¹² Of all possible societies this is the most free; of all possible states, it is the most free and the

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 175-176; p. 170. Rousseau also wrote: Self-love, which regards only ourselves, is contented when our true needs are satisfied. But *amour-propre*, which makes comparisons, is never content and never could be, because this sentiment, preferring ourselves to others, also demands others to prefer us to themselves, which is impossible.

Rousseau, *Emile*, pp. 213-214.

²¹¹ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, pp. 176-177; pp. 169-171.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 175; p. 169.

most happy.

Propelled out of this state by a "fatal accident", man enters a state in which *amour-propre* can develop. *Amour-propre* only develops after "it was found to be useful for one to have provisions for two", after equality disappears and men have come to depend on others for their survival, after men have lost their self-sufficiency, that it after the development of metallurgy and agriculture, the division of land, and the inventions of the rules of justice.²¹³ After all these developments, mankind finds himself in a "new order of things". Rousseau writes:

Here, then, are all our faculties developed, memory and imagination brought into play, vanity [*amour propre*] interested, reason become active, and the mind almost at the limit of the perfection of which it is capable.²¹⁴

Progress seems to have been made, but man's dependence has become even more engrained:

...man, who had previously been free and independent, is now so to speak subjugated by a multitude of new needs to the whole of Nature, and especially to those of his kind, whose slave he in a sense becomes even by becoming their master; rich, he needs their services; poor, he needs their help, and moderate means do not enable him to do without them. He therefore constantly has to try to interest them in his fate and to make them find their own profit, in deed or in appearance, in working for his;....²¹⁵

After leaving the best state, man becomes both physically

²¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 177-181; pp. 171-175.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 180; p. 174.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

and mentally dependent on others. He becomes entirely enslaved. He must interest others in himself. He begins to live in the eyes of others which only spurs his *amour-propre* for others will never see him as he wishes to be seen.²¹⁶ His fellow men become his competitors:

Finally, consuming ambition, the ardent desire to raise one's relative fortune less out of genuine need than in order to place oneself above others, instills in all men a black inclination to harm one another....²¹⁷

Men begin to claim rights to others' goods on basis of strength or need; "unbridled passions of all, stifling natural pity and the still-weak voice of justice, made men greedy, ambitious, and wicked."²¹⁸

As Rousseau continues his history of the passions, he writes of what he would prove if he went into details. The items of his list of possible proofs involve the development of inequality and *amour-propre* in society. He would prove

²¹⁶ Rousseau writes:

...as soon as one adopts the habit of measuring oneself against other and moving outside oneself in order to assign oneself the first and best place, it is impossible not to develop an aversion for everything that surpasses us, everything that lowers our standing, everything that diminishes us, everything that by being something prevents us from being everything. *Amour-propre* is always irritated or discontent, because its wish is that each person should prefer us to all else and to himself, which is impossible. *Dialogues*, pp. 112-113.

²¹⁷ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 181; p. 175.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

that:

Inequality of credit and authority becomes inevitable among Private Individuals (XIX) as soon as, united in one Society, they are forced to compare themselves with one another....²¹⁹

He would show:

...how much this universal desire for reputation, honors, and preferment which consumes us all, stimulates talents and strengths and sets them off against one another, how much it excites and multiplies the passions²²⁰

and :

...that it is to this ardor to have ourselves talked about, to this frenzy to distinguish ourselves which almost always keeps us outside ourselves, that we owe what is best and what is worst among men, our virtues and our vices, our Sciences and our errors, our Conquerors and our Philosophers, that is to say a multitude of bad things for a small number of good ones.²²¹

Amour-propre is both beneficial and harmful. Its benefits, however, are offset by its detrimental effect it has on the way individuals live. Society develops the passions and the mind of civilized man but brings him to live outside himself. Rousseau writes:

That, indeed, is the genuine cause of all these differences: the Savage lives in himself; sociable man, always outside himself, is capable of living only in the opinion of others and, so to speak, derives the sentiment of his own existence solely from their judgement.²²²

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 194; pp. 188-189.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 195; p. 189.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 199; p. 193.

This is the strongest form of dependence, the highest degree of slavery, the state most opposed to freedom. Man is never more oppressed than when he is oppressed by the passions aroused by his *amour-propre*. This man, is "always active, sweats, scurries, [and] constantly agonizes in search of still more strenuous occupations.... He courts the great whom he hates, and the rich whom he despises...."²²³ He lives in peace while he competes with all other men, enchained by his own desire to distinguish himself. Spurred ever onward by his *amour-propre*, by his frenzy to distinguish himself, this man is a slave to his own passions. Rousseau's "attentive Reader" will note that:

...Society no longer offers to the eyes of the wise man anything but an assemblage of artificial men and factitious passions which are the product of all their new relationships and without true foundation in Nature.²²⁴

Rousseau brings us back to his Preface and the disfigured appearance of Glaucus. He returns us to the necessity of withdrawing from society in thought in order to look within and find what is basic and abiding in our nature.

By showing us that these passions owe their origins to society, Rousseau shows us that we can live without them. He shows us a model of tranquillity in solitary man in the state of nature and suggests that we should approximate the conditions under which he lived. Rousseau does not suggest

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 198; p. 192.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

we make a physical return to the state of nature, but that, if we must live in society, we should at least approximate that stage of society which was best for man, the stage in which man was self-conscious but still independent. He suggests that in order to help slow the growth of our *amour-propre*, we must live in a society in which we are not personally dependent on others.

SYNTHESIS B - THE HYPOTHETICAL HISTORY

Most obviously, Part II of the *Second Discourse* is a history. Man makes the journey from being solitary to being sociable and to being a member of a political society. It is a strange history in that its brush strokes are so broad and its details scanty. Addressing the lack of details, Rousseau writes:

... these details would alone provide material for a considerable work in which the advantages of the Rights of the state of Nature would be weighed, and in which would be revealed all the different guises that inequality has assumed to this day and may in future Centuries assume, according to the Nature of these Governments and to the revolutions times will necessarily bring about in them.²²⁵

The approach Rousseau says he would take with the details is the approach Rousseau takes with the general story. He presents his story and then judges it by the nature of man as revealed in the state of nature. In this way Rousseau

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 195; pp. 189-190.

claims "to examine the facts in terms of Right".²²⁶

Part II begins with the founding of civil society.

Rousseau writes:

The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, to whom it occurred to say *this is mine* and found people sufficiently simple to believe him, was the true founder of civil society.²²⁷

He quickly doubles back however. Many ideas were necessary for the formation of the idea of property:

Let us therefore take up the thread earlier, and try to fit this slow succession of events and of knowledge together from a single point of view, and in their most natural order.²²⁸

Rousseau spends the first third of Part II explaining how man could have become able to leave the state of nature. Given the need for a "fortuitous concatenation of several foreign causes...without which [natural man] would eternally have remained in his primitive condition", Rousseau has a lot of explaining to do.²²⁹ To make his explanation easier, he returns to the state of nature, seen from "a single point of view," from the perspective of civil man. Seen from this perspective, the state of nature becomes different. Part II is a rewriting of Rousseau's first state of nature: Savage man becomes nascent man who had an instinct, ate meat, had "his [own] female," and quickly

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 188; p. 182.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 170; p. 164.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 168; p. 162.

learned to develop. The second beginning allows Rousseau to tell the story of the state of nature in a different style. In Part I, Rousseau offered a picture of the state of nature and its inhabitants and then offered ostensible evidence for his view. Despite this evidence, the state of nature, as a real state, seemed less than proven. Rousseau had us "suppose" much of it. In particular, Rousseau had us suppose:

...that men had multiplied so much that natural produce no longer sufficed to feed them; that without forges and Workshops, the tools for Farming had dropped from Heaven into the Savages' hands; that these men had overcome the mortal hatred they all have of sustained work; that they had learned to foresee their needs sufficiently far ahead, that they had guessed how to cultivate the Earth, sow seed, and plant Trees; that they had found the art of grinding Wheat and of fermenting grapes;.²³⁰

In Part II, Rousseau elaborates these suppositions, but he abandons conjectural language. The language in Part II is surer than in Part I.²³¹ The language seems designed to encourage our belief in the story Rousseau has to tell. The firmness of his language should not however make us forget

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152; p. 145.

²³¹ Gourevitch notes that Harald Weinrich's finding, that the verb forms of the two parts of the *Discourse* are different - primarily discussive in Part I and narrative in Part II - supports his point that Rousseau never offers facts to support his "pure state of nature" (as opposed to the Savage state or a pre-political state), but always conjectures. See Gourevitch, "Rousseau's Pure State of Nature," *Interpretation*. Vol. 16 (Fall 1988), p. 34, n.18. [Weinrich cited from *Geschichte - Ereignis und Erzählung*, (Munich: W. Fink, 1973), pp. 411-26.]

that he has told us that what he is describing could have happened in several ways, that he is choosing his path based on conjectures.²³²

Rousseau's new beginning also allows him to give a new, different, account of the state of nature and its inhabitants. In Part II, Savage man who was so tranquil, and so ubiquitous, in Part I becomes nascent man. The single "Savage" is mentioned only four times in Part II; once in the body of the discussion and three times at the conclusion of the *Discourse* where he is placed in juxtaposition to Civil man to sum up the entire work's argument. With nascent man, a new character is created who will soon be described as a sociable being. In Part I, it is unclear whether man has an instinct. In Part II of the *Discourse*, man in his primitive state seems to have had an instinct. He seems in addition, to have been not just *bête* but a *bête*. This would perhaps correspond to the views of a civil man crudely looking on Rousseau's Savage man as nothing more than a beast, although this is not Rousseau's view in Part I, nor I think, in Part II.²³³

Although nascent man, like Savage man, begins at the

²³² Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 168; p. 162.

²³³ Rousseau never calls man a beast, only *bête*. See Gourevitch, "Pure State of Nature, p. 41, n. 28, and Rousseau's letter to the Archbishop of Paris, *Oeuvres complètes*, Pléiade, IV, 936. Rousseau defines the importance of his distinction between man and beast in Note X.

level of the animals, he, unlike Savage man, quickly begins to develop. Savage man inhabited a more primitive, and less challenging, stage of the state of nature. Until the advent of "new circumstances", the operations of his soul were limited. "To will and not to will, to desire and to fear, [were] the first and almost the only operations of his soul".²³⁴ In Part II, nascent man faces new circumstances. He faces difficulties. These difficulties included:

...the height of Trees which prevented him from reaching their fruits, competition from the animals trying to eat these fruits, the ferociousness of the animals that threatened his very life,....²³⁵

Nascent man is forced to develop in order to survive.

In Part I, Rousseau writes the Savage man's only tool is his body, although he describes him fending for himself against the beasts using sticks and stones. In Part II, the sticks and stones are described as natural weapons and have come about as a reaction to man's new environment. In Part I, man, rarely meeting other men, rarely the object of animals' antipathies, and, surrounded by the abundance of a naturally fertile earth, rarely comes to blows with other beings. In Part II, nascent man "learned to overcome the obstacles of Nature, fight other animals when necessary, contend even with men for his subsistence, or make up for

²³⁴ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 149; p. 143.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171; p. 165.

what had been yielded to the stronger."²³⁶ A vegetarian in Part I, in Part II, man has become a meat-eater.²³⁷ Solitary in Part I, to the extent of only having sex fortuitously when he came across a woman, man now has "his female."²³⁸ Out of necessity, men begin to develop and keep on developing.

Rousseau tells the story of man's development quickly, enumerating the highlights. He summarizes man's journey from being solitary to being sociable and political as follows:

If we follow the progress of inequality through these different revolutions, we will find that the establishment of the Law and Right of property was its first term; the institution of Magistracy, the second; the conversion of legitimate into arbitrary power the third and last; so that the state of wealth and poverty was authorized by the first Epoch; that of powerful and weak by the second, and that of Master and Slave by the third, which is the last degree of inequality and the stage to which all the others finally lead, until new revolutions either dissolve the Governments entirely or bring it closer to legitimate institution.²³⁹

What makes Rousseau's history interesting are not the facts he presents in telling it. He does not supply many facts, but rather argues a history on principle. His history is interesting because he makes a point to interrupt

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 172; p. 166.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 193; p. 187.

it to defend his argument concerning natural freedom. I will focus on two of these interruptions.

Rousseau pauses to defend his account of history against rival accounts, after having outlined his view on the way in which society and laws originate. He writes:

I know that some have attributed other origins to Political Societies, such as the conquests by the more powerful, or the union of the weak; and the choice between these causes does not make a difference to what I want to establish: however, the cause of their origin which I have just expounded seems to me the most natural for the following reasons:....²⁴⁰

Rousseau offers three reasons to oppose the ideas that societies were formed from conquest or by a union of the weak. Rousseau's reasons seem weak.²⁴¹ Rousseau must have known the weaknesses of these arguments. After supplying these reasons, he writes:

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 185; p. 180.

²⁴¹ The first reason is formal. Rousseau does not discount the possibility that force founded a society. The second reason suggests that men were unable to subjugate one another without the formal agreement of law, that the only method of controlling one another before law was to control or affect someone's property, which seems unlikely. The third reason, that the poor would not agree to an arrangement that harmed them, fails because men in general, under Rousseau's argument, are harmed by an arrangement they believed would be useful.

It therefore seems to me certain not only that Governments did not begin with Arbitrary Power, which is but their corruption, their ultimate stage, and which at last returns them to the sole Law of the stronger for which they at first were the remedy, but also that even if this is how they did begin, Arbitrary Power, being by its Nature illegitimate, cannot have served as the foundation for the Rights of Society not, consequently, for instituted inequality.²⁴²

Rousseau, with his "even if this is how they did begin," leaves open the possibility that society did begin with arbitrary power.²⁴³

Rousseau tells us that the way a political society originated is irrelevant to what he wants to establish. What does he want to establish? I believe he wants to establish right on the basis of what he has told us is

²⁴² Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 190; p. 184.

²⁴³ Rousseau knows that many societies began in violence. Rousseau reminds us of this in his epigram to the *Social Contract*, taken from the *Aeneid*. The epigram is: "In an equitable federation, we will make laws." The speaker, the King of Latium, had just been conquered by Aeneas. [Masters, ed., *On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy*, trans. Judith R. Masters, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), Note 3, p. 132.] Rousseau leaves the 'option' open but insists power be based on right, that it be legitimated. Of course violence has had a hand in the establishment of societies; the point is that society only becomes a legitimate political society once its members have affirmed its laws. Also see *Second Discourse*: "It therefore seems certain not only that governments did not begin with Arbitrary Power... but also even if this is how they did begin, Arbitrary Power, being by its Nature illegitimate, cannot have served as the foundation for the Rights of Society...." (p. 190; p. 184.); and Masters, ed., *On the Social Contract*, Note 17, p. 135.

natural for man, on the basis of natural man.²⁴⁴ It does not matter how society came about. It matters only that it be made legitimate. By showing how society is against right, Rousseau will be suggesting how to make society legitimate.

In giving reasons why he opposes the views that a society can originate with the use, or threat of force or with the union of the weak, Rousseau describes his reasons as "most natural." Society could not have come about naturally through force because man in the state of nature does not know what "oppression" means. He may steal from another, but, Rousseau asks: "...how will he ever succeed in getting himself obeyed by him, and what would be the chains of dependence among men who possess nothing?"²⁴⁵ Property is necessary, Rousseau argues, before men can subjugate one another. Because property coincides with the "great revolution" signalling the development of metallurgy and agriculture it is property that initiates society, and it is the interdependence it brings with it that initiates man's enslavement, not force.²⁴⁶ Society cannot begin through a

²⁴⁴ "But as long as we do not know natural man we shall in vain try to ascertain either the Law he has received or that which best suits his condition." Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 132; p. 125.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 167; p. 161.

²⁴⁶ "The inventions of the other arts was therefore necessary to force Mankind to attend to the art of agriculture. As soon as men were needed to melt and forge iron, others were needed to feed them." "From the

union of the weak because, before the "great revolution" everyone is strong enough to remain independent.

For Rousseau, a society cannot be based on force because people can only be free if they freely consent to the laws of their society. Yet, Rousseau did not deny that man was capable of force, just that he was not naturally inclined to use force against other beings. For Rousseau, the law of the stronger is the law of nature. Nature "makes those who have a good constitution strong and robust, and causes all the others to perish".²⁴⁷ In the state of

cultivation of land, its division necessarily followed; and from property, once recognized, the first rules of justice necessarily followed...". Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 179; p. 173.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 142; p. 135. "exactly as the Laws of Sparta did". This, I think is hardly an unambiguous lauding of laws that imitate nature. The laws of Sparta actually hurried nature up a 'ittle bit, according to Plutarch:

Nor was it in the power of the father to dispose of the child as he though fit; he was obliged to carry it before certain triers at a place called Lesche...if they found it puny and ill-shaped, [they] ordered it to be taken to what was called the Apothetae, a sort of chasm under Taygetus; as thinking it neither for the good of the child itself, nor for the public interest, that it should be brought up, if it did not, from the very outset, appear made to be healthy and vigorous.

Plutarch, in *Plutarch's Lives*, "Lycurgus", p. 62.

Nature's harshness is one of many reasons why man, grown soft cannot return to it. Rousseau uses nature as a standard, not a blueprint. In his *Confessions*, Rousseau writes of his own, natural, weakness: "I was almost born dead.... But one of my father's sisters, a nice sensible woman, bestowed such care on me that I survived;...". *Ibid.*, p. 19 That Rousseau was highly conscious of what he wrote about his health appears evident from his writing that he was "Restored to life, so to speak," one Easter. *Ibid.*, p. 529.

nature, however, man's sluggish passions did not often move him to violence and he withstood injury without construing the injury as insult. Without the dangers of the escalation of violence which stem from *amour-propre*, the law of the stronger in the state of nature tended towards the maintenance of an equilibrium:

In a word, every man viewing his kind scarcely differently from the way he would view Animals of another species, can rob the weaker of his prey or yield his own to the stronger without considering these acts of pillage as anything but natural occurrences, without the slightest stirring of arrogance or resentment, and with no other passion than the pain of pleasure at success or failure.²⁴⁸

In the state of nature, the law of the stronger did not affect anyone's personal independence. Once injury becomes insult, however, man no longer understands force as something that happens but understands it as something directed by will. Offended *amour-propre* then becomes a powerful spur to violence. *Amour-propre*:

...a relative sentiment, factitious, and born in society, which inclines every individual to set greater store by himself than by anyone else, inspires men with all the evils they do one another, and is the genuine source of honor.²⁴⁹

For Rousseau, society must strive to artificially approximate the freedom and effective equality in the state of nature. Natural laws cannot simply be grafted onto

²⁴⁸ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note XV, p. 227; pp. 219-220.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

society. Thoughtfully constructed conventions are needed to approximate in society the conditions of freedom existing in the state of nature. To approximate this freedom, the equality of treatment under the laws of nature must be replaced with equality under human law. A man must be able to ignore the personal wilfulness of his neighbour while sharing his neighbour's allegiance to a law that treats them identically and which they have both ratified.

After discussing the origin of society Rousseau then takes us through society's "revolutions." It is after the second political revolution that Rousseau pauses for the second time. He interrupts his history to defend his conception of natural freedom. He argues against other histories which suggest men simply agreed to follow leaders before establishing their laws. He argues that man's natural disposition towards freedom should be judged against that of man in the state of nature,²⁵⁰ that paternal power

²⁵⁰ Rousseau writes:

...on the basis of the things they see, [politicians] judge of very different things which they have not seen, and they attribute to men a natural inclination to servitude because of the patience with which the men they have before their eyes bear their servitude....

Second Discourse, p. 187; p. 181.

He adds:

Man's natural dispositions for or against servitude must therefore not be judged by the degradation of enslaved Peoples but by the Prodigious feats of all free Peoples to protect themselves against oppression. *Ibid.*

cannot authorize despotism,²⁵¹ and that it is doubtful that freedom, because it is a gift of nature, can be divested rightfully.²⁵² All three of these arguments are based on Rousseau's view of man as naturally free.

These are the highlights of Rousseau's history. He judges them against the standard of human freedom he propounded in Part I. A person is naturally free. Once that person can impute insult to injury that person cannot be free in a society based on force. A person is naturally free and therefore would not have rushed to enslave himself to a master. Only once a person has been weakened by living in society does that person begin to "call the most miserable servitude peace".²⁵³ The burgeoning love for outer or political tranquillity at the price of inner peace

²⁵¹ First, he argues, "nothing in the world is farther from the ferocious spirit of Despotism than the gentleness of this [the father's] authority which looks more the advantage of the one who obeys". Second, "an individual was recognized as the Father of may only once they remained assembled around him", that is, society creates fathers by making them identifiable. *Ibid.*, p. 188; p. 182.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190; p. 184. The argument is based on Rousseau's view of human nature:

...just as violence had to be done to Nature in order to establish Slavery, Nature had to be altered in order to perpetuate that Right. And the Jurists who have gravely pronounced that the child of a Slave would be born a Slave, have in other words decided that a human being would no be born a human being. *Ibid.*, p. 190; p. 184.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 187; p. 182. Rousseau cites Tacitus (*Histories*, I, iv, chap. 17) from Algernon Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government*, (II, section 15), Gourevitch, *The First and Second Discourse*, p. 346.

begins with the institution of the body politic. The people, corrupted by society, are no longer jealous of their freedom. The political degeneration mirrors the gradual corruption of their souls.

The other side, the complementary synthesis, of Part II charted this corruption of man's soul. It showed the inner journey from the solitary's love of freedom and peace of mind to the civil man's love of social peace at the cost of his inner tranquillity. It showed how Savage man, limited to self-love and living only for himself, could become Civil man, racked by *amour-propre* and living only in the eyes of others. It showed the development of man and of his passions. Only by understanding this half of Part II, could someone hope to slow the journey towards despotism.

PART II - CONCLUSION

In Part II, Rousseau presents two complementary journeys: a psychological journey and a historical journey. Rousseau shares his meditations on the operations of his soul. He shows how man's passions develop as he begins to compare himself to others, and how this development leads man ever farther from freedom. He also shows us a hypothetical history in which he examines the facts in terms of right, using man's natural freedom, as presented in Part I, as his standard of right.

These journey's are syntheses built on Rousseau's

analysis of man in Part I. They complete the experiment by showing where it can lead. But the true goal of Rousseau's experiment is to reach man's beginning. In the historical synthesis, Rousseau does this. He writes that the establishment of despotism brings "a new State of Nature, different from that with which we began".²⁵⁴ In the synthesis of the passions, Rousseau does not come full circle. He only completes the circle in his last work. It is in this work, his *Reveries*, that he describes himself in a state of tranquillity reminiscent of the state of mind of Savage man.

In showing the development of man, Rousseau demonstrates that the best state for man is the state that exists *amour-propre* develops. Having presented his ideal of man in the state of nature and his ideal state for sociable man, Rousseau leaves us wondering how he may have applied these ideals in his thoughts about the politics of his own time. I will address this question in my last chapter, by turning to his Epistle Dedicatory and to a consideration of his *Reveries* as an approximation of the tranquillity and freedom of natural man. First I will tie up the loose ends of my consideration of the *Second Discourse* as an experiment. I will discuss in more detail Rousseau's method of argumentation and the importance or rather lack of importance he places on facts in relation to principles.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 197; p. 191.

CHAPTER SIX - HOW WE KNOW - ARGUING FROM PRINCIPLE

In this chapter I will discuss Rousseau's attitude towards how we know by drawing on his comments in Note X. I will argue that the only knowledge Rousseau considers fully sound is knowledge we have tested for ourselves. I will also give two examples of how Rousseau has the principles of his arguments shape his use of facts, by examining in detail his claims that man is by nature vegetarian and solitary. I will devote the following two chapters to showing in detail why Rousseau is not to be taken seriously when he offers 'facts.' I will argue here that, if we understand Rousseau's way of knowing and his way of arguing, we would not even look twice at his factual evidence, but simply seek to test the principles of his argument against our own souls.

HOW WE KNOW

Before we can discount Rousseau's facts, we must understand the standard he uses to judge his sources. Rousseau reveals in Note X, that he is sceptical. He tells us that if we hope to know we must begin by knowing by ourselves.

Note X begins with a reference to the variety of different sorts of men: black, white and red men, long-haired men, generally hairy men, gigantic men and tiny men.

We know these men, Rousseau writes "either on our own, or from Historians, or from travelers".²⁵⁵ In this Note, Rousseau discounts both the knowledge gained from historians and from travellers. He writes:

...without placing blind faith in the accounts of Herodotus and of Ctesias, one can at least draw the following very plausible conclusion from them, that, if good observations had been possible in those ancient times when different people differed in their ways of life more than they do today, then much more striking varieties in the shape and bearing of the body would also have been noted among them.²⁵⁶

Rousseau says here that the accounts of historians, although they cannot fully be trusted, can form the basis of a "very plausible conclusion" concerning different peoples and their bodies. The conclusion is that a greater variety of shapes and bearings would have been noted "if good observations had been possible." As it was, Rousseau could only posit this greater variety from the variety of ways of life reported by the ancient historians, good observations not having been possible.

Rousseau discounts the accounts of travellers as well. He writes:

²⁵⁵ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note X, p. 214; p. 208.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

...there are scarcely more than four sorts of men who make extended journeys: Sailors, Merchants, Soldiers and Missionaries. Now it is scarcely to be expected that the first three Classes would provide good Observers, and as for those in the fourth, even if they are not subject to prejudices of station as are all the others, one has to believe that since they are absorbed by the sublime vocation that calls them, they would not readily engage in inquiries that appear to be matters of pure curiosity and would distract them from the labors to which they are destined.²⁵⁷

None of these four classes would contribute good observers. The Missionaries, perhaps the best educated of the four groups would have a strong incentive not to delve into studies of the first men. The history of man had already been written for them in the Bible.

Perhaps, writes Rousseau, if a Montesquieu, a Buffon or a Diderot, were to travel with a view to instructing their compatriots and then to write the "natural, Moral, and Political History" of what they had seen, perhaps then "we would ourselves see a new world issue from their pen". These comments raise questions. How does one see a history? Certainly, Rousseau and his contemporaries had already seen new worlds issue from philosophers's pens, without the philosophers actually having travelled. Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, for instance, had been published in 1721. Finally, it is important to note that Rousseau writes of these 'potential' histories that "we would ourselves see" them issue from the writers. He puts the onus back on us to

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Note X, pp. 218-219; p. 212.

see for ourselves. We may not put blind faith in them, just as we wouldn't blindly trust Herodotus, but we would be our own witnesses and judges.

Knowing, "on our own," was the way of knowing with which Rousseau began his note. Seeing by ourselves is the beginning of this process. After seeing, "we learn to know our own [world]."²⁵⁸ The two other ways of knowing, through historians and through travellers he discounts. In the end, it is the evidence that we can experience ourselves that counts. To believe other accounts without attempting to verify them is to set oneself up to be misled.

ARGUING FROM PRINCIPLE

Rousseau does not argue from facts of physical nature but from principles he has based on the facts of his inner world. By meditating on the first operations of the soul, on the facts concerning the working of his soul, he discovered two principles:

...of which one interests us intensely in our well-being and our self-preservation, and the other inspires in us a natural repugnance at seeing any sentient Being, and especially any being like ourselves, perish or suffer.²⁵⁹

Taken broadly, these principles are those of self-love and pity. In the *Discourse*, Rousseau does not use facts to support their existence because he has already ascertained them

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Note X, p. 220; p. 214.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 132; p. 126.

in meditation. What he does is to have his principles shape his use of facts. This is most apparent in his arguments that man is naturally solitary and naturally vegetarian. These are the instances in the *Discourse* in which Rousseau is most obviously straining to fit facts to his principles in order to make his principles believable to intractable readers. Roughly, the reasons Rousseau must argue in the *Discourse* that these attributes as natural are to support his claim that man is naturally tranquil and free. The passions of sociable man and the hunger of the carnivore would disturb that tranquillity. Yet, these reasons are only products of Rousseau's attempt to make the freedom of the state of nature believable to those who need a physical 'proof.' Natural vegetarianism supports the idea that man was at peace in the state of nature, but a solid reason for natural solitude is never given in the *Discourse*. Rousseau argues that it was possible but not why we should believe it was man's actual state.

MAN AS VEGETARIAN

Rousseau's claim that man was originally a herbivore supports his claim that a natural repugnance to see other beings suffer is basic to human beings. This repugnance helps keep the peace in the state of nature and helps man survive. Although man initially observes and imitates the animals, his relationship with the animals changes. This

change occurs in Part II of the *Discourse* when man sets about to trap animals and to eat them. In Part I, dealing with a more 'original' human being, Rousseau is at pains to portray man as a herbivore, or in his word, a frugivore. These arguments in support of man's natural vegetarianism are contained mostly in Notes V and VIII (Masters: e and h). Their point is to support Rousseau's contentions that man is naturally peaceful. He is concentrating on his principles rather than his facts. As Rousseau writes in Note V:

For since prey is almost the only object about which Carnivores fight, and Frugivores live in constant peace with one another, it is clear that if the human species were of the latter kind, it could have subsisted much more easily in the state of Nature, and would have had much less need and many fewer occasions to leave it.²⁶⁰

Although Rousseau writes in a speculative vein here - he cannot deny that many people do eat meat - he argues that nature somehow meant man to be a frugivore. He supports his argument in three ways in Note V.

First, he argues from physiology. Rousseau discusses 'the shape of the teeth and the conformation of the intestines' in various animals. He then 'concludes':

It therefore seems that Man, whose Teeth and Intestines are like those of the Frugivorous Animals, should naturally be placed in that Class, and this opinion is confirmed not only by anatomical observations: but the records of Antiquity also lend it considerable support.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Note V, p. 204; p. 199.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Rousseau had, however, already discounted man's physiology as a basis for argument in Note III. One of the unique qualities of man was that he could adapt his physiology with a freedom unavailable to animals.

To bolster his argument from physiology, which Rousseau knew he had already undermined, he offers another basis of evidence. Rousseau appeals to the "records of Antiquity," despite his frequent disparagement of the use of facts, especially those of history, as the basis of arguments. Rousseau's appeal appears even more questionable as it is an appeal made to the writings of a saint, St. Jerome, who is discussing the reign of Saturn, a pagan God. Saturn, himself, of course, indulged his taste for flesh by devouring his children. Saturn's reign may very well have coincided with men living on fruits and vegetables but the example remains a curious one, almost a darkly amusing one, and we can remember that Rousseau did promise to amuse us in his Notes.²⁶²

The third argument in support of man's natural vegetarianism is based on an appeal to travellers' tales. The credibility of these tales should always be questioned. Rousseau himself questioned them, in the *Emile* and in Note X.²⁶³ This particular appeal is doubly questionable. It is questionable both because it appeals to travellers' tales

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 135; p. 128.

²⁶³ See Chapter Eight.

and because it ignores a more prevalent, and contradictory, theme in travellers' tales. Rousseau alludes to François Corréal, "among others," to the effect that: "most of the inhabitants of the Lucayes whom the Spaniards transported to the islands of Cuba, Santo Domingo, and elsewhere, died for having eaten flesh."²⁶⁴ The theme Rousseau blatantly ignores is that of cannibalism. Cannibalism was a foible much mentioned in travellers' tales. That Rousseau was fully aware of tales of cannibalism is evident. His failure to mention it in this context directly follows a reference to Saturn. The context of Rousseau's reference to Juvenal in Part I, "When nature gave man tears,/ She proclaimed that he was tender-hearted" is a discussion of cannibalism.²⁶⁵ Rousseau also alludes to Montaigne's essay "On Cannibals" at the close of his *Discourse*.²⁶⁶ We also know of Rousseau's awareness of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, a book he has Emile read and which he mentions in many of his writings, including his *Confessions* and *On the Social Contract*.²⁶⁷ Friday is brought to the island by a party of cannibals from

²⁶⁴ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note V, p. 204; p. 199.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 161; p. 155; Juvenal, "The Satires of Juvenal," in *Juvenal and Persius*, trans. G.G Ramsey, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918). Satire XV, lines 131-133.

²⁶⁶ Gourevitch, ed., *The First and Second Discourses*, Note II[58], p. 349.

²⁶⁷ Rousseau, *Confessions*, p. 594; *On the Social Contract*, I, ii, p. 48.

whom he escapes and, later in the book Friday's father is rescued from yet another cannibal party.²⁶⁸

Rousseau returns to the theme of man's frugivorous nature in Note VIII. He offers an argument based on a half-hearted biology. It is half-hearted because, after enumerating his 'facts', Rousseau writes: "All this calls for many individual observations and reflections; but this is not the place for them, and I am satisfied to have shown the most general System of Nature...".²⁶⁹ His general system is revealed by his having noticed that animals living off vegetation rarely have more than two offspring. Nature seconds his observation, he writes, by having assigned herbivorous mammals only two teats. Birds which eat only grain also support his argument, laying fewer eggs than predatory birds. Rousseau then supplies a reason to support his 'observations':

...the animals living off grasses and plants, since they spend almost all day foraging and are forced to spend much time feeding themselves, could not properly nurse many young, whereas the carnivores, since they take their meal almost in an instant, can more easily and more frequently return both to their young and to their hunt, and repair the expense of such a large quantity of Milk.²⁷⁰

Rousseau was called on his 'facts' in this Note in a letter

²⁶⁸ Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 205-208 and pp. 23-238.

²⁶⁹ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note VIII, p. 207; p. 201.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

forwarded to him by Condillac. This letter was written by Charles-George Le Roy, Master of the King's Hunt and contributor to the *Encyclopedia*, with the knowledge and perhaps the participation of Buffon.²⁷¹ Le Roy questioned, among other things, Rousseau's characterization of man as natural herbivore. He offered the example of rabbits and hares as a refutation of Rousseau's point on the small litters of herbivores. Le Roy concluded the letter: "It is always assumed that everything in nature is well ordered. Make sure of your facts, and perhaps you will find that it is not the case that everything is well ordered."²⁷²

Rousseau's reply to the letter concluded:

Besides, regardless of what observation may establish about particular facts, the proof that all is well regulated is drawn from a general and incontrovertible fact, namely that all species survive: but I do understand that we, and especially I, can often err in the choice and application of the rules.²⁷³

In his reply, Rousseau appeals to the general versus the particular fact. A general fact would seem to be equivalent to a principle. Rousseau, then, continues his appeal to principles over facts.

Rousseau's 'evidence' for man as 'naturally' frugivorous is not solid. He never claims, however, to rest

²⁷¹ Gourevitch, ed., *The First and Second Discourses*, p. 359.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 360.

²⁷³ Rousseau, "Reply to Charles-Georges Le Roy" in Gourevitch, ed., *The First and Second Discourses*, p. 238.

his arguments on facts but rather to base them upon his principles. His principles tell him that man is naturally peaceful. Of the two principles anterior to reason which Rousseau discovered in his meditations, one "inspires in us a natural repugnance at seeing any sentient Being, and especially any being like ourselves, perish or suffer".²⁷⁴ To eat meat is to kill animals. In Part II, man becomes a meat-eater, apparently because need overrides pity.²⁷⁵ In Part I, man in the state of nature does not even kill animals let alone other men, whom he would see intermittently and perhaps have difficulty distinguishing from other animals. Man in the state of nature is tranquil.

MAN AS NATURAL SOLITARY

Rousseau asserts that man in the state of nature is "alone."²⁷⁶ Rousseau has us picture him as:

²⁷⁴ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 132; p. 126.

²⁷⁵ Pity is only effective if man's self-preservation is not threatened: "pity...will keep any sturdy Savage from robbing a weak child or an infirm old man of his subsistence... if he hopes he can find his own elsewhere". *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163; p. 156.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 147; p. 140.

...wandering in the forests without industry, without speech, without settled abode, without war, and without ties, without any need of others of his kind and without any desire to harm them, perhaps even without ever recognizing any one of them individually, subject to few passions and self-sufficient....²⁷⁷

While this man will not develop his natural perfectibility unless he is thrust out of this state by a fortuitous concatenation of foreign events, such as the concatenation of conjectures Rousseau formulates in Part II, he is different from the beasts because he is naturally free. He is free because he is self-sufficient. He is free because he does not depend on another.

The idea that man was naturally solitary raised much controversy in 1755.²⁷⁸ The idea was and is improbable. Masters points out that Rousseau's description of the state of nature is subject to "grave reservations." In addition, he comments:

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 166; pp. 159-160.

²⁷⁸ Francis Moran III, "Between Primates and Primitives: Natural Man as the Missing Link in Rousseau's Second Discourse", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 54 (January 1993), No. 1, p. 52.

It has been emphasized that Rousseau was well aware of these reservations concerning one capital point, namely the total isolation of man in the pure state of nature; Rousseau apparently presented this image in order to strengthen his contention that man was naturally free, since he knew of and even admitted the possibility that a continuing family relationship existed from the earliest times.²⁷⁹

Masters goes on to cite evidence from modern anthropologists that higher primates, and the "simplest men" studied over the past century tended to live in small bands, that is, that they were if not naturally sociable at least naturally gregarious.²⁸⁰ Arthur Melzer also comments on the implausibility "that asociality is natural to man."²⁸¹ He writes that it "Rousseau's extreme individualism...led him to the doubtful assumption that man was naturally solitary and that not even the family is natural." Rousseau's arguments in defence of his individualism, Melzer notes, are not made in the *Second Discourse* itself.²⁸²

Rousseau's argues in the *Second Discourse* only that

²⁷⁹ Masters, *Political Philosophy*, p. 431. Masters notes (*Ibid.*, p. 128) that Rousseau calls the family "The most ancient of all societies, and the only natural one" in *On the Social Contract*, I, ii. He also refers us to the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, Chapter, IX. For that reference, see Gourevitch, *The First and Second Discourses*, p. 260.

²⁸⁰ Masters, *Political Philosophy*, p. 431. He cites: S.L. Washburn and I. De Vore, "The Social Life of Baboons," *Scientific American*, Vol CCIV (June 1961), 70.

²⁸¹ Melzer, *Natural Goodness of Man*, p. 47.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, Note 3, p. 51. Melzer outlines these arguments in his second chapter, pp. 29-48, drawing primarily from *Emile*, the *Dialogues* and the *Reveries*.

natural solitude was possible. He does not give a reason why he thinks man was naturally solitary. He argues only that man had been able to survive and man and woman had been able to perpetuate the species without the establishment of society, or even the family. Rousseau made this survival and the perpetuation of the species more probable by arguing the earth was naturally fertile and the woman were as easily available to men as the acorns or chestnuts on which he lunched.⁷⁸³ Men are also independent of families and so of any spur to sociability a family would entail. The absence of the family does not endanger the perpetuation of the species, Rousseau argues, because women are quite capable of bringing the children up themselves.⁷⁸⁴

Apart from failing to show anything more than the possibility that man was solitary in the state of nature, these arguments seem contrived. If Rousseau was aware, as Masters writes, that man may have always been part of a social grouping, if, as Melzer points out, he has arguments in defence of individualism but does not use them in the

⁷⁸³ The purpose of Note IV is to support Rousseau's claim of the earth's abundance. Women are abundantly available because "the number of females generally exceeds that of males" and "in the human species, ... love is never cyclical". Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 165; p. 159.

⁷⁸⁴ This is the argument of Note XII. In Note VIII, Rousseau argues that human mothers, because they are frugivores, give birth to small litters which supply helps the upbringing of the children. See *Second Discourse*, Note XII, p. 222; p. 216; and Note VIII, pp. 206-207; pp. 210-202.

Discourse, what is Rousseau doing in the *Discourse*?

I can be argued that Rousseau is forced to see man as naturally solitary because sociable man is an impassioned man. Because Rousseau wants to put forth a picture of man as naturally tranquil and free, he must put forward a picture of man as naturally solitary. As a natural solitary, man can be tranquil, and surrender to the sentiment of his existence much more easily. In entering into society or becoming sociable, man changes. He runs the risk of having his self-love deteriorate into *amour-propre*, and so of veiling his self-love with artificial passions. He runs the risk of becoming alien to himself and "He who begins to become alien to himself does not take long to forget himself entirely."²⁸⁵

In society, man's love for himself is frustrated. Naturally, Rousseau argues, man loves himself and his love even spreads outward. Rousseau writes:

It is very natural that a person who loves himself should seek to extend his being and his enjoyments and to appropriate for himself through attachment what he feels should be a good thing for him. This is a pure matter of feeling in which reflection plays no part.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 243.

²⁸⁶ Rousseau, *Dialogues*, p. 112.

A heart full of an overflowing sentiment likes to open itself.... He who senses how sweet it is to be loved would want to be loved by everyone; and all would want preference without there being many malcontents.²⁸⁷

But once this love is extended to beings who also love themselves, once man has started to compare himself to others and to want to be loved by them as he loves himself, his self-love degenerates towards *amour-propre*, because he desires something that is impossible:

...as soon as this absolute love degenerates into *amour-propre* and comparative love...as soon as one adopts the habit of measuring oneself against others and moving outside oneself in order to assign oneself the first and best place, it is impossible not to develop an aversion for everything that surpasses us, everything that lowers our standing, everything that diminishes us, everything that by being something prevents us from being everything. *Amour-propre* is always irritated and discontent, because its wish is that each person should prefer us to all else and to himself, which is impossible.²⁸⁸

With love and friendship are born dissensions, enmity, and hate. From the bosom of so many diverse passions I see opinion raising an unshakable throne, and stupid mortals, subjected to its empire, basing their own existence on the judgements of others.²⁸⁹

Or, as Rousseau argues in the *Second Discourse* itself, once man has figured out that others can love him, he demands that they do:

²⁸⁷ Rousseau, *Emile*, pp. 214-215.

²⁸⁸ Rousseau, *Dialogues*, pp. 112-113.

²⁸⁹ Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 215.

As soon as men had begun to appreciate one another and the idea of regard had taken shape in their mind, everyone claimed a right to it, and one no longer could with impunity fail to show it toward anyone.²⁹⁰

Being in society takes us out of ourselves. Man is naturally good; company makes him wicked. Even a man such as the Rousseau of the *Reveries*, a man who has reached tranquillity, is forced out of himself again by the presence of company. He writes:

Everything brings me back to the happy and sweet life for which I was born. I pass three-fourths of my life occupied with instructive and even agreeable objects in which I indulge my mind and senses with delight.... In all this, love of myself does all the work; self-love [*amour propre*] has nothing to do with it. This is not the case during the sorrowful moments I still pass in the midst of men - a plaything of their treacherous flattery, bombastic and derisive compliments, and honeyed malignity. No matter what I might try to do, self-love [*amour propre*] then comes into play.²⁹¹

If man were naturally sociable, he would be naturally passionate, but Rousseau denies this. Looking into himself to discover his basic nature, Rousseau found self-love and a sort of pity, not an array of passions.

Coming back to the basis of Rousseau's argument, his meditation, reveals the real basis of Rousseau's argument for man as a solitary being. Divorced from himself, extended into society, man cannot meditate. In meditating

²⁹⁰ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, pp. 175-176; p. 170.

²⁹¹ Rousseau, *Reveries*, pp. 117-118. Note that Butterworth translates "*amour propre*" as self-love. See *Oeuvres complètes*, Pléiade, I, p. 1081.

to discover man, Rousseau has already skewed his method. And he knows this. His argument that man is solitary in the state of nature is weak. His argument that man is solitary in the state which defines his nature, that is, in a state of conscious, of sentiment, seems secure. Only if we see the *Second Discourse* as an invitation to the solitude of mediation, does Rousseau's argument of natural solitude ring true. Noticing the weaknesses in Rousseau's portrayal of the state of nature as an actual, physical or historical state leads us from considering it as such to performing, along with Rousseau, our own meditative experiment to discover our own nature. Here, by noticing that Rousseau's arguments, if seen as intimately connected with the state of nature as a historical state, self-destruct, we are forced to notice the real basis of his argument and to consider ourselves free beings, not because we are actually solitary, but because it is our nature to be able to become solitary by withdrawing ourselves into the solitude of meditation.

This natural solitude, the individual quiet of introspection, is the sphere of freedom Rousseau seeks to secure in politics. This freedom exists by nature, but is veiled in a society which keeps people forever out of themselves, forever distracted from the enjoyment of their self-love, of their sentiment of existence.

CHAPTER SEVEN - SETTING ASIDE THE FACTS - SCIENCE

Even if Rousseau meant his state of nature to be seen as an actual account, the natural science would have offered him little help in proving his claim. He could not perform an experiment to prove a 'real' state of nature. As well, scientific books, Rousseau wrote "only teach us to see men as they have made themselves".²⁹² Travellers' tales which presented savages who were not natural men but men who had already developed some form of society, also offered no proof for Rousseau's claims. History, that mass of innumerable facts which can bolster so many different claims but do not exist in the present and so cannot be verified, offered inadequate proof.²⁹³ It does not seem out of the question that, faced with these problems, Rousseau was serious in setting aside the facts as facts. As rhetoric, Rousseau used facts to describe and embellish his state of nature, but his state of nature was and is capable of standing on its own, apart from scientific, travel or

²⁹² Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 132; p. 125. He does, of course, cite Buffon's *Histoire naturelle*, as I will discuss, but even his use of this scientific book seems part of his attempt to use facts to support principles he has already discovered by other means, i.e. introspection.

²⁹³ Even if history could be proven for Rousseau, it would not change his method which begins with meditation or introspection. He criticises Grotius because "his most persistent mode of reasoning is always to establish right by fact". *On the Social Contract*, I, ii, p. 47.

historic facts. This, I believe, is apparent from his use of the evidence in the *Second Discourse*.

The purpose of this and the following chapter is to offer additional support to my argument that Rousseau was not interested in the factual nature of the evidence he supplied in giving his account of the state of nature. In order to convince people prone to take science seriously, Rousseau had to make sure his evidence was real, in the sense of being taken from existing sources of information. Rousseau took his evidence from recognized sources, Buffon and travel accounts, because his evidence needed to be seen as factual in order to have any rhetorical power. Rousseau's concern for facts did not go beyond the strictures of making his rhetoric effective in persuading minds imbued with the scientific dilettantism of the Enlightenment.

In this chapter, I will argue against claims that Rousseau reached his account of the state of nature using natural science and show that these claims over-emphasize Rousseau's involvement with the natural sciences. In the following chapter, I will show that there has also been too much stress put on Rousseau's evidence from travel accounts and from history as evidence Rousseau intended to be factual. Showing this overemphasis on "facts" I hope to increase the strength of my claim made in the previous chapter that Rousseau was not interested in arguing from

facts but only from principles.

In the Preface to the Second Discourse, Rousseau asked:

*What experiments would be needed in order to come to know natural man; and by what means can these experiments be performed within society?*²⁹⁴

Following this query, Rousseau writes:

Far from undertaking to solve this Problem, I believe that I have meditated upon the Subject sufficiently to dare answer in advance that the greatest Philosophers will not be too good to direct these experiments, nor the most powerful sovereigns to perform them; a collaboration which it is scarcely reasonable to expect, especially in conjunction with the sustained or rather the successive enlightenment and goodwill needed by both parties in order to succeed.²⁹⁵

This seems to indicate that Rousseau, who says he has not undertaken to solve the problem of experimentation, does not expect solid observations, nor the performance of experiments from which such observations could be made. He even suggests that the collaboration necessary for such experimentation is unlikely, given the isolation of the

²⁹⁴ Rousseau suggests elsewhere that such experiments cannot be performed in society but that they can be performed in the imagination or, more to the point, in works of the imagination. The education of Emile can be seen as such an imaginative experiment. Rousseau also has Bomston and Wolmar discuss their experiments involving the education or/and testing of Saint-Preux in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Book V, Letters III and IV, p. 391. Fiction would be the appropriate domain to attempt the mating of Orang-outangs and society ladies which Rousseau discusses in Note X, but, even if he could get it past the censor, the "crudest observers" would probably be left unsatisfied. *Second Discourse*, p. 217; p. 211. [italics in the original].

²⁹⁵ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 130; p. 124.

philosopher from the rest of the species.²⁹⁶

Plattner is not so quick to discount the possible seriousness of Rousseau's mention of experiments. Pointing to Rousseau's question regarding the experiments necessary to know natural man, Plattner argues that Rousseau is issuing "a call for scientific experimentation" which, buttressed by "the decidedly scientific character of the *Second Discourse* as a whole," suggests Rousseau believed the state of nature to have been actual, that is, not a hypothetical state.²⁹⁷

Plattner bases his argument that Rousseau's discourse is 'scientific,' on several claims. He links Rousseau's 'call for experimentation' to the experiment Rousseau suggests in Note X. He stresses Rousseau's use of physics in describing the state of nature, and points to Rousseau's use of Buffon's *Natural History*.

Plattner's turn to Note X comes after his turn to the turn Notes in general. He writes that Rousseau intended the Notes for his philosophical readers. Masters concurs.²⁹⁸ Because Rousseau was aware of the corrupting nature of science, Plattner argues, he had to write in a way that "conceal[ed] from vulgar readers knowledge that would be

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 162; p. 156.

²⁹⁷ Plattner, p. 22.

²⁹⁸ Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, p. 109.

harmful to them."²⁹⁹ Plattner writes that: "one of the tactics Rousseau employed in this enterprise was to 'hide' some of his more explosive speculations in the obscure reaches of the Notes."³⁰⁰ Plattner argues that Rousseau's notes reveal his esoteric advocacy of science. The assumption of esoterism is necessary for Plattner and Masters in order to reconcile the advocacy of science they see Rousseau making in the *Second Discourse*, with his argument in the *First Discourse* that the sciences and arts are detrimental to political virtue. Because Rousseau was, in the *First Discourse*, clearly using a reasoned argument, and because he lauded Bacon, Descartes and Newton, his criticism of science can be interpreted as applying only to a popularized science, and not to science as pursued by the wise few.³⁰¹ Plattner and Masters, having made the argument that the notes are for Rousseau's philosophical readers only, can then argue that Rousseau was advocating science, albeit to the few. They do not explain why Rousseau would have considered his encouragement necessary

²⁹⁹ Plattner, p. 24.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-5.

³⁰¹ Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p. 259. I agree to this point. I also agree that Rousseau puts his account of the state of nature "into a context supplied by modern natural and social science". *Ibid.*, p. 264. I cannot however agree with Masters and Plattner that Rousseau was serious about natural sciences, beyond using it for his purposes. I certainly do not agree that Rousseau meant the "demonstration" he suggests in Note X, as anything more than a joke.

to those people he had described in the *First Discourse* as needing no masters.³⁰²

Although I agree that Rousseau wrote on more than one level, and more, I would argue, than two, I see the argument that the notes are for the philosophic and scientific few as fundamentally flawed for two reasons. Firstly, it does not take a lot of wit, or lack of being common, to be able to see that the notes exist, nor to see that the language in many of them deals with science. The Notes are not 'hidden' but appended. Anyone who could read would be able to easily locate them, read them, and discover that science is mentioned. Buffon's work is mentioned in three of the nineteen Notes: Notes II, IV and VII. Physics is mentioned in Note XII. Experiments are mentioned in Notes IV, X, and XII. Travellers' tales and snippets of history, which could be seen as factual evidence, are more generally scattered throughout the notes.

Secondly, the argument that the notes represent an esoteric advocacy of natural science is flawed because the assumption that the notes are there for the philosopher is

³⁰² Rousseau writes:

Those whom nature intended as her disciples had no need of masters. Such men as Verulam, Descartes and Newton, these Preceptors of Mankind, had none themselves, and indeed what guides could have led them as far as their own vast genius carried them? Ordinary masters could only have cramped their understanding.... If a few men are to be allowed to devote themselves to the study of the Sciences and the Arts, it must only be those who feel the strength to go forth alone in their footsteps.... *First Discourse*, pp. 25-26; p. 29.

flawed. In his "Note on the Notes", Rousseau did not say: 'there will be no harm in the vulgar, or common, readers not reading the notes'. He said:

..those who will have the courage to begin again, will be able to amuse themselves the second time by beating the bushing and attempting to go through the notes; there will be little harm that the others do not read them at all.¹⁰³

More plausibly, the notes are there for the *philosophically* minded. It seems unlikely that Rousseau who wrote so vehemently against the vanity of enlightenment thinkers, artists and scientists in the *First Discourse* would flatter that vanity by supplying serious explosive speculations as the prize for running vainly to read that which Rousseau says "there will be no harm in the others' not reading at all."³⁰⁴ Could it not be that Rousseau is playing a joke on those vain enough to pounce upon unhidden words as esoteric manna? Surely Rousseau was aware that vulgar readers turn pages as well as, and probably faster than, 'the few'.

Plattner, however, argues that the Notes are of central importance in understanding Rousseau's intent. Plattner directs us, in particular, to "the central and longest note

³⁰³ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 135; p. 128.

³⁰⁴ Rousseau, *First Discourse*, p. 17; p. 21; *Second Discourse*, p. 135; p. 125.

of the *Discourse*," which is Note X.³⁰⁵ Plattner suggests that this note is both physically and philosophically central to the notes; it is the only note he names explicitly in his Chapter "The Historical Status of the State of Nature".

Note X mirrors the *Second Discourse* as a whole. Both the Note and the *Discourse* tell us in general how we can know man. Both tell us that the only knowledge that counts is the knowledge we gain by ourselves. Both involve distinguishing man from a creature that appears beast-like. Note X concerns distinguishing man from 'Pongos' and 'Orang-outangs.' The *Discourse* involves the project of uncovering the human soul, the simplicity of which had become obscured by passions, like "the disfigured statue of Glaucus which time, sea, and storms had so disfigured that it less

³⁰⁵ Plattner is not alone of this point. Gourevitch notes that Heinrich Meier "maintains that Rousseau's readiness to envisage the possibility that some of the beings which crude observers call apes and satyrs may be human beings marks the culminating point of the *Discourse*, and that the fact that it does conclusively proves the *Discourses*'s 'philosophically radical and scientifically serious character.'" Gourevitch adds: "Meier believes that Rousseau thought so too, and that he indicated as much by placing these reflections at the very center of the Notes which he appended to the text..." but "[Meier] gives no other evidence of his claim that this is the philosophical highpoint to the *Discourse*." Gourevitch also notes that by stressing this point Meier undermines his argument that Rousseau deliberately refused to consider questions about evolution or transformism. Gourevitch, in "Rousseau's Pure State of Nature," p. 43. Gourevitch is commenting on Meier's *Diskurs über die Ungleichheit: Kritische Ausgabe des integralen Textes*, (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1984).

resembled a God than a ferocious Beast".³⁰⁶

Rousseau and most of his contemporaries had never seen an Orang-outang although they may have seen drawings of them.³⁰⁷ Descriptions and drawings of Orang-outangs in Rousseau's time showed them as very similar to humans in appearance.³⁰⁸ Without having seen the being himself and without reliable observers such as "a Montesquieu, a Buffon, a Diderot... or men of that stamp," Rousseau states the possibility that these beings might be men but does not say that they are.³⁰⁹

Rousseau does mention a way in which man could establish whether he was biologically related to these beings. He writes:

... if the Orang-outang or others did belong to the human species, there is one way in which the crudest observers could satisfy themselves on the question even with a demonstration; but not only would a single generation not suffice for this experiment, it must also be regarded as impractical because what is but an assumption would have to have been demonstrated as true before the test to confirm the fact could be tried in innocence.³¹⁰

As Rousseau has just cited the translator of the *Histoire des Voyages* in the previous paragraph as commenting that the

³⁰⁶ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 129; p. 122.

³⁰⁷ Gourevitch, "Rousseau's Pure State of Nature," p. 42.

³⁰⁸ Moran, p. 39.

³⁰⁹ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note X, p. 220; p. 213.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Note X, pp. 217-218; p. 211.

Orang-outans were said to be "'so similar to man that it has entered the mind of some travelers that it might have been the offspring of a woman and a monkey,'" the form the demonstration would take is not too hard to fathom.³¹¹

Plattner argues that this demonstration, and the follow-up study, is Rousseau's answer to his question in the Preface concerning the experiments necessary to know natural man. Plattner writes: "To emphasize the importance of empirical or scientific evidence for his conception of man's primitive condition, Rousseau himself suggests such an experiment." Masters comments on this experiment:

"Rousseau's desire to cast his thought in a way that could be proven - experimentally - to the 'crudest observers' reveals an effort to establish philosophic proofs on more 'solid' grounds than those of classic philosophers."³¹²

Plattner notes that the experiment of Note X is "the only suggestion in the *Discourse* of a specific 'experiment' for arriving at knowledge of natural man".³¹³ Plattner writes:

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, Note X, pp. 216-218; pp. 209-221. It is also worth noting that the idea that forms the basis of the experiment is a fourth-hand piece of 'information.' Rousseau cites the translator, who cites Dapper, who heard some travellers speculating. This is far from being something known "on our own". *Ibid.*, p. 214; p. 208.

³¹² Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, p. 116.

³¹³ Plattner, p. 25.

[Rousseau] delicately alludes to the mating of a human being and an orangutan for the purpose of seeing whether such a mating would produce fertile offspring. If such a union did produce fertile offspring, this would 'verify the fact' that the orangutan was really a man in his primitive state. [Plattner's italics] ³¹⁴

Rousseau seems to take this experiment much less seriously than Plattner. Rousseau writes of this experiment, not only that it is "one way in which the crudest observers could satisfy themselves" but also that "it must be regarded as impracticable."³¹⁵ If the beast in question had not been proved human it could not be coupled with a woman without social uproar. It is unclear whether Plattner is taking Rousseau seriously in his suggestion of sexual coupling between Orang-outang and human female or whether he considers Rousseau to have accepted the Orang-outangs' humanity as a fact. Both interpretations appear faulty.

It is hardly likely that Rousseau meant his experiment to be performed. His experiment would be the trial of an idea that had "'entered the heads of some travelers,'" an experiment the *Histoire* describes as "'a chimera dismissed even by the Negroes,'" a chimera, which given the context, was hardly to be taken seriously. Rousseau's suggestion of the experiment also follows and precedes his criticism of

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note X, pp. 217-218; p. 211.

the travellers' observations and their compilers' comments as unreliable and prejudiced. Rousseau's experiment is also extreme in light of Rousseau's comment that: "it is well demonstrated that the Monkey is not a variety of man."³¹⁶ If, somehow, without a mating experiment, monkeys have been demonstrated not to be men, surely a similar demonstration could be exercised concerning Orang-outangs. The experiment, in light of the suggestion of subtler scientific forays, takes on a rhetorical air, the air of having been suggested only as a possible pandering to the crudest observers and not as an experiment that should be carried out.

Plattner points to Rousseau's scepticism over whether these beings were men or beasts as "decisive evidence" that Rousseau was offering what he considered a scientific account of an actual state of nature. Plattner writes:

Rousseau's unqualified assertion that even in his own time there might be men still living in the primitive state of nature affords decisive evidence for the interpretation that he regarded the state of nature described in the *Second Discourse* as approximating a factual, historical account.³¹⁷

To call the statement of a possibility an "unqualified assertion" of a possibility does not change Rousseau's scepticism into belief. In addition, to assert a possibility in order to demonstrate an approximate fact is

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ Plattner, p. 25.

at most a half-hearted science. Plattner ignores the possibility that Rousseau may have thought that all men were, in some sense, still living in the state of nature or that he could have had other, more directly political rather than scientific, reasons for suggesting these beings were human.

There are at least two reasons Rousseau may have had for arguing that the beasts spotted by travellers were actually men; both can be reduced to a concern for a greater equality of treatment under law. One reason concerns arguments over "the chain of being"; the other concerns Rousseau's general argument concerning pity. Francis Moran III argues that Rousseau's argument that orangutans might be men was designed to counteract the argument that the orangutans supplied the "missing link" for the chain of being. The argument against the chain of being was an argument against using natural inequality as authorization of a natural right to dominate. Moran writes:

Contemporary description of both primates and primitive human beings were meant to demonstrate continuity in God's creation and the viability of the chain of being. This implied that if the chain of being was an accurate account of natural history, then inequality was a necessary feature of human society....³¹⁸

He adds:

³¹⁸ Moran, p. 49.

Where naturalists using the chain of being subdivided and ranked groups within the human species according to the purportedly highest attributes of the species...Rousseau sought the baseline attributes shared by all members of the species.³¹⁹

Rousseau argument that Pongos and Orang-outangs could be human can therefore be seen in the light of arguing from the principle of the equality necessary for the functioning of a free political society.

To see anthropomorphic animals as possibly human also has implications regarding pity. If human beings have more pity for beings they consider to be like themselves, as Rousseau argues, then inclusion in the category of humanity can carry vital consequences.³²⁰ An extension of pity from which "flow all social virtues" can only bode well for a highly stratified society in which "Savage man" can be likened to a member of the "rabble".³²¹ By seeking the baseline attributes of the human and finding them to be prior to reason, Rousseau is making room for greater equality in society that, in the end, will serve to allow the sphere of freedom he sees as a defining quality of natural man. Allowing the possibility of that freedom will

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

³²⁰ "Indeed commiseration will be all the more energetic in proportion as the Onlooking animal identifies more intimately with the suffering animal...". Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 162; p. 155.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 161; p. 155 and p. 162; p. 156.

allow Rousseau himself to enjoy that freedom.³²²

Plattner emphasized the experiment Rousseau suggests in Note X, but, strangely, does not discuss the other experiments mentioned in the notes. Rousseau writes of "experiments" three times in the Notes: in Note X, in Note IV and in Note XII. In Note X, Rousseau wrote that the mating experiment was impractical. In Note XII he mentions the impossibility of performing natural-science experiments to prove facts of the state of nature:

A good deal of uncertainty surrounds the principal fact which serves as the basis for Mr. Locke's entire argument: For in order to know whether, as he claims, in the pure state of Nature the woman is commonly with child again and brings forth too a new birth long before the former is able to shift for himself, would require experiments which Locke has surely not performed, and which no one is in a position to perform.³²³

The only experiment in the notes that Rousseau says is

³²² In relation to this point see St. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), 16.8, p. 531. Valerie I.J. Flint argues that Augustine's argument - that if we cannot be assured that beings we encounter are animals, we must assume they are men - was based on a concern for the extension of tolerance and sympathy at a time when the church faced some barbarous potential converts. Flint, "Monsters and the Antipodes in the Early Middle Ages and Enlightenment," in *Viator Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, V. 15 (1984), pp. 72-73.

³²³ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note XII, p. 223; pp. 216-217. No one, writes Rousseau, is in a position to perform these experiments, Rousseau has told us that the pure state of nature is inaccessible. If the inaccessibility of the pure state of nature makes it so that no one is in a position to perform this experiment, why has Locke "surely not" performed the experiment? Perhaps, Rousseau is making a joke?

practical is one he also says he has performed. He writes:

...the fruits of Trees provide animals with a more abundant supply of food than can other [forms of] vegetation, an experiment I have myself performed by comparing the production of two pieces of ground equal in size and quality, the one covered with chestnut trees, and the other sown with wheat.³²⁴

This practical experiment should serve as a reminder to us, if the impractical ones do not, that the notes were to "amuse" us.³²⁵ I can see Rousseau either sitting down to a hearty dinner of chestnuts, wondering aloud how it is that the produce of the farmer is robbed by the taxfarmer and how it is that so many go without bread or wading knee-deep in chestnuts, on a solitary promenade. Plattner ignores the one experiment that Rousseau says explicitly he has performed, another that Rousseau wrote was impossible and concentrated on the one that Rousseau said was impractical and yet if performed would satisfy the crudest observers.

Plattner supports his argument that the *Discourse* is scientific in other ways. Plattner writes that:

Rousseau indicates in several places that his description of the state of nature aims at the character of physics. Thus he criticizes Locke's argument for the naturalness of the family on the grounds that 'moral proofs do not have great force in matters of physics.'³²⁶

Rousseau does have a place for physics in his state of

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, Note IV, pp. 203-204; p. 198.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 135; p. 128.

³²⁶ Plattner, p. 22.

nature. More than that, Rousseau seems to indicate a role for physics in nature in general. He can write:

I see in any animal nothing but an ingenuous machine to which nature has given senses in order to wind itself up and, to a point, protect itself against everything that tends to destroy or to disturb it.³²⁷

He can write, in response to Locke's argument that the family is natural, that: "moral proofs are without great force in matters of Physics," but in continuing his commentary on Locke's argument, Rousseau adds:

...although it may be advantageous to the human species that the union between man and woman be permanent, it does not follow that it was so established by Nature; otherwise it would have to be said that nature also instituted Civil Society, the Arts, Commerce, and everything that is claimed to be useful to men.³²⁸

Physics in the sense Rousseau uses it seems to have to do with nature working mechanically, unaffected by the artifice of man. In matters of Physics, before humans have come to grasp the concept of advantage, man and woman will remain solitary. That they unite and live together does not, Rousseau argues, follow from nature, from the physical mechanistic working of the universe, just as politics, the arts, and commerce do not follow from mechanical nature but are rather products of man's difference from a mechanistic or instinctive nature, products of man's unique quality - his freedom and perfectibility. While Rousseau sees animals

³²⁷ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 148; p. 141.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, Note XII, p. 222; pp. 215-216.

as ingenious machines with senses to enable their self-preservation, man, though similar to the animal-machines, are crucially different from them. Rousseau writes:

"...Nature alone does everything in the operation of the Beast, whereas man contributes to his operations in his capacity as a free agent."³²⁹ He adds:

Nature commands every animal, and the Beast obeys. Man experiences the same impression, but recognizes himself free to acquiesce or to resist; ... for Physics in a way explains the mechanism of the senses and the formation of ideas; but in the power of willing, or rather of choosing, and in the sentiment of this power are found purely spiritual acts about which nothing is explained by the Laws of Mechanics.³³⁰

Although physics can explain much about the state of nature, it cannot account for the unique potential of beast-man, which, although latent, exists as part of his nature and distinguishes him from the inanimate nature and the animals surrounding him.

Plattner offers another reason to see the *Discourse* as a scientific work. He points out that, in the notes, Rousseau appeals to a scientific book: Buffon's *Histoire naturelle*. Rousseau's first appeal concerns Buffon's discussion of the importance of the "internal sense" as a way of understanding ourselves. Rousseau cites:

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 148; p. 141.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

... we seek only to spread outward, and to exist outside ourselves; too busy multiplying the functions of our senses and extending the external scope of our being, we rarely use the internal sense which reduces us to our true dimensions, and sets off from us everything that does not belong to it.... We have lost the habit of using it...it has been dried up in the fire of our passions; the heart, the Mind, the senses, everything has worked against it.³³¹

This quotation and its subject are notable as Rousseau seems to have chosen carefully from Buffon's work in order to support his own introspective approach. Rousseau was clearly influenced by Buffon, but it is difficult to know the full nature of that influence.³³² Rousseau and Buffon disagreed on many points. Buffon wrote a refutation of Rousseau's natural man in the preface to his *Natural History of Carnivores* (1758), targeting in particular Rousseau's assertions that man was naturally asocial and that there had been no family in the state of nature.³³³

Masters also argues that Rousseau meant the state of nature to be seen a historical state and that in presenting it he meant to be scientific. He writes of Rousseau's criticism of Hobbes:

³³¹ *Ibid.*, Note II, pp. 200-201; pp. 195-196.

³³² See Otis Fellows, "Rousseau and Buffon: Aspects of a Relationship," in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol. LXXV, 3, (June), 1960 and Jean Morel, "Recherches sur les sources du Discours de l'inégalité," in *Annales de la Société J.-J. Rousseau*, Vol. 5, 1906, pp. 179-198.

³³³ Jean Starobinski, "Rousseau and Buffon" in *Transparency and Obstruction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 332.

In short, Hobbes was not sufficiently scientific because he did not attempt to discover the historical epoch in which the human species lived among other animals in a true state of nature.³³⁴

He adds:

Although it was not original for Rousseau to have considered the state of nature as having existed, to my knowledge he was the first philosopher to treat it as an historical epoch that must be studied by means of comparative anatomy, biology, and modern anthropology.³³⁵

Masters suggests that human nature is to be known, for Rousseau, by knowing the physical nature of man. Masters writes: "Only by considering the human species as a natural phenomenon, living in the 'animal system' and subject to purely scientific analysis, can a philosophic understanding of human nature be established."³³⁶ This interpretation does not seem to be borne out in the text.

Rousseau wrote in the Exordium that he would set aside all the facts.³³⁷ He begins Part I of the *Discourse* by setting aside the science of comparative anatomy. He begins by ruling out various methods of inquiry. Rousseau suggests he can discover "Man's natural state" without considering him from his origin, "in the first Embryo of the species",

³³⁴ Masters, "The Structure of Rousseau's Political Thought," p. 405.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, p. 118.

³³⁷ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 139; p. 132.

through the successive developments of his organization. Rousseau will not be tracing any possible changes in man's physiology. He writes of "changes that must have occurred in man's internal and the external conformation in proportion as he put his limbs to new uses and took up new foods," but we writes that he will not be taking these changes into account. "Comparative Anatomy," he writes, "has as yet made too little progress, the observations of Naturalists are as yet too uncertain to permit establishing the basis of a solid argument on such foundations;".¹¹⁸ He adds:

... I shall assume that [man] was always conformed as I see him today, walking on two feet, using his hands as we do ours, directing his gaze over the whole of Nature, and with his eyes surveying the vast expanse of Heaven.¹¹⁹

Casting aside the fact of changes he said must have occurred Rousseau accepts, as sufficient for discovering man's natural state, the picture of man as he is now.

Rousseau also discounts physiology as a basis for argument in Note III. He discusses whether man has always been a biped or not. He lists several reasons why it was believed that man was originally a quadruped and several

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 141; p. 134. Any attempt to argue that Rousseau meant the experiment of mating an orang-outang and a human, a comparison of anatomies at the crudest level, seriously has to be squared with this initial denial that he will be engaging in comparative anatomy and his reiteration that the observations of travellers and naturalists are not to be trusted.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

reasons why it was believed man was originally a biped. Although Rousseau labels the second set of reasons as ones that seem better to him, he also concludes each of the arguments, con and pro, with an example of man's adaptability. In the case of walking on all fours, Rousseau writes:

As for the possible objection that this means to deprive ourselves of the use of the hands, to which we owe so many advantages; besides the fact that the example of the monkeys shows that the hand can very well be used in both ways, it would only prove that man can assign to his limbs a more convenient destination than nature's, and not that Nature destined man to walk otherwise than it teaches him to do.¹⁴⁰

Of a child hypothetically abandoned in the woods and raised by some beast, Rousseau writes that:

...just as people lacking an arm succeed, by dint of practice, to do with their feet everything we do with out hands, so will it finally have succeeded in using its hands as feet.¹⁴¹

It seems, from Rousseau's discussion, that he considers man to be defined not by his physical constitution but rather by his ability to adapt to different circumstances. The facts of a possible physiological transformation do not affect Rousseau's view of what is essentially human. Man's faculties are more important to Rousseau than his physiology. Man means more to Rousseau than the body.

The scientific evidence Rousseau presents and the

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Note III, pp. 201-202; pp. 196-197.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Note III, pp. 202-203; p. 197.

experiments he discusses suggest that he was not serious about pursuing knowledge through the natural sciences. The *Second Discourse* can rightly be said to have a 'scientific character' but, if we delve beneath the sheen of rhetoric, we find Rousseau to be not a natural scientist, but a philosopher arguing from principles based on his own science of introspection.

CHAPTER EIGHT - SETTING ASIDE THE FACTS - TRAVEL AND HISTORY

TRAVEL

Plattner suggests that Rousseau took the travellers' tales he cites throughout the *Discourse* and the notes seriously because the travellers' tales offered evidence that there may still have been men living in the state of nature.³⁴² While it cannot be denied that Rousseau uses and cites from many travellers' accounts, it can be denied that he took them seriously.

Rousseau took what he wanted from the travellers' tales, or rather he took what he needed for his arguments. Georges Pire, who studied Rousseau's use of travellers' tales, cites Rousseau from the *Emile* as saying that he spent his life reading accounts of travels.³⁴³ Rousseau wrote:

³⁴² Plattner, p. 25.

³⁴³ Georges Pire, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau et les Relations de Voyages," in *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, Vol. 56 (juillet-septembre, 1956), No. 3, p. 355.

It is too much to have to pierce through both the authors' prejudices and our own in order to get to the truth. I have spent my life reading accounts of travels, and I have never found two which have given me the same idea of the same people. In comparing the little that I could observe myself with what I have read, I have ended by dropping the travelers and regretting the time that I gave to informing myself by reading them. I am quite convinced that in matters of observation of every kind one must not read, one must see.³⁴⁴

Rousseau's claim to have spent his life reading travel accounts, Pire, concludes, is surely an exaggeration. Pire adds that Rousseau's criticisms of travel tales should not be taken literally and that it was by reading these tales that Rousseau was convinced that his insight into human nature was correct.³⁴⁵ Backing up this conclusion is Pire's literary archaeology. Pire dug into Rousseau's notebooks and found many references to travel tales.³⁴⁶ Yet, notes are not professions of belief and surely Pire's conclusion that Rousseau did not spend his life reading accounts of travels presumes a narrow definition of travel. Augustine's *Confessions* and Plato's *Laws* can also be seen as a travel accounts of a sort; Augustine is on a pilgrimage to God and the three old men of the *Laws* are heading for the cave of Zeus.

Rousseau's criticism of travel, like his criticism of

³⁴⁴ Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 451.

³⁴⁵ Pire, pp. 355, 376, 378.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

science, is not that the activity itself is bad, but that it is done incorrectly. He writes:

To become informed, it is not sufficient to roam through various countries. It is necessary to know how to travel. To observe, it is necessary to have eyes and to turn them toward the object one wants to know.³⁴⁷

He adds: "it is bad reasoning to conclude from the fact that we travel badly that travel is useless."³⁴⁸ Travel, and even travellers' tales, if we weigh them against what we know ourselves and do not glibly accept them as tales with which to inform ourselves, are useful because confronted with prejudices different from our own we are forced to question our own conventions. Travel, Rousseau assures us, is not suited for everyone, for: "Travel pushes a man toward his natural bent and completes the job of making him good or bad." But, he adds the complementary assurance: "Whoever returns from roaming the world is, upon his return, what he will be for his whole life."³⁴⁹ Rousseau's method of travel parallels his scientific method by stripping us of what is conventional and revealing what is common to man. If we can, after having witnessed this sight, return, that is, return to living under our conventions, we are actively consenting to those conventions and we find ourselves free.

Rousseau uses travel tales to support his arguments

³⁴⁷ Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 452.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 455.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

concerning man in the state of nature. This becomes apparent when we realize how self-conscious European attitudes to "Savages" were, when we realize how selective Rousseau was in choosing his evidence from the tales, and when we look at the way he uses this evidence in the *Second Discourse*.

European attitudes to the savages of the New World were highly self-conscious. By this I mean that the savage of the new world had become a political symbol of the old world. By 1755, tales of the new world and its inhabitants had been filtering back to Europe for over two centuries. Many of the accounts confirmed Rousseau's portrait of man in the state of nature.³⁵⁰ In 1721, the year in which Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* was published, a play by Delisle de la Drevetière, entitled *Arlequin sauvage*, was presented at the Théâtre Italien in Paris. Rousseau mentions this play in the *Letter to D'Alembert*.³⁵¹ In the play, the

³⁵⁰ William Brandon, *New Worlds for Old*, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986), p. 109.

³⁵¹ He does not of course laud the play as he is in the process of writing against the idea of establishing a theatre in Geneva. He writes:

If the *Arlequin sauvage* is so well received by audiences, is it thought that this is a result of their taste for the character's sense and simplicity, or that a single one of them would want to resemble him? It is, all to the contrary, that his play appeals to their turn of mind, which is to love and seek out new and singular ideas.

Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. Allan Bloom, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), p. 20.

Savage finds society false. "You are madmen," the Savage declaims, "who think you are wise, you are ignorant and believe yourselves educated, you are poor and believe you are rich, you are slaves who believe yourselves free."³⁵² The Savage was a set character, like the Oriental nabob, a satirical figure who acted as a gadfly, criticising eighteenth century society.³⁵³

Throughout the seventeen and eighteenth centuries, travellers' tales had been adding weight to the ideas voiced by the *Arlequin sauvage* that men could live happily and virtuously without laws, kings or written right.³⁵⁴ Voltaire, like the *philosophes*, derided the image of the 'noble savage.'³⁵⁵ William Brandon, in *New Worlds for Old*, writes that: "Rousseau was very conscious indeed of New World associations with his ideas, especially in reference to ideas of liberty and equality."³⁵⁶ He adds:

³⁵² Brandon, p. 101.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

³⁵⁴ Gilbert Chinard, "Influence de récits de voyages sur la philosophie de J.J. Rousseau," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol. XXVI, No. 3 (Vol. XIX of New Series), 1911, p. 485.

³⁵⁵ Brandon, p. 107.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

...Rousseau did not in the least create the 'noble savage' or any of the ideas associated with that image in regard to liberty, equality, and property. What Rousseau did do was insist on liberty and equality as elements of man's natural world, going not to the ancients for citations and examples but to the people of Arlequin and [Lahontan's] Adario, to the American societies commented upon by Du Tertre and Montaigne.³⁵⁷

Part of the peculiar nature of the travel tales made it unnecessary for Rousseau to go to the ancients. Many of the travel accounts had been written by missionaries and those written by Jesuit missionaries bore the stamp of their classical education. The Jesuits used Virgil and Plutarch to embellish their picture of the new world, finding "the golden age in the forests of the New World."³⁵⁸ Du Tertre wrote of peaceful Caribs, who enjoyed good health, and equality.³⁵⁹ Another missionary, Lejeune, wrote:

...we see a great number of very honorable people land here every year, who come to cast themselves into our great woods as if into the bosom of peace, in order to live here with more piety, more freedom and liberty... Would to God the souls enamored of peace could see how sweet is life remote from the gehenna of a thousand superfluous compliments, of the tyranny of lawsuits, of the ravages of war, and of an infinite number of other savage beasts that we do not encounter in our forests.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³⁵⁸ Chinard, p. 490.

³⁵⁹ Pire, pp. 369, 375.

³⁶⁰ Brandon, pp. 69-70, citing from *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents...1610-1701*, ed. R.G. Thwaites, 73 volumes, (Cleveland, 1896-1901), 8:168 and 9:141.

Another Jesuit wrote: "We see in the savages the beautiful remnants of a human nature entirely corrupted among civilized peoples".³⁶¹ The Jesuits told only one half of the missionary tale, however. The "Récollets" told the other. The *Récollets* had a more dismal tale to tell, painting the savages as stupid, brutish animals. Père Hennepin writes of Caribs killing each other and being killed by the English. God, wrote Hennepin, permitted the slaughter because the Caribs lived the life of beasts and resisted conversion.³⁶² Given these opposing strains in the accounts, Rousseau's scepticism regarding them becomes understandable. The fact that he was highly selective in choosing what he included and what he left out of his account of the Savage in the state of nature also becomes apparent. Pire notes that Rousseau omitted mention of the passages in the works he consulted which showed crudeness, vices, cruelty and that he paid close attention to passages stressing the goodness and innocence of primitives and their superiority over civilised man.³⁶³ Rousseau then, it seems, knew natural man before he began making notes from

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70, from *Relations*, 64:130. I am not arguing that Rousseau read these particular accounts, but that his having read similar accounts lies behind both his positive account of the savage and his comment in Note XVI that "one even sees sensible Missionaries regret with emotion the calm and innocent days they spent among those much despised peoples". *Second Discourse*, p. 227; p. 220.

³⁶² Chinard, pp. 489-490.

³⁶³ Pire, p. 378.

travel accounts. He made him more believable by using material gleaned from the travel accounts, judiciously disregarding the material that did not suit his purposes. Rousseau, having already pinned his argument on principles, was not above using what 'facts' he could find to persuade others to adopt them.

Rousseau's use of travellers' tales in the *Second Discourse* supports the interpretation that Rousseau had the principles which formed the skeleton of his natural man firmly in mind before he attempted to clothe that man with the flesh of "Savage man" as described in travel accounts. In the main text of the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau does not base his description of Savage man on the descriptions of travellers but rather bolsters his account of Savage man by referring to these accounts. He sets out a picture of Savage man and then he mentions a travellers' tale. He shows only that his picture is not contradicted by the travellers' tale, not that the tale is the source of his picture.

There are many examples of this in the *Discourse*. For example: Rousseau begins a description of Savage man. Savage man is naturally strong, or robust; he is rarely frightened, sturdy, agile, courageous. Then he adds a description of the relationship of savage man to the beasts among which he lives. The man's strength and agility, and the tools he has learned to use, sticks and stones, allow

him to defend himself against the beasts. The beasts, which are by nature, Rousseau says, not inclined to attack each other, soon discover that attacking man poses a danger to them and will not readily attack him. From stronger animals, Rousseau reasons, man flees. He sums up the situation by asserting that:

...it does not seem that any animal naturally wars against man except in the case of self-defense or of extreme hunger, or that any bears him those violent antipathies that seem to announce that one species is destined by Nature to serve as food for another.³⁶⁴

Only after he has described savage man does Rousseau bring in the descriptions of travellers and then only in a way which indicates that Rousseau's own description is the primary one. After the above description, he writes: "These are undoubtedly the reasons why Negroes and Savages worry so little about the ferocious beasts they might meet up with in the woods."³⁶⁵ Rousseau repeats this order of presentation. He describes Savage man as "Alone, idle, and always near danger," as a light sleeper. He adds that:

³⁶⁴ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, pp. 143-144; pp. 136-137.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144; p. 137.

Self-preservation being almost his only care, his most developed faculties must be those that primarily serve in attack and defense...: By contrast, the organs that are perfected only by softness and sensuality must remain in a state of coarseness... and since his senses differ in this respect, his touch will be extremely crude; his sight, hearing and smell most subtle....³⁶⁶

After this description, based on Rousseau's conjecture of Savage man's condition, Rousseau adds: "Such is the animal state in general, and according to Travellers' reports, it also is the state of most Savage Peoples."³⁶⁷ Only then does Rousseau cite actual peoples mentioned in the reports:

It is therefore not surprising that the Hottentots of the Cape of Good Hope can sight Ships with the naked eye as far out on the high seas as the Dutch can with Telescopes, not the Savages of America track the Spaniards by smell just as well as the best Dogs might have done....³⁶⁸

Rousseau discusses the Savage man's lack of foresight:

His soul, which nothing stirs, yields itself wholly to the sentiment of its present existence, with no idea of the future, however near it may be, and his projects, as narrow as his views, hardly extend to the close of day.³⁶⁹

Rousseau then adds that:

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 147; p. 140.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 151; p. 144.

Such is still nowadays the extent of the Carib's foresight: he sells his Cotton bed in the morning and comes weeping to buy it back in the evening, having failed to foresee that he would need it for the coming night."³¹⁰

The Savage man is not being described in light of the Carib, rather the Carib is said to share characteristics of Savage man.

Rousseau does not depend on the travellers' tales to prove "natural man". At most the accounts would allow Rousseau to show "Savage man." Yet, even Savage man, as Rousseau describes him, seems designed to fit Rousseau's view of human nature as he has seen it within, that is, the Savage man is portrayed as free.

HISTORY

I will briefly address Rousseau's use of history because the claim that Rousseau's state of nature was an actual state reduces it to a historical state. This, I believe, makes it immediately suspicious for Rousseau. He is serious enough about knowing for himself, by himself, that he has realized that a history can never be fully trusted. He knows, however, how useful history can be. It is by means of history that Emile, unschooled in philosophy, will learn to read the hearts of men by studying their actions, but Emile must read the proper sort of history.³¹¹

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 237.

He must read Plutarch. After enumerating the problems of different histories, Rousseau concludes in the *Emile*.

I would prefer to begin the study of the human heart with the reading of lives of individuals; for in them, however much the man may conceal himself, the historian pursues him everywhere.... 'Those who write lives,' says Montaigne, 'are more suited to me to the extent that they are interested in intentions more than in results, in what takes place within more than in what happens without. This is why Plutarch is my man.'³⁷²

For Rousseau, too, Plutarch is the man.³⁷³

Because Rousseau chooses Plutarch as the historian for *Emile*, because we know from he read and re-read Plutarch, and because Rousseau tells "Man" in the Exordium that he will present "the life of your species," it is interesting to note Plutarch's approach to the writings of *Lives*. Plutarch writes:

³⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 240. Bloom notes that Montaigne, (*Essais*, II, 10) wrote "what comes from within" and not takes place. Bloom, ed. *Emile*, Note 14, p. 489. Rousseau's change suggests how radically interior he is making history.

³⁷³ Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 240.

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It must be borne in mind that my design is not to write histories, but lives. And the most glorious exploits do not always furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men; sometimes a matter of less moment, an expression or a jest, informs us better of their characters and inclinations, than the most famous sieges, the greatest armaments, or the bloodiest battles whatsoever. Therefore as portrait-painters are more exact in the lines and features of the face, in which the character is seen, than in the other parts of the body, so I must be allowed to give my more particular attention to the marks and indications of the souls of men, and while I endeavor by these to portray their lives, may be free to leave more weighty matters and great battles to be treated of by others.³⁷⁴

Rousseau will uncover the history of man in the *Second Discourse*, not by focusing on the grand events of history but by delving into his own soul. That this is not too far-fetched is indicated by the approach Rousseau takes in his *Confessions*, his *Dialogues* and his *Reveries*. Rousseau writes that his *Confessions*, which he calls his own history, are true, but they are not true because they are 'factual' in the usual sense of the word. He says that it would be strange if he had not made some confusions of time and place. Yet, in concluding he writes:

I have told the truth. If anyone knows anything contrary to what I have recorded, though he prove it a thousand times, his knowledge is a lie and an imposture.³⁷⁵

Rousseau introduces his history in the *Second Discourse*, by telling "Man": "Here is your history such as I

³⁷⁴ Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, "Alexander," trans. John Dryden, (New York: Modern Library), p. 801.

³⁷⁵ Rousseau, *Confessions*, p. 149, 128, 605.

believed I read it, not in the Books of your kind, who are liars, but in Nature, which never lies."³⁷⁶ This is a strange address and Rousseau's history will be a strange one. Rousseau says he has read the history of his kind in nature, yet the only nature he seems to have read is his own. In the Preface, in a paragraph that began as the above quotation begins, by disregarding books of men, Rousseau wrote of meditating on the operations of the human soul.³⁷⁷ If the nature that Rousseau has read and the history he is going to tell is based on his own nature, nothing in his history will be false as he is intentionally introducing evidence based on his own experience. It will not be false, not because it will be factual. It will not be false, even though Rousseau tells us it is hypothetical, because it will be principled.

Rousseau does not support his arguments in the *Second Discourse* with the 'facts' of history. He refers to "the uncertain testimonies of history".³⁷⁸ History is uncertain because chance plays a part in it. History is not, for Rousseau driven by a principle. It could have happened in different ways. Towards the end of Part I of the *Discourse*, Rousseau writes:

³⁷⁶ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 140; p. 133.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 132; p. 125.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 150; p. 144.

I admit that since the events I have to describe could have occurred in several ways, I can choose between them only on the basis of conjectures; but ... on the principles I have just established, no other system could be formed that would not give me the same results from which I could not draw the same conclusions.³⁷⁹

In the *Geneva Manuscript*, Rousseau writes along similar lines:

...in this work I give only one method for the formation of political societies, although in the multitude of aggregations that now exist under this name, there may not be two that were formed in the same manner and not one according to the manner I establish. But I seek right and reason, and do not argue over facts.³⁸⁰

In *On the Social Contract*, Rousseau criticizes the reasoning of Grotius because he bases his arguments of right on facts.

Rousseau writes:

[Grotius'] most persistent mode of reasoning is always to establish right by fact. One could use a more rational method, but not one more favorable to tyrants.³⁸¹

In reference to this remark, he also cites the Marquis d'Argenson:

Learned research on public right is often merely the history of ancient abuses, and people have gone to a lot of trouble for nothing when they have bothered to study it too much.³⁸²

Rousseau discusses the contingency of history in other

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 168; p. 162.

³⁸⁰ Rousseau, *Geneva Manuscript*, in *On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy*, I, v, p. 169.

³⁸¹ Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, I, ii, p. 47.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

works. In these works, history comes second to the principles Rousseau has developed concerning the nature of man which, in the *Second Discourse* he discovers within himself. In his "Political Fragments" he writes:

To fruitfully follow the history of mankind, to judge well of the formation of peoples and of their revolutions, it is necessary to return to the principles of the passions of men, to the general causes which make them act.... In these studies, history is of no use to us, and the knowledge of facts deprived of that of their causes serves but to surcharge the memory, without instruction for experience and without pleasure for reason.³⁸³

In "L'état de guerre," Rousseau writes, in connection with "the social state":

The reader should imagine [songe] only that it matters here less of history and facts, than of right and justice, and that I examine things by their nature more than by our prejudices.³⁸⁴

Two pages later, Rousseau adds:

...I could content myself with responding by facts and I would have no reply to fear but I have not forgotten that I reason here by the nature of the thing and not on events which can have a thousand particular causes, independent of a common principle....³⁸⁵

History is an amalgam of particularities. History can be used, often, both to prove and to disprove the same thing.

History offers, like science, and like the travellers'

³⁸³ Rousseau, "Fragments politiques," in *Oeuvres complètes*, III, p. 529. My translation.

³⁸⁴ Rousseau, *L'état de guerre*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, III, p. 603. My translation.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 604. My translation.

tales, a bottomless sea of facts through which we can pick and choose. Only principles have the force of truth for Rousseau and principles can only be found within.

CHAPTER NINE - POLITICS AND PHILOSOPHY

The point of this chapter is to complete my discussion of Rousseau's experiment of introspection in the *Second Discourse* by linking his experiment to politics and to articulate more fully the link between Rousseau's politics and his philosophy. I will argue that securing the freedom of the man Rousseau finds through his meditation is the end of Rousseau's politics. The end of his philosophy comes, if it comes, when a man such Rousseau himself finds and enters this sphere of freedom and fills it with his feelings, his imagination and his thoughts. Rousseau's politics aims to insure this sphere of freedom for all. In turn, the securing of this freedom for all is the condition for the coming into existence of the philosopher. Only if a person can remain within himself by not being dependent on the particular wills of others can that person become a philosopher.

To link Rousseau's meditative experiment to his politics and his philosophy, I will consider Rousseau's "Epistle Dedicatory" in the *Second Discourse* and Rousseau's own status, in his *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, as a exile who has re-entered the state of nature by finding a freedom that allows him the enjoyment of his existence. I will argue that the being represented in the *Second*

Discourse as natural man and the solitary walker are both Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

In Part I of the *Discourse*, Rousseau presents a picture of man and savage man in the state of nature. The key characteristic shared by the inhabitants of the state of nature is that of self-sufficiency. This self-sufficiency is the key to man's natural freedom. Men:

...so long as they applied themselves only to tasks a single individual could perform, and to arts that did not require the collaboration of several hands, they lived free, healthy, good and happy as far as they could by their Nature be... but the moment one man needed the help of another... slavery and misery were soon seen to sprout and grow together with the harvests.³⁸⁶

Rousseau writes that "in the relations between man and man the worst that can happen to one is to find himself at the other's discretion."³⁸⁷ It is from this predicament that Rousseau hopes to save men. Freedom is defined by lack of dependence on other people. This freedom is precarious. After locating this freedom as a defining attribute of man in the state of nature, Rousseau traces the erosion of this freedom in the *Second Discourse*. This erosion corresponds with the decline of self-sufficiency and the emergence of interdependence. This erosion corresponds with the development of society and the development of the human mind which in turn reveal the possibility and necessity for a new

³⁸⁶ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 177; p. 171.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 186; p. 181.

kind of freedom, and the possibility of the philosopher.

The political end of Rousseau's philosophy is to approximate the freedom of the state of nature in society, to replace a natural freedom that is not possible in society, with civil freedom. Man as a solitary, free, creature becomes the natural standard against which existing societies are to be judged and the basis for the construction of the ideal society. Rousseau uses this ideal individual freedom as the basis for the Geneva he shows us in the Epistle Dedicatory. This Geneva is an ideal society constructed around the idea of natural man.

Rousseau's dedication to Geneva is highly idealistic. The picture he presents is of a society in which the conditions of natural freedom are approximated in a conventional world. The key to this approximation is to build a society of citizens that will be bound by human law as humans are bound by nature's laws. Rousseau writes:

I should have wished to live and die free, that is to stay so far subject to the laws that neither I nor anyone else could shake off their honorable yoke.... I should have wished, then, that no one inside the State could have declared himself to be above the law, and No one outside it could have imposed any [law] which it was obliged to recognize. For regardless of how a government is constituted, if there is a single person in it who is not subject to the law, all the others are necessarily at his discretion.³⁸⁸

To be perfect and to allow freedom, the laws of society must

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 119-120; p. 112. I follow the capitalization in the text.

govern all the people, just like the law of gravity or any other natural law. This is the most important condition for individual freedom. Rousseau's first note elaborates this point. Drawing on Herodotus, Rousseau tells the story of Otanes. Otanes, having had his request that the seven liberators form a Republic denied, requested that he and his family be left free and independent. The restrictions placed on this privilege, were that Otanes and his descendants were not to transgress the laws of the realm. He and his descendants would be free and independent, but only insofar as they remained within the bounds of the law.³⁸⁹ Rousseau adds:

Even if Herodotus had not told us the restriction placed upon this Privilege, it would necessarily have to be assumed, otherwise Otanes, not recognizing any sort of Law and not accountable to anyone, would have been all-powerful in the State, and more powerful than the King himself. But it was scarcely likely that a man capable in a case like this of being satisfied with such a prerogative, was capable of abusing it.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁹ Herodotus writes:

'...For my own part, I abdicate from this contest with you; I will not rule or be ruled, but I withdraw from any chance of rule on one condition: that I shall not be ruled by any one of you, neither myself nor my descendants.' That is what [Otanés] said, and the six others accepted his proposition on these conditions. He, then, would not join the contest but withdraw, and till this day his house continues as the only free one in Persia and is under the rule of another only insofar as it itself chooses, providing it does not overstep the laws of Persia.

Herodotus, *The History*, trans. David Grene, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), Book III, 83, p. 250.

³⁹⁰ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note I, p. 200; p. 195.

This argument, that Otañes is not an exception to the law, that although he is outside the law he is not above the law, is important. Its importance will become apparent in considering the civic status and responsibility of a 'solitary walker,' and in considering the end of Rousseau's philosophy.

Rousseau's concept of freedom involves limitations that are shared and ratified by everyone in a political group. Freedom, for Rousseau, is not spontaneous autonomy. It is wrong, writes, Rousseau to "mistake unbridled license for freedom, which is its very opposite."³⁹¹ For Rousseau, an individual is most free when he is no more and no less enslaved than his neighbours. The individual is slave to the law, but is enslaved no more or less than anyone else. The individual remains enslaved but is free. Having agreed to his chains, to the laws that enable his community to function, he has made them legitimate and himself free from dependence on another person.

Although Rousseau describes the ideal human laws in terms of natural laws, he is fully aware that human laws, unlike natural laws, can be and are broken.³⁹² This

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 120; p. 113.

³⁹² Masters writes, regarding *On the Social Contract*, I, iv: "...Rousseau treats the problem of social obligations in the terms of Newtonian mechanics ('forces,' 'resistance,' 'obstacles,' etc.)," implying that Rousseau considered it possible that human laws bind as mercilessly as natural laws. Masters, ed. *On the Social Contract*, p. 137 note 29. Because Rousseau is using natural laws as the model for

possibility is what makes education a prime concern to Rousseau. He is aware that the best way to ensure laws are kept is to mould mores or more accurately, *moeurs*, a combination of morals and manners³⁹³ Moulding *moeurs* is a form of passion control, an activity aimed at preventing the necessity of law enforcement. Law, in the strict sense of legal conventions, does nothing to affect what a citizen really is.³⁹⁴ Rousseau writes in the *Discourse*:

human laws does not mean that he thought humans could be controlled mechanistically. The laws of physical nature are to be approximated but they cannot be copied because man is more than simply physical.

³⁹³ Bloom explains *moeurs* as:

... habits as they are related to moral goodness or badness; a man's taste in food or where he goes to take his amusement indicate more adequately the state of his soul and the type of actions he is likely to take than any opinions or principles he holds; and the habits that appear in themselves to be of the most trivial or indifferent nature can play the most important role in the direction of the whole man. Hence it is of the first importance to study the effect of any institution on the habits of men to understand its moral effect; from the legislator's point of view the *moeurs* are the source of a state's well- or ill- being and the decency or viciousness of its citizens.

In Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, Note 3, p. 149.

³⁹⁴ By law in the strict sense of legal conventions I mean in contrast to the Greek *nomos* which can refer to written, and unwritten, law as well as morals and manners, or *moeurs*. Rousseau is certainly interested in the ramification of law as *nomos*, as the type of law that has a city singing in tune and not simply mouthing the same words when required to. See Plato, *The Laws of Plato*, trans. and ed. T. Pangle., p. 511, note 1.

...with the sole exception of Sparta where the Law primarily attended to the Children's education, and where Lycurgus established morals that made the addition of Laws unnecessary, Laws in general less strong than the passions contain men without changing them....¹⁹⁵

Education can effect good *moeurs*. Education can lead people to accept their laws and traditions. Only such an acceptance will allow them to be free. This is Rousseau's point in discussing "that model of all free Peoples," the Romans. This people, he writes, were:

...at first but a stupid Populace that had to be handled with care and governed with the utmost wisdom; so that these souls, enervated, or rather numbed under the [past] tyranny [of the Tarquins], as they little by little grew accustomed to breathe the salutary air of freedom, might gradually acquire that severity of morals and that proud courage which eventually made of them the most respectable of all Peoples.¹⁹⁶

There is a double lesson here. Rousseau is saying both that a people must be educated to accept freedom, or to consent to their laws and *moeurs* and that their education should be preceded by the numbing of their souls. Rousseau tells us this is a necessary process in Part II of the *Discourse*. Attempts were made to remedy the defects in nascent government, he writes, whereas:

¹⁹⁵ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 193; pp. 187-188.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121; p. 113.

...the thing to do would have been to begin by purging the threshing floor and setting aside all the old materials, as Lycurgus did in Sparta, in order afterwards to erect a good Building.³⁹⁷

This setting aside of old materials is what Rousseau has us do for ourselves, or does for us, in the *Second Discourse*.

If he has been successful in leading us to perform our own experiment of introspection, Rousseau will have had us strip ourselves of conventions in order to convince ourselves of our special nature. He will have had us convince ourselves that we have a nature that can be reduced to the tranquil freedom of our sentiment of existence. He will also have had us convince ourselves that this sentiment is valuable enough to want to protect it politically.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 186; p. 180. Concerning the purge of the threshing floor Gourevitch points to *Luke* 3:17. In *Luke*, John the Baptist is prophesying the coming of Jesus. Rousseau wants each of us to pull his house down in order to rebuild them of a more solid foundation. See: Descartes, "Discourse of the Method," in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. 1, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Part II, p. 117. In the same section, Descartes praises the laws of Sparta and credits their power to their having been given by one man alone, that is from Lycurgus alone. Concerning the clearing away in general, see: Plato, *Republic*, trans. A. Bloom, (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1968), Book IV, 429d-430b.

³⁹⁸ Melzer makes an important comment concerning the richness of this sentiment. He comments:

There might seem to be an unbridgeable gulf between Descartes, who defines the self as a *res cogitans*, 'a thing that thinks,' and Rousseau, who was the first to deny that man is the rational animal.

But, he adds that even in Locke:

...the Cartesian ego exists and knows itself in every form of perception - not just thinking. And Descartes himself maintains that '[b]y the word thought I understand all that of which we are conscious as

If he has not been successful in having us shed our conventions for ourselves, he has at least done it for us, by presenting in a scientific context a pre-social state of nature. The facts of this presentation appear weak on examination, but if we had examined them closely then we would surely have pierced through the rhetoric of the *Discourse* to see Rousseau's invitation to introspective experimentation. The facts, on the surface, serve to convince the reader who does not see the real invitation, that, by nature, we are beings defined only by our freedom and our perfectibility. Rousseau's scientific presentation is designed to persuade these readers that their own souls are naturally bleached and that they should accept the dye or conventions of their city as long as those conventions can serve as a true fabric for their freedom. This acceptance of convention is the only way that law can be made legitimate and by which people can make themselves free.

Political conventions can only serve freedom if they meet certain conditions. These conditions are formal. They

operating in us. And that is why not alone understanding, willing, imagining, but also feeling, are here the same thing as thought'" [John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II-27 (11): v. I, 449. IV-9 (3): v. II, 305; René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, I-9: v. 1, 222]

Melzer concludes "Rousseau does not really stray so far from Descartes, then, in defining the self as, essentially, a 'thing that feels.' Melzer, Note 13, p. 39.

deal with necessary *rappports*, or relationships rather than any concrete content. In the Epistle Dedicatory, Rousseau counsels the Genevans to accept their laws as the route to freedom. He tells them: "your happiness is complete, you have only to enjoy it; and all you need in order to become perfectly happy is to know how to be content with being so."³⁹⁹ He adds: "Henceforth it is up to yourselves alone not, indeed, to provide for you happiness, your Ancestors have spared you that trouble, but to make it long-lasting by the wisdom of using it well."⁴⁰⁰ The laws must approximate the laws of nature; they will do this if they are accepted as binding everyone in the political community equally. Under the laws of nature man considered himself independent of the will of others, because he did not impute a will to others.⁴⁰¹ In society, after man has learned that others do have wills, man can only be independent of other people, that is, free from bonds of personal dependence, if he, and his neighbours, are all equally bound by the law.

Rousseau describes the problem of making law binding in *On the Social Contract*. He describes the problem to be solved by a social contract as follows:

³⁹⁹ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 123; p. 116.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 124; p. 116.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Note XV, p. 227; p. 219-220.

'Find a form of association that defends and protects the person and goods of each associate with all the common force, and by means of which each one, uniting with all, nevertheless obeys only himself and remains as free as before.'⁴⁰²

The clauses of this contract can be distilled into a single clause:

...namely, the total alienation of each associate, with all his rights, to the whole community. For first of all, since each one gives his entire self, the condition is equal for everyone, and since the condition is equal for everyone, no one has an interest in making it burdensome for the others.⁴⁰³

"Finally," Rousseau writes, "each gives himself to all, he gives himself to no one".⁴⁰⁴ All rule and so no one rules and as all are ruled equally no one enjoys a special status. No one is personally dependent on another person. All are dependent on the laws. This involves a transformation of humans in that they are wrenched as far away as possible from being physically self-sufficient, but is true to human freedom which is secured by leaving people morally self-sufficient, that is, free from dependence on the will of a particular other. A man would lose his natural freedom, "which is limited only by the force of the individual" but gain civil freedom "which is limited by the general

⁴⁰² Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, I, vi, p. 53. These are Rousseau's quotation marks.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

will".⁴⁰⁵

It is under the general will that the condition of natural freedom, the lack of dependence on another person, is duplicated. The general will, however, has a catch.

Rousseau writes:

... in order for the social compact not to be an ineffectual formula, it tacitly includes the following engagement, which alone can give force to the others: that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the entire [political] body; which means only that he will be forced to be free. For this is the conditions that, by giving each citizen to the homeland, guarantees him against all personal dependence;....⁴⁰⁶

The most obvious problem with the general will is the problem that arises when someone must be "forced to be free." This problem is a test to Rousseau's finding that the individual is prior to society and to his attempt to build a system that assures the individual an approximation of natural freedom and so the enjoyment of the sentiment of existence. I believe Rousseau solves this problem in a way that shows how serious he was in asserting the individual as the most important 'element' of politics and in arguing that individual freedom must be assured. The general will establishes the conditions for freedom from personal dependence. This is the end of Rousseau's political theory. It is not the end of his philosophy. The imperfection in

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, I, viii. p. 56.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, I, vii, p. 55.

the theory seems to be the possibility that a person could dissent from the general will. I believe Rousseau suggests a 'solution' to this problem in *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. At the least, he approximates a solution by describing himself as an outcast, an exile, from society, and showing that as an exile he is more free than ever.

In the *Reveries* Rousseau looks within himself, studies himself and describes himself to be, in many ways, like man in the state of nature.⁴⁰⁷ The *Reveries* show the freedom that can follow the successful completion of the experiment that Rousseau performs on himself in the *Second Discourse*. In the *Discourse*, while Rousseau traces the development of society from Savage man to man living under a despotism and calls this situation a "new State of Nature," he does not complete the return to the state of nature on the level of the development of the passions.⁴⁰⁸ The *Reveries* completes

⁴⁰⁷ Rousseau, "First Walk," *Reveries*, p. 5. The *Reveries* was not published in Rousseau's lifetime. It was found, as an already assembled work, in one of his notebooks. [See: Charles E. Butterworth, Appendix A, Description of the Notebooks Containing *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, in *Reveries*, pp. 243-247.] Considering Rousseau's professed desire to have his works survive him, (see the *Confessions* and *Dialogues*), it is probable that he desired that this work be published after his death. His failure to have it published allowed him to maintain the pretence that it was a work solely for his own eyes, that is, that he was indeed an exile and a man outside the realm of morality and virtue. Of all Rousseau's main works, the *Reveries* is the work that comes closest to advocating a life of contemplation, or philosophy, over the life of virtue. It is also to be noted that Rousseau wrote it, and tacitly bequeathed it as an old man.

⁴⁰⁸ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 197; p. 191.

the circle from state of nature to a new state of nature that was left incomplete in the *Discourse*. The state of freedom Rousseau reaches in the *Reveries* is the end of Rousseau's political philosophy.⁴⁰⁹

The *Reveries* shows Rousseau as a man like Otanes who must, to co-exist with society without being part of it, promise not to transgress society's rules, but who also lives free and independent. Rousseau of the *Reveries* appears to be the man who is "forced to be free," the man who turns out to be the most free and the most happy of all men.

To explain this paradox, one must begin by seeing "forced to be free" as a paradox. Rousseau tells us that: "Force is a physical power."⁴¹⁰ Force belongs to the realm of physics. Force cannot serve as a basis for a legitimate

⁴⁰⁹ It seems strange of course that freedom could be an end. As moderns, we see freedom as a beginning for unbounded doing, or willing, not as liberty but as license that disappears into the infinity of the future. Lionel Trilling wrote that Rousseau's "ideal of authentic personal being" by which he seems to mean something like the sentiment of existence "is rather too abstract, or too moderate, to command the modern imagination." *Sincerity and Authenticity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 93-94. Rousseau did not want to command the modern imagination, however, but to engage the human imagination in an enjoyment of its self. His concern was that we should not focus on doing anything more than what we have always done, but should rest content to be and to wonder at our being. To do transports us out of ourselves; to be maintains us as harmonious, self-sufficient, wholes. Only a radicalization of Rousseau turns natural man into Faust.

⁴¹⁰ Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, I, iii, p. 48.

society. The human will cannot be ruled by physics.⁴¹¹ Because force is a physical power, Rousseau writes: "I do not see what morality can result from its effects. Yielding to force is an act of necessity, not of will."⁴¹² A person cannot be "forced to be free." In order to be free in the face of force, a person must not only accept the force as necessary, whether it is necessary or not, but must also freely consent to it. Yielding to force is not, *per se*, incompatible with freedom for Rousseau. It can be an act of necessity which does not depend on the wills of others. Yielding to non-arbitrary force, such as the force of nature, is not incompatible with freedom. Rousseau's savage man, for example, is a free being.⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ See *Second Discourse*, p. 148; p. 142:

"for Physics in a way explains the mechanism of the senses and the formation of ideas; but in the power of willing, or rather of choosing, and in the sentiment of this power are found purely spiritual acts about which nothing is explained by the Laws of Mechanics."

In countering Locke's claims of a natural family, Rousseau describes 'early' Savage man as guided by "Physics" in his sexual impulses. While the sexual impulse is mechanical, there is no mechanical impulse leading towards fatherhood. The man does not will to remain with the woman and so does not; the family is, therefore, not natural. *Ibid.*, Note XII, 222; p. 215.

⁴¹² Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, I, iii, p. 48.

⁴¹³ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 158; p. 152. Savage man does seem to have some choices, at least in Part II. Without will, the power of choosing, the power of comparing, he would have remained savage, like an animal, despite "foreign causes." (p. 168; p. 162). He is naturally free. He is not subject to "the impulse of appetite alone," although he is not, of course, morally free, as he does not obey a law he has given himself. *On the Social Contract*, I, viii p. 56.

How is a person to be forced to free? If force has nothing to do with morality and morality is the tie that binds in the human realm, freedom which is forced must expel the recalcitrant, non-conforming, human from the realm of morality. The man who refuses to obey must be exiled from the realm of human relations, while consenting to his exile.⁴¹⁴ This is Rousseau's own law of complaisance.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁴ Like Aristides, who was one of Rousseau's favoured figures from Plutarch's *Lives*. Rousseau, *Confessions*, p. 20. Plutarch writes of Aristides' ostracism:

...an illiterate clownish fellow, giving Aristides his sherd, supposing him a common citizen, begged him to write Aristides upon it; and he being surprised and asking if Aristides had ever done him any injury, 'None at all,' said he, 'neither know I the man; but I am tired of hearing him everywhere called the Just.' Aristides, hearing this, is said to have made no reply, but returned the sherd with his own name inscribed.

"Aristides," in Plutarch, *The Lives*, p. 396.

⁴¹⁵ Compare Hobbes:

A fifth Law of Nature, is COMPLEASANCE; that is to say, That every man strive to accommodate himselfe to the rest.... a man that by asperity of Nature, will strive to retain those things which to himselfe are superfluous, and to others necessary; and for the stubbornness of his Passions, cannot be corrected, is to be left, or cast out of Society, as cumbersome thereunto.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, Chap. 15, p. 209. [Note Rousseau's ideal man wants less and has no passions.]

And Aristotle:

If there is one person so outstanding by his excess of virtue...that the virtue of all the others and their political capacity is not commensurable with..his alone... such persons can no longer be regarded as a part of the city. For they will be done injustice if it is claimed they merit equal things in spite of being so unequal in virtue and political capacity; for such a person would likely be like a god among human beings.

Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1284a3-11 [Rousseau's ideal is not virtuous, but good and flees not the hope of equality but enslavement.]

Being forced to be free is to be forced outside the political community, outside the duties of virtue and towards the pleasures of natural goodness. Aristotle wrote that "One who is incapable of participating or who is in need of nothing through being self-sufficient is no part of a city, and so is either a beast or a god."⁴¹⁶ Rousseau agrees, on his own terms. Outside society, before society, natural man, is self-sufficient like a beast. He is, at least, *bête*, lacking reason, which serves to limit the range of his knowledge, the extent of his passions and to safeguard his freedom. What one doesn't know, runs the argument, one does not desire and if one can control one's passions one avoids being mastered by them. Outside society after having acquired reason, man is self-sufficient like God.⁴¹⁷

Rousseau paints himself as an exile in the *Reveries*. He also suggests that he is an exile in using as his epigram for both his *First Discourse* and for *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*, a line from Ovid's *Tristia*: "Here I am the barbarian because they do not understand me."⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a28-29.

⁴¹⁷ Rousseau, "Fifth Walk," in *Reveries*, p. 69.

⁴¹⁸ Rousseau, *First Discourse*, trans. Gourevitch, p. 1; p. 2; *Dialogues*, p. 1. The line is from Ovid, *Tristia*, V. x. line 37, Gourevitch, ed., *The First and Second Discourses*, p. 298.

Rousseau paints himself as an outsider using the book of this poet in exile, reminding us not only of the role of poetry in politics, but also that he, Rousseau, is an exile, from his fatherland, and from society itself.

As an exile, Rousseau finds his freedom. He finds freedom in his *Reveries*. Beginning his "First Walk," he finds himself "alone on earth, no longer having any brother, neighbor, friend, or society other than myself." He writes: "The most sociable and loving of humans has been proscribed from society by a unanimous agreement."⁴¹⁹ It is to be noted that the agreement is unanimous. Rousseau himself was 'forced' to agree. He was forced to agree, by the maltreatment of his 'enemies.' He writes:

In the refinements of their hatred, they have sought the torment which would be cruellest to my sensitive soul and have violently broken all ties which attached me to them.... Only by ceasing to be humane, have they been able to slip away from my affection.⁴²⁰

Refined hatred led Rousseau to cut his own ties, ties of affection, to his society. Society had labelled him a monster; men have refused to see him as natural man.⁴²¹ He had struggled to clear his name. Under the weight of a continuing opprobrium, he eventually gave up:

⁴¹⁹ Rousseau, "First Walk," *Reveries*, p. 1.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴²¹ Rousseau speaks of being labelled a monster in the "First Walk," *Reveries*, p. 2; he appears as a man of nature in his *Dialogues*, p. 214.

Finally, feeling that all my efforts were useless and that I was tormenting myself to no avail, I took the only course that remained - that of submitting to my fate without railing against necessity any longer.⁴²²

In submitting to his fate, in his resignation, Rousseau writes that he finds compensation for his pains. He finds tranquillity. He has escaped his fears and his hopes which lay beyond his control, and were intertwined with his relationships with men. His persecutors, making it impossible for him to even imagine his reacceptance into society, have served him well. "They have deprived themselves of all mastery over me," he writes.⁴²³ They have forced him to be free. Forcibly freed from fears and hopes, Rousseau finds himself able to give himself up to himself, to the sweet sentiment of his own existence. He finds: "a sufficient, perfect, and full happiness which leaves the soul no emptiness it might feel a need to fill...". This happiness is the result of:

...a state in which the soul finds a solid enough base to rest itself on entirely and to gather its whole being into, without needing to recall the past or encroach upon the future; in which time is nothing for it; in which the present lasts forever without, however, making its duration noticed and without any trace of time's passage; without any other sentiment of deprivation or of enjoyment, pleasure or pain, desire or fear, except that of our existence, and having this sentiment alone fill it completely;....⁴²⁴

⁴²² Rousseau, "First Walk," *Reveries*, p. 2.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, "Fifth Walk," pp. 68-69.

Here we find the end of Rousseau's philosophy. Rousseau has become free. He has not been physically exiled; he remains a part of society, having returned to live in Paris in 1770, where he wrote the *Reveries*.⁴²⁵ Instead, he has come to see himself as morally apart from society. By realizing that he can survive this moral ostracism, he realizes that he is truly morally independent, or morally self-sufficient. He does not need, any longer, to be virtuous, he can now return to nature and be good, by asserting his self-sufficiency.⁴²⁶ He writes:

By withdrawing into my soul and severing the external relations which make it demanding, by renouncing comparison and preferences, it [his self-love] was satisfied with my being good in my own eyes. Then, again becoming love of myself, it returned to the natural order and delivered me from the yoke of opinion.⁴²⁷

At last, he has captured the freedom of natural man which he had seen as the basis of his nature but could not reach while he was enmeshed in the passions brought about by his involvement in society. In the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau described himself as this man minus the disadvantages and

⁴²⁵ Peter France, "Introduction," to Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), pp. 7-10.

⁴²⁶ Rousseau's escape from society, from any need to act as a virtuous citizen, comes only late in his life. For most of his life he has followed his own precept that "every useless citizen may be looked upon as a pernicious man." He did little, but wrote much, exhorting Citizens to virtue. *First Discourse*, p. 15; p. 18.

⁴²⁷ Rousseau, "Eighth Walk," *Reveries*, p. 116.

the benefits man acquires in society, that is, without his passions and without his reason. Rousseau found the nature of this man by finding in his own meditation the sentiment of existence. This lies behind his claim of natural freedom. In the *Reveries*, Rousseau also looks within and describes himself as free, natural man with reason. He confirms the description of him by the "Rousseau" of the *Dialogues* as a "natural man enlightened by reason."⁴⁷⁸

Natural man in the state of nature and enlightened natural man are equally free. They are equally open to the sentiment of their existence. Enlightened natural man is different from natural man in the state of nature, however, because enlightened natural man, though far from being a *philosophe* is open to being a philosopher.

⁴⁷⁸ Rousseau, *Dialogues*, pp. 158-159.

CONCLUSION

Many things are going on in Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*. I have focussed on Rousseau's treatment of science. I have argued that Rousseau took science seriously, as he first revealed in the *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* which made him famous. He took nascent modern natural science and its popularity in his century seriously as a threat to freedom. Yet, in the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau does not attempt to sweep back the tide of Enlightenment. He uses what facts and hypotheses he can find amidst its mass of indiscriminate information as rhetoric, in the interest of man. He attempts to redirect science, to turn it inward, to have it stop its endless extension into things above and below the earth in order to look at human things.

Rousseau presents a serious science of introspection, indulging in his age's fascination with analysis, but applying this method directly onto himself, and making it more rigorous than before. Others had failed to reach the state of nature. Rousseau took up the task anew and soon transported himself within himself, into a state in which he could discover natural man. He bids us to forget our country, and opinions, to follow him, and to witness for ourselves our history as it is written in nature.

He shows us man, as he issues from nature, as a being who is different from the animals only in being free and in having the faculty to perfect himself. He is a man who is taken up entirely with himself, whose soul yields entirely to his sentiment of existence. Rousseau tells us that man is naturally good. He shows us himself stripped of conventions. He shows us this man and calls him "man," or Savage man, or one of many Savage men, and he hints at how natural man resembles these man. He suggests, by providing such poor evidence of the genesis of these men, that they are only shadows of natural man. Seeking the source of natural man we come to see him as the personification of Rousseau's introspection, as the personification of man's ability to meditate.

Rousseau even offers us a synthesis, to present the implications of his findings. He presents a lesson in the development of the passions which ends only in *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker* when Rousseau recaptures the natural order and the freedom of natural man. He tells a story about our history, which ends in despotism. Above all, in presenting the state of nature and in building his syntheses on it, he wants us to believe that we are naturally free because we want us to pursue our freedom.

He sees this pursuit of freedom in two ways. First, man must secure the possibility of freedom, then he must enjoy it. The possibility of freedom is pursued in

politics. Man must be allowed the freedom to experience his sentiment of existence by being freed from dependence on other personal wills. If he is worried about the wills of others, man cannot concentrate on himself, he cannot be tranquil and so cannot be free. This freedom is to be secured by having a people universally consent to their laws and traditions. By accepting human law as an approximation of a law of nature, as necessary and without exception, the people regain the type of equality they enjoyed in the state of nature. They are not equal, but are treated equally by the law, they can know their place in the world and can be free. The conditions for this freedom are formal; it does not matter what the laws are as long as everyone can consent to being bound by them. The laws to consent to, suggests Rousseau, are those that exist. In this way, a people affirms the product of its history in order to enjoy its freedom. This is, however, not the end of Rousseau's thought, but the beginning.

Once he is in society, man must become free again in order to find his natural freedom. While man reaches freedom by freely consenting to the laws that bind him, he reaches himself only in the enjoyment of his freedom. The enjoyment of our nature is the end of Rousseau's philosophy, as it is the beginning. The freedom that is represented in the tranquillity of the state of nature, in meditation, is man's sentiment of existence. Man's nature is this freedom

to sense and enjoy his being. It is not lost to man in society; it must simply be found again. By securing the conditions for this freedom, politics can allow everyone enjoy the freedom of the sentiment of existence. In addition, by securing the conditions for this freedom, politics can allow the possibility of the philosopher who will only be supplied, if he is supplied, by chance. The philosopher will be the kind of unique man Rousseau claimed to be.

Having set freedom as the necessary condition for the enjoyment of our existence, Rousseau tries to create belief in freedom, and so our willingness to pursue it, in two ways. One way is by inviting us to discover it ourselves by duplicating his experiment of introspection. The second way is to persuade as through a rhetoric of fact.

Rousseau offers an invitation to man to put aside his prejudices and to imitate his introspective experiment. He suggests we can only be convinced of our freedom if we convince ourselves. The only way of convincing ourselves that we are free by nature is to examine ourselves, to meditate. In reflecting on our meditation and what it is to be able to meditate we will discover ourselves to be free beings. We will discover in our reveries the sweet sentiment of our existence, which is the greatest and most still freedom of all. It is the freedom of wonder, of having our world and our existence become both a question

and a joy to us.

The second way in which Rousseau tries to create belief in natural freedom is by using the 'facts' available in his day to persuade his reader that he had scientifically uncovered the state of nature and had revealed that man was naturally free. He uses science, travel accounts and history, as sources from which to draw in order to support his arguments for freedom. These facts crumble upon examination. Both the facts he presents and the way he presents them indicate that Rousseau was not interested in facts beyond their power as rhetoric. Yet, if we can examine the facts, we should also be able to discover Rousseau's invitation to meditation. If we cannot believe Rousseau's facts, we should not assume that he was simply wrong. We should assume rather, that we've missed something, and should return again to the text without our desire to absorb the facts he offers as true. We should return with a desire to see, to know and above all, to experience for ourselves, what Rousseau suggests we can experience as humans: the freedom of meditation. In the end, Rousseau cannot prove the existence of freedom. He can attempt to persuade us that it exists but we will only be convinced that it exists if we discover it for ourselves. The state of nature, as a state of consciousness in which we could discover our freedom, is impossible to prove. Yet, if Rousseau's *Second Discourse* failed and continues to fail as

an experiment, we should blame not Rousseau, but ourselves. It is not Rousseau, but our willingness to dismiss him, that blocks our return to the state of nature. It is our willingness to put ourselves above Rousseau, it is our *amour-propre*, that blinds us to his invitation. Rousseau issues an invitation to the state of nature in the form of a call for introspection. He holds out the hope that we will remember our forgotten selves, the selves we have veiled by keeping busy as slaves to *amour-propre* and the world of society outside ourselves. He points the way to a recoverable freedom. He can do no more for us. It is up to us to follow.

APPENDIX - ROUSSEAU'S NOTES

The nineteen Notes Rousseau appended to his *Discourse* are curious. In his "Note About the Notes" Rousseau writes:

I have added some notes to this work after my lazy practice of working in fits and starts. These notes sometimes stray so wide of the subject that they are not good to read together with the text. I therefore cast them to the end of the *Discourse*, in which I tried to follow the straightest road. Those who will have the courage to start over again can amuse themselves the second time with beating the bushes and trying to go through the notes; there will be no harm in the others' not reading them at all.⁴²⁹

This note, perhaps of all Rousseau's notes, is the most curious. That Rousseau added some notes implies he felt the *Discourse* needed additions, that it was in some way, incomplete. Yet he did not work the notes into the text. He suggests they did not really fit the text well, that they weren't quite on topic. The text, he writes, represents his straightest path, his most direct argument. The notes he has cast [*rejetées*] to the end of his work. Are they elaborations, alternatives, inconsequential spare thoughts or invaluable additional notes that he just didn't trouble to work into his text?

Given the heterogeneity of Rousseau's notes, it is tempting to take him at his word and to imagine that his notes are lazily cast to the end with not much thought given

⁴²⁹ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, p. 135; p. 128.

to their order. This temptation is furthered by the seeming meaninglessness with which Rousseau labelled his notes. Although various different editors and translators of Rousseau have labelled the notes differently - Vaughn lettered the notes and Masters imitated this notation; the Pléiade edition numbered them - Rousseau actually did both. He numbered fifteen of his notes which appeared in their numerical order and he lettered four of his notes which appeared, interspersed with the numbered notes, in the order: a, d, b, c. The four lettered notes seem to have little in common. Note "a," the fourth note, deals with the natural fertility of the earth. In it, Rousseau cites Buffon's *Histoire naturelle* and mentions Rousseau own experiment in which he compared the productivity of two equal stretches of land. Note "d," the seventh appended note, again cites Buffon's *Histoire*; this time it cites him in relation to the life-span of horses. Note "b," the thirteenth note, cites Vossius lauding the method of communications of beasts over the language of man. Note "c," the seventeenth, or third-last note, explains why men came to find it difficult to disperse from one another. Rousseau's middle note remains the note in which he discussed anthropomorphic animals.

The importance of the notes is further clouded by Rousseau's saying that the notes will offer amusement to those who will go through his work a second time to flush

out whatever might be hiding there. Are the notes serious? Are they meant to be amusing? It seems strange, too, that Rousseau writes that this amusement lies in wait for those who have the "courage" to start again. Are the note somehow connected to or supporting of virtue? Finally, Rousseau's last line informs the reader that for some there will be no harm in not reading the notes. He does not say: 'there will be no harm in the vulgar, or common, readers not reading the notes'. He says

..those who will have the courage to begin again,
will be able to amuse themselves the second time
by beating the bushing and attempting to go
through the notes; there will be little harm that
the others do not read them at all.

Rousseau suggests that the overarching sentiment that is to accompany these activities in the person with the courage to begin again is that of amusement. The notes, on a second look, do become entertaining. In describing the Hottentots swimming for instance, Rousseau mistranscribed *col* as *corps*, making for an image of the Hottentots swimming "with their bodies upright and their hands stretched out of the water".⁴³⁰ It is possible that Rousseau himself never performed the experiment of going swimming, for those who had, and certainly some of his readers would have been to the baths, the description of the Hottentots must have seemed, if not incredible, then amusing. Those, I think,

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, Note VI, p. 205; p. 200. Regarding the mistranscribing see Masters, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, note 74, p. 186.

who want to simply take the notes as factual notes, as signs of Rousseau's intention to present evidence from the natural sciences in support of his thesis of natural man, have missed the message on scepticism. Were Plattner and Masters to start their reading again and to put aside their prejudices as Rousseau's bids in the Exordium, they would find plenty to be amused at in the notes.

That Rousseau garnered his notes from writings that many considered factual cannot be denied. That he believed himself to be building a picture of reality by citing them is questionable. Rousseau chose his selections carefully. To think that Rousseau believed the travellers' reports, for instance, would be analogous to suggesting an intelligent person in today's world believes what is written in the (less reputable) newspapers. Rousseau perhaps gave the impression that he was more interested in the travellers' tales as facts than he really was. In addition to misciting or mistranscribing his sources. Rousseau also cites a non-existent reference. In referring to the *Histoire générale des voyages*, in Note X, he writes: "These species of Anthropomorphic animals are again mentioned in the third volume of the same *Histoire des Voyages*...".⁴³¹ Rousseau was apparently transcribing the reference to further information from the fifth volume of the *Voyages*. The reference was erroneous however. It referred the reader to

⁴³¹ Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Note X, p. 216; p. 210.

Volume III but should have referred him instead to Volume IV.⁴³² If Rousseau had looked through the third volume, only to be forced to the fourth volume in search of further facts, it is probable he would have remembered the effort and not repeated the erroneous reference in the note of Volume V. If Rousseau had been interested, as a natural scientist, in following up his speculations about the animals who may have been men it is likely then that he would have followed his own reference. Either Rousseau was being 'sloppy' - which seems unlikely - or his deeper interests lay outside the books of the travellers.

To imagine that the notes are lazily appended would belie the care Rousseau seems always to have taken with his published works. Why would Rousseau draw our attention to the notes if they were not important? Masters points out that Rousseau advised his readers to read his works, not only carefully, but more than once.⁴³³ Rousseau gives his advice in his *Dialogues*. He has the Frenchman, for whom, and through whom, "Rousseau" is attempting to salvage the character of "J.J.," return to J.J.'s works, Rousseau's own works, and reread them. Rousseau then has the Frenchman say:

⁴³² Morel, pp. 190-191.

⁴³³ Masters acknowledges Heinrich Meier for pointing out Rousseau's strange notation. Masters, ed. *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, note 18, p. 179.

I believed I had felt inequalities, even contradictions. I hadn't grasped the whole sufficiently to make a sound judgement about a system that was so new to me. Those books are not, like those of today, collections of detached thoughts on each of which the reader's mind can rest. They are meditations of a solitary person. They require consistent attention that is not too much to our nation's taste. When one persists in following its thread well, one must reread with effort, and more than once.⁴³⁴

To read and to re-read the *Second Discourse* is not to emphasize the notes but to view the *Discourse* as a whole. I think that the most important part of reading the *Discourse* is to see it as the meditations of a solitary person. The thread to follow is the one that leads us in our own thought, if we agree to participate in a duplication of Rousseau's experiment, back to the sentiment of the state of nature. The notes are the underside of the tapestry. They retain the rich colours of the main text but their importance has already been raised in the text. Many of the notes buttress parts of Rousseau's argument but none of them make it. His argument is made in the main text.

⁴³⁴ Rousseau, *Dialogues*, p. 211.

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