

THE DISCOURS SUR L'INÉGALITÉ AND ITS SOURCES

Among all the early works of Rousseau in political and social thought the most important is certainly the Discours sur l'inégalité.¹ For the account of both the genesis and nature of society which he elaborated in the Discours is at once more detailed and more coherent than that which can be found in any of his other writings of the period from 1750 to 1756, and in

1. There are no problems about establishing the dates around which Rousseau composed the Discours that are anything like the difficulties of ascertaining when he wrote the 'Economie politique' and Manuscrit de Genève (see ch. II, notes 73 and 104). In November 1753 the Mercure de France published a notice for the Académie de Dijon about an essay competition on the subject, 'Quelle est la source de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, & si elle est autorisée par la loi naturelle'. Rousseau remarks in his Confessions (O.C.I, p. 388) that he was very much impressed by this choice of topic and began almost immediately to work upon the Discours. The essay was completed in about four months, and by 1 April 1754 it was submitted as an anonymous entry to the Academy. It is clear, however, that Rousseau was known to be the author of the Discours before the prize was announced on 19 July (see Roger Tisserand, Les concurrents de J.-J. Rousseau à l'Académie de Dijon pour le prix de 1754 [Paris 1936] pp. 13-14), and this may help to explain why a work that was far superior to the first essay with which he had obtained the Dijon prize before was eliminated from the competition. Already by June 1754 Rousseau apparently knew that his entry would not be successful, and he then began to make preparations for its publication in Paris (see the Correspondance complète, II, pp. 267-269). On 12 June he completed his dedication to the Republic of Geneva (see O.C.I, p. 392, and O.C.III, p. 121), and in that summer he met Rey, a publisher from Amsterdam but of Genevan birth, to whom he finally decided to entrust his manuscript (see the Correspondance complète, III, pp. 128-130). During the winter of 1754-55 he corrected the proofs which were sent to him by Rey, and as late as 29 May 1755 he complained about the long delay in publication. The work was nevertheless ready some time in April, and to Rousseau's distress a single copy had been circulated in Paris before the presentation volume could be sent to the Petit Conseil in Geneva (see *ibid.*, pp. 125 and 129). On 12 May, Malesherbes, the directeur de la librairie, advised Rey to send one hundred copies of the Discours to a Paris bookseller (*ibid.*, pp. 126), and on 18 June the work was at last submitted to the Petit Conseil (see *ibid.*, pp. 132-134). Cf. Courtois, 'Chronologie critique de Rousseau', pp. 76-83, and O.C.III, pp. lxx-lxxi and 1860-1861. Both the Academy's manuscript of the Discours as well as the manuscript from which the first published edition was made are

some respects it provides a theory of society which is more systematic even than that of the Contrat social itself. The fundamental contrast between the innocent natural state and the corrupt society of men which figures in so many of Rousseau's other writings is nowhere else described in such a striking form, and it is in this text that his conception of the moral and political effects of social inequality is set forth at greatest length. To be sure, the essay was not in fact awarded the prize for which Rousseau composed it,² but its significance among his contributions to social thought has always been apparent to its readers. Voltaire, for instance, denounced it as an attack upon mankind almost as soon as he had read the copy which Rousseau presented to him,³ while in the next century Engels praised it because in his view it anticipated Marx,⁴ and in our own day Lévi-Strauss has stated that it is a work of

now lost, though a few fragments from earlier drafts have survived (see especially notes 199 and 237 below). It has also been suggested that Rousseau may have originally prepared the Discours, not only as an entry for the Dijon competition, but equally as a reply to one of the critics of his Discours sur les sciences et les arts. The preface of Rousseau's second letter to Charles Borde (see O.C.III, pp. 103-107) was written at about the same time that he began the Discours sur l'inégalité, and as the text of that letter was never completed, it is possible that Rousseau intended his prize essay to supplant it. For in another letter which he wrote to Mme de Créqui, probably in November 1753, he remarked (Correspondance complète, II, p. 232), "Le Discours de M. Bordes, tout bien pesé restera sans réponse.... J'aurai peut être occasion de mieux développer mes idées sans répondre directement". See also Havens, 'The road to Rousseau's Discours sur l'inégalité', Yale French Studies, XL (1968), pp. 29-30, and ch. V, p. 430.

2. The register of the Academy (see the Correspondance complète, II, p. 345) indicates that its members did not even hear the text read out to them, as was the case for most of the other entries, "a cause de sa Longueur Et de sa mauvaise tradition &". With regard to the deliberations of the Academy on this occasion, see Tisserand, Les concurrents à l'Académie de Dijon, pp. 23-30.

3. See Voltaire's letter to Rousseau of 30 August 1755 cited in ch. II, note 95, and Havens, Voltaire's Marginalia on the pages of Rousseau (Columbus 1933), pp. 4-28.

4. See Anti-Dühring in Marx-Engels Werke, 39 vols. in 41 (Berlin 1960-68), XX, pp. 130-131: "Rousseau sieht also in der Entstehung der Ungleichheit einen Fortschritt. Aber dieser Fortschritt war antagonistisch, er war zugleich ein Rückschritt....Wir haben hier also schon bei Rousseau nicht nur einen Gedankengang, der dem in Marx' 'Kapital' verfolgten auf ein Haar gleicht, sondern auch im einzelnen eine ganze Reihe derselben dialektischen Wendungen, deren

supreme value because it inaugurated our contemporary 'sciences de l'homme'.⁵

Yet whereas the prominence of the Discours in Rousseau's thought has never been in doubt, the extent of its originality, on the other hand, has frequently been questioned by his interpreters. It is perhaps something of a paradox that a work acknowledged to be among his most profound should also be understood to show the deepest imprint of his many debts to other thinkers, as if Rousseau was really not quite himself when he was at his best. Nevertheless, the Discours at least appears to invite suspicions of this kind, since it contains more references pertaining to ancient and modern authors alike than any of Rousseau's other writings. None of the works which he had produced before is so abundantly supplied with passages and citations drawn from such a wide range of sources - from essays on morals, for instance, to philosophical fables and treatises on law, from personal memoirs and travel diaries to scientific studies and historical reviews - and never again, moreover, was he to display the breadth of his reading and the measure of his learning in so much scholarly detail. In the light of

Marx sich bedient: Prozesse, die ihrer Natur nach antagonistisch sind, einen Widerspruch in sich enthalten, Umschlagen eines Extrems in sein Gegenteil, endlich als Kern des Ganzen die Negation der Negation." See also Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, pp. 33-34; Galvano Della Volpe, Rousseau e Marx, fourth edition (Roma 1964), pp. 121-132; and Lucio Colletti, Ideologia e società, third edition (Bari 1972), pp. 255-262.

5. See 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau, fondateur des sciences de l'homme', in Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Neuchâtel 1962), p. 240: "Rousseau ne s'est pas borné à prévoir l'ethnologie: il l'a fondée. D'abord de façon pratique, en écrivant ce Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité...qui pose le problème des rapports entre la nature et la culture, et où l'on peut voir le premier traité d'ethnologie générale; et ensuite, sur le plan théorique, en distinguant, avec une clarté et une concision admirables, l'objet propre de l'ethnologue de celui du moraliste et de l'historien." See also Lévi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques (Paris 1955), p. 423, and Le Totémisme aujourd'hui (Paris 1962), pp. 142-146; and Jacques Derrida, 'La violence de la lettre: de Lévi-Strauss à Rousseau', in De la grammatologie (Paris 1967), pp. 149-202.

these references alone, therefore, it might appear that the Discours sur l'inégalité was really composed, in a scissors-and-paste fashion, as a laborious exegesis of propositions first set forth by other thinkers rather than as the truly unorthodox and boldly original work that he planned.

The suggestion, however, that the most important is also the least original of Rousseau's early writings can hardly carry conviction if it requires that we make our tabulation of the references which it contains serve equally as proof of the extent to which he borrowed his ideas from all these other texts. For it is patently not the case that the originality of his work - still less its profundity - varies inversely with the number of sources upon which it draws. Of course the fact that so many authors are mentioned by Rousseau in the Discours does provide us with a grasp of the particular form in which he conceived his work, but that is an entirely different matter from the evidence required to show that its ideas were originally devised by the persons whom he cites. Indeed, so much of the Discours is emphatically polemical instead of imitative in design that the extent of its novelty may itself be judged, at least to some degree, by the sense in which Rousseau departs from rather than repeats the doctrines of the thinkers he considers. Insofar as the Discours actually consists of critical commentaries devoted to other texts a proper study of its sources should enhance our understanding of its meaning, not because we should then be able to ascribe Rousseau's ideas to their true authors, but because we should then have a better grasp of how those ideas were constructed around other views whose premises and implications, either in part or collectively, he believed to be false. Like every great thinker Rousseau always marched into battle backwards, and the work which forms the best conceived of all his early

battles was fought over the widest possible terrain which it was his aim to leave behind.

In this chapter I shall be concerned with the principal sources of the Discours sur l'inégalité especially from the perspective of Rousseau's attempts to depart from them. And in accordance with my general aim here I shall try to show that we can only understand the meaning of his thought if we place it squarely in the context of the various arguments of other thinkers which he intended to modify or refute. I should like first, however, to challenge what I believe to be the most prevalent misconception about the genesis of the Discours - that is, the claim that the work bears the markings of the strong influence of Diderot.

The fact that some scholars have attempted to draw a close connection between the social thought of Diderot and the philosophy expounded by Rousseau in the Discours is hardly surprising, not only because the two men were such intimate friends at the time Rousseau was engaged in writing the essay, but also because he himself later admitted - and indeed repeated on several occasions, though by then with regret - that Diderot had actually played a part in the composition of his work.⁶ Armed particularly

6. Rousseau makes this claim a number of times in the form of a progressively more bitter charge against the textual incisions of his erstwhile friend rather than as an acknowledgement of their collaboration. In a passage of the Discours (O.C.III, p. 156) he had written, "Il n'y a plus que les dangers de la société entière qui troublent le sommeil tranquille du Philosophe, et qui l'arrachent de son lit. On peut impunément égorger son semblable sous sa fenestre; il n'a qu'à mettre ses mains sur ses oreilles et s'argumenter un peu, pour empêcher la Nature qui se revolte en lui, de l'identifier avec celui qu'on assassine. L'homme Sauvage n'a point cet admirable talent". And in a note in his Confessions (O.C.I, p. 389) he remarked that these lines were suggested to him by Diderot: "Le morceau du philosophe qui s'argumente en se bouchant les oreilles pour s'endurcir aux plaintes d'un malheureux est de sa façon, et il m'en avoit fourni d'autres plus forts encore que je ne pus me résoudre à employer." The accusation was repeated twice in still stronger terms in his letter to Saint-Germain of 26 February 1770. Thus the same lines "qu'il m'y fit insérer presque

with this testimony, therefore, a number of Rousseau's interpreters have had no difficulty in locating what they believe to be the major sources of the Discours among a collection of Diderot's own texts.⁷ Thus a passage which had appeared in his Suite de l'apologie de l'abbé de Prades of 1752, for instance, has been described as "very similar to Rousseau's

malgré moi" were now depicted as "de lui tout entier. Il est certain que M. Diderot abuse toujours de ma confiance et de ma facilité pour donner à mes écrits un ton dur et un air noir, qu'ils n'eurent plus sitôt qu'il cessa de me diriger et que je fus livré tout à fait à moi-même" (Correspondance générale, XIX, pp. 246 and 252). Yet on each of these occasions Rousseau's complaint was made in a passage that had been appended to the text. The text of the Confessions, for instance, states only that "ses conseils me furent le plus utiles", while in the note Rousseau wrote "le morceau...est de sa façon". And because that note is placed, exceptionally, in the margin rather than at the bottom of the page (in the original Paris manuscript of the Confessions, Bibliothèque du Palais-Bourbon, Ms. 1457), it appears to have been added after the work was finished. Morel ('Recherches sur les sources du Discours de l'inégalité', p. 124) has pointed to the change in Rousseau's position from one passage to the next: "Notons la progression de ces notes: Rousseau glisse du conseil au conseil perfide, du conseil perfide à l'insertion de morceaux entiers. Ce sont d'abord de 'simples impulsions', puis 'quelques morceaux' qui ne sont pas désignés; enfin l'idée arrive à la précision: 'le morceau du philosophe qui s'argumente est de lui tout entier'." Cf. Starobinski, O.C.III, pp. 1332-1334. Since Rousseau's attitude toward his one-time colleague, therefore, became progressively more severe, the extent to which Diderot had actually exercised an influence upon his formulation of this passage is not entirely clear. At the same time, however, Diderot's hand is sometimes quite apparent in works which were not in fact his own, as for example in certain passages of the Mémoires de Mme d'Epinay, and it would not be too surprising if the lines about which Rousseau complained were in fact the work of his former friend. See MacDonald, Rousseau: a new criticism, I, pp. 86-95; Masson, 'Mme d'Epinay, Jean-Jacques...et Diderot chez Mlle Quinault', Annales, IX (1913), pp. 4 and 19ff; and the Histoire de Madame de Montbrillant, I, pp. xxi-xxiii. Note also the following statement made by Diderot in a letter to M. Berryer, lieutenant général de police, on 10 August 1749, in Diderot's Correspondance, I, p. 86: "Il y a dans les Observations de l'abbé Desfontaines plusieurs morceaux de ma façon. J'ai prêté ma plume et donné mon tems à tous ceux qui en ont eu besoin pour des choses utiles." See also ch. IV, note 117.

7. According to Assézat-Tourneux (IV, pp. 100-104), for instance, Rousseau's avowal that Diderot had drafted some of the more fitful passages of the Discours must be interpreted to mean that he had been responsible, not only for the particular remarks Rousseau ascribes to him, but also for a whole section of the work which surrounds them. Without any justification at all the editors therefore include among their selections from Diderot's own writings a number of paragraphs from O.C.III, pp. 154-157, under the title, 'Morceau de Diderot inséré dans le Discours sur l'inégalité'.

emphasis...on the...results of inequality",⁸ while the whole of the Discours is sometimes said to recapitulate, in more substantial terms, a section of the Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature which Diderot composed in 1753.⁹

Rousseau est encore fortement influencé par les idées de Diderot au moment où il écrit son second discours....On a pu dire, non sans raison, que l'histoire de l'homme telle que Rousseau la traitait dans sa recherche sur l'origine de l'inégalité est déjà tout entière en germe dans la conclusion des Pensées sur l'Interprétation de la Nature.¹⁰

Even the translation of a book by Shaftesbury that Diderot had completed by 1745 is occasionally cited as a major source of Rousseau's work. For in the Essai sur le mérite et la vertu, it has been maintained, Diderot asked the same question as would be posed by "Rousseau nearly a decade

8. Havens, 'Diderot, Rousseau, and the Discours sur l'inégalité', pp. 242-243. The passage to which Havens refers appears in Assézat-Tourneux, I, pp. 466-467: "Voilà les hommes arrêtés les uns à côté des autres, plutôt en troupeau qu'en société, par l'attrait de leur utilité propre... qu'arrivera-t-il? C'est que, n'étant encore enchaînés par aucune loi, animés tous par des passions violentes, cherchant tous à s'approprier les avantages communs de la réunion...les faibles seront les victimes des plus forts; les plus forts pourront à leur tour être surpris et immolés par les faibles; et que bientôt cette inégalité de talents, de forces, etc., détruira entre les hommes le commencement de lien que leur utilité propre...leur [avait] suggéré pour leur conservation réciproque. Mais comment remédieront-ils à ce terrible inconvénient?...ils sentiront le péril et la barbarie de ce droit fondé sur l'inégalité des talents...et ils feront entre eux des conventions qui répareront l'inégalité naturelle, ou qui en préviendront les suites fâcheuses: quelque autorité sera chargée de veiller à l'accomplissement des conventions et à leur durée; alors les hommes ne seront plus un troupeau, mais une société policée; ce ne seront plus des sauvages indisciplinés et vagabonds, ce seront des hommes, ainsi que nous les voyons, renfermés dans des villes, et soumis à des gouvernements." See also note 18 and the passages from the Discours sur l'inégalité (O.C.III, pp. 175-177) discussed on pp. 190-192 below, and Proust, pp. 369-371. For an account of the connection between Diderot and the abbé de Prades, see Venturi, Jeunesse de Diderot, pp. 192-236, and Wilson, Diderot: The Testing Years, pp. 154-172.

9. In 1754 the work was published in a number of editions, but a few copies had been printed in the year before as well. See Dieckmann, 'The First Edition of Diderot's Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature', Isis, XLVI (1955), pp. 251-267.

10. Venturi, Jeunesse de Diderot, pp. 331-332.

later at the beginning of his Discours":

"Où prendre la nature? Où? dans l'état originel des créatures; dans l'homme, dont une éducation vicieuse n'aura point altéré les affections".... Thus Diderot and Rousseau both implicitly attack "le péché originel," yet in a sense present a new doctrine of "la chute," not unlike the old belief of orthodox theology.¹¹

Above all the works of Diderot which have been compared to the Discours, however, stands the Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville.¹²

It is there that Diderot's own attack upon corrupt society¹³ is set out in its most comprehensive form, and it is there too - as it is in the Discours for Rousseau - that his description of man in the natural state is drawn most sharply. Thus, for instance, in his observations on the natives of Tahiti in the Supplément, he remarks that their mode of life ought really to excite our admiration. We do not appreciate as much as we should, he states,

les usages d'un peuple assez sage pour s'être arrêté de lui-même à la médiocrité, ou assez heureux pour habiter un climat dont la fertilité lui assurait un long engourdissement, assez actif pour s'être mis à l'abri des besoins absolus de la vie, et assez indolent pour que

11. Havens, 'Diderot, Rousseau, and the Discours sur l'inégalité', p. 237. The passage appears in Assézat-Tourneux, I, pp. 108-109. Presumably Diderot's footnotes to this work provide a better guide to his ideas than can be found in the adapted text of Shaftesbury's Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit. It is in one of these notes (ibid., p. 29, note 2), though not in the text itself, that Diderot refers to "l'homme dans l'état de pure nature", but in my view Havens has failed to show that either the text or the notes had any major influence upon the social thought of Rousseau.

12. See ch. II, note 21.

13. See, for instance, the following passage which appears on pp. 59-60 of the Supplément: "Voulez vous sçavoir l'histoire abrégée de presque toute notre misere? La voici. Il existait un homme naturel; on a introduit au dedans de cet homme, un homme artificiel, et il s'est élevé dans la caverne une guerre civile qui dure toute la vie. Tantôt l'homme naturel est le plus fort; tantôt il est terrassé par l'homme moral et artificiel; et dans l'un et l'autre cas, le triste monstre est tirailé, tenaillé, tourmenté, étendu sur la roue, sans cesse gémissant, sans cesse malheureux, soit qu'un faux enthousiasme de gloire le transporte et l'enivre, ou qu'une fausse ignominie le courbe et l'abatte."

son innocence, son repos et sa félicité n'eussent rien à redouter d'un progrès trop rapide de ses lumières. Rien n'y était mal par l'opinion ou par la loi que ce qui était mal de sa nature. Les travaux et les récoltes s'y faisaient en commun....La passion de l'amour réduite à un simple appetit physique n'y produisait aucun de nos désordres. L'isle entiere offrait l'image d'une seule famille nombreuse.¹⁴

The resemblance between this view of primitive society and the account which is developed in the Discours¹⁵ has, in fact, seemed so striking to some scholars that in their opinion it could only be explained if we allow that Diderot may actually have produced, rather than just inspired, a substantial part of Rousseau's work. According to this interpretation, then, it follows that the Supplément completes the picture that Rousseau had merely outlined in the Discours.

Plus exactement encore, Diderot va se servir de l'exemple de Tahiti pour vérifier, localiser et rendre plus réelle la reconstruction hypothétique des premiers temps qui se trouve dans le second Discours. Les ressemblances sont telles, comme on pourra le voir par une comparaison des deux textes, que la question de la collaboration de Diderot au Discours de l'inégalité se pose à nouveau.¹⁶

Several studies which Diderot produced both before and after the publication of the Discours are therefore said to confirm the claim of Rousseau that this work "fut plus du gout de Diderot que tous mes autres Ecrits".¹⁷

14. Ibid., p. 51.

15. Cf. the passage from the Discours sur l'inégalité (O.C.III, pp. 170-171) cited on p. 208 below.

16. Gilbert Chinard, in the introduction to his edition of the Supplément (Paris and Baltimore 1935), pp. 51-52.

17. Confessions, O.C.I, p. 389. See also note 6 above and Havens, 'Diderot, Rousseau, and the Discours sur l'inégalité', pp. 259-262. For Morel (see the 'Recherches sur les sources du Discours de l'inégalité', p. 119), Diderot is one of the two writers - together with Condillac - who exercised the strongest influence upon Rousseau's thought at this time.

Yet despite these observations the ideas that were developed by Rousseau in his essay cannot really be described as the theoretical offspring of propositions advanced in Diderot's writings, and though the intellectual debt which Rousseau owed to his friend and colleague may have been a substantial one in general it seems to me clear that this debt was not properly repaid in the Discours sur l'inégalité. There is, of course, no reason to doubt that some of Diderot's expressions were incorporated in the text, and while Diderot himself never troubled to confirm it there should equally be no question but that Rousseau was correct when he maintained that the Discours met with his approval. Nevertheless, the central features of the Discours are not in fact drawn from any of his writings. It is true that certain elements of the Apologie de l'abbé de Prades, for instance, appear to anticipate the Discours, since the distinction between a herd and a society of men which Diderot makes in this work, and at the same time the brief account of social inequality which he provides there, both correspond roughly to some ideas that are expressed in Rousseau's text.¹⁸

18. Two passages in the Apologie are thought to be of special significance in connection with Rousseau. One of these is cited in note 8 above. The second appears in Assézat-Tourneux, I, pp. 454-455: "L'état de nature n'est point celui d'Adam avant sa chute; cet état momentané doit être l'objet de notre foi, et non celui de notre raisonnement. Il s'agit, entre les philosophes, de la condition actuelle de ses descendants, considérés en troupeau et non en société...condition qui dure plus ou moins, selon les occasions que les hommes peuvent avoir de se policer, et de passer, de l'état de troupeau à l'état de société. J'entends par l'état de troupeau, celui sous lequel les hommes rapprochés par l'instigation simple de la nature, comme les singes, les cerfs, les corneilles, etc., n'ont formé aucunes conventions qui les assujettissent à des devoirs, ni constitué d'autorité qui contraigne à l'accomplissement des conventions." Cf. the following passage in the Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 166-167: "Il se trouva en état de distinguer les occasions rares où l'intérêt commun devoit le faire compter sur l'assistance de ses semblables....il s'unissoit avec eux en troupeau, ou tout au plus par quelque sorte d'association libre qui n'obligeoit personne, et qui ne duroit qu'autant que le besoin passager qui l'avoit formée....Il est aisé de comprendre qu'un pareil commerce n'exigeoit pas un langage beaucoup plus raffiné, que celui des Corneilles ou des Singes, qui s'attroupent à peu près de même." At least Rousseau's reference to 'Corneilles' and 'Singes' in these lines does seem to be drawn from Diderot. Another passage in the Discours (O.C.III, pp. 175-177 - see pp. 190-192 below) corresponds very roughly to that section of the Apologie which is considered in note 8.

But these ideas can also be found in the Discours sur les sciences et les arts which Rousseau had completed more than two years before the Apologie was published,¹⁹ and the debt, however slight, of Diderot to Rousseau on these points thus seems more clear than the reverse.²⁰ Indeed, apart from those features of the Apologie that Diderot might conceivably have owed to Rousseau, the work is incompatible in substance with the essay which it is said to have inspired. For it provides an interpretation of the natural law and of the social contract which Diderot had already set forth in his article 'Autorité politique' and which was in fact repudiated rather than adopted by Rousseau in the second Discours.²¹

19. The Discours sur les sciences et les arts was composed by Rousseau in the period between October 1749 and March 1750. It was first published in Paris in January 1751 (see ch. V, note 4). The passage on the herd of men appears in O.C.III, p. 8: "On n'ose plus paroître ce qu'on est; et dans cette contrainte perpétuelle, les hommes qui forment ce troupeau qu'on appelle société, placés dans les mêmes circonstances, feront tous les mêmes choses si des motifs plus puissans ne les en détournent." The passage on inequality appears in O.C.III, p. 25 and is discussed here in ch. V, pp. 389-390.

20. The extent of Diderot's influence upon the first Discours of Rousseau will be considered in ch. V (see pp. 400-403). Whatever we conceive the nature of that influence to be, however, there is not the slightest evidence to suggest that Rousseau's references to inequality and to a herd of men in this work were inspired by the ideas of his friend.

21. With regard to Diderot's descriptions of natural law in the Apologie, see especially Assézat-Tourneux, I, p. 471: "Les éléments de la loi naturelle, dont les premières traces s'impriment dans l'âme de très-bonne heure, deviennent de jour en jour plus profondes, se rendent ineffaçables, tourmentent le méchant au-dedans de lui-même, consolent l'homme vertueux, et servent d'exemple aux législateurs." With regard to Diderot's conception of the social contract in this work, see, in particular, note 8 above and Assézat-Tourneux, I, p. 469: "Il est très-douteux que le parlement soit content qu'on ait traité les maximes suivantes de séditieuses; savoir: 'Que les lois de la nature et de l'Etat sont les conditions sous lesquelles les sujets se sont soumis, ou sont censés s'être soumis au gouvernement de leur prince....Qu'un prince ne peut jamais employer l'autorité qu'il tient d'eux, pour casser le contrat par lequel elle lui a été déferée...' Car, qu'est-ce qu'un parlement, sinon un corps chargé du dépôt sacré du contrat réel ou supposé, par lequel les peuples se sont soumis ou sont censés d'être soumis au gouvernement de leur prince?" The quotation cited in this passage follows very closely the text of some remarks on the same subject in Diderot's own 'Autorité politique' (see ch. II, note 16). With respect to Rousseau's critique of natural law in the second Discours, see especially ch. I, pp. 18-19.

Thus the similarity between their conceptions of inequality in the Discours and Apologie, respectively, is far outweighed by the discrepancy between their accounts, for instance, of the political conventions designed to overcome a hypothetical state of war, since Rousseau understood these conventions to be an ingenious hoax intended to establish the supremacy of the rich over the poor,²² while Diderot maintained that they were a prerequisite for the creation of a peaceful and civilised world. In my view, even their explanations of inequality in these two works are more remarkable for their difference than their likeness, insofar as the Discours delineates two kinds of inequality, that is, natural and moral,²³ which have no real connection with each other, while the Apologie describes the effects of moral inequalities as if they were the consequences of the natural variations between men. If we turn to the Interprétation de la nature, moreover, we shall find as its central theme the contention that the improvement of the human race depends upon the progress of science and invention,²⁴ whereas much of Rousseau's work, on the other hand, is devoted precisely to a refutation of this point.²⁵ So too in the Essai sur le mérite et la vertu,

22. See pp. 189-192 below.

23. See pp. 182-193 below.

24. See, for example, the following passages: "Je me représente la vaste enceinte des sciences, comme un grand terrain parsemé de places obscures et de places éclairées. Nos travaux doivent avoir pour but, ou d'étendre les limites des places éclairées, ou de multiplier sur le terrain les centres de lumières. L'un appartient au génie qui crée; l'autre à la sagacité qui perfectionne" (Assézat-Tourneux, II, p. 17); "Les expériences doivent être répétées pour le détail des circonstances et pour la connaissance des limites. Il faut les transporter à des objets différents, les compliquer, les combiner de toutes les manières possibles" (ibid., p. 41); "Lorsque je trouve les hommes incertains sur les premiers principes de la médecine et de l'agriculture, sur les propriétés des substances les plus communes, sur la connaissance des maladies dont ils sont affligés, sur la taille des arbres, sur la forme de la charrue, la terre ne me paraît habitée que d'hier" (ibid., p. 60).

25. See, in particular, the passage in O.C.III, pp. 170-171 cited on p. 208 below. With respect to the Interprétation de la nature, Proust remarks (p. 387) that for Diderot, in contrast with Rousseau, "le perfectionnement de l'individu et celui de l'espèce sont inséparables".

finally, the natural men whom Diderot portrays are destined only to live happily together in society,²⁶ though for Rousseau it was in fact society which had produced the misfortunes of mankind. While most of the principal ideas that were developed in these early works of Diderot thus have much in common with each other, they do not generally anticipate the views which were expressed in the Discours. They are consistent, I believe, with the cosmopolitan account of human progress that appears in Diderot's article 'Droit naturel', but they are essentially in conflict with the social theory of Rousseau. In short, those few concepts which are shared between the Discours and the writings that Diderot had produced before it cannot be traced clearly to his influence because Rousseau himself had propounded them at an earlier date, whereas the principal arguments of the Discours are actually incompatible with Diderot's ideas at the time that Rousseau produced his work.

The Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville, however, is rather different in substance from Diderot's early writings, since the savages he describes in that text are never introduced to the inventions of science or the enactments of the civil law whose benefits he proclaims in such fulsome terms elsewhere. In the Supplément, on the contrary, Diderot contends that the virtues of human conduct which are characteristic of the natural state do not in fact improve with the progress of mankind, and the primitive society of the Tahitians which he portrays is actually superior in moral quality to the debased cultures of civilised men. But while the Supplément

26. See, for instance, the following passage in Assézat-Tourneux, I, p. 99: "Quel malheur n'est-ce pas pour une créature destinée à la société plus particulièrement qu'aucune autre, d'être dénuée de ces penchants qui la porteraient au bien et à l'intérêt général de son espèce! car il faut convenir qu'il n'y en a point de plus ennemie de la solitude que l'homme dans son état naturel....L'homme insociable, ou celui qui s'exile volontairement du monde, et qui, rompant tout commerce avec la société, en abjure entièrement les devoirs, doit être sombre, triste, chagrin, et mal constitué." See also *ibid.*, pp. 24-25, and Proust, pp. 359-360. There is a striking similarity between these lines in the Essai and that passage in Le Fils naturel (see ch. II, p. 80) about which Rousseau was to feel such deep distress.

appears, in some respects, to be more like the Discours than is any one of Diderot's other works, the reason for this cannot be that its ideas laid the foundation for Rousseau's theory, if only because the text was written some seventeen years after the Discours. By then, of course, Diderot would have had ample opportunity - though perhaps not too much inclination - to draw upon the precepts of Rousseau, but certainly in view of the order in which the two works were composed and of the years which separate them, and also in view of the fact that the arguments of the Supplément do not figure in the social theory that Diderot espoused at the time the two men were friends, it is difficult to imagine how Rousseau could have turned to this work, or even to a vague and rough sketch of it, as a source of inspiration.

The resemblance between the two essays, in any case, is not a very close one. For in the Supplément it is the institution of matrimony rather than inequality that Diderot condemns, and the moral corruption which he depicts has primarily to do with sexual conduct.

Comment est-il arrivé qu'un acte...auquel la nature nous invite par l'attrait le plus puissant; que le plus grand, le plus doux, le plus innocent des plaisirs soit devenu la source la plus féconde de notre dépravation et de nos maux!...C'est par la tyrannie de l'homme qui a converti la possession de la femme en une propriété. Par les moeurs et les usages qui ont surchargé de conditions l'union conjugale. Par les loix civiles qui ont assujetti le mariage à une infinité de formalités.²⁷

In the Discours, on the other hand, Rousseau devotes only a few lines to

27. Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville, p. 58. In his introduction (p. lxxix) Dieckmann makes clear the distinction between Diderot and Rousseau on this point: "Le problème des rapports amoureux constitue le thème central du Supplément, tandis que dans le Discours il n'est qu'un exemple de la perte du bonheur de l'état de nature. Rousseau ne consacre à ce problème que quelques pages, et il ne s'abandonne point, comme le fait Diderot, à une évocation voluptueuse du bonheur des sens." See also *ibid.*, pp. lxxxiv-lxxxv.

these matters,²⁸ and problems about sexual behaviour in society are certainly not fundamental to his work. The hypothetical history of mankind which forms the central theme of the Discours, moreover, has no place in the Supplément, since the contrast which Diderot draws there between the primitive and civilised communities of men clearly lacks an evolutionary perspective, and the natural society of the Tahitians provides a moral alternative to France only insofar as the two cultures are to be found in different parts of the world at the same time. Thus the traveller is in a position to compare their merits, and the preference which he displays for either one mode of life or the other can be fashioned from some first-hand observations.²⁹

28. See the passage from O.C.III, pp. 157-158 cited in note 146 below. With regard to sexual conduct, Rousseau maintains that there is a dichotomy between the physical and moral aspects of love, that is, between the natural attraction which persons of the opposite sex feel for each other generally, on the one hand, and the artificial sentiment which prompts them to select their partners in accordance with socially prescribed standards of beauty or merit, on the other. This argument certainly occupies an appropriate place in the context of a theory about the fundamental difference between men's natural and moral attributes, but there is no reason to suppose that Rousseau borrowed it from Diderot. As several scholars have noted (see, for instance, Otis Fellows, 'Buffon and Rousseau: Aspects of a Relationship', PMLA, LXXV (1960), p. 193), it may actually have been derived by Rousseau from a passage in Buffon's Histoire naturelle (see OPB, pp. 340-341).

29. Of course in the Discours Rousseau himself refers to the accounts of primitive society which had appeared in the writings of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travellers. Thus, for instance, he remarks (O.C.III, pp. 140-141), "Tel est l'état animal en général, et c'est aussi, selon le rapport des Voyageurs, celui de la plupart des Peuples Sauvages...les Hottentots du Cap de Bonne Espérance...les Sauvages de l'Amérique...toutes ces Nations Barbares". In his notes to the Discours (especially vi and x) Rousseau actually comments at some length upon the works of such contemporary travellers as Francisco Coreal, Peter Kolb, and Charles-Marie de La Condamine, with whose writings he was probably best acquainted through the accounts of them provided by the abbé Prévost in his massive contribution to the Histoire générale des voyages, 20 vols. (Paris 1746-89). Hence Rousseau's transcription (see O.C.III, p. 200), for example, of the report made by Kolb on the Hottentot communities of the Cape of Good Hope is clearly taken directly from the Histoire générale, V (1748), pp. 155-157, while the remarks about the opossum which he added to the Moulou-Du Peyrou edition of his text (see O.C.III, p. 140) appear to be drawn substantially from the Histoire générale, XII (1754), pp. 637-638. Starobinski's observations on these notes, and on Rousseau's references to travellers' tales in general (see O.C.III, pp. 1309, 1314-1315, 1360-1361, 1363, and 1368-1374), form an altogether excellent study

Diderot...discute le problème de l'homme dans l'état de nature et l'état de civilisation par une série d'antithèses entre des données fixes et presque stables....Tahiti vient d'être découvert; l'île existe à quelques milliers de lieues de Paris. Cette absence d'une conception historique et dialectique explique le fait que Diderot ne pose pas la question de l'origine du malaise dans la société mais qu'il constate seulement le malaise. Sa perspective principale dans le Supplément exclut l'histoire. 30

of this subject. But I do not think Rousseau believed that these works provide a true account of man in the state of nature. For the natural state which he depicted was a hypothetical construction located in an imaginary past (see the passage from the Discours, *ibid.*, pp. 132-133 cited on p. 226 below), and his main reason for citing the accounts of voyagers was, in my view, to remind his readers of the great variety of human traits which could be found in different cultures throughout the world. The mistake of most philosophers who had remarked upon the nature of mankind was to suppose that individuals were universally the same, while according to Rousseau the diversity of social institutions everywhere had effectively led to the development of distinct kinds of men. Insofar as the natural creatures whom he described were entirely dissimilar to men in society, Rousseau's hypothesis could therefore be made to seem plausible only in the light of the real differences which prevailed between diverse cultures. Those illustrations provided by voyagers of what were, in fact, actual variations in the character of men, might thus lend some encouragement to speculation about what must, in the past, have been a still greater disparity. It is, in my view, for something like this reason, at any rate, that Rousseau makes the following statement in note x of the Discours (*ibid.*, pp. 212-213): "La Philosophie ne voyage point, aussi celle de chaque Peuple est-elle peu propre pour un autre....On n'ouvre pas un livre de voyages où l'on ne trouve des descriptions de caractères et de moeurs; mais on est tout étonné d'y voir que ces gens qui ont tant décrit de choses, n'ont dit que ce que chacun savoit déjà, n'ont su appercevoir à l'autre bout du monde que ce qu'il n'eût tenu qu'à eux de remarquer sans sortir de leur rüe, et que ces traits vrais qui distinguent les Nations, et qui frappent les yeux faits pour voir, ont presque toujours échapé aux leurs. De-là est venu ce bel adage de morale, si rebattu par la tourbe Philosophesque, que les hommes sont par tout les mêmes, qu'ayant par tout les mêmes passions et les mêmes vices, il est assés inutile de chercher à caractériser les différens Peuples." Much the same point is made again in that section of the fifth book of Emile (O.C.IV, p. 826) which Rousseau entitled 'Des voyages'. See also Chinard, L'Amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au XVII^e et au XVIII^e siècle (Paris 1913), pp. 341-365, and Georges Pire, 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau et les relations de voyages', RHLF, LVI (1956), pp. 355-378. Other noteworthy accounts of the significance which was attached to journeys to exotic nations in eighteenth-century thought can be found in Paul Hazard, La crise de la conscience européenne (1680-1715), 3 vols. (Paris 1935), I, pp. 6-37, and Duchet, Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumières (Paris 1971), pp. 25-226.

30. Dieckmann, introduction to the Supplément, pp. lxxxviii-lxxxix.

The discrepancies between the Supplément and the Discours are just as striking, therefore, as the features which they share, and even if it were possible that Diderot had already conceived the principal ideas of his later work some years before Tahiti was discovered, those ideas were not to be adopted by his companion of the early 1750s.

It is true that Diderot is mentioned once in Rousseau's essay, but that reference appears only in a short passage of a note which is appended to the text and in which Rousseau points to several thinkers whom he then admired. Thus, he remarks,

Supposons un Montesquieu, un Buffon, un Diderot, un Duclos, un d'Alembert, un Condillac, ou des hommes de cette trempe voyageant pour instruire leurs compatriotes...supposons que ces nouveaux Hercules, de retour de ces courses mémorables, fissent ensuite à loisir l'Histoire naturelle Morale et Politique de ce qu'ils auroient vu, nous verrions nous mêmes sortir un monde nouveau de dessous leur plume, et nous apprendrions ainsi à connoître le nôtre.³¹

The name of Diderot may have been included by Rousseau among these figures in return for a similar compliment which had been paid to him in the Interprétation de la nature,³² but in any case the citation is certainly of no great importance. And while in the 'Economie politique' and the Manuscrit de Genève an intellectual debt to one of Diderot's works is in fact acknowledged by Rousseau,³³ his passing mention of a

31. Discours sur l'inégalité, note x, O.C.III, pp. 213-214.

32. See Assézat-Tourneux, II, p. 52: "Vous, qui prenez le titre de philosophes ou de beaux esprits, et qui ne rougissez point de ressembler à ces insectes importuns qui passent les instants de leur existence éphémère à troubler l'homme dans ses travaux et dans son repos, quel est votre but?...Malgré vous, les noms des Duclos, des D'Alembert et des Rousseau; des de Voltaire, des Maupertuis et des Montesquieu; des de Buffon et des Daubenton, seront en honneur parmi nous et chez nos neveux." See also Havens, 'Diderot, Rousseau, and the Discours sur l'inégalité', pp. 256-258.

33. See ch. II, pp. 60-61 and 84-86.

distinguished colleague in the Discours does not constitute a reference to a specific source of his ideas.

For all these reasons I believe that the influence of Diderot is far more apparent in some of Rousseau's other writings than it is in the Discours,³⁴ so that the claim that the central theme of this work can be traced to postulates which Diderot had conceived first does not, in my opinion, have much historical foundation. Of course Rousseau and Diderot discussed their views at length when they were friends, and they were certainly still friends at the time Rousseau composed his second Discours. Of course in the period of their friendship, moreover - and indeed even beyond that - each of the two writers clearly borrowed some ideas from the other, and we know that when Rousseau was preparing his essay at the end of 1753 and the beginning of 1754 he both sought Diderot's approval of the text and accepted some of his corrections to it.³⁵ But the substance of Rousseau's argument in the Discours is quite unlike that of any work which Diderot had produced before, and in the light of Rousseau's detailed references to other authors in his essay, and in view of the extensive commentaries on other writings which he makes there, it is a mistake to suppose that an unattributed and unclaimed debt to an unspecified work by a man who did not share his views then³⁶ marks the most profound of all the influences underlying his composition. In the Discours sur l'inégalité Rousseau turned elsewhere for inspiration, and I should like next to consider the main sources which he cites himself of his social theory in that essay.

34. Even Havens remarks ('Diderot, Rousseau, and the Discours sur l'inégalité', p. 243) that "we can be sure only of the interesting resemblances of the two authors, Diderot and Rousseau, at this point. To speak confidently of influence in either direction would be dangerous".

35. See note 6 above.

36. Though if we are to believe Rousseau (see the passage from the Confessions, O.C.I., p. 389, cited on p. 109 above), the second Discours was more to Diderot's liking than any of Rousseau's other works.

The competitors for the Dijon prize of 1754 were all required to consider the subject, 'Quelle est la source de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, & si elle est autorisée par la loi naturelle'. Yet according to Rousseau, the second part of this question could not in fact be answered³⁷ unless a distinction was first made between the laws which mankind had received from Nature and those moral rules which happened to prevail in the diverse societies of men. All the definitions of the natural law

qu'on trouve dans les Livres, outre le défaut de n'être point uniformes, ont-elles encore celui d'être tirées de plusieurs Connoissances que les hommes n'ont point naturellement, et des avantages dont ils ne peuvent concevoir l'idée qu'après être sortis de l'Etat de Nature....tant que nous ne connoîtrons point l'homme naturel, c'est en vain que nous voudrions déterminer la Loi qu'il a reçue ou celle qui convient le mieux à sa constitution.³⁸

The supposition that human inequalities might be attributable to the effects of natural law was one which could not be substantiated with reference to any of the social distinctions that existed between persons, for it was the origin of precisely such distinctions which had still to be explained. If we were to look upon the different attributes or relative positions of men in their communities while seeking to understand the genesis of inequality, we should only succeed in confusing its effects for its sources. Hence in order to locate these sources it was necessary to examine the natural traits of men quite apart from the skills and talents which in society they might have come or been required

37. Since the full title of Rousseau's text - that is, the Discours sur l'origine et les fondemens de l'inégalité parmi les hommes - incorporates only the first part of the question, it has even been suggested (see, for instance, Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence de Rousseau, p. 509) that Rousseau deleted the second part from consideration.

38. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 125. Cf. the passages from the Discours cited in ch. I, p. 19.

to possess. A study of the nature of mankind, then, was indispensable to an account of inequality, and it was with this conception of the problem that Rousseau began the preface of his work.

La plus utile et la moins avancée de toutes les connoissances humaines me paroît être celle de l'homme....je regarde le sujet de ce Discours comme une des questions les plus intéressantes que la Philosophie puisse proposer, et malheureusement pour nous comme une des plus épineuses que les Philosophes puissent résoudre: Car comment connoître la source de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, si l'on ne commence par les connoître eux mêmes? et comment l'homme viendra-t-il à bout de se voir tel que l'a formé la Nature, à travers tous les changemens que la succession des tems et des choses a dû produire dans sa constitution originelle?³⁹

The whole of the development of man from the natural to the social state was thus conceived by Rousseau to be the subject of his essay,⁴⁰ and if that might have seemed too bold an undertaking even to his own contemporaries, at least he could refer to other writers who had attempted to recount the history of the human race in what he supposed was a quite similar way.⁴¹

Among these writers Buffon⁴² is clearly the most prominent of all.

39. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 122.

40. See, for instance, *ibid.*, p. 133: "O Homme, de quelque Contrée que tu sois, quelles que soient tes opinions, écoute; voici ton histoire telle que j'ai cru la lire, non dans les Livres de tes semblables qui sont menteurs, mais dans la Nature qui ne ment jamais."

41. Apart from the works of Buffon and Condillac which are considered here, the Essai de philosophie morale of Maupertuis (first published in Berlin in 1749) and the Observations sur l'histoire naturelle of Jacques Gautier d'Agoty (which appeared in Paris between 1752 and 1755) are also cited by Rousseau (see O.C.III, pp. 201, 202, and 1364). He refers at great length, moreover, to several texts about primitive society that were produced by travellers and missionaries (see note 29 above), and he points to a number of classical writers, such as Herodotus and Isocrates (see pp. 195 and 222) as well. This is not to mention, of course, the works of Hobbes, Locke, Pufendorf, and the natural philosophers whom he attacks.

42. Rousseau first met Buffon at the home of Mme Dupin in 1742, and their last encounter was in 1770 at Buffon's home in Montbard, when, it would later be said (see Marie-Jean Hérault de Séchelles, 'Visite à Buffon' [September 1785], in his Oeuvres littéraires, ed. Emile Dard [Paris 1907],

His contributions to social theory receive more attention than those of any other thinker mentioned in the Discours, and, indeed, they are discussed by Rousseau before any of the rest.⁴³ For in the only note which he added to his opening remarks about the need for a proper study of the

p. 13) that "Rousseau se mit à genoux et baisa le seuil de la porte" in homage to the greatness of his host. They did not meet often in the intervening years, however (apart from on those rare occasions, such as at the time of d'Alembert's election to the Académie française in 1754, when they dined together), but they did maintain some contact then, either through direct correspondence or in the form of messages transmitted by mutual friends. Thus when in December 1764, for instance, Rousseau learnt from his bookseller, Panckoucke, that Buffon had spoken well of him at length one evening, he replied (Correspondance générale, XII, p. 156), "Je suis sensible aux bontés de M. de Buffon, à proportion du respect et de l'estime que j'ai pour lui...il y a des ames dont la bienveillance mutuelle n'a pas besoin d'une correspondance expresse pour se nourrir, et j'ai osé me placer avec lui dans cette classe-là". To be sure, after Rousseau's death and the publication of his Confessions, Buffon is reported to have said (see Hérault de Séchelles, p. 24) that while he had respected the man before, "lorsque j'ai vu ses Confessions, j'ai cessé de l'estimer. Son âme m'a révolté...après sa mort, j'ai commencé à le mésestimer". But at least until the early 1780s it is clear that Buffon had considerable admiration - and while Rousseau was alive - much concern for the wayward philosophe. On one occasion he encouraged him to make at least some effort to come to terms with Voltaire (see Rousseau's letter to Du Peyrou of 31 January 1765 in the Correspondance générale, XII, p. 272), and around the time of Rousseau's flight from Môtiers in October of that year he wrote (*ibid.*, XIV, p. 196), "Vous avez été la victime de votre amour pour la verité et meme de votre amour patriotique...je vous aime monsieur je vous admire et je vous plains de tout mon coeur". Rousseau, on the other hand, never wavered at all in his respect for Buffon. "Si tous les hommes étoient des...Buffons", he remarked in a letter to Fréron (Correspondance complète, II, p. 243) in 1753, "je desirerois ardemment qu'ils cultivassent tous les Sciences afin que le genre humain ne fut qu'une Societé de Sages". "He attempted to keep abreast of each successive tome of the Histoire naturelle as soon as it appeared" (Fellows, 'Buffon and Rousseau', p. 188), and when Buffon offered him a gift of all the volumes that had been printed thus far, Rousseau wrote to Du Peyrou in 1765 (Correspondance générale, XII, p. 325), "Je suis très flaté du Cadeau qu'il veut bien me faire, mais j'aime trop son ouvrage pour m'être contenté de la marche plus tardive de l'in douze". Soon after the publication of the Discours, the similarity between the work of Rousseau and Buffon was already noted by Formey (in his Bibliothèque impartiale, pour les mois de juillet et août 1756 - see Starobinski, 'Rousseau et Buffon', appended to the second edition of La transparence et l'obstacle [Paris 1971], p. 383): "M. Rousseau est assez dans son genre ce que M. de Buffon est dans le sien; il manie les hommes comme ce Philosophe manie la Nature et l'Univers; il fait des hypothèses sur la Societé comme l'Académicien en fait sur les Globes de l'Univers et l'origine des Planètes."

43. This is with the exception, however, of an historical illustration drawn from Herodotus which appears in note i of the Discours (see O.C.III, p. 195) and is connected with some remarks about the rule of law that figure in the dedication of Rousseau's work.

nature of mankind, he in fact refers directly, with great approval and respect, to a passage in Buffon's Histoire naturelle. "Dès mon premier pas", he proclaims,

je m'appuye avec confiance sur une de ces autorités respectables pour les Philosophes, parce qu'elles viennent d'une raison solide et sublime qu'eux seuls savent trouver et sentir. "Quelque intérêt que nous ayons à nous connoître nous-mêmes, je ne sais si nous ne connoissons pas mieux tout ce qui n'est pas nous. Pourvûs par la Nature, d'organes uniquement destinés à notre conservation, nous ne les employons qu'à recevoir les impressions étrangères, nous ne cherchons qu'à nous repandre au dehors, et à exister hors de nous....Comment dégager notre Ame... de toutes les illusions de notre Esprit? Nous avons perdu l'habitude de l'employer...le coeur, l'Esprit, le sens, tout a travaillé contre elle".⁴⁴

The profundity of Buffon's observations on the nature and development of man is actually acknowledged several times in the Discours,⁴⁵ and this is so, I think because Rousseau conceived the subject of his essay in a form which Buffon had also adopted as his own. For Rousseau shared with Buffon the belief that a proper study of our nature must incorporate a study of our history as well, and like those parts of Buffon's Histoire naturelle which deal with mankind as a species,⁴⁶ the second Discours was

44. Discours sur l'inégalité, note ii, O.C.III, pp. 195-196. The passage cited by Rousseau appears in the last section of the second volume (in the first edition) of Buffon's Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière (see OPB, p. 293).

45. See especially notes iv and vii (O.C.III, pp. 198 and 201), which are devoted entirely to a discussion of certain passages in Buffon's work on the connection between the human race, on the one hand, and different species of animal and vegetable life, on the other. Rousseau was particularly impressed by the claim Buffon had made that mankind consumed the vegetable resources of Nature to a far greater extent than could be replenished through cultivation. In Rousseau's judgment it followed from this that the growth of agriculture must eventually endanger the forests of the world, and with them all those creatures which depended upon the nourishment provided by trees. See also Morel, 'Recherches sur les sources du Discours de l'inégalité', pp. 180-181, and Masters, The Political Philosophy of Rousseau, pp. 122-125.

46. In the first 4to edition of this massive work the final sections of vols. II (pp. 427-603) and III (pp. 305-530), both of which bear the subtitle 'Histoire naturelle de l'homme', as well as the initial section of

designed by Rousseau to provide nothing less than an account of the origins of the human race.

According to the natural law philosophers the distinctive features of mankind as a whole must at all times have been the same, so that the shared inclinations and common purposes which would always have served to unite men in the past could not be distinguished from those fundamental bonds and ties which still held societies together now. The sociability of men was both prescribed and ensured by natural law, and the faculty of reason, which was a universal human attribute, made it possible for each man to have a grasp of those specific rights and duties which joined him to his neighbours.⁴⁷ For both Buffon and Rousseau, however, the social dispositions which were characteristic of our species must themselves have been developed in the course of human history, so that the moral traits of individuals had of necessity been subjected to continuous change and alteration just insofar as new societies arose, diversified, and were transformed. Hence, Buffon remarked, while "il n'y a eu originairement qu'une seule espèce d'hommes", our entire race had since undergone a great variety of changes

par l'influence du climat, par la différence de la nourriture, par celle de la manière de vivre...& aussi par le mélange varié à l'infini des individus

vol. IV (pp. 1-110) entitled 'Discours sur la nature des animaux', are devoted specifically to the study of man, while a few other volumes which appeared several years after the Discours sur l'inégalité also treat the same subject at some length. Copies of the first four volumes (the last printed in 1753, the others in 1749) were certainly in Rousseau's hands at the time he was engaged in writing his essay, though despite the remarks which he made later to Du Peyrou (see note 42 above) his references to the text indicate that he consulted the 12mo edition in which the equivalent tomes were all produced in 1752-53. The whole of the Histoire naturelle was originally published in forty-four volumes in Paris between 1749 and 1804. Buffon had a number of collaborators in this enterprise, and the later tomes were not written by him at all, in fact, but by the comte de Lacépède.

47. See ch. I, pp. 16-18.

plus ou moins ressemblans...ces altérations...sont
...devenues variétés de l'espèce...elles se sont
perpétuées &...elles se perpétuent de génération
en génération, comme les difformités ou les maladies
des pères & mères passent à leurs enfans.⁴⁸

So too for Rousseau, as the numbers of men proliferated and our species came to occupy a constantly expanding area of the globe, the differences between the soil, climate, and seasons which individuals would have confronted in their various settlements must have driven them to live in a number of distinct ways.

Des années stériles, des hyvers longs et rudes, des Etés brulans...exigèrent d'eux une nouvelle industrie. Le long de la mer, et des Rivieres ils...devinrent pêcheurs....Dans les forêts ils...devinrent Chasseurs et Guerriers; Dans les Pays froids ils se couvrirent des peaux des bêtes qu'ils avoient tuées.⁴⁹

Now if it was the case that, through the cumulative adaptation of its separate communities to new environments, the human race had been progressively transformed, then it followed, for Buffon and Rousseau together, that the qualities which were originally man's natural endowment could not be the same as those which he had gradually acquired in accordance with his various social rôles. We distinguish so little, wrote Buffon, between those traits which Nature has bestowed upon us, on the one hand, and those which we owe to education, imitation, art, and example, on the other, that it would not be surprising if we were entirely unable to recognise ourselves when confronted by the image of a savage in his original state.

Un sauvage absolument sauvage...[seroit] un spectacle curieux pour un philosophe, il pourroit en observant son sauvage, évaluer au juste la force des appétits de la Nature...il en distingueroit tous les mouvemens naturels, & peut-être y reconnoîtroit-il plus de douceur, de tranquillité & de calme que dans la sienne, peut-être verroit-il clairement que la vertu

48. OPB, p. 313.

49. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 165.

appartient à l'homme sauvage plus qu'à l'homme civilisé, & que le vice n'a pris naissance que dans la société.⁵⁰

Equally for Rousseau, though he did not share Buffon's view that the human race might be more virtuous in its natural than in its civilised form, it was nonetheless also true that the development of society had ensured the metamorphosis of man.

Gardons nous...de confondre l'homme Sauvage avec les hommes, que nous avons sous les yeux...En devenant sociable et Esclave, il devient foible, craintif, rampant, et sa manière de vivre molle et efféminée acheve d'énervier à la fois sa force et son courage.⁵¹

Buffon supposed that of all the types of creatures which inhabited the world mankind alone had the capacity to change and to adapt its habits and dispositions to new circumstances and environments. It was this idea in particular which the philosophers of natural law had failed to grasp and just this idea, too, which was to figure centrally in both his theory and that of Rousseau. While every other species was compelled to behave in conformity with a pattern which had been prescribed for it, man was specially gifted, the two thinkers believed, in having been endowed with faculties he could employ in several ways. The flexibility of human nature, Buffon observed, was in fact its most conspicuous feature.

Dès que l'Homme a commencé à changer de ciel...sa nature a subi des altérations...il y a plus de force, plus d'étendue, plus de flexibilité dans la nature de l'homme que dans celle de tous les autres êtres.⁵²

50. 'Histoire naturelle de l'homme', in the first edition of the Histoire naturelle, III, pp. 492-493. This passage, and all other references to the original text here, do not appear in OPB.

51. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 139.

52. OPB, p. 394.

In view of man's native ability to adopt continuously changing forms of life it also followed for Buffon that our species was unique in the sense that every member of it was sufficiently resourceful to make himself distinct from all the rest. Hence, according to Buffon, each person could escape from "cette uniformité dans tous les ouvrages des animaux" which, for beasts, ensured that "l'ordre de leurs actions est tracé dans l'espèce entière".⁵³ Much the same opinion on this point was adopted by Rousseau as well.

La Nature commande à tout animal, et la Bête obéit. L'homme éprouve la même impression, mais il se reconnoît libre d'acquiescer, ou de résister; et c'est surtout dans la conscience, de cette liberté que se montre la spiritualité de son ame.⁵⁴

For both thinkers, then, it was apparent that all other creatures possessed a particular set of genetic traits which were common to their species alone and that the pattern of behaviour of every breed of life apart from our own was practically identical from one generation to the next.⁵⁵ The attributes of the human race, however, had in their view been modified by a great variety of local practices and customs, so that the inhabitants of our separate communities had become distinct both from each other at any one time and also from the earliest examples of mankind. It was therefore precisely because the qualities of humanity had changed that an understanding of man's nature must be based upon a study of his past.

53. Ibid., p. 297.

54. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 141-142.

55. Buffon, however (see especially the passage from the Histoire naturelle cited in note 59 below), allowed a certain exception to this rule insofar as he maintained that both the physical and behavioural characteristics of domesticated creatures had been subjected to some change through human manipulation.

Yet if it is true that in the Discours Rousseau drew from Buffon at least a part of his inspiration for an historical account of human nature, this fact must not be taken to imply that the two figures were agreed as to which characteristics could properly be ascribed to the original members of our race. Indeed, their views were fundamentally opposed with regard to two quite crucial points about the progenitors of modern man. For while Buffon maintained, firstly, that it was only our moral attributes which had been modified to a significant extent in the course of our development, Rousseau retorted that our physical form must also have undergone a history of change which was no less remarkable than that of our spiritual and moral evolution and which for him suggested that mankind might once have been affiliated to other species. And whereas it was Buffon's opinion, secondly, that in the state of nature our ancestors must have adopted at least some primitive and rudimentary forms of social life, Rousseau insisted that in their original condition men must all have lived apart from one another and alone.

There can be no doubt but that Buffon was acquainted with many of the substantial number of theories about the physical transformation of our race which had been formulated by the mid-eighteenth century,⁵⁶ and in his Histoire naturelle he lavished much praise upon the

56. For an account of at least some of the evolutionary theories with which Buffon would have been familiar, see especially Jean Rostand, L'évolution des espèces: Histoire des idées transformistes (Paris n.d. [1932]), pp. 18-48; Emile Guyénot, Les sciences de la vie au XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles: L'idée d'évolution (Paris 1941), pp. 209-401; Roger, Les sciences de la vie, pp. 325-526 and 585-748; and Bentley Glass et al., eds., Forerunners of Darwin 1745-1859, second edition (Baltimore 1968), chs. ii-vi. While most of the historians in this list envisage a connection between Enlightenment and later accounts of the evolution of species, Roger, however, who is the most learned but equally the most sceptical of modern authorities on this subject, maintains that none of the supposed precursors of Lamarck or Darwin in the eighteenth century actually believed that the development of new life-forms was due to the progressive transformation of more primitive forms. This subject is a difficult and complex one which happily does not need to be considered at any length here. Readers with an interest in the theories of the genesis of species which were conceived in the century of Buffon and Rousseau could do no better than to turn first to the survey of baron Georges Cuvier in the third and fourth volumes of his Histoire des sciences naturelles

most important and most popular contribution to the subject at this time, that is, the Vénus physique of Maupertuis.⁵⁷ But whereas Buffon was prepared to accept the claim of Maupertuis and others that the differences between types of men throughout the world might be explicable in terms of the cumulative effect of the inheritance of acquired characteristics transmitted over many generations,⁵⁸ he never allowed that these differences could be so profound as to blur the distinction between man and beast altogether. He acknowledged that certain kinds of animals - especially a number of domesticated creatures - had acquired bodily shapes and material traits which the members of their species as a whole did not possess at first, and in this regard he commiserated upon the fate of the camel in particular.⁵⁹ At the same time, however, it was also his view

(first published in Paris in five volumes between 1841 and 1845). For Cuvier's work, appearing as it did in the period between Lamarck and Darwin, is relieved of the burden which a knowledge of the outcome of this history has brought to all its later interpreters, and that fact, together with the author's brilliant mastery of French prose, has made his account of an otherwise most weighty subject a delight to read. See also note 134 below.

57. See especially OPB, p. 285. The Vénus physique was first published in 1745; its immediate success is attested by the fact that it appeared in five further editions over the next six years. With regard to both the general popularity of natural history in the mid-eighteenth century and also the acclaim with which Buffon's work in particular was greeted, see Mornet, Les sciences de la nature en France, au XVIII^e siècle (Paris 1911), pp. 173-191 and 213-236.

58. Strictly speaking, Maupertuis supposed that the appearance of novel traits among the members of any species could be attributed to the effects of natural phenomena, artificial breeding, or even chance, and that insofar as these traits were transmitted to offspring and their progeny they constituted the distinguishing features of new species. But more often than not such traits - such as albinism among blacks, for instance - were just resurgent characteristics of the ancestral species which, according to Maupertuis, had somehow come to be suppressed. For two quite distinct views of Maupertuis's contribution to the history of evolutionary theory, see Roger, Les sciences de la vie, pp. 468-487, and Glass, 'Maupertuis, Pioneer of Genetics and Evolution', in Forerunners of Darwin, pp. 51-83.

59. See the Histoire naturelle, XI (published in 1764), pp. 228-229: "Si l'on réfléchit sur les difformités [du chameau]...on ne pourra douter que sa nature n'ait été considérablement altérée par la contrainte de l'esclavage & par la continuité des travaux. Le chameau est plus anciennement, plus complètement & plus laborieusement esclave qu'aucun des autres animaux domestiques...dans les autres espèces d'animaux domestiques...on trouve encore des individus dans leur état de nature...que l'homme ne s'est pas soumis: au lieu que dans le chameau l'espèce entière est esclave." In

that there were certain species which were nobler in their form than others because they did not breed with animals of a different sort,⁶⁰ from which it followed that their traits were more distinctive and unique. Hence about such species as the lion, for example, Buffon remarked that they were constant, invariable, and beyond any suspicion of degradation.⁶¹ Since man was by nature "l'être le plus noble de la création",⁶² it was therefore clear for Buffon that the human race was the most perfect of them all and that it bore the least resemblance to any of the lower orders of beasts.

Now it might appear that on this point Buffon was inconsistent, inasmuch as from time to time, for instance in the essay which serves as the introduction to the whole of his Histoire naturelle, he also remarked upon the fact "peut-être humiliante pour l'homme...qu'il doit se ranger lui-même dans la classe des animaux".⁶³ If we survey all the things and creatures of the natural world, he observed in this text, we shall find it possible to descend, by almost imperceptible degrees, from the most perfect being to the most amorphous matter, until we recognise the true magnificence of Nature in the subtle nuances which it brings to every change of movement, form, and generation, and to "les successions

Buffon's judgment, moreover, the very misfortunes of the camel served equally as blessings for mankind. For "on ne pourra s'empêcher de le reconnoître", he continued (*ibid.*, pp. 239-240), "pour la plus utile & la plus précieuse de toutes les créatures subordonnées à l'homme: l'or & la soie ne sont pas les vraies richesses de l'Orient; c'est le chameau qui est le trésor de l'Asie, il vaut mieux que l'éléphant". See also Roger, Les sciences de la vie, p. 569.

60. According to Buffon (see OPB, p. 378) the horse was not a very noble species insofar as it could mate with the ass to produce the mule, while the dog was less noble still because it was so much related to the wolf, fox, and jackal "qu'on peut regarder comme des branches dégénérées de la même famille". In general, he continued, the inferior species such as rabbits, weasels, and rats have so many collateral branches that we can no longer recognise the characteristic stock and pedigree of these "familles devenues trop nombreuses".

61. See *ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

de toute espèce".⁶⁴

In fact, however, Buffon consistently denied that the variations between physical traits among individuals could ever be taken to imply that the human race had actually developed from some other animal species. On the contrary, all the evidence pointed, in his view, to the absolute discontinuity between man and beast. For one thing, since the most vital feature which characterized each species was the more or less sharply delimited reproductive capacity of its members to engender only creatures like themselves,⁶⁵ it was clear for Buffon that the distinctions of colour, height, hair, and facial traits within the human race were variations of a quite different sort from those which set related species apart.⁶⁶ Men and women of every type could be joined together to procreate children, but it was impossible to form a fertile union between man and beast. Secondly, such variations as did exist between the members of our race were due, he claimed, to the degeneration from a single stock which had been suffered by some human communities rather than to the improvement or refinement of any animal traits.⁶⁷

64. Ibid. See also the passage from the fourteenth volume of the Histoire naturelle, published in 1766, in which Buffon points (OPB, p. 401) to the "changement des espèces mêmes...cette dégénération...de tout temps immémoriale, qui paroît s'être faite dans chaque famille, ou...dans chacun des genres sous lesquels on peut comprendre les espèces voisines & peu différentes entr'elles".

65. Hence Buffon defines a species (ibid., p. 356) as nothing other than "une succession constante d'individus semblables...qui se reproduisent".

66. See ibid., pp. 356 and 394.

67. See, for instance, ibid., p. 394. Buffon believed that nearly all variations within animal species (apart, perhaps, from some types of American deer and skunk - see ibid., p. 412) were degenerate forms of the original breed of those species, and in his Histoire naturelle he devoted the longest section of vol. XIV to an account of this subject under the title 'De la dégénération des animaux'. Equally, the physical differences which had arisen within mankind - while they were relatively insignificant by comparison with the divergencies between related animals - were to be understood, in Buffon's view, as various distortions of the common source from which all men were patterned. His disagreement with Maupertuis's account of albinism within the black race (see note 58 above) is partly based upon this conviction that corporeal changes to living organisms generally produce inferior specimens. For whereas Maupertuis supposed that black albinos showed a reversion

Insofar as the ancestral race of man could only have been white, in his view,⁶⁸ the fact that the fundamental colour of men's skin had come to be darkened in certain cases did not at all suggest to him that there might be a natural continuity between ourselves and other more primitive species. For he regarded the brown hue of most African peoples as an acquired characteristic which arose almost exclusively through the effects of climate,⁶⁹ and this development, while it was "la plus grande altération que le ciel ait fait subir à l'homme",⁷⁰ was neither a profound change⁷¹ nor one that had occurred in the required sequence. Even if it were supposed that, in virtue of their anatomical similarity to our race, monkeys were in some sense a degenerate form of man,⁷² it was inconceivable for Buffon that our species could itself have descended from any primordial family of apes. Thirdly, those hybrid variations which existed within other species were for the most part less fertile than the genetic prototypes⁷³ from which they issued,⁷⁴ and it was therefore

to the original colour type of man, Buffon argued (*Histoire naturelle*, III, pp. 502-503) that "ces Nègres blancs sont des Nègres dégénérez de leur race", the members of which had themselves already undergone a natural deterioration of skin colour. Largely because of his views about the flexibility of human nature (see p. 125 above), however, Buffon believed that mankind, unlike all other species, had the power to make its history follow a progressive course. Thus, in one of the later volumes of his work, for instance, he exclaimed (OPB, p. 196), "Qui sait jusqu'à quel point l'homme pourroit perfectionner sa nature, soit au moral, soit au physique?".

68. It was Buffon's contention (see the *Histoire naturelle*, III, p. 502, for example) that "le blanc paroît...être la couleur primitive de la Nature".

69. See OPB, p. 395: "La couleur de la peau, des cheveux & des yeux, varie par la seule influence du climat." Buffon supposed (see the *Histoire naturelle*, III, p. 483) that the transformation of white men into black could be achieved after "plusieurs siècles & une succession d'un grand nombre de générations", simply by transporting persons from the north to the equator, though he also added that this development might prove more likely to succeed if a suitably tropical diet and style of life were adopted as well.

70. OPB, p. 395.

71. See *ibid.*

72. See *ibid.*, pp. 354-355: "Dans ce point de vûe...on pourra dire...que le singe est de la famille de l'homme, que c'est un homme dégénéré."

73. Buffon uses this term frequently. See, for instance, *ibid.*, pp. 31 and 352.

74. In the earlier tomes of the *Histoire naturelle* (see *ibid.*, pp. 236 and 356, for example) Buffon argued that hybrids were altogether infertile.

difficult to imagine how any hybrid creatures between the apes and man could have engendered the human race. To be sure, there was, fourthly, no evidence of intermediate species at all, even between those animal forms which had the capacity to produce hybrid offspring, and if this was so now, for instance, with regard to the horse and ass,⁷⁵ it must also have been so, a fortiori, with regard to men and monkeys, who were altogether unable to join together to beget progeny of a hybrid kind. Finally, if there was no trace in Nature of intermediate species, it was obvious for Buffon that there could never have been any new species either which did not exist at the time of the creation of all living matter.⁷⁶ The history of each kind of animal and plant was as long as that of every other,⁷⁷ and since it followed from this that man was as old as the brutes, he could not have descended from them.⁷⁸

Despite Buffon's claims, then, about the imperceptible nuances which mark the succession of species, there were none which connected our race to any of the lower forms of life. He acknowledged that such nuances

Later (see especially the passages cited in Roger, Les sciences de la vie, p. 572) he maintained instead that they were less fertile, since they were sufficiently potent to conceive in "certaines circonstances". Thus while in 1749 he described a hybrid (OPB, p. 236) as a creature which "ne produiroit rien", by 1766 he came to the opinion (see *ibid.*, p. 403) that all hybrids apart from mules were actually progenerative, and ten years later (see the Histoire naturelle, supplementary volume III, p. 20) he remarked upon the fecundity of mules as well.

75. See OPB, pp. 353 and 357.

76. See *ibid.*, pp. 35 and 355. Buffon was not in fact consistent on this point, however, since he eventually maintained (see *ibid.*, p. 170) that certain species, and especially terrestrial animals, "n'ont pu naître & se multiplier que dans des temps postérieurs & plus voisins du nôtre".

77. See *ibid.*, p. 31 and the passage cited for note 84 below. Here again Buffon subsequently changed his mind in the light of evidence that some organisms, such as the mastodon, had become extinct (see *ibid.*, pp. 116, 125-126, and 170).

78. Some of the points in this paragraph are inspired by Lovejoy's excellent account of 'Buffon and the Problem of Species' in Forerunners of Darwin (see especially pp. 98-99).

were not really equal in every case,⁷⁹ and those which set men apart from other creatures were certainly the widest and most perceptible of all.⁸⁰ Indeed even those features which established family resemblances between members of other species were fundamentally due not to some process of descent from a common ancestor but rather to the grace and wisdom of their Creator. We might conjecture, Buffon remarked, upon the apparent relation between groups of species, and we might suppose that

si ces familles existoient en effet, elles n'auroient pû se former que par le mélange, la variation successive & la dégénération des espèces originaires.⁸¹

If we were to adopt this point of view, moreover, we might perhaps imagine that the monkey is of the same family as man,⁸² and we might then even conceive the possibility that every family, both animal and vegetable, stems from some common source, and that all creatures owe their origin ultimately to a single organism which, with the passage of time, has produced, "en se perfectionnant & en dégénéant, toutes les races des autres animaux".⁸³ In fact, however, we have all been spared such speculative ordeals by the sure knowledge brought to us through revelation. For

il est certain, par la révélation, que tous les animaux ont également participé à la grâce de la création, que les deux premiers de chaque espèce & de toutes les espèces sont sortis tout formés des mains du Créateur, & l'on doit croire qu'ils étoient tels alors, à peu près, qu'ils nous sont aujourd'hui représentés par leurs descendans.⁸⁴

79. See OPB, p. 355.

80. According to Buffon (see *ibid.*, p. 401) the human race constitutes a whole genus as well as a species.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

82. See the passage from OPB cited in note 72 above.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 355.

84. *Ibid.* In view of Buffon's numerous other statements about the Creation and the fixity of species, there is no good reason, in my opinion, to suppose that his remarks about revelation here are either ironical (as Samuel Butler maintained in his Evolution, Old and New [London 1879]) or inspired by his

These lines appeared in the fourth volume of the Histoire naturelle which was published in 1753, and later in the same year Diderot was to mock them in his Interprétation de la nature.⁸⁵ But while in some of the subsequent tomes of his work Buffon came to modify a number of his ideas about the genesis of matter and the earth⁸⁶ he never repudiated these remarks about the evolution of species. Both at the time of the publication of his greatest work - that is, the Epoques de la nature - in the

fear of ecclesiastical censure (as claimed by Alfred Giard in his Controverses transformistes [Paris 1904]). It is true that in 1750 Buffon was attacked in the Jansenist journal, Nouvelles ecclésiastiques, for having established too close a link in his theory between the human race and animal species and for having forgotten that God created man in His own image. In the following year, moreover, it even transpired that a small number of his claims - none of them pertaining to evolution, however - were declared "répréhensibles" and "contraires à la croyance de l'Eglise" by the Paris Faculté de Théologie. But Buffon was quick to satisfy his critics in the Faculty (see OPB, pp. 106-109) and never incurred its public disapprobation again, while so far from believing that our race was just the most advanced among animal species, he always attacked the 'nomenclateurs' (particularly Linnaeus) for allowing just such ridiculous classifications to find a place in their systems. According to Buffon it may have been the forces of Nature rather than the powers of God which had exercised the active rôle in our history since the Creation, but "plus j'ai pénétré dans le sein de la Nature", he wrote (OPB, p. 126), "plus j'ai admiré & profondément respecté son Auteur". Butler and Giard have misunderstood Buffon's references to the Deity because they have been too much concerned to establish Buffon's title among the precursors of Darwin.

85. See the following passage in Assézat-Tourneux, II, pp. 57-58: "Si la foi ne nous apprenait que les animaux sont sortis des mains du Créateur tels que nous les voyons; et s'il était permis d'avoir la moindre incertitude sur leur commencement et sur leur fin, le philosophe abandonné à ses conjectures ne pourrait-il pas soupçonner que l'animalité avait de toute éternité ses éléments particuliers, épars et confondus dans la masse de la matière; qu'il est arrivé à ces éléments de se réunir, parce qu'il était possible que cela se fît; que l'embryon formé de ces éléments a passé par une infinité d'organisations et de développements...qu'il s'est écoulé des millions d'années entre chacun de ces développements; qu'il a peut-être encore d'autres développements à subir et d'autres accroissements à prendre, qui nous sont inconnus...? La religion nous épargne bien des écarts et bien des travaux."

86. Perhaps the most striking change in Buffon's theory is marked by the fact that between 1749 and 1778 he felt it necessary to increase his view of the number of epochs which had occurred in the history of the world from one to seven. Cf. his 'Histoire et théorie de la terre' (OPB, pp. 45-64), on the one hand, and Epoques de la nature (ibid., pp. 117-196), on the other. Of course seven epochs could be made as much compatible with Scripture as the more usual one (that is, from the time of the Creation) or two (the same, that is, divided by the Deluge).

year of Rousseau's death, and at the time Rousseau consulted the initial volumes of his study while preparing the Discours sur l'inégalité, Buffon held fast to the claim that no species could give rise to any other.

Quoiqu'on ne puisse...pas démontrer que la production d'une espèce par la dégénération soit une chose impossible à la Nature, le nombre des probabilités contraires est si énorme, que philosophiquement même on n'en peut guère douter.⁸⁷

It was therefore always clear for Buffon that

les espèces dans les animaux soient toutes séparées par un intervalle que la Nature ne peut franchir.⁸⁸

For Rousseau, on the other hand, the apparent diversity between types of men throughout the world, and, even more significantly, the marked similarity between some of these types and certain species of apes, justified our forming a quite different conclusion. Since it was acknowledged that other sorts of creatures had developed and transmitted bodily features appropriate to their needs and functions in disparate environments, it followed that there was no prima facie reason for supposing

87. Ibid., p. 357.

88. Ibid., p. 359. Buffon's general view of the fixity of species is also made absolutely clear in the following passage from *ibid.*, p. 38: "L'empreinte de chaque espèce est un type dont les principaux traits sont gravés en caractères ineffaçables & permanens à jamais." While some modern authorities on the subject (for instance Guyénot in his Sciences de la vie - see p. 401) still argue that Buffon was a major precursor of our contemporary theory of evolution, most (like Roger - see his Sciences de la vie, p. 577, and J. S. Wilkie - see 'The Idea of Evolution in the Writings of Buffon', Annals of Science, XII (1956), p. 255) contend that he was not, though a few (such as Rostand - see L'évolution des espèces, p. 61) adopt something of an intermediate position. In my view, most of the evidence put forward to prove that he believed in the transformation of species is now discredited. It has been shown that the ostensibly evolutionary remarks in some of his volumes on birds were produced by other writers and do not really tell us much about his own views, and a study of the full context of the passage from the Histoire naturelle cited in note 64 above, moreover, confirms that even in this account of evolution Buffon only had intra-specific changes in mind, and not changes from one species to another.

that the physical variations between men were necessarily distinct in kind from those which set species of related animals apart. If we recognised that a great number of the differences between our corporeal traits - such as the colour of our skin, for instance, or our height, or the extent and texture of our hair - might be attributable to the discrepancies between the climate, forms of nourishment, and general styles of life which prevailed in widely separated parts of the globe, then why should we not allow that these variations, like the institutions adopted by men, might have undergone a history of change as well? Even if we did not place too much trust in the tales recounted by, let us say, Herodotus and Ctesias,⁸⁹ we might still draw from them some conception of the greater multiplicity of human types which must have prevailed in the past, when men were not yet settled in the ways and patterns of existence which now made them both behave and look alike throughout the world.

On en peut du moins tirer cette opinion très vraisemblable, que si l'on avoit pu faire de bonnes observations dans ces tems anciens où les peuples divers suivoient des manières de vivre plus différentes entre elles qu'ils ne font aujourd'hui, on y auroit aussi remarqué dans la figure et l'habitude du corps, des variétés beaucoup plus frapantes.⁹⁰

In the Discours Rousseau admits that it would be extremely difficult to trace the course of the various metamorphoses through

89. A Greek physician and historian of the early 4th century B.C. whose principal work, Persica, provided an account of Babylon and the Persian Empire up to the year 398 B.C.

90. Discours sur l'inégalité, note x, O.C.III, p. 208. Most of Rousseau's remarks on this page about the physical variations between men are inspired by the section in the third volume of Buffon's Histoire naturelle (pp. 371-530) entitled 'Variétés dans l'espèce humaine' (see also OPB, pp. 312-313).

which our physical form would have passed, for the study of comparative anatomy was still so rudimentary that we could only make the most vague conjectures about this subject. Thus while he was prepared to advance hypotheses about the causes which must have brought about the moral transformation of mankind he hesitated to speculate upon the differences between bodily traits which must also have marked our development from a natural to a civilised condition. And since our knowledge about these changes was too uncertain he remarked that in his work he would suppose that the progenitors of our race had much the same shape and physical attributes as we have today.

Je ne pourrois former sur ce sujet que des conjectures vagues, et presque imaginaires: L'Anatomie comparée a fait encore trop peu de progrès, les observations des Naturalistes sont encore trop incertaines, pour qu'on puisse établir sur de pareils fondemens la base d'un raisonnement solide; ainsi, sans avoir recours aux connoissances sur-naturelles que nous avons sur ce point, et sans avoir égard aux changemens qui ont dû survenir dans la conformation, tant intérieure qu'extérieure de l'homme, à mesure qu'il appliquoit ses membres à de nouveaux usages, et qu'il se nourrissoit de nouveaux alimens, je le supposerai conformé de tous temps, comme je le vois aujourd'hui, marchant à deux pieds, se servant de ses mains comme nous faisons des nôtres.⁹¹

Yet in this passage Rousseau is rather ambiguous about the corporeal similarities between modern and primitive man, and he actually points only to the congruence between the structure of our limbs and the resultant flexibility of use to which men at all times might have put them. With regard to our feet and our hands, that is, Rousseau allows that we must always have been rather as we are now - upright in posture and free to grasp and manipulate the things necessary for our survival.

91. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 134. See also note iii, *ibid.*, pp. 196-198.

We must not overlook the fact, too, that Rousseau here displays his reluctance to conjecture about our physical development in terms which still refer to the "changemens qui ont dû survenir dans la conformation...extérieure de l'homme", while earlier in the same paragraph he states that he means to leave out of his account any discussion of the "développemens successifs" which have affected the "organisation" of the human body and have drawn us away from the "premier Embryon de l'espèce". Indeed at other points in the Discours Rousseau seems much more eager to hazard some guesses as to how our shape and appearance might have come to be modified in certain ways over the course of our history. In the preface he reflects upon "les changemens arrivés à la constitution des Corps" throughout the stages of our development, adding that just as physical causes had brought about new varieties within each animal species so too it is

dans ces changemens successifs de la constitution humaine qu'il faut chercher la première origine des différences qui distinguent les hommes.⁹²

Some of the organic differences between primitive and modern man, to be sure, are embodied in our senses rather than our appearance, so that "la veüe, l'oüie et l'odorat"⁹³ of the savage must have been at once powerful and more subtle than our own faculties, and even now Hottentots, for instance, can see as far with the naked eye as Europeans with a telescope.⁹⁴ There are many further distinctions of this kind, moreover,

92. Ibid., pp. 122 and 123.

93. Ibid., p. 140. Following Buffon, however (see *ibid.* and OPB, p. 325), Rousseau allowed that our sense of touch was more refined than that of animals.

94. See the Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 141. In the Discours Rousseau generally adopts the view that Hottentots are physically more supple and agile than Europeans, with faculties and senses which are far more acute than our own. His main source for these observations is Kolb's Caput

which are conspicuous enough in our external features alone. Thus while Rousseau regarded the claims made about pygmies as only a "fable" or at best an "exaggeration", the evidence of diminutive Laplanders and Greenlanders in his own day suggested to him that somewhere in the world there are, by contrast, or might once have been, nations of giants.

Il y a eu et il y a peut-être encore des Nations
d'hommes d'une taille gigantesque.⁹⁵

Domesticated creatures, in his view, are not only less vigorous, less powerful, and less robust than the members of their species which still roam free in their original habitats; they are shorter as well.⁹⁶

And since the earliest representatives of our own race must also have been marked "par les fonctions purement animales",⁹⁷ then why should we not accept that in the course of our civilisation we had come to be transfigured rather like species of animals subjected to artificial breeding? It was actually the belief of some philosophers, Rousseau remarked, that "il y a plus de différence de tel homme à tel homme que de tel homme à telle bête",⁹⁸ an observation which the reports of

Bonae Spei hodiernum of 1719 with which he was acquainted through the commentary of Prévost in the fifth volume of the Histoire générale des voyages, and in his additions to the text (see notes vi and xvi, O.C.III, pp. 200 and 221) he quotes two passages - indicating his precise reference - which he drew from that volume of the Histoire générale. We know that Rousseau took some care to marshal his evidence about Hottentots, since Neuchâtel Ms R 18 (ancienne cote 7842 - see pp. 7r-8r) contains several long and neatly transcribed passages about them which he copied from Prévost's work, including two paragraphs (from pp. 144 and 174 of the fifth volume) that he did not incorporate in the Discours sur l'inégalité.

95. Ibid., note x, p. 208. Rousseau's speculations about pygmies and giants here are, of course, belied by the facts that pygmies exist and giants do not. Some of our best speculative histories of the human race are, alas, diminished in stature when confronted by facts such as these.

96. See *ibid.*, p. 139.

97. Ibid., p. 143. Note x, which deals principally with the orang-utan and which is discussed below, is introduced just after these words in the text.

98. Ibid., p. 141.

travellers tended to confirm, insofar as they described savages as having many of the attributes that were characteristic of all creatures in their natural state.

L'état animal en général...est aussi, selon le rapport des Voyageurs, [l'état] de la plûpart des Peuples Sauvages.⁹⁹

Certainly the taming of our race has produced victims who are equally its agents, but the distinction between primitive and civilised man is partly for this reason even greater than the difference between wild animals and beasts of burden. In fact by making other creatures serve us we have only fashioned a steeper path of decline from our natural state, for as we have bred livestock to satisfy our needs we have also thereby made our senses more dull and our constitutions more frail, and in modern society we are hardly any longer even animals of a certain degenerate kind but only pets, broken in by ourselves - weak, docile, fattened, and fleeced.

En devenant sociable et Esclave, [l'homme] devient foible, craintif, rampant, et sa manière de vivre molle et efféminée acheve d'énerver à la fois sa force et son courage. Ajoutons qu'entre les conditions Sauvage et Domestique la différence d'homme à homme doit être plus grande encore que celle de bête à bête; car l'animal, et l'homme ayant été traités également par la Nature, toutes les commodités que l'homme se donne de plus qu'aux animaux qu'il apprivoise, sont autant de causes particulières qui le font dégénérer plus sensiblement.¹⁰⁰

Rousseau's account of the civilisation of humanity as a self-imposed form of domestication points to one of the most original elements of his argument in the Discours sur l'inégalité. For 'l'homme sauvage' and 'l'homme civil' were in his view distinguished not only by their social

99. Ibid., pp. 140-141.

100. Ibid., p. 139.

characteristics but also by their bodily traits, and if it was the case that the difference between them is even greater than the divergence between wild and tamed animals of the same species, then it followed for him that the physical properties and faculties which set mankind apart from all other creatures might in fact be less precise and sharp than most commentators on this subject had supposed. We still had so much to learn about the several types of men which were scattered throughout the world, Rousseau insisted, that it was absurd for us to make judgments about the inherent qualities of every member of our species.

Nous ne connoissons point les Peuples des Indes Orientales, fréquentées uniquement par des Européens plus curieux de remplir leurs bourses que leurs têtes. L'Afrique entière et ses nombreux habitans, aussi singuliers par leur caractère que par leur couleur, sont encore à examiner; toute la terre est couverte de Nations dont nous ne connoissons que les noms, et nous nous mêlons de juger le genre-humain!¹⁰¹

Until we had more reliable evidence about the anatomy and mode of life of beasts which were reported by travellers to resemble man, we could only be uncertain in our judgments about the natural qualities which divided the human from the animal realms.

Je dis que quand de pareils Observateurs affirmeront d'un tel Animal que c'est un homme, et d'un autre que c'est une bête, il faudra les en croire; mais ce seroit une grande simplicité de s'en rapporter là dessus à des voyageurs grossiers, sur lesquels on seroit quelquefois tenté de faire la même question qu'ils se mêlent de résoudre sur d'autres animaux.¹⁰²

According to Rousseau at least some of the creatures which had a constitution similar to our own were quite possibly varieties of the

101. Ibid., note x, p. 213.

102. Ibid., p. 214.

human race itself. It was the opinion of most travellers who had had occasion to observe the great apes that these animals could not really be classified as savage men, and that for two principal reasons: firstly, because the conformity between their features and ours was not close enough, and, secondly, because unlike the members of the human race, they were speechless. Yet for Rousseau these distinctions might be explained as a consequence of the development of mankind, for Nature had not endowed us all with an unalterable and universally identical physical form, nor had we always been - as we are now - instructed in the use of language. The bodily traits and linguistic achievements of persons in the civilised world could not be cited as evidence of the appearance and behaviour of men at all times, and Rousseau believed that there were grounds for surmising that a number of the animals which resembled us in form were actually members of our race still living in a primitive and savage state.

Toutes ces observations sur les variétés que mille causes peuvent produire et ont produit en effet dans l'Espèce humaine, me font douter si divers animaux semblables aux hommes, pris par les voyageurs pour des Bêtes sans beaucoup d'examen, ou à cause de quelques différences qu'ils remarquoient dans la conformation extérieure, ou seulement parce que ces Animaux ne parloient pas, ne seroient point en effet de véritables hommes Sauvages, dont la race dispersée anciennement dans les bois n'avoit eu occasion de développer aucune de ses facultés virtuelles, n'avoit acquis aucun degré de perfection, et se trouvoit encore dans l'état primitif de Nature.¹⁰³

In his speculations about this subject in the Discours Rousseau focused his attention particularly upon the creature which he described as an orang-utan. Drawing at length upon the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century African voyages of Andrew Battel, Olfert Dapper, and Girolamo

103. Ibid., p. 208.

Merolla as recounted in the Histoire générale des voyages,¹⁰⁴ he put forward the hypothesis that the large Congolese animal which had been described by these travellers, and which had been taken to be of the same family as "'ces grands Animaux qu'on nomme Orangs-Outang aux Indes Orientales'",¹⁰⁵ might really be men. Others had imagined only that orang-utans "'tiennent comme le milieu entre l'espèce humaine et les Babouins'", but Rousseau was too much impressed by the extent to which his authorities were agreed about the animal's "'visage humain'" and its striking "'ressemblance exacte avec l'homme'". For if it was true that "'son visage ressembloit à celui d'un homme'" - if the beast

104. Each of these figures is cited in a long passage from the Histoire générale des voyages, V, pp. 87-89, that Rousseau quotes almost in full in note x of the Discours (see O.C.III, pp. 209-210). On some unknown date between 1748 and 1754 he had already copied that passage in a notebook of readings that contains a selection of extracts from Prévost's text, and like most citations of this kind which he incorporated in his published works it is crossed out in the manuscript (see Neuchâtel Ms R 18, pp. 6r-6v, and note 94 above). Prévost's authorities in the same passage include not only Battel, Dapper, and Merolla, but also Filippo Pigafetta, who had provided an account of the late-sixteenth-century voyage to the Congo of Duarte Lopes which is not mentioned in the Discours sur l'inégalité. But Rousseau refers again to Battel, Dapper, and Merolla in a later passage of note x (see O.C.III, p. 211), adding there the name of Samuel Purchas, who had rendered an account of the travels of Battel in his Purchas his Pilgrimage, first published in 1613. See also Pire, 'Rousseau et les relations de voyages', pp. 357-358, 368, and 372.

105. Discours sur l'inégalité, note x, O.C.III, p. 209. 'Orang-utan' is originally a Malay term meaning 'man of the woods', and it is now applied exclusively to one species of anthropoid ape (Pongo pygmaeus) found in Borneo and Sumatra only. In European letters, however, the word was first employed (by Nicolaas Tulp in his Observationum medicarum of 1641) in connection with the African chimpanzee, and until approximately the end of the eighteenth century these two species, and many other great apes - both real and fictitious - as well, were regularly assimilated under the generic name 'orang-utan'. Thus Edward Tyson, for instance, described the anatomy of a chimpanzee in his Orang-Outang of 1699; Buffon admitted, in a supplement to his Histoire naturelle, that the creature which he had earlier depicted as an orang-utan was not of that species at all; and when Thomas Savage and Jeffries Wyman discovered the gorilla in the mid-nineteenth century they called the animal 'a New Species of Orang'. I have discussed some of these confusions about the term in an article on 'Tyson and Buffon on the orang-utan' which will appear shortly in SVEC.

was in so many respects "'si semblable à l'homme'"¹⁰⁶ - why should we feel so certain that it was not in fact human after all? Its apparent stupidity and lack of language surely could not be taken as proof that it was of a different species from our own, since in their most savage state our ancestors would not have been any wiser, nor would they as yet have learnt how to speak. And Rousseau maintained that, so far as he could tell, the commentators had been too cursory in their observations of the orang-utan and too hasty in forming their conclusions that this animal was unrelated to man.

On ne voit point dans ces passages les raisons sur lesquelles les Auteurs se fondent pour refuser aux Animaux en question le nom d'hommes Sauvages, mais il est aisé de conjecturer que c'est à cause de leur stupidité, et aussi parce qu'ils ne parloient pas; raisons foibles pour ceux qui savent que quoique l'organe de la parole soit naturel à l'homme, la parole elle même ne lui est pourtant pas naturelle, et qui connoissent jusqu'à quel point sa perfectibilité peut avoir élevé l'homme Civil au-dessus de son état originel. Le petit nombre de lignes que contiennent ces descriptions nous peut faire juger combien ces Animaux ont été mal observés et avec quels préjugés ils ont été vus.¹⁰⁷

It was thus sheer prejudice to claim, for instance, that orang-utans were deformed or monstrous creatures, since unlike all true monsters their matings were fertile and their offspring as prolific as themselves.¹⁰⁸ Buffon could decree that ours was the most noble of all species on the grounds that there could be no hybrid progeny resulting from the sexual union of a man or woman with any beast,¹⁰⁹ but for Rousseau this was a matter which had still to be ascertained. We could

106. Discours sur l'inégalité, note x, O.C.III, pp. 209 and 210.

107. Ibid., p. 210.

108. See ibid.

109. See pp. 129-132 above.

only establish by experiment whether matings between ourselves and orang-utans might prove fruitful.

Il y auroit...un moyen par lequel, si l'Orang-Outang ou d'autres étoient de l'espèce humaine, les observateurs les plus grossiers pourroient s'en assurer même avec démonstration; mais outre qu'une seule génération ne suffiroit pas pour cette expérience, elle doit passer pour impraticable, parcequ'il faudroit que ce qui n'est qu'une supposition fût démontré vrai, avant que l'épreuve qui devroit constater le fait, pût être tentée innocemment.¹¹⁰

Because we are not naturally endowed with language, and because the domestication of both man and beast had produced physical changes within the affected species, we could not regard either the mute condition of the orang-utan or its inexact physical resemblance to us as proof that Nature had formed a great gulf between that creature and the human race. The fact that we had adopted and assumed new figures, both in our speech and in our bodies, did not set us apart genetically from animals that appeared to have only the characteristics which we must have possessed before we came to be civilised, and Rousseau believed that there was at least an ostensible case for supposing that the orang-utan is actually a kind of man. After all, though we portrayed the ape as inferior to ourselves, occupying a place in the scala naturae which was beneath the level of humanity, the Ancients envisaged the same creature as divine, and further research might confirm that it was properly situated only within our species, that is, between the spheres of beasts and gods.

110. Discours sur l'inégalité, note x, O.C.III, p. 211. In his long quotation from the Histoire générale des voyages, however (see *ibid.*, p. 209 and note 104 above), Rousseau incorporates Dapper's rejection of the claim that orang-utans are the products of matings between women and monkeys, an idea which Dapper decried as a "'chimère que les Nègres mêmes rejettent'".

Nos voyageurs font sans façon des bêtes sous les noms de Pengos, de Mandrills, d'Orang-Outang, de ces mêmes êtres dont sous les noms de Satyres, de Faunes, de Silvains, les Anciens faisoient des Divinités. Peut-être après des recherches plus exactes trouvera-t-on que ce ne sont ni des bêtes ni des dieux, mais des hommes.¹¹¹

The monkey, however, could not be accorded the same status since - for reasons which are unclear - Rousseau was convinced that this animal lacked the attribute of perfectibility which the orang-utan shared with other men.

Il est bien démontré que le Singe n'est pas une variété de l'homme; non-seulement parcequ'il est privé de la faculté de parler, mais surtout parcequ'on est sur que son espèce n'a point celle de se perfectionner qui est le caractère spécifique de l'espèce humaine.¹¹²

But he remained adamant that the orang-utan should be counted as a type of man until we have reliable evidence to the contrary, and when the naturalist Charles Bonnet attacked his views on this subject in a reply to the Discours which was printed in the Mercure de France in October 1755, Rousseau repeated his point and challenged his critic to prove that the orang-utan could not be regarded as one of the varieties of the human race.

111. Discours sur l'inégalité, note x, O.C.III, p. 211. The words "que ce ne sont ni des bêtes ni des dieux, mais des hommes" at the end of this passage are an addition to the text which first appeared in 1782 in Moulton-Du Peyrou. The original version reads simply "que ce sont des hommes". Tyson had already suggested in his Orang-Outang (preface, p. iii) that the "great Agreement" between this animal and man could account for the ancient mythology that there really were "several sorts of Men" in the world, and in a number of essays which he appended to his text he developed the thesis (see especially A Philological Essay concerning the Pygmies, p. 2) that there actually had been such animals as the Ancients called pygmies, cynocephali, satyrs, and sphinges, and that these creatures were in fact only apes, monkeys, and orang-utans.

112. Discours sur l'inégalité, note x, O.C.III, p. 211. For an account of the concept of perfectibility in the Discours, see pp. 204-209 below.

Que le singe soit une Bête, je le crois, et j'en ai dit la raison; que l'Orang-Outang en soit une aussi, voila ce que vous avez la bonté de m'apprendre, et j'avoüe qu'après les faits que j'ai cités, la preuve de celui là me sembloit difficile. Vous philosophez trop bien pour prononcer là dessus aussi légèrement que nos voyageurs qui s'exposent quelquefois sans beaucoup de façons à mettre leurs semblables au rang des bêtes. Vous obligerez donc surement le public, et vous instruirez même les naturalistes en nous apprenant les moyens que vous avez employez pour decider cette question.¹¹³

Of course Buffon also recognised that the members of animal species were transfigured through domestication and the cumulative effects of artificial breeding,¹¹⁴ and as we have seen already he explained the diversity of physical types within the human race in terms of the degeneration of some peoples from our original white stock.¹¹⁵ But just for this reason it was inconceivable in his view that mankind might have descended from the apes, and in 1766, in his account of the orang-utan in the fourteenth volume of the Histoire naturelle, he put forward this claim in what he supposed to be the

113. 'Lettre à Philopolis', *ibid.*, pp. 234-235. Bonnet had signed his article 'Philopolis, Citoyen de Genève', and it seems (see the Correspondance complète, III, p. 155) that Rousseau discovered the identity of its author only after he had completed his rejoinder. The remark to which this passage is addressed appears in O.C.III, p. 1384: "L'homme sauvage de M. Rousseau, cet homme qu'il chérit avec tant de complaisance, n'est point du tout l'homme que DIEU a voulu faire: mais Dieu a fait des orang-outangs et des singes qui ne sont pas hommes." See also Bonnet's Contemplation de la Nature (first published in 1764) in the revised edition incorporated in his Oeuvres d'Histoire naturelle et de Philosophie, 8 vols. (Neuchâtel 1779-1783), IV.ii, pp. 475-479. Rousseau's 'Lettre à Philopolis' was not printed in his lifetime; it first appeared in Moulton-Du Peyrou.

114. See pp. 129-130 above. It should be borne in mind here that the two main passages, in notes 59 and 67 above, which I have cited as evidence of this feature of Buffon's theory, were first published in 1764 and 1766 respectively. It would be incorrect to suppose that Rousseau used the Histoire naturelle as a source for his thesis about the physical effects of domestication upon animals, since Buffon advanced the idea himself only a decade or so after the publication of the Discours.

115. See p. 131 and note 68 above.

strongest possible fashion by demonstrating, not that orang-utans were insufficiently similar to man in their physical organs and bodily traits, but rather that even when they possessed the same organs and traits they lacked the capacity to make them serve their appropriate human functions. For Buffon contended that orang-utans possessed a brain, on the one hand, and organs of speech, on the other, which were exactly like those of men, and yet these creatures were unable either to think or to speak. Could there be any more reliable evidence of our superiority over this animal, any surer proof of the discontinuity between man and the ape, than the fact that the similarity of anatomical structure and organization between our species did not produce the same effects in each case? Apart from some minor differences between our ribs, vertebrae, kidneys, and bladder, nearly all our bodily features, Buffon proclaimed, were much the same as those of orang-utans, and yet there was no doubt but that we were entirely distinct and unrelated.

Toutes les autres parties du corps, de la tête & des membres, tant extérieures qu'intérieures, sont si parfaitement semblables à celles de l'homme, qu'on ne peut les comparer sans admiration, & sans être étonné que d'une conformation si pareille & d'une organisation qui est absolument la même, il n'en résulte pas les mêmes effets. Par exemple, la langue & tous les organes de la voix sont les mêmes que dans l'homme, & cependant l'orang-outang ne parle pas; le cerveau est absolument de la même forme & de la même proportion, & il ne pense pas: y a-t-il une preuve plus évidente que la matière seule, quoique parfaitement organisée, ne peut produire ni la pensée ni la parole qui en est le signe, à moins qu'elle ne soit animée par un principe supérieur?¹¹⁶

Buffon drew this argument directly from Edward Tyson's Orang-Outang

116. Histoire naturelle, XIV, p. 61.

of 1699, and Tyson, in turn, had borrowed it from Claude Perrault's Suite des Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire naturelle des animaux of 1676.¹¹⁷ In essence it constituted a particular application in the Enlightenment of the general Cartesian claim that man - while he shared certain material properties with all other creatures - was nonetheless set apart from them by virtue of his unique spiritual traits, and in Buffon's case it formed the nub of his conviction that humanity was distinguished from the beasts "par un intervalle que la Nature ne peut franchir".¹¹⁸

S'il y avoit un degré par lequel on pût descendre de la nature humaine à celle des animaux, si l'essence de cette nature consistoit en entier dans la forme du corps & dépendoit de son organisation, ce singe¹¹⁹ se trouveroit plus près de l'homme que d'aucun animal...mais...l'intervalle qui l'en sépare réellement...est...immense; & la ressemblance de la forme, la conformité de l'organisation, les mouvemens d'imitation qui paroissent résulter de ces similitudes, ni ne le rapprochent de la nature de l'homme, ni même ne l'élèvent au-dessus de celle des animaux.¹²⁰

Rousseau, however, had no difficulty in supposing that the orang-utan was really a member of our species, since the physical differences between us and this creature did not imply that we were naturally superior, nor was language, in his view, a sign of any higher faculty which distinguished the human race from every other type of animal. He nowhere inferred from the skin colour of Europeans that all men must

117. See Orang-Outang, p. 55, and the Suite des Mémoires (Paris 1676), p. 126. The Mémoires were first published in 1671, and the Suite des Mémoires was later bound and paginated consecutively with the text.

118. See p. 135 above.

119. That is, the orang-utan.

120. Histoire naturelle, XIV, pp. 70-71.

originally have been white,¹²¹ and in this regard he did not even have to confront the thesis - that Buffon had rejected - to the effect that apes might represent a stage in the physical degeneration of man beyond that of the Negro.¹²² With regard to language, moreover, Rousseau joined La Mettrie in believing that orang-utans might some day learn to make use of their vocal organs and to develop their "facultés virtuelles".¹²³ In his L'Homme machine of 1747 La Mettrie had quite explicitly maintained that the similarity between the physical traits of humans and apes was so striking that there was no reason why apes could not be taught to master a language and become, like the rest of us, perfect little men about town.

La similitude de la structure & des opérations du Singe est telle, que je ne doute presque point, si on exerçoit parfaitement cet Animal, qu'on ne vînt enfin à bout de lui apprendre à prononcer, & par conséquent à savoir une langue. Alors ce ne seroit plus ni un Homme Sauvage, ni un Homme manqué: ce seroit un Homme parfait, un petit Homme de Ville.¹²⁴

121. In fact, if anything, the black man was more like the natural savage for Rousseau than was the white man. Thus, he remarked in an addition to the Moulou-Du Peyrou text of the Discours (O.C.III, p. 137, note), "Les Negres et les Sauvages se mettent si peu en peine des bêtes féroces qu'ils peuvent rencontrer dans les bois. Les Caraïbes de Venezuela vivent entr'autres, à cet égard, dans la plus profonde sécurité et sans le moindre inconvénient". The only work, to my knowledge, which deals at any length with the subject of Rousseau's reflections about black men is Mercer Cook's 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Negro', in the Journal of Negro History, XXI (1936), pp. 294-303. Cook (see p. 302) makes the interesting point, too seldom remembered, that Thomas Day's poem The dying Negro of 1773 was dedicated to Rousseau.

122. See p. 131 above.

123. Discours sur l'inégalité, note x, O.C.III, p. 208 (see p. 142 above).

124. L'Homme machine, edited by Aram Vartanian (Princeton 1960), p. 162. For La Mettrie apes, like the deaf, could be taught to speak simply by imitating the bodily movements that were necessary to pronounce words. "Pourquoi...l'éducation des Singes seroit-elle impossible?", he asked (*ibid.*, p. 161). "Pourquoi ne pourroit-il enfin, à force de soins, imiter, à l'exemple des sourds, les mouvemens nécessaires pour prononcer? Je n'ose décider si les organes de la parole du Singe ne peuvent, quoi

According to Rousseau, indeed, the mute condition of apes might be attributable, not even so much to their lack of training, as to their quite deliberate and perfectly rational choice. For it was "la ruse des singes", he later remarked,

qui, disent les nègres, ne veulent pas parler,
quoiqu'ils le puissent, de peur qu'on ne les
fasse travailler.¹²⁵

Of course since Rousseau probably never saw a true orang-utan, and since his account of this creature's behaviour was drawn from the statements of observers who disagreed amongst themselves, his reflections about its capacities must be treated with a little scepticism and reserve. It was not until the 1770s that a sufficient number of live specimens came to be available in Europe for detailed and reliable studies to be undertaken,¹²⁶ and it was not until after Rousseau's death that scientists came to agree that it was definitely a species of ape which was different from the chimpanzee. But the importance of Rousseau's comments about the humanity of the orang-utan was well-recognised in his own day. His views were challenged by other theorists of the origin of language, for instance by Herder who, in his Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache of 1772, maintained that

qu'on fasse, rien articuler; mais cette impossibilité absolue me surprendroit, à cause de la grande Analogie du Singe & de l'Homme, & qu'il n'est point d'Animal connu jusqu'à présent, dont le dedans & le dehors lui ressemblent d'une manière si frappante." It must be allowed here that La Mettrie does not refer specifically to the orang-utan but rather to monkeys in general; Rousseau was more discriminating in his ascription of a human status to some of the great apes.

125. Rousseau to Hume, 29 March 1766, Correspondance générale, XV, p. 128. The suggestion that apes remain silent for good reasons of their own - especially to avoid work and enslavement - appeared at least as early as 1623 in Richard Jobson's The Golden Trade.

126. See especially Arnout Vosmaer, 'Description de l'Orang-Outang' (Amsterdam 1778); Buffon, 'Addition à l'article des Orangs-outangs', Histoire naturelle, supplément VII (1789), pp. 1-29; and Petrus Camper, 'De l'orang-outang, et de quelques autres espèces de singes', in Camper's Oeuvres (Paris 1803), I, pp. 5-196.

while orang-utans might ape our behaviour they could never really imitate it.

Der Affe äffet immer nach, aber nachgeahmt hat er nie....welcher Ourang-Outang...hat je mit allen Menschlichen Sprachwerkzeugen ein Einziges Menschliches Wort gesprochen?¹²⁷

There were also anthropological critics, moreover, such as Johann Friedrich Blumenbach who, in his De generis humani varietate nativa of 1775, dismissed Rousseau's ideas as ill-informed in both natural history and anatomy.¹²⁸ Yet Rousseau's perspective of orang-utans had its defenders, too, and the most impassioned endorsement of all came from Lord Monboddo in the second edition of the first volume of his Origin and Progress of Language in 1774. In the initial edition of this work published in the previous year, Monboddo had already lavished his praise upon Rousseau, insisting that he was very happy to find that his notions,

both with respect to the original state of human nature, and the origin of language, agree so perfectly with the notions of an author of so much genius, and original thought, as well as learning.¹²⁹

But in 1773 he had cited Buffon and Rousseau together among his authorities about the orang-utan,¹³⁰ and it was only after some of his friends

127. Herders sämtliche Werke, 33 vols. (Berlin 1877-1913), V, pp. 44-45. These remarks figure in a paragraph which begins with the following words: "Die ganze Rousseausche Hypothese von Ungleichheit der Menschen ist, bekannter Weise, auf solche Fälle der Abartung gebauet."

128. See Blumenbach, De generis humani varietate nativa (Göttingen 1775), p. 36.

129. Of the Origin and Progress of Language, first edition, I (Edinburgh 1773), I.xi, p. 141, note. This mammoth work appeared in six volumes between 1773 and 1792.

130. See *ibid.*, I.xiv, pp. 174-176.

drew his attention to the fact that Buffon held quite a different opinion from Rousseau's and his own that Monboddo approached the question in earnest. He prepared a new version of his text, adding two additional chapters of ninety pages devoted exclusively to the subject of the orang-utan, in which he commented at length upon the distinction between the views of Buffon and Rousseau and showed clearly that it was to Rousseau's thesis that he subscribed himself.

The Orang Outang is an animal of the human form, inside as well as outside....he has the sentiments and affections peculiar to our species, such as the sense of modesty, of honour, and of justice; and likewise an attachment of love and friendship to one individual....It is from these facts that we are to judge, whether or not the Orang Outang belongs to our species. Mr Buffon has decided that he does not. Mr Rousseau inclines to a different opinion... I hold the Orang Outang to be of our species.¹³¹

Monboddo connected his own account of the humanity of orang-utans to a number of other claims about men with tails, and his reflections on these subjects were regarded as so extravagant that the most common response to his work throughout his lifetime was that of ridicule.¹³²

131. Of the Origin and Progress of Language, second edition, I (Edinburgh 1774), II.iv, pp. 289-290 and 311. The essential point for Monboddo, as for Rousseau, was that men in the natural state could not have had the use of speech, so that Buffon's refusal to regard orang-utans as human on the grounds (*ibid.*, p. 294) that they "have not invented a language" was misconceived. If Buffon were correct, wrote Monboddo (*ibid.*, p. 297), "I believe it will be very difficult...to draw the line betwixt the Orang Outang and the dumb persons among us". And like both La Mettrie and Rousseau before him he saw no reason to doubt that (*ibid.*, p. 299) "Orang Outangs...have at least the capacity of learning to speak by imitation". It should be noted here, however, that Rousseau did not share Monboddo's views about the natural affections common to both man and the orang-utan. The persons who directed Monboddo to a reappraisal of Buffon's ideas were Lord Lyttelton and Sir John Pringle. See also Lovejoy, 'Monboddo and Rousseau', Modern Philology, XXX (1932-33), pp. 281-289.

132. "Other people have strange notions; but they conceal them", observed Dr. Johnson, for instance (Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill and L. F. Powell, V, The Tour to the Hebrides [Oxford 1950], p. 111), some months after the first printing: "If they have tails, they hide them; but Monboddo is as jealous of his tail as a squirrel."

Rousseau's views, to be sure, were also treated with derision by his critics, and in the 1760s he suffered the indignity of having a letter falsely ascribed to him signed 'ROUSSEAU, jusqu'à ce jour homme civilisé, & Citoyen de Genève, mais à présent, ORANG-OUTANG'.¹³³ Two very important points, however, should be remembered with regard to his thesis about the humanity of orang-utans. For, firstly, his comments in note x of the Discours form one of the earliest - and perhaps the boldest - set of conjectures about the physical transformation of the human race in an age when most arguments about the chain of being still rested fundamentally upon a belief in the fixity of species.¹³⁴ And, secondly, though Rousseau could not have known this

133. See the Correspondance complète, XII, appendice 286, pp. 301-306. See also *ibid.*, pp. 150-151 and 225-227, and *ibid.*, XVII, pp. 107-108 and 130.

134. Like most disputes about the meaning of Rousseau's thought, the controversy as to whether or not he believed in the biological evolution of species has been long and sharp and is today still unresolved. Widely varied accounts of his views on the continuity of species appear in most of the works cited in notes 56 and 57 above taken together, as well as in more recent commentaries, such as Starobinski's 'Rousseau et Buffon' and Victor Goldschmidt's Anthropologie et politique. Les principes du système de Rousseau (Paris 1974). According to Goldschmidt (p. 243), whose massive composition of eight hundred pages is devoted almost entirely to the Discours sur l'inégalité, "Rousseau, aussi bien que Buffon...compent assurément parmi les 'fixistes'". In Starobinski's judgment, on the other hand, the same text shows (O.C.III, p. 1369) that "Rousseau semble vouloir admettre un transformisme limité, intervenant au sein d'une espèce donnée", or, alternatively ('Rousseau et Buffon', p. 385), that for Rousseau "l'homme devient...un exemple particulièrement éloquent du transformisme restreint". No doubt the passages which I have considered here - both about the physical effects of domestication upon humanity, and about the connection between our species and the orang-utan - can be interpreted in several ways. I hope, however, that I have at least made clear how Rousseau conceived it was possible for some members of our race to have acquired physical attributes with which they had not been naturally endowed, and why, furthermore, he believed that we possessed no attributes of any kind - either physical or spiritual - which warranted our excluding the orang-utan from consideration as one of the varieties of man. He was convinced that there was much empirical research which had still to be undertaken on this subject, and he believed, in short, that the commonly accepted divisions between mankind and this ape were founded upon prejudice alone. For discussions of the generally more 'fixiste' contributions to eighteenth-century evolutionary theory, see especially - in addition to the references cited in notes 56 and 57 above - Lovejoy, 'Some Eighteenth-Century Evolutionists', Popular Science Monthly, LXV (1904), pp. 238-251

himself, his portrait of the orang-utan as a kind of savage in the state of nature is drawn with the greatest accuracy of all eighteenth-century descriptions of its behaviour. Only in the past few decades have we come to learn that the orang-utan, with no permanent family ties and no fixed abode, is the least social and least settled of the primates,¹³⁵ and in these respects it resembles the solitary native which Rousseau depicts in the Discours more closely than does any other creature in the natural world. A fierce and protracted dispute about the factual status of Rousseau's sketch of primitive man in the Discours could perhaps have been avoided if it had been recognised that his 'homme sauvage' was truly an orang-utan. And if this had been perceived, Rousseau would now occupy a prominent place, not only in the history of speculative anthropology, but in the history of empirical primatology as well.

If Buffon and Rousseau did not agree about the extent and direction of the physical transformation of our species, neither were they in accord as to whether our moral and social characteristics could be properly ascribed to the original race of man. For according to Rousseau, on the one hand, our habits and qualities of mind must have been modified in the course of our development in ways which were even more perceptible than the changes to our external features, and the fact that this was so implied that every individual in the

and 323-340; Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge, Mass. 1936), chs. vi-x; and Georges Gusdorf, Les sciences humaines et la pensée occidentale, V (Dieu, la nature, l'homme au siècle des lumières [Paris 1972]), II, chs. ii-iv. For a broader treatment of the debates about the orang-utan in the Enlightenment, see Franck Tinland, L'Homme sauvage (Paris 1968), ch. iii.

135. This point is well-established from long and thorough first-hand observations in John MacKinnon's 'The Behaviour and Ecology of Wild Orang-utans', Animal Behaviour, XXII (1974), pp. 3-74. See also Barbara Harrison, Orang-utan (London 1962).

state of nature must have lived apart from all the rest. Since the moral traits of man in society were formed by the alliances which bound each person to the company of others, then those qualities, he argued, must not be attributed to savages in their original state.

Concluons qu'errant dans les forêts sans industrie, sans parole, sans domicile, sans guerre, et sans liaisons, sans nul besoin de ses semblables, comme sans nul désir de leur nuire, peut-être même sans jamais en reconnoître aucun individuellement, l'homme Sauvage sujet à peu de passions, et se suffisant à lui même, n'avoit que les sentimens et les lumières propres à cet état.¹³⁶

Rousseau contended that there could not even have been any family ties in the world which men inhabited at first, partly because they would then have had no settled form of life at all - no huts or similar fixed dwellings in which they might shelter and protect one another - but mostly because they would have had no inclination to remain with their sexual partners after casual matings. Thinkers who imagined that we must always have lived in families of some sort committed the fallacy of transposing ideas which pertain only to society in their reflections about the state of nature, for they falsely assumed that

la famille rassemblée dans une même habitation, et ses membres gardant entre eux une union aussi intime et aussi permanente que parmi nous, où tant d'intérêts communs les réunissent; au lieu que dans cet état primitif, n'ayant ni Maison, ni Cabanes, ni propriété d'aucune espèce, chacun se logeoit au hazard...les mâles, et les femelles s'unissoient fortuitement selon la rencontre, l'occasion, et le désir, sans que la parole fût un interprête fort nécessaire des choses qu'ils avoient à se dire: Ils se quittoient avec la même facilité.¹³⁷

136. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 159-160. See also the passage on p. 138 in which Rousseau speaks of "la manière de vivre simple, uniforme, et solitaire qui nous étoit prescrite par la Nature".

137. *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147. This passage figures in connection with Rousseau's critique of the linguistic theory of Condillac (see pp. 163-164 below).

Thus, in Rousseau's view, speechless fornication alone must have been the rule before nuptial vows became our rite. If the instincts of men and women brought them initially together that was only to satisfy their individual and indiscriminating passions, and though copulation must have led to the birth of enough children to ensure the survival of the human race, it did not in itself lead to the institution of families. For just as other animals do not make spouses of their mates, so too there would have been no reason for the male of our species to become attached to any particular female. And if men and women formed couples at all, they did so only at the time of the conception of their offspring, and certainly not throughout the period of pregnancy and beyond.

On ne voit pas que le Chien, le Chat, l'Ours, ni le Loup reconnoissent leur femelle mieux que le Cheval, le Belier, le Taureau, le Cerf ni tous les autres animaux Quadrupèdes ne reconnoissent la leur... Si telle femme est indifférente à l'homme pendant [les neuf mois de la grossesse]... pourquoi la secourra-t-il après l'accouchement? pourquoi lui aidera-t-il à élever un Enfant qu'il ne sait pas seulement lui appartenir, et dont il n'a résolu ni prévu la naissance?... L'appétit satisfait, l'homme n'a plus besoin de telle femme, ni la femme de tel homme.¹³⁸

138. Ibid., note xii, pp. 216 and 217. Note xii of the Discours is devoted entirely to a refutation of the following claims in Locke's Second Treatise, c. vii, §§ 79 and 80, pp. 337-338: "The end of conjunction between Male and Female, being not barely Procreation, but the continuation of the Species, this conjunction...ought to last, even after Procreation, so long as is necessary to the nourishment and support of the young Ones... one cannot but admire the Wisdom of the great Creatour, who having given to Man foresight and an Ability to lay up for the future...hath made it necessary, that Society of Man and Wife should be more lasting, than of Male and Female amongst other Creatures." See also ch. I, note 87. Rousseau never cites Locke's works in their English editions (see note 175 below), and the text of these two chapters of the Second Treatise - which he quotes in full (see O.C.III, pp. 214-215) - is taken from the French translation by David Mazel, first published in Amsterdam in 1691 and reprinted several times in the course of the eighteenth century. It should be noted here that Rousseau's conception of the family in the Discours is somewhat ambiguous, since he also remarks there (p. 182) that "par la Loi de Nature, le

Buffon, on the other hand, held that men must always have had at least some social bonds, insofar as all the forces within the state of nature combined to make them fraternal, affectionate, and perfectly sociable creatures. The family unit itself, to be sure, must in his judgment have constituted a kind of natural society.

Tout a concouru à rendre l'homme sociable; car quoique les grandes sociétés, les sociétés policées, dépendent certainement de l'usage & quelquefois de l'abus qu'il a fait de sa raison, elles ont sans doute été précédées par de petites sociétés, qui ne dépendoient, pour ainsi dire, que de la Nature. Une famille est une société naturelle.¹³⁹

The progressive growth of social institutions, he believed, must have produced substantial changes in the moral traits of men,¹⁴⁰ but it was not possible to abstract entirely from human nature those inclinations which had served to bring individuals together. If even the impulse to form close relationships was denied to persons in their original condition, then how could they ever have come to form the bonds of intimacy upon which all societies fundamentally depend?

Pere n'est le maître de l'Enfant qu'aussi longtems que son secours lui est nécessaire, qu'audelà de ce terme ils deviennent égaux, et qu'alors le fils parfaitement indépendant du Pere, ne lui doit que du respect, et non de l'obéissance". It is true that this passage appears in a quite different context in the argument, but while it does not necessarily contradict the points raised in the objection to Locke it can be reconciled with them, in my view, only by an uncomfortably long stretch of the imagination. In the *Contrat social* (I.ii, *ibid.*, p. 352), moreover, Rousseau states that "la plus ancienne de toutes les sociétés et la seule naturelle est celle de la famille", and this proposition looks perilously close to the thesis which, in the *Discours*, Rousseau sets out to overturn. Some of these problems are considered by Masters in *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau* (see pp. 125-132).

139. OPB, p. 346.

140. See *ibid.*, p. 374: "Nous voyons qu'on descend par degrés assez insensibles des nations les plus éclairées, les plus polies, à des peuples moins industrieux, de ceux-ci à d'autres plus grossiers...de ces hommes grossiers aux sauvages, qui ne se ressemblent pas tous, mais chez lesquels on trouve autant de nuances différentes que parmi les peuples policés."

Indeed Buffon was quite convinced that it was not only the tendency to form social and family groups but also their very existence which must already have marked the earliest stage of our evolution.

In the seventh volume of his Histoire naturelle, published in 1758, Buffon turned directly to this distinction between his own ideas and those of Rousseau. "Nous ne supposerons pas avec un Philosophe", he wrote,

l'un des plus fiers censeurs de notre humanité*,
qu'il y a une plus grande distance de l'homme en
pure nature au sauvage, que du sauvage à nous....
l'état de pure nature est un état connu; c'est le
Sauvage vivant dans le désert, mais vivant en
famille, connoissant ses enfans, connu d'eux,
usant de la parole & se faisant entendre.¹⁴¹

Hence despite his belief that the members of our race had undergone a profound social evolution, Buffon supposed that the conduct of human affairs in the past could never have resembled the behaviour of any other creatures more than it approximated the life of men in civilised communities today. Rousseau, however, conceived the differences between the natural and the social man to be just as great as the discrepancies between mankind and all animal species, so that in our original state we could not have possessed any of the attributes and dispositions which we later acquired in society. Buffon, for his part, surmised that a man who lacked these attributes and dispositions was, in some sense, defective in his nature - that is, like an animal.

*. M. Rousseau.

141. OPB, pp. 373 and 374. Rousseau was certainly aware of Buffon's reference to him in the Histoire naturelle, though he appears to have been under a misapprehension as to its precise location in the text (see the Correspondance complète, XV, pp. 301-303).

"On est hors de soi", he remarked,

dès que l'on n'est occupé que des sensations
actuelles....Cet état où nous ne nous trouvons
que par instans, est l'état habituel des animaux;
privés d'idées & pourvûs de sensations, ils ne
savent point qu'ils existent, mais ils le
sentent.¹⁴²

Yet Rousseau, in turn, believed that quite the opposite was true. "Le
Sauvage vit en lui-même", he wrote.

L'homme sociable toujours hors de lui ne sait vivre
que dans l'opinion des autres, et c'est, pour ainsi
dire, de leur seul jugement qu'il tire le sentiment
de sa propre existence.¹⁴³

Thus while Rousseau drew upon Buffon's historical account of
mankind as a species, he did not share with him the conviction that
the members of our species were necessarily sociable by nature. In
this regard, at least, Buffon had adopted what was for Rousseau a
mistaken claim which formed the cornerstone of the natural law philosophy.
And just as Rousseau challenged the thesis that men must always have
had the same physical characteristics which now set them apart from all
other creatures, so, too, he rejected the claim that they must always
have been marked by a spiritual trait which inclined them to form social
bonds that were superior to the ties which held animals together. In
essence, then, Rousseau's description of the original savage overturned
the principal barriers that Buffon had constructed between man and beast,
and

142. OPB, p. 333.

143. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 193. These words also
appear in the intermediate draft of the passage from the Discours recently
transcribed by Launay (see notes 237 and 238 below). The contrast
between Buffon's account of the mindless animal as "hors de soi" and
Rousseau's conception of the sociable man as "hors de lui" is discussed by
Starobinski in his 'Rousseau et Buffon', pp. 388-389.

on pourra donc dire que Rousseau, pour peindre
l'homme de la nature, animalise...l'homme
qu'avait décrit Buffon.¹⁴⁴

Perhaps the main reason which Buffon put forward to account for our superiority to animals was the fact that we were endowed with an ability to enunciate ideas which animals did not even have the capacity to conceive. The faculty of speech, for Buffon, distinguished mankind from all other creatures in the natural world.

L'homme rend par un signe extérieur ce qui se passe au dedans de lui, il communique sa pensée par la parole, ce signe est commun à toute l'espèce humaine; l'homme sauvage parle comme l'homme policé, & tous deux parlent naturellement, & parlent pour se faire entendre: aucun des animaux n'a ce signe de la pensée....C'est...parce qu'une langue suppose une suite de pensées, que les animaux n'en ont aucune... ils sont incapables de former cette association d'idées, qui seule peut produire la réflexion, dans laquelle cependant consiste l'essence de la pensée.¹⁴⁵

The brutes might be joined together by their shared common impulses, but only men had the facility to achieve a common purpose, and it was through language that the aims which men pursued by choice were both expressed and understood. Human conduct possessed a moral character which made it distinct from animal behaviour,¹⁴⁶ and according to Buffon the faculty of speech was a prerequisite of moral life. This

144. Starobinski, 'Rousseau et Buffon', p. 387.

145. OPB, p. 296.

146. It was only with regard to "les passions de l'homme", Buffon reflected in the fourth volume of his *Histoire naturelle* (OPB, p. 340), that we could differentiate "le physique & le moral". It should not be supposed, however, that Buffon regarded the moral aspect of behaviour as necessarily superior in all respects to mere physical impulse. On the contrary these very remarks introduce some paragraphs about the distinction between the physical and moral aspects of love which advance a thesis about the healthy

was clearly the case insofar as we perform our duties in the same sense that we abide by our word or keep to our promises, and we must therefore have the ability to use words and to make promises in order to act in a morally responsible way.

Now the connection between language and morals had certainly been perceived by other writers before Buffon, and, to be sure, it provides one of the more recurrent themes in the history of social thought. Aristotle, for example, had also pointed to the human faculty of speech as central to the moral distinction between mankind and all other species,¹⁴⁷ and on his account politics was actually the art of public discourse about the best goals which men should collectively pursue. Slaves might be compelled, but citizens could only be counselled, to fulfil their obligations, and language was the sole instrument of authority that could be employed by politicians concerned with the attainment of the good life. Something like this view was held by many other thinkers, too, and was in fact adopted, at least in part, by Rousseau himself. "La parole distingue l'homme entre les animaux",¹⁴⁸ he remarked in his Essai sur

state of the former and the corruption of the latter that is remarkably similar to the view adopted by Rousseau in the Discours sur l'inégalité (see note 28 above) and which I believe had a substantial influence upon the development of his own ideas on this subject. See especially the following passage (O.C.III, pp. 157-158): "Commençons par distinguer le moral du Physique dans le sentiment de l'amour. Le Physique est ce désir général qui porte un sexe à s'unir à l'autre; Le moral est ce qui détermine ce désir et le fixe sur un seul objet exclusivement....Or il est facile de voir que le moral de l'amour est un sentiment factice; né de l'usage de la société....Ce sentiment étant fondé sur certaines notions du mérite ou de la beauté qu'un Sauvage n'est point en état d'avoir, et sur des comparaisons qu'il n'est point en état de faire, doit être presque nul pour lui....il écoute uniquement le temperament qu'il a reçu de la Nature, et non le goût qu'il n'a pu acquérir, et toute femme est bonne pour lui." It should be noted here that for Rousseau the morals and manners of people could have an effect upon their physical development, a point which he made about the general consequences of our self-imposed domestication and which he sometimes invoked (see, for instance, Emile, Livre IV, O.C.IV, p. 495, note) in criticism of Buffon's theory.

147. See The Politics of Aristotle, ed. Ernest Barker (Oxford 1946), I.ii, §§ 11-12, p. 6.

148. Essai sur l'origine des langues, ch. i, p. 27. The place of this work in the context of Rousseau's early social theory is considered in the next chapter.

l'origine des langues, and if in the past men might have been persuaded to adopt rules which did not serve to their advantage¹⁴⁹ it was still the case that they could be required to obey laws which promoted their true interests only if they had agreed to do so.¹⁵⁰

According to Rousseau, however, it was a mistake to connect our notion of language directly to the nature of mankind. For while the faculty of speech might be indispensable to the moral character of each person, it was not in our original state but once again only in society that the rules of moral conduct could be prescribed. Men were in need of human company not only for the purpose of transmitting their ideas but also very much in order to conceive them, and if in the state of nature they were able to perform their duties and fulfil their obligations then in a quite inexplicable manner they would already have achieved the main objective of their collective undertakings before they had even learnt to identify and recognise their neighbours. In established households mothers would no doubt have taught their children how to speak, but the teaching of a language to some individuals presupposes that others have learnt it before, and we cannot infer from the exchanges of words which take place in a domestic setting that we must always have been masters of the art of conversation.

Les Hommes n'ayant nulle correspondance entre eux,
ni aucun besoin d'en avoir, on ne conçoit ni la
nécessité de cette invention, ni sa possibilité,
si elle ne fut pas indispensable. Je dirois
bien, comme beaucoup d'autres, que les Langues

149. See the passages from the Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 164 and 177 cited on pp. 189 and 192 below.

150. See, for instance, the following passage from the Contrat social, I.i, O.C.III, p. 352: "L'ordre social est un droit sacré, qui sert de base à tous les autres. Cependant ce droit ne vient point de la nature; il est donc fondé sur des conventions."

sont nées dans le commerce domestique des Peres, des Meres, et des Enfants: mais...ce seroit commettre la faute de ceux qui raisonnant sur l'Etat de Nature, y transportent les idées prises dans la Société....car de dire que la Mere dicte à l'Enfant les mots, dont il devra se servir pour lui demander telle, ou telle chose, cela montre bien comment on enseigne des Langues déjà formées, mais cela n'apprend point comment elles se forment.¹⁵¹

In the state of nature, for Rousseau, there could be no representational language of any kind, and we could not have attained our verbal proficiency in the world in which we must have lived before we embarked upon the long history of our linguistic apprenticeship. In fact men would have come to articulate their thoughts only after passing through a period in which they had no ideas at all to communicate, so that our earliest languages, and the only natural idiom of the first savages, must have been the cry of impulse - the vocalization of fear or of danger, for instance - elicited by instinct alone.

Le premier langage de l'homme, le langage le plus universel, le plus énergique, et le seul dont il eut besoin, avant qu'il fallut persuader des hommes assemblés, est le cri de la Nature. Comme ce cri n'étoit arraché que par une sorte d'instinct dans les occasions pressantes, pour implorer du secours dans les grands dangers, ou du soulagement dans les maux violens, il n'étoit pas d'un grand usage dans le cours ordinaire de la vie.¹⁵²

151. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 146-147. For Monboddo - who was almost as much indebted to Rousseau's theory of language as to his views on orang-utans - the truth of the thesis that men do not by nature have a command of the art of speech was equally damaging to the philosophy of Buffon. "If...language be not essential to man's nature", he reflected (Of the Origin and Progress of Language, I, second edition, II.iv, p. 297), "it follows...that there was a time when men did not speak". He believed, therefore (ibid., pp. 294-295), that Buffon's speculations on the subject were "most wild and extravagant", plainly showing that "however much Mr Buffon may have studied facts of natural history, he has not considered language as a philosopher".

152. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 148. Cf. Emile, Livre I, O.C.IV, p. 286: "Comme le premier état de l'homme est la misère et la foiblesse, ses premières voix sont la plainte et les pleurs. L'enfant sent ses besoins et ne les peut satisfaire, il implore le secours d'autrui par des cris."

Insofar as language was a prerequisite of moral conduct, therefore, Rousseau maintained that it could be understood only as a social institution through which men conveyed ideas that arose together with the very obligations which those ideas signified and expressed. Like every other social institution it must have undergone a history of development and change, and its fundamental character was misconstrued by those who perceived it to be the outward manifestation of a natural human faculty of speech.

Now the most important source of Rousseau's ideas about language in the Discours was undoubtedly the philosophy of Condillac.¹⁵³ In

153. Rousseau first met the abbé de Condillac in the spring of 1740 when he was engaged as tutor to the sons of his elder brother, Jean Bonnot de Mably (Condillac's other brother, Gabriel, was the distinguished political thinker), the prévôt-général du Lyonnais. Condillac had lived in the home of Mably from 1727 onwards, and Rousseau must have seen him almost daily throughout the year that he remained at this post. The two writers did not then come to know each other well, however, largely because Condillac was extremely shy. His timidity was so great, indeed, that according to Rousseau even his own family supposed he might be mentally retarded. Thus, Rousseau reflected in Emile, Livre II (O.C.IV, p. 343), "J'ai vû dans un âge assés avancé un homme qui m'honoroit de son amitié passer dans sa famille et chez ses amis pour en esprit borné. Cette excellente tête se meurissoit en silence. Tout à coup il s'est montré philosophe, et je ne doute pas que la postérité ne lui marque une place honorable et distinguée parmi les meilleurs raisonneurs et les plus profonds métaphysiciens de son siècle". They were to meet again upon Rousseau's return to Lyon in 1742, and in 1745, when Condillac was in Paris and working on his Essai, they dined frequently with Diderot at the Hôtel du Panier Fleuri (see the Confessions, O.C.I, pp. 280 and 347). It was Rousseau who, in fact, brought Condillac and Diderot together, and Diderot, for his part, was so impressed with the abbé's talents that he undertook to find a publisher for the Essai. Rousseau and Condillac were never to be really close companions, though they both had, throughout their lives, a great respect for one another. They may have corresponded from time to time during the years (1758-67) that Condillac was tutor to Prince Ferdinand of Parma, and in 1776, when Rousseau was barred from leaving the manuscript of his Rousseau juge de Jean Jaques at the altar of Notre Dame, he decided to entrust it to Condillac instead. "Je venois d'apprendre", he remarked later in an appendix to that work (O.C.I, p. 981), "qu'un homme de lettres de ma plus ancienne connoissance avec lequel j'avois eu quelque liaison, que je n'avois point cessé d'estimer, et qui passoit une grande partie de l'année à la Campagne, étoit à Paris depuis peu de jours. Je regardai la nouvelle de son retour comme une direction de la providence, qui m'indiquoit le vrai dépositaire de mon Manuscrit....Je lui porte mon manuscrit, et je [le] lui remets avec un transport de joye....Sans savoir encore de quoi il s'agissoit, il me dit

the Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines of 1746 Condillac had also argued that our faculty of speech must have developed as our conditions of life changed, and like Rousseau he claimed in this work that we could only have come to know how to articulate our thoughts in the course of our having managed to acquire them. Since Condillac believed that our ideas could not have been conceived by primitive men it followed for him that such men would have been similarly unable to employ the kinds of utterances through which we enunciated those ideas, so that the earliest languages would have been formed of impulsive gestures and actions rather than discursive speech.

Ces langages ne se succédèrent pas brusquement: ils furent long-temps mêlés ensemble, et la parole ne prévalut que fort tard...Premièrement, quand les hommes commencèrent à articuler des sons, la rudesse des organes ne leur permit pas de le faire par des inflexions aussi foibles que les nôtres...notre esprit est fort exercé par le grand nombre d'idées que nous avons acquises, et par l'habitude où nous sommes de les lier à des sons. Voilà ce qui manquoit aux hommes qui eurent les premiers l'usage de la parole. Leur esprit étoit dans toute sa grossièreté; les notions aujourd'hui les plus communes étoient nouvelles pour eux.¹⁵⁴

en le recevant qu'il ne feroit qu'un bon et honnête usage de mon dépôt. L'opinion que j'avois de lui me rendoit cette assurance très superflue". A short while after this meeting, however, Condillac proposed a number of improvements to the text, and Rousseau, who had expected that his work would make a more profound impression, was annoyed. Thus, he wrote (*ibid.*, p. 982), "Depuis lors j'ai cessé d'aller chez lui. Il m'a fait deux ou trois visites que nous avons eu bien de la peine à remplir de quelques mots indifférens, moi n'ayant plus rien à lui dire, et lui ne voulant me rien dire du tout". Condillac did, nonetheless, keep his promise that he would not release the manuscript for publication (see *ibid.* and p. 1753). And while the text of Rousseau juge de Jean Jaques may not have been much to his liking he had at least expressed an interest in some of Rousseau's earlier works. Thus Narcisse was first printed with his note of approval in 1753, and in a letter to Rousseau of 1756 (see the Correspondance complète, IV, p. 99 and ch. II, p. 60) he enquired about the republication of the article 'Economie politique'.

154. Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines, II.i.2, §13, OPC, I, p. 63. See also the following passage from Condillac's Cours d'études du Prince de Parme of 1775, II.i.2, *ibid.*, p. 434: "Les sauvages ont peu

It was equally his view, moreover, as it was to be for Rousseau later, that language in its original form could not have served to communicate ideas but only to express the unreflective passions of individuals as they came into occasional contact with each other.

Ainsi, par le seul instinct, ces hommes se demandoient et se prêtoient des secours. Je dis par le seul instinct, car la réflexion n'y pouvoit encore avoir part.¹⁵⁵

It is true that in the Essai Condillac provided two accounts of the genesis of language - stating, on the one hand, that it was initially a gift which God must have bestowed upon Adam and Eve, and, on the other, that it was a skill mastered by men through experiment and practice after the Deluge¹⁵⁶ - neither of which was really accepted by Rousseau in the Discours. But though Rousseau found it much more difficult than Condillac to explain how mankind might have come to establish any coherent set of linguistic rules or patterns of intelligible speech - though he did not, as I shall try to show in a moment, support Condillac's view of the origin of language - he did clearly adopt the description of its primordial form which Condillac had set forth. For in the Essai Condillac had envisaged the basic

de besoins, donc ils observent peu; donc ils ont peu d'idées....leurs langues ne sont pas propres à rendre les connoissances que nous avons sur ces différens objets. Assez parfaites pour eux, puisqu'elles suffisent à leurs besoins, elles seroient imparfaites pour nous, parce qu'elles manquent d'expressions pour rendre le plus grand nombre de nos idées."

155. Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines, II.i.1, §2, OPC, I, p. 61.

156. The first thesis, it should be noted, occupies only two sentences in the Essai (see *ibid.*, II.i, p. 60), and it is hard to avoid the suspicion that Condillac, an ordained priest and usually rather conservative on matters of religion, advanced the idea only in order to seem more orthodox in his speculations than he was. The second thesis appears in the same paragraph as the first, and it serves to introduce Condillac's general ideas about the nature and origin of language in that work.

features of our earliest language in terms which served as a model for the expressions that figure in the Discours sur l'inégalité. Thus Rousseau's comments, in particular, upon the "cri de la Nature" in the Discours appeared some nine years after Condillac's remarks in the Essai about the natural signs

ou les cris que la nature a établis pour les sentimens de joie, de crainte, de douleur, etc....Quant aux cris naturels, cet homme les formera aussitôt qu'il éprouvera les sentimens auxquels ils sont affectés; mais ils ne seront pas, dès la première fois, des signes à son égard, puisqu'au lieu de lui réveiller des perceptions, ils n'en seront que des suites.¹⁵⁷

In all these respects, therefore, the approach to the study of language which Condillac had developed in the 1740s anticipated the theory of Rousseau. This intellectual debt, moreover, was certainly acknowledged and made explicit in the text of the Discours itself.

"Qu'il me soit permis de considerer un instant les embarras de l'origine des Langues", wrote Rousseau.

Je pourrois me contenter de citer ou de repeter ici les recherches que Mr. l'Abbé de Condillac a faites sur cette matière, qui toutes confirment pleinement mon sentiment, et qui, peut-être, m'en ont donné la première idée.¹⁵⁸

157. Ibid., I.ii.4, §§35 and 38, p. 19. "Les cris naturels" were a feature of what Condillac called the "langage d'action", and this language, he believed, was common to animals as well as men. He was convinced that animals were marked by a degree of intelligence which made it possible for them both to have thoughts and to transmit them to other members of their species, and in this regard he disagreed sharply with Buffon, who had supposed (see p. 161 above) that animals could have no thoughts at all. Condillac, in fact, devoted much of his Traité des animaux to a critique of Buffon's conception of the difference between animal and human traits (see especially section II.iv in OPC; I, pp. 360-362). The best available treatment of this subject, to my knowledge, is still that of Georges Le Roy in La psychologie de Condillac (Paris 1937), pp. 188-203.

158. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 146.

Yet despite this tribute to the thinker who had inspired his reflections about language in the Discours, Rousseau believed that Condillac had not been entirely consistent in his theory. For while he had supposed that the first spoken language must have expressed the impulses of men before it could convey the sense of their ideas, he had also imagined that the elements of every language were invariably a sign of thought. In the beginning we must have articulated our thoughts by attaching them to "des signes arbitraires",¹⁵⁹ and our figures of speech and manners of speaking must have been developed and enriched by the multiplication of signs which we devised to give voice to the increasing number of concepts and ideas that we acquired. In fact it was necessarily the case, not only for mankind but for all other creatures too, Condillac added in his Traité des animaux of 1755, that "les cris inarticulés et les actions du corps sont les signes de leurs pensées",¹⁶⁰ and animals, like ourselves, then, had a capacity to make their thoughts apparent at least to other members of their species. It followed from this that men did not originally require any linguistic symbols in order to conceive their thoughts, since their impressions of the world were drawn directly from their sensations through a mental process which Condillac described as "la liaison des idées",¹⁶¹ and these impressions could have been communicated through a variety of gestures as well as vocal signs. It was, indeed, precisely because thought could be detached from speech that men were able to formulate a set of terms for the

159. Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines, II.ii.1, §6, OPC, I, p. 61.

160. Traité des animaux, II.iv, *ibid.*, p. 361.

161. See, for instance, the Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines, I.ii.11, §107, *ibid.*, p. 36.

purpose of delineating their impressions.¹⁶² Thus every man had been endowed with an ability to classify the objects of his experience, and Condillac believed that language was developed in a cumulative fashion through the allocation of specific names to different thoughts. We must first have conceived our complex ideas - of a tree, say, or of fruit, fire, water, and the like - because these proceed directly from our senses. After we had labelled such ideas by attaching distinct words to them we must have come to reflect upon the simpler properties of our generic concepts and thus would have learnt progressively to employ signs to define adjectives and adverbs, and, in due course, verbs as well, in order to designate our actions.

La langue fut long-temps sans avoir d'autres mots que les noms qu'on avoit donnés aux objets sensibles, tels que ceux d'arbre, fruit, eau, feu, et autres, dont on avoit plus souvent occasion de parler. Les notions complexes des substances étant connues les premières, puisqu'elles viennent immédiatement des sens, devoient être les premières à avoir des noms... On distingua ensuite, mais peu-à-peu, les différentes qualités sensibles des objets; on remarqua les circonstances où ils pouvoient se trouver, et l'on fit des mots pour exprimer toutes ces choses: ce furent les adjectifs et les adverbes... En se faisant une habitude de se communiquer ces sortes d'idées par des actions, les hommes s'accoutumèrent à les déterminer, et dès-lors ils commencèrent à trouver plus de facilité à les attacher à d'autres signes. Les noms qu'ils choisirent pour cet effet, sont ceux qu'on appela verbes.¹⁶³

Now it would certainly be a mistake to regard the whole of Condillac's linguistic theory in the way which I have outlined here.

162. It was thus a mistake on the part of some philosophers, Condillac observed later (*Cours d'études*, II.i.2, *ibid.*, p. 432), to suppose that "les noms de la langue primitive exprimoient la nature même des choses". On the contrary, such names "représentoient les choses... d'après des apparences, des opinions, des préjugés, des erreurs; mais ces apparences, ces opinions, ces préjugés, ces erreurs étoient communes à tous ceux qui travailloient à la même langue et c'est pourquoy ils s'entendoient".

163. *Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines*, II.i.9, §§82 and 83, *ibid.*, p. 83.

For one thing, he occasionally argued that we must have had a language of some sort even before we had any concepts to express, since without a vocabulary of appropriate signs we could not have had a distinct idea of what it was that we were thinking.¹⁶⁴ For another, he always held that language and thought were closely related, and, indeed, interconnected, in such a way that we could not decipher our notions without artificial signs and referential terms to "décomposer, et... étudier successivement toutes les idées",¹⁶⁵ just as we might examine all the parts of a watch. There are many subtle and intricate facets of Condillac's philosophy which would undoubtedly render this sketch not only partial but even misleading if too much weight were to be placed upon it.¹⁶⁶ I believe, nevertheless, that it is correct

164. See especially the following passage in La Logique (first published in 1780), II.ii, OPC, II, p. 396: "Il falloit que les élémens d'un langage quelconque, préparés d'avance, précédassent nos idées; parce que, sans des signes de quelque espèce, il nous seroit impossible d'analyser nos pensées, pour nous rendre compte de ce que nous pensons, c'est-à-dire, pour le voir d'une manière distincte." It should be noted here, however, that in this passage Condillac supposes language to be a precondition of our forming ideas rather than of our having thoughts - an extremely important distinction in his philosophy.

165. Cours d'études, II.i.4, OPC, I, p. 437. See also ibid., I.i.1, p. 410, and the Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines, I.ii.7, §66, ibid., p. 26.

166. Fuller, but divergent, accounts of Condillac's philosophy of language can be found in the following works and essays published over the past few years: Ulrich Ricken, 'Condillacs 'liaison des idées' und die 'clarté' des Französischen', Die Neueren Sprachen, XII (1964), pp. 552-567; Jean Mosconi, 'Regards sur la théorie du devenir de l'entendement', Cahiers pour l'Analyse, IV (1966), pp. 51-88; Roger Lefèvre, 'Condillac, maître du langage', Revue internationale de philosophie LXXXII (1967), pp. 393-406; Isabel Knight, The Geometric Spirit. Condillac and the French Enlightenment (New Haven and London 1968), ch. vi; Ellen McNiven Hine, 'Condillac and the problem of language', SVEC, CVI (1973), pp. 21-62; Derrida, 'L'archéologie du frivole', introduction to Condillac's Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines (Auvers 1973); and Aarsleff, 'Condillac's Speechless Statue', Studia leibnitiana, supplementary volume XV (1975 - I am grateful to Professor Aarsleff for providing me with a copy of this article prior to its publication). Most of these works deal in some measure with the subject of Condillac's sources, though in my view much work remains to be done in this field, and a reassessment of the influence of Locke - about which the most substantial account seems still to be that of Le Roy in La psychologie de Condillac - is long overdue. With regard to the influence that was exercised by Condillac's linguistic

to portray Condillac as having always upheld the view that language and thought can be distinguished in principle, since however difficult it might be for us to have a proper grasp of our ideas without the use of markers and labels there was a fundamental sense in which our linguistic symbols plainly denoted those ideas. The concept of a language as a collection of signs itself presupposes that these signs refer to something else which is not language, and it was precisely this aspect of Condillac's theory that Rousseau challenged in the Discours.

According to Rousseau it was impossible to set thought apart from speech, since the words that men employ to articulate their impressions are identical with the terms in which their thoughts are conceived. The statements that individuals formulate in their discourse do not merely refer to their thoughts but express them, and if it is the case that "les Hommes...ont eu...besoin...de savoir penser pour trouver l'art de la parole", it is equally true that all men "ont eu besoin de la parole pour apprendre à penser".¹⁶⁷ We could not have formed composite images of the kind Condillac had listed unless at the same time we also had a set of locutions which

theory in the Enlightenment we now have a masterly essay by Aarsleff on the debate in the Berlin Akademie der Wissenschaften (see 'The Tradition of Condillac', in Studies in the History of Linguistics, ed. Dell Hymes [Bloomington and London 1974], pp. 93-156) to add to Venturi's more narrow account of the connection with Diderot (see his Jeunesse de Diderot, pp. 247-282).

167. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 147. It is true that in the Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines (I.ii.5, §49, OPC, I, p. 22) Condillac had made an apparently similar point even in much the same terms: "Combien...n'a-t-il pas fallu de réflexions pour former les langues, et de quel secours ces langues ne sont-elles pas à la réflexion!" But in this passage he also puts forward the view - which Rousseau's remarks were designed to oppose - that our ability to employ linguistic signs must be firmly grounded in our capacity to reflect upon their meaning and to attach them to ideas which we have already formed without them: "On ne sauroit se servir des signes d'institution, si l'on n'étoit pas déjà capable d'assez de réflexion pour les choisir et pour y attacher des idées."

specified the properties of things, for such images are abstractions that we can comprehend only through the use of descriptive names. No one could possibly have had a general impression of a tree, for instance, unless he first had some notion of the characteristics of particular trees, and in Rousseau's view Condillac had been quite mistaken in his belief that we attach representational signs to complex ideas which we derive immediately from our senses. We should have had to be well-versed in the languages of natural history and metaphysics, he remarked, before we could have had any understanding of the essence of the compound substances which Condillac had regarded as providing the most fundamental terms of reference in our glossary of signs and symbols.

Pour ranger les êtres sous des dénominations communes, et génériques, il en falloit connoître les propriétés et les différences; il falloit des observations, et des définitions, c'est-à-dire, de l'Histoire Naturelle et de la Métaphysique, beaucoup plus que les hommes de ce tems-là n'en pouvoient avoir....les idées générales ne peuvent s'introduire dans l'Esprit qu'à l'aide des mots, et l'entendement ne les saisit que par des propositions....Essayez de vous tracer l'image d'un arbre en général, jamais vous n'en viendrez à bout, malgré vous il faudra le voir petit ou grand, rare ou touffu, clair ou foncé, et s'il dépendoit de vous de n'y voir que ce qui se trouve en tout arbre, cette image ne ressembleroit plus à un arbre. Les êtres purement abstraits se voyent de même, ou ne se conçoivent que par le discours.¹⁶⁸

Condillac, in turn, replied to this critique of his philosophy in his Cours d'études du Prince de Parme of 1775, and he set forth his answer in two ways. Firstly, he maintained that there was no need for persons to have a mastery of subjects like natural history and metaphysics in order to have a command of language, since it was

168. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 149-150.

perfectly clear that children could achieve linguistic competence without such knowledge. In any case, he claimed, secondly, that Rousseau had laboured under a misapprehension, since while it was true that the verbal symbols of socially advanced cultures incorporate words that designate the properties and attributes of things it would not have been necessary for the utterances of our ancestors to have had the same sense and reference as statements have today, nor would the earliest figures of speech have had to be grounded upon their users' knowledge of the properties of things.

Une pareille opinion, de la part de [M. Rousseau], aussi profond qu'éloquent, ne peut être qu'une inadvertance. En effet, il exige dans les hommes, qu'on suppose avoir fait une langue, beaucoup plus de connoissances qu'il ne leur en falloit; car s'il eût été nécessaire qu'ils eussent assez connu l'histoire naturelle et la métaphysique, pour déterminer les propriétés des choses, pour en marquer les différences, et pour en donner des définitions; il me semble qu'aujourd'hui les enfans ne pourroient apprendre à parler qu'autant qu'ils sauroient assez d'histoire naturelle et de métaphysique....Or le langage d'un enfant est l'image de la langue primitive, qui, dans son origine, a dû être très-grossière et très-bornée....Voilà sans doute à quoi M. Rousseau n'a pas fait attention. Il a vu tout ce qu'il falloit pour faire une langue où il pût développer son génie comme dans la nôtre; et il a jugé avec raison qu'elle n'a pu être l'ouvrage des hommes qui ont les premiers prononcé des sons articulés. Mais pour faire une langue imparfaite...je crois qu'il n'étoit point nécessaire de connoître les propriétés des choses.¹⁶⁹

Now if Rousseau had had an opportunity to put forward his own rejoinder to this reply he might well have argued that Condillac's first point was unconvincing since it failed to take account of the distinction - upon which he had already commented in the Discours sur l'inégalité - between the learning of an established language on the part of children and the construction of an unprecedented language

169. Cours d'études du Prince de Parme, II.i.2, note, OPC, I, p. 433.

by primeval men. He would certainly have objected, moreover, to Condillac's attempt to defend his thesis on the strength of the differences between linguistic practices of a primitive and an advanced kind. For in Rousseau's view it was just because savages would not initially have perceived the world in terms of generic categories and propertyless substances that Condillac's account of the origin of language must be mistaken. At the very least it appeared to be inconsistent, insofar as it characterized our first utterances as unreflective natural cries, on the one hand, and as complex and abstract ideas, on the other, with Rousseau, for his part, accepting the first of these claims while rejecting the second. Yet the most basic problem, in his view, was not Condillac's inconsistency but rather his incorrect account of the relation between language and thought, and this matter is discussed in the text of the Discours sur l'inégalité itself. Rousseau believed that the terms of our first languages could not have referred to ideas that were elicited from our sensations. On the contrary they must have been the expression of mental activities which could only have arisen in conjunction with the linguistic rules and practices through which they were voiced. It is for this reason that Rousseau regarded the earliest figures of speech as exclamatory utterances which were no more than an outward manifestation of our passions and fears. And whereas Condillac had perceived a clear connection between such utterances and the discursive propositions of civilised man, for Rousseau that supposed unbroken continuity was misconceived. On his interpretation, then, it was impossible to decide whether language presupposed thought or thought presupposed language, since the relation between them was one of reciprocal entailment.¹⁷⁰

170. On this point see especially the remarks of Starobinski in O.C.III, pp. 1323-1324, and the following passage from Mosconi's 'Regards sur la

There is one further point as well which Condillac had overlooked in his account of language and which Rousseau regarded as centrally damaging to his case. For the claim that language was originally devised by individuals in order to clarify and convey ideas which they already had in mind was built around a false presumption, as Rousseau saw it, since men would have had no reason to entertain any ideas at all in their original condition. It was just because language was a social institution - it was just insofar as our linguistic rules were conventions similar to those which tied us to one another's company - that it would have been impossible for men in isolation to have formed the agreements necessary to inaugurate any kind of vernacular speech. Language was not only an art which had to be learnt through practice; it was also a manufactured system of communication based upon the fact that we already shared a set of terms with an intelligible meaning. We could have no glossaries of words, in short, unless we first had a common frame of reference.

Quand on comprendroit comment les sons de la voix ont été pris pour les interprètes conventionnels de nos idées, il resteroit toujourns à sçavoir quels ont pû être les interprètes mêmes de cette convention pour les idées qui, n'ayant point un objet sensible, ne pouvoient s'indiquer ni par le geste, ni par la voix, de sorte qu'à peine peut-on former des conjectures supportables sur la naissance de cet Art de communiquer ses pensées, et d'établir un commerce entre les Esprits.¹⁷¹

Yet if language was required for the formation of our ideas, and if society was required for the invention of language, it was equally

théorie de l'entendement', p. 67: "Chez [Condillac], le langage surgit sur le fond d'une nécessité commandée par le système de l'entendement....avant le langage, les hommes avaient assez acquis pour pouvoir l'inventer, mais pas assez pour continuer à progresser sans son aide. Chez Rousseau au contraire, le langage surgit sur le fond d'une impossibilité: il y a un cercle des origines, qui n'est brisé que par des événements fortuits."

171. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 147-148.

true that language was a precondition for the establishment of society. For how could men have created their social ties except through a variety of linguistic undertakings - through promises, commitments, and other speech acts which they imbued with an artificially binding force? Condillac had imagined that neighbours in a savage state would have come progressively to institute and adopt a shared vocabulary of signs, but for Rousseau it was inconceivable how men in such a state should ever have come to have any neighbours at all. The chains which must originally have joined men together in associations were, in his judgment, both conceptual and linguistic, and since society was as much a prerequisite of language as language of society, he was unable to attribute the foundation of either institution to human means alone. Condillac's philosophy of the origin of language was thus based upon an erroneous dichotomy between the conditions necessary for the shaping of language, on the one hand, and the conditions required for the moulding of society, on the other, and this dichotomy was as erroneous as his distinction between the nature of our thoughts and the nature of the signs we employ to express them.

La manière dont ce Philosophe résout les difficultés qu'il se fait à lui-même sur l'origine des signes institués, montrant qu'il a supposé ce que je mets en question, savoir une sorte de société déjà établie entre les inventeurs du langage, je crois en renvoyant à ses réflexions devoir y joindre les miennes... Quant à moi, effrayé des difficultés qui se multiplient, et convaincu de l'impossibilité presque démontrée que les Langues ayent pû naître, et s'établir par des moyens purement humains, je laisse à qui voudra l'entreprendre, la discussion de ce difficile Problème, lequel a été le plus nécessaire, de la Société déjà liée, à l'institution des Langues, ou des Langues déjà inventées, à l'établissement de la Société.¹⁷²

172. Ibid., pp. 146 and 151. The fact that the first language could not have been devised by any human agency according to Rousseau's account led some eighteenth-century commentators to regard his arguments in the

It was in this fashion that Rousseau's claim in the Discours about the interlocking features of the essence and origin of thought, language, and society, were conceived as a critique - in my opinion as the most significant and profound critique in the Enlightenment - of the philosophy of Condillac.¹⁷³

Discours as proof that both our faculty and use of speech must have been bestowed upon us as a gift from God. This thesis was advanced, for instance, by Beauzée and Jacques-Philippe-Augustin Douchet who, in their article 'Langue' for the Encyclopédie, quote nearly the whole of Rousseau's long passage on language from the Discours (on the question of their authorship of this essay, see Sylvain Auroux, L'Encyclopédie: "grammaire" et "langue" au XVIII^e siècle [Paris 1973], pp. 49-50). Hence, these two scholars reflect (Encyclopédie, IX, pp. 252-253), "Le philosophe de Genève a bien senti...que l'établissement de la société & l'institution du langage se supposoient respectivement, puisqu'il regarde comme un problème difficile, de discuter lequel des deux a été pour l'autre d'une nécessité antécédente plus considérable...Ayant vu d'une manière démonstrative que les langues ne peuvent tenir à l'hypothèse de l'homme né sauvage, ni s'être établies par des moyens purement humains; que ne concluait-il la même chose de la société? que n'abandonnoit-il entièrement son hypothèse, comme aussi incapable d'expliquer l'un que l'autre?...toute langue suppose une société préexistente...D'autre part une société formée par les moyens humains...présuppose un moyen de communication pour fixer d'abord les devoirs respectifs des associés...Que suit-il de-là? que si l'on s'obstine à vouloir fonder la première langue & la première société par des voies humaines, il faut admettre l'éternité du monde & des générations humaines, & renoncer par conséquent à une première société & à une première langue proprement dites: sentiment absurde en soi....c'est donc Dieu lui-même qui non-content de donner aux deux premiers individus du genre humain la précieuse faculté de parler, la mit encore aussi-tôt en plein exercice, en leur inspirant immédiatement l'envie & l'art d'imaginer les mots & les tours nécessaires aux besoins de la société naissante". For his part Monboddo regarded Rousseau's problem about the connection between language and society as perfectly soluble on the grounds (Of the Origin and Progress of Language, I, first edition, II.ix, p. 279) that animals form societies and "carry on in...common business, without the use of speech". Employing illustrations drawn from the supposed community life of beavers and sea-cats, Monboddo thus concluded (*ibid.*, p. 290) that he had "removed Mons. Rousseau's chief difficulty concerning the invention of language, by shewing that society...which he judges rightly to be necessary for the invention of language, may exist without language".

173. The two most perceptive interpretations of Rousseau's arguments on these subjects which I have seen are offered, on the one hand, by Starobinski (see his 'Rousseau et l'origine des langues', in Europäische Aufklärung. Herbert Dieckmann zum 60. Geburtstag [München 1967], pp. 282 and 284-287 [this essay has been reprinted in the second edition of La transparence et l'obstacle]), and, on the other, by Derrida (in 'La linguistique de Rousseau', Revue internationale de philosophie, LXXXII (1967), pp. 448-452).

The principal mistake which had been made by both Buffon and Condillac, in Rousseau's view, was to confuse some of our socially formed traits with the natural characteristics of mankind. In their different ways the two writers supposed that the human race was superior in nature to every other animal species, and they each believed, moreover, that the attributes and skills which we had acquired in the course of our development were the products of our innate predispositions. They imagined that our ancestors must have possessed a certain natural ingenuity, so that the social institutions which we had come to espouse, and, indeed, even the arts and sciences that we had come to cultivate,¹⁷⁴ could be understood only as the fulfilment of those capacities with which we must have been initially endowed. For Rousseau, however, the discrepancies between the natural and the social qualities of man were even more profound than the differences between animal and human traits, and it was his judgment that none of our original faculties could have prescribed the path of our historical evolution. Our behaviour and patterns of life did in fact set us apart from all other creatures insofar as we had adopted various rules of conduct in society. Yet those rules, he maintained, could not have been implicit features of our natural state. On the contrary, they marked the extent of the transformation of our original faculties and of the corruption of our nature, and they showed that throughout our history we had actually debased and degraded our intrinsic human qualities. Since Buffon and Condillac,

174. With regard to Buffon, see, for instance, the following passage in OPB, pp. 371-372: "Le fondement de toute science n'est-il pas dans la comparaison que l'esprit humain fait faire des objets semblables & différens, de leurs propriétés analogues ou contraires, & de toutes leurs qualités relatives?" For Condillac, see especially this remark in his Cours d'études du Prince de Parme, II.i.1, OPC, I, p. 431: "L'homme, lorsqu'il crée les arts, ne fait qu'avancer dans la route que la nature lui a ouverte, et faire avec règle, à mesure qu'il avance, ce qu'il faisoit auparavant par une suite de sa conformation."

for their part, could not accept that mankind had been transformed at all, it was impossible for them to see that we had made ourselves corrupt.

The tribute which Rousseau paid to these two writers was thus tempered with some reservations. He adopted a number of their ideas, but what he understood to be the implications of these ideas had not been drawn by either figure, and, in fact, both later came to raise their own objections to his theory. Just the same, in the Discours sur l'inégalité, the challenge which Rousseau assembled against Buffon and Condillac together was counterbalanced by his praise of their views, and in this work, to be sure, it was against two other philosophers who had committed a mistake of a far more serious kind that he levelled most of his attack. For the central arguments which Rousseau developed in his essay were conceived, above all, as a critique of the social and political doctrines of Hobbes and Locke.¹⁷⁵

175. In the Discours Rousseau specifically mentions Locke in four passages, of which the two most important - in O.C.III, pp. 170 and 214-218 - are discussed in note 138 above and on pp. 190-191 and 194-195 below (the others appear in O.C.III, pp. 182 and 183, note). There is also a comment upon one of Locke's political statements in a fragment of the Discours first transcribed by Leigh (see note 199 below). Rousseau quotes both the Second Treatise and the Essay concerning Human Understanding, though each of his references is taken from a French translation, and I believe that nowhere in his writings is there any citation of Locke's works in their English editions. It is clear from a number of Rousseau's other texts (see the Confessions, O.C.I, p. 237, and Le Verger de Madame de Warens, O.C.II, p. 1128) that he was already familiar with some of Locke's ideas as early as 1739, and there is evidence that they exercised a substantial influence upon the formation of his thought, particularly upon his views about education in Emile (on this important subject see especially Peter D. Jimack, La Genèse et la rédaction de l'Emile de J.-J. Rousseau, SVEC, XIII (1960), ch. xii). With respect to Hobbes, on the other hand, the references in the Discours are at once more critical and less precise. For while in several passages Rousseau attacks the Hobbesian account of natural conflict between men (see especially the remarks in O.C.III, pp. 136 and 153 cited in ch. II, note 128 and on pp. 190-191 below) he does not point directly to any one of the writings in which this account appears, and in my view it is quite conceivable that he had no real first-hand acquaintance with the works of Hobbes. So far as I know, there was no French edition of the Leviathan available in the eighteenth century, while most (though not all) of the Latin and French editions of De cive had been out of print for about one hundred years before Rousseau began to write the Discours.

Now there is one respect, perhaps, in which Rousseau's work bears a close resemblance to the major writings of both Hobbes and Locke, for the Leviathan incorporates a list of nineteen laws of nature¹⁷⁶ while the Second Treatise is divided into nineteen chapters and the Discours sur l'inégalité incorporates nineteen explanatory notes. Apart from this, however, the arguments which appear in the Discours have very little in common with the social thought of either figure. It was Rousseau's contention that Hobbes and Locke had, in their different ways, provided an account of man's depravity in terms which were quite generally correct, though at the same time they had both misconceived the true significance of their ideas. On the one hand they had explained how men in the past must have agreed to form those institutions which had been responsible for the moral corruption of the human race, but on the other hand they had supposed that it was each man's duty to make just those agreements. They had shown how individuals might have established the despotic authority of present governments, and yet they had surmised that every person ought to abide

Starobinski (see O.C.III, p. 1308) indicates some sections from both of these works which Rousseau might have had in mind, but no explicit reference to either text is included anywhere among his writings. And while it is true, as Derathé remarks (see p. 103, note 1), that a passage in Livre I of Emile (see O.C.IV, p. 288) alludes to the preface of De cive (see Hobbes, Opera, II, p. 148), it is equally apparent that Rousseau obtained this reference through the mediation of Diderot. (In De cive Hobbes had written "Ita ut vir malus idem fere sit, quod puer robustus, vel vir animo puerili", in the article 'Hobbisme' [see ch. II, note 128] Diderot maintained that "le méchant de Hobbes est un enfant robuste", and in Emile Rousseau states that "Hobbes appelloit le méchant un enfant robuste". The reference in Emile, therefore does not prove that Rousseau must have been familiar with the text of De cive itself, and in any case it does not stand alone in Rousseau's writings - as Derathé contends - since much the same terms also figure in the Discours [see ch. II, note 128]). Diderot had certainly seen a copy of De cive, but it is possible that Rousseau drew his own account of Hobbes's social theory from secondary sources - from Bayle, Shaftesbury, and Brucker, perhaps, and from Diderot himself.

176. See the Leviathan, English Works, III, pp. 117-144. It must be acknowledged here, however, that Hobbes added a twentieth law of nature in his 'Review, and Conclusion' (see *ibid.*, p. 703).

by the decrees of such governments. They had focused their attention generally upon the social and political arrangements which were the source of all our misfortunes, but they had described these arrangements as the only solutions which could enable us to overcome those very misfortunes. According to Rousseau, in fact, Hobbes and Locke had located the true source of inequality only for the purpose of commending its effects to all their readers.

In the Discours Rousseau maintained that there must be two kinds of inequality among men,

l'une que j'appelle naturelle ou Phisique, parce qu'elle est établie par la Nature....L'autre qu'on peut appeller inégalité morale, ou politique, parce qu'elle...est établie, ou du moins autorisée par le consentement des Hommes.¹⁷⁷

It was his view, moreover, that our natural inequalities must always be distinguished from our moral differences. No group of persons had any authority to command the rest in virtue of their greater strength or courage, and while the rule of the young over the old, or of fools over the wise, may have been established by consent, it could not have been prescribed by Nature. For "l'inégalité morale", he remarked,

autorisée par le seul droit positif, est contraire au Droit Naturel, toutes les fois qu'elle ne concourt pas en même proportion avec l'inégalité Physique; distinction qui détermine suffisamment ce qu'on doit penser à cet égard de la sorte d'inégalité qui regne parmi tous les Peuples policés; puisqu'il est manifestement contre la Loi de Nature, de quelque manière qu'on la définisse, qu'un enfant commande à un vieillard, qu'un imbécille conduise un homme sage, et qu'une poignée de gens regorge de superfluités, tandis que la multitude affamée manque du nécessaire.¹⁷⁸

177. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 131.

178. Ibid., pp. 193-194.

The moral and political divisions which had been assumed by mankind were, therefore, never to be justified with reference to any of the natural traits that marked the mental and bodily variations between one individual and the next. If the opposite were true, then the possession and exercise of superior force might itself create an obligation to obey, and men would somehow command the respect of their neighbours for the same reason that they arouse their fears.¹⁷⁹ The rules which set the members of our species apart from one another in society could only have been formed by their agreement, so that the inequalities produced by Nature must have been transformed into those inequalities which were enjoined by man. The prodigious diversity of the modes of life that had come to be adopted by persons in the civil state must be contrasted, Rousseau believed, with the relative simplicity and uniformity of behaviour which would have prevailed in the savage world. And if we perceived how immense were the distinctions between men in society and how insignificant were the differences between them in the natural state we could not fail to notice, equally,

combien la différence d'homme à homme doit être moindre dans l'état de Nature que dans celui de société, et combien l'inégalité naturelle doit augmenter dans l'espèce humaine par l'inégalité d'institution.¹⁸⁰

Rousseau actually conceived the central theme of the Discours as an account of how mankind might have undergone a transformation of just this sort. "Après avoir prouvé", he wrote,

179. See *ibid.*, p. 132: "De quoi s'agit-il...précisément dans ce Discours? De marquer dans le progrès des choses, le moment où le Droit succédant à la Violence, la Nature fut soumise à la Loi." Cf. also the following passage from the Contrat social, I.iii, *ibid.*, p. 355: "Convenons...que force ne fait pas droit, et qu'on n'est obligé d'obéir qu'aux puissances légitimes."

180. Discours sur l'inégalité, *ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

que l'Inégalité est à peine sensible dans l'état de Nature, et que son influence y est presque nulle, il me reste à montrer son origine, et ses progrès dans les développemens successifs de l'Esprit humain.¹⁸¹

Since in the state of nature men could have had no more than casual and infrequent contact with each other, it followed, in his view, that the original disparities between individuals could not have been of any consequence at all. The inequalities which men had themselves established, however, formed the most fundamental characteristics of each community.

Il suit de cet exposé que l'inégalité étant presque nulle dans l'Etat de Nature, tire sa force et son accroissement du développement de nos facultés et des progrès de l'Esprit humain, et devient enfin stable et légitime par l'établissement de la propriété et des Loix.¹⁸²

The natural man had neither any need for the company of creatures like himself, nor, at the same time, any wish to hurt them, and it was only with the birth of social institutions that his weakness became timidity or his strength a menace to his neighbours. Thus while men did not attach importance to those differences between them which had been prescribed by Nature, they had in their history come to be bound together permanently by relations of subservience and command, and these relations formed the most conspicuous and striking feature of every form of social life.

Hobbes and Locke, on the other hand, had wrongly supposed that men in the state of nature were all roughly equal in their powers, and they had both imagined that largely for this reason every individual would be apprehensive of his neighbours.¹⁸³ "From this equality of

181. Ibid., p. 162.

182. Ibid., p. 193.

183. It is, of course, true that Locke distinguished the state of nature from the state of war (see the Second Treatise, c. iii, §19, pp. 298-299).

ability", Hobbes proclaimed, "ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our ends".¹⁸⁴

It followeth, that in such a condition, every man has a right to every thing; even to one another's body. And therefore, as long as this natural right of every man to every thing endureth, there can be no security to any man.¹⁸⁵

Thus men of similar capacities could pursue the same objectives only at their peril, for "without a common power to keep them all in awe", he observed, "they are in that condition which is called war".¹⁸⁶

In effect the equality of men, conjoined with their mutual fear and natural vanity, ensured only that they would remain in ceaseless conflict and antagonism in a state which had no enforceable laws to regulate their affairs.

If any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation...endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another....in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory. The first, maketh men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation.¹⁸⁷

But there was no natural authority which could protect a man from any infringement of those rights which he originally enjoyed, and thus, Locke observed (*ibid.*, p. 300), "one great reason of Mens putting themselves into Society, and quitting the State of Nature", was "to avoid this State of War (wherein there is no appeal but to Heaven)". This feature of Locke's theory has been discussed at great length by his interpreters.

184. Leviathan, English Works, III, p. 111. Cf. De cive, Opera, II, p. 162. See also ch. II, p. 95.

185. Leviathan, English Works, III, p. 117. Cf. De cive, Opera, II, pp. 164-165.

186. Leviathan, English Works, III, p. 113. Cf. De cive, Opera, II, pp. 165-166.

187. Leviathan, English Works, III, pp. 111 and 112. Cf. De cive, Opera, II, pp. 161 and 163.

In order therefore to maintain the peace men must institute a sovereign judge or 'mortal god' with absolute authority to protect each person from the next, so that, according to Hobbes, the pernicious effects of equality may be overcome through the subjection of the whole multitude to the Leviathan.¹⁸⁸ For Locke, too, it was the lack of a common superior in the natural state which made the tenure of property there uncertain and insecure. He believed, like Hobbes, that without an organized political system mankind must live in a condition of equality,

wherein all the Power and Jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another: there being nothing more evident, than that Creatures of the same species and rank promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without Subordination or Subjection.¹⁸⁹

It was his view that men are able to preserve their rightful property only when they "make one Body Politick" and abide by the enactments of the government which they establish through a social compact.¹⁹⁰ And just as Hobbes had argued that an artificial sovereign was required to enforce a state of peace, so Locke supposed that men could make their property secure only if it were constantly defended by a predominant power to which they willingly entrusted the responsibility for its care.

The great and chief end...of Mens uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, is the Preservation of their Property. To which in the state of Nature there are many things wanting....The inconveniencies, that they

188. See the Leviathan, English Works, III, p. 158. Cf. De cive, Opera, II, pp. 215-216.

189. Second Treatise, c. 2, §4, p. 287.

190. See ibid., c. viii, §§95-96, pp. 348-350.

are therein exposed to, by the irregular and uncertain exercise of the Power every Man has of punishing the transgressions of others, make them take Sanctuary under the establish'd Laws of Government, and therein seek the preservation of their Property. 191

The two writers thus both held that individuals in the natural state were unable to obtain protection from their neighbours, and each contended that a civil authority must always be formed to reduce the dangers which accompany the unfettered equality of men.

Now I think it is clear that Rousseau's account of inequality in the Discours was at least partly designed to contradict these claims, since in the light of his own theory the superior authorities which had been conceived by Hobbes and Locke must have reinforced instead of overcome all the antagonisms which set men at odds with their neighbours. It was impossible to discover from the works of either figure why men in the state of nature should even seek protection from one another, but the ideas of both thinkers did nonetheless explain how individuals might have established as legitimate just those determinate and fixed relations which form the differences between men in corrupt society. For the civil powers which they described made some persons politically inferior to others and for the first time in human history created bonds between them of subservience and command. According to Rousseau, then, it was true that men must have developed all their social obligations so as to protect their lives and their possessions from each other, but since

191. Ibid., c. ix, §§124 and 127, pp. 368-370. Locke's account of property has been discussed at greater length than practically any other feature of his social thought. Perhaps the most important - and certainly the most often criticised - of the more recent interpretations is that of Macpherson, for whom Locke's theory "provides a moral foundation for bourgeois appropriation" (see The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, pp. 197-221).

they could not have been at war nor at the same time owned any property in their natural state, it was inconceivable that they should originally have felt the need for safeguards of this kind. Sentiments of envy or distrust, in his view, could not have prompted the behaviour of the earliest savages, and the feelings of ambition and insecurity which made men vicious in the civilised world formed no part of the character of persons who lived alone. We must not conclude, with Hobbes in particular, Rousseau reflected,

que pour n'avoir aucune idée de la bonté, l'homme soit naturellement méchant, qu'il soit vicieux parce qu'il ne connoît pas la vertu...ni qu'en vertu du droit qu'il s'attribue avec raison aux choses dont il a besoin, il s'imagine follement être le seul propriétaire de tout l'Univers.... Hobbes n'a pas vû que la même cause qui empêche les Sauvages d'user de leur raison...les empêche en même tems d'abuser de leurs facultés...de sorte qu'on pourroit dire que les Sauvages ne sont pas méchants précisément, parce qu'ils ne savent pas ce que c'est qu'être bons.¹⁹²

The social contracts which figure in the theories of both Hobbes and Locke must therefore have been formed by individuals who had already been corrupted by society, and the purpose of these contracts must have been to make each person recognise his duty to comply with rules of inequality that were, in fact, contrary to Nature.

Rousseau actually believed that the idea of an exclusive right to land must have constituted the most fundamental principle of obligation, though insofar as men in their natural state could not have formulated principles of any kind, such an idea, like all our other fixed conceptions, must clearly have arisen some time after individuals had begun to settle in communities. No claims of

192. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 153-154. See also ch. II, notes 128 and 136.

ownership could have been expressed or understood by men until the linguistic rules of social life had already been established, and, indeed, the calamitous institution of private property depended upon a variety of other ideas which we must have previously accepted and upon a whole range of conventions that could only have evolved over a long period of time in human history.

Le premier qui ayant enclos un terrain, s'avisa de dire, ceci est à moi, et trouva des gens assés simples pour le croire, fut le vrai fondateur de la société civile. Que de crimes, de guerres, de meurtres, que de misères et d'horreurs, n'eût point épargnés au Genre-humain celui qui...eût crié à ses semblables. Gardez-vous d'écouter cet imposteur; Vous êtes perdus, si vous oubliez que les fruits sont à tous, et que la Terre n'est à personne: Mais...cette idée de propriété, dependant de beaucoup d'idées antérieures qui n'ont pû naître que successivement, ne se forma pas tout d'un coup dans l'esprit humain: Il falut faire bien des progrès, acquerir bien de l'industrie et des lumières, les transmettre et les augmenter d'âge en âge, avant que d'arriver à ce dernier terme de l'état de Nature.¹⁹³

If civil society, moreover, was initially formed as a political expression of our property relations, it must also have been these relations which gave rise to war. For with the continuous appropriation of property by individuals, and with its extension and then

193. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 164. Voltaire was not at all pleased when he read this passage, and in the margin of his own copy of the Discours he added the following remarks (Havens, Voltaire's Marginalia on the pages of Rousseau, p. 15): "Quoy celui qui a planté, semé, et enclos na pas droit au fruit de ses peines. quoy cet homme injuste ce voleur aurait été le bienfaicteur du genre humain! voyla la philosophie d'un gueux qui voudrait que les riches fussent volez par les pauvres." Rousseau's account of property here is clearly incompatible with the views which he set forth in the 'Economie politique' (see ch. II, note 89), but it is consistent with most of the ideas that he developed on this subject both before and after his composition of the Discours (see, for instance, the passage from his 'Dernière réponse' to Borde's Discours sur les avantages des sciences et des arts cited in ch. V, p. 421, on the one hand, and the Contrat social, I.ix, O.C.III, pp. 365-367, on the other). See also Goldschmidt, Anthropologie et politique, pp. 495-535.

transmission through inheritances from one generation to the next, there must have come a time when no further unclaimed land remained for persons to acquire at all. At that stage, when the fruits of the earth had already been sequestered by some men at the expense of the rest, the poor had no alternative but to become the lackeys of the rich or the usurpers of their property, so that servitude and plunder thus arose at the same time.

Quand les heritages se furent accrus en nombre et en étendue au point de couvrir le sol entier... les uns ne purent plus s'aggrandir qu'aux dépens des autres, et les surnuméraires que la foiblesse ou l'indolence avoient empêchés d'en acquérir à leur tour, devenus pauvres sans avoir rien perdu... furent obligés de recevoir ou de ravir leur subsistance de la main des riches, et de là commencèrent à naître... la domination et la servitude, ou la violence et les rapines... c'est ainsi que les usurpations des riches, les Brigandages des Pauvres... rendirent les hommes avarés, ambitieux, et méchants. Il s'élevait entre le droit du plus fort et le droit du premier occupant un conflit perpétuel... La Société naissante fit place au plus horrible état de guerre.¹⁹⁴

Just as Locke had been mistaken, therefore, to suppose that men could have established rights of ownership before they had created any other social institutions, so too Hobbes had failed to see that the property relations which men formed in their communities must be the principal cause of war. On this point at least - Rousseau remarks in a mistranslation of a passage from the Essay concerning Human Understanding - Locke had been right to maintain that there can be no injury where there is no property.

Hobbes prétend que l'homme est naturellement intrépide, et ne cherche qu'à attaquer, et combattre... circonstances rares dans l'état de Nature, où toutes choses

194. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 175-176.

marchent d'une maniere si uniforme, et où la face de la Terre n'est point sujette à ces changemens brusques et continuels, qu'y causent les passions, et l'inconstance des Peuples réunis....c'est faute d'avoir suffisamment distingué les idées, et remarqué combien ces Peuples étoient déjà loin du premier état de Nature, que plusieurs se sont hâtés de conclure que l'homme est naturellement cruel et qu'il a besoin de police pour l'adoucir, tandis que rien n'est si doux que lui dans son état primitif....selon l'axiome du sage Locke, il ne sauroit y avoir d'injure, où il n'y a point de propriété.¹⁹⁵

In Rousseau's view, then, it followed from this that the social contract which was devised by men in order to make their property secure could not have been formed in the state of nature, but, on the contrary, must have been a hoax perpetrated in society by the rich upon the poor. Its terms might have seemed superficially plausible because they would have referred to the defence of the weak and the security of every man, but its real aim would have been to re-establish the order necessary to preserve the estates of those who had earlier acquired the exclusive use of their own land at the expense of the liberty of the rest to gain the same entitlements. Such an agreement would have bound each person to maintain the peace in exchange for the legitimate possession only of what he owned already, so that in order to comply with its terms the great majority

195. Ibid., pp. 136 and 170. In Locke's Essay, first published in London in 1690, the passage appears in Book IV, ch. 3, §18, and reads as follows: "'Where there is no property, there is no injustice', is a proposition as certain as any demonstration in Euclid." The standard French translation of the Essay in the eighteenth century was by Pierre Coste, first printed in Amsterdam in 1690 under the title Essai philosophique concernant l'entendement humain. The text is correctly rendered by Coste as "'Il ne sauroit y avoir de l'injustice où il n'y a point de propriété'". See also the following passage from Rousseau's 'Etat de guerre', O.C.III, p. 610: "Mettons un moment ces idées en opposition avec l'horrible système de Hobbes; et nous trouverons, tout au rebours de son absurde doctrine, que bien loin que l'état de guerre soit naturel à l'homme, la guerre est née de la paix, ou du moins des précautions que les hommes ont prises pour s'assurer une paix durable."

of men must have obtained protection from their neighbours by the act of repudiating all their rights to share the wealth which men of property enjoyed.

Il n'est pas possible que les hommes n'ayent fait enfin des réflexions sur une situation aussi miserable....Les riches surtout durent bientôt sentir combien leur étoit désavantageuse une guerre perpétuelle dont ils faisoient seuls tous les frais, et dans laquelle le risque de la vie étoit commun, et celui des biens, particulier.... le riche pressé par la nécessité, conçut enfin le projet le plus réfléchi qui soit jamais entré dans l'esprit humain....après avoir exposé à ses voisins l'horreur d'une situation qui les armoit tous les uns contre les autres...il inventa aisément des raisons spécieuses pour les amener à son but. "Unissons-nous", leur dit-il, "pour garantir de l'oppression les foibles...et assurer à chacun la possession de ce qui lui appartient: Instituons des réglemens de Justice et de paix auxquels tous soient obligés de se conformer"....Il en falut beaucoup moins que l'équivalent de ce Discours pour entraîner des hommes grossiers, faciles à séduire....Tous coururent au devant de leurs fers croyant assurer leur liberté.¹⁹⁶

Thus the political authorities which had been prescribed by Hobbes and Locke served the purpose of establishing a legal recognition of the differences between men in society. They could not solve any problems which arose from the supposed fact that men were equal in the state of nature, for their true effect was to make the social distinctions between individuals more durable and persistent. According to Rousseau, in short, both Hobbes and Locke had conceived their ideas as solutions to some problems of which those solutions were in fact the cause.¹⁹⁷ They had detected a way in which men might plausibly

196. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 176-177. Cf. the passage from Diderot's Suite de l'apologie de l'abbé de Prades cited in note 8 above.

197. See the passage from the Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 184 cited on p. 225 below.

have come to accept their obligations under law, but they had not at all explained why any person ought to have made such a commitment. They had confused a description of man's past with a statement of his duty, and more than any of Rousseau's contemporaries they had unwittingly provided an account of what he understood to be the origins of moral inequality. For it was his view that the misery and servitude which mark the history of humanity could only be explained in terms of some kind of social compact that enshrined the disproportionate shares of property which Locke had applauded in the form of an agreement to uphold the peace and order extolled by Hobbes. The two thinkers had in their separate ways recounted how we might in fact have come to sacrifice our natural liberty in exchange for nothing but our permanent enslavement in society, so that Hobbes and Locke had thus shown how our ancestors might once have willingly submitted to the usurpation of their rights by the men among them who had come to be deprived by the vice of ambition.

Telle fut, ou dut être l'origine de la Société et des Loix, qui donnèrent de nouvelles entraves au foible et de nouvelles forces au riche, détruisirent sans retour la liberté naturelle, fixèrent pour jamais la Loi de la propriété et de l'inégalité, d'une adroite usurpation firent un droit irrévocable, et pour le profit de quelques ambitieux assujétirent désormais tout le Genre-humain au travail, à la servitude et à la misère.¹⁹⁸

Of course Rousseau did not entirely conflate the differences between Hobbes and Locke, and in a fragment of a passage from a section of the Discours that he chose to leave out of the published text he actually commented upon a section from the Second Treatise which records one of the most striking distinctions between their respective

198. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 178.

political ideas.¹⁹⁹ For the most part, however, Rousseau's argument in the Discours points to the similarities between the claims of Hobbes and Locke and to the common mistake which he believed both writers had committed. The two figures had overlooked the true significance of their ideas, as Rousseau understood them, because each had adopted a misconceived hypothesis about the essential features of human nature. They imagined that in the natural state the lack of any recognised authority left each person exposed to the aggression of the next, so that for this reason it was to the advantage of all men that they should form a civil power which could defend the whole community against every act of violence. For Rousseau, however, it was only

199. The fragment, which is neither a first draft nor in Rousseau's own hand (though it contains corrections which he added himself), appears in BN Ms fr. 12760, p. 615r and v. It was initially transcribed and annotated by Leigh on pp. 62-63 and 71-77 of his 'Manuscripts disparus de J.-J. Rousseau', Annales, XXXIV (1956-58), and its original place in the text can be established exactly since it incorporates several lines that figure in the final version (see O.C.III, pp. 187-188 and 1356-1358, and 'Manuscripts disparus', p. 73). The reference to Locke appears in the context of the following remarks about tyrannical government (O.C.III, p. 1357): "Qu'y a-t-il...de plus nécessaire à l'Etat qu'un Chef intrépide et prudent, toujours prompt à pénétrer les projets des voisins suspects, et à faire tête à l'ennemi déclaré? Mais si ce Chef préférant son intérêt au nôtre est tenté de nous opprimer lui même en parlant toujours de nous deffendre, qui protegera l'Etat contre son Protecteur quand il en deviendra le Tyran, et qu'aurons nous gagné qu'un ennemi de plus, au quel il ne nous sera même pas permis de résister? N'est-ce pas, dit le sage Locke, comme si, pour garantir une Basse cour du Renard, on la mettoit sous la protection du Loup?" These words clearly pertain to the paragraph in Locke's Second Treatise (c. vii, §93, p. 346) in which he decries any justification of absolute monarchy on the grounds that men cannot be "so foolish that they take care to avoid what Mischiefs may be done them by Pole-Cats, or Foxes, but are content...to be devoured by Lions". Most commentators have observed that the substance of this whole paragraph contrasts sharply with the absolutist philosophy of Hobbes, while Laslett has suggested (see *ibid.*, p. 346, note) that it was actually conceived to challenge the ideas of Filmer. Locke's remarks may perhaps be read as a critique of both of these thinkers, though in my view his terms "Foxes" and "Lions" refer directly to "la golpe et il lionne [la volpe e il leone]" which the prince must know how to imitate, according to Machiavelli in the eighteenth chapter of Il Principe.

in society that men could even feel the need to be secure from one another, since the property relations which gave rise to war could not have been a feature of their natural state. Individuals had no original inclination to envy or to fear their neighbours, and by attributing these acquired traits to mankind at all times Hobbes and Locke together had wrongly supposed that in the state of nature men must have already formed those institutions which first made them dependant upon and later antagonistic toward each other.

Le raisonnement de Locke tombe...en ruine, et toute la Dialectique de ce Philosophe ne l'a pas garanti de la faute que Hobbes et d'autres ont commise. Ils avoient à expliquer un fait de l'Etat de Nature, c'est-à-dire, d'un état où les hommes vivoient isolés...et ils n'ont pas songé à se transporter au-delà des Siècles de Société, c'est-à-dire, de ces tems où les hommes ont toujours une raison de demeurer près les uns des autres.²⁰⁰

Hobbes and Locke, therefore, no less than Buffon and Condillac, had neglected to abstract the social qualities of man from their study of his nature, and in Rousseau's judgment their accounts were in fact still further from the truth. For whereas Buffon and Condillac, on the one side, had only attached a gregarious social tendency or a cordial means of communication to our natural faculties, Hobbes and Locke, in turn, had imagined that men were quarrelsome and combative even before they had come together. Rousseau was convinced that persons who had never kept company could not have had any reason to

200. Discours sur l'inégalité, note xii, O.C.III, p. 218. In his review of the Discours published in the Correspondance littéraire (II[3], p. 54) of 15 July 1755 Grimm drew attention to this feature of Rousseau's argument, though he referred to Hobbes and Pufendorf rather than to Hobbes and Locke: "Le citoyen de Genève reproche avec raison à tous les philosophes qui ont médité sur cet important objet de ne s'être pas formé une idée bien distincte de l'état de nature, de l'avoir toujours confondu avec l'état civil, et d'avoir transporté sans cesse à l'état de nature des idées qu'ils avaient prises dans la société. Hobbes et Puffendorf sont singulièrement dans ce cas."

drive each other apart, and in his view Hobbes and Locke had both proposed nothing less than that our most fatal vices should be authorized by law.

In the Discours Rousseau remarked that primitive man must have possessed two traits in common with all creatures in the state of nature. On the one hand he must always have been impelled by a desire to preserve his life, and, equally, before his social institutions made him morally corrupt, he must have felt compassion for the suffering of other members of his species. No fundamental principle of sociability, such as the natural law philosophers envisaged, could be ascribed, Rousseau contended, to the progenitors of our race. Thus meditating upon the first and most simple operations of the human spirit, he wrote,

j'y crois appercevoir deux principes antérieurs à la raison, dont l'un nous intéresse ardemment à notre bien-être et à la conservation de nous mêmes, et l'autre nous inspire une répugnance naturelle à voir perir ou souffrir tout être sensible et principalement nos semblables. C'est du concours et de la combinaison que notre esprit est en état de faire de ces deux Principes, sans qu'il soit nécessaire d'y faire entrer celui de la sociabilité, que me paroissent découler toutes les règles du droit naturel; règles que la raison est ensuite forcée de rétablir sur d'autres fondemens, quand par ses développemens successifs elle est venue à bout d'étouffer la Nature.²⁰¹

201. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 125-126. See also ch. I, pp. 25-26. It should be noted here that by the time Rousseau composed the fourth book of Emile he was convinced that the two most fundamental characteristics of mankind described in the Discours could be reduced to only one, that is, self-love. For in the natural constitution of humanity, Rousseau contended in the later work (O.C.IV, p. 491), 'l'amour de soi' must have come before, and must have given rise to, all our other

It was Rousseau's view that the second of these traits had been ignored by Hobbes in particular, largely because he had had a misconceived impression of the first. He had imagined that men came into conflict with each other in their efforts to preserve their own lives, so that in the state of nature no individual could be both compassionate and secure. Since each man sought to make himself superior to the next, as Hobbes supposed, he had no choice but to remain constantly on guard against attack and, at the same time, to take advantage of his neighbour when he could. For Rousseau, however, it was necessary to have concern for others in order to care properly for oneself, since a pitiless desire for security at the expense of any person creates just that vanity and contempt which together transform strangers into enemies. Hobbes, for his part, had failed to recognise that men in their natural state, like all other undomesticated creatures, were moved by compassion as well as by self-interest, and, indeed, the concept of self-preservation which he had advanced pertained to a quite factitious feeling, Rousseau believed - to an entirely debased form of love of oneself - which individuals could only have acquired in society.

passions: "La source de nos passions, l'origine et le principe de toutes les autres, la seule qui naît avec l'homme et ne le quitte jamais tant qu'il vit est l'amour de soi; passion primitive, innée, antérieure à toute autre et dont toutes les autres ne sont en un sens que des modifications....la plupart de ces modifications ont des causes étrangères sans lesquelles elles n'auroient jamais lieu, et ces mêmes modifications loin de nous être avantageuses nous sont nuisibles, elles changent le premier objet et vont contre leur principe; c'est alors que l'homme se trouve hors de la nature et se met en contradiction avec soi. L'amour de soi-même est toujours bon et toujours conforme à l'ordre." See also Emile, Livre II, *ibid.*, p. 322, and the Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont, *ibid.*, p. 936. Among the most perceptive recent commentaries about this subject are those of Masters (see The Political Philosophy of Rousseau, pp. 136-146) and Goldschmidt (see his Anthropologie et politique, pp. 311-356). With regard to Rousseau's conception of pity, in particular, see also ch. IV, note 242.

Il y a...un...Principe que Hobbes n'a point apperçû et qui, ayant été donné à l'homme pour adoucir, en certaines circonstances, la férocité de son amour propre, ou le désir de se conserver avant la naissance de cet amour, tempere l'ardeur qu'il a pour son bien-être par une répugnance innée à voir souffrir son semblable....Je parle de la Pitié, disposition convenable à des êtres aussi foibles, et sujets à autant de maux que nous le sommes; vertu d'autant plus universelle et d'autant plus utile à l'homme, qu'elle précède en lui l'usage de toute réflexion, et si Naturelle que les Bêtes mêmes en donnent quelquesfois des signes sensibles.²⁰²

Rousseau was quite insistent about this point in the Discours, and he devoted one of his nineteen notes entirely to an account of the distinction between 'l'amour de soi-même', that is, the self-love which impels every animal to seek its own survival, and 'l'amour propre', that is, the vanity which drives the members of our species alone to attempt to make themselves superior to their neighbours. Rousseau maintained that the sentiment of self-love must have inspired all men in their seminal condition and was a true mark of their humanity; when it was also conjoined with the natural sentiment of pity, he asserted, it might even be a sign of their moral virtue.²⁰³ Our feeling of vanity, however, and our sense of honour which arose from it, were initially contrived and affected emotions. They could not have figured among the spontaneous and unreflective passions and desires which impelled all men at first to care for both themselves and others whom they might have chanced to meet in their original state, and they could only have been formed in connection with the social bonds that our ancestors must have come to force upon themselves as they learnt progressively to suppress that compassion

202. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 154.

203. Hence, observes Starobinski (O.C.III, p. 1298), for Rousseau "l'amour de soi et la pitié sont les mouvements spontanés de la sensibilité qui fondent la morale naturelle".

which had earlier been characteristic of their nature.

Il ne faut pas confondre l'Amour propre et l'Amour de soi-même; deux passions très différentes par leur nature et par leurs effets. L'Amour de soi-même est un sentiment naturel qui porte tout animal à veiller à sa propre conservation et qui, dirigé dans l'homme par la raison et modifié par la pitié, produit l'humanité et la vertu. L'Amour propre n'est qu'un sentiment relatif, factice, et né dans la société, qui porte chaque individu à faire plus de cas de soi que de tout autre, qui inspire aux hommes tous les maux qu'ils se font mutuellement, et qui est la véritable source de l'honneur. Ceci bien entendu, je dis que dans nôtre état primitif, dans le véritable état de nature, l'Amour propre n'existe pas.²⁰⁴

204. Discours sur l'inégalité, note xv, O.C.III, p. 219. See also Rousseau juge de Jean Jaques, O.C.I, p. 669. In his critical edition (see p. 165, note) of La 'Profession de foi du Vicaire savoyard' de Rousseau (Fribourg and Paris 1914) Masson cites a number of sources from which Rousseau might have drawn these terms and the distinction he makes between them. The most important is probably the following passage from Marie Huber's Lettres sur la religion essentielle à l'homme (Londres 1739 edition), lettre xxx, p. 102: "Ici paroît assez sensiblement la différence de l'Amour-Propre ou de l'Amour Faux, à l'Amour de Soi-même bien entendu. C'est que celui-ci, en s'appliquant à la recherche du Bien même, ne prétend en exclure personne, parce que ce Bien est de nature à pouvoir se partager sans concurrence; au lieu que celui-là méconnoissant le vrai Bien, n'est satisfait que lorsqu'il se flatte d'une distinction particulière." Cf. also Jacques Abbadie, L'Art de se connoître soi-même (Rotterdam 1692), p. 263. It should be noted here, however, that the distinction Rousseau adopted between 'l'amour de soi-même' and 'l'amour propre' was not widely accepted by Enlightenment thinkers. Condillac, for instance, put forward an altogether different view of 'l'amour propre' in his Traité des animaux (II.viii, OPC, I, p. 372), claiming that it is a passion which is undoubtedly common to the members of all animal species and that "c'est de lui que naissent tous les autres penchans...Le premier objet de l'amour-propre est...d'écarter tout sentiment désagréable; et c'est par-là qu'il tend à la conservation de l'individu". In Neuchâtel Ms R 18, p. 14r (O.C.III, p. 1376), moreover, Rousseau himself transcribed a passage from Vauvenargues's Introduction à la connoissance de l'esprit humain (first published in Paris in 1746) in which the two terms are employed in a sense that is very much opposed to that of his own theory: "Avec l'amour de nous-mêmes...on peut chercher hors de soi son bonheur; on peut s'aimer hors de soi plus que son existence propre; on n'est point à soi-même son unique objet. L'amour-propre, au contraire, subordonne tout à ses commodités et à son bien-être, il est à lui-même son seul objet et sa seule fin." Almost exactly the same words, copied from the text of Vauvenargues, appear in the abbé Claude Yvon's article 'Amour des sciences et des lettres' in the Encyclopédie, I, p. 371.

Rousseau therefore believed that even when individuals had no fixed relations with each other they would at least have been inclined toward sympathy rather than belligerence on those few occasions when they did meet, so that in this regard the original dispositions of men must have been like those of all the creatures which were to be found in the state of nature. For even if we disregard the tenderness shown to their offspring by mothers of every type of animal, Rousseau reflected,

on observe tous les jours la répugnance qu'ont les Chevaux à fouler aux pieds un Corps vivant; Un animal ne passe point sans inquiétude auprès d'un animal mort de son Espèce: Il y en a même qui leur donnent une sorte de sepulture; Et les tristes mugissemens du Bétail entrant dans une Boucherie, annoncent l'impression qu'il reçoit de l'horrible spectacle qui le frappe.²⁰⁵

Self-love and compassion together, then, were feelings which, in his view, must once have been shared by men with all the other beasts of the natural world.

While the human race was in these respects like every other animal species Rousseau also supposed, however, that mankind had a unique capacity to change its nature. We must always have been marked by the same passions and desires as other creatures, but the various forms of our response to these desires were not prescribed by powers which lay beyond our control, and we alone were able to acquire knowledge and assume modes of life that

les hommes n'ont point naturellement, et...dont ils ne peuvent concevoir l'idée qu'après être sortis de l'Etat de Nature.²⁰⁶

205. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 154.

206. Ibid., p. 125. See also the passage from the Discours (ibid., p. 139) cited on p. 125 above.

For while Nature must have given rise both to the impulses of animals and to their patterns of behaviour, we received the same impulses but were free to choose the manner in which we would satisfy or overcome them. Every type of beast apart from man, wrote Rousseau, is nothing more than an ingenious machine to which Nature has provided the instinct and appropriate means of self-preservation. The same is equally true of the human machine, he continued, except that we are free agents and hence play a part in the calculation of the deeds which we perform, whereas Nature alone governs the movements and habits of all other creatures in the wild. Thus men act as they do - at least to some extent, and often even to their disadvantage - in virtue of their liberty; animals, on the other hand, always do what they must.

Je ne vois dans tout animal qu'une machine ingénieuse, à qui la nature a donné des sens pour se remonter elle même, et pour se garantir, jusqu'à un certain point, de tout ce qui tend à la détruire, ou à la déranger. J'apperçois précisément les mêmes choses dans la machine humaine, avec cette différence que la Nature seule fait tout dans les opérations de la Bête, au-lieu que l'homme concourt aux siennes, en qualité d'agent libre. L'un choisit ou rejette par instinct, et l'autre par un acte de liberté; ce qui fait que la Bête ne peut s'écarter de la Règle qui lui est prescrite, même quand il lui seroit avantageux de le faire, et que l'homme s'en écarte souvent à son préjudice.²⁰⁷

207. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 141. According to Rousseau, therefore, men are free insofar as the actions which they perform are deliberate rather than compulsive. This is a point which he makes perhaps most clearly in the Contrat social, III.i, *ibid.*, p. 395: "Toute action libre a deux causes qui concourent à la produire, l'une morale, savoir la volonté qui détermine l'acte, l'autre physique, savoir la puissance qui l'exécute. Quand je marche vers un objet, il faut premièrement que j'y veuille aller; en second lieu, que mes pieds m'y portent." For Hobbes, on the other hand (Leviathan, English Works, III, p. 197), "When the words free, and liberty, are applied to any thing but bodies, they are abused; for that which is not subject to motion, is not subject to impediment....from the use of the word free-will, no

It was because men in their natural state were able to make themselves distinct from other animals - rather than because they were endowed with any specific attributes which might originally have set them apart from all the rest - that, according to Rousseau, the human race must always have had an advantage over every other type of creature. If we could uncover the essential qualities possessed by our progenitors beneath all the supernatural gifts which later generations would have received; if we could denude our species of all the artificial faculties which we must have acquired during the long course of our development; if, in short, we could take away from man all the trappings of civilisation and consider him, Rousseau observed, "tel qu'il a dû sortir des mains de la Nature", we should find

liberty can be inferred of the will, desire, or inclination, but the liberty of the man; which consisteth in this, that he finds no stop, in doing what he has the will, desire, or inclination to do". The movements of objects and the actions of men all "proceed from necessity", Hobbes continued (*ibid.*, p. 198), so that in his view there could be no constraint upon the human will, but only upon the physical motion of men's bodies. Hobbes would have argued that Rousseau was fundamentally mistaken in his account of liberty, since his supposition that creatures were not free when they were subject to the will of Nature could only have been founded upon a confusion between the determinate cause of their actions, on the one hand, and an external impediment which might be placed in their way, on the other. In the judgment of Hobbes, that is, everything must happen of necessity and does so in conformity with the will of God or the dictates of Nature, but necessity is not itself incompatible with freedom. The motion of a freely falling object might be determined by the laws of gravitation, but its freedom was lost only when it hit the earth. Rousseau, however, believed that Nature could exercise an internal constraint upon animal behaviour, insofar as "l'impulsion du seul appetit est esclavage", and only "l'obéissance à la loi qu'on s'est prescrite est liberté" (Contrat social, I.viii, O.C.III, p. 365). So far as I know, Rousseau does not refer anywhere to the difference between his own account of liberty and that of Hobbes, but it is possible that he had the social theory of Hobbes in mind when he drafted the following lines of the Contrat social, III.ix (*ibid.*, p. 420, note): "Un peu d'agitation donne du ressort aux ames, et ce qui fait vraiment prospérer l'espèce est moins la paix que la liberté." See also the passages from the Manuscrit de Genève, I.iii, *ibid.*, pp. 292-293, and the Contrat social, I.viii, *ibid.*, pp. 364-365, cited in ch. II, note 143.

un animal moins fort que les uns, moins agile que les autres, mais à tout prendre, organisé le plus avantageusement de tous.²⁰⁸

In their original state our ancestors would have perceived that they were more dextrous and adroit than other creatures,²⁰⁹ and insofar as the female of our species was able to move about with a child in her arms she must have had "beaucoup plus de facilité à le nourrir que n'ont les femelles de plusieurs animaux".²¹⁰ Most important of all, man must always have been able to decide for himself, even in the state of nature, how he could best contend with each situation. He was able to live both in the forest or in a cave; he could hunt for prey or, alternatively, gather fruit; and he could select either to confront or flee from danger.

A l'égard des animaux qui ont réellement plus de force qu'il n'a d'adresse, il est vis à vis d'eux dans le cas des autres espèces plus foibles, qui ne laissent pas de subsister; avec cet avantage pour l'homme, que non moins dispos qu'eux à la course, et trouvant sur les arbres un refuge presque assuré; il a par tout le prendre et le laisser dans la rencontre, et le choix de la fuite ou du combat.²¹¹

While other creatures were not subject to the kind of fixed relations which prevailed between men in society, they were all, nevertheless, bound by the commands of Nature. Man alone possessed the liberty to determine in what fashion, and, indeed, whether or not, he would comply

208. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 134-135.

209. See *ibid.*, p. 136: "L'homme Sauvage vivant dispersé parmi les animaux, et se trouvant de bonne heure dans le cas de se mesurer avec eux, il en fait bientôt la comparaison, et sentant qu'il les surpasse plus en adresse, qu'ils ne le surpassent en force, il apprend à ne les plus craindre."

210. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

211. *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

with these commands, and for Rousseau it was particularly in man's consciousness of this liberty that "la spiritualité de son ame"²¹² is displayed.

It was also Rousseau's belief, moreover, that the human race must always have been distinct among animal species in yet another way, for only mankind possessed the attribute of perfectibility. Insofar as all individuals were free to choose the manner of their response to the impulses of Nature they must have been able to develop their behaviour in a cumulative way, so that in his original condition each person must have had the capacity not only to change his essential qualities but also to improve them. Once having adopted habits which no other animals could share, it would have been in his power to make those habits a permanent feature of his character, and in Rousseau's view, to be sure, it was precisely because men were able to make themselves more perfect rather than merely different from other creatures that they could undergo a history of change. After a few months every animal apart from man is already stamped with the characteristic habits of its maturity, and after a thousand years the whole of its species is marked by the same instincts and patterns of life as the first generation. Man, however, is capable of improving his faculties, and he is also alone among animals, moreover, in having what is, in effect, the same capacity to make retrograde steps and thus impair his nature. Imbeciles, Rousseau suggested, are just civilised persons who have reverted to humanity's primitive state through their having lost

212. Ibid., p. 142 (see p. 126 above). Rousseau thought, apparently, that it was partly because men had resisted the commands of Nature that they came to invent and adopt other rules instead.

the mental skills they had earlier acquired in virtue of their perfectibility.²¹³ Since other creatures were unable to make themselves more perfect, it was not in their power to make themselves worse by forfeiting attributes which they had never possessed.

Quand les difficultés qui environnent toutes ces questions, laisseroient quelque lieu de disputer sur cette différence de l'homme et de l'animal, il y a une autre qualité très spécifique qui les distingue, et sur laquelle il ne peut y avoir de contestation, c'est la faculté de se perfectionner; faculté qui, à l'aide des circonstances, développe successivement toutes les autres, et réside parmi nous tant dans l'espèce, que dans l'individu, au lieu qu'un animal est, au bout de quelques mois, ce qu'il sera toute sa vie, et son espèce, au bout de mille ans, ce qu'elle étoit la première année de ces mille ans. Pourquoi l'homme seul est il sujet à devenir imbécile? N'est ce point qu'il retourne ainsi dans son état primitif, et que, tandis que la Bête, qui n'a rien acquis et qui n'a rien non plus à perdre, reste toujours avec son instinct, l'homme rependant par la vieillesse ou d'autres accidens, tout ce que sa perfectibilité lui avoit fait acquérir, retombe ainsi plus bas que la Bête même?²¹⁴

213. This claim seems rather strange in the light of Rousseau's general perspective of human nature in the Discours. Imbeciles are clearly not civilised men who have recovered the pristine faculties of their savage state through age or infirmity; they are persons whose mental disabilities make them even more frail than the rest of us. Rousseau's contention about the course of imbecility here is somewhat similar to that of Maupertuis about the retrogressive path of black albinism which had already been challenged by Buffon (see notes 58 and 67 above).

214. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 142. With regard to the genesis of the term 'perfectibilité' Starobinski makes the following observation (O.C.III, pp. 1317-1318): "Le mot perfectibilité est un néologisme savant. Ce mot ne figure pas dans le Dictionnaire de Trévoux avant 1771; il n'existe pas dans la quatrième édition du Dictionnaire de l'Académie (1740, sic 1762). Il apparaît dans la cinquième édition de ce dictionnaire, 1798, dans le sens que lui donne Rousseau... Antoine Charma, à la page 68 de son étude sur Condorcet, rapporte que le mot était utilisé dans la conversation par Turgot dès 1750. Il apparaît dans l'ordinaire de février 1755 de la Correspondance littéraire." The passage from the Correspondance littéraire, I(2), to which Starobinski refers here appeared in the issue of 15 February 1755 and reads as follows (p. 492): "L'homme constitue une espèce d'être très-singulier et tout à fait différent de ce que nous voyons de vivant et d'inanimé dans la nature. Le principal

Rousseau supposed that it was through the exercise of our liberty that we must have come to form our particular social traits, so that because persons could transmit these traits from one generation to the next it followed that the whole of our species had been able to make its

caractère qui le distingue de toutes les autres créatures de l'univers, c'est la perfectibilité ou la faculté qu'il a reçue de se rendre plus parfait, faculté qui opère sans cesse les plus étonnantes révolutions, et dans son être et dans toute la nature. Toutes les autres espèces d'animaux ont conservé le même degré de perfection où elles étaient depuis que nous savons leur histoire....L'homme seul par sa nature est fait pour éprouver les différences les plus sensibles et pour passer par des changements successifs et continuels, suivant lesquels il peut ou approcher de la perfection que son espèce comporte, ou s'en éloigner jusqu'à se dégrader....Quand on réfléchit sérieusement sur l'homme et sur sa déplorable destinée confirmée par l'histoire de tant de siècles, on est tenté de croire que le don de se perfectionner qu'il a reçu de la nature lui a été plus funeste qu'utile." With respect to these lines Starobinski remarks (O.C.III, p. 1318) that "à la date où le texte de Grimm (ou de Diderot?) est publié, le manuscrit du Discours est depuis longtemps entre les mains de Rey". Since none of Rousseau's corrections to the proofs have any bearing upon his use of the term 'perfectibilité', it is therefore certain, writes Starobinski (ibid.), "que Rousseau n'a pas été influencé par la publication de Grimm. L'inverse est infiniment plus probable: Grimm aurait eu communication du manuscrit de Rousseau, ou aurait adopté ces idées à son contact. Diderot, pour sa part, peut avoir servi d'intermédiaire, ou peut-être est-il l'inspirateur commun de Grimm et de Rousseau". Whatever might have been the source for Rousseau's use of the word, his idea of 'perfectibilité' was certainly attacked at length by his eighteenth-century critics. Jean de Castillon, for instance, in the most substantial of the early replies to the Discours, charged Rousseau (Discours sur l'inégalité parmi les hommes. Pour servir de réponse au Discours que M. Rousseau a publié sur le même sujet [Amsterdam 1756], p. 46) with having failed to see that "la faculté de se perfectionner... est commune à l'homme & à la bête". According to Castillon (pp. 49-50) the specific perfectibility of man was attributable to his natural endowments of reason and language, and it was certainly not the case, as Rousseau had supposed, that our exercise of this faculty produced our errors and vices as well as our virtues and enlightenment: "LA PERFECTIBILITÉ fait éclore les lumières & les vertus de l'homme: mais elle ne fait point naître ses erreurs & ses vices: elle ne le rend point sujet à l'imbécillité." For Herder, moreover, the concept of perfectibility which Rousseau had attached to human nature was as superfluous as the concept of reason, which he had tried to divorce from savage man, was indispensable. Thus, wrote Herder in his Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache (Herders sämtliche Werke, V, p. 44), "Sein Phantom, der Naturmensch; dieses entartete Geschöpf, das er auf der einen Seite mit der Vernunftfähigkeit abspeiset, wird auf der andern mit der Perfectibilität und zwar mit ihr als Charaktereigenschaft, und zwar mit ihr in so hohem Grade belehnet, daß er dadurch von allen Thiergattungen lernen könne - und was hat nun Rousseau ihm nicht zugestanden! Mehr, als wir wollen und brauchen!".

departure from the state of nature.²¹⁵ In his view, then, man must at first have shared the same faculties as other animals, but he must nevertheless have been distinct in his potentialities. And while his liberty and perfectibility could not have been manifest in his original behaviour these inchoate qualities had made possible the historical evolution of the human race.

Of course the perfectibility of men in their original state did not ensure that they would become more perfect creatures, for the real development of that attribute depended upon the actual choices which individuals must have made when they adopted their various patterns of life and institutions in society. Human perfectibility ensured only that there could be cumulative change in one direction or another, and it was as much compatible with the history of man's degradation as it would have been compatible with the history of his progress. According to Rousseau, in fact, man had misapplied his freedom in his use of those traits which he had in common with all other creatures, so that in the course of his advance he had come to suppress his 'pitié' and 'amour de soi-même' and had thus brought about his own corruption. Perhaps the state of primitive society which Rousseau termed "la Société naissante" would have offered the best possible conditions for our happiness, since in that still propertyless world

215. Some of Rousseau's interpreters (see especially Strauss, Natural Right and History, pp. 265-266, and Masters, The Political Philosophy of Rousseau, pp. 69-72) have suggested that he conceived the idea of perfectibility to replace rather than to supplement his view of natural liberty, largely in order to avoid the dualistic metaphysics which his concept of an exclusively human form of freedom might appear to entail. This interpretation seems to me quite wrong. Rousseau believed each man was perfectible only insofar as he was free, and at the same time he supposed that the historical perfectibility of the human race as a whole depended upon the liberty of all persons both to alter their nature and to transmit the changes they have made - in the form of social habits - to their progeny in a cumulative fashion.

we could have exercised our faculties in ways which might have bettered our nature rather than distorted it. Every element of the subsequent progress of mankind, however, has produced the apparent perfection of the individual only at the true cost of the decrepitude of our species.

Il faut remarquer que la Société commencée et les relations déjà établies entre les hommes, exigeoient en eux des qualités différentes de celles qu'ils tenoient de leur constitution primitive...la Société naissante...étoit...le meilleur [état] à l'homme.... le Genre-humain étoit fait pour y rester toujours... et...tous les progrès ulterieurs ont été en apparence autant de pas vers la perfection de l'individu, et en effet vers la décrépitude de l'espèce.²¹⁶

The social relations which men formed with one another had actually debased rather than improved their habits, for just as they had grown progressively less dependant upon Nature they had equally made themselves progressively more dependant upon other men. Our capacity for self-improvement, that is, had never been devoted to the task of increasing the liberty which we must have enjoyed in our natural state since, on the contrary, we had in society elected to become slaves to new compulsions that we imposed upon ourselves. It was for this reason that Rousseau regarded our perfectibility as the principal source of all our misfortunes.

Cette faculté distinctive, et presque illimitée, est la source de tous les malheurs de l'homme... c'est elle qui le tire, à force de tems, de cette condition originaire, dans laquelle il couleroit

216. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 170-171. See also p. 231 below. The real consequence of man's perfectibility has therefore been his fall, notes Starobinski (La transparence et l'obstacle, pp. 12-13): "Parce que l'homme est perfectible, il n'a cessé d'ajouter ses inventions aux dons de la nature. Et dès lors l'histoire universelle, alourdie du poids sans cesse croissant de nos artifices et de notre orgueil, prend l'allure d'une chute accélérée dans la corruption....Le mythe de la chute ne précède donc pas l'existence terrestre; Rousseau transporte le mythe religieux dans l'histoire elle-même."

des jours tranquilles, et innocens...c'est elle, qui faisant éclore avec les siècles ses lumières et ses erreurs, ses vices et ses vertus, le rend à la longue le tiran de lui-même, et de la Nature.²¹⁷

This faculty had, in effect, made possible the transformation of our natural into our moral differences and had therefore played the most crucial rôle in the development of social inequality.

If Nature created the first and least significant distinctions between men, according to Rousseau, it was chance, on the other hand, that must initially have drawn them together. Without the concatenation of fortuitous events all the members of the human race, he believed, would have remained eternally in their original condition of innocence and isolation.

Après avoir montré que la perfectibilité, les vertus sociales, et les autres facultés que l'homme Naturel avoit reçues en puissance, ne pouvoient jamais se développer d'elles mêmes, qu'elles avoient besoin pour cela du concours fortuit de plusieurs causes étrangères qui pouvoient ne jamais naître, et sans lesquelles il fût demeuré éternellement dans sa constitution primitive; il me reste à considérer et à rapprocher les différens hazards qui ont pu perfectionner la raison humaine, en détériorant l'espèce, rendre un être méchant en le rendant sociable, et d'un terme si éloigné amener enfin l'homme et le monde au point où nous les voyons.²¹⁸

217. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 142.

218. Ibid., p. 162. There is a certain superficial similarity between Rousseau's argument here and Machiavelli's contention, in his Discorsi, I.ii, that the first associations of men were formed by chance. But while Rousseau drew much inspiration from the thought of Machiavelli - particularly in the Contrat social - there is no reason to suppose that he borrowed this thesis from the Discorsi. For Machiavelli's essential point there is that the genesis of our different forms of government - rather than of society itself - is attributable to chance. Though like Rousseau he believed (Discorsi, I.ii, in Opere complete, ed. Sergio Bertelli and Franco Gaeta, 8 vols., [Milano 1960-65], I, p. 131) that "nel principio del mondo, sendo gli abitatori radi, vissono un tempo dispersi a similitudine delle bestie", he also held to the quite different supposition that men must have gathered together in the first instance in order to defend themselves against the attacks of other men.

It was, of course, impossible, he added, to determine the exact circumstances which must have led to the formation of our earliest communities, and we could only speculate about how natural catastrophes such as floods or earthquakes or, indeed, any other great disasters, might once have brought men into territorial proximity. Such occurrences could have torn parts of the earth away from the great continents, and in the islands thus created men would have been obliged to meet more often than before. Perhaps languages arose, he suggested, in the form of devices employed by individuals to communicate in these forced congregations. In any case, though he pointed to no evidence or authorities that might support his hypothesis,²¹⁹ and though he did not attempt to specify the nature or trace the possible course of these unpremeditated events, he insisted that happenings of this kind must have given rise to the first human groups, and he was adamant that our earliest forms of social life would have had to be established by accident rather than by choice or design.

J'avoue que les événemens que j'ai à décrire ayant pu arriver de plusieurs manières, je ne puis me déterminer sur le choix que par des conjectures.... De grandes inondations ou des tremblemens de terre environnèrent d'eaux ou de précipices des Cantons habités; Des revolutions du Globe détachèrent et coupèrent en Iles des portions du Continent. On conçoit qu'entre des hommes ainsi rapprochés, et forcés de vivre ensemble, il dut se former un Idiome commun plutôt qu'entre ceux qui erroient librement dans les forêts de la Terre ferme. Ainsi il est très possible...que la Société et les langues ont pris naissance dans les Iles, et s'y sont perfectionnées avant que d'être connües dans le Continent.²²⁰

219. It may be true, as Starobinski has maintained (O.C.III, p. 1344), that "Rousseau était un adepte convaincu des théories géologiques de Buffon". But Buffon's geological theories are not mentioned in the Discours, and while they incorporate speculations about natural accidents and catastrophes they have no direct bearing - as is the case with respect to Rousseau's conjectures - upon the author's view of the genesis of society.

220. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 162 and 168-169. There are

Whatever might have been the actual history of these events, Rousseau was convinced, nevertheless, that they could hardly have brought about the development of social inequality itself, since the forces which originally drew men together could not have been identical with those which must later have driven them apart.²²¹ The

at least two other notable passages in Rousseau's writings in which he makes much the same point to the effect that natural accidents must have been responsible for bringing men together in their earliest societies. One of these passages figures in the Essai sur l'origine des langues, ch. ix, p. 113: "Les associations d'hommes sont en grande partie l'ouvrage des accidens de la nature, les déluges particuliers, les mers extravasées, les eruptions des volcans, les grands tremblemens de terre, les incendies allumés par la foudre et qui détruisoient les forets, tout ce qui dût effrayer et disperser les sauvages habitans d'un pays dût ensuite les rassembler pour reparer en commun les pertes communes." The second was published for the first time in Streckeisen-Moultou, pp. 258-259: "D'autres causes, plus fortuites en apparence, ont concouru à disperser les hommes inégalement dans des lieux, à les rassembler par pelotons dans d'autres, et à resserrer ou à relâcher les liens des peuples selon les accidens qui les ont réunis ou séparés. Des tremblemens de terre, des volcans, des embrasemens, des inondations, des déluges, changeant tout à coup, avec la face de la terre, le cours que prenaient les sociétés humaines, les ont combinées d'une manière nouvelle, et ces combinaisons, dont les premières causes étaient physiques et naturelles, sont devenues, par fruit du temps, les causes morales qui changent l'état des choses, ont produit des guerres, des émigrations, des conquêtes, enfin des révolutions qui remplissent l'histoire et dont on a fait l'ouvrage des hommes sans remonter à ce qui les a fait agir ainsi. Il ne faut pas douter que ces grands accidens de la nature ne fussent plus fréquents dans les premiers temps." Cf. O.C.III, p. 533. This passage originally appeared in a manuscript discovered in the mid-nineteenth century by Streckeisen-Moultou among the texts which he inherited, through his wife, from Paul Moultou, to whom Rousseau had left some of his papers in 1778 shortly before his death (most of the rest having already been entrusted to Pierre-Alexandre Du Peyrou in 1765 - see ch. IV, note 147). The manuscript of the fragment printed by Streckeisen-Moultou has been lost, and we can only speculate about its original place in Rousseau's writings. It may once have figured in a draft of the Discours or the Essai, but I suspect that Rousseau never really planned to incorporate it in either of these works. Derathé, nevertheless (O.C.III, p. 1533), regards it as "manifestement en relation avec le chapitre IX de l'Essai"; Streckeisen-Moultou, for his part, took it to be a fragment of the Institutions politiques.

221. See the passage from the Essai sur l'origine des langues, ch. ii, p. 43 cited in ch. IV, p. 329. In the Essai (ch. ix, p. 113), however, Rousseau did observe that once men have been brought into proximity with one another the effect of further natural catastrophes can only be to scatter them: "Depuis que les sociétés sont établies ces grands accidens ont cessé et sont devenus plus rares: il semble que cela doit encore être; les mêmes malheurs qui rassemblerent les hommes épars disperseroient ceux qui sont réunis."

moral distinctions that prevailed in society were, of necessity, formed by men rather than by Nature or by chance, and while these distinctions were developed from the time that men began to live in company with one another, they must, even in the first instance, have been chosen and espoused by individuals and could not have been a direct consequence of their proximity alone. According to Rousseau, in fact, morality arose only from the way in which savages must have undertaken to identify their neighbours. When, in their primitive settlements, men came repeatedly to confront the same persons every day, they must have begun to take some notice of those traits which distinguished one individual from the next. They must have come gradually to recognise which men were strongest or most agile, and, in general, they must have begun to perceive, whereas before they could only have felt, the effects of the differences in their constitution which were due to Nature. Each man, equally, must have come to identify himself in the light of qualities which others recognised as typical of his own behaviour, so that as his relations with his neighbours became more settled he must have grown increasingly dependant upon what he took to be their impressions of his character, their appraisals of his conduct, and their judgments of his abilities and shortcomings. He must have begun to compare himself to others and at the same time to attach some significance to the variations that he perceived, so that, in Rousseau's view, it was the manner in which our ancestors came to value certain characteristics above the rest - it was the expectations which they formed about each other's actions and the demands which they began to make in the light of their presumptions - that all together must have brought about the transformation of their natural differences into moral traits. Those persons who were the most strong, or handsome, or eloquent - or who proved, say, to

be the best dancers - must have come to be admired above the others, for it was to such traits and capacities as these that we would have attached our first ideas of merit and beauty and our first feelings of preference. We must have turned our attention upon the talents of the individuals around us and must also have wished to be admired for our own skills. We must have come either to envy or to despise those men whose qualities appeared to be distinct from our own, and the unequal distribution of public esteem began to set us apart in social hierarchies. The same features which savage man must have detected in his identification of his neighbours, then, must also have been invoked by him in order to discriminate between them. In fact he could only have identified the persons with whom he was forced by chance to live in daily contact through making discriminations of just this kind, and Rousseau supposed that it was in virtue of such comparisons and the scale of preferences to which they gave rise that the disintegration of our natural happiness and innocence was ensured.

On s'accoutume à considérer differens objets, et à faire des comparaisons; on acquiert insensiblement des idées de mérite et de beauté qui produisent des sentimens de préférence....Chacun commença à regarder les autres et à vouloir être regardé soi-même, et l'estime publique eut un prix. Celui qui chantoit ou dansoit le mieux; le plus beau, le plus fort, le plus adroit ou le plus éloquent devint le plus considéré, et ce fut là le premier pas vers l'inégalité, et vers le vice en même tems: de ces premières préférences nâquirent d'un côté la vanité et le mépris, de l'autre la honte et l'envie; et la fermentation causée par ces nouveaux levains produisit enfin des composés funestes au bonheur et à l'innocence.²²²

Now the various human traits that were esteemed by primitive men

222. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 169-170.

could not have made their appearance all at the same time. Our savage forefathers must have recognised those individuals among them who were strongest before they discovered which ones were best able to sing or dance,²²³ and they could only have come to be impressed by the most eloquent of their neighbours after they had already formed the conventions of a language.²²⁴ Rousseau was undoubtedly vague about the order in which our moral traits were first developed, and, indeed, it is far from obvious in the Discours why persons should have found some of their capacities to be more worthy of respect than others.²²⁵ He was nevertheless firmly convinced that as soon as men began to attach importance to their differences they must thereby have embarked upon the establishment of their social institutions. In particular, the dexterity and eloquence which were the attributes of a few of our ancestors, and at the same time the source of admiration of the rest, made possible the introduction of private property. For the first man who enclosed a piece of land, claimed it as his own, and persuaded others foolish enough to believe him, Rousseau contended,²²⁶ was the real founder of civil society. This person, that is, must have

223. See *ibid.*, p. 169: "On s'accoutuma à s'assembler devant les Cabanes ou autour d'un grand Arbre: le chant et la danse, vrais enfans de l'amour et du loisir, devinrent l'amusement ou plutôt l'occupation des hommes et des femmes oisifs et attroupés." Cf. the passage from the Essai sur l'origine des langues, ch. ix, p. 123 cited in ch. IV, p. 331. With respect to Rousseau's general views about the place of song and dance in primitive society, see Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, pp. 114-120.

224. Other Enlightenment thinkers adopted a quite different view of the genesis of eloquence. D'Alembert, for instance, maintained (Discours préliminaire, Encyclopédie, I, p. x) that the quality was a gift bestowed upon individuals by Nature: "Les hommes en se communiquant leurs idées, cherchent aussi à se communiquer leurs passions. C'est par l'éloquence qu'ils y parviennent....[La Nature] seule peut créer un homme éloquent."

225. To be sure, Rousseau did not believe that his conjectures about the origins of our moral conduct must be correct in every detail (see pp. 225-228 below).

226. See the passage from O.C.III, p. 164 discussed on pp. 188-189 above.

applied his dexterity upon the soil and his eloquence upon his neighbours and in such a fashion produced as an accepted institution the most fundamental of all the determinate relations which bound men to one another.

In fact even before the establishment of private property in land there must already have been, in Rousseau's view, a kind of property in persons which was formed by the first divisions of the members of our race into family groups. The forced communal life led by individuals in the earliest societies must have created ties between men and women that were more lasting than those which ensued from casual matings in the state of nature, and such ties, extended to the offspring of sexual couplings as well, must have constituted both the bonds within each family unit and the distinctions that marked one family from the next - all of which collectively inaugurated the first revolutionary epoch in human development, just as the accidents that had previously brought men together comprised the first revolutions in the history of Nature.

Ce fut-là l'époque d'une première révolution qui forma l'établissement et la distinction des familles, et qui introduisit une sorte de propriété; d'où peut-être naquirent déjà bien des querelles et des Combats.²²⁷

Yet according to Rousseau it must have been private property in land, rather than in persons - it must have been the cultivation of the earth to satisfy the desires of individuals to possess not only the same things as their neighbours but substantially more as well - which truly launched mankind upon its path of toil, misery, slavery, and conflict.

227. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 167.

Dès qu'on s'aperçut qu'il étoit utile à un seul d'avoir des provisions pour deux, l'égalité disparut, la propriété s'introduisit, le travail devint nécessaire, et les vastes forêts se changèrent en des Campagnes riantes qu'il falut arroser de la sueur des hommes, et dans lesquelles on vit bientôt l'esclavage et la misère germer et croître avec les moissons.²²⁸

After the establishment of proprietary rights in land, moreover, the arts of metallurgy and agriculture must have been developed so as to enhance the productivity of the soil and at the same time increase the moral differences between the men who owned it and those who did not. These two arts, to be sure, must have produced the second great revolution in our moral development - a revolution which both civilised and ruined mankind - and according to Rousseau, indeed, it was largely because of the greater abundance of iron and the greater fertility of wheat in the European world that the institutions of government and political control were more deeply entrenched there than anywhere else.

La Métallurgie et l'agriculture furent les deux arts dont l'invention produisit cette grande révolution. Pour le Poëte, c'est l'or et l'argent, mais pour le Philosophe ce sont le fer et le bled qui ont civilisé les hommes, et perdu le Genre-humain. . . l'une des meilleures raisons peut-être pourquoi l'Europe a été, sinon plutôt, du moins plus constamment, et mieux policée que les autres parties du monde, c'est qu'elle est à la fois la plus abondante en fer et la plus fertile en bled.²²⁹

228. Ibid., p. 171.

229. Ibid., pp. 171-172. Two notable, but rather divergent, accounts of the significance of metallurgy and agriculture in the argument of the Discours are provided by Masters (see The Political Philosophy of Rousseau, pp. 175-177) and Goldschmidt (see his Anthropologie et politique, pp. 474-484). With regard to the importance in the text of these two revolutions see especially Duchet's contribution to the article, which she wrote jointly with Launay, entitled 'Synchronie et diachronie: l'Essai sur l'origine des langues et le second Discours', Revue internationale de philosophie, LXXXII (1967), pp. 434-435; Duchet, Anthropologie et histoire, pp. 339-357; and ch. IV, pp. 356-357.

It followed from this that when the transfer of ownership through inheritances and the growth in the numbers of men led to the occupation of all the land, no person could continue to increase his property except at the expense of others. Thus the state of civil society must have given rise to war, and men came to avoid incessant conflict only by contracting to maintain an armistice which was prescribed by law and enforced by police powers. In exchange for such a regime of peace and for the custodial protection of their lives the poor members of our race must have renounced their claims upon the property of the rich, so that the dextrous and eloquent individuals in society made their wealth entirely secure from others in the perpetuation of a hoax which "d'une adroite usurpation firent un droit irrévocable".²³⁰

The different forms of government that must initially have been devised by men all owe their origin, Rousseau reflected, to the distinctions "plus ou moins grandes qui se trouvèrent entre les particuliers au moment de l'Institution".²³¹ A monarchy must have been established when any single man was recognised to be pre-eminent in those attributes regarded as worthy of respect, an aristocracy was formed when several men were jointly held to be superior to the others, while democracy was instituted when the inequalities between men in society were not yet so considerable as to make them entirely corrupt.

Un homme étoit-il éminent en pouvoir, en vertu, en richesses, ou en crédit? il fut seul élu Magistrat, et l'Etat devint Monarchique; si plusieurs à peu près égaux entre-eux l'emportoient sur tous les

230. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 178 (see p. 193 above).

231. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

autres, ils furent élus conjointement, et l'on eut une Aristocratie; Ceux dont la fortune ou les talens étoient moins disproportionnés, et qui s'étoient le moins éloignés de l'Etat de Nature, gardèrent en commun l'Administration suprême, et formèrent une Démocratie.²³²

Since all these forms of government, however, were devised in order to legitimate and give authority to the divisions which formed our moral qualities, they must in every case have followed much the same pattern of development. They must have served to make the incipient, or perhaps even already significant, gradations of wealth or standing which set men apart still more conspicuous and must therefore have accelerated the growth of social inequality. They must have progressively extended the authority of the few persons who governed and at the same time increased the obligations of the many who were bound to obey, until the predominant relations between men in society had become just absolute despotism, on the one hand, and complete subordination, on the other. It was an essential paradox of human history, then, that whereas men must have originally come together with the objective of framing rules to secure for themselves some limited rights of ownership, their descendants had become transformed into the subjects of absolute rule and the actual objects held in thrall - the very chattels that were owned - by the political potentates of the day. If the first epoch of inequality was formed by the establishment of property and the authority of the rich over the poor, the second was marked by the creation of the legal jurisdiction of the state and the rule of the strong over the weak, while the third stage was characterized by the sway of arbitrary controls in place of all legitimate powers, and by the domination of slaves by their masters. The governments which

232. Ibid.

at first had been instituted by the consent of men must eventually have given way to irresponsible and tyrannical force, and the dominion of state officials must in due course have become so burdensome to their subjects that they could no longer preserve the peace which they had been empowered to maintain. Civil society must therefore have succumbed to revolutionary change, and men must have escaped the periodic crises of their political development only by turning to new masters whose disingenuous eloquence persuaded them once again to adopt still further principles and practices of slavery.

Si nous suivons le progrès de l'inégalité dans ces différentes révolutions, nous trouverons que l'établissement de la Loi et du Droit de propriété fut son premier terme; l'institution de la Magistrature le second; que le troisième et dernier fut le changement du pouvoir légitime en pouvoir arbitraire; en sorte que l'état de riche et de pauvre fut autorisé par la première Epoque, celui de puissant et de foible par la seconde, et par la troisième celui de Maître et d'Esclave, qui est le dernier degré de l'inégalité, et le terme auquel aboutissent enfin tous les autres, jusqu'à ce que de nouvelles révolutions dissolvent tout à fait le Gouvernement, ou le rapprochent de l'institution légitime....C'est du sein de ce désordre et de ces révolutions que le Despotisme élevant par degrés sa tête hideuse...parviendrait enfin à fouler aux pieds les Loix et le Peuple, et à s'établir sur les ruines de la République.²³³

233. Ibid., pp. 187 and 190-191. There is only a superficial similarity between the cycle of constitutions portrayed by Rousseau in these passages and the classical and neo-classical typologies - of monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, and their perversions - depicted by Plato, Aristotle, Polybius, Machiavelli, and many other figures. Commentators have frequently drawn a parallel between Rousseau's scheme and that of Machiavelli in the Discorsi, I.ii, in particular, but in my view there is no close resemblance between the ideas of the two thinkers on this subject. For in Rousseau's account the degenerative course of constitutional changes must have followed a continually worsening path whose initial step was itself already one of moral debasement, whereas according to Machiavelli the descent was from the best constitutions to the worst and included both peaks and troughs, while the transitions he described were principally from virtuous administrations of one kind or another to vicious regimes of the same outward type. And though it was Machiavelli's belief that constitutional democracy must

Thus the social contracts which would have been initially established in order to secure peace for all men and property for at least a few must in this fashion have produced just those divisions which their authors meant to overcome. They must have created forms of oppression of such scope and severity that they could not be endured by the vassals that had once been citizens, and they must thereby have forced the dissolution of all those bonds which held individuals together in their political associations. The decay which followed ineluctably from the establishment of artificially superior powers in society must in due course have provoked the subjugated populations to overthrow those powers, so that the final term of inequality - the last stage which completes the circle of our development - could only bring us back to a condition of moral equality like that which must have served as our point of departure. This new state of equality, however, in which the only law is that physical force alone should prevail, differs sharply from our original state, for whilst in the natural world our feelings must have been pure and our reactions to strangers generous and benevolent, the equality of men in a world from which nothing apart from political authority has been removed is the product of an excess of corruption - a state in which all the antagonisms but none of the safeguards and constraints of social life have managed to survive.

generally have arisen as a corrective to tyranny before giving way, in turn, to a state of licence followed by the reintroduction of monarchy, Rousseau, for his part, was convinced that democracy must have been the form of government adopted by men who were the least corrupted by society and that the sequel to tyranny was not popular government at all but rather anarchy and a reversion to the right of the stronger. For a further discussion of these features of the thought of Machiavelli and Rousseau see the remarks of Starobinski in O.C.III, p. 1359.

C'est ici le dernier terme de l'inégalité, et le point extrême qui ferme le Cercle et touche au point d'où nous sommes partis: C'est ici que tous les particuliers redeviennent égaux parce qu'ils ne sont rien....C'est ici que tout se ramène à la seule Loi du plus fort, et par conséquent à un nouvel Etat de Nature différent de celui par lequel nous avons commencé, en ce que l'un étoit l'Etat de Nature dans sa pureté, et que ce dernier est le fruit d'un excès de corruption.²³⁴

Rousseau's remarks about the order of events leading to this ultimate degradation of our race seem a good deal more perfunctory than most of the other features of his argument in the Discours. In the essay he offered no hypotheses as to how revolutionary change from one political epoch to the next might actually have been achieved; he did not let his readers know whether he believed that the final stage of human corruption had been realized already or whether, alternatively, he expected it to come after our governments had undergone still further decay; and he neglected to explain whether or why the last term of inequality should be any more durable than the unstable phases which must have come before. Some of these omissions are attributable simply to his failure to pursue lines of enquiry which he had opened himself, while others are at least partly due to the fact that the final text of the Discours is a much shortened and attenuated version of the work that he originally conceived²³⁵ - a

234. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 191. In Anti-Dühring (Marx-Engels Werke, XX, p. 130) Engels commented about this section of the Discours that "so schlägt die Ungleichheit wieder um in Gleichheit, aber nicht in die alte naturwüchsige Gleichheit der sprachlosen Urmenschen, sondern in die höhere des Gesellschaftsvertrags. Die Unterdrücker werden unterdrückt. Es ist Negation der Negation".

235. Hence, observes Leigh in his 'Manuscripts disparus' (p. 62), the original draft of the Discours must have been "beaucoup plus ample que la version définitive". See also ch. IV, pp. 310-326.

version from which not only points of detail but, indeed, whole sections of his initial study were withdrawn for a variety of reasons. There is ample evidence that Rousseau deleted a fragment on the origins of music which he later reconstituted in two chapters of his Essai sur l'origine des langues,²³⁶ and we also know, moreover, that in conjunction with the passages from the end of his study which are under discussion here he at first planned to introduce an account of the depths of inequality into which men must have been driven by their religious superstition and the idolatrous faith propagated by their priests, whom he vilified as "ennemis mortels des Loix et de leurs ministres". Two fragmentary drafts of this account have in fact survived,²³⁷ and while most of what they contain does not appear in the

236. See ch. IV, pp. 294-326.

237. The earliest (Genève Ms fr. 228, pp. 39r-40v), initially printed in Streckeisen-Moultou (see pp. 345-346), was first transcribed with all its variants by Leigh in his 'Manuscripts disparus' (see pp. 68-71); it also appears, with the principal variants only, in O.C.III, pp. 224-225 and 1377-1379. The second or intermediate draft (Neuchâtel Ms R n.a. 9, f. 1 [pp. 59-60]) is not in Rousseau's own hand, but like the other major surviving fragment of the Discours (see note 199 above) it contains corrections which he added himself. Since it includes a paragraph that later figured in the published text, moreover, this draft provides a better clue than does the first of the place in the argument at which Rousseau might originally have intended to develop his ideas on religion. (In this regard it is a matter of some interest that the fragment appears at a point in the text which comes after, and is not immediately connected with, the only two other passages of the Discours [see O.C.III, pp. 127 and 186] in which Rousseau mentions the subject of religion.) Not enough evidence has been uncovered yet, however, to enable scholars to establish its exact location in the earlier formats of the Discours, because Rousseau only incorporated the concluding paragraph from the second draft in the final version of his work. I believe, nevertheless, that one passage which figures in both the first and intermediate manuscripts may have been an earlier draft of the statement in O.C.III, p. 191, about "le dernier terme de l'inégalité" and "un nouvel Etat de Nature...[qui] est le fruit d'un excès de corruption" reproduced above, and it is largely for this reason that I think it appropriate to comment upon the fragment here in conjunction with that passage. The second draft was initially transcribed by Launay as part of his contribution to 'Synchronie et diachronie' (see pp. 423-428) where it appears together with the first-draft and definitive versions; it is reprinted, without a few minor variants, in vol. II of the Launay edition of Rousseau's Oeuvres complètes (see pp. 264-267). The following passage (taken from 'Synchronie et diachronie',

published text a number of their elements may actually help to fill in some of the gaps that remain in the final version. It is hardly surprising, to be sure, that Rousseau should have aimed initially in the Discours to offer an interpretation of the origins of our religious practices and beliefs which would complement his theory of the genesis

pp. 424-426) is an excerpt from the second draft, beginning with the sentence which I read as an earlier variant of the passage noted above, and ending with the first sentence which was also adopted in the final text: "Je ne m'arêterai point à montrer combien cette orgueilleuse curiosité engendra de folies et de crimes, combien elle érigea d'Idoles et inspira de fanatiques: Je me contenterai de remarquer qu'elle produisit une nouvelle sorte d'inégalité, qui, sans être établie par la Nature ni même par la convention, mais seulement par des opinions chimeriques, fut à la fois la moins raisonnable et la plus dangereuse de toutes. Il s'éleva une espece d'hommes singuliers qui se portant pour interprètes des choses incompréhensibles et pour Ministres de la <vérité> [divinité] sans son ordre, et sans son aveu prétendirent assujétir le Genre Humain à leurs décisions. Substituant adroitement des Dieux de leur façon au véritable qui ne convenoit pas à leurs veües, et leurs maximes absurdes et intéressées à celles de la droite raison, ils detournerent insensiblement les Peuples des devoirs de l'humanité et des règles de la morale dont ils ne dispoient pas à leur gré, pour les assujétir à des pratiques indifférentes ou criminelles, et à des peines et des recompenses arbitraires dont ils étoient seuls les dispensateurs et les juges. Ennemis mortels des Loix et de leurs ministres, toujours prêts à autoriser les usurpations injustes du magistrat suprême pour usurper plus aisément eux mêmes [son] autorité légitime, ils faisoient en sorte en parlant toujours de droits spirituels, que les biens, la vie, et la liberté du Citoyen n'étoient en sureté qu'autant qu'il se mett<roit>[oit] à leur discrétion; Leur pouvoir étoit d'autant plus redoutable que s'instituant sans honte seuls juges en leur propre cause, et ne souffrant aucune mesure commune des differences qu'ils mettoient entre eux et les autres hommes, ils bouleversoient et anéantissoient tous les droits humains sans qu'on put jamais leur prouver qu'ils excedoient les leurs. Enfin, à ne juger des choses que par leur cours naturel, si le Ciel n'eut parlé lui-même, si la voix de Dieu n'eut instruit les hommes de la Religion qu'ils avoient à suivre, si sa parole n'eut fixé par la Révélation les bornes sacrées des deux pouvoirs, on ne scait jusqu'où des Prêtres Idolâtres et ambitieux dominant sur les Peuples par la superstition, et sur les Chefs par la terreur n'eussent point porté leurs attentats et les miseres du Genre humain: Mais c'est assés m'arêter sur cette cause particuliere, tandis qu'il m'en reste tant d'autres à développer. RAPPELONS nous à quel point l'esprit de la société attire et change nos inclinations naturelles. L'homme sauvage et l'homme policé différent tellement à cet égard que l'état qui fait le bonheur suprême de l'un réduiroit l'autre au désespoir." The last sentence in this passage is clearly an earlier draft of another sentence which appears in O.C.III, p. 192. From that point until its end the manuscript fragment continues in much the same terms as the published text up to the conclusion of the first paragraph on p. 193. In his 'Manuscrits disparus' (see pp. 63-67) Leigh remarks upon the fact that Rousseau's reflections here provide a

of our political relations, and I suspect that he may at first have wished to develop that theme at this late stage of the argument so as to provide a comprehensive explanation of the meaning of "le dernier terme de l'inégalité" in the passage I have just presented. In any case it is perfectly clear from a remark that appears both in one of these fragments on religion and in the published copy of the Discours that for Rousseau the cycle of constitutions which must have led to the debasement of all our natural passions was set in motion as soon as our ancestors became sociable and began to seek the company of other creatures like themselves. For with the cultivation of their desire to please and be respected by their neighbours, with the manufacture of the artificial value which they placed upon their reputation and their standing in society, they must thereby also have disseminated the moral inequality that was the essence of all forms of government and the bane of our common humanity.

L'homme sociable toujours hors de lui ne sait vivre que dans l'opinion des autres....Il n'est pas de mon sujet de montrer comment d'une telle disposition naît tant d'indifférence pour le bien et le mal...comment tout se réduisant aux apparences, tout devient factice et joué....Il me suffit

treatment of the origin of religion and the rôle of the priesthood which is conspicuously absent from the final version of the Discours. According to Leigh Rousseau may have decided to delete the passage because at the time that he composed it he was subjecting his ideas on religion to the same scrutiny and reappraisal as all the other features of his philosophy which until then had shown the influence of Diderot and the 'coterie holbachique'. Yet while there is no doubt but that the vehemence of tone and substance of his observations on religion and the priesthood are more in keeping with the views of the Encyclopédistes than are most of his later statements on the subject, and while it might even be the case that the passage was inspired by some suggestions put forward by Diderot in particular, there is no reason to suppose that Diderot may actually have been its author. For as Starobinski rightly comments (see O.C.III, p. 1378), the many variants in the first draft of this passage show how hard Rousseau himself laboured to find the right words to express a thesis which - for whatever reason - he chose to leave out of his final text.

d'avoir prouvé que ce n'est point-là l'état originel de l'homme, et que c'est le seul esprit de la Société et l'inégalité qu'elle engendre, qui changent et altèrent ainsi toutes nos inclinations naturelles.²³⁸

The great tragedy of civilisation, then, is that the historical progress of our governments was bound to give rise to just that arbitrary power and wanton rule of the strongest which all civilised persons have sought to prevent by establishing the rules of their political constitutions. For "le Pouvoir Arbitraire", Rousseau concluded,

est...la corruption, le terme extrême [des Gouvernemens]...qui les ramène enfin à la seule Loi du plus fort dont ils furent d'abord le remède.²³⁹

Rousseau conceived his second Discours as a speculative account of the origins of moral inequality. His arguments were designed to provide not so much a history of mankind as a theory of human nature, and his description of the past - though it was buttressed by as much evidence about the social life of primitive men as he was able to amass - was essentially a conjectural and philosophical investigation into the conditions which he supposed had necessarily led to the present degradation of our species. The true facts about the primeval world of our ancestors were in any case no longer accessible, he thought, and while we must undertake historical research to establish the connections between events that can be known for certain,

238. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 193 (see also p. 160 above). Almost exactly the same terms conclude the fragment from Neuchâtel Ms R n.a. 9 cited in note 237 above (see Launay, 'Synchronie et diachronie', p. 427-428).

239. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 184.

"c'est à la Philosophie à son défaut", he claimed, "de déterminer les faits semblables qui peuvent les lier".²⁴⁰ The fundamental traits of humanity could be uncovered and made clear, in his view, only if we abstracted them from the contemporary and superfluous features of our conduct, so that the natural man must be derived from the citizen and not the civilised man from the savage. Since Rousseau began his enquiry from the perspective of man's current state it followed that his postulated reconstruction of the past owed little to any chronicle of events, and instead, he maintained, it actually resembled the hypothetical sketches of the formation of the world which had been advanced by scientists. He allowed that the circumstances he portrayed might have come to pass historically in a variety of ways, but the principles that he deduced from his conjectures formed a coherent system of ideas which he was convinced could not be challenged or refuted philosophically.

Commençons...par écarter tous les faits, car ils ne touchent point à la question. Il ne faut pas prendre les Recherches, dans lesquelles on peut entrer sur ce Sujet, pour des vérités historiques, mais seulement pour des raisonnemens hypothétiques et conditionnels; plus propres à éclaircir la Nature des choses qu'à montrer la véritable origine, et semblables à ceux que font tous les jours nos Physiciens sur la formation du Monde....J'avoue que les événemens que j'ai à décrire ayant pu arriver de plusieurs manières, je ne puis me déterminer sur le choix que par des conjectures; mais outre que ces conjectures deviennent des raisons, quand elles sont les plus probables qu'on puisse tirer de la nature des choses et les seuls moyens qu'on puisse avoir de découvrir la vérité, les conséquences que je veux déduire des miennes ne seront point pour cela conjecturales, puisque, sur les principes que je viens d'établir, on ne sauroit former aucun autre système qui ne me fournisse les mêmes résultats, et dont je ne puisse tirer les mêmes conclusions.²⁴¹

240. Ibid., p. 163.

241. Ibid., pp. 132-133 and 162. Starobinski suggests about the first of these passages that (O.C.III, p. 1303) "pour le lecteur français de 1755, l'allusion concerne la Théorie de la Terre de Buffon, et sans doute

Rousseau's principal aim in this work, then, was to show that all the moral attributes of men must be acquired in society. He believed that as our social relations changed our patterns of behaviour altered too, so that our standards of right conduct were derived, not from any ideas or faculties which Nature had implanted in every person at all times, but rather from our perception of the particular place which we happened, at different times, to occupy among our neighbours. To those theorists who claimed that speech must be a natural attribute of man Rousseau replied that words can have no meaning apart from the linguistic conventions which are established in a variety of ways in disparate cultures. Against those commentators who insisted that the members of our species were essentially selfish or aggressive Rousseau retorted that they could only have become so after they had been forced to live in company with one another under rules of association which were oppressive and injurious to the welfare of most men. And in opposition to those writers who argued that the fundamental differences between us - or the inequalities that prevailed in the distribution of our property - were all prescribed by Nature, Rousseau

aussi l'Essai de Cosmologie de Maupertuis". See also the passage from the Discours, *ibid.*, p. 133 cited in note 40 above, and my own remarks about this aspect of Rousseau's argument in note 29 above. Many of Rousseau's interpreters have claimed that the 'facts' which he intended to put aside and disregard were those recounted in the Bible, and particularly in the Book of Genesis, rather than real historical facts (see, for instance, Morel, 'Recherches sur les sources du Discours de l'inégalité', pp. 135-137; Hubert, Rousseau et l'Encyclopédie, pp. 88-89; Henri Grange, 'L'Essai sur l'origine des langues dans ses rapports avec le Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité', Annales historiques de la Révolution française, XXXIX (1967), pp. 292-293; and Masters, The Political Philosophy of Rousseau, p. 118). I think, however, that these claims are quite mistaken, since they depend largely upon the supposition that Rousseau failed to say precisely what he meant and actually wrote something that has an altogether different sense. Insofar as he believed that the natural man which he had constructed was a fictitious rather than real figure, it seems perfectly plain that he should also point to the abstract, as opposed to empirical, character of his argument as a whole.

held that the only significant distinctions between persons were created artificially and that the institution of property must have made its first appearance in society. The Discours, in short, was composed as an indictment of the social relations which had been adopted by mankind, and Rousseau's state of nature was constructed as a fictitious world from which the corrupt features of society had been removed. He allowed that there had never been a truly natural man, but it was only with reference to such a figure that we were able to provide a theory of our moral change. And though a condition of perfect innocence no longer existed - perhaps never did exist, and probably never will - it was nonetheless necessary to have a proper understanding of its character in order to judge the very real and sorry state in which humanity now found itself.

Ce n'est pas une légère entreprise de démêler ce qu'il y a d'originnaire et d'artificiel dans la Nature actuelle de l'homme, et de bien connoître un Etat qui n'existe plus, qui n'a peut-être point existé, qui probablement n'existera jamais, et dont il est pourtant nécessaire d'avoir des Notions justes pour bien juger de nôtre état présent.²⁴²

242. Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 123. Cf. the following passage from the Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont, O.C.IV, p. 952: "L'homme sauvage errant seul dans les bois...n'existe pas, direz-vous; soit. Mais il peut exister par supposition." For an admirable statement of the anthropological significance of Rousseau's abstract savage man, see Lévi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques, p. 423. The idea of a fictitious state of nature was, of course, equally prominent in the thought of most of the natural law philosophers. But whereas in the writings of Grotius, Pufendorf, and Locke, for instance, it figured as a juridical fiction and pertained to a world that was much like our own apart from its lack of a legal sovereign, in the social theory of Rousseau, on the other hand, the concept was a fiction about the past which he required for an explanation of our real moral development. Some writers, such as Strauss, for example (see Natural Right and History, p. 267, note 32), have even suggested that Rousseau did not regard his state of nature as a fiction at all but supposed instead that it was as much a fact of history as were the forms of contemporary despotism. On this interpretation, only the intermediate stages between the natural and the despotic phases were meant to be hypothetical. That view, however, seems to me entirely inconsistent with Rousseau's own remarks.

Now if the state of nature is a fiction, it follows, of course, that there will be no point in our attempting to return to it. "La nature humaine ne retrograde pas", Rousseau was to lament near the end of his life in the last of his major autobiographical works.

Jamais on ne remonte vers les tems d'innocence et d'égalité quand une fois on s'en est éloigné.²⁴³

Even before he had begun to draft the Discours sur l'inégalité, moreover, he had already made it clear to the most illustrious critic of his first Discours sur les sciences et les arts that he supposed a people once corrupted by civilisation could never be expected to recover its original innocence. If we were to destroy all the libraries, universities, academies, and other embellishments of our culture, he proclaimed in his 'Réponse' to King Stanislas of Poland, we would only plunge the whole of Europe into a state of barbarism from which nothing would be gained to benefit the morals and manners of humanity.

Gardons-nous [de] conclure qu'il faille aujourd'hui brûler toutes les Bibliothèques et détruire les Universités et les Académies. Nous ne ferions que replonger l'Europe dans la Barbarie, et les moeurs n'y gagneroient rien. C'est avec douleur que je vais prononcer une grande et fatale vérité....on n'a jamais vû de peuple une fois corrompu, revenir à la vertu....leurs coeurs une fois gâtés le seront toujours; il n'y a plus de remède, à moins de quelque grande révolution presque aussi à craindre que le mal qu'elle pourroit guérir, et qu'il est blamable de désirer et impossible de prévoir.²⁴⁴

Rousseau made much the same point, too, in the most often-quoted note of his second Discours. Perhaps there were persons among us who could

243. Rousseau juge de Jean Jaques, O.C.I, p. 935.

244. 'Observations de Rousseau. Sur la Réponse qui a été faite à son Discours' ['Réponse au roi de Pologne'], O.C.III, pp. 55-56. This text was first published around October 1751 (see ch. V, p. 411). See also ch. V, pp. 415-417.

detach themselves from the miseries of contemporary social life and, by returning to the forest, could thus rescue their pristine qualities from the baneful trappings of their own degraded souls. If there were such men in the world Rousseau was certainly not one of them. For his part he hinted that the sole possible salvation for mankind lay within the fabric of society, in which only our respect for its laws, our fidelity to its officers, and our love of all its members, might bring some hope of change.

O vous...qui pouvez laisser au milieu des Villes vos funestes acquisitions, vos esprits inquiets, vos coeurs corrompus et vos desirs effrénéz; reprenez, puisqu'il dépend de vous, vôte antique et première innocence; allez dans les bois perdre la vûe et la mémoire des crimes de vos contemporains....Quant aux hommes semblables à moi dont les passions ont détruit pour toujours l'originelle simplicité, qui ne peuvent plus se nourrir d'herbe et de gland, ni se passer de Loix et de Chefs....Ceux, en un mot, qui sont convaincus que la voix divine appella tout le Genre-humain aux lumières et au bonheur des celestes Intelligences...ils respecteront les sacrés liens des Sociétés dont ils sont les membres; ils aimeront leurs semblables et les serviront de tout leur pouvoir; Ils obéiront scrupuleusement aux Loix, et aux hommes qui en sont les Auteurs et les Ministres.²⁴⁵

It is true that Rousseau frequently expressed a profound distaste for cosmopolitan affairs, and it is also true that he admired rustic life and country folk more than did most of his contemporaries. But noble savages were not to be found in any shepherd's pastures or village fair, and if the state of nature could be made real at all it would probably look more like a dense woodland sparsely populated by solitary hunters. No man of the Enlightenment - still less a contributor to the Encyclopédie - could ever hope to make his home there.

245. Discours sur l'inégalité, note ix, O.C.III, p. 207.

Even that form of primitive society which must have arisen in "l'époque la plus heureuse, et la plus durable" for our species - even the state which "l'exemple des Sauvages...semble confirmer que le Genre-humain étoit fait pour y rester toujours"²⁴⁶ - was one which civilised man could never hope to recover. Such a state, to be sure, was not entirely fictitious, for it was located somewhere between a past that was imaginary and a present that was real, and it contained some elements of both. In primitive society men must still have been compassionate and kind and, on the whole, unlikely to do harm, since they could not yet have been bound together by property relations and had no wish, therefore, to injure any of their neighbours.²⁴⁷ At the same time, however, they must already have begun to take some notice of their different aptitudes and talents, and their moral sentiments of vanity and contempt, on the one hand, together with shame and envy, on the other, must have produced effects upon their character which were fatal to their happiness and innocence.²⁴⁸ If men had ever lived in such a state it would perhaps have been to their advantage to remain there,²⁴⁹ but a world that had been lost could never be recovered, and a past which was abstracted from the present did not provide the moral principles appropriate to generations of men who were to come.

Rousseau employed some of the political imperatives that had been prescribed by Hobbes and Locke in his own discussion of the

246. Ibid., p. 171 (see pp. 207-208 above).

247. See pp. 190-191 above.

248. See the passage from the Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, pp. 169-170 discussed on pp. 212-213 above.

249. See the passage from the Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C.III, p. 171 discussed on pp. 207-208 above.

origins of inequality. For he believed that their ideas provided a quite accurate account, not of our true obligations, but rather of our past as it must have been, and the social contracts which figured in the theories of both thinkers helped to explain how men could have entered into those agreements which had made them morally corrupt. Yet since the social conventions that had depraved mankind were imposed by individuals upon themselves it was still at least conceivable that persons might in future form agreements, and might collectively establish institutions, of an altogether distinct kind. Man must have applied his faculty of self-improvement in such a way as to restrict his freedom, but he could not have destroyed his capacity for change, and if, indeed, he was perfectible by nature, then the mistakes which he had committed could in principle be corrected and overcome. The political authorities that had been introduced to make our inequalities legitimate could be transformed into authorities that would make us equal under law, and in the Contrat social Rousseau was to turn his attention upon the manner in which such institutions might be established.

In the Discours sur l'inégalité Rousseau claimed that the political associations which men must have formed were responsible for the maintenance of those moral differences that set them apart from one another. In the Contrat social, on the other hand, he was later to argue that the associations which they ought to form should take no account at all of these differences and should instead substitute a principle of moral equality that would render their natural variations irrelevant in law and insignificant in social life.

Au lieu de détruire l'égalité naturelle, le pacte fondamental substitue au contraire une égalité morale et légitime à ce que la nature avoit pu

mettre d'inégalité physique entre les hommes, et que, pouvant être inégaux en force ou en génie, ils deviennent tous égaux par convention et de droit.²⁵⁰

The supposed legal equality of men under our present constitutions, he maintained there, is nothing but a sham and an illusion. Its only function is to preserve the misery of the poor and the arrogated wealth and power of the rich, so that our systems of law are now always

utiles à ceux qui possèdent et nuisibles à ceux qui n'ont rien: D'où il suit que l'état social n'est avantageux aux hommes qu'autant qu'ils ont tous quelque chose et qu'aucun d'eux n'a rien de trop.²⁵¹

The social contract to which we ought to adhere, however, must be devised by men who have no wish to secure any particular advantage through deceit and subterfuge, and its purpose must be to bind individuals together in relations of equality rather than of subservience and command. Such equality could only be achieved by an agreement between persons, not to retain what they already owned, but, on the contrary, to live under the same conditions and to enjoy the same political rights.

Le pacte social établit entre les citoyens une telle égalité qu'ils s'engagent tous sous les mêmes conditions, et doivent jouir tous des mêmes droits. Ainsi par la nature du pacte, tout acte de souveraineté, c'est-à-dire tout acte authentique de la volonté générale, oblige ou favorise également tous les Citoyens, ensorte que le Souverain connoit seulement le corps de la nation et ne distingue aucun de ceux qui la composent.²⁵²

250. Contrat social, I.ix, O.C.III, p. 367.

251. Ibid., note.

252. Ibid., II.iv, O.C.III, p. 374. Cf. the following passage from the Contrat social, II.xi, ibid., p. 391: "Si l'on recherche en quoi consiste précisément le plus grand bien de tous, qui doit être la fin de tout système de législation, on trouvera qu'il se réduit à ces deux objets principaux, la liberté, et l'égalité. La liberté, parce que toute

Hence whereas every one of us has the capacity to improve his nature, for Rousseau it is only if we come to attach significance to those interests which we share in common with our neighbours that we can begin to make ourselves better instead of worse than other creatures. To achieve this aim would require the reconstitution of the structures of our current states, and both the manner in which we might come to conceive such a programme, as well as the terms which might be required to inaugurate and sustain it, form the central problems to which Rousseau was to turn his attention in the Contrat social.

dépendance particulière est autant de force ôtée au corps de l'Etat; l'égalité, parce que la liberté ne peut subsister sans elle." On the subject of equality in both the second Discours and the Contrat social see especially Raymond Polin, La politique de la solitude. Essai sur la Philosophie politique de Rousseau (Paris 1971), pp. 107-134.