

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU AND THE TENSION
BETWEEN NATURE AND SOCIETY

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

AND

THE TENSION BETWEEN

NATURE AND SOCIETY

By

TONY WOOLFSON, M.A.

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AUTHOR: Tony Woolfson, M.A. (Glasgow University)

M.A. (York University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Derry Novak

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's treatment of the effect of political actions on the human problem. Four emphases in that treatment are considered.

In the first place, Rousseau is concerned about what can be called a tension between nature and society, a tension which is basic to the human situation as he sees it. He wants to distinguish between good nature and bad society and between a good, natural self and a bad, social self.

In the second place, closer scrutiny reveals that the tension between nature and society hinges on the problem of passion. Rousseau wants further to distinguish between good, natural passions and bad, social passions, and the political problem is always and everywhere the same: how to control the bad, social passions.

In the third place, there is a dialectical unity in Rousseau's treatment of the tension between nature and society. Contrary to many interpretations, he does not treat nature and society as concrete abstractions but only as hypothetical abstractions. His writings are consistent; he is both idealistic and realistic, theoretical and practical, optimistic and pessimistic.

In the fourth place, whether Rousseau is talking about individuals or societies there is a continuing emphasis on an organic cycle of life and death. An ironical situation develops in respect of political actions that affect the tension between

nature and society. Political actions have to be as natural as possible, but they confront nature as limit, in the form of a natural tendency on the part of individuals to place their own interests ahead of those of their fellows. Rousseau envisions no way out of that vicious circle, and we are, therefore, faced with the prospect of a never-ending cycle of life and death of all organic bodies, including bodies politic.

Those four emphases inform the structure of this thesis. The thesis is divided into a series of chapters dealing with different aspects of the tension between nature and society. The thesis begins with a discussion of how Rousseau himself dealt with the problems that he faced in his life, given that he considered himself an exemplar of what it meant to be both natural and human. The thesis then looks at the tension between nature and society viewed as hypothetical abstractions, after which the tension is considered from an historical perspective.

The centrepiece of the thesis consists of a discussion of how political actions can affect the tension between nature and society, through communitarian and egalitarian politics. The cycle is completed by showing why, in the long run, all bodies politic are bound to decay and die, bearing in mind, however, that regeneration is always possible.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

'LA SOCIETE EST NATURELLE A L'ESPECE HUMAINE
COMME LA DECREPITUDE A L'INDIVIDU.'

About seven years ago I prepared a comprehensive paper on the relationship between the individual and the community in the writings of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Marx. My interest in the life and work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau dates from that time. At that time I was something of a 'Marxist'. I had, quite literally, been inspired by a reading of Marx's early work, On the Jewish Question (1843). I suddenly saw what Marx was talking about, and perhaps more important, I saw how vital was his way of talking about the relationship between the individual and the community. I understood what it meant to be a dialectical thinker. I was, then, rather inclined to think of Marx's writings as something of a culmination in the understanding of the relationship between the individual and the community and of how an ideal relationship between the two might best be achieved. Drawing upon an understanding of philosophy, politics and economics, Marx's writings seemed to offer a way to join theory with practice, ideals with reality. His confidence that history was unfolding in the service of ideals was a formidable answer to the question of how to reconcile individual with community in a truly human way.

I soon realised that Jean-Jacques Rousseau had no such confidence in the conjunction of theory with practice. Rousseau was, to say the least, tentative about the human pro-

spect. He was certainly influenced by the contemporary tendency to think about human development in evolutionary terms, but he was decidedly ambivalent about whether that development had been for better or worse. The first thing that impressed me about Rousseau was, therefore, his utterly realistic appraisal of the simultaneity of progress and decay in humankind's evolution.

The second thing that impressed me about Rousseau was his willingness to expose his private self to public scrutiny. Those who write discursively are usually reluctant to talk about themselves and their inner feelings, let alone use their so-called private feelings and experiences as a basis for their public actions and utterances. Rousseau displayed no such reluctance to talk about himself and to use his own self as one criterion of validity for his ideas. In so doing we can at once remark a source of tension in his life, which has been a subject of much debate ever since. On the one hand, his habit of sincerely confessing his innermost feelings sometimes bordered on self-indulgence, thus calling into question his attempt to ground his ideas in his own person. Was he just a solipsist? On the other hand, the fact that he insisted on people's lives being grounded in their own feelings and experiences gives a very important affective dimension to his work. In fact, I soon realised that one of the central problems in Rousseau's work concerns the question of what to do about human passions. That problem will loom large in what follows.

Suppose, then, we were to ask ourselves an obvious question, why would anyone want to concern himself with Jean-Jacques Rousseau today? I do not think that it is enough to say that we want to find out about his way of talking about this or that question in political philosophy, for that does no justice to the moral fervour which is so central in his writings. I think that we continue to read Rousseau because he still has a great deal to tell us about ourselves. He is not simply a man of his own time, he is in some measure a man for all time, as all great thinkers are. It may simply be that the complexities of the human situation continue, as ever, to fascinate us; or it may be that Rousseau's particular combination of optimism and pessimism is just as appealing as the confidence of one such as Marx. Whatever the reason, I have derived enormous pleasure from the task of unravelling just what Rousseau does have to tell us about 'the great art of living together', as the poet Bertolt Brecht has put it. I have found that Rousseau has a great deal to tell us about what it means to be human, living in a society that is far from perfect, and trying to retain a sense of what things could be like without giving in to despairing cynicism or ascending to starry-eyed idealism. In this thesis I intend to show how successfully Rousseau treads the fine line between idealism and realism, which will also entail demonstrating the logic of his position. There are obvious limitations in Rousseau's view of the human prospect but they are enclosed

within his writings; his writings are internally consistent and the limitations must be seen as arising from his realistically appraising the likelihood of things actually unfolding as the moralist would like them to do. In Rousseau's writings there is a continuing dialogue between the moralist and the practical philosopher.

It has been said of Jean-Jacques Rousseau that he presented 'the human problem in its variety in greater depth and breadth than any of his successors.'⁽¹⁾ This thesis attempts to explain what happens when political actions are brought to bear on the human problem. What are the possibilities of intervening in the 'historical process' as Rousseau understands it? What political actions can ameliorate the apparent defects in human society? Can we intervene in history to improve the lot of humankind? Can we, in fact, alter the course of human history?

First of all, we must ask an important question. What, precisely, constitutes the human problem? There would seem to be two aspects to that problem, firstly, that we all die, and, secondly, that we all die alone. Conversely, however, the human problem is a political problem, because there are better and worse ways to die and because political action can to some extent overcome that aloneness through living in community with similar others.

Human mortality is aptly characterised in a passage from Emile:

By nature men are neither kings, nobles, courtiers, nor millionaires. All men are born poor and naked, all are liable to the sorrows of life, its disappointments, its ills, its needs, its sufferings of every kind; and all are condemned at length to die. This is what it means to be human, this is what no mortal can escape.⁽²⁾

On the other hand, there are, as we have just said, better and worse ways to die. One can die in one's own bed, one can die in defence of one's homeland, one can die a slave, or one can die a master. The fact that there is a difference between these ways of dying is constitutive of a moral and political dimension to life.

At a certain ontological level one is always alone; one lives in solitude, and one dies alone. We need, however, to beware of treating the solitary individual as a philosophical and political abstraction. We can reasonably expect to share some portion of our lives with other solitary individuals. Communication between people is a measure both of their distance from each other and of a desire on the part of each individual to go some way towards closing the perceived gap between them. Individuals can be understood as similar others and society can be understood both as the setting wherein these communications take place and as the setting that is created as a result of successfully overcoming individual differences.

Underlying all of these questions is the fact that human life is full of tension. There is a tension between life and death, between theory and practice, between ideals

and reality, between self and others, and between the individual and the community. Wherever and whenever people attempt to live together there emerges the problem of their not always getting along with each other. The notion of tension aptly captures both the problems and the possibilities that are involved in the attempts made by human beings to live together. The notion of tension aptly captures the sense of a balance between opposing forces, and of the creative as well as the destructive elements in that balance. It is, therefore, a more apt term than conflict, which usually presupposes a permanent absence of any balance between the opposing forces; it is also more apt than the term contradiction, which suggests that the forces negate each other. That is not to deny that the notion of tension does not sometimes involve both conflict and contradiction, as we shall see in what follows.

In my view, the central political focus in Rousseau's treatment of the human problem is the tension between what he called nature and society, and that tension is the central concern of this work. I shall now discuss the notion of a tension between nature and society much more fully, indicating in general terms how Rousseau felt about it. After that, I shall discuss a particular aspect of the tension as it relates to Rousseau's apparent tendency to treat either or both nature and society as abstractions and to idealise one at the expense of the other. I shall then show how the notion of a

tension between nature and society informs the structure of this thesis and I shall conclude by giving an outline of the succeeding chapters.

The point of distinguishing nature from society, as Rousseau was at pains to do, is to show that a natural life is a life that is relatively free of tension. A social life, by contrast, is full of tension. That tension is exacerbated in some forms of social life, especially as Rousseau sees it, in the civil society of his own day. Life is never without tension, as we have already implied in discussing the human problem. There is always going to be a tension between life and death, the two poles of nature. The point is that certain forms of life are easier to bear, and only in the hypothetical life of the state of nature is there going to be least tension. That is also why communal life must be as natural as possible, if we want to lessen the destructive elements in the tension. It is important to see what life in the hypothetical state of nature might really have been like, because we are looking for moral criteria, the most important criteria of all in society. There are other criteria of a natural life but the moral criteria are most important. We have to know what is involved in living with other people and how the difficulties might best be overcome. The state of nature is, therefore, both a hypothetical starting point of human history and a criterion of the natural, and, by extension, the moral way of life.

We need to discuss the way of life of a natural man in

the state of nature, one who is least subject to social forces. The story of young Emile's development is an allegorical extension of the same principle. In fact, the turning point in young Emile's life is when he is on the threshold of entry into society life. That point represents a crisis in his life, and Rousseau can be credited with the discovery of what is now referred to as the 'adolescent crisis'. The most important aspect of that crisis hinges on the question of what to do with one's passions, especially one's sexual passions.⁽³⁾

The most important features of a natural life, as it is experienced by an inhabitant of the state of nature or by a contemporary individual such as Emile, are its self-sufficiency, its solitariness, and its unaesthetic, unimaginative and relatively passionless quality. By extension--and this is most important from a moral point of view--it is a harmless life. In preserving oneself as naturally as possible, one does least harm to others who must also clothe, feed and house themselves.

As we have just said, the most important feature of a natural life from a moral point of view is that it is relatively passionless. In fact, the critical question in all of Rousseau's writings is the question of what to do about human passions, be they one's own or those of other people. Everything hinges on the question of passion. What passions are natural? On what are our passions based? How aware are we of our passions and of what it means to follow them? How do we

control the excesses of passion to which we are so likely to be subject in civil society? Do we, in fact, want to control our passions?⁽⁴⁾

Civil society is characterised--Rousseau was neither the first nor the last to characterise it in this fashion--precisely as a battleground in which simply to survive involves competition with others. The root problem of civil society is scarcity. Scarcity was always, and may always be, a problem,⁽⁵⁾ but its resolution was made much easier in the 'panorama' of the true state of nature where there was no notion of an exclusive right of property, involving a need to see others as potential obstacles to one's own self-preservation. When a few people have laid hold of the available resources and have, in contemporary terms, offered the rest no alternative but to sell their labour in conditions approximating to wage slavery, it becomes most difficult for the great mass of people to provide for their needs except by suppressing all that is most natural in themselves. Thus, natural inequalities are exacerbated by social and political inequalities that make things even worse for the weaker members of society. Pity for the weak may be, as Rousseau was at pains to argue, a natural feeling, but it is a lot to expect from people who have continually to guard themselves against the likely encroachments of others on their property, be that property land, goods, or their own selves. People develop fear in society. They have to defend themselves,

leading to the institutionalisation of inequalities and to such polities as the 'bad' one of the Second Discourse.

In Rousseau's view, there are natural passions and there are social passions. How are they to be distinguished and how do the social passions arise? Their individual development can be traced in Emile in whose life the turning point is, as we have said above, his attainment of sexual maturity. Their social development can be traced in such works as the Second Discourse; their moral aspects can be seen in the Letter to D'Alembert, which is concerned with the portrayal of passions on the theatre stage in particular and with the control of passions in general. Passions thus assume a political character, especially if an individual is diverted from his social responsibilities by his penchant for passionate excesses.

On what is the development of the passions based? Rousseau himself aptly sums it up as follows: 'Sensibility is the source of all the passions, imagination determines their course.'⁽⁶⁾ We begin with an awareness of ourselves as having a certain relationship to our surroundings, which might include other people; it will certainly include those adults who are our primary means of survival in the early years. Our first need is to survive, and that survival involves other people to varying degrees. Our survival is based on our sensory capacities, on our ability to organise the data of our senses into patterns of experience, and on

our awareness of the relation between different data. We compare, we make judgments, we make generalisations, based on our capacity to think, and, more important, to feel. 'I felt before I thought', as Rousseau said.⁽⁷⁾ Other people are felt to be obstacles or allies in the task of life. Our primary task, duty or obligation--but entailing little sense of a moral obligation to begin with--is to clothe, feed and house ourselves, and to avoid pain and hunger. Our primary feeling is, then, a concern for self, self-love or amour de soi, as Rousseau called it. That in itself is a general and universal phenomenon, with relatively little differentiation of the environment into distinct objects and impressions. We live in relatively undistinguished surrounds to begin with. The surround is our sphere.⁽⁸⁾ We gradually distinguish good from bad with more and more clarity, characterised as that which helps, as opposed to hinders, our survival. Tall fruit trees, deep rivers and raging storms hinder survival; good weather, enough rain, shady trees and fertile soil help survival. Other people-- and more of them--enter our sphere. We form impressions of them. Imagination begins to work, we become conscious of them, and Rousseau argues that we have what might be called a conscience about them, if we see them suffering. We want to help them in their misery. We may not be altruistic as such, but we don't mind helping.

We become more and more aware of ourselves as distinct, different and special. We have feelings of our own which make us both distinct from and similar to others. If we begin to

encounter other people as obstacles then we will begin to fear as well as like other people. We have to see ourselves as in some way competing with other people, especially if there are not enough resources to go around. We are going to compare ourselves more and more to other people as we become accustomed to their presence, and to their absence. We might even begin to miss people. Our comparisons are likely to engender a certain awareness of what we, as individuals are like in relation to others. Our self-love will begin to take on the attributes of a pride in ourselves. Pride is the 'earliest and the most natural' of the passions, says Rousseau.⁽⁹⁾ If, from our initial experience of life in a more social context, we are led to question our sense of ourselves and to develop a fear that we might not be able to survive on our own, then we are quite likely to develop a defensive and restrictive form of pride, one which involves an exclusive attitude to one's self. For example, we might have made a temporary and instrumental agreement to help someone if he or she would help us in return. Suppose that the other person failed to do what he or she agreed to do. We are likely to adopt a more defensive attitude to ourselves, one which can be characterised as more proprietary in nature. That is what Rousseau means by vanity, or amour-propre, as he called it, the hallmark of social man.

Our future history depends on what we experience--good or ill--with other people. From the point of view of

tension, we can say that the tension will begin to mount. That is not necessarily or always a bad thing. It is very important to remember that there is creative tension as well as destructive tension. Rousseau recognises that when he refers to what I call the simultaneity of progress and decay in human evolution.⁽¹⁰⁾ We can never know beforehand whether a given development is going to affect us for good or for bad. The point of 'perfectibility' is that we, as humans, have an inescapable margin of free choice in what we do.⁽¹¹⁾ We do not know until after the event what the results of our freely chosen actions are going to be. That is well seen in the development of the idea of private property, which combines both economic and moral aspects. From an economic point of view, private property might well seem to enhance our survival, no matter its disastrous consequences from a moral point of view. The question is, is morality intrinsic to us, as humans? It is, in that people are less likely to harm other people if there are enough resources to go around. If there are insufficient resources, or if certain ways of overcoming scarcity are followed, the survival of everyone could well be jeopardised, which is the pattern that Rousseau depicts in the Second Discourse. Therein lies the dilemma of development, and that is why certain sophisticated features of a developed social life turn out to be at a premium. That is the judgment of history. We could call this the imperialism of concepts of survival. More com-

plicated ways of survival drive out less complicated, just as bad money is said to drive out good. What, then, is to be done? We could in some way attempt to arrest the perceived path of development by intervening in a politically conscious way, and with the agreement of all concerned, so as to initiate conscious history and create a setting in which all are able to participate, and in which all share both the costs and the benefits of social life. The notions of equality and freedom are crucial in this conception of the politics of a social contract community. If the sphere of politics is too narrow, and if politics are organised to the exclusive benefit of the private passions of the more powerful individuals in the society, a power struggle will ensue; the survival of everyone will continue to be jeopardised, and a situation will result in which the end of survival will justify any and all means that are used. If the community can be constructed in as natural a way as possible, involving the reaching of reasonable compromises between people, then, it can be argued, there is no reason why people will not continue to use their reason and their intrinsic sense of pride in what they have achieved together to further their survival as a social unit.

It must be noted that Rousseau was far from equanimous concerning the ability and willingness of individuals to make the kinds of compromises necessary to keep the body politic alive and well. His political writings are replete with analyses of what happens when private passions continue to be the

basis of public life. In effect, the tension mounts and mounts and social life becomes unbearable. At no point, as we shall see in succeeding chapters, can any part of the process be called unnatural. It is all part of the basic tension between nature and society. For example, from a Rousseauian perspective the development of cooperative and interdependent production represents a great advance in human affairs. Unfortunately, however, that was achieved at the price of our progressively losing the ability to survive on our own, with a consequent loss of everything that is a beneficial result of our following our natural passions. Rousseau does not deny that we are sociable, or that we have it in us to become so. His concern is that we all too often become embroiled in living through other people, the more so in competitive settings like the contemporary civil society. We simply lose the ability to live alone; we forget how to balance the natural and the social, which itself involves costs and benefits. A natural life is hardly memorable, aesthetic, or beautiful; all is simple, banal and unaroused.

In summary, then, natural passions can be said to assume a more and more social character, and if the path of development is not itself natural, it becomes more and more difficult to live naturally. For instance, pride in appreciation of self, which would, however, soon burgeon if and when a male encountered a female who was felt to be a source

of attraction to him. More and more awareness of self would be experienced. A key question would then be to find a form of love that was natural and healthy and which did not involve the submersion of the self in social intercourse with others. How can love be prevented from assuming a dangerous and volatile character, as it is surely bound to do in society? Once again, all sense of the natural would be lost, everyone would be doing things for others, but in a slavish, conforming way. There could be no sincerity or authenticity in such a situation, and one would soon find that his inner self was at odds with his outer self, or, more precisely, that his outer self was at odds with his inner self. Over the whole situation can be seen to lie the pall, or perhaps the question, that was raised by Nietzsche in a comment on the agonies of Hamlet's self-consciousness: 'Knowledge kills action. Action requires the veils of illusion.' (12)

The question that is raised by Rousseau, as by thinking people everywhere, is whether we can do the right thing for the right reasons. Is it possible to act now in some awareness that what we are doing is right? The question is, if the state of nature involved an unconscious continuity of experience and civil society involves a conscious discontinuity of experience, is it possible to experience the conscious continuity of experience? Rousseau could give only a hypothetical answer to that question when he presented us with the model of life in the 'golden age', which can be called the

theoretical moment between the end of nature and the beginning of society , when natural and social passions were in balance and when communal life, such as it was, was truly festive. It remains a moot point whether the 'golden age' can be recreated in the here and now, in the form of a social contract community such as Rousseau proposed. As we have already said above, Rousseau doubted it, and we shall see why in later chapters of this work.

Having thus discussed in general terms the tension between nature and society, I shall now give some concrete examples of Rousseau's attitude to that tension, by considering a problem that always seems to be present when one considers Rousseau's life and work. When we look closely at what Rousseau says about nature and society it often appears that he wants to treat either or both of nature and society as abstractions and to idealise one at the expense of the other. To some people, therefore, Rousseau appears to want to abandon society altogether, to take off back into the forests, and to live there in solitary and natural splendour. On the other hand, Rousseau often appears to want to submerge the individual in some corporate prison that is called 'the social contract community', and all that as an answer to the problems of the prison of civil society!

In part, the problem arises from the fact that there are several distinct modes of discourse in Rousseau's numerous writings. We can distinguish, for example, Rousseau the man of nostalgic sensibility; Rousseau the moralist, judge and

critic of civil society; Rousseau the rhetorical writer; Rousseau the man of faith; and also, we must hasten to add, Rousseau the intelligent and practical philosopher. These modes of discourse frequently overlap within a single work, which only adds to the difficulty of finding out how he really felt about the tension between nature and society. Some examples should, however, give us a further idea of his position.

While Rousseau is always concerned with the political task of lessening the destructive aspects of the tension between nature and society, he is, at times, ambivalent about the desirability of living in society with one's fellows at all. For example, 'I think that, just as one must make war only in order to have peace, one must live in society only in order to love solitude and to enjoy some rest without tiring of it.'⁽¹³⁾ As Rousseau reviews the process whereby mankind became more and more social in its existence, not to mention his own feelings about his own upbringing and entry into society life, his writings provide ample testimony to his experiencing feelings of nostalgia, loss and even despair. A relatively mild example of this is to be found in the First Discourse: 'It is a lovely shore, adorned by nature's hands alone, toward which one turns one's eyes and from which one regretfully feels oneself moving away.'⁽¹⁴⁾ Later on in his life, his very real suffering at the hands of social and political powers-that-be, combined with his enforced peregrinations around Europe as a political refugee, produced feel-

ings of what we would now call paranoia and persecution. This must be at least partly responsible for the somewhat tormented writing that he undertook at the time, most noticeably in the Dialogues. In that work, the distinction between 'good' nature and 'bad' society is made really forcefully, so much so that he comes close to committing the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. Rousseau has the 'Frenchman' say:

I saw throughout the development of his great principle that nature has made man happy and good but that society corrupts him and renders him miserable. Take the Emile, much read but much misunderstood; it is nothing other than a treatise on the spontaneous goodness of man, meant to show vice and error, foreign to his constitution, invade it from outside and deteriorate it progressively.

In his first writings, he is more concerned to show and destroy the delusive prestige which caused us to admire stupidly the very means of our misery, and he seeks to correct this false valuation which causes us to honour mischievous talents and to despise beneficial virtues. Everywhere he shows us mankind better, wiser and happier in its primitive constitution; blind, miserable and nasty as it moves away from it. His goal is to correct the error of our judgments in order to check the progress of our vices. (15)

Note, however, that his concern is to 'check the progress of our vices', which is quite different from wanting to go 'back' to nature. A more subtle, and more dialectical, statement about society is found in the sub-title of this introductory chapter: 'Society is as natural to the human species as decrepitude is to the individual.' (16) This phrase evokes the image of society as a geriatric hospital. It is a place that one enters reluctantly when once one is unable to remain independent of one's fellows and fend for oneself. Society is, however,

natural, that is the point.

We must also remember that Rousseau never denies that society is here to stay, nor does he seriously consider either the desirability or the possibility of one's living alone, for all that he himself often felt that he had no alternative but to resort to his own company alone. At the end of one long and vehement discussion of the costs and benefits of social life Rousseau strenuously dismisses the idea of returning to the state of nature as an alternative to living in society:

What! Must we destroy societies, annihilate mine and thine, and go back to live in forests with bears? A conclusion in the manner of my adversaries which I prefer to anticipate rather than leave them the shame of drawing it. (17)

In the course of reviewing the social development of mankind, we shall see that one moment does stand out as cause for celebration of mankind's sociality, and that moment becomes a criterion for the hypothetical social contract community. That moment is the 'golden age', a hypothetical time in mankind's evolution when, in Rousseau's view, the creative elements and the destructive elements in the tension between nature and society were optimally balanced. 'Good' natural passions and 'bad' social passions were in balance, and communal life was truly festive.

The central place of compassion in Rousseau's thinking is another clear expression of his awareness of the untenability of abstracting an individual from his social context. When Rousseau does berate society for the harm that it has done to

our sense of what a natural life is or could be like, we have also to note the very strong rhetorical, and as we have pointed out above, the very personal element in much of his writings. As a moralist and critic of society, Rousseau is highly adept at making use of rhetorical flourishes, the better to reinforce his argument.

Neither should it be forgotten that Rousseau is a man of faith. His faith in individual human beings and societies might well have been stretched to the limit, by difficulties both real and imagined, but Rousseau continued to believe in a beneficent deity . God may not be visible or knowable in any concrete sense, but his presence can certainly be felt, perhaps most definitely in the form of conscience, always involving a feeling for Rousseau, which acts upon us prior to any conscious reflection on our part. To say only that conscience acts upon us is already to bias the issue, for conscience is an innate feeling and hardly amenable to rational discourse. One either believes or one does not, and in the final analysis, Rousseau denies that all is hazardous, and believes that there is a divine purpose in the world. In the context of a discussion of conscience as an innate feeling Rousseau states quite categorically that man is by nature sociable: 'Again, if, as it is quite impossible to doubt, man is by nature sociable, or at least fitted to become sociable . . .'(18)

The importance of Rousseau's faith will become more clear when we consider the politics of the social contract community, which is really set up only for one purpose: to maintain and en-

hance freedom, based ultimately on Rousseau's faith that we do want to be free and that freedom, in fact, is a divine gift that forms the essence of our humanness.

Claude Lévi-Strauss recognises the dialectical element in the tension between nature and society when he says that, 'Natural man did not precede society, nor is he outside it. Our task is to rediscover his form as it is immanent in the social state, mankind being inconceivable outside society . . .' (19) Rousseau would never state directly that natural man is 'immanent' in the social state (except, perhaps, in comments like the one which we have quoted above, that man is 'by nature sociable'). He would have accepted, however, Lévi-Strauss' interpretation that the 'indissoluble message' of some of his writings is that we should go back to the society of nature to reflect on the nature of society. (20) Chapter Three of this work explains that more fully.

As for the 'totalitarian' argument, Rousseau nowhere claims that a device exists whereby the 'general will' of the people will instantly be made knowable to all and sundry, and he nowhere claims that the government is in a position automatically to know where the 'general will' lies. (21) The whole point of the 'general will' is that it is an inherently hypothetical notion, and it can be understood only by someone who knows what it means to have faith. The 'general will' embodies a faith, a faith that the right and proper thing to do is knowable, that if a whole people could gather together, de-

liberate for a long period, or at least for as long as it takes to reach some understanding of what seems to be in the community's best interest, and if the whole people then took a vote, bearing in mind that the more important the issue, the closer to unanimity should the result be, what follows can reasonably be said to be an expression of the 'general will' of the people.

One, however, can never know what results will, in fact, be an expression of the 'general will' of the people. This has little or nothing to do with the obvious fact of inexperience, irrationality, or just plain self-interest on the part of the communards. It has to do, simply, with the fact that the future can be known only when it has become the past, i.e., after the fact. Any greater knowledge than that is simply the result of an act of faith on the individual's part, but, it must be said, no less valid for that. We should bear in mind that Rousseau-ean community politics do not simply consist of attempts to find ways of ascertaining what the 'general will' of the people is, or, to put it another way, they do not at all take for granted that the 'general will' of the people will, in fact, be as general as it needs to be, which is another way of saying the same thing. Thus, to the prime hypothetical importance of the 'general will' are added two other foci of community life: a massive political education programme and a political economy of equality, both of which are discussed in some detail in Chapter Five of this work.

It is true that the hypothetical has a habit of bordering on the contrived, but Rousseau certainly knew just how hypo-

thetical his arguments were. Between the hypothetical and the contrived there does intervene another element, the ability of the people at large to gather together and do the things that must be done to keep alive a body politic. Once again, we can really do no more than hope that it would work; as we shall see in what follows, Rousseau was far from confident that individual bodies politic could be kept alive beyond their point of natural death. Furthermore, as we have said above, there will always be some tension in life. Even if we were to find ourselves in a community where, for example, each gave according to his ability and each received according to his need, there would still be some problems arising from the fact that people are human, they are different, and they are often perverse. Everything that can be done to remove and prevent irrelevant barriers between people should be done. If, for example, scarcity is a problem and a certain way of producing and distributing the society's resources exacerbates the problem of scarcity, it should be changed. If some feelings that people have about each other are seen to cause problems in the community, something should clearly be done to try to alter those feelings, or outlets should be provided for them. When I say 'alter' those feelings, I do not have in mind some horrendous thought control programme, such as is practised on dissidents in the Soviet Union, and it will, hopefully, be quite clear that Rousseau would never have intended that either. I am simply recognising that the community does have some respons-

ibility to provide for the future, however contingent and hypothetical many elements in that future may appear to be. There is always going to be an element of the total about politics, given that they inhabit the realm between force and persuasion, or, on another dimension, between anarchy and total control from above.

The two spectres of Rousseau's rushing back to nature or rushing to impose total control in the community should be completely dispelled in what follows. I need hardly add, however, that Rousseau was hardly optimistic concerning the probability, or even the possibility, of actually putting his theories into practice. He is, above all, a moralist but his moral theories are completely practical as well. As we have said above, there is always a continuing dialogue between the moralist in Rousseau and the practical philosopher in him.

So far, I have discussed the notion of a tension between nature and society in general terms, indicating how it informs some of the themes that we shall be raising in subsequent chapters. I have also discussed a particular problem that arises when we consider his attitude to nature and society, namely, his apparent tendency to treat either or both of nature and society as abstractions and to idealise one at the expense of the other. It now remains to indicate how the notion of a tension between nature and society informs what follows.

There are three specific aspects to the tension between nature and society. First of all, the tension refers to a

hypothetical conflict between one's natural self and one's social self. Rousseau sees individual persons as divided in two, which division is best expressed in his distinction between natural self-love and social vanity. Secondly, the relationship between individual members of a society, at any particular time and place, can be thought of as a tension between them. That tension will frequently emerge as a conflict, or even a contradiction, between two social selves in which their better, natural selves are, as it were, rendered impotent. It is important to note that the division between and within individuals becomes more apparent as we review mankind's development in general, and individual development in particular, over time. It requires of us, therefore, that we view mankind in an historical perspective, and Rousseau was one of the first theorists to do this.⁽²²⁾ Thirdly, there can be a tension between the individual and the community, in which the community represents the recreation of natural self-love on a universal level and a transcendence of the restrictive social selves of the individual members. In that sense, the community is like nature writ large, at odds with the proprietary self of civil society. We should also note that the tension between individual and community could occur within the person of an individual communard as well as between individual communards.

In this thesis I shall deal with those three aspects of the tension between nature and society in a series of chapters which are headed as follows: nature and society, society and history, history and politics, and politics and nature.

There is a logical sequence to the chapters, and taken together they represent an organic cycle which runs as follows: nature--society--history--politics--nature. I shall now give a specific chapter outline.

In Chapter Two of this work I look at Rousseau's own life as an individual case study of what he discusses in his more discursive works. Rousseau's own life can be seen as a case study of the ways in which one individual tried to cope with the tension between nature and society in his own life and of that individual's felt need of moral justification of himself and his actions.

In Chapter Three of this work I consider the tension between nature and society in an unhistorically way. I do as Rousseau did, which is to recreate the state of nature as a hypothetical point prior to the beginning of history. That leads to a discussion of the distinction between one's natural and social selves and of the distinction between a natural way of life and the way of life of an individual member of civil society. The centrepiece of that discussion concerns the passions, and it will be seen that, while Rousseau is reluctant to concede that social passions such as vanity are natural, the philosopher in him always knows that they are, and that it is logically untenable to say that man is not both natural and social.

In Chapter Four of this work I discuss the tension between nature and society from an historical perspective by re-

viewing the history of mankind's social development. From that perspective, we will again observe the reluctance with which Rousseau admits that 'evil' social man has developed quite naturally from his beginnings in the hypothetical 'good' state of nature. We shall see that, for Rousseau, the society of the 'golden age', for instance, represents an attempt by him to abstract society from the perceived and received course of history so far. The fact that he usually views any attempt, as it were, to stay in the 'golden age' as totally impossible demonstrates just how realistic he is. By the end of Chapter Four, civil society has become completely antithetical to nature. The destructive elements in the tension between nature and society are paramount and the body politic, such as it is, faces imminent death, due to three factors: firstly, such purposive political interventions as have taken place have been of a makeshift, piecemeal variety; secondly, the body politic simply insitutionalised the social and political inequalities that resulted from the free rein given to individuals' pursuing their own interests and from the fact that naturally stronger individuals were able to acquire more goods and possessions in the competitive scramble that followed the invention of an exclusive property right; and, thirdly, community education and the experience of participating in public life were inadequate, by themselves, to create a virtuous citizenry.

Chapter Five is the centrepiece of this work. In that Chapter I re-open the case of the body politic and inquire whether a more creative tension between nature and society can

come about as a result of conscious political interventions against the history of mankind's social development. Can we, through political actions, transcend the restrictive life of civil society by creating a new focus for individuals' attention, the community? It can be seen, therefore, that politics actually appear rather late on the scene of Rousseau's oeuvre, although he certainly knew how important they were. Politics do not, however, have any natural autonomy, for all that political interventions must be as natural as possible, given that the natural is always both an ethical criterion for, and a limit to, human actions. In Chapter Five I consider the theoretical and hypothetical aspects of life in a social contract community, after which I demonstrate how theory would be translated into the main practical concerns of a Rousseauian community politics, a mass politicisation programme and a political economy of equality.

Chapter Six is a lesson in 'reality principle'. In other words, Rousseau's realism will be quite apparent as we concentrate on a realistic appraisal of the tension between nature and society. That involves showing why, in Rousseau's view, even comprehensive political interventions in history are doomed to failure in the long run. That will further demonstrate the difficulty of maintaining a distinction between a good, natural individual and a bad society, as Rousseau tried to do. The good individual is also a bad member of that self-same society, and he has passions and

interests which tend to be at odds with those of his fellows. Quite naturally, he tends to place his interests above those of his fellows, with grave results for the survival of the body politic. All is not lost, however, as it is always possible that out of the anarchy that results from the institutionalisation of despotic government will emerge a more legitimate government. That possibility notwithstanding, we find ourselves back at the beginning again, in the form of the ever-present tension between nature and society as both possibility and limit to human endeavours. We shall, perhaps, emerge both sadder and wiser, fully able to appreciate the profundity of T. S. Eliot's words:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time. (23)

Finally, in the Conclusion, I shall make some closing remarks concerning Rousseau's treatment of the whole question of the individual and the community, and I shall end with some examples of his personal attempts to put theory into practice.

NOTESCHAPTER ONE

¹Allan Bloom, 'Rousseau', in the History of Political Philosophy (Chicago, 1962), ed. Leo Strauss and David Storey, p. 552.

²Emile*, p. 183.

³Ibid., p. 378. Rousseau's exact words are these: 'Works on education are crammed with wordy and unnecessary accounts of the imaginary duties of children; but there is not a word about the most important and most difficult part of their education, the crisis which forms the bridge between the child and the man.' That crisis is dealt with in detail in Book IV of Emile, where we find the most interesting comments on the 'passions'. See Chapter Three below for details.

⁴The debate continues. In 1968 P. E. Trudeau urged us to put 'la raison avant la passion', words which inspired a ghastly cinematographic commentary on Canada by Joyce Wieland.

⁵A contemporary treatment of the problem of scarcity is to be found in R. D. Laing and David Cooper, Reason and Violence (London, 1964), especially at pp. 114-115.

⁶Emile, p. 180.

⁷Confessions, p.19. See also Emile, p. 253.

⁸See, for example, Rousseau's own comment on his 'sphere', in the Eighth Promenade, Reveries, pp. 156-157: 'When everything was in order around me, when I was content with all that surrounded me, and with the sphere in which I had to live, I filled it with my affection.' We shall return to the implications of that image in the concluding chapter.

⁹Emile, p. 171.

¹⁰See, for a fine example, Second Discourse, p. 175.

* Please refer to the Bibliography for full citation of the editions of Rousseau's works referred to in this thesis.

¹¹See ibid., pp. 114-115, 105, 138.

¹²Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy (New York, 1966), Section 7, p. 60. Note that nature is frequently referred to as 'veiled' by Rousseau, although he is not referring to the same agonies of self-consciousness as is Nietzsche.

¹³Remarques en marge des Lettres sur les Anglais et les Français de Muralt (O.C., II, p. 1139). Two important features of a 'natural' life are contained here, solitude and indolence, which will be discussed below.

¹⁴First Discourse, p. 54.

¹⁵O.C., I, p. 936. For a discussion of the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness', see Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (Glencoe, Ill., 1967), pp. 50-51, 57-59.

¹⁶The phrase is from Rousseau's letter to a M. Philopolis, a pseudonym used by Charles Bonnet of Geneva, who had written a criticism of Rousseau's Second Discourse (O.C., III, p. 232).

¹⁷Second Discourse, note i, p. 201. One of his adversaries who entirely misread his intentions was Voltaire; he addressed a letter to Rousseau which began as follows: 'I have received, Sir, your new book against the human race . . . One is seized with a desire to walk on all fours when reading your work.' (O.C., III, p. 1379). One of the few contemporaries of Rousseau who fully understood what he was trying to do was the Swiss-born artist, Henry Fuseli. See his Remarks on the Conduct and Writings of J.J. Rousseau (1767).

¹⁸Emile, p. 253.

¹⁹Claude Lévi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques (New York, 1975), p. 392.

²⁰Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau, fondateur des sciences de l'homme', in Samuel Baud-Bovy, et al., Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Neuchâtel, 1962), p. 248.

²¹A contemporary version of this argument was given by the then Secretary of State, John Roberts, in an address to the Rousseau Bicentennial Congress, at Trent University, Peterborough, in June, 1978. The speaker compared Rousseau's discussion of the 'general will' with the current political

situation in Quebec. He discussed Rousseau's 'claim' that a device exists whereby 'we' could know what the people want, or, in other words, that the 'general will' is inherently knowable. The speaker had in mind the present situation in Quebec, where the Parti Quebecois government would have liked the 'general will' of the Quebecois to express itself in favour of separation from the rest of Canada; what he did not like were the 'totalitarian' implications of the Quebec government's claiming to speak in the name of Quebec when it said that Quebec would, in fact, separate. He may have given expression to solidly federal political thinking, but it was very poor Rousseau--and the audience knew it.

²²See, for example, Ronald Meek, 'Political theory and Political Economy, 1750-1800', paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference for the Study of Political Thought, Toronto, April 19-20, 1974.

²³T.S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding', in his Four Quartets (London, 1959), p.59.

CHAPTER TWO

'ME VOICI DONC, SEUL SUR LA TERRE.'

A contemporary commentator has said that there is a 'close connection between the systematic and the existential' in Rousseau's life and work.⁽¹⁾ In this chapter, we shall look at Rousseau's own life as a case study of what, in general terms, he discusses in his more discursive works. Our purpose is not to give a biographical account of Rousseau's life; it is rather to illuminate some key features of his life as he lived it, of the frustrations and happiness that he experienced, and of how Rousseau tried to resolve--or at least to live with--the tension between nature and society which, as we have said in our introduction, is the central tension in his life and work.

Rousseau viewed himself as typical of the human race, for all that he also regarded himself as unique. In the Confessions he was concerned 'in some way to make my soul transparent to the reader's eye' and to give the reader 'the history of my soul'.⁽²⁾ In his other confessional works there is clear evidence that he viewed his own soul as a model for his conception of a 'natural' man. In one of his letters he speaks of 'that inner feeling, which is that of nature herself'; in his Dialogues he calls himself an 'historian of the human heart' and the apologist of nature, taking his model from 'his own heart'; in the Reveries, especially in the Third

Promenade, he is at pains to maintain that his innermost being corresponds to how the world ought to be, as, for example, when he asserts:

No; vain arguments do not destroy ever the agreement which I perceive between my immortal being and the constitution of this world, and the physical order that I see reigning there; I have found in the corresponding moral order, the system of which is the result of my researches, those footholds which I need to support the miseries of my life.⁽³⁾

That recalls the claim that there is a close connection between the 'systematic and the existential' in Rousseau's life and work. How close is the connection? That is very hard to say, as in modern parlance, it raises the question of the neurotic basis of artistic expression. We can, however, begin to explore the systematic-existential connection by showing how Rousseau's personal experiences illuminate the discussion of the tension between nature and society.

We know that there was a discrepancy between Rousseau's conception of a moral world, confirmed by his innermost feelings about himself, and the contemporary world in which he lived, and that is one of the ways in which the tension between nature and society manifested itself. In other words, while in no way urging us to go 'back' to the state of nature, Rousseau had great difficulty in reconciling himself to life in eighteenth-century civil society. Would he have written quite as well as he did, and on so many different themes, had he personally not suffered so much, in reality or in imagination, at the hands of society?

That raises the question of the 'good' faith of the writer, of which, as we shall see, Rousseau was fully aware. It is clear that writing serves as an outlet for the feelings of the writer, and in that sense we can certainly say that both the content and the genre of Rousseau's writings are a reflection of how he felt at the time of writing. For example, La Nouvelle Héloïse obviously served as an outlet for Rousseau's own suppressed feelings and aspirations. In the Confessions he describes how that literary work was used as solace for the impossible dream of ever achieving an acceptable relationship with Mme. D'Houdetot, for whom Rousseau says that he experienced the strongest feelings of love in his entire life.

He had started to write the letters which make up La Nouvelle Héloïse before he met Mme. D'Houdetot, and they were initially based on his pleasure in recalling the loves of his life. Sadness and pleasure were, however, mixed from the start as none of his past loves had quite lived up to his ideal:

The impossibility of attaining the real persons precipitated me into the land of chimaeras; and seeing nothing that existed worthy of my exalted feelings, I fostered them in an ideal world which my creative imagination soon peopled with beings after my own heart.⁽⁴⁾

The real thing then appeared in the form of Rousseau's relationship with Mme D'Houdetot, their love was sacrificed on the altar of social convention, and the story of La Nouvelle Héloïse was given its final form. Rousseau seems to have felt slightly irresponsible in so indulging his fancies, perhaps thinking that his time should have been spent in exposing further moral out-

rages like the proposal to establish a theatre in the hitherto virtuous community of Geneva, which proposal prompted him to write his Letter to D'Alembert on the Theatre in just three weeks in 1758.

From that example it is obvious that Rousseau used his writings as an outlet for his feelings, and as compensation for the difficulties of life 'here below', as he was wont to express it.⁽⁵⁾ In this regard Rousseau is also exemplary of the human race in general as it seeks to find compensations for the pain of living so far removed from nature, in the 'abyss' of civil society, where the future is unknown and fraught with danger. Just as the human race in general finds compensations in such activities as love, language and music, so too did Rousseau. He spent his whole life in search of lasting and fulfilling love, and he amazed himself with the discovery that even at the relatively advanced age of forty-four, he could fall so deeply in love with Mme. D'Houdetot, his 'first and only love', in fact, if what he wrote in the Confessions is to be believed.⁽⁶⁾

It is perhaps surprising that there should be any question about the truth of Rousseau's own account of his life, but here too Rousseau's is a typical case study. If one could ever give an absolutely unmediated expression of one's feelings, then one would have no need to concern himself with giving a 'true' account of his feelings, as well as an account of his motives, and the likely effects of his acting as he did. It is part of the human situation that, excepting moments--usually

brief--of semi-mystical or even mystical experience, one is usually assailed by doubt as one seeks to say why one did something, or even as one seeks to describe what one did. Rousseau was certainly prey to such doubts. In part the problem is a very general one, having to do with the impossibility of ever overcoming the gap between sign and meaning which, in one writer's view, is the distinguishing feature of literary writing; and discursive writing differs only in degree, not in kind.⁽⁷⁾ To begin with, there would have been less of a problem, as the human race can be considered to have communicated through sounds which would now approximate to musical chantings. That is why Rousseau felt that music was a much less unnatural form of speech than was, for example, prose, clearly the language of those who had fallen into civil society and who felt the need to be forever explaining and justifying themselves. Rousseau himself was no exception to that kind of lapse, as he admitted in the preface to his play Narcisse, for example.⁽⁸⁾ He was usually less willing to admit that amour-propre was perhaps as strong a force in his own life as in everybody else's. However, in the relatively graceful period during which he wrote the Reveries he did come round to admitting that, in the matter of the conspiracy against him, his amour-propre was probably working as much as anybody else's.⁽⁹⁾

Rousseau was concerned not only with giving as true an account of himself as he could but also with justifying himself. His confessional works are all concerned with the difficulties

of an individual who has been trying to live as ethical a life as he can in most difficult circumstances, and who feels the need to justify his behaviour and attitudes both to the world at large and to individual readers of his works. In fact, a very interesting rhetorical situation is set up in the confessional works between Rousseau as accuser and accused and the reader of the works. In the Dialogues that situation is made quite explicit in the form of a dialogue between Rousseau himself and a typical reader of his works, the 'Frenchman'. The reader is expected to be the final judge of the works in question but quite frequently Rousseau is sufficiently confident of his own position to feel no need of any outside validation at all.⁽¹⁰⁾

The problems of truth, self-justification and the felt need to express oneself as sincerely, or, in more modern parlance, as authentically as possible only arise once one has become aware of himself as a distinct self, surrounded by other, equally distinct selves.⁽¹¹⁾ It is as if one spends one half of one's life in ignorance of one's discrete individuality and the other half trying to rediscover that uniqueness through the mediation of others. Such an awareness usually occurs much earlier than half-way through one's life, however. For the human race in general, as we shall see in later chapters, the distinct experience of other people as potential obstacles to one's own aspirations comes only with the invention of property, an invention which in Rousseau's view completes the transformation of natural love of self into its social negation, vanity.

For individuals like Rousseau, the experience usually occurs much earlier in one's life. For Rousseau, the distinctive experience appears to have been the occasion when he was unjustly accused of the theft of Mme. Lambercier's comb. That experience made Rousseau aware both of the need to justify oneself when in society with others and of the likelihood that one will be condemned by appearances. In other words, that was the first occasion when the truth did not speak for itself and when human accountability was found to be necessary. Once having fallen by accident into a society that frequently borders on the downright unauthentic, human beings find it hard to climb back out again. In Rousseau's own case, that first unjust accusation was followed by others, in some of which he did actually lie, in order to save appearances, as in the case of his laying the blame for the theft of an employer's ribbon on a servant girl, a crime to which, in his Confessions, he immediately admits. That case is exemplary of Rousseau's feeling that man in general is good but men are evil, the cornerstone of his account of an individual's development as he describes it in Emile.⁽¹²⁾

In society, then, one has to be concerned with a literal truth, the truth of events, motives and results. That gives rise to a language that is discursive, didactic and analytical. There is another form of truth that is much closer to that desired by Rousseau, a literary truth in which the most important ingredient is that one be true to oneself.

That entails less of an involvement with the literal, historical truth of what happened when and where than with conveying truthfully how one felt on particular occasions. It is like a general truth, the truth of one's feelings. With that kind of almost mythological truth Rousseau was deeply concerned.⁽¹³⁾

Like the human race in general, he felt before he thought, and he spent the rest of his life trying to convey how he really felt in various situations. We end up with an almost mythological account of one man's life, as he himself felt and experienced it. As one writer has said of Rousseau, his concern was this: 'Make yourself a myth; make yourself, a myth.'⁽¹⁴⁾ In mythological terms, the contradiction between the real and the unreal in life is resolved in imagination remembered, in poetic truth; and it is not just an individual life story such as Rousseau's that is resolved in this way, but, potentially at least, all of experience. Experience is conceived over time, and time gives structure to present experience. In Rousseau's own words:

I have studied men, and I think I am a fairly good observer. But all the same I do not know how to see what is before my eyes; I can see clearly only in retrospect, it is only in my memories that my mind can work . . . afterwards it all comes back to me, I remember the place and the time, the tone of voice and look, the gesture and situation; nothing escapes me. . . Not only do I recall times and places and persons but all the objects surrounding them, the temperament of the air, the smells and colours, and a certain local colour only to be felt there, the sharp recollection of which carries me back there again.⁽¹⁵⁾

One writer has said of Rousseau that 'His passions have become the atmosphere in which we move.'⁽¹⁶⁾ And yet, it is not

so much Rousseau's passions as Rousseau's feelings that most impress us after all these years. He can be said to have inhabited a pre-romantic universe in which the main element was feeling, or sensibility.⁽¹⁷⁾ He lived in a time of transition from the purely rational style of expressing oneself--'I think, therefore I am', in Descartes' classic adage--to the completely passionate style of giving fullest expression to one's feelings that reached its peak in the romantic movement of the next century. For Rousseau, the point was to write with both feeling and reason, and it can justifiably be argued that feelings usually come up against an implacable social wall of reason, especially in such works as La Nouvelle Héloïse, where the love between St. Preux and Julie is sacrificed on the altar of social convention. For all that the poet Byron immortalised the romantic sensibility in his notion of 'wild Rousseau', he did realise that, for Rousseau, feelings were still only felt rather than acted out, to adopt modern parlance. One of the many stanzas that Byron wrote about Rousseau amply conveys this understanding:

Here the self-torturing sophist, wild Rousseau,
The apostle of Affliction, he who threw
Enchantment over Passion, and from Woe
Wrung overwhelming eloquence, first drew
The breath which made him wretched; yet he knew
How to make Madness beautiful, and cast
O'er errands deeds and thoughts, a heavenly hue
Of words, like sunbeams, dazzling as they past
The eyes, which o'er them shed tears feelingly and fast.⁽¹⁸⁾

As we have noted, Rousseau's is the story of one who felt before he thought, the story of a man who was highly imaginative, sensitive and passionate, and capable of deep love and affection.⁽¹⁹⁾ To those terms we would probably want to

add the more modern notion of intense, because it is obvious that Rousseau himself was full of the kinds of tensions that make a person outstanding, both in his own time and since. It is often forgotten just how intensively Rousseau experienced life, not least because of the number of different activities that he undertook in his lifetime. He was, first and foremost, an artist, but he was also a philosopher, a watch-maker, an engraver, an ambassador's secretary, a music copyist, a composer, a poet, a playwright, a novelist, a tutor, a political writer, a husband, a lover, and so on. Like most artists, he was subject to varying fits of temperament. His intense energies might well have been rooted in psycho-sexual problems but that is not really relevant to our consideration of his importance as a thinker and artist; on the other hand, it is in no way to detract from his greatness if we do admit that his persecution complex and his problem with urine retention probably intensified the energies that he brought to bear on his work.

Rousseau lived his life at varying degrees of intensity. In the Reveries, he clearly contemplates his own death, and with something quite close to equanimity, but he had felt himself close to death as early as 1738 when the ailments that were to affect him on and off for the rest of his life first began. The sense of being sometimes very sick and sometimes very healthy resolved itself in some degree in what we have come to call masochism, and it also led him to feel that he had only 'really lived' at conflicting periods in his life.

In the Confessions, therefore, as well as in the Reveries, he refers to the time with Mme. de Warens--'Maman', as he called her--as that time when he really 'lived', with the added comment in the Confessions that this came immediately after thinking that he was going to die. In other words, he starts to live only after thinking that he was going to die. On the other hand, in his fourth letter to M. de Malesherbes, in 1762, he says that he only began to live in 1756 when he left the city of Paris for the relative solitude of the Hermitage, the country house which Mme. d'Epinaÿ had refurbished for her 'bear', as she called him. On that occasion he was concerned that M. de Malesherbes should know just how important it was for him not to leave France on account of the publication of such works as Emile and the Social Contract. In fact, Rousseau was fairly circumspect regarding the publication of the Social Contract and it was the radical tenor of his religious views in Emile that led to his falling foul of both the French and Genevan powers that be, which led to his having to live the wandering life of a refugee. (20)

One effect of living in a state of flux, as Rousseau characterises life 'here below', is to increase the tensions and paradoxes that are involved in existence in time. This is well seen in the mutually exclusive descriptions of himself that Rousseau gives us in the Confessions. To give but a few examples of this tendency, he describes himself at dif-

ferent times as: hard to rouse/hard to restrain; calm/passionate; sordid and avaricious/contemptuous of money; timid, docile and indolent in ordinary life/proud, fiery and inflexible when aroused; frightened of conversation/furiously desiring to chatter; quick and emotional/slow thinker; sick/healthy; close to death/closest to life. ⁽²¹⁾

Obviously, both sides of the apparent contradiction are true at different times, sometimes even at the same time. Both are accepted, the apparent contradiction is even admitted to, and only the actual experience of living in time resolves the contradiction, and then usually in the form of the memory of the experience, which allows a more distanced and perhaps even a more immediately intimate recollection of the experience to be given. As we have said, experience is felt over time, and time gives structure to experience, which permits a more accurate, if more poetical account to be given of it.

Another effect of living in a state of flux is to make it very hard to attain any lasting happiness. ⁽²²⁾ For that is perhaps the main purpose of life, and it was certainly the main purpose of Rousseau's life. Obviously, it is essential that one be free to live as one pleases and that is why liberty is defined for the individual in terms of not having to do what one does not want to do, rather than, for example, in terms of positively encouraging people to do what they want to do. ⁽²³⁾ Happiness is rather a difficult notion to define in any precise way. As Rousseau himself says:

'Indeed, true happiness is quite indescribable; it can only be felt, and the stronger the feeling the less it can be described, because it is not the result of a collection of facts but a permanent state.'⁽²⁴⁾ All the more reason, then, for Rousseau to be concerned with the felt truth of the memory of the various experiences of his life, rather than with exact details of time and place. On the other hand, when Rousseau says that happiness is a 'permanent state', he can only mean that in a transitory sense, for the whole point is that it is incredibly difficult to achieve any kind of lasting happiness in this life. Rousseau himself certainly found it difficult enough, what with having to contend with social inequalities, conspiracies real and imagined, more and less severe depressions, illnesses and persecution.

As can be imagined, there is an ambivalence in Rousseau as to whether lasting happiness is to be found in society with other people or whether one can find it only on one's own. It is impossible ever to know whether Rousseau would have said and done the things he did had he, for example, found a lasting and fulfilling relationship with any one woman. He certainly seems to have spent much of his life in search of just such a dream, and it is no small part of what we call the romantic in him that he did so. Without in any way wishing to subscribe to psychohistorical explanations that seek to reduce a person's life and work to some traumatic

experience(s) early in life, we can say that the absence of a mother must have had a major effect on him. Just how major we cannot, thankfully, ever know, but he himself does allude to the fact that he cost his mother her life, and that 'my birth was the first of my misfortunes';⁽²⁵⁾ however, we cannot really know whether he is simply indulging in slightly masochistic and self-indulgent notions at that point. It is no detriment to the love that Rousseau felt for Mme. de Warens if we say that she was in many important ways a mother-substitute for him. After all, the very name 'Maman' testifies to this fact; so does his own account of his sexual initiation with 'Maman' in which he admits to feeling that there was something slightly incestuous in his relationship with her, and in which he very obviously enjoyed the feelings of anticipation rather than the actual sex act itself.⁽²⁶⁾ On the other hand, that enjoyment of the feelings of anticipation is very typical of Rousseau's amorous ventures. From very early childhood on, he obviously delighted in the anticipation of fulfilling his desires. In one of his childhood encounters with young girls, he tells us that he felt so utterly submissive to the girl that he would surely make a very poor lover, preferring to kneel at the lover's feet.⁽²⁷⁾ It is typical of this man of heightened sensibility that he should feel this way, and, on the one hand, it led to the writing of such beautifully worked exercises of his imaginative fancies as La Nouvelle Héloïse and the Confessions themselves. On the other

hand, the fact that he did not achieve lasting fulfillment with any one woman--the only prospect appears to have been Mme. D'Houdetot and propriety soon put a stop to that flight of fancy--meant that he had to end his days in solitude, albeit peaceful and graceful, enjoying the moments of quiet nostalgia that he depicts for us in the Reveries, perhaps the most poignant of which is the memory of the Palm Sunday in 1728 when he first met Mme. de Warens, fifty years to the day before his recalling the experience at the start of the uncompleted Tenth Promenade.

Rousseau did achieve some happiness in his lifetime, as he is the first to admit. For simple companionship and a lasting, if uninspired devotion, he could always turn to Thérèse Levasseur, whom he in fact married late in life and by whom it appears that he did indeed have five children; in a rather unfortunately typical action of those times, all five children were consigned to a foundling home, Rousseau apparently feeling that his life was too insecure to make possible the provision of a happy and stable family environment. He did, of course, suffer pangs of conscience as a result. For the excitement of sensual pleasure he could recall the amorous affair with Mme. de Larnage, his travelling companion for a week in 1737, and to whom, as he tells us, he owes the fact of not dying without having known 'sensual delight'. Rousseau is very careful to distinguish his feelings at all times, and this occasion was no exception. He did not

feel love for Mme. de Larnage, he tells us:

If what I felt for her was not precisely love, it was at least so tender a return for the love she showed me, there was so hot a sensuality in our pleasures and so sweet an intimacy in our talk, that it had all the charm of passion without the delirium that turns the head and makes enjoyment impossible. (28)

Perhaps that 'delirium' is an inescapable facet of true love as Rousseau experienced it, as the only 'true love' that he felt was for Mme. D'Houdetot, in the passionate, delirious, but completely frustrating relationship that they had in 1757. Even Rousseau's love for Mme. de Warens was not without pain, as he himself tells us; his intimacy with her was always accompanied by a feeling of sadness, due to his feeling reproachful for 'degrading' her; this further suggests that he felt that their relationship was slightly incestuous. (29) On the other hand, it is no surprise that Rousseau should say that the time spent living with Mme. de Warens was the only time when he had truly lived, for in those years he was, by his own account, truly happy. It would seem that their kind of shared intimacy came as close as one could want to achieving a complete happiness in this life. Rousseau's characterisation of that happiness is quite beautiful:

But how can I tell what was neither said, nor done, nor even thought, but only relished and felt, when I cannot adduce any other cause for my happiness but just this feeling? I rose with the sun, and I was happy; I went for walks, and I was happy; I saw Maman, and I was happy; I left her, and I was happy; I strolled through the woods and over the hills, I wandered on the valleys, I read, I lazed, I worked in the garden, I picked the fruit, I helped in the household, and happiness followed me everywhere; it lay in no definable object, it was entirely within me; it would not leave me for a single moment. (30)

For some reason best summed up in the notion of human perfectibility, all things shall pass, including, in this case, the good ones. Rousseau came back from one of his many journeys to find that he had once again been supplanted in his Mamma's affections, this time by a young man named Vintzenried, a man to whom Rousseau felt quite superior, in contrast to the previous occasion when he had been supplanted by Claude Anet, one of the models for the character of Wolmar, in La Nouvelle Héloïse. Rousseau was unable to do for Vintzenried what Claude Anet had done for him, namely, to take him under his wing and show him the right path to follow. Rousseau was able to swallow his sadness at losing sole possession of his 'Maman', and, having no desire to degrade her by trying to go on 'possessing' her, but unable to tolerate the situation in which he had to share her affections with another, he embarked on a disastrous attempt at tutoring the children of M. de Mably, which he gave up after a year, in May, 1741.⁽³¹⁾ Shortly thereafter, he embarked on that path so well trodden by young provincials in search of fame and fortune, the path which led in this case to Paris, the fatal lure. Thus ended the period of his youth, a time which had, by Rousseau's own account, 'flowed by in a uniform and pleasant enough way',⁽³²⁾ much in contrast to the turbulence, uncertainty, excitement, publicity and intensity of the next thirty-seven years that were to come.

Rousseau would hardly be the pre-romantic that he is had he not suffered very real frustrations in his life. Not the least of these must have come from his experiences with

rich and famous people, and from his first-hand experience of the workings of social inequalities. He tells us in the Confessions that his unjustly being accused of the breaking of Mme. Lambercier's comb awakened in him a hatred of injustice and a life in which all is judged on the basis of appearance.⁽³⁴⁾ In his many travels he must also have witnessed at first hand the stupidity and waste of an inegalitarian society. In one episode dating from 1732, Rousseau tells us how he wanted to pay a man for the food and drink that he had consumed. The man seemed fearful of taking the money and it turned out that he preferred to appear to be poverty-stricken rather than face the prospect of paying heavy and arbitrary taxes on his produce. As Rousseau says:

All that he said to me on this subject, which was entirely strange to me, made an impression on me which will never grow dim. It was the germ of that inextinguishable hatred which afterwards grew in my heart against the oppression to which the unhappy people⁽³⁵⁾ are subject, and against their oppressors.

As we have said above, Rousseau was sometimes highly outspoken and courageous in company and sometimes smitten with a most terrible shyness and timidity, symptomatic of what we would now call an inferiority complex. On the other hand, the very fact that Rousseau was himself aware of these and other inconsistencies in his character makes it demonstrably absurd to term him a paranoid schizophrenic, as psychohistorians have had occasion to do. Rousseau did have very real cause for complaint in the treatment that he received at the hands of the upper echelons of society, both social and

political. For all that he was well-acquainted with the leading intellectual lights of the day, he must have seemed a real enigma to them, with his combination of the most scathing criticism of the status quo and an abiding belief in a beneficent deity, which belief, on the other hand, was not enough to save him from harsh treatment by the established religious authorities because of the radically personalised nature of his religious beliefs. It is also a lasting pity that he felt it necessary to use the whole of womankind as a scapegoat in the Second Discourse on account of the no doubt haughty and inconsiderate treatment that he received at the hands --or, more likely, at the feet--of some Parisian grandes dames. In this regard, though, we should recall the difficulty that Rousseau himself experienced in the company of so many women, and the fact that he carried on a copious correspondence with many fine women indicates that he often found it much easier to express himself in writing.

In some respects at least, Rousseau was certainly a déclassé, a representative of a dying breed, the proud and independent class of small artisans and businessmen--what we would now call the 'petty bourgeoisie'--who were victims of the age of commercial progress.⁽³⁶⁾ He certainly spared no words in condemning the practices of the rich, as we shall note with regard to works like Emile and the various Discourses that he wrote. In La Nouvelle Héloïse, for ex-

ample, Lord Bomston himself delivers a scathing attack on the stupidity and bigotry of his fellow-aristocrats as demonstrated by their refusal to accept such a fine example of the so-called common people as St. Preux, and this is obviously symptomatic of Rousseau's own feelings in the matter. So is the fact that he puts such an indictment in the mouth of a fellow-aristocrat, as he clearly felt that the situation was all the more outrageous because of the ease and charm with which individual members of the aristocracy --such as his patrons, M. and Mme. de Luxembourg, and his protector, Maréchal Keith--were able to transcend the limitations of their station in life. At least to some extent, then, such limitations were self-imposed, and all the worse for that. (37)

Rousseau obviously identified with both St. Preux and Julie in the frustration of their love for each other--it being impossible for a baron's daughter to marry a commoner--and in the necessity of their renouncing that love in order for them both to be re-integrated into the community at Clarens. Just such a renunciation was required at the time of writing the novel, in his relationship with Mme. D'Houdetot. The frustration of his last attempt--in some respects, at least, his only attempt--to find lasting and fulfilling love prompted Rousseau to despair of ever finding that kind of shared experience in this life at all. This is amply conveyed in the novel. In a letter to St. Preux

Julie gives expression to her feelings of complete happiness at Clarens. Her life is full, she is not divided from herself, she has attained an ideal of close intimacy with her family, and she has a harmonious and immediate relationship with her environment. In short, it would seem that she has achieved an ideal of communal happiness, of the sort that Rousseau himself found with Mme. de Warens:

I am surrounded by everything that concerns me, the whole universe is here for me; I enjoy both the attachment I have for my friends and their attachment to me and to one another . . . I see nothing that does not extend my being and nothing that divides it; it is in everything around me; there remains no part of it that is far from me. My imagination has nothing more to do, I have nothing more to desire: to feel and to enjoy are the same thing for me: at the same time I live in all that I love, and I have all the happiness that life can bring . . . (38)

Julie immediately finds herself feeling dissatisfied with this seemingly perfect bliss, and the passage quoted above goes on at once to read: 'O death, come when you will! I fear you no longer!' It would seem that there is something inherently unsatisfactory in actually attaining what one wants, so that when Julie says later in the same letter that 'happiness bores me' and that she feels an 'inexplicable void' and a strange 'emptiness of soul', we have indeed to wonder whether lasting happiness is attainable after all. Julie herself wonders if the ultimate meaning of existence is not in fact to be found in the constant but vain attempt to fill that inexplicable void. It is a short step from there to the proposition that the 'land of chimaeras' alone

makes life worth living, the 'central point' of the novel in the editor's view. Julie's exact words are these:

Woe to him who has nothing more to desire! He loses, so to speak, all that he possesses. One enjoys less what one obtains than what one hopes for, and one is happy only before being happy. . . . Illusion ceases at the point where enjoyment begins. The land of chimaeras is in this world the only one worth living in, and such is the nothingness of human affairs that apart from the Being who exists by himself, there is nothing beautiful save that which does not exist. (39)

There is a remarkable ambivalence here, and Rousseau goes out of his way to comment upon it. In a personal footnote to Julie's comment that 'happiness bores me', he says that poor Julie is somewhat in conflict with herself and does not know what she wants: 'What is this, Julie! So many contradictions! Ah! I rather feel, charming and devoted as you are, that you are no longer in accord with yourself! Moreover, I do admit that this letter seems to me like a swan-song.' (40) In effect, Rousseau has set the whole situation up in order to dramatise the frustrations faced by Julie and St. Preux. For all that Julie has attained an ideal familial love, her romantic aspirations have, after all, had to be sacrificed on the altar of social convention. In the same letter from which we have quoted above, Julie wishes that St. Preux could return to the community at Clarens, and she suggests that perhaps he could undertake responsibility for the upbringing of one of her children and even that he could perhaps marry her cousin Claire. Perhaps she felt that St. Preux's presence, in whatever

guise, was necessary to complete her picture of familial bliss. We are left, however, with the lingering suspicion that a human presence could never fill the necessary void that exists in human affairs. Julie does die with St. Preux's name on her lips after heroically saving her daughter's life at the cost of her own. She dies in the hope of being reunited with St. Preux in a better world:

The virtue that separated us on earth will unite us in the eternal resting place. I die with that sweet anticipation, only too happy to purchase at the cost of my life the right of loving you forever without crime and of telling you so one more time! (41)

At this point, then, happiness is not to be achieved in this life, and Wolmar has to admit that he has failed. His last letter to St. Preux ends with an entreaty to St. Preux to come and take his rightful place in the community at Clarens.

The problem of whether immediate and absolute plenitude of being is possible in this life occupied Rousseau throughout his life. We have seen in La Nouvelle Héloïse that Julie had resort to the 'land of chimaeras' as an outlet for her search for happiness, and it remains a moot point whether actually living with St. Preux would have satisfied her. It is obvious that Julie's view reflects Rousseau's own ambivalence. It did not help that there were so many human obstacles to his achieving what he wanted, but one senses that his frequent visits--if one can use such a word in this context-- to the 'land of chimaeras' did in fact contain an inherently pleasurable element that might

well not have been possible had his fantasies actually materialised.

In 1762, Rousseau wrote to M. de Malesherbes about the kind of fantasies in which he indulged and which resulted in the creation of what we might wish to call a real imaginary world. He says that much of his literary output is the product of, if anything, an over-fertile imagination, combined with the effects of his sense of social injustice, both personally experienced and observed at large. In his youth, he developed a love of the 'heroic and romantic', which, he says, was strengthened, not weakened, by his observation of the failure of the 'real world' to live up to his expectations. In the combination of fantasy and frustration we can certainly observe the workings of a pre-romantic sensibility. Furthermore, as we have already mentioned, there is almost a masochistic sense of emptiness, in other words, the experience of the void in life itself is pleasurable:

However in the midst of all that [fantasy world, etc.], I confess that sometimes the emptiness of my chimaerical dreams suddenly came to mind and saddened me. If all my dreams had been turned into realities, they would not have sufficed for me: I should have imagined, dreamed, desired still, I found myself in an unaccountable void that nothing could fill, a certain yearning of the heart for another sort of joy of which I did not have the idea but nevertheless felt the need. Well, Sir, that itself was enjoyment, since I was filled with a very lively feeling and alluring sadness that I would not want to have missed.⁽⁴²⁾

The description of this feeling-state is part of an account of a typical day that Rousseau would spend while

living at the Hermitage and at Montmorency between 1756 and 1762. In that account of the joys of solitude, the pleasures of engaging in fantasies, and even the pleasures of realising that the emptiness of the fantasies is meaningful, we can see several of the ingredients of the happy life as an individual like Rousseau experienced it. As we have said, it remains a moot point whether any individual human being could actually have increased his happiness in the sentiment of his own being. After describing how he felt while contemplating the fundamental void in things human, Rousseau tells M. de Malesherbes that his thoughts then took wing, as it were, and lost themselves in wonderment at creation, and the universe. As his imagination expanded, even the universe could not contain him, and he achieved a religious plenitude of being as he felt the presence of God in everything:

I yielded myself with ravishment to the overpowering effect of these great ideas, I loved to myself in space, in my imagination; my heart, restricted to the limits of creaturely things, found itself too straitened, I stifled in the Universe, I would have liked to soar out into the infinite. I believe that if I could have unveiled all the mysteries of Nature, I should have felt myself to be in a situation less delicious than that dizzy ecstasy to which my spirit yielded without restraint and which sometimes made me cry out in the excitement of my transports: 'O Great Being! O, Great Being!', without being able to say or think anything else. (43)

Thus the 'most charming days any human creature ever spent' culminated in feelings of religious ecstasy as he lost himself in contemplation of the infinity of God's wonders. At that level, happiness takes on a religious dimension to the

immediacy and plenitude of which human affairs can only approximate and which they can only attempt to emulate. At a much more earthly level, two activities could go some way towards the experience of fullness and immediacy. These are the activity of botanising, and the activity of reverie, both of which Rousseau describes in some detail in his last, unfinished work, the Reveries. Both activities place one in fullest touch with nature; both activities are disinterested in themselves and at a remove from the passions of other people; both activities require very little in the way of special ingredients, in that one can botanise anywhere, and, excepting the fact that closeness to water might be needed to experience the feeling of reverie to the fullest, one can engage in reveries almost anywhere; perhaps most important, both activities go a long way towards compensating for the sadness and tribulation involved in living in society.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Botany, in particular, represented for Rousseau an activity that could be carried on anywhere and at any time. It required very little preparation: 'Botany is the study of an idle and unemployed solitary; a needle and a magnifying lens are all the apparatus that it is necessary for him to have.'⁽⁴⁵⁾ It obviously brings one very close indeed to an appreciation of the beauty and complexity of nature experienced first-hand. And it is completely unsullied by any ulterior motive --or at least it should be, in Rousseau's

view. It also allows one to distance himself from the dirt and exploitation that are inseparably a part of, for instance, a study of rocks and minerals, as it is hard to forget that minerals are used so much in society. In one delightful aside on the ironies of life, Rousseau tells us of a time when he was busy botanising in the Alps and imagined himself to be far away from any fellow-human beings, let alone human industry. Imagine his surprise, therefore, when, on investigating a strange noise that he heard, he came upon a stocking factory on the hillside. As he says: 'But in fact who ever could have expected to find a factory under a precipice! It is only in Switzerland that one finds this mixture of savage nature and human industry.'⁽⁴⁶⁾ The best thing about botany would seem to be that it makes possible moments of quiet and graceful nostalgia and happiness:

It transports me into peaceful habitations, in the midst of simple good people, such as those with whom I once lived. It recalls to me both my youth and my innocent pleasures; it makes me enjoy them over again, and often renders me happy still, in the midst of the saddest lot that has ever befallen a human being.⁽⁴⁷⁾

We have deliberately refrained from discussing at length Rousseau's more tormented feelings of persecution that are most obviously expressed in the Dialogues, because it is obvious that the satisfaction of such activities as botanising and reverie consists precisely in the fact that they provided such fine compensation for those very feelings of being persecuted and hated by all and sundry. Once again, we can ask

ourselves to what extent the happiness experienced during botanising and reverie came about because of his feeling so persecuted, but it does seem likely that more is involved than simply compensation. Reverie is certainly viewed as a far less wearisome and saddening activity than reflection, but it is surely not the case that Rousseau always found that reflection was painful, saddening and wearisome. In retrospect, he perhaps found that the delightful flights of fancy that he undertook in reverie were all the more memorable because of that other, less satisfactory side to his life.

In the Reveries Rousseau tells us that the quiet and idle solitude that he enjoyed in the two brief months that he spent on the Lac de Bienne in 1762 was so delicious to him that he counts those two months as 'the happiest time' of his life.⁽⁴⁸⁾ He spent his time botanising and engaging in reverie. From the account that he gives us in the Reveries, most notably in the beautiful Fifth Promenade, we can see that the experience of reverie brought him very close to a perfect happiness, this time of a different sort than that which involved the contemplation of the infinity of God's creation. Reverie involves an 'experience of pure present', as one writer has said.⁽⁴⁹⁾ One feels the sentiment of one's own existence so delicately and purely that one is liberated from any experience of time and place. One does not lose consciousness of oneself,

and it is not a mystical experience, as such. It seems to involve a very subtle and gentle merging with one's surroundings so that one is aware of one's harmonising and combining with one's immediate environment. It provides a very marked contrast to the customary experience of the flux of everyday life; the happiness that one feels is entirely independent of the passions of fellow humans. Perhaps Rousseau forgot just how happy he was with Mme. de Warens when he makes his typical observation, in the Fifth Promenade, that the happiness that can be achieved with fellow humans is inherently unstable and transitory in nature. But let us listen to Rousseau himself on the subject of reverie:

But if there is a state where the soul finds a position sufficiently solid to repose thereon, and to gather all its being, without having need for recalling the past, nor to climb on into the future; where time counts for nothing, where the present lasts for ever, without marking its duration in any way, and without any trace of succession, without any other sentiment of privation, neither of enjoyment, of pleasure nor pain, of desire nor of fear, than this alone of our existence, and which this feeling alone can fill entirely: so long as this state lasts, he who finds it may be called happy, not with an imperfect happiness, poor and relative, such as that which one finds in the pleasures of life, but with a sufficing happiness, perfect and full, which does not leave in the soul any void which it feels the need of feeling.

And of the nature of the enjoyment, he says:

Nothing external to oneself, nothing except oneself and one's own existence; so long as this state lasts, one suffices to oneself, like God. The sentiment of existence, deprived of all other affection, is in itself a precious sentiment of contentment and of peace, which alone suffices to render this existence dear and sweet to whoever knows how to remove from himself all the

sensual and terrestrial impressions which come unceasingly to distract us, and to trouble the sweetness here below. (50)

With that beautiful expression of what it means to experience the precious sentiment of one's own existence we shall leave Rousseau the man for the time being. We have seen that many elements in Rousseau's personal life do indeed illuminate the themes that will be raised in subsequent chapters as we discuss his more discursive works. In general, we can see that Rousseau experienced the tension between nature and society at first-hand if, for nature and society, we read Rousseau and society, respectively. He, at least, thought of himself as a model of a 'natural', and of a naturally moral, man.

In our concluding chapter we shall have more to say about Rousseau's personal commitment to community. For the moment, however, we shall turn our attention away from the problems of an individual named Jean-Jacques Rousseau and towards the more general concern with what he had to say about the human problem. As we have said in our introduction, the human problem stems from a tension between nature and society. We shall begin to discuss the tension in the next chapter.

NOTES

CHAPTER TWO

¹Pierre Burgelin, La Philosophie de l'Existence de Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris, 1952), p. 32.

²Confessions, pp. 169, 262.

³Letter to M. de Franquières, January 15th, 1764, (C.G., XIX, p. 53), Dialogues (O.C., II, pp. 728, 936), Third Promenade, Reveries, p. 69.

⁴Confessions, pp. 395-453, especially p. 398.

⁵Fifth Promenade, Reveries, p. 112.

⁶Confessions, p. 408: 'As it [his love for Mme d'Houdetot] was the first and only love in all my life, and as through its consequences it will ever remain a terrible and indelible memory for me, may I be forgiven for describing it in some detail'.

⁷Paul de Man, Blindness and Insight (New York, 1971), pp. 17-19.

⁸O.C., II, pp. 972-974. See also Benjamin Barber, 'Rousseau and the Paradoxes of the Dramatic Imagination', Daedalus, Summer, 1978, pp. 74-92.

⁹Eighth Promenade, Reveries, pp. 161ff. Of course, Rousseau does, in effect, blame society for arousing his amour-propre in the first place.

¹⁰In the Confessions, he makes the claim to being, if not better, at least completely different from anyone else. In the Fourth Promenade, Reveries, p. 97, he says that, in writing the Confessions, he often kept silent concerning the truth even where it might have cast him in a better light, and because, 'in writing my "Confessions", I should have seemed to be eulogising myself'. See also, for a discussion of the tension between the accuser and the accused in Rousseau, Jean Starobinski, 'The Accuser and the Accused', Daedalus, Summer, 1978, pp. 41-58.

¹¹See, in particular, Lionel Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), and Henri Peyre, Literature and Sincerity (New Haven, 1963).

¹²Confessions, pp. 29, 86-89, and, for another example of being condemned 'by appearances', p. 55. Cf. Jean Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La Transparence et l'Obstacle (Paris, 1957), pp. 12-31, esp. pp. 17-21.

¹³Marcel Raymond, 'Les Confessions', in Samuel Baud-Bovy, et al., Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Neuchatel, 1962), p. 50, makes this distinction very clearly and he notes that the factual truth of the details of Rousseau's life has been accepted now.

¹⁴James Boon, From Symbolism to Structuralism: Lévi-Strauss in a Literary Tradition (New York, 1972), p. 152.

¹⁵Confessions, pp. 114, 121. See also Boon, op.cit., pp. 149-155.

¹⁶Havelock Ellis, From Rousseau to Proust (Freeport, New York, 1968), p. 108.

¹⁷See, for example, Octavio Paz, Children of the Mire (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), Chapter 2 and note this comment, p. 33: 'Against the modern, against history and its dates, Rousseau opposes sensibility . . . The Romantics turned sensibility into passion.' We would, of course, have to question the extent to which Rousseau actually does turn his back on history, as his historical pessimism must always be noted, as must the fact that, at least so far as political interventions are concerned, history usually wins in the end, through the reassertion of nature in the form of the death of the body politic.

¹⁸Lord Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto the Third, Verse LXXVII.

¹⁹See the opening pages of the Confessions, pp. 17-19, and note how Rousseau's assertion, that it is the common lot of humankind to feel before thinking, is given explicit philosophical treatment in Emile, p. 253.

²⁰The varying intensities at which Rousseau's life was lived is beautifully conveyed in Marcel Raymond's article, 'Les Confessions', op.cit., especially at pp. 48-49. See also Bernard Gagnebin, 'Une Vie Tourmentée', pp. 11-32 in the same

volume as that in which Raymond's article appears. For the varying accounts of when he 'truly' lived, see Confessions, p. 215, Tenth Promenade, Reveries, p. 194, letter to Malesherbes, January 26th, 1762, (Letters, p. 211).

²¹These examples are taken from Confessions, pp. 23, 29, 45, 47, 49, 113, 119.

²²See, for example, a very typical statement of the problems facing an individual like Rousseau that he gives in the Ninth Promenade, Reveries, p. 173: 'Happiness is a permanent state that does not seem to be made for men here below; everything upon earth is in a continual flux which does not permit anything to take on a fixed form.'

²³Sixth Promenade, Reveries, p. 132, obviously based on his own feeling of never being 'truly accustomed to civil society'. (ibid.)

²⁴Confessions, pp. 224-225.

²⁵Ibid., p. 119.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 186-190.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 36-38.

²⁸Ibid., p. 241.

²⁹Ibid. Note Rousseau's comment on himself, pp. 209-210, after speculating on whether his feverish imagination had in some way brought about his illness in 1737: 'My passions have made me live and my passions have killed me.' This is a marvelous comment on perfectibility.

³⁰Ibid., p. 215.

³¹Ibid., pp. 248-255.

³²Ibid., p. 261.

³³Confessions, p. 69.

³⁴Ibid., p. 159.

³⁵On this aspect of Rousseau's own life, see, especially,

Michel Launay, 'La Société Française d'après la Correspondence de J.-J. Rousseau', Société des Etudes Robespierriennes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris, 1963), particularly at p. 22: 'let us not forget that Rousseau was, from birth to death, an artisan, bureaucrat or minor employee just as much as he was a writer.' His frequenting of aristocratic establishments and the appeal of his works to the upper classes does not contradict this view, as the aristocrats who befriended him tended to share his essentially petit-bourgeois view of a world without commerce and industry.

³⁶On all of this, see Judith Shklar, 'Rousseau's Images of Authority', pp. 332-365 in Maurice Cranston and Richard Peters, eds., Hobbes and Rousseau (New York, 1972), especially pp. 336-340. Judith Shklar sees something essentially child-like in Rousseau's frequently needing someone to whom he could look for help and guidance, people like Claude Anet, Maréchal Keith and M. and Mme. de Luxembourg, and suggests that Rousseau never really goes beyond the point of identifying with St. Preux alone, rather than in any way seeing himself as a Wolmar, in other words, as himself a model for a legislator.

³⁷La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part 6, Letter 8 (O.C., II, p. 689).

³⁸Ibid., pp. 689, 693-694.

³⁹Ibid., p. 694.

⁴⁰Ibid., Part 6, Letter 13 (O.C., II, p. 743).

⁴¹Letter to Malesherbes, January 12th, 1762, (Letters, p. 207), and January 26th, 1762, (ibid., pp. 212-214). Note also that, in a letter to the Prince of Wurtemberg, November 10th, 1763 (C.G., X, p. 217), Rousseau says of himself that 'The comparison of what is with what ought to be has given me a romantic mind and it has always placed me at a distance from what is happening.' The French word for 'romantic' is romanesque, and we must be careful not to impute too much of what we have come to know of the word 'romantic' to that word used by Rousseau. Judith Shklar views that letter as evidence of Rousseau's 'lack of genuine interest in history', ('Rousseau's Images of Authority', op.cit., p. 342), which might be stretching a point somewhat.

⁴²Letter to Malesherbes, January 26th, 1762, (Letters, p. 215).

⁴³See his own description of these activities in the Fifth Promenade and the Seventh Promenade of the Reveries.

⁴⁴Seventh Promenade, Reveries, p. 148.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 152.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 155.

⁴⁷Fifth Promenade, Reveries, p. 105.

⁴⁸Mark Temmer, Time in Rousseau and Kant (New York, 1959),
p. 18.

⁴⁹Fifth Promenade, Reveries, pp. 113-114.

CHAPTER THREE

'LA NATURE A FAIT L'HOMME HEUREUX ET BON MAIS . . .
LA SOCIETE LE DEPRAVE ET LE REND MISERABLE.'

In our introduction, we have spoken in general terms about the tension between nature and society. In this chapter we shall clarify in some detail the distinction between nature and society as Rousseau understood it. We shall employ two different methods in making that distinction. We shall do as Rousseau did in the Second Discourse, and attempt to reconstruct the state of nature in hypothetical terms. We shall also consider his other works which contain examples of his view of the distinction between nature and society. The most systematic treatment of a natural way of life is actually to be found in Emile, which is an account of the development of a 'natural' child who is, however, destined to live in cities, i.e., in society.

We shall begin with a discussion of the procedure to be followed in reconstructing the state of nature. We shall then discuss both macrocosmic and microcosmic features of life in the state of nature as well as discuss how Emile's upbringing fits into that picture. We shall find that the key elements of a natural way of life are balance, self-sufficiency, indolence and solitude, and that it is unaesthetic, unimaginative and relatively passionless. All of these elements are in sharp contrast to life in civil society, and the comparison will be noted at all times. We shall then consider the moral aspects of life in the state of

nature in particular and of a natural way of life in general. That is the centrepiece of the whole distinction between nature and society, as there would be little point in carefully distinguishing nature from society if a natural life were not, in fact, a moral life in which one does least harm to others, due to the fact that there is no conscious intent to hurt anyone in the state of nature. We shall carefully consider the question of human passions, distinguishing the natural from the social, and we shall see that, although Rousseau might have wanted to make a really clear-cut distinction between good nature and bad society, the practical philosopher in him knows at all times that it is not as simple as that. Through carefully discussing the difference between 'natural' self-love and 'social' vanity, we shall see, in fact, that in the most careful treatment of that subject--in Emile--the distinction is actually quite drastically modified. We shall, finally, discuss two key elements in the distinction between nature and society, the status of 'pity' as a natural feeling and the question of 'love' and how to control its excesses.

In common with so many of his contemporaries, Rousseau chose to reconstruct life in the 'state of nature' as one way of distinguishing the natural from the social. His reconstruction of the state of nature incorporates several other methods as well, and it would be useful to discuss these. The following ways of distinguishing the

natural and the social present themselves: observations of contemporary society; anthropological evidence; historical researches; introspection and hypothetical and conjectural reasoning. We shall now consider the pros and cons of each of these methods.

In Rousseau's view, it is not enough simply to look around at the society at large. Were we to do that we should be likely simply to conclude that people are very nasty indeed. From the observed alienation, insincerity, competition and general contradiction between being and appearance, which were so prevalent in the supposedly enlightened society of his day--and entailing social criticism that anticipated many of the concerns of radical thought in the two hundred years since his death--Rousseau refused to imply that we are, therefore, born as predators of our fellow-men. As Rousseau says of Hobbes and the other philosophers who think this of natural man, 'Hobbes and the philosophers . . . know full well what a Bourgeois from London or Paris is like; but they will never know what a man is like.'⁽¹⁾

Anthropological evidence is of enormous potential importance. It provides us with examples of people who have not travelled as far down the road to decay and decadence as we have done and who live less unnaturally than we do. Thus, we find that Rousseau was very enthusiastic about the prospects for philosophical and scientific under-

standing of man that were afforded by voyages of discovery to such places as Southern Africa, South America, the Far East and Australasia, voyages that were becoming somewhat more commonplace in the eighteenth century. Rousseau refers to these voyagers as the 'new Hercules's', and notes that if they were all to describe to us what they had seen on their voyages, 'we ourselves should see a new world come from their pens, and we should learn to know our own.'⁽²⁾

Anthropological and historical researches both require of us that we make a fundamental distinction that Rousseau was careful to make, that between men in civil society and mankind in general.⁽³⁾ We must strip away the layers of civilisation from the person whose image we see reflected in our mirrors and whom we see living in the society around us. Rousseau refers us to the statue of Glaucus and likens our task to that of stripping off the layers of dirt and decay that 'time, sea and storms' have left on the statue. The critical question is whether, in attempting to uncover the original, we shall not find that it is so disfigured as to be unrecognisable. On the other hand, we might not be able to decide whether what we see is, in fact, the original. The original state of mankind has quite possibly been changed beyond all recognition.⁽⁴⁾

Historical research will no doubt tell us something about the changes undergone by mankind throughout its evolution to the present day. It is, however, pre-historic time

that most interests us. We have literally to go back to time immemorial. We are unlikely to find what we need in history books because we are concerned with origins, and with an aboriginal condition that certainly predates our ability to read and write, perhaps even to think and speak, which means that little evidence of a hard, scientific kind will be available. On the other hand, we are definitely engaged in scientific, philosophical study of what it means to be natural and human. As Rousseau says, it is more a question of clarifying 'the nature of things' than of showing their 'true origin'.⁽⁵⁾

Another way of distinguishing the natural from the social is to think about oneself, and about the most basic impulses, instincts and feelings which move us to act in the ways that we do. In the Confessions, Rousseau tells us that he thought best while walking, and the ideas on which the Second Discourse were based came to him while walking in the forests of St. Germain outside Paris.⁽⁶⁾ The really basic inspiration for much of his work of social criticism had come to him in the semi-mystical illumination of Vincennes. In a confessional letter to M. de Malesherbes in 1762, Rousseau stated that suddenly he saw in a flash all the abuses of society and the need to distinguish between good nature and bad society. The passage is well worth quoting at length:

I was on my way to see Diderot, then a prisoner

at Vincennes: I had a copy of the Mercure de France in my pocket and I took to leafing through it on the way. My eyes lit on the question of the Academy of Dijon, which occasioned my first piece of writing. If anything was ever like a sudden inspiration it was the impulse that surged up in me as I read that. Suddenly I felt my mind dazzled by a thousand lights; crowds of lively ideas presented themselves to me at once, with a force and confusion that threw me into an inexpressible trouble; I felt my head seized with a vertigo like that of intoxication. A violent palpitation oppressed me, made me gasp for breath, and being unable any longer to breathe as I walked, I let myself drop under one of the trees by the wayside, and there I spent half an hour in such a state of agitation that when I got up I perceived the whole front of my vest moistened with my own tears that I had shed unawares. Oh, Sir, if ever I could have written even the quarter of what I saw and felt under that tree, with what clarity should I have revealed all the contradictions of the social system, with what force would I have demonstrated that man is naturally good, and that it is through these institutions alone that men become bad.⁽⁷⁾

Introspection obviously played a very important role in Rousseau's thought processes concerning nature and society, and it took several forms, ranging from the semi-mystical experience that we have just described through the 'meditating . . . on the first and simplest operations of the human soul', to which he refers in the preface to the Second Discourse, all the way to his experiencing a desire to make his own soul transparent to the reader and to consult his own inner self as a first example of what is natural in man.⁽⁸⁾

So far, we have seen that it is not enough simply to observe men in contemporary society since they are so obviously living unauthentically. We have also noted how useful anthropological research might be and how historical research affords us some insight into the character of mankind's

evolution, for all that our main interest is in a hypothetical time that predates historical time proper. The products of these researches, combined with the product of the process of introspection, enable us to engage in 'hypothetical and conditional reasonings'.⁽⁹⁾ We can reason conjecturally about what it was really like; we can never be sure that it really was like that, and our understandings will always be contingent and hypothetical. We must make the effort if we are to judge and improve the lot of mankind:

I began some lines of reasoning, I ventured some conjectures, less in the hope of resolving the question than with the intention of clarifying it and reducing it to its true state. Others will easily be able to go further on the same road, though it will not be easy for anyone to reach the end of it; for it is no light undertaking to separate what is original from what is artificial in the present nature of man, and to know correctly a state which no longer exists, which perhaps never existed, which probably never will exist, and about which it is nevertheless necessary to have precise notions in order to judge our present state correctly.⁽¹⁰⁾

The hypothetical, conjectural and tentative quality of our researches is admirably summed up in that passage. We are almost engaged in a poetic exercise of the imagination but with a moral purpose in mind, the task of carefully judging contemporary society. On no account should we commit the fallacy of arguing from what is to what ought to be without very careful consideration. Rousseau was quite familiar with such faulty reasoning: 'Writers begin by seeking the rules on which, for the common utility, it would

be appropriate that men agree among themselves; and then they give the name natural law to the collection of these rules, without other proof than the good which they judge would result from their universal application.'⁽¹¹⁾ In other words, instead of inquiring into the nature of law, they simply prescribe certain laws as natural, not a very scientific way in which to diagnose the ills of the patient, civil society. We must be scientific and unbiased in our researches, but not, it should be noted, to the extent of being indifferent to the ills of the patient and to the cure we prescribe. Rousseau could never be accused of such indifference, given that he himself is an example both of an inhabitant of civil society and of one who has managed to retain an element of naturalness in his character.

Having considered how to distinguish the natural from the social, we are now in a position to recreate some of the main features of life in the state of nature and of a natural way of life as Rousseau presents them in his works. We shall begin with some summary statements concerning the 'natural', after which we shall consider some of the more important features of a natural way of life.

Rousseau's own summary statement at the end of the first part of the Second Discourse contains many key elements: 'Let us conclude that wandering in the forests, without industry, without speech, without domicile, without

war and without liaisons, with no need of his fellow-men, likewise with no desire to harm them, perhaps never even recognising anyone individually, savage man, subject to few passions and self-sufficient, had only the sentiments and intellect suited to that state.' (12) Some other key phrases, upon many of which we shall elaborate below, are these, taken from the Second Discourse: 'simple, uniform, solitary'; 'instinctual, habitual'; 'alone, idle, and always near danger'; 'by nature committed to instinct alone'; 'resignation, indifference, and acceptance'; 'heart at peace and healthy body'; 'his soul, agitated by nothing, is given over to the sole sentiment of its present existence without any idea of the future'; 'the sole spectator'; 'the sole being in the world to take an interest in him'; 'the sole judge of his own actions'; 'no comparisons and no opinions so no feeling of being cheated'; and so on. (13)

Jean Starobinski has admirably portrayed some of the essential features of the way of life of natural man, a way of life and state of being that he considers to be an 'origin', the first exemplar of which is, of course, Rousseau himself:

Rousseau . . . describes man's primitive state, his idle and happy solitude, his desires in accordance with his needs, his appetites satisfied at once by nature; it is the first equilibrium, prior to all becoming, it is the interminable nothing that precedes the beginning; time is not yet slipping away, there is no history, the waters are still'. (14)

One thing should be made clear at the outset. Rousseau does not idealise the state of nature, for all that he obviously wants to set up a clear and distinctive yardstick by which to measure the achievements that have resulted from mankind's development. As we noted in our introduction, his enthusiasm for the original state of nature varies throughout his works, and it must be said that the natural man of the Second Discourse is hardly the sublime embodiment of all that is best, brightest and most beautiful about being human. There is little room for aesthetic appreciation of this rather unprepossessing creature, little different in the initial stages of his development from the animals among which he lives and by the killing of which he feeds himself. He does have the advantage of being the best organised of the animals, and he certainly possesses his 'spirituality of the soul', namely, the ability to say yes or no to the commands of nature; however, in view of the fact that this quality hardly manifests itself in the original state of nature, Rousseau is content to settle for the 'faculty' of self-perfection as the human animal's distinctive quality. It is like a latent rather than a manifest aspect of being human at this abstract point. It will loom much larger in the picture when we come to ask 'Why?' concerning mankind's development. (15)

To begin with, there is little to distinguish the

human from the non-human animals. Men need food, a female, and repose, and they represent good to them; they fear the evils of pain and hunger. That is the extent of natural man's concerns, and the limit of his horizon; he lives fortuitously, from day to day, in fact from the beginning of one day to the end of that day; he seldom spends the night in the same place, and would perhaps not realise it if he did.⁽¹⁶⁾

Natural man is entirely self-defining, self-sufficient and self-preserving. He has all the advantages of having all his strength at his disposal, and of 'always carrying oneself, so to speak, entirely with one.'⁽¹⁷⁾ His way of life is healthy, and in that sense it is a good life. Natural man is entirely capable of looking after himself, and he suffers from none of the ailments that result from living in dirty, crowded cities, and which make doctors and the art of medicine necessary.⁽¹⁸⁾ Natural man has no need of his fellow-men, he never bothers them, and rarely has any intercourse at all with them. We find that 'Savage man, when he has eaten, is at peace with all his fellow-men.'⁽¹⁹⁾ Not only that, but he is also at rest, for in Rousseau's view it is simply not natural always to be rushing about in the hustle and bustle of contemporary society in search of illusory and transitory gratifications, such as the love of a woman might bring, for instance. Man's natural condition and his natural inclination are to be indolent, and, in a sense, the point of life and work is to achieve a resting place, a place

where one can take time out from the concerns of the so-called real world. The desired state is one of indolence, one form of which is reverie, involving as it does a relatively timeless existence and something near to an experience of pure present. It should be added that reverie is more likely to be appreciated by moderns like Rousseau himself, for whom an escape from time was so much to be desired. Natural man's indolent way of life cannot be compared to the contemporary experience of living in time, and, in one image, Rousseau wonders what might have induced natural man to give up his self-sufficient, indolent life:

Supposing eternal spring on the earth; supposing plenty of water, livestock and pasture, and supposing that men, as they leave the hands of nature, were once spread out in the midst of all that, I cannot imagine how they would ever be induced to give up their primitive liberty, abandoning the isolated pastoral life so suited to their natural indolence, to impose upon themselves unnecessarily the labours and the inevitable misery of a social mode of life.⁽²⁰⁾

At this point, Rousseau is prepared to settle for an answer couched in terms of a completely chance occurrence, involving a slight shift in the 'globe's axis', but the answer is less important than is the form of the question, for it explicitly takes for granted that our natural state is one of indolence, an argument that is developed in a footnote to the above passage:

It is not possible to determine the degree of man's natural indolence . . . Nothing sustains the love of so many savages for their mode of life as does this delicious indolence. The feelings that make man restless, foresighted and active arise only in society.

To do nothing is the primary and the strongest passion of man after that of self-preservation . . . ⁽²¹⁾ it is in order to achieve repose that everyone works.

If everyone is doing as little as possible, the state of nature is bound to be balanced and orderly, and that is exactly how it is depicted by Rousseau. The timelessness is well conveyed in the statement that 'there is always the same order, there are always the same revolutions', ⁽²²⁾ and in the Essay on The Origin of Languages, the 'eternal spring' of man's origins is depicted as a time of plenitude and sufficiency, a time of ecological harmony:

There is a similar relation between human needs and the products of the earth, which suffices for it to be peopled and for everyone to live . . . nature ignited volcanoes and caused earthquakes, lightning burned forests. A stroke of lightning, a flood, an eruption, could thus do in a few hours what, under present conditions, takes fifty thousand men a century. ⁽²³⁾

There were in fact chaos and disorder in this vision of harmony, but it was all natural, whereas now it is all social and political. Rousseau actually says that human intervention tries to achieve what nature used to achieve by way of maintaining or redressing the balance. In his view, human intervention can never achieve that same balance and order, for all that it was accompanied by frequent natural revolutions and calamities. Everything is reversed now, as human art has taken over in an attempt to order and control nature:

When, on the one hand, one considers the vast labours of men, so many sciences fathomed, so many arts invented, and so many forces employed, chasms filled, mountains razed, rocks broken, rivers made navigable, land cleared, lakes dug out, swamps drained, enormous

buildings raised upon the earth, the sea covered with ships and sailors; and when, with a little meditation for the true advantages that have resulted from all this for the happiness of the human species, one cannot fail to be struck by the astounding disproportion prevailing between these things, and to deplore man's blindness, which, to feed his foolish pride and an indefinable vain admiration for himself, makes him run avidly after all the miseries of which he is susceptible, and from which beneficent nature had taken care to keep him. (24)

From this perspective, the history of man's development is the history of man's attempts to do nature's work for her. If only we could have left well alone, and been content to remain in the state of veiled, natural ignorance!--that is Rousseau's complaint, a complaint that is still sounding out loudly and clearly in our own ecologically self-conscious era. On the other hand, had we left well alone, we would have missed out on so much, both for better and for worse, which is, of course, the whole point.

If life in the 'panorama of the true state of nature' (25) was balanced and orderly, the microcosmic picture as it affects each individual in the state of nature is similar. One of the more striking features of life in the state of nature is the balance between desires and power. This viewpoint is basic to Emile, and indeed to all of Rousseau's life and works. It combines a sense of how things really are with a claim about how they ought to be. The notion of a balance between desires and power, or between resources and desires, represents an impossible limit, a hypothetical abstraction that is always being broken. (26) Rousseau is saying that natural man's imaginative

capabilities were so limited that a natural balance between his ability to feel desire and the available resources was naturally maintained without his having to think about it at all. We can of course only know this after the event, which adds to the hypothetical quality of the notion of a balance. Nonetheless, throughout Emile, happiness and freedom are defined through one's being able to satisfy one's own needs without the help of anyone else, thus minimising one's likely suffering at the hands of others. Happiness is also linked to an ability to say 'no' to all those little extras which, we know, have made life so pleasant, and which compensate somewhat for our sufferings 'here below', as Rousseau himself well knew:

True happiness consists in decreasing the difference between our desires and our powers, establishing a perfect equilibrium between the power and the will. . . . In this condition, nature, who does everything for the best, has placed him from the first . . . In every land, man's labour yields him more than a bare living. If he were wise enough to disregard the surplus, he would always have enough, for he would never have too much. (27)

For better and for worse we did not disregard the surplus, and, to that extent, we have only ourselves to blame for what followed: 'From society and the luxury it engenders arise the liberal and mechanical arts, commerce and letters, and all those useless things which make industry flourish, enrich and ruin states.' (28)

As usual, Emile will be able to say 'no' to all those useless and unnecessary extras that make us so miserable and

dependent in the long run, just as Rousseau himself said 'no' in 1756 when he renounced the false veneer of the vicarious life of the Parisian salon and returned to a relatively self-sufficient life in the country. Emile will not be weakened by having needs that are disproportionate to his strength. He will be able to control his imagination so that it does not lead him to want more than can be provided by reality. Reality is given and fixed, a part of necessity in life, and Emile is far too natural to rebel against necessity.⁽²⁹⁾ Emile is happy: 'Everyone desires happiness, but to secure it he must know what happiness is. For the natural man, happiness is as simple as his life; it consists in the absence of pain; health, freedom, the necessities of life are its elements.'⁽³⁰⁾

It is worth underlining what Rousseau is saying about a natural way of life. He is suggesting that it is a very limited life, but it can only be known as such after the event. Natural man himself must, ex hypothesi, have been entirely unaware of this. Nonetheless, Rousseau does suggest that it would be a good thing were we all to try to limit our imaginative powers and restrict ourselves to wanting only those things that can be obtained **without** involving other people or without stretching our naturally scarce and limited resources. In the state of nature, we managed this without having to think about it, with the result that life was balanced and peaceful, with plenty for everyone of the things that one needed. We, on the other hand, are creatures of

passion and an overworked imagination, and we spend our days indecently hastening and worrying. In the state of nature there is simply no conception of the human capacity to transcend the bounds of its existence; and yet, there is, it is simply that Rousseau would like to think that we would have been a lot better off had we not been so eager to transcend the given, natural limits to our endeavours. He urges us to stick to a life in which necessity and limits are the criteria for action:

Is it nature that carries men so far from their real selves? . . . Keep to your appointed place in the order of nature and nothing can tear you from it. Do not kick against the stern law of necessity, nor waste in vain resistance the strength bestowed on you by heaven . . .

Furthermore, we are urged to let children find the 'heavy yoke which nature has placed upon us, the heavy yoke of necessity'. (31)

A life in which necessity rules is one in which there are clear and concrete limits to possible human action. It is a life in which one can and should be dependent on things, that being perfectly natural in this view; however, it is not at all natural to be dependent on fellow human beings, whose caprices, foibles, whims and wills make life altogether too unpredictable and arbitrary. The problem in every society is that we have to make the best of the mutual dependence that is an inescapable feature of social life, and, in a very important anticipation of the importance of the rule of law in the social contract

community, Rousseau distinguishes between dependence on men and dependence on things. In being both makers of, and obedient to, law we retain our natural independence of mere men, and everything conforms to the natural order. The community is as natural as it can be. In this view, law is equivalent to a concrete, universal statement of the necessary limits to the community's endeavours.⁽³²⁾

If a natural life is relatively unimag~~inative~~^{ative}, it is also going to be unintellectual, unaesthetic and relatively passionless. Indeed, in Emile, Rousseau envisions Emile's passions as still 'asleep' at age fifteen,⁽³³⁾ the age at which Emile is made ready to enter passionate social life. A natural life is so unreflective that Rousseau was prompted to make his famous remark that 'If nature destined us to be healthy, then I almost dare affirm that the man who thinks is a depraved animal.'⁽³⁴⁾ A natural life is unaesthetic, with no consideration and no appreciation of beauty, and with no need to try to represent beauty; beauty is simply superfluous, since 'Where there is no love, of what use is beauty?' Thus, it comes as no surprise to learn that 'art perished with the inventor'.⁽³⁵⁾ Art involves the use of one's imagination in an attempt to transcend the categories of the given reality, but if imagination is dormant, or dead, there can be no art, no culture, no need felt of them. By the same token there can be neither poetry nor music, those languages that Rousseau felt to be more natural than prose. Another

reason for the lack of art can be seen to lie in Rousseau's view that there is no aboriginal garden of Eden from which we have been expelled or have fallen, and there is no natural need to try to represent this in fantasy or imagination. In other words, if Rousseau takes the relatively unchristian view that man did not commit some kind of original sin that led to his being expelled from the garden of Eden, there is no need either to try to return there or to recreate its main features here on earth; nor, again, is there any need to represent the garden of Eden in art. Rousseau's state of nature is simply a much more banal place than that image of a mythological paradise implies. Life in the state of nature is seen as a preparation for death, involving attempts to avoid pain, unnecessary work, and unnecessary intercourse of any kind. Rousseau was clearly very disenchanted with the civil society in which he lived and worked.

It follows from this that natural man would die if he had to, and that he would accept his fate with calmness and equanimity. In Emile, Rousseau goes on at some length about how we waste so much time trying to be prudent and to escape that which marks us all out as human, namely, our mortality:

By nature men are neither kings, nobles, courtiers, nor millionaires. All men are born poor and naked, all are liable to the sorrows of life, its disappointments, its ills, its needs, its sufferings of every kind; and all are condemned at length to die. This is what it means to be human, this is what no mortal can escape. (36)

We all must die, so why try to postpone the inevitable?

If anything, death is to be welcomed as a release from our sufferings 'here below'.⁽³⁷⁾ Emile is pervaded with that kind of sense of the inevitability of suffering and death in this life. Happy is the man who suffers but little; happy is the man who can live quietly, calmly, and in repose, a repose that only a completely negative perception of liberty--concerned with our not having to do what we do not want to do--would seem, at this point, to bring.⁽³⁸⁾

The young Emile, we are frequently informed, would be natural enough to accept the reality of death if he had to; in contrast with those 'social' men around him, he would not struggle against death. The fifteen-year-old Emile might well be rather an insufferable young man, especially if he were ever wont to go around moralising to others in the way in which Rousseau talks about him: 'To live in freedom, and to be independent of human affairs, is the best way to learn to die'. Who among us would have wanted to say that at age fifteen, or would have been proud of being 'alone in the midst of human society' and dependent on himself or herself alone?⁽³⁹⁾

We can see that one of the main features of a natural way of life is that one lives in relative isolation from one's fellows, in solitude. That, in turn, has obvious ramifications for a natural morality, which is what all the discussion is leading up to. We shall see that, for Rousseau, the moral way of life is one in which one does least harm to people, rather

than achieving most good with them. Clearly, one does least harm to people when one is self-sufficient, self-defining and self-reliant. A life in which one of the positive values is solitude is sure to lead to one's doing the least harm to others. By placing so much stress on the value of solitude, Rousseau can compensate, as it were, for having to accept the simultaneity of nature and society. Interestingly enough, in the social contract community a similar value is placed on solitude, but this time it is combined with the utmost togetherness in the community, whenever people do engage in community-oriented actions. At this point, a discussion of the merits of solitude does much to highlight the reluctance with which Rousseau concedes the point that there is, indeed, a natural society at all.

An immediate distinction has to be made between solitude and loneliness, which is rendered in the French as the distinction between solitude and isolement. At several points in La Nouvelle Héloïse, for example, St. Preux speaks of the profound sense of loneliness that one feels in places like Paris, where one is just a lonely face in a crowd, a stranger in the city. There is no possibility of transparent communion in the city, where everyone is wearing a mask, which is another of Rousseau's favourite images of man in society. Everybody lives vicariously, and although everybody defines himself through others, this is done in a false and slavish way which in no way allows one's true, natural self to be shown in public. In effect, everyone becomes an actor

in the city, and all of Rousseau's strictures against the acting profession--that the actor counterfeits himself, that he sells himself for money, and that he appears different from what he really is--become relevant.⁽⁴⁰⁾

In solitude, however, one can find oneself. When Rousseau suggests that we should all learn to know virtue by 'listening to the voice of our conscience in the silence of our passions', he surely intends to say that a life of solitude is most conducive to success in this endeavour. 'All the great passions come from solitude', in other words, nothing but good can come from solitude.⁽⁴¹⁾ We shall learn to know ourselves by sitting down calmly and consulting our inner voices. Sometimes our passions will be entirely silent when we are doing this, but sometimes they will speak to us, and then only for the good. Whereas silence in the city, for example, is a sure sign of loneliness and an inability on the part of people to communicate with each other, silence in a small community like Clarens is a sign that the members of the community are at the apex of interpersonal communication. Rousseau considers that true happiness and contentment lead to calmness, tranquillity and peace: 'True contentment is neither merry nor noisy . . . A really happy man says little and laughs little; he hugs his happiness, so to speak to his heart.'⁽⁴²⁾ There is little room for ecstasy there, and at Clarens ecstasy is to be found in Julie's love for her children; the family life of the Wolmars is quiet, intimate and calm. Natural solitude reigns in the little community there.

Even in the social contract community, as we noted above, there would be a clear distinction between one's public life, in which one participated publicly by seeing and being seen, and one's private life, in which the stress is still on self-reliance and self-sufficiency, of the kind that Rousseau found so praiseworthy a feature of the life of the Neuchâtelois artisans to whom he refers in the Letter to D'Alembert.⁽⁴³⁾ The point is to husband one's own resources, to gather one's strength in preparation for possible uncertainties to come: 'Man in society seeks to extend himself, while man in isolation retrenches.'⁽⁴⁴⁾

Rousseau's acceptance of the simultaneity of nature and society is really seen to be rather grudging when compared, for example, with the conception of species-being or social man, which is so noted a feature of the early writings of Karl Marx. The change from a realistic acceptance of the given to a realistic appraisal of what can be done to supersede the given is quite remarkable, and, in the two writers' works, it begins with the different conception of what it means to be human. Rousseau sees the problem of living in civil society and attempts to counter that reality with what must be described as a very brave, and often very beautifully depicted, retrenchment or retreat to what he considers as truly natural in the human, so that he oscillates between realistically accepting the given and the need to work within its parameters, and despairing at what has been lost in the

transition to modernity. Marx, on the other hand, begins with an ontological statement of what it means to be truly human, a statement which is more or less essentialist in orientation and which involves a conception of man, as truly man, only in community with others, the 'direct, natural, and most necessary' form of which is man's relation to woman in shared love.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Man achieves his most complete expression of himself only in community with others, when he can 'expand his gifts in all directions'.⁽⁴⁶⁾ For Marx, too, nature and society, or more accurately, individual and society, must not be treated as abstractions. Marx, however, shows no reluctance whatsoever in making this point:

Above all we must avoid postulating 'society' again as an abstraction vis-a-vis the individual. The individual is the social being. His manifestations of life, even if they may not appear in the direct form of communal manifestations of life carried out in association with others, are therefore an expression and confirmation of social life . . . Man, much as he may therefore be a particular individual (and it is precisely his particularity which makes him an individual, and a real individual social being), is just as much the totality--the ideal totality--the subjective existence of imagined and experienced society for itself . . . ⁽⁴⁷⁾

On the basis of this vision, the question for Marx really does become the historical one of 'What is to be done?', given the historicist notion that we are made by and make our own history, in a continuing dialectic. No such optimism or vigour can be said to characterise Rousseau's works. He is certainly a trenchant and stern critic of civil society, and he anticipates many of the concerns of Marx and other, later

radical thinkers in that respect, but when it comes to asking what can be done to improve things, it is a different story altogether. The point for Rousseau is to try to arrest the observed tendency to decay and death; the point is to try to find a friendly harbour, a place of refuge where one can better prepare oneself to cope with the uncertainty of life in civil society, or where one can retreat from, and defend oneself against, the encroachments of that society. Thus, as we have already seen, Emile's education prepares him for life 'in the raw'. Emile will be able to preserve the natural in himself against the encroachments of the social pressures around him. At one point, Rousseau suggests that we must not give children everything that they want; they must not be allowed to become slaves of their own caprices, for, after all, 'With the age of reason the child becomes the slave of the community; then why forestall this by slavery in the home?'⁽⁴⁸⁾ This somewhat negative view of the place of the wider community in human affairs is echoed in an aphorism about the proper object of education at Clarens: 'The whole point is not to spoil the natural man in appropriating him to the society.'⁽⁴⁹⁾ 'Spoilers' and 'appropriators' are very strong words to apply to those who are engaged in a fundamental task, education. They are clear evidence of Rousseau's feelings on the matter of what could usually be expected from society as he knew and experienced it.

We must not forget that, to some extent, Rousseau's

critique of civil society is based on his own experience in, and observations of, the contemporary society of his day. Would he have been so grudging in his acceptance of the simultaneity of nature and society had the observed reality not been so distressing? At this point, we can only ask the question. We should remind ourselves once again that Rousseau nowhere denies that society is natural, for all that he found so many features of contemporary civil society to be blatantly unnatural. Furthermore, Rousseau did idealise certain forms of society, for instance, the society of the 'golden age' and the hypothetical social contract community. The latter form of society is characterised as bringing about a remarkable transformation in man, from a 'limited and stupid animal into an intelligent being and a man'.⁽⁵⁰⁾ That is hardly the comment of one who wanted to treat all forms of society as unnatural. It is the right comment of one who had reason to be deeply sceptical of most existing societies.

Having considered the importance of solitude in the life of natural man, we shall now turn to the moral aspects of the life of natural man, i.e., as good or evil. All that has been said so far about a natural life should demonstrate the absurdity of accusing Rousseau's 'limited and stupid animal' of anything like a natural propensity to hurt or harm his fellow-men. After all, he has little reason to recognise fellow members of the species excepting, perhaps, women, whom he loves but rarely and then based only on in-

stinct and habit.⁽⁵¹⁾ Morality for Rousseau is a matter of not hurting other people, so that if it can be shown that natural man has no intention of hurting his fellows, he cannot be said to be evil. This, of course, is what Rousseau intends to be the distinction between amour de soi and amour-propre as we shall see below.

Rousseau in no way claims that the rather unprepossessing creature--more like an ignoble than a noble savage--whose way of life we have been discussing, is the sublime manifestation of all things bright and beautiful, or that he would be aware of it if he were. He is saying that it is patently absurd and theoretically unsound to accuse natural man of being in any way capable, desirous or needful of perpetrating on his fellow-men the kinds of actions that make life in the Hobbesian state of nature 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short', a life in which one has permanently to be on one's guard against the 'known propensities' of one's fellows to transform the state of nature into a state of war. That description is valid in every respect as a description of life in contemporary civil society, where everyone is playing a 'zero-sum game' in which 'I win because you lose', and vice versa. It will not do as a description of man's life as he emerged from the hands of his maker, in the 'embryo' of the human species, as Rousseau puts it.⁽⁵²⁾ As we pointed out above, we must be careful not to confuse the natural and the social man. We must guard against the tend-

ency to label as natural, behaviour and attitudes that have developed in society with others. (53)

Natural man may not be 'innocent', or consciously moral, but that does not mean that he is guilty. Nature is not to be equated with innocence but with ignorance, well seen in this image of nature as 'veiled':

Behold how luxury, licentiousness, and slavery have in all periods been punishment for the arrogant attempts we have made to emerge from the happy ignorance in which eternal wisdom had placed us. The heavy veil with which she covered all her operations seemed to warn us adequately that she did not destine us for vain studies. Is there even one of her lessons from which we have known how to profit, or which we have neglected with impunity? Peoples, know once and for all that nature wanted to keep you from being harmed by knowledge, just as a mother wrests a dangerous weapon from her child's hands . . . (54)

The implications of this argument from the First Discourse are not that we should return to that veiled ignorance that represents the natural, but that ordinary people, among whom Rousseau is quite prepared to class himself, should leave the task of acting as nature's disciples to such great 'preceptors of the human race' as Bacon, Descartes and Newton, geniuses who needed no guides in the job of spreading the truth about virtue, unlike the pretentious hacks of Rousseau's day and age who so prided themselves on their progressive and reasonable views. (55)

If natural man is ignorant, so, by analogy, are children and the human race in general. To the notion of natural man as ignorant we can also add that he is amoral and asocial: 'Above all, let us not conclude with Hobbes that because man

has no idea of goodness he is naturally evil . . . savages are not evil precisely because they do not know what it is to be good.'⁽⁵⁶⁾ Secondly, as we have already depicted in some detail, asocial, natural man lives by and for himself alone, in a condition of subsistence-level abundance, with enough food and space, and with no pressure from over-population. Each person can easily look to his own self-preservation without needing or hindering others. The result could never be a Hobbesian war of all against all:

' . . . since the state of nature is that in which care of our self-preservation is the least prejudicial to the self-preservation of others, that state was consequently the best suited to peace and the most appropriate for the human race.'⁽⁵⁷⁾

Even if one of his fellow-men were to hurt him, natural man would not be offended, and would not try to take terrible revenge. He would accept his fate; he would simply write off the loss of his dinner, to take one example of a likely encounter, as a bad encounter, as opposed to the good one of having found his dinner in the first place.⁽⁵⁸⁾ He would look for some more dinner or would seek out another tree under which to spend the night, if that were the problem. Similarly, one could neither imprison nor be imprisoned by one's fellow-man. Quite apart from the unlikelihood of anyone's thinking of imprisoning him, natural man would simply take off into the forests as soon as the captor's back was turned. As Rousseau so aptly says: ' . . . should his vigilance relax for a moment,

should an unforeseen noise make him turn his head, I take twenty steps into the forest, my chains are broken, and he never in his life sees me again,'⁽⁵⁹⁾ Thus, the parameters of one's life are both boundless, inasmuch as one can go anywhere, and bounded, inasmuch as twenty steps are all that is needed to escape from any dire situation.

The basis of Rousseau's case against Hobbes and the other philosophers who say that man in a state of nature is evil, and the crux of his attempting to distinguish between good nature and bad society, lies in the hypothetical distinction between amour de soi and amour-propre, between self-love and vanity. The difference between them represents simply the difference between two principles of life. Natural man lives according to the principles of self-love, while social man lives according to the principle of vanity. More precisely, social man, by definition, has to have an awareness of himself in relation to other people in society. All too often, and the more so in contemporary civil society, that involves his having to treat other people as obstacles to his own self-preservation, resulting in his having a proprietary, exclusive attitude to himself, an attitude which is summed up in the notion of vanity. Pride in oneself is not a bad thing. Indeed, Rousseau says of pride that it is the 'earliest and the most natural' of the passions, and we shall see that pride in intrinsically worthy things--such as one's country--is positively virtuous.⁽⁶⁰⁾ In competitive civil society, it is very hard to find things that are intrinsically worthy of our pride:

thus pride usually takes the form of vanity.

As always, the force of the distinction between self-love and vanity varies, usually in accordance with Rousseau's degree of willingness to be realistic about the immanence of nature and society. Thus, we find that in the Dialogues, for example, the distinction is made much more forcefully than in the Second Discourse. This is hardly surprising, given that Rousseau probably felt most tormented and persecuted when he wrote the Dialogues. On the other hand, the treatment of self-love and vanity is much more rhetorical in the Second Discourse than it is in Emile, which, as we shall see below, represents the most careful and systematic treatment of the subject of human passions. In none of the works is there a denial of the inevitable and inexorable transformation of self-love into vanity. There is no attempt to escape from reality altogether.

Both principles involve loving oneself, and in one passage in Emile Rousseau refers to self-love as vanity writ universal, as it were: 'Man's only natural passion is self-love or vanity taken in a wider sense. In itself or in relation to ourselves this vanity is good and useful, and as it does not necessarily concern other people, in that respect it is naturally indifferent . . .'(61) At this stage, Rousseau did not clearly distinguish self-love from vanity, being content to label self-love as the indifferent version of vanity. Although self-love is used to characterise natural man's solitary and

self-sufficient life, and although self-sufficiency becomes a sort of natural ethic with Rousseau, it is, in fact, vanity, the principle by which social man lives, that is the restrictive category. Self-love does not preclude a primitive identification with similar others of our species, i.e., it is the basis of our humanness. Thus, when it comes to reconciling nature and society, it is the universalistic ethic based on self-love that will provide the basis of a regenerative communal ethic, in which natural goodness is transformed into virtue.⁽⁶²⁾

The sense of wholeness, of universalism, and of basic humanness in self-love is well portrayed in Jean Starobinski's fine version. Self-love is a ' . . . presence that is happy in itself, a confident adherence to our own body, to the world close at hand: it is a force of sympathy and identification. There is no split between our outer and inner selves.'⁽⁶³⁾ Contrast this notion of the naturally self-sufficient, happy, gentle and unfragmented being with that of a typical member of civil society and we can see why it is love of self that will have to be socialised in the community: 'The man of the world almost always wears a mask. He is rarely ever himself and is almost a stranger to himself; he is ill at ease when he is forced into his own company. Not what he is but what he seems is all he cares for.'⁽⁶⁴⁾ In another classic image, Rousseau comments upon the 'true cause' of the difference between savage man and civilised man: ' . . . the savage lives within himself; the sociable man, always outside of himself, knows how to live only

in the opinion of others; and it is, so to speak, from their judgment alone that he draws the sentiment of his own existence.' Of course, the man of civil society has to cope with a Hobbesian nether-world, in which 'greed, avarice, oppression, desires, and prides' are predominant, where there is no hope of anyone's appearing or being seen as he really is, and where a black theatre is operating, in which everyone must come heavily disguised on to the social stage. (65)

The potentially expansive nature of self-love is in marked contrast to the restrictive, limiting and exclusive nature of vanity. Although it would appear that when one lives in society one would have to be more sociable and outgoing, Rousseau's point is that in the turbulent, noisy and competitive civil society around him one needs to take a highly exclusive attitude to one's self. One's self becomes one's property, to be guarded jealously against the encroachments of other selves. One needs to take a proprietary, exclusive attitude to one's self, as opposed to an expansive, inclusive, and, by implication, more human attitude to one's self. In that sense, Rousseau's insight that the invention of private property was coeval with the origin of civil society could equally refer to one's own person as one's personal property, as well as the more customary usage of property in land and goods. In the state of nature, there was obviously no need of a proprietary sense of self or possessions, as there was no conception of scarcity, no conception of the dialectical opposition of self-interests, no conception

of life in a market society, where every aspect of one's self is up for sale to the highest bidder and where people are literally bought and sold all the time, and no conception of the life of man as anything other than well-ordered, stable and balanced.

In one sense, then, the history of the human race is the history of the transition from a life based on self-love to a life based on vanity. Human history is the history of the passions, almost equivalent to a genealogy of passion.⁽⁶⁶⁾ Rousseauian politics are the politics of passions, where passions are the motive forces in people's lives. The principal passions, so basic that they are referred to as 'principles' which themselves guide the other passions, are, as we said above, self-love and vanity. The basic message about the passions is this: by nature we are creatures of sensibility, we have feelings. Rousseau himself felt before he thought, and that is the common experience of all humanity, as he tells us in the Confessions. Our feelings give rise to passions, and imagination determines the course of the passions.⁽⁶⁷⁾ The point is that passions are part of what it means to be human, they are part of human nature, even the bad ones, as Rousseau more and less grudgingly admits. Furthermore, our imaginations dream up alternative futures, for better and for worse. We may bemoan the chaos and disorder in our lives as they appear to be unfolding, but at a certain, basic, natural level we do have only ourselves to blame. That is the trouble, but therein also lies the possibility in-

herent in being human. Something can always be done. Our 'spirituality of the soul' allows us to say yes or no to the commands of nature, so that human history becomes the history of human perfectibility, the development of human potential for better and for worse. Rousseau resolutely denies the validity of original sin and he seems unable to account for the 'fall' except to say that it was a chance result of a series of chance circumstances. The problem is that, once having fallen into civil society, we seem to lack the strength or will-power to pull ourselves out.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Or, perhaps it is because we are too busy enjoying the admitted compensations for having to live in a fallen society, compensations such as love, language and music.

We can see why Rousseauian politics come to be concerned more and more with the need for, and the possibilities of, ordering , controlling, mastering, and even repressing our bad passions, and enhancing, encouraging, nurturing and developing our good passions. To take just one example of Rousseau's message on the subject of the passions, he comments in the Letter to D'Alembert that 'well-regulated passions' are laudable in themselves, but, on the other hand, excesses of passion are 'dangerous and inevitable'.⁽⁶⁹⁾

The distinction between the hypothetical form of self-love as opposed to vanity continually demonstrates Rousseau's attitude to the simultaneity of nature and society. In the Second Discourse, for example, the distinction is, at first

sight, made quite forcefully:

Love of oneself is a natural sentiment which inclines every animal to watch over its own preservation, and which, directed in man by reason and modified by pity, produces humanity and virtue. Vanity is only a relative sentiment, artificial and born in society, which inclines every individual to have a greater esteem for himself than for anyone else, inspires in men all the harm they do to one another, and is the true source of honour. (70)

Love of oneself is a natural feeling that will be conjoined with reason and pity in a natural community to produce virtuous and good citizens. Rousseau is not referring to the cold, pedantic reason of his fellow-philosophers, a form of reason that divides people and engenders vanity, but to a form of natural reason, not immediately apparent in the true state of nature, but a noted feature of life in the 'golden age' and in the life of a natural community that is in many ways an attempt to retain some of the features of that almost mythological epoch. In that form reason would ideally teach us to know the limits placed on us by the natural order. (71)

Once again, this differs markedly from the artificial, relative and restrictive feeling of vanity, the hall-mark of social man. Vanity, however, is also referred to as the 'true source of honour', and honour is surely a worthy and natural feature of a thriving communal life. Rousseau's realism is once again suggesting a way of reconciling natural self-love and social vanity. Honour involves the desire to shine in the eyes of others, and to be acknowledged as a natural superior. In another part of the Second Discourse Rousseau quite

clearly designates the desire to distinguish oneself as the source simultaneously of both good and bad things: 'I would show that to this ardour to be talked about, to this furor to distinguish oneself, which nearly always keeps us outside of ourselves, we owe what is best and worst among men, our virtues and our vices, our sciences and our errors, our conquerors and our philosophers--that is to say, a multitude of bad things as against a small number of good ones.'⁽⁷²⁾

Thus, the desire to be superior and to shine in the eyes of others is often a good thing, as in the society of the 'golden age', for example, when the good and bad passions were in balance. Sometimes the desire to be superior is quite natural and predictable, as in the case of the fifteen-year-old Emile, for instance: 'Hitherto my Emile has thought only of himself, so his first glance at his equals leads him to compare himself to them; and the first feeling excited by this comparison is the desire to be first. It is here that self-love is transformed into selfishness . . .'⁽⁷³⁾ Apparently, it is quite natural to want to be above all the rest, and now comes the time for very careful control and teaching by the tutor, so that Emile will not let his passions run amok. Earlier on, it had all been much easier, as the main thing had been to prevent much being done and to let nature run her course. This she had done with very good effect, apparently, as the twelve-year-old Emile had been characterised as a 'natural' leader:

He is made to lead, to rule his fellows; talent and experience take the place of right and authority. In any garb, under any name, he will still be first; everywhere he will rule the rest, they will always feel his superiority, he will be master without knowing it, and they will serve him unawares'. (74)

From these few examples we can see how self-love almost naturally merges or evolves into vanity. As soon as one enters society, which in Emile's case is represented by his reaching the age of reason, one looks around and begins to look at oneself in the light of what one sees other people to be like. One begins to particularise other people and so to individualise one's self as apart and different from the other selves. Social development proper has started, for better and for worse.

The tormented and persecuted Rousseau who wrote the Dialogues was much less willing to be realistic about vanity as a natural aspect of a human being. In the first of the Dialogues Rousseau allows much freer rein to his imagination in conjuring up a vision of a world in which he himself would like to live. He tells his alter ego, the Frenchman, about an ideal world, similar to, yet different from, our own, in which everything is naturally ordered and in conformity with the original harmony and purity of nature. Once again, there is an acceptance of the passions as the motive force of all our actions. Again, there is the reminder that 'All of nature's first impulses are right and straightforward', and that they tend most directly to our conservation and happiness.

Our 'primitive passions' are directed by self-love alone, so that they are 'essentially all loving and gentle'. Thus, self-love is clearly characterised by happiness, pure love and gentleness. As always, the image of an ideal world cannot be sustained in the face of the reality surrounding it, and self-love soon gives way to vanity. How does this happen? The main fault in this version appears to lie in our 'weakness of soul', another form of 'perfectibility', which allows many obstacles, such as errors of judgment and the force of prejudice, to deflect the course of self-love, in itself a 'good and absolute feeling'. And so our primitive passions are diverted, change their character, and become, in sharp contrast to the gentle and loving natural passions, 'irascible and full of hatred'. Once again, vanity is characterised as a purely negative, vicarious, restrictive and relative principle of life. It is ' . . . a relative feeling that we use to compare ourselves, a feeling that demands that we have preferences, the enjoyment of which is purely negative, and which no longer seeks to satisfy itself by our own well-being, but only by the misfortune of another.' As we noted earlier, those who live by vanity are playing a 'zero-sum game', in which 'I win because you lose', and vice versa-- 'I am happy because you are unhappy', and then only for so long as I can keep you at bay and no longer. (75)

The most systematic treatment of the passions from a developmental perspective is to be found in Emile, that inspiring account of the upbringing of a hypothetical child. The key to understanding Emile is to see that it concerns one central

problem: how to make the transition from a natural way of life to a social way of life. That moment of transition represents a 'crisis' for Emile, and it has become known in our time as the 'crisis' of adolescence, which Rousseau can be credited with discovering. It is, quite simply, the moment when the child becomes a man and when the 'great river' of passions begins to flow.⁽⁷⁶⁾ As a man, an individual will be operating in a social context which involves being in relationship to others. Those others may be competing for scarce resources; they will certainly be competing for attention, self-esteem, and, more precisely, the favours of a woman. One must, therefore, have a very strong sense of himself in order to survive. The purpose of Emile's upbringing to the point of entry into social life is to make him strong enough to survive on his own, so that he will have a sense both of his own true worth and of the true worth of other people and things in his environment.

Emile is to be brought up as naturally as possible. His is a compromise education. As Rousseau says, he is a 'savage who has to live in the town.'⁽⁷⁷⁾ He cannot be kept out of society for ever, but he can be equipped to cope in as natural a way as possible with the uncertainties of life in contemporary civil society. In effect, Emile's development is arrested. Rousseau's concern in the early years is simply to ward off vices rather than to inculcate any virtues. This is reflected in two ways. On the one hand, he shows a genuine concern for the special qualities of childhood. He urges us to love

childhood and hold it 'in reverence'; he urges us to respect the child's 'special' way of 'seeing, thinking, and feeling'; he urges us to treat the child 'according to his age', and to treat the child as a child and the man as a man; and he advises us: 'Be just, human, kindly.' (78) On the other hand, there is a special purpose behind all of this, which is that we must not concern ourselves with the social aspects of life before we need to or before the child is ready for them. It is in that context that we should understand this 'rule' of education: 'May I venture at this point to state the greatest, the most important, the most useful rule of education? It is: do not save time, but lose it.' (79) From that rule it certainly follows that early childhood education should be primarily negative and strictly in accordance with natural limits and criteria rather than human ones.

The point, as we have just said, is to arrest the child's development until he is ready and able to cope with other people as possible obstacles to his own self-preservation. The child cannot be kept out of society for ever. He must be equipped to preserve himself in society, as self-preservation is nature's 'first law'. (80) Furthermore, if our knowledge of how to control passions does not in fact keep pace with the development of the passions we run the risk of upsetting that 'natural equilibrium' which is desirable if we are to live an ordered life. Rousseau is, therefore, faced with the task of using passions to control passion. (81) He

must teach Emile all about human passions while at the same time he must somehow convince Emile of the difference between the good passions and the bad passions. Thus, we in turn can learn a great deal about Rousseau's attitude to passion through an understanding both of Emile's development and of the place of passion in that development.

As we have said, nature's 'first law' is self-preservation, and our passions are the 'chief means' of self-preservation. (82) The overall context is that of man's relation to his environment:

Man's proper study is that of his relation to his environment. So long as he only knows that environment through his physical nature, he should study himself in relation to things; this is the business of his childhood; when he begins to be aware of his moral nature, he should study himself in relation to his fellow-men; this is the business of his whole life, and we have now reached the time when that study should be begun. (83)

Hitherto there was no point attempting to reason with the child. One had to be reasonable, but to reason was pointless. The child had no rational conception of the distinction between good and evil. With the age of reason comes the possibility of the child's being able to combine reason and conscience with a view to living morally. (84) That entails, as we have insisted throughout, knowing about the passions with a view to controlling them:

This is the sum of human wisdom with regard to the use of the passions. First, to be conscious of the true relations of man both in the species and in the individual; second, to control all the affections in accordance with those relations. (85)

At this point, then, as Emile reaches the age of fifteen and full adolescence, Rousseau introduces him to the real world, the world where social inequality is rife, where passions run amok, and where it is more than ever necessary to realise that the political task is fundamentally an ethical task. The good life will be an ordered life:

But to determine whether the passions by which his life will be governed shall be humane and gentle or harsh and cruel, whether they shall be the passions of benevolence and pity or those of envy and covetousness, we must know what he believes his place among men to be, and what sort of obstacles he expects to have to overcome to attain the position he seeks . . . This is the time for estimating inequality natural and civil, and for the scheme of the whole social order. Society must be studied in the individual and the individual in the society; those who desire to treat politics and morals apart from one another will never understand either. (86)

For the next two hundred pages in the English translation we learn all about the politics of passion, and about life at the front and back of the vast social stage. The purpose is to learn what needs to be done to attain full mastery of ourselves, so that we can attain that state of balance between nature and society which alone makes possible a quiet, ordered, naturally tasteful and sensitive life. (87) That life does not preclude having loving relationships with persons of the opposite sex, but the relationship is not like the ecstatic, loving one of Rousseau's dreams, the frustration of which so often left him feeling desperate and lonely, nor indeed like the ecstatic, loving one which is a permanent feature of the romantic imagination--a feature of the imagination alone. It is rather one

that gives rise to feelings of happiness, contentment, security and true friendship, while at the same time leaving one fully prepared to cope with all the vicissitudes of life in unpredictable circumstances (as we can see from the uncompleted sequel to Emile), and to rise to the defence of the community in which one happens to be living, should one's virtue be put to the test. (88)

At this point, our first concern is not with Rousseau's answers but with the way in which he poses the questions. In Emile, the question of passion is approached realistically, although there are the usual and expected strictures against the contradictions, the inequities, the stupidities and the weakness that are involved in social life. Far better, as we have already shown, is the happy, self-limiting, self-sufficient and natural life of quiet solitude, which is always Rousseau's critical yardstick in assessing the follies of contemporary life. This long passage on natural and social passions is quite typical:

The origin of our passions, the root and spring of all the rest, the only one which is born with man, which never leaves him as long as he lives, is self-love; this passion is primitive, instinctive, it precedes all the rest, which are in a sense only modifications of it. In this sense, if you like, they are all natural. But most of these modifications are the result of external influences, without which they would never occur, and such modifications, far from being advantageous to us, are harmful. They change the original purpose and work against its end; then it is that man finds himself outside nature and at strife with himself. (89)

The critical admission has been made, however reluctantly: 'In this sense, if you like, they are all natural'. No matter how or why self-love is transformed into vanity, the process can never

be discounted as a complete and utter aberration of what nature intended. In another context, Rousseau says of self-love that it is 'thrown into a ferment' when 'private interests are stirred up and clash with each other'; this effects its transformation--or modification--into its 'opposite', vanity.⁽⁹⁰⁾ Although Rousseau would obviously like to say that self-love is transformed into vanity by the action of external forces which operated in the environment around one, he knows that there must still be something in our individual human natures that makes possible this transformation, and, of course, there is: our perfectibility, that virtual quality that allows us to imagine alternative futures, for better and for worse. It hardly helps to be living in a society which places a premium on people's ability to exploit each other for profit, but Rousseau thinks that there is more to it than that. It is true that civil society, per se, was founded by the first person to fence off his land and say that it was his, and his alone. At a deeper level, however, we have to resort to more chance-like explanations, as are implied by the notions of perfectibility or weakness of soul.

We can see, therefore, how realistic is Rousseau's treatment of the passions in Emile, which has obvious implications for an understanding of the tension between nature and society. The point is that we cannot simply distinguish good nature from bad society. The situation demands a much more subtle and realistic approach than that. Briefly to recapit-

ulate some of the main elements in the treatment of the passions in Emile, we can see that nature's 'first law' is self-preservation and that passions are the 'chief means' of that self-preservation. Passions cannot be destroyed as they are God's work, nor can their birth be prevented. Being modifications of the natural passions, the social passions are natural also. Imagination being the determinant of the course of the passions, Rousseau suggests that we should restrict the world of imagination that the child faces, given that the real world is limited and finite. A form of pride is explicitly characterised as the 'earliest and the most natural' of the passions. Finally, the twenty-year-old Emile will not be shielded from the real way of life of society, and so he will be introduced to love, as teaching him to be disgusted with love would be a way 'contrary to nature'. It is far better to enlist nature in the task of finding the good life, as there is a form of love that is natural and good. We need to remember that: 'Only through passion can we gain mastery over passions; their tyranny must be controlled through their legitimate power, and nature herself must furnish us with the means to control her'. Thus equipped, Emile is almost ready to assume a fully responsible place in the society around him, and so it is now time to go to the front of the social stage, go about in society, and learn all about how 'men' love, in contrast to his knowing about 'mankind' in general, which has been the main focus of his learning so far. We need not fear that Emile will be sucked into the

dreadful traps of society; the traps into which he might enter will all be of his own making, in that sense quite natural, and, therefore, easy to escape from:

He may no doubt be deceived by his own passions; who is there who yields to his passion without being led astray by them? At least he will not be deceived by the passions of other people, If he sees them, he will regard them with the eye of the wise, and will neither be led astray by their example nor seduced by their prejudices. (91)

Our treatment of the principles of self-love and vanity has demonstrated how a realistic and philosophically sound reading of the situation continually led Rousseau to collapse his distinction between natural self-love and social vanity, or at least rather drastically to modify it. No matter how reluctantly he did it, Rousseau's formulations continually demonstrate the immanence of nature in society and the simultaneity of nature and society. This is hardly surprising when we bear in mind that Rousseau's purpose in setting up such a clear distinction between nature and society was to judge society. It is quite obvious that he found civil society wanting in many respects. In fact, the tension between nature and society is so fundamental that, when it comes down to the question of what can be done to reconcile the split between nature and society, we shall see that we are seriously constrained in the endeavour.

We still have to discuss two aspects of the ethical life of natural man, both of which have an important bearing on the prospects for a community that is as natural as possible.

These are natural compassion or pity and the question of love between the sexes. We shall now deal with these in turn.

A major attribute of natural self-love is that it is modified by feelings of compassion for the fate of suffering, recognisably similar others. The most systematic treatment of the natural status of pity is to be found in the Second Discourse while Emile, once again, contains a very interesting application of the argument. In the Second Discourse natural pity is used as one of Rousseau's arguments against those who, like Hobbes, say that man is naturally evil. In Rousseau's view, social passions make laws necessary. Savages do not know how to reason, and they lack the imagination or the need to abuse their faculties in such a way as to let their passions run amok, as do men who live in society. Savages need neither law nor enlightenment to prevent them from abusing others; their passions are calm, and they are ignorant of vice and virtue. In addition, savages have been given the principle of pity, a principle which acts to soften any ferocity that they might occasionally feel towards others, a principle which moves them to feel for others without any reflection on their part. As we noted above, feeling, in Rousseau's view, always occurs before thinking or intellectual understanding.⁽⁹²⁾

For all their ignorance of good and evil, savages do have the innate capacity to feel for their fellow-creatures, and this really makes it possible to talk in dialectical terms of the society of nature. We should not, however, expect too

much from this principle of compassion, at least in its most basic aspect. In this sense, a primitive identification is involved, an ontological act of recognising others who are similar to oneself and of distinguishing oneself as one distinguishes others. Compassion in this sense is certainly the unifying 'crucible' of civilisation, making possible, in Lévi-Strauss' terms, the three-fold passage from nature to culture, from emotion to intellectuality, and from animality to humanity.⁽⁹³⁾ In this sense, also, compassion is the sine qua non of a politics of the human condition, as it is social vanity that will, hopefully, be transcended in a community which is based on self-love, the compassionate aspect of which will be expressed as virtue.

We said above that we should not expect too much from the most primitive aspect of compassion. While it is a sine qua non of any community politics at all, it is not likely to be a principle that is widely practised in Rousseau's state of nature, although it is clearly present in potential. For that reason we can distinguish a second element in compassion, a much more positive going out of our own selves to others. In the state of nature, we carry ourselves about with us, so to speak, and it is unlikely that we would spend much time extending ourselves to other people, if only because few opportunities for any kind of social intercourse would present themselves, and we would thus be unlikely to learn what was involved in pitying others. That is how Rousseau characterises pity in the Essay

on the Origin of Language:

We develop social feeling only as we become enlightened. Although pity is native to the human heart, it would remain eternally quiescent unless it were activated by imagination. How are we moved to pity? By getting outside of ourselves and identifying with a being who suffers. We suffer only as much as we believe him to suffer. It is clear that such transport supposes a great deal of acquired knowledge. How am I to imagine ills of which I have no idea? (94)

Rousseau's emphasis is slightly different in the Second Discourse. In that work one of his main tasks is to criticise the state of contemporary society and not least the ideas of his fellow-philosophers. He is particularly hard on what he perceives to be the cold, unfeeling and self-centred life of the typical philosopher, a man of reason: 'Reason engenders vanity and reflection fortifies it; reason turns man back upon himself, it separates him from all that bothers and afflicts him. Philosophy isolates him.' (95) By contrast, then, the savage for once really looks quite noble, as his identification with suffering animals, human or non-human, is obviously 'infinitely closer' than that of the man of reason. Presumably, the 'rabble, the marketwoman', are also more natural than the average 'prudent man', who would move away as soon as any trouble started and would not move a muscle to help. The common people can be relied upon to help prevent 'honest people from murdering each other'. Summing up this part of his argument, Rousseau concludes:

It is very certain, therefore, that pity is a natural sentiment which, moderating in each individual the activity of love of oneself, contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species. It carries us

without reflection to the aid of those whom we see suffer; in the state of nature, it takes the place of laws, morals, and virtue, with the advantage that no one is tempted to disobey its gentle voice . . . (96)

Thus directed by his self-love and his pity, and having no desire to see his fellow-man suffer--equivalent in Rousseau's view to desiring that he be happy, in rather a negative conception of what it takes to make people happy--natural man would easily be able to follow a 'least harm' ethic, which involves the 'less perfect but more useful' maxim of 'Do what is good for you, with the least possible harm to others.' In the state of nature, where there is hardly any social intercourse between people, where there is no idea of mine and thine, where there is no conception of an intent to hurt or hinder another, and where there is no 'true' idea of justice, this maxim is more than enough to ensure the happiness and stability of life. (97) The perfect maxim is, of course, that 'sublime maxim of reasoned justice': 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you', which, as Rousseau suggests in *Emile*, still requires more than just reason for its operation. For Rousseau, always the man of feeling and always attentive to the demands of his heart, reason must be combined with conscience and feeling in the natural community : ' . . . by reason alone, unaided by conscience, we cannot establish any natural law, and . . . all natural right is a vain dream if it does not rest upon some instinctive need of the human heart . . . it is false to say that the precepts of natural law are based on reason only; they have a firmer and more solid foundation. The love of others, springing from self-love, is the

source of human justice.) (98)

In practice, the real world is less amenable to reason and less likely to resemble anything sublime than the feelings of Rousseau might lead him to desire. In practice, the real world, which is so prominent a constraint on the young Emile's upbringing, is a world where pity for the sufferings of others is all too necessary. Life in this world is fraught with uncertainty and danger. One never knows when one might fall into an abyss. In this world, life is a preparation for death, a death which comes to all, rich and poor alike, and in many guises. Thus, the thing is to be prepared, and to be able to pity others in their all-too-likely suffering. The happy man is the one who suffers least, and who has least need of his fellow-men: 'Every affection is a sign of insufficiency', as Rousseau says. (99) The best thing would be to have no need of other people, and consequently no need ever to pity them. In practice, it is usually too much to expect us to wish another person well in his or her life. We only envy other people's happiness, that is 'human nature', according to Rousseau. Even our pity for their woes results only from our realising that the same fate could easily befall us in these uncertain times, and then it is only to the extent that they obviously feel the need of pity. In fact, we don't even need to feel other people's woes, it is enough simply to know them and to know what they involve. (100) We have to be very careful in the matter of compassion, as too much time spent in inspiring

pity in the young Emile might induce only pain and sorrow, and that too often leads to a hardening of the heart when a softening is needed. Thus, selectivity, control and great care are needed on the tutor's part: 'A single thing, carefully selected and shown at the right time, will fill him with pity and set him thinking for a month.' (101)

Rousseau has clearly realised that compassion can easily become contempt. It is very hard for the compassionate one not to feel thankful that he is not in the same position as the sufferer. Although Rousseau keeps on telling Emile that he could be doing the suffering, the point is that in the meantime he is not. In consequence, Emile is quite likely to feel slightly superior to the one who is suffering. We noted earlier that Emile is characterised at one point as a 'natural' superior, and it is quite likely that Emile's compassion might be based on his inequality in regard to his fellow-men, despite Rousseau's spending so long on the subject of Emile's humanness, and on what it means to be a man. Compassion can all too easily be based on inequality, not equality. In a world that is full of exploitation, injustice, suffering and death, compassion is certainly needed, and we should be thankful whenever it is seen to be operative in people. In that sense, compassion and widespread inequality do go hand-in-hand. Things would hopefully be somewhat different in the regenerated community of Rousseau's dreams where there might be less need of feelings like compassion and charity, especially

if everyone really did have something and no one too much. One would hope that in the regenerated community the practice of seeing, and being seen by, one's fellows would lead to a more positive characterisation of 'humanity' than simply 'pity applied to the human species in general'.⁽¹⁰²⁾ We also need to bear in mind the problem we face in overextending ourselves. As our circle widens, it is likely that the strength of our feelings of compassion will diminish in proportion: 'It appears that the feeling of humanity evaporates and grows feeble in embracing all mankind . . .' Thus, we can see that there is going to be a tension in community between the tendency to expand one's horizons and the need to limit one's circle to the known and familiar.⁽¹⁰³⁾ On the other hand, we should not spend all our time being compassionate to those closest to us, as it is possible that our sense of communal virtue will be weakened, thus leading to an inability on our part to distinguish right from wrong in our neighbours' conduct:

Extend self-love to others and it is transformed into virtue, a virtue which has its roots in the hearts of every one of us. The less the object of our care is directly dependent on ourselves, the less we have to fear from the illusion of self-interest; the more general this interest becomes, the juster it is, and the love of the human race is nothing but the love of justice within us . . . To prevent pity from degenerating into weakness we must generalise it and extend it to mankind . . . Reason and self-love compel us to love mankind even more than our neighbour, and to pity the wicked is to be very cruel to other men.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

We can see how both of these tensions could be resolved in a community that was neither too big nor too small and in whi

one divided one's time between worrying about, and caring for, those nearest to one and serving the needs of the community at large.

We have seen how important it is to generalise our feelings of pity so that they will come to embrace all of humanity, or at least that portion of humanity which is within the bounds of one's community. It is likewise of great importance to extend our self-love to the community at large so that we will become virtuous citizens. Another way of saying this is to stress the importance of the community as an outlet for one's passionate feelings. In Rousseau's view, it is much more worthy to love the community than it is to love a mistress, for example. We thus encounter another distinction, that between the natural and the social in love between the sexes, to which we shall now turn.

In one sense the distinction between the 'physical' and the 'moral' in love, or simply the status of love between the sexes as natural, highlights the whole question of what Rousseau wanted to take for granted as natural. The whole of Emile turns on the question of what kind of love is fitting for the realistic reconciliation of nature and society, on which is predicated Emile's upbringing. La Nouvelle Héloïse is obviously concerned with the kind of love that is healthy, responsible and virtuous, as opposed to the kind of free, ecstatic love that is--or in Rousseau's day was thought to be--destructive of a responsible communal life. We can also view Rousseau's own life as an attempt to find fulfilment and re-

sponsibility through shared love; like Julie, we can say of Rousseau that he sought a life in which it was not a 'crime to love someone too much'. In La Nouvelle Heloise, the attempt ends in the tragedy of Julie's final, heroic sacrifice of herself for the sake of the domestic community at Clarens; at the end of her life she still has St. Preux's name on her lips, but she embraces religion and achieves grace.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ In Rousseau's own life, the attempt ends in the peaceful solitude of reverie and the attainment of a state of grace at the very end of his life. In other words, he was able to give up trying, and accepted his fate with equanimity.

In the final analysis, the distinction between self-love and vanity, as between natural and social passions, hinges on the question of love. For the pre-romantic, frequently desperate, and always sentient Rousseau, this is one area in which the commitment to realism imposes a very high price. In other words, in the conflict between love and duty, as between freedom and happiness, duty and happiness always win in the end. A natural love in society is one that brings great happiness and contentment, that does not prevent one from doing his duty when necessary, that is thoroughly responsible and faithful, that gives rise to such natural feelings as friendship, generosity and pity, and that nowhere risks the collapse of all that is permanent and worthy for the sake of perhaps a moment's passing ecstasy. Let us now see how the

question of love is dealt with in some of Rousseau's writings.

In all Rousseau's works we can distinguish between natural, healthy passions and social, unhealthy ones; in all the works there is a tension between them; and in all his works the unhealthy, social passions are controlled, mastered, or even repressed, in favour of a realistic balance between natural and social passion. The Letter to D'Alembert, for instance, appears at first sight to be a straightforward response to D'Alembert's short article in Diderot's Encyclopaedia, in which D'Alembert considers with favour the idea of establishing a theatre in Geneva. In his response, Rousseau does deal with the effects of setting up a theatre in a virtuous community like Geneva. In his response, Rousseau does deal with the effects of the theatre in specific contexts, and he is thoroughly realistic in his comments. He knows that the theatre is good for sophisticated people in places like Paris, where there is no virtue, where there is only an exquisite sensibility, and where all hope of decency is lost, given a priority of virtue, decency and taste--in descending order, as can be imagined.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ Thus, he accepts that the theatre is good for a bad society, but bad for a good society. Bad societies can hardly be any worse than they are already, and those poor souls who must suffer life in crowded, competitive and corrupt cities certainly need some compensations for their toil.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ In uncorrupted, virtuous and free communities quite a different approach is needed. The last thing that is

needed is a dark, crowded cavern of a place, in which all kinds of corrupt goings-on will be portrayed and represented. And we all know how degenerate these actors and actresses are, don't we?

On closer reading, however, the Letter to D'Alembert can clearly be seen to be concerned with the passions in general and love in particular. There is one very simple reason for that: 'The stage is, in general, a painting of the human passions, the original of which is in every heart.' (108) Rousseau's real concern is with the public portrayal of feelings. What feelings should be displayed on a public stage? When and where is love a good thing? These are the underlying questions with which the Letter is concerned. Rousseau thus accepts that 'the man without passions is a chimaera'. (109) In similarly realistic vein he is not about to deny that love is a good thing, but is concerned about the 'dangerous and inevitable' excesses of the passion, love. Rousseau would prefer the theatre to portray more love of humanity and of one's country, while being prepared to admit that 'tenderness' is 'more natural' and closer to 'love, properly so called'. (110) The problem is that love is the 'realm of women', and while there is nothing more natural and charming than an 'agreeable and virtuous woman', few women in contemporary society even approach that ideal. (111) If they were all like young Julie, who, to begin with at least, found ecstatic love in her relationship to her children, everything would be all right.

As Rousseau says: 'Is there a sight so touching, so respectable, as a mother surrounded by her children, directing the work of her domestics?'⁽¹¹²⁾ If we leave out the reference to 'domestics', there is really nothing to be faulted in that view. It may be a cause for regret that in our century of liberation movement we read that 'the peaceful care of the family and the home' is the appropriate 'lot' of women. On the other hand, Rousseau does say that 'Man and woman were formed for one another', and that 'innocent gaiety' between the sexes is fine; and he certainly thought that his rather chaste views were well-grounded, as he appeals at various points in the Letter to D'Alembert to the 'inclination of nature', 'the good of society', 'reason', 'experience', 'norms of morality', 'history', and ultimately, of course, to his own feeling of being correct in his views.⁽¹¹³⁾

In part, Rousseau's treatment of love arises from the very nature of love itself. In Rousseau's view, love involves making comparative statements of preference. As he says in Emile: 'We wish to inspire the preference we feel; love must be mutual. To be loved we must be worthy of love; to be preferred we must be more worthy than the rest, at least in the eyes of the beloved.'⁽¹¹⁴⁾

The question is whether comparison necessarily needs to involve competition. In saying that he prefers one woman to another, or that he is preferred over another man, is Rousseau saying that men and women must compete with each other for love? Does love necessarily have to breed envy,

rivalry or emulation? It is easy to see that Rousseau's personal experiences with women must have influenced his views on love. The pre-romantic in Rousseau placed women on a pedestal, thereby idealising them. It would appear that if and when they failed to meet his ideal expectations, his denunciation was as strong as his previous adoration. This is well seen in the Second Discourse, where Rousseau unequivocally condemns women and lays all the blame for the 'moral', unhealthy aspect of love at their door.

We all know that 'the more violent the passions the more necessary laws are to contain them', and the most violent of all passions is love:

Among the passions that agitate the heart of man, there is an ardent, impetuous one that makes one sex necessary to the other; a terrible passion which braves all dangers, overcomes all obstacles, and which, in all its fury, seems fitted to destroy the human race it is destined to preserve. What would become of men, tormented by this unrestrained and brutal rage, without chastity, without modesty, daily fighting over their loves at the price of their blood? ⁽¹¹⁵⁾

A terrible fate lies in store for us unless we can master our surging passions--that little is certain. We might begin, as Rousseau does, by carefully distinguishing between natural, physical love and social, moral love, and, it is 'incontestable that love itself, like all the other passions, has acquired only in society that impetuous ardour that so often makes it fatal to men.'⁽¹¹⁶⁾ Whose fault is it? As we have said, it is the fault of all those high society ladies who make life so difficult for over-sensitive, highly intellig-

ent but timid provincials like Jean-Jacques: 'Now it is easy to see that the moral element of love is an artificial sentiment born of the usage of society, and extolled with much skill and care by women in order to establish their ascendancy and make dominant the sex that ought to obey.'⁽¹¹⁷⁾ Voltaire's response to a view like that would have been typically cynical, that if a valet is to be allowed in the drawing room he must be expected to say extraordinary things.⁽¹¹⁸⁾

What results from this view of the moral element of love? The answer is simple and we have already given it: repression, mastery, and control of the more violent excesses of passion. The conflict between freedom and happiness that is reflected in Rousseau's approach to the question of love leads to some interesting contrasts in his ideas. For instance, the same writer who has Julie write to St. Preux: 'You have not spoken well, it seems to me, in saying that we should live in order to love. Ah! You should have said, let us love in order to live', also suggests to Emile's tutor that 'As he acquires knowledge, choose what ideas he shall attach to it; as his passions awake, select scenes calculated to repress them.'⁽¹¹⁹⁾ The contexts differ but the contrast is clear to see and Rousseau is sufficiently realistic not to mask it in any way.

We have to be very careful when we use a word like 'repress' when referring to feelings. People like Sigmund Freud in our own century have contributed so much to our

understanding of the workings of both the conscious and unconscious areas of the mind, and have so firmly convinced us of the relevance of sublimation and repression in the progress of civilisation, that it is hard to read a phrase like 'select scenes calculated to repress the passions' without its conjuring up the image of a systematic and unauthentic assault on our instinctual desires. On the other hand, Rousseau was only responding to what anyone in his position would see as a problem--the fact that venereal disease and syphilis claimed the lives of so many would-be libertines in his day. Part of the problem is linguistic, in that the French word used by Rousseau, réprimer, which does translate as repress, did not then have the same pejorative overtones as it now has. Rousseau's meaning is direct enough, as he obviously thought of repressing passion in the same way that, for instance, political uprisings have to be put down; in that sense it is simply another metaphorical way of referring to the need to control one's outbursts of passion. We should also remember that people like Freud simply described as an internal, unconscious process something that everyone knew had been going on in more overt, conscious ways for a long time, that is, the same process of controlling excesses of passion.

Another way of understanding what Rousseau had in mind is to place him in the tradition of the times. Mandeville, Herder, Goethe and Hegel spoke of harnessing the passions and thought that the harnessed passions would be transformed and

become 'good', and Rousseau is quite restrained when compared to the absolutely repressive tone of, say, John Calvin, for whom the absolute state's role consisted simply in the repression of passion, be it a passion for love, money, or power. (120)

Rousseau's talk of balancing and controlling passion is quite gentle by comparison, as he is concerned only with excesses of passion. Always the man of feeling, Rousseau would never deny the need to base our lives on feelings. Rousseau wanted to find the form of community in which our good, natural passions could be encouraged and our bad, social passions could be controlled to the necessary extent. In his view, the most lasting human fulfilment was to be found in service to one's community. We can distinguish a hierarchy of passion in Rousseau's writings, with love of one's country at the top of the list, followed by the natural, tasteful love of a good woman. Much nearer the bottom comes the love of a mistress. Ever the sentient realist, Rousseau readily admitted that loving a mistress was better than loving no one or nothing at all. As we have said, however, love of country comes first, and we shall end this chapter with this view of the paramount importance of patriotism:

It is certain that the greatest miracles of virtue have been produced by patriotism: that fine and lively feeling, which gives to the force of self-love all the beauty of virtue, lends it an energy which, without disfiguring it, makes it the most heroic of all the passions . . . the transports of susceptible hearts appear altogether fanciful to anyone who has never felt them; and the love of one's country, which is a hundred times more lively and delightful than the love of a mistress, cannot be conceived except by experiencing it. (121)

NOTES

CHAPTER THREE

¹L'Etat de Guerre (O.C., III, p. 612).

²Second Discourse, p. 213. All of Rousseau's note j, pp. 203-213 is relevant.

³See, for example, Language, pp. 30-31. In the Second Discourse, 'man in general' is the concern (p. 103). See also Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Savage Mind (London, 1968), p. 291, for this method of distinguishing 'mankind' from 'men' as 'basic' to anthropology, and the same author's Tristes Tropiques (New York, 1975), p. 390.

⁴Second Discourse, pp. 91-92. Cf. Jean Starobinski, La Transparence et l'Obstacle (Paris, 1959), pp. 27-33.

⁵Second Discourse, p. 103.

⁶Confessions, pp. 157-158, 362.

⁷Letters, p. 208. I refer to this illumination as semi-mystical because Rousseau, quite obviously, came very close to losing all sense of time and place during this intense experience. Note, too, the importance of feeling as a basis for thinking. Confessions, p. 19, is typical. If the account of his thought processes which he gives in the Confessions is indeed to be taken literally, then it would seem that the Second Discourse was also thought through in similar circumstances (see Confessions, p. 362).

⁸Second Discourse, p. 95, O.C., I, pp. 728, 936. In a letter to M. de Franquières, dated January 15th, 1769, Rousseau refers to an 'inner feeling', equivalent to 'nature herself' which supplements the role of reason in finding what is immediately necessary to man (C.G., XIX, p. 53). Cf. Jean Starobinski, op. cit., pp. 41, 341, and my preceding chapter.

⁹Second Discourse, p. 103.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 92-93. See also Lucio Colletti, 'Rousseau as Critic of Civil Society', pp. 143-194, in his From Rousseau to Lenin (New York, 1972), and Ernst Cassirer, The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Bloomington, Indiana, 1973), as examples

of works that focus on Rousseau's importance as critic of civil society.

¹¹Second Discourse, p. 95.

¹²Ibid., pp. 116, 137.

¹³Ibid., pp. 110, 113, 119, 112, 115, 117, 222, respectively.

¹⁴Jean Starobinski, 'Rousseau et la recherche des Origines', Cahiers du Sud, LIII, 367 (July-August, 1962), p. 329.

¹⁵Second Discourse, pp. 114-115, 105, 138.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 107. Perhaps we could refer to the 'portable savage'.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 109-111.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 195. We can begin to see how absurd it really is to impute any original sin or natural evil to this rather banal creature.

²⁰Language, p. 39.

²¹Ibid., pp. 39-40. In this image of natural indolence we are a long way from the kind of Promethean activity which is a hall-mark of both the romantics and the radicals of the next century.

²²Second Discourse, p. 117. If anything, Rousseau's hypothetical reconstruction of mankind's development is much more revolutionary than evolutionary, but the notion of revolution is frequently used to convey a sense of order and of a return to the beginning, as in the image quoted here.

²³Language, pp. 42-43.

²⁴Second Discourse, p. 193. This is part of Rousseau's long note, i, on the evils of life in civil society, a note in which he summarises many of the arguments of the First Discourse concerning the hypocrisy and vice that are so prevalent in civil

society, and the deleterious effect of progress on the moral fibre of the society. The note ends with his rejecting the option of going 'back' to nature. Note how the force and intensity of Rousseau's language do so much to strengthen the sense of a dialectical upheaval.

²⁵Second Discourse, p. 105.

²⁶See Jacques Derrida, De la Grammatologie (Paris, 1967), pp. 263-264, and Second Discourse, p. 116.

²⁷Emile, pp. 44-45, 48. We are told: 'That man is truly free who desires what he is able to perform, and does what he desires.' Remember also that 'Every affection is a sign of insufficiency.' (p. 182).

²⁸Second Discourse, p. 199. Rousseau is certainly what we would call an ecologist but, like so many normal people, he is full of paradoxes and was himself prey to many of the sensuous lures of society, such as food and drink, for which, as he tells us in the Confessions, he had a great liking. Life in civil society calls for both compensations and some illusions if it is to be bearable. In more censorious mood, Rousseau asks in his letter to Grimm of 1751 (O.C., III, p. 64) why nature has imposed necessary labours on us if it is not to divert us from idle occupations.

²⁹Emile, pp. 45, 128.

³⁰Ibid., p. 110. As early as 1742, Rousseau had stipulated two things only as leading to man's happiness, health and the necessities of life, assuming, of course, that we do want to lead virtuous lives and to achieve that heartfelt peace that is its fruit (O.C., I, pp. 132-143). It therefore becomes patently absurd that a few should have so much as to deprive the many of even the bare necessities of life (Second Discourse, p. 181), and thus we can also see how much of Rousseau's social criticism is based on a very simple moral criterion of what ought to be the basis for justifiable inequalities in society. To this we shall return in Chapter Five.

³¹Emile, pp. 46, 55, 126. Rousseau says of the twelve-year-old Emile that 'he does not rebel against necessity, her hand is too heavy upon him; he has borne her yoke all his life long, he is well used to it; he is always ready for anything.' Much of the tutor's time is spent in contriving to create situations in which the young Emile will find out for himself that

natural necessity is a limit to human endeavours; there must be no sense of human limits in the early stages of education.

³²Ibid., p. 49. Dependence on things is both necessary and natural. If the law is of general scope in both authorship and application, then it conforms to nature, and this becomes a major criterion of law in the social contract community. Recall that up to the age of fifteen Emile knows only about 'nature and things', although the use of the word 'only' immediately prejudices the issue. The point is that it is simply not necessary to know any more, and probably not desirable either.

³³Emile, p. 170.

³⁴Second Discourse, p. 110. The point is that we can express this only in a hypothetical and contingent manner, 'If nature . . . ' Rousseau wants to make a decisive distinction between good nature and bad society, but, in the final analysis, the notion of nature as a criterion of the good life can be only hypothetical.

³⁵Second Discourse, pp. 139, 137.

³⁶Emile, p. 183. This is as clear a statement as any on Rousseau's sense of the human condition as absolute limit to our endeavours.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 45-46. Savages accept death, of course, and they waste no time in moralising about it.

³⁸See, for example, ibid., p. 44: 'The happiest is he who suffers least.' Obviously, it is Rousseau's realism and fatalism that lead him to define freedom and happiness as not having to do what one does not want to do, rather than, for example, in the more 'positive' sense of society's providing opportunities for one to do what one does want to do. In this regard, Rousseau is very much the individualist concerned about social restraints on people. See, for example, the fourth of his Letters from the Mountain, and the first letter to Malesherbes (Letters, p. 205), where 'happiness' is defined as 'not doing what I do not want to do'.

³⁹Emile, p. 170. In La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part II, letter 7 (O.C., II, p. 213), Julie tells St. Preux not to sigh and sob like a woman nor to fly into a passion like a madman, but to 'learn how to bear misfortune, and be a man.' The image of ourselves with our feet on the edge of an abyss recurs

frequently, e.g., Emile, p. 285, and D'Alembert, p. 118. This passage from the Confessions, p. 69, is revealing on the link between perfectibility and suffering: 'I have made you too feeble to climb out of the pit, because I made you strong enough not to fall in.' (Rousseau imagines God as speaking these words to us through our consciences).

⁴⁰For examples of the merits of solitude, see La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part I, Letters 18, 23, 33, 34 (O.C., II, pp. 69, 78, 105, 107). On 'masks', see Emile, p. 191. As a preparation for his re-entry into the natural community at Clarens, it is necessary for St. Preux to go 'down' to Paris, there to experience the chaos at first hand, and in La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part II, Letters 14, 15 and 16 (O.C., II, pp. 231-245), there are significant descriptions of life in big cities, couched in such terms as 'wasteland', 'shadows' and 'masks' besides other obvious features, such as competition, envy, pride, etc. In D'Alembert, pp. 58-59, Rousseau becomes quite exercised about city life: 'In a big city, full of scheming, idle people without religion or principle, whose imagination, depraved by sloth, inactivity, the love of pleasure and great needs, engenders only monsters and inspires only crimes; in a big city, where morals (manners) and honour are nothing because each, easily hiding his conduct from the public eye, shows himself only by his reputation and is esteemed only for his riches . . .'. Other examples abound. It is, of course, implicit in all of this that one will not appreciate solitude unless one has been all the way down into civil society, and the problem in La Nouvelle Héloïse is, literally and metaphorically, to prevent St. Preux's being seduced by city life; the novel is clearly a Bildungsroman in its stress on the notion of renunciation and re-integration on the part of the main characters. On the acting profession, see D'Alembert, pp. 79-81. In all this criticism, the point is to criticise a social life which is based on appearances only, and, at least in that sense, quite unauthentic.

⁴¹First Discourse, p. 64, La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part I, Letter 33 (O.C., II, p. 105). The full context of this letter is: 'That solitary and peaceful life gave rise to and nourishes our passions; perhaps they would be weakened by this more dissipated way of living. All the great passions come from solitude. There is nothing like them in society, where there is not time for a single object to make a profound impression and where the variety of pleasures enervates the strength of the sentiments.' For another example, see D'Alembert, p. 7: 'Solitude calms the soul and appeases the passions born of the disorder of the world.' In F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (New York, 1972), p. 50, the author has Jordan Baker say: 'And I like big parties. They're so intimate. At small parties there isn't any privacy.' The comparison with Rousseau's sense of the regenerative qualities of intimate

gatherings is irresistible.

⁴²Emile, p. 191. 'True' happiness often entails 'melancholy' as well (ibid.); and see Corsica, pp. 325-326, 'True pleasure is simple and peaceable, it loves silence and meditation . . . '

⁴³D'Alembert, pp. 60-62. For one thing, everyone is in the 'public eye', in sharp contrast to people in cities.

⁴⁴Language, pp. 33-34. Retrenchment involves keeping oneself busy with one's own affairs, so that it comes as no surprise to read of St. Preux's writing to Julie in La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part I, Letter 45 (O.C., II, p. 125), that 'since want of occupation makes men rather sociable, he sought me out', even when, as in this case, the person was well worth knowing; it was St. Preux's first meeting with Lord Bomston. On the theme of the expanding and contracting 'circle' in Rousseau's thought, see Georges Poulet, Les Métamorphoses du Cercle (Paris, 1961), especially pp. 101-129.

⁴⁵Karl Marx, The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 (Moscow, 1974), p. 89.

⁴⁶Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The German Ideology (Moscow, 1947), p. 443. Note the difference between this notion of expanding one's gifts in all directions and Rousseau's sensing a need to strike a balance between one's tendency to expansiveness and the desirability of self-limitation.

⁴⁷Karl Marx, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

⁴⁸Emile, p. 53.

⁴⁹La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part V, Letter 8 (O.C., II, p. 612). St. Preux is writing to tell Wolmar of some 'new reflections' which he has reduced to a 'sort of system', typical of Rousseau's slight ambivalence about the notion of his ideas ever being reducible to a system. He was obviously opposed to being thought of as one of the many philosophers who tried to reduce everything to an apparently orderly system, but, on the other hand, he frequently refers to his writings as forming a system, e.g., Emile, pp. 74 and 202, and the third of his Dialogues (O.C., I, p. 932).

⁵⁰Social Contract, I, 8, p. 185.

⁵¹Second Discourse, pp. 134-135.

⁵²Ibid., p. 104.

⁵³Ibid., p. 102.

⁵⁴First Discourse, pp. 46-47. This may be one place where the dialectical argument put forward by Jean Starobinski, La Transparence et l'Obstacle, op. cit., especially on pp. 331 ff., of evil society as the complete negation of innocent nature overstates the case. Nature really represents ignorance rather than innocence.

⁵⁵First Discourse, pp. 63-64. The great 'preceptors' combined virtue, science and authority, the basis of true and natural political leadership in the community, as we shall discuss in Chapter Five.

⁵⁶Second Discourse, pp. 128-129. All those who would say of Rousseau's savage that he is a finer creature than Hobbesian man are therefore correct, but often for the wrong reasons, e.g., Peter Winch, 'Man and Society in Hobbes and Rousseau', pp. 233-253, in Hobbes and Rousseau, eds. Maurice Cranston and Richard Peters (New York, 1972). Rousseau's savage is ignoble, not noble, but he is harmless, and that is what really matters from a moral point of view.

⁵⁷Second Discourse, p. 129. Hobbes confused cause and effect in attributing as natural a war which is the product of life in society: 'Hobbes's mistake, therefore, is not that he established the state of war among men who are independent and have become sociable, but that he supposed this state natural to the species and gave it as the cause of the vices of which it is the effect.' Geneva Ms., p. 162 (Book I, Chapter 2).

⁵⁸Second Discourse, p. 222, and see Rousseau's note o, pp. 221-222.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 139.

⁶⁰Emile, p. 171. On the importance of having pride in one's country, see, for example, Corsica, pp. 327-329.

⁶¹Emile, Book II (O.C., IV, p. 322). The English translation is rather loose (p. 56). See also the Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont (O.C., IV, p. 935-936): 'The sole passion with which man is born, known as love of self, is a passion that is indifferent in itself to good and evil.' One is amoral, at least to begin with. In that sense, nature represents an im-

possible abstraction, as the point of it all is to show that naturally we are good, although 'good' really means self-preserving in this context, the clearest sense that can be given to the phrase bonté naturelle.

⁶²See the editor's notes to the Pléiade edition of Emile (O.C., IV, p. 322).

⁶³Jean Starobinski, L'Oeil Vivant (Paris, 1971), p. 179.

⁶⁴Emile, p. 191. As can be expected, Emile is characterised as the 'man of the world who least knows how to disguise himself'. (O.C., IV, p. 776).

⁶⁵Second Discourse, pp. 179, 102. Cf. ibid., p. 155, for an analysis of 'conspicuous ostentation of the kind that is satirised in Molière's Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. Again, the fundamental split between being and appearance needs to be stressed as, e.g., in the third of the Dialogues (O.C., I, p. 936): 'Everyone seeks his happiness in appearances, and no-one cares about reality', and First Discourse, p. 38: 'one no longer dares to appear as he is . . . '

⁶⁶See the Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont (O.C., IV, p. 935), where Rousseau says that he has 'so to speak followed the genealogy' of those vices that people wrongly impute to the human heart.

⁶⁷Confessions, p. 8, Emile, p. 180. In the Second Discourse, p. 115, he says that our 'needs' give rise to passions, but we must feel the needs first.

⁶⁸See, for example, the passage from the Confessions, p. 69, that we quoted in note 39 above.

⁶⁹D'Alembert, p. 117.

⁷⁰Second Discourse, p. 222.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 129, 150. La Nouvelle Héloïse contains many examples of Rousseau's strictures against cold, useless philosophy, e.g., Part II, Letter 10 (O.C., II, p. 220): 'ah, speak to me no more of philosophy! I scorn that deceiving parade which consists only of idle words, that phantom which is only a delusion, which strives to defy passions at a distance and leaves us like a blustering bully at their approach', Part III, Letter 13 (O.C., II, p. 330): 'In vain I am reminded of all those vain words with which philosophy amuses people who feel nothing', and, Part III, Letter 20 (O.C., II, p. 370):

'but reason has no other end except that which is good, its rules are sure, clear, practicable in the conduct of life, and never is it misled except in idle speculations which are not intended for it.' The point is always to find a form of philosophy and of reason that is not cold and detached but is true, natural and able to be felt as well as thought.

⁷²Second Discourse, p. 175. On the notion of 'good' honour, see St. Preux's letter to Julie, La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part I, Letter 24 (O.C., II, p. 84), where the concepts of 'public opinion' and 'self-esteem' are distinguished as two aspects of 'honour': 'The first consists of vain prejudices no more stable than a ruffled wave, but the second has its basis in the eternal truths of morality . . . True honour . . . is the essence of happiness, because it alone inspires that permanent feeling of interior satisfaction that constitutes the happiness of a rational being.'

⁷³Emile, p. 97.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 50, 55, 57, 126. The concept of 'negative education' and of leaving children alone as much as possible becomes a practical maxim both at Clarens and in the kind of public education that is envisaged for Poland.

⁷⁵First of the Dialogues (O.C., I, pp. 667-672). Note that, until love gives way to vanity, the inhabitants of the ideal world are depicted as not suffering from the usual contradictions between being and appearance, as do people in the real world.

⁷⁶Emile, pp. 378-379, p. 171. It must be said that Emile's education is completely hypothetical and perhaps somewhat contrived. Right from the start, the education is seen to be almost an impossible task, requiring a tutor who is, as it were, made for the pupil, rather than vice versa. Control by the tutor of the pupil's reality is a constant feature of the process, and I have noted above (note 31) that the pupil should be faced with natural and necessary limits rather than human limits to his endeavours. Thus, for example, the tutor is advised to go to the country, where reality can be controlled more easily. The tutor is constantly devising little scenes that are designed to elicit some desired response on Emile's part. For examples of all this, see Emile, pp. 17, 45, 55, 56, 59, 84, 156, 187-188, 190, 191, 195 and so on. None of this should detract from the sensitivity of Rousseau's approach to childhood, as we shall see below. On the problem of the contrived character of Emile's education, see Marshal Berman, The Politics of Authenticity (New York, 1970), and on

the idealistic nature of the whole hypothetical process, Istvan Meszaros, Marx's Concept of Alienation (London, 1970). In part, the problem of education's taking on a contrived quality will always be with us; the question is that of the point at which the hypothetical becomes the contrived, with all that follows for a free politics. This question is addressed in Chapter Six below.

⁷⁷Emile, p. 167, and see also p. 217.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 71, 54, 55, 44, 59.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 57.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 156. This comment is made in the context of a discussion of the desirability of Emile's knowing about interdependence and exchange.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 292: 'But as there are in this same society inevitable causes which hasten the development of the passions, if we did not also hasten the development of the knowledge which controls these passions we should indeed depart from the path of nature and disturb her equilibrium.'

⁸²Ibid., p. 173

⁸³Ibid., p. 175

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 34, 58.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 180. In certain contexts, especially that of sexual promiscuity, 'repression' of passion is called for: 'As he acquires knowledge, choose what ideas he shall attach to it; as his passions awake select scenes calculated to repress them.' (Ibid., p. 193). Rousseau then gives an example of a father who took his wayward son to the 'V. D. hospital' (as we should now call it) in order to give him the desired lesson in self-control.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 197. Basically, we can here distinguish an individual from a social level, and Rousseau is implying that the sphere of the political is always concerned with morals on a society-wide basis, which is in no way to imply that individuals are not also concerned with the morality of their actions. It is symptomatic of the desire on Rousseau's part to abstract the individual from the social. At the social level, 'everything is rooted in politics', as he says in the Confessions, p. 377.

⁸⁷Bearing in mind, for instance, this passage from Language, p. 38: 'The feelings that make man restless, foresighted and active arise only in society.'

⁸⁸Emile's uncertain future is anticipated in Emile, p. 157, and spelled out quite explicitly at p. 185. Part of his training in politics in Book V involves his learning that he must do his duty anywhere and everywhere (p. 437, et seq.), as Rousseau himself implied that he would do, Second Discourse, note i. It is interesting to note that La Nouvelle Héloïse has the same structural form as Emile, following the path of nature--society--decadent society--regenerated natural community--uncertain future.

⁸⁹Emile, p. 173. Not only is man 'at strife with himself', but with everyone else in the society (p. 199); further, it is man's 'weakness' that makes him 'sociable' (p. 182), and we know that: 'Human institutions are one mass of folly and contradiction' (p. 46).

⁹⁰Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont (O.C., IV, p. 937). Note that the language of transformation strengthens as we move from Emile ('modifications' to love of self) through the Lettre (love of self is 'thrown into a ferment') to the Dialogues (love of self encounters 'a thousand obstacles').

⁹¹Emile, pp. 173, 45, 171, 292. See also pp. 167 and 217 for the theme of Emile as a 'natural' man but made for society, and, for further evidence of Rousseau's realism in the matter of passion, see pp. 407-409, where he says, for example, that 'all [passions] alike are good if we are their masters.' Politically, the aim in the community is to develop the more worthy and less unnatural passions such as pride; see, therefore, Corsica, p. 326: 'Pride is more natural than vanity, since it consists in deriving self-esteem from truly estimable goods.' More details will be given in Chapter Five. Finally, note the parallel between Emile's education and our study of human society, in that both move from the general--mankind in general--to the specific--particular people in particular societies.

⁹²Second Discourse, pp. 129-130.

⁹³Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau, fondateur des sciences de l'homme', in Samuel Baud-Bovy, et al., Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Neuchâtel, 1962), p. 248. See also Claude Lévi-Strauss, Totemism (Boston, 1973), especially p. 101.

⁹⁴Language, p. 32. In Emile, p. 184, we are told that pity carries one 'outside himself'.

⁹⁵Second Discourse, p. 132, and refer back to note 71 above. In D'Alembert, Rousseau is also concerned about the lack of any connection between thinking about people and being moved to action, and one of his criticisms of tragic drama is that while it certainly moves people to feel pity for the sufferings of others, it does not move them to action; of course, 'cold' philosophers would be unlikely even to feel the pity.

⁹⁶Second Discourse, pp. 132-133. Nowadays, our enthusiasm for the canaille (the French which is translated as 'the rabble, the marketwoman') tends to be tempered by the realisation that they are at least as likely to feel ressentiment and nothing more. In feeling both envious of, and inadequate when compared with, their superiors, a politics of envy usually results in which the underlings are only too happy to play their part in the pecking-order of the oppressed. Rather than seeking to overthrow the oppressors, they simply oppress those who are next down the line. Rousseau was well aware of this kind of politics, as will be shown below.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 133-134.

⁹⁸Emile, pp. 196-197. The 'Creed of the Savoyard Vicar' is ample testimony to Rousseau's belief that feeling must be combined with reason, both of which work through our consciences; and there is also ample evidence of the problem that is posed when the 'voice of the soul', conscience, conflicts with the 'voice of the body', the passions. Perhaps the neatest summation of Rousseau's individualist morality is contained in this passage: 'Has he not given me conscience that I may love the right, reason that I may perceive it, and freedom that I may choose it?' (p. 257, and see pp. 249, 254).

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 182. The mixed blessings of society are rather apparent in this statement.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 182, 185-186, 190.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁰²Second Discourse, p. 131. Likewise, such qualities as 'generosity' and 'clemency', the loss of which is so bemoaned in the First Discourse, are characterised as pity applied to the 'weak' and the 'guilty' respectively.

¹⁰³Political Economy, p. 130. See also Georges Poulet, op. cit.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 215. An identical argument is made in Political Economy, p. 130, and in La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part II, Letter 2 (O.C., II, p. 193), where Lord Bomston writes to Claire that he is concerned about the lovers' fate 'not out of a sentiment of pity, which can only be a weakness, but out of a concern for justice and order that desires everyone to be disposed of in a manner most advantageous to himself and to society.' Here, as elsewhere, we can well see how Rousseau oscillates between a satisfaction with an individualistic morality based on the merits of solitude and self-sufficiency, and a more communitarian morality based on the needs of the social order.

¹⁰⁵La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part 6, Letter 12 (O.C., II, p. 743). In that novel, we can easily distinguish several models of love. Julie's father, Baron d'Etang, ignores his children, has some passion and warmth, and is class-bound and dominant. In Parisian families of the kind that St. Preux sees during his travels, family love is deemed simply to be impossible. Julie's and Wolmar's love is cold, static, atheistic, planned, and based on science and reason. Julie's and St. Preux's love for each other is, of course, free, natural and dynamic. The novel leaves unanswered the question of whether the love of Julie and St. Preux for each other could have found more lasting outlets in different social and historical circumstances; in other words, passion and duty conflict in the novel. It is a moot question whether the love of Emile and Sophie for each other is like that of Wolmar and Julie or St. Preux and Julie, or perhaps some combination of both.

¹⁰⁶D'Alembert, pp. 17-18, 51-57, 64-65.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., pp. 63-64, 199

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 117

¹¹⁰The problem for politicians is to control the excesses of passion. How does one act on the mores of a people? Rousseau's answer is threefold, by 'the force of the laws, the empire of opinion and the appeal of pleasure.' Rousseau's concern is of course that the theatre encourages maxims that work on public opinion and effect a change in mores and habits of life, which are then detrimental to virtue and public order. In his view, a situation would be reached in which even the law was ineffective in controlling excesses of passion (pp. 22, 74). This question will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 47, where he also refers to the 'empire of

the fair sex', and the 'ascendancy of women' in matters of love.

¹¹²Ibid., pp. 87-88. This image certainly takes a lot for granted, especially as it comes from one who so passionately and forcefully denounced slavery. Wage slavery was not yet seen as slavery, properly so-called. In the community at Clarens, of course, the servants love the master and mistress, as they all have a similar common interest, and because the master and mistress are 'upright, just and equitable', doing only what is 'reasonable and expedient' (La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part IV, Letter 10, (O.C., II, pp. 468-470)).

¹¹³D'Alembert, pp. 81-91, 100-102, 128. In La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part II Letter 18 (O.C., II, pp. 256-258), Julie writes of the duties of a 'virtuous wife' and says that 'even keeping up appearances is one of her duties', a particular bit of un-authenticity that was probably dictated as much by the social conventions of the day as by any notion that it is somehow natural for a woman to have to do this as part of her wifely duties. In Part I, Letter 50 (O.C., II, pp. 137-139), Julie writes of 'true love' and of the honour, virtue, decency and respect that must go with it, and even insists at one point that she is 'neither prudish nor precious'. It would certainly seem that Rousseau knew how prudish his views would seem in such an enlightened century, but when it comes to women's role in the community, he favoured some areas of ascendancy for women, such as that of making sure that their husbands followed the straight and narrow path of decency, moderation and virtue in their public lives; women should use both their hearts and their reason to achieve this end (see, especially, the Dedication to the Second Discourse, p. 90). In D'Alembert, p. 103, he certainly does go to extremes, however, and makes what can only be said to be rather an outrageous statement: 'Women, in general, do not like art, know nothing about any, and have no genius. They can succeed in little works which require only quick wit, taste, grace, and sometimes even a bit of philosophy and reasoning . . . But that celestial flame which warms and sets fire to the soul, that genius which consumes and devours . . . will always lack in the writings of women . . . they are a hundred times more sensible than passionate. They do not know how to describe nor to feel even love.'

¹¹⁴Emile, p. 175. St. Preux does not have to flatter or amuse Julie: 'To amuse a fashionable woman, one must describe a witty and gallant people. But you, my dear Julie, ah, I know well that the picture of a happy and simple people is the one I must paint for your heart.' (La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part I, Letter 21, (O.C., II, p. 74).

¹¹⁵Second Discourse, p. 134. This question is also at the root of such works as D'Alembert, which concerns itself

with the question of how to control passionate excesses and so keep the community young, vigorous, virtuous and healthy.

¹¹⁶Second Discourse, p. 135.

¹¹⁷Ibid., pp. 134-135. As some palliative to the male-oriented tenor of this passage, the Dedication to Geneva should also be looked at, as Rousseau does there envisage some ascendancy of role for the community's wives, in acting as guardians of the virtue of the community. Presumably, Rousseau's personal experiences in Parisian salons led him to take such a dim view of the kind of femininity that was in evidence there; this passage from D'Alembert, p. 101, would also seem to be based on those experiences: 'and every woman at Paris gathers in her apartment a harem of men more womanish than she, who know how to render all sorts of homage to beauty except that of the heart, which is her due.' This is in the context of an argument that a 'sedentary and homebound' life is 'natural' for women, whereas an 'entirely opposite one' is appropriate for men (pp. 101-102). In La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part I, Letter 46 (O.C., II, p. 128), he has Julie express the argument for natural differences between the sexes very wittily: 'A perfect woman and a perfect man ought not to resemble each other any more in their souls than in their faces; our vain imitations of your sex are the height of folly; they make the wise man laugh at us and they discourage love. In short, I find that unless we are to be five and a half feet tall, have a bass voice and a beard on our chins, we have no business pretending to be men.' Ever the sentimentalist, Rousseau's claim is that women are made to be loved by men; anything that detracts from that activity is therefore to be denigrated.

¹¹⁸Maurice Cranston reported this comment of Voltaire's in a review of recent books on George Orwell, who might be termed another déclassé turned radical, in 'The Spirit of Decency', Times Literary Supplement, April 18th, 1975, p. 387.

¹¹⁹La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part I, Letter 61 (O.C., II, p. 167), Emile, p. 193. The correspondence of Rousseau contains many examples of his ability to transcend in a simple and beautiful way any and all vagaries that he might have felt in the experience of day-to-day meetings with people. See Judith Shklar, Men and Citizens (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 228-230. Rousseau's penchant for written communication is indicative of a very interesting rhetorical situation that was always present in his relationship to his reader(s), and it is surely no accident that La Nouvelle Héloïse consists entirely of letters, albeit that it was a typical genre form at the time. Letters heighten both the intimacy of the situation and the on-going tension in the events of the novel. The Confessions are also

very interesting on the subject of love; in that work Rousseau clearly settles for overall contentment as the best that can be hoped for, and suggests that it is well beyond the merely sensual in love, witness his own feelings of a rather incestuous quality to his relationship with 'Maman', Mme. de Warens (pp. 58, 104-105, 136, 147, 250). He says that he experienced the 'pure and sharp' pleasure of sensual enjoyment but once with Mme de Larnage (p. 241), and we can also distinguish something much closer to the real thing, which he experienced in aspiration only with Sophie d'Houdetot at a time when he was beginning to spin the fantasies on which much of La Nouvelle Héloïse was based, and when he thought he was well past finding true love. On that occasion he experienced a 'delirium which turns the head and makes enjoyment possible', possibly equivalent to 'true love'; the problem was that all his energy was expended on imagination, leaving him powerless to act (pp. 187-193, 241, 408).

¹²⁰ See, especially, Albert O. Hirschman, The Passions and the Interests (Princeton, 1977), especially Part One.

¹²¹ Political Economy, p. 130. The morally self-righteous tone of this passage is, of course, quite typical of Rousseau's political writings, and it is in marked contrast to the concerns of the individual Rousseau, ever the man of feeling. However, the man of feeling still felt called upon always to justify feeling the way he did, which again brings us to the area of personal morality and to the possibility of overcoming what sometimes looks to be a tension between them. From the priority of virtue and love of country it does, of course, follow that the community must be both mother and father to its members, so that it will be worth living in and dying for, and the other parts of Political Economy consist of advice to rulers and governments in those areas. For evidence of the hierarchy of passion, see the highly realistic comments in D'Alembert, pp. 117-118.

CHAPTER FOUR

'L'HOMME EST NE LIBRE, ET PARTOUT IL EST EN FERS.'

In our previous chapter we considered what Rousseau meant by a natural way of life and looked at his version of the tension between nature and society. In this chapter we shall no longer be considering nature and society as hypothetical abstractions only; we shall reconstruct the history of society as it has evolved over time.

At the beginning of the Social Contract Rousseau makes his famous statement that 'Man was born free but everywhere he is in chains.' He then asks, 'How did this change occur?', and answers, perhaps surprisingly, 'I do not know.' Rousseau would surely claim to know how mankind came to wear the chains of dependency but was content at that point to collapse the whole history of mankind's development into a premise that forms the basis of a discussion of the 'Social Compact':

I assume that men have reached the point where obstacles to their self-preservation in the state of nature prevail by their resistance over the forces each individual can use to maintain himself in that state. Then that primitive state can no longer subsist and the human race would perish if it did not change its way of life.⁽¹⁾

How did the noble, or even the ignoble, savage come to wear such heavy chains of dependency? From that point of view, the history of society is the history of a transition from a life of freedom to a life of servitude. We can discern a transition from a life in which the fundamental questions only have to do with avoiding the evils of pain and hunger with the least amount of effort on natural man's part, through a

life in which the question of different forms of society begins to arise as natural man begins, slowly and reluctantly, to form rudimentary societies, and culminating in a life in which the key question is political, having to do with man's ability to go on living in freedom. The history of mankind's social development becomes a political issue when more and more people find themselves in master-slave relationships in which the defining characteristic is the power of the master to make them do things that they do not want to do and to prevent them from doing things that they do want to do. In other words, power politics become the disorder of the day until a point is reached when only a drastic and radical regeneration will prevent the death of the body politic and we thus find ourselves in the position that becomes the premise of the Social Contract: find a new manner of existence or face the imminent extinction of the human race.⁽²⁾

The history of mankind's social development is one in which chance and necessity play a major part, especially when it is viewed as the history of perfectibility:

After having shown that perfectibility, social virtues, and the other faculties that natural man had received in potentiality could never develop by themselves, that in order to develop they needed the chance combination of several foreign causes which might never have arisen and without which he might have remained eternally in his primitive condition, it remains for me to consider and bring together the different accidents that were able to perfect human reason while deteriorating the species, make a being evil while making him sociable, and from such a distant origin finally bring men and the world to the point where we see them.⁽³⁾

That is how Rousseau ends the first part of the Second Discourse. In the second part he will give us a conjectural history, true to the extent that its content and conclusions follow logically and consistently from the premises which he so carefully laid out in the first part of the discourse. Rousseau would like to think that the particular combination of events which we call human history is a chance one. He would like to think that man himself is not to be blamed for the way in which events have turned out, for better and for worse. One suspects, however, that even if the history is not exactly pre-ordained and teleological, it is still unlikely that things could ever have turned out very differently. For all that Rousseau thinks of nature as a concrete and necessary limit to human endeavours, and a limit which, hypothetically speaking, natural man automatically accepted, it is in fact a moral limit. We ought, for our own good, to have accepted concrete, natural limits to our endeavours and that is what Rousseau encourages Emile, for example, to do. The fact is that we did not accept the notion of nature as a limit and we have only ourselves to blame for what followed, for better and for worse. Our perfectibility, which combines free-will and imagination, makes for a better and a worse world. Thus, our perfectibility is one of the causes of our development and it is somewhat circuitous to say that it is itself acted on by a 'chance combination of foreign causes'. The causes are not foreign at all, they are inherent

in the notion itself. Clearly, there is a fortuitous element in all of this and a degree of realism is required. We certainly cannot blame Rousseau for wanting, as it were, to stop the world and get off at the 'golden age' when nature and society were ideally balanced. It is equally certain that we could not have remained in our 'primitive condition', as we would never have known about it if we had. Hindsight works wonders.

There is a distinctly dramatic quality to the ushering-in of civil society: 'The first person, who, having fenced off a piece of ground, took it into his head to say this is mine, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society,'⁽⁴⁾ It is not, however, high drama that we are witnessing as there is a certain anti-heroic, almost pathetic, quality to the occurrence. The first encloser might well have been concerned with the effect of encroachments by animals rather than by fellow-humans. Animals might have been in the habit of trampling on the crops which he had sown and he might in no way have foreseen what the consequences of his action would be. Unfortunately, perhaps, we have to concern ourselves with those consequences, and there is nothing either accidental or equivocal about the consequences for mankind of the invention of property right. In a very clear anticipation of future radical thought on the matter, Rousseau blames property for most, if not all, of the ills of civil society: 'It is clear that to established property must be attributed the assassinations, poisonings, highway robberies, and

even the punishments of those crimes.'⁽⁵⁾

Rousseau's attitude to property was somewhat ambivalent, and this should be clarified right away. On the one hand, it may be true of Rousseau that, in his attitude to property, as to division of labour and exchange, there is a 'fundamental contradiction' in his combining 'an incommensurably sharp perception of the phenomena of alienation and the glorification of their ultimate cause.'⁽⁶⁾ On the other hand, this does not simply lead Rousseau into the misty regions of petit-bourgeois idealism as some of his critics would claim. After all, it has fallen to later ages to discover just how petit-bourgeois is Rousseau's view of property and how naive he apparently was in thinking that exchange relations and private property do not always lead to an exacerbation of inequality and servitude. At no time does Rousseau justify the kind of unlimited appropriation that is implicit in the treatment of property and money in John Locke's Second Treatise of Government;⁽⁷⁾ in fact, he explicitly allows for the socialising of property, provided that it is done generally and universally, and, in the Project for the Constitution of Corsica, he advocates that 'state property' be as extensive as possible.⁽⁸⁾ Finally, notwithstanding the clarity of, for example, Marx's critique of private property and the beauty of his vision of a community in which the sphere of clashing, private rights is transcended, surely very few of us would say that Rousseau was all wrong

in making what he thought was a clear distinction between a form of property right, e.g., in the product of one's 'time, labour, trouble', and indeed of one's 'very self', which he calls natural,⁽⁹⁾ and the implications of private property rights in a society based on division of labour, exchange relations and interdependence. After all, Marx himself said that 'labour is the true property of man'.⁽¹⁰⁾

In the hypothetical history of the denaturing of man Rousseau is most concerned with the implications of private property right. As we have already implied, chance seems at first to have been the main element in the story. If one of the initial encloser's fellows had only shouted 'STOP!', a lot of nastiness and unpleasantness might have been avoided: 'What crimes, wars, murders, what miseries and horrors would the human race have been spared by someone who, uprooting the stakes or filling in the ditch, had shouted to his fellow-men: 'Beware of listening to this impostor; you are lost if you forget that the fruits belong to all and the earth to no one!'⁽¹¹⁾ No one stopped the encloser and the damage was done. Who was to know what the effects of that simple action would be? In fact, the first enclosure was not the unexpected, completely unpredictable event that it might appear to be in this version. As always, it is just one possibility which arises out of the preceding countless centuries of human history. It is simply one more link in the taking on of those radical chains of dependence that will lead to Rousseau's crying out that 'Man was born free but every-

where he is in chains.' We must also remember that a certain degree of fatalism is in order. It takes two people to form a society, even a bad one. The person who did not say 'STOP!' is just as guilty--or innocent--as the one who did the enclosing. Human history is the history of perfectibility, for better and for worse.

Civil society proper comes relatively late in Rousseau's hypothetical history. Overall, we are concerned with a situation in which society becomes more and more the negation of nature. We can certainly say that Rousseau is concerned with the evolution of mankind, but we must not allow that to detract from the importance of revolution in his account. We can certainly distinguish a number of stages that the human race goes through in its passage from the state of nature through civil society to the death of the body politic. The precise number of discernible stages does not really matter and there are some differences of interpretation in this regard.⁽¹²⁾ It matters even less when we remember that nature and society are only meant to be hypothetical abstractions and when we bear in mind Rousseau's admission of the immanence of nature in society. We shall, however, make some distinctions.

We can, for instance, quite easily speak of a period of socialised nature prior to the establishing of civil society proper, when possession becomes property, and custom and tradition are replaced by law and morality. We can speak of the gradual change from a life in which natural revolutions

hold complete sway over people's lives to a life in which material revolutions do nature's work for her, i.e., to a life in which man masters nature, or at least attempts to do so. We can speak of different modes of man's consciousness of both his own self and other selves, all of which arise from different modes of obtaining subsistence. Something like the notion of a 'cultural generation' must have been on Rousseau's mind when he wrote that savage man had 'only the sentiments and intellect suited to that state [of nature]', as when he noted that 'When one investigates the origins of the arts and considers primitive customs, one sees that everything corresponds in its origins to the means of providing subsistence.'⁽¹³⁾ He further suggests that a cultural mode corresponds to each mode of obtaining subsistence, with the result that the hunter is a savage, the herdsman is a barbarian, and the tiller of the soil is a man of civil society. There is always an emphasis on the fact that people have settled down in relatively fixed abodes, they are less spread out, and they wander less. This is made possible by two factors, firstly, the fact that others do it as well, thus giving birth to society by force of example, and secondly, the generation of material surplus which makes unnecessary the wandering life of the savage hunter or the barbarian herdsman.

It is, ex hypothesi, impossible to say how long man might have remained in his most primitive state. The notion of the state of nature can only be discussed in metaphorical

terms, for example, in terms of a hypothetical balance between powers and needs, a balance which is always about to be or is being broken due to the workings of imagination, however rudimentary might those workings have been. In the Second Discourse Rousseau suggests that the human mind would probably have taken 'thousands of centuries' to develop such virtual faculties as the operations of speech and language,⁽¹⁴⁾ and the Essay on the Origin of Language is simply another hypothetical account of that same process of development in the course of which the very first beginnings of language gradually evolve into the patterns of social communication and speech with which we are all so familiar. As Rousseau says in that work, speech is 'the first social institution', owing its form to 'natural causes alone'.⁽¹⁵⁾

In the first instance, Rousseau suggests that natural man would probably have encountered some difficulties in obtaining his subsistence. Fruit trees might be too tall for him to reach easily; animals would compete with him and might compete with some ferocity.⁽¹⁶⁾ The critical problem is always that of overcoming scarcity, by surmounting obstacles in the way. We must also remember that, at this stage, men are totally subject to natural occurrences, whether these be volcanic eruptions, fires started by lightning, torrential rainstorms, earthquakes or floods. In an immediate, if partial, transcendence of these natural limitations, necessity would work via imagination to foster invention, man would turn to

sticks and stones in his struggle to subsist, and he would soon become a warrior and hunter. In this first, 'primitive' stage of socialised nature, characterised in one place as the period of time from the 'dispersion of men to any period of the human race that might be taken as determining an epoch', there would have been very little social intercourse between people: 'In primitive times the sparse human population had no more social structure than the family, no laws but those of nature, no language but that of gesture and some inarticulate sounds.'⁽¹⁷⁾ There might not even have been as limited a social unit as the family, since men still loved only out of instinct and habit, in a purely physical way; at this stage, all Rousseau's arguments against the natural status given to the family by John Locke would still be relevant.⁽¹⁸⁾ There would probably be some common speech patterns within these social groupings, and men would slowly but surely start to think, to compare, to imagine, and even, as we have said, to speak. Man might start becoming conscious of himself as superior to other animals, thus giving rise to feelings of pride; he might also start comparing himself in his primitive way to other human beings, who would be found to be the same as and different from him.

It is unlikely that man's natural pity would have many outlets at this stage. Given that it requires imagination and at least some reflection to become active, it would probably be limited to relations within his own most rudimentary social

grouping, his own family, and feelings for those nearest and dearest to him would probably be as warm as would feelings for strangers be cold.⁽¹⁹⁾ Separateness, dispersion and solitude are still the main features of man's life. Our hunter might occasionally cooperate with his fellows, perhaps for the purpose of pursuing a stag, but the limits of co-operation are amply demonstrated by Rousseau in a classic game-theoretic image. While it would be quite natural and rational for a solitary hunter to cooperate with fellow-hunters in pursuit of a stag, he would abandon cooperation as soon as he envisaged the possibility of managing on his own. If a hare should cross his path while he and others were out hunting a stag, he would immediately pursue the hare without scruple or thought for the possibility that his companions might thereby lose their dinner.⁽²⁰⁾ Even less frequently would our primitive man find it necessary to compete with his fellow-men. His needs would continually drive him away from his fellows, and, although they might attack each other when they did meet, they would meet so rarely that a sort of 'golden age' prevailed, 'not because men were united, but because they were separated'. Thus it was that, during these 'barbaric times', when, as it were, nature was doing most of the fighting, 'A state of war prevailed universally, and the whole earth was at peace.'⁽²¹⁾

Although this rudimentary stage of socialised nature' characterised by hunting, is depicted in the Second Discourse

as probably lasting for 'multitudes of centuries',⁽²²⁾ it is not so distinguished in the Essay on the Origin of Language. In the latter version it would seem that over a wide, but nonetheless recognisable, geographical area there would simultaneously be hunters and shepherds. On the one hand, some would want to stay 'natural' for longer. As Rousseau says: 'the most active, the most robust, those who were always pushing ahead, would want to live only on fruits and hunting.' On the other hand, remembering that these were potentially wild, barbaric and unsettled times,

The majority, being less active, and more peaceful, settled down as soon as they could. They gathered and tamed cattle, which they rendered submissive to the human voice. To provide food for themselves, they learned to keep them and breed them; and thus pastoral life began.⁽²³⁾

We are now approaching the true 'golden age', so we should pause and take note of a really important feature of the account so far. That feature is the reluctance of Rousseauian man to have anything to do with his fellows. We have already noted the limits of social rationality in the famous stag-hunting image. Now we have just been treated to a picture of hunters who are 'pushing ahead' to stay the longest in nature. A very strange image of progress indeed, and one that is highly indicative of Rousseau's view that mankind was somewhat reluctant to enter society. Society is for the majority who are weak and indolent; society is likened to a geriatric hospital in an image that we quoted in our introduction. However, the next stage in the evolution of society, the

pastoral stage, is depicted as best suiting man's 'natural' indolence, and Rousseau wonders what could have brought man to leave it for the harried life of civil society. We thus find that each discernible stage in the story is seen as less natural than the one preceding it, but less unnatural than the one succeeding it.

The 'eternal spring' of the pastoral age gives rise to the previously mentioned question of 'Why leave it?' If we are to give a valid account of the beginnings of society, roughly equivalent to the time when more distinct epochs can be seen, then we do have to explain why primitive man would give this up:

Supposing eternal spring on the earth; supposing plenty of water, livestock and pasture, and supposing that men, as they leave the hands of nature, were spread out in the midst of all that, I cannot imagine how they would ever be induced to give up their primitive liberty, abandoning the isolated pastoral life so fitted to their natural indolence, to impose upon themselves unnecessarily the labours and the inevitable misery of a social mode of life.⁽²⁴⁾

The point is that, even assuming 'eternal spring', not everything about this life would be ideal. Natural events would still hold enormous sway over the course of people's lives, so that even though they might wish to remain dispersed, other needs would reunite them and give them an incentive to start speaking to each other. Chance and necessity still rule: 'Human associations are due largely to accidents of nature', and in another wonderful image of the chance element in mankind's social development:

He who willed man to be social, by a touch of a finger shifted the globe's axis in line with the axis of the universe. I see such a slight movement changing the face of the earth and deciding the vocation of mankind: in the distance I hear the joyous cries of a naive multitude; I see the building of castles and cities: I see the birth of the arts: I see nations forming, expanding and dissolving, following each other like ocean waves; I see men leaving their homes, gathering to devour each other, and turning the rest of the world into a hideous desert: fitting monument to social union and the usefulness of the arts. (25)

In discussing the origin of language, Rousseau makes a distinction between warm, southern countries, and cold northern ones. In the former, he says that people would have remained dispersed for as long as possible but that ultimately the need for common watering-places would lead to their meeting with each other. At the very least, they would need to agree to the use of wells; more likely, they would need to cooperate in the digging of them. As Rousseau says, taking note of the hypothetical character of his own account: 'Such must have been the origin of societies and languages in warm countries'; (26) it is a short, pleasurable step from there to chance encounters, of longer and longer duration, between the two sexes, leading to a mutual expression of their heart-felt feelings. Thus, 'The first tongues, children of pleasure rather than need, long bore the mark of their father,' (27) In the cold, northern countries, pleasure and need are also interdependent in the origin of society and language. In this case, fire is the key element in people's coming together. Quite apart from its facilitating the transformation of raw meat into cooked meat and cold nights into warm nights, fire is also the first factor in bringing

people together at all; once people start to huddle round a fire, the fire literally becomes the crucible of civilisation: 'People gather round a common hearth where they feast and dance; the gentle bonds of habit tend imperceptibly to draw man closer to his own kind. And on this simple hearth burns the sacred fire that provokes in the depths of the heart the first feelings of humanity.'⁽²⁸⁾

Once again, we should note the oscillation and ambiguity in Rousseau's thoughts concerning the evolution of society. However reluctantly people formed themselves into social groupings, there were immediate compensations as in the image of warm, sacred and human feelings that were aroused by the phenomenon of fire. In effect, we find that Rousseau is giving us a sociological and historical basis for such myths as the stealing of fire by Prometheus. The mythological quality that is involved in the origin of people's settling down to a less nomadic existence is well portrayed in this image of the celebrating of communion:

The first cake to be eaten was the communion of the human race. When men began to settle down, they cleared a little land around their huts, more of a garden than a field. They grew a little grain which they ground between stones, and made some cakes that they cooked under ashes or oven coals or on a hot stove. These were eaten only on festive occasions.⁽²⁹⁾

The evolution of society is less an occasion for rejoicing if the account given in the Second Discourse is anything to go by. Of course, that work has a much more blatantly political problem to deal with, namely, what to do about the rampant

and morally outrageous inequality in the society of Rousseau's day. The problem in that work is to explain how the relatively unimportant natural differences between people could have given rise to such enormous differences in the moral order of society as it then existed. Once again, the account stresses the importance of natural occurrences in encouraging people to start talking to each other.⁽³⁰⁾ The critical event in this account, however, is a revolution in material life; this is the 'epoch of a first revolution', and it involves the use of stone to make hatchets which in turn were used to make the more settled abodes which already figured in the account given above.⁽³¹⁾

Either way, a new epoch is about to begin. In some ways, it is the first truly historic epoch, as it is the first period in mankind's history when the human race becomes aware of itself on a collective basis. Mankind is beginning to live in history, which is simultaneous with the end of its living entirely at the hand of nature and the beginning of its living in society. Social intercourse is no longer restricted to the most rudimentary family grouping, nor is love just a matter of instinct and habit. Families are differentiated from each other, and within each family some sex-role differentiation is evident. A 'sort of property' is introduced, people settle down, some surplus is generated, and 'little extras' are acquired in respect of which there is thus scarcity. Whole groups of people can now be distinguished, unified by 'customs and character', or, more simply, by the same kind of life and eating habits,

and subject to the same effects of climate. Natural and material influences are again interdependent. (32)

The most important aspect of this first historical epoch is the fact that it represents a 'golden age' for Rousseau. The 'golden age' actually refers to an impossible moment between nature and society, or between the unself-conscious experience of existing timelessly and the self-conscious experience of existing in time, i.e., discontinuously. The 'golden age' is that historical moment when we were aware of the continuity of experience. The 'golden age' represents the end of the beginning and the beginning of the end, the end of nature and the beginning of society. In that sense, we can say that the 'golden age' represents an attempt to abstract society from history; in other words, if the history of society represents a continual, downward fall towards increasing decay and decadence, then the 'golden age' represents a moment--theoretical or historical--when it was still possible that the history of society would not necessarily follow in that direction. Bearing in mind the fact that, firstly, the history of society did continue on its downward path and that, - secondly, we should not treat nature and society as abstractions, then we can begin to see just how impossible a moment it is, and why it is so often a feature of Rousseau's nostalgic longings, but that alone. Although Rousseau asks us to consider the important fact that all the primitive tribes known in his day were found to be living in conditions approximating

those of the 'golden age',⁽³³⁾ his more realistic appraisal is generally that the 'golden age' is of mythological importance only, rather than having any basis in concrete fact. That is in no way to deny the importance of mythological truth as it does give us grounds for believing in, and accepting, our past origins and traditions, and it does give us a basis for experiencing some continuity in our existence. That little was of major importance for Rousseau, who would probably have been quite content if people would, in fact, love the 'golden age' with the kind of devotion and feeling that might make its restoration something less of an impossibility. But who other than the Emiles of this world can even love the 'golden age'?⁽³⁴⁾ In that regard, Rousseau is something of an 'antique censor in modern dress' who can only feel dismayed at the way in which we have banished our ancient gods, rituals and traditions from our homes.⁽³⁵⁾ We are such a crass lot that we cannot even love our traditions, let alone continue to practise them. In one appraisal of the 'golden age' Rousseau goes so far as to deny it any mythological validity at all, let alone any historical validity:

Thus nature's gentle voice is no longer an infallible guide for us, nor is the independence we have received from her a desirable state. We lost peace and innocence forever before we had tasted their delights. Unfelt by the stupid men of earliest times, lost to the enlightened men of later times, the happy life of the golden age was always a state foreign to the human race, either because it went unrecognised when humans could have enjoyed it or because it had been lost when humans could have known it.⁽³⁶⁾

There is so much of life's ironical and illusory quality in a passage like that. The human condition is such that we never seem to know a good thing until we have lost it. While we are young it never occurs to us to do anything other than wish that we could enjoy the apparent fruits of maturity. We never realise just how impossible it is to escape from history and from the knowledge of where we were combined with our sense of where we are not now. If the future only seems to hold out promise of more of the same, and if more of the same only seems to entail more suffering and grudging acceptance of what it means to be human, what hope is there? Rousseau well knew that we cannot live on fantasies or illusions, especially when they are rooted in the past only, and he obviously felt that it would be impossible altogether to escape from the tension between nature and society.⁽³⁷⁾ The political task, therefore, is everywhere the same, that of retaining as many features of our more natural past as possible while making as many concessions to present social reality as necessary.

That, perhaps, is Rousseau at his most realistic. In other versions of life in the 'golden age', he is much less harsh in his appraisal, and it becomes clear that the 'golden age' is in fact a very important yardstick for political action which might be undertaken here and now. Two basic features of the model of the 'golden age' need to be stressed, firstly the festive aspect of communal life in the 'golden age' when happi-

ness and freedom were so well reconciled, and, secondly, the fact that the 'golden age' was a time of balance between good, natural passions, and bad, social ones.

The festive aspect of the 'golden age' is most clearly stressed in the version given in the Essay on the Origin of Language; we have already mentioned the communal significance of the eating of the 'first cake' as well as the fact that these cakes were eaten only on 'festive occasions'. The festive aspect of communal life, as well as the self-conscious but timeless quality of experience in those times, are beautifully depicted in this image from the same work:

In that happy age when nothing marked the hours, nothing would oblige one to count them; the only measure of time would be the alternation of amusement and boredom. Under old oaks, conquerors of the years, an ardent youth will gradually lose his ferocity. Little by little they become less shy with each other. In trying to make oneself understood, one learns to explain oneself. There too, the original festivals developed. Feet skipped with joy, earnest gestures no longer sufficed, being accompanied by an impassioned voice; pleasure and desire mingled and were felt together. There at last was the true cradle of nations: from the pure crystal of the fountains flow the first fires of love.(38)

The Second Discourse is more obviously concerned with mankind's 'fall' into society and with such negative features of social life as rampant inequality and excesses of passion, and the account of the 'golden age' is much more restrained as a result. In that work festivals are simply one aspect of both the process of social development and the progress of inequality, and they are immediately depicted as having both good and bad effects:

People grew accustomed to assembling in front of the huts or around a large tree; song and dance, true children of love and leisure, became the amusement or rather the occupation of idle and assembled men and women. Each one began to look at the others and to want to be looked at himself, and public esteem had a value. The one who sang or danced the best, the handsomest, the strongest, the most adroit, or the most eloquent became the most highly considered; and that was the first step toward inequality and, at the same time, toward vice. From these first preferences were born on the one hand vanity and contempt, on the other shame and envy; and the fermentation caused by these new leavens gradually produced compounds fatal to happiness and innocence.⁽³⁹⁾

In that image festivals are to be considered in relation to the genealogy of passion. Festivals mark a transition between self-love and vanity, and both the good and the bad aspects of vanity can be seen in that one image. In general, social intercourse is simply less restrained than it used to be. Life is no longer a matter of complete indifference to people, nor do they want simply to be indolent. Imaginations are working more powerfully, for better and for worse. Conjugal love is one good effect, but the need to take terrible vengeance on offenders against custom and tradition is one bad effect. Rousseau considers that some warfare might have broken out already between people of the same community simply because of their closer proximity to each other, and because of the growing ascendancy of vanity in their lives. People are becoming much more concerned about their own selves and they more clearly distinguish their own selves as they distinguish other selves. Men might compete over a woman, people might feel envious and contemptuous of each other, or might feel that

their neighbours had been less than civil in some matter of common concern. In a word, people are now living more passionately than hitherto, and their turbulent, unruly passions begin to hold more sway over their lives.

However passionately people might be living, the 'golden age' was, of course, a time of balance between nature and society, between stability and chaos, between natural disasters and human industry, between self-love and vanity, between a self-sufficient existence and a decadent, vicarious existence, and between the natural, physical and the social, moral element in love. In Rousseau's classic image it is depicted as a 'golden mean':

Thus although men had come to have less endurance and although natural pity had undergone some alteration, this period of the development of human faculties, maintaining a golden mean between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activity of our vanity, must have been the happiest and most durable epoch. The more one thinks about it, the more one finds that this state was the least subject to revolutions, the best for man, and that he must have come out of it only by some fatal accident which for the common good ought never to have happened. (40)

Once again, we should note the contrast between this picture of stable, enduring balance between nature and society and the much more harshly realistic tone of the passage in which Rousseau recognises that we would probably never have experienced the 'golden age' for what it was, and would have known it only when we had already lost it. Hindsight works wonders, as we have said on several occasions.

The 'golden age' was mankind's last chance to live a

more natural life, in harmony with natural needs and powers. From now on, we will be concerned with the 'progress of evil' and the 'progress of inequality',⁽⁴¹⁾ as we contemplate mankind's headlong flight into the abyss of civil society and the likely death of all bodies politic. Before the 'golden age' nature was predominant in people's lives; after the 'golden age' society is predominant. The tension between nature and society will build up from now on, until society becomes the direct negation of nature. One could, hitherto, speak metaphorically of social categories as supplements to natural categories. These were in harmony with natural categories at the beginning of the 'golden age', but by the end of the 'golden age' the social categories had become antithetical to the natural ones. That is what Jacques Derrida means when he refers to the idea of suppléments to man's original state. They are factors that cause man's progressive decay and decadence, but they also represent his compensation in society. Of the suppléments Derrida says:

What is added on is nothing since it is added to a presence to which it is external. The spoken word is added on to the intuitive presence (of being, of essence . . .); writing is added on to the word that is live and present to itself; masturbation is added on to so-called normal experience; culture is added on to nature, evil to innocence, history to the origin.⁽⁴²⁾

Initially, the compensatory factor in these suppléments was paramount, but the decadent aspect subsequently takes over. In another sense, there is now a pattern of rupture or scission, in which the first, more natural element gives way

progressively to the second, more social element in the course of mankind's development: self-love/vanity, sensation/reason, being/appearance, acting/speaking, province/capital, country/city, liberty/slavery, independence/dependence, and so on.⁽⁴³⁾ In perhaps the neatest summation of the vicarious and often unauthentic life of social man, Rousseau says that 'the savage lives within himself; the sociable man, always outside of himself, knows how to live only in the opinions of others.'⁽⁴⁴⁾

It must be remembered that, to begin with at least, there was nothing conspiratorial or intentionally evil about the way in which society evolved.⁽⁴⁵⁾ It was no one individual's fault, for all that we can speak of a 'fatal accident' that was the chance result of man's perfectibility. Historically, the 'golden age' simply came to an end with the invention of the arts of metallurgy and agriculture, which in turn led to the 'great revolution' represented by cooperative and interdependent production; this led to the felt need to transform natural possession into the social right of property, and thus to the founding of civil society proper, as we have already discussed above.⁽⁴⁶⁾

To begin with, people had now adopted a more settled way of life. They could afford to start thinking about the future, to plan and to make an investment of time and labour by sowing seeds, planting crops and reaping the harvest of their efforts. The invention of the agricultural mode of production is, therefore, of great importance in the origins of

civil society:

Agriculture is an art that requires tools. Sowing for harvest is a precaution which presupposes foresight . . . Concerning agriculture, which is slower to come into being: it is connected to all the arts; it leads to property, government, and laws, and gradually to the misery and crime that are inseparable for our species from the knowledge of good and evil. (47)

Apart from foresight and an investment of one's time and trouble--which can be summarised in the notion of living in time as opposed to living timelessly--agriculture also requires tools, namely, the products of the art of metallurgy. If some people are busy making agricultural implements, then others must be ready and willing to feed them. The tool-makers need food, and the farmers soon find out how to use tools to increase their productivity. In a word, society is now characterised by interdependence. The farmers are now dependent on the tool-makers, and vice versa. Well-schooled as we are in the virtues of robust self-sufficiency, we all know that interdependence and reciprocal needs are the first signs of a life of servitude, which begins with the simple notion of my willingness to rely on you for the provision of certain basic needs which we all have in common: 'but from the moment one man needed the help of another, as soon as they observed that it was useful for a single person to have provisions for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, labour became necessary . . .' (48)

It should be stressed that Rousseau is not necessarily or only talking of the division of labour at this point. He

does refer to 'arts' that need the 'cooperation of several hands',⁽⁴⁹⁾ but this does not necessarily refer to the division of labour that is inherent in, say, the assembly-line production of automobiles or the production of Adam Smith's much-celebrated widgets. Rousseau is only referring to the kind of cooperation, and thereby interdependence, that is inherent in anything other than a most primitive economy in which each person is relatively self-sufficient and in which it hardly makes any sense to talk of a society at all. He is referring to the operations of a simple exchange economy, comprised in this case of two sectors, agriculture and metallurgy. The point is that the farmer no longer makes the tools with which he sows his seeds and harvests his crops. What concerned Rousseau was that a naturally stronger man could take advantage of his strength, to produce more, perhaps to sell more, and thereby to enrich himself at others' expense. Therein lies the significance of Rousseau's pointing out that 'as soon as they observed that it was useful for a single person to have provisions for two', equality disappeared, and so on. Those involved in the simple economy might not take advantage of each other, or, more importantly of other, weaker people, but the point is that natural inequalities are now relevant to the outcome, in marked contrast to the state of nature, where natural differences between people did not matter:

'Since it is impossible in the state of nature that the difference between man and man should be great enough to make one

dependent on another, there is in fact in this state of nature an actual and indestructible equality.'⁽⁵⁰⁾

In concentrating on the fact of interdependence as the root of the social and political problem, Rousseau certainly recognised that market mechanisms of extrinsic valuation and exchange simply allow for the dynamic progression of natural inequality into ever greater social inequality. When we set up political institutions that give people free and equal access to the market, we are in fact giving the naturally strong people a sort of blank cheque to make of the market what they will. The political institutions of a laissez-faire economic system are intended solely to guarantee a stable climate in which everyone can scramble to maximise his natural potential. Those institutions simply add the force of the law and the community to the force of the naturally strongest individuals. Equality before the law in theory becomes just so much inequality in practice. One writer has called this the 'snare of bourgeois freedom', and Rousseau seems to have been fully aware of it:

In the civil state there is a vain and chimaerical equality of right; the means intended for its maintenance, themselves tend to destroy it; and the power of the community, added to the power of the strongest for the oppression of the weak, disturbs the sort of equilibrium which nature has established between them.⁽⁵¹⁾

As always, we need to recognise the desire for 'natural' order that goes hand-in-hand with Rousseau's realistic appraisal of the status quo in civil society. Rousseau always

wants to talk in terms of social arrangements that would create--or not destroy--a natural harmony, equilibrium, or balance, and there is much talk of 'natural relations' between people and between social categories. He would like to retain a sense of the 'real value' and 'true worth' of things, for example, when he classifies occupations according to their real usefulness, which is always tied to their meeting real, natural needs of people. Thus, agriculture is the highest art in society, closely followed by arts like metallurgy and carpentry. Much closer to the bottom of the list are such obviously superfluous arts as pastry-making, jewellery and engraving. As can be expected, society reverses the real order of things and we find that arts are rewarded in 'inverse ratio to their real utility', which is one more example of the triumph of appearance over reality in social life. (52)

We can see that Rousseau's economic theories are always intended to bring things more into line with his sense of natural relations and real worth. In the account of the increasing interdependence of people with each other, he does allow of a sort of pre-capitalistic time when it was just possible for the original two-sector economy (of metallurgy and agriculture) to produce a harmonious result. Had natural talents been distributed equally among people and the consumption of foodstuffs exactly balanced the use of iron, a measure of equality could have been maintained. (53) Pre-

cisely because natural talents are not distributed equally nothing much can be done except to engage in rather pious hopes that the resulting economic and social inequalities will not grow too far out of proportion. It is precisely to this kind of ultimately dream-like equality that Rousseau's economic theories try to regress, when, that is, they are not engaged in a 'flight forward in ideology', in the words of one modern commentator. (54)

As we have already said, the 'great revolution' represented by cooperative and interdependent production was made possible by the invention of the arts of metallurgy and agriculture; in its turn, the 'great revolution' gave rise to the felt need to transform natural possession into the social right of property and the birth of civil society proper. In the historical evolution of society, the invention of property-right is the main disturbance of the peace. We already depicted a scene as an individual bethought himself to put up a fence, perhaps to keep out interfering animals, a scenario in which is depicted the birth of privatised interests and scarcity, as well as the beginnings of the clash of mutually exclusive interests which produces so much violence and bloodshed. The problem with the statement, 'This is mine', lies in the fact that it excludes you, and, in the notion of private property as a right to exclude others from using that which is 'mine', can be seen all the ills of civil society.

To begin with at least, there might have been no need to exclude other people from using 'my' property if, for example, there was plenty of good land for everyone who wanted it. Soon enough, however, there would be less and less good land left, what with population pressure and natural limitations on productive capacity. One of the mixed blessings of capitalism has indeed been its facilitating the seemingly infinite manufacture of scarcity by those with a superiority of marketable natural talents. No such visions of infinite growth were available to Rousseau, however, for whom an urban, commercial life simply meant that much more depletion of the real, natural resources of society which he always considered to lie primarily in a rural existence, closer to nature.⁽⁵⁵⁾ His model of civil society is based on agriculture as the principal mode of production, but that is less important than the moral aspect of life in civil society. That life no longer takes for granted the fact that you and I can further our interests in common. The very fact that I am now defining myself in terms of 'my interests' means that our selves might, at some point, conflict with each other.

That is precisely what happens in civil society. A realistic appraisal of civil society leads Rousseau to define it in terms of a clash of selves, wills and interests, in a conflict which is marked by increasingly passionate intensity all round. Rousseau categorically rejects the Physiocratic notion of a 'harmony' between 'particular' and 'general' in-

terests; ⁽⁵⁶⁾ he also anticipates and rejects the classic argument for laissez-faire economics put forward by Adam Smith in The Wealth of Nations (1776), that the 'invisible hand' of the market so arranges things that each man's selfish, if rational, pursuit of self-interest increases the general welfare and actually produces harmony, somewhat along the lines of Alexander Pope's admittedly satirical words, 'All discord, harmony misunderstood'. Rousseau preferred to be realistic and call a spade a spade: 'If I were answered that society is constituted so that each man gains by serving others, I should reply that this would be very well if he did not gain still more by harming them.' ⁽⁵⁷⁾

We have seen that the invention of the arts of metallurgy and agriculture brought about increasing specialisation, division of labour, cooperative and interdependent production and exchange. Along came someone with the bright idea of fencing off the land on which, perhaps, he had planted some seeds, and civil society was born: 'From the cultivation of land, its division necessarily followed; and from property once recognised, the first rules of justice.' ⁽⁵⁸⁾ The fundamental question of how to feed oneself has become the social question of the ordering of society along the lines of different occupations. Now the question is about to become the political one, having to do with power and the fact that some people can so order the society as to be in a position of being able to dominate the rest. In other words, the first political society is

about to be formed, and on a highly inegalitarian basis. Rules of justice are concerned with law and order and with so arranging thing that everyone can rightfully have and use what is his. Rules of justice establish a status quo, a given order of society which it is the purpose of political institutions to conserve. Rousseau's concern is that a highly unequal society is in the process of becoming the order which the political arrangements are to conserve. We are about to encounter the politics of inequality.

So far, natural differences between people have not mattered, but now that we are on the verge of forming the first civil society and have begun already to develop a proprietary sense of ourselves, all those natural differences between people--differences of strnegth, cleverness, ingenuity, and skill, to name but a few--are about to give rise to a politics of domination and inequality. In Rousseau's summation of the situation that prevails immediately prior to the institution of civil society proper, the situation which ends in a Hobbesian state of war, the most basic tension is always that between reality and the appearance of reality. Whether or not people do have the natural qualities that will enable them to amass more goods and possessions, they have to give the semblance of having them:

And these qualities being the only ones which could attract consideration, it was soon necessary to have them or affect them; for one's own advantage it was necessary to appear to be other than what in fact one

was. To be and to seem to be became two altogether different things; and from this distinction came conspicuous ostentation, deceptive cunning, and all the vices that follow from them. (59)

In another image, it is now absolutely necessary to make use of other people. Other people are objects which I can use to further my own selfish ends. Interdependence means that we all need each other and can make use of each other, whether or not this serves our real needs. The master is as much a slave of the slave as vice versa in this image, as the rich are characterised as needing the services of the poor, the poor needing the help of the rich. Everyone has something to lose. Ultimately, we all become so ambitious that dominating and harming others almost become ends in themselves: 'in a word, competition and rivalry on one hand, opposition of interest on the other; and always the hidden desire to profit at the expense of others. All these evils are the first effect of property and the inescapable consequence of nascent inequality.' (60)

To begin with at least, the naturally weak members of the society are not even rendered absolutely poorer in the ensuing struggle to survive; they are simply left at the starting-line, literally non-starters. They do become relatively deprived:

And the supernumeraries, whom weakness or indolence had prevented from acquiring inheritance in their turn, having become poorer without having lost anything--because while everything around them changed they alone had not changed at all--were obliged to receive or steal their subsistence from the hands of the rich; and from that began to arise, according to the diverse characters of the rich and the poor, domination and servitude, or violence and rapine. (61)

In other words, hitherto irrelevant natural inequalities are now of enormous importance, so much so that Rousseau refers to the 'destruction of equality'. One must survive, and in order to do so, one must either beg and steal from the rich or subject oneself to a life of wage-slavery and servitude. The result is the all-too-familiar 'most frightful disorder' and the 'most horrible state of war' against even the 'known disposition thereto' Hobbes has tried to warn us all.⁽⁶²⁾ The war is almost more Hobbesian than the Hobbesian one, being characterised by what Althusser has called a 'universal state of alienation'.⁽⁶³⁾ Everyone has something to lose in this new situation in which scarcity prevails. The war is hastened by the parcelling out and handing on of all available lands via inheritance; people are unable to 'disperse' because of population pressure and their propensity to stay put.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Anyone trying to subsist naturally would be unable to do so: 'He could not even continue to exist, for finding the whole earth appropriated by others while he had only himself, how could he get the means of subsistence?'⁽⁶⁵⁾ Although people's imaginative, reasoning and memorising powers would now be working more fully, there would not yet be a sufficient development of their perfectibility nor yet a sufficient transformation of their natural goodness into civic virtue for them to be able to do anything to avoid the state of war. Rousseau can, therefore, continue to view them as victims of circumstances, such that no one is absolutely diabolical in

any way; they are only made that way: 'thus the usurpations of the rich, the brigandage of the poor, the unbridled passions of all, stifling natural pity and the as yet weak voice of justice, made men avaricious, ambitious and evil.'⁽⁶⁶⁾

The political economy of dependency is about to begin. Those who have made use of their natural talents to get rich quick find themselves hard-pressed to keep, let alone justify keeping, those goods and possessions that they have managed to grab in the free-for-all following the invention of private property. There is a perpetual struggle between the right of the strongest and the right of the first occupant. Neither one can claim that the human race gave its 'express and unanimous consent' to his appropriating more than is necessary to his self-preservation, especially when others are lacking the very necessities of which he has such excess; this is a point on which Rousseau is particularly trenchant in his criticism perhaps because he himself suffered at the hands of the rich.⁽⁶⁷⁾ The life of both rich and poor becomes, in Hobbes's famous phrase, 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short', and the rich are driven by the extreme exigencies of their situation to conceive 'the most deliberate project that ever entered the human mind'. They would offer a plan for a political society to everyone in the society, a plan which would guarantee everyone the exclusive enjoyment of whatever he had managed to possess. Everyone's possession would be safeguarded, the weak would be protected, the ambitious would be restrained, if reg-

ulations of 'justice and peace' were instituted, to which all would be subject equally: 'In a word, instead of turning our forces against ourselves, let us gather them into one supreme power which governs us according to wise laws, protects and defends all the members of the association, repulses common enemies and maintains us in an eternal accord.'⁽⁶⁸⁾ This idea appealed to everybody, the poor being unaware of the dangers posed by this institutionalisation and legitimisation of inequality, the ambitious waiting to profit from abuse of the new institutions, and the wise presumably thinking that it was worth trying. Thus, one more link was added to the chains of dependency as 'all ran to meet their chains, thinking that they secured their freedom.' The result is well-known to us all, however hypothetical might be the account of the origins of political society:

Such was, or must have been, the origin of society and laws, which gave new fetters to the weak and new force to the rich, destroyed natural freedom for all time, established forever the law of property and inequality, changed a clever usurpation into an irrevocable right, and for the profit of a few men henceforth subjected the whole human race to work, servitude and misery.⁽⁶⁹⁾

There then begins the cycle of corruption, arbitrary power, decline, fall and death of the body politic that characterises the rest of the Second Discourse, ending in a despotism 'which closes the circle'; at that point, everyone is again equal in a new state of nature, where might alone is right. This time, however, we are faced with a novel prospect of the state of nature in that it is the 'fruit of an excess of corruption', as compared to nature 'in all her purity'. A com-

plete reversal of the original, harmonious state of nature has been arrived at.⁽⁷⁰⁾

The 'progress of inequality' is characterised as going through three stages in this process of revolutionary transformation. In the first stage, the social status of rich and poor is authorised by the establishment of law and the right of property; the second stage sees the authorisation of the political inequality of powerful and weak through the institution of the magistracy; and the third stage involves the change from legitimate to arbitrary power with an ensuing change in status to master and slave.⁽⁷¹⁾ Human freedom is always the political end that Rousseau values most highly, so that a master-slave situation represents the nadir of political life; this is the point at which despotism rears its head and political revolution becomes no less legitimate than was the original assumption of arbitrary power by the rich and powerful.⁽⁷²⁾

As we have noted above, the basic problem with this first, botched attempt at forming a community based on the prior and unanimous agreement of all the members--an attempt which results in a 'bad socialisation', in Pierre Burgelin's phrase--⁽⁷³⁾ is that it originates in a situation of glaring and real inequality between rich and poor. Thus, the formal, theoretical equality before the law that is enjoyed by everyone in the community, and which gives the first political society its initial legitimacy, simply means that the power

of the community is added to the power of the strongest at the expense of the weak and powerless members, who, however, still have something to lose, even if it is only their freedom.

Rousseau's works are full of critical commentary on the situation in which the rich and powerful are able to pursue their own selfish interests at the expense of the poor and weak. In one caricaturised version of the social compact between rich and poor, a version which was approvingly quoted by Karl Marx in Capital, Rousseau writes: You have need of me because I am rich and you are poor. We will therefore come to an agreement. I will permit you to have the honour of serving me, on condition that you bestow on me the little you have left, in return for the pains that I shall take to command you.⁽⁷⁴⁾ The rich have everything going for them. The established laws and justice protect their immense possessions while hardly leaving the poor in quiet possession of what little they have managed to put together. The rich get all the privileges, the exemption from taxation, the lucrative administrative posts, and immunity from creditors; they can easily see to it that their accusers are shut away in prison, while they themselves are immediately aided if they are robbed; they are assisted and escorted while they travel, and all in all live a life of untroubled luxury. The worst thing is that this is all deemed to be the rich man's right: 'Yet all this respect costs him not a farthing! It is the rich man's right and not what he buys with his wealth. How different is the case of

the poor man! The more humanity owes him, the more society denies him.' All the doors of the society are closed to the poor man, and nobody helps him to bear the crushing burden of inequality. What is more, the losses of the poor are relatively harder to make good, as a much larger proportion of their income must be spent on over-taxed necessities. The poor are absolutely and relatively deprived of the necessities of life while the rich wallow in a superfluity of the same goods. (75)

The rich and powerful are not content merely to enjoy the fruits of their privileged position within their own country, but are forever seeking to further their selfish interests in the international arena as well. That is why international relations are in a state of war also. (76) It also allows us to understand why relatively uncorrupted communities--such as the Geneva of Rousseau's day--had so much to fear from the power of their much larger neighbours; in this case France. The Letter to D'Alembert can certainly be seen as a critique of the effects of a dominant, somewhat more cosmopolitan culture on a smaller, relatively 'backward' one. To adopt a contemporary theoretical vocabulary, we might wish to say that Rousseau was concerned about the 'cultural imperialism' that 'hegemonic, metropolitan cultures' practise on 'hinterland areas'. At one point, Rousseau refers to the theatre as a form of taxation on the members of a community, and he also analyses in some detail the predictable economic

consequences--such as an increase in the consumption of luxuries, price rises and the importation of more foreign goods--of the establishment of a theatre in the midst of a previously robust, virtuous and self-sufficient community, characterised by a rustic simplicity of taste.⁽⁷⁷⁾ We can see that what we have called the political economy of dependency is practised both within each society and between different societies. Rousseau's concern with the problems of both Corsica and Poland clearly stems from an appreciation of the dominant influences that were either working or seemed likely to be working in the future on the indigenous cultures.⁽⁷⁸⁾

Rousseau was also aware of the subtleties involved in relationships of dependence and domination, and he has a masterful sense of the dialectic of master-slave relationships. In one image, which we have already quoted above, he says that the master is just as much a slave of the slave as vice versa: 'One who thinks himself the master of others does not fail to be more of a slave than they.' Even in the general society of the last stage of the state of nature, the society is depicted in terms of an intricate network of interdependent relationships. Whereas all were previously free and independent, everyone is now 'subjected, so to speak, to all of nature and especially to his fellow-men.'⁽⁷⁹⁾ The rich protect the poor and the poor serve the rich, and the new civil society simply makes permanent the interdependence and slavery of rich and poor. The rich, of course, stand to gain far more from the authorisation

of inequality. As we noted above, the many are always sacrificed to the few, and the common interests of all to the private interests of those few. Appearance always wins out over reality and nowhere more so than in the lives of rich people who seem at first sight to have gained so much by way of greater possessions and other signs of influence and prestige, but who are in reality completely enslaved by their own apparent needs. As Rousseau says: 'If he really desires to enjoy himself the man of taste has no need of riches; all he wants is to be free and to be his own master. With health and daily bread we are rich enough, if we will get rid of our prejudices; this is the 'Golden Mean' of Horace.'⁽⁸⁰⁾ Always the stern critic of the sophisticated veneer of a social life of luxury and slavish commitment to fashion, Rousseau chides the rich for thinking that their money can ever buy happiness or that they can ever avoid the 'chief curse' of being rich, dullness.⁽⁸¹⁾ It would probably matter less if the rich did not involve everyone else in pandering to their selfish whims. Unfortunately, the whole society is run for their benefit alone, and ultimately, even that is not enough. The rich are happy with their wealth only because others are poor: 'The rich think so much of these things [works of art and trifles of doubtful real value], not because they are useful, but because they are beyond the reach of the poor.'⁽⁸¹⁾

Another sad aspect of relationships of domination and dependence is the 'sub-imperialism' that goes on within the

overall structure of domination. Rousseau clearly anticipates the contemporary appreciation of the subtleties of power politics, in which a sort of pecking-order of the oppressed is set up. All that the rulers need to do is divide and rule, and the sad thing is that they can leave the rest to the working-through of the oppressed's resentment, which leads to their venting their anger and frustration on those beneath them in the pecking-order instead of directing their anger where it truly belongs, against the masters. In a very sober assessment of the limits of perfectibility in the society of his day, Rousseau notes that it is those who themselves seek to command who can be rendered most obedient. Cowardice, envy, chips on the shoulder and felt inadequacies all work wonders:

Thus there must have come a time when the eyes of the people were so bewitched that their leaders had only to say to the smallest of men; be great, you and your line; immediately he appeared great to everyone as well as in his own eyes, and his descendants were exalted even more in proportion to their distance from him. (83)

In the face of so much pretence and tension between real and apparent good, Rousseau must often have felt that the task was well and truly hopeless. Could anything really be done to prevent the progress of inequality or the tendency to live unauthentically? Evidence of the unauthenticity of people's lives was everywhere: everybody so consumed by ambition and the desire for power, fame and fortune; 'factitious passions' governing men's conduct in society; no sign anywhere of the calmness and indifference of natural man, who knows only

repose and freedom; and everybody living outside of himself. (84)

The new political order has simply legitimised the ill-gotten gains of the rich and powerful, and everyone lives by appearances:

For it is an astonishing thing to have made it impossible for men to live together without being constantly on their guard, usurping each other's places, deceiving, betraying and destroying each other! From now on we must guard against being seen for what we are; for, where two men have common interests, a hundred thousand oppose them. and the only way to succeed is to deceive or ruin them all. Such is the unhappy source of violence, betrayals, and all the horrors compelled by a state of things in which every man who pretends to work for the fortune or reputation of others, is trying to lift his above theirs, at their expense. (85)

On the stage of civil society, appearance counts for all; everyone wears a mask, and heaven help the one who allows people to see his real, true self. He might end up a tormented refugee as Rousseau sometimes felt himself to be, especially after 1762 and his flight from France. Living in society means living a lie, and living in political society only compounds the lie even further, leading inexorably as it does to servitude and misery. It also leads to a life in which the only language of human relationships is money. One of the worst features of life at the end of the progress of inequality is that money alone talks, and the reason for this is as follows. In Rousseau's view it is inevitable that people in society with each other will make comparisons that lead them forever to be striving to 'keep up with the Jones's', in the contemporary idiom. In other words, vanity is the governing principle in their lives. Of the differences between people that are most

significant in society, namely, 'wealth, nobility or rank, power and personal merit', all the others are reduced to wealth in the end, it being the easiest language of all with which to engage in social communication as well as the one which can buy all the other distinctions. Any and all hope of 'agreement' between those categories is lost in a political society based on bribery and corruption.⁽⁸⁶⁾ What is even worse to Rousseau, Citoyen de Genève, is that people will serve the state only for money; 'one would see politics limit to a mercenary portion of the people the honour of defending the common cause.'⁽⁸⁷⁾ Although Rousseau does not in any way anticipate the analytical precision of a discussion of capitalist economics that views both bourgeois and proletarian as enslaved by the realm of capital, there is no doubt that his critique of the power of money in civil society is a critique of the kind of extrinsic, apparent value that is a feature of a market society in which anything can be bought and sold. Inequality is so rampant that the poor are reduced to selling themselves for money while the rich are so rich that they can buy other people's services quite easily, i.e., they can buy other people. There is no hope for that much-admired position in which everyone had something and no one has too much.⁽⁸⁸⁾

It is time to sum up this hypothetical reconstruction of the origins and development of civil society. It has been the story of the way in which people take on the chains of dependence, moving farther and farther away from a natural life

of solitude and abundance, and towards a life of servitude, misery, hypocrisy, appearance, vanity and encroaching decay. The first chain of dependence was taken on innocently enough, as mankind emerged from the relative harmony and balance of the 'golden age'; that was the chain represented by cooperative and interdependent production, made possible by the invention of the arts of metallurgy and agriculture. The first exchange economy came into being, but as soon as exchange is accepted, we have to bid farewell to robust self-sufficiency. With exchange comes a society based increasingly on extrinsic valuation and the buying and selling of people's services and goods in the market-place. Furthermore, a society is formed in which I am willing to rely on other people for the provision of my basic, human needs. Once everyone is relying on everyone, i.e., once society is characterised by interdependence, it does not take long for those who are naturally stronger, more skilful and more clever to begin to take advantage of the new exchange society to amass more land and possessions, the first signs of inequality of wealth. Increasing interdependence brings increasing inequality, and also the most significant feature of civil society, private property, which entails the idea that society should be arranged so that each and everyone in it is guaranteed the exclusive use of that which is his, even if that be only his 'free' person. An increasingly mad scramble for goods and wealth has already begun and scarcity rules everywhere. The poor have to steal from the

rich or content themselves with a life of servitude to the rich. The rich are no more secure in their ill-gotten gains than are the poor in their attempt to beg, steal or borrow the necessities of life. Interdependence also means insecurity, and, in an attempt to overcome the condition of insecurity that is now so prevalent a feature of life in society, the rich dream up the ingenious plan of buying off the poor with the promise of securing everyone's possessions, by turning possessions into property. Everyone's unanimous consent is obtained for the new plan and all start to live happily ever after; however, what is set up on an unequal basis merely authorises increasing inequality and more dependence all round, and it ends in the ultimate misery of despotism, tantamount for Rousseau to death, or at least to the death of the body politic, given the paramount importance of our freedom to live as we please: 'Man was born free but everywhere he is in chains.'

We need, finally, to re-emphasise several key features of the history of civil society. We need, first of all, to recognise the fortuitous and accidental element in the story. Rousseau himself refers to a 'fatal accident' that led us to give up the 'happiest and most durable epoch', the 'golden age'. The whole story can be written in terms of a series of 'different accidents' which had both good and bad effects.⁽⁸⁹⁾ We cannot say that there was anything absolutely unnatural about the story, nor that there was anything absolutely diabolical

in the actions of any one man or men. To begin with at least, no one set out with the evil intent of actually enslaving another person or of forcing him to do anything that he did not want to do. In other words, there are no power politics to begin with. All that comes later, and then in abundance. Even the invention of property, the bête noire of the whole story, cannot be said to be an unnatural consequence of all that had preceded it. Rousseau never denies that we are entitled to call 'our own' whatever we have added our labour to; and he implies that the transition from possession to property came about quite naturally. In speaking about the origins of rules of justice, which he sees as stemming from everybody's having something to lose as well as his fear of being treated as harshly as he might treat others, in other words, from a felt need for some law and order in his life, Rousseau writes:

This origin is all the more natural as it is impossible to conceive of the idea of property arising from anything except manual labour; because one cannot see what a man can add, other than his own labour, in order to appropriate what he has not made. It is labour alone which, giving the cultivator the right to the product of the land he has tilled, gives him a right to the soil as a consequence, at least until the harvest and thus from year to year; which, creating continuous possession, is easily transformed into property. (90)

Thus it is that we can say, with Rousseau, that man is good while men are evil. There need not be a contradiction in denying original sin while fully recognising the extent of evil in the world. That, of course, is what Rousseau has set out to

do. It is not enough simply to make a moral critique of civil society, for all that there is justification in doing that. The critique must be philosophically sound as well; it must be based on sound and consistent conjecture, so that the outcome follows naturally from the premises. A fine example of this argumentation is to be found in Rousseau's discussion of the 'progress of inequality' in political society, which comes about as a result of an entirely natural circumstance, people's propensity to grow old, and the argumentation is based on one premise, that the more frequently elections are held, the more factionalism and corruption there will be, given, that is, the corrupt and competitive society in which they live. More precisely, the argument goes as follows. The magistrates of the community are going to be those men who are most naturally fitted and meritorious. Those who have the most experience of communal life, the oldest citizens, are going to be the most meritorious. Those citizens are going to die soonest, thus making frequent elections a necessity. The more frequently elections are held, the more corruption, factional disputes and civic strife there is going to be. Once factionalism and corruption start there is no more virtue or love of country; it is only a matter of time before money becomes the only acceptable language of political discourse, after which the death of the body politic is inevitable.⁽⁹¹⁾

Recognising the accidental element in all this underlines the need for a degree of relativism in our critique of

the status quo. In other words, if the history of society is such that we end up living in complete contradiction to a natural way of life, and if it thus seems that the tension between nature and society is irreconcilable and absolute, then we must retreat from that absolute position to some degree. In other words, we must be realistic and once again see the immanence of nature in society as well as the evidence of the simultaneity of nature and society.

Perhaps the clearest examples of the need for relativism in our critique are to be found in Rousseau's judgment of city life, some examples of which we have given already, both in this and in the preceding chapter. We shall begin with a few of Rousseau's critical comments about cities. They are said to be full of frauds, schemers, rogues, and corrupt and immoral people. They drain the countryside of both people and resources and are like a cancerous sore on the body politic. They are like vast, arid deserts where silence and loneliness reign supreme. City life is like life in the most corrupt state of nature of the kind that is the 'fruit of an excess of corruption' at the end of the progress of inequality; the life of man in cities is like primitive man's life in three significant ways, firstly, his sexual mores are without any modesty or pride, secondly, his life is anti-contemplative and without any depth or meaning, and thirdly, his life is totally uniform as everyone looks alike because he is wearing a mask and there is thus a form of psychological equality

which in this case hides vast socio-economic inequality.⁽⁹²⁾

There are, however, major qualifications to this picture of city life as the quintessence of corruption. There are major compensations for those who must live in cities, since the taste for love, language and music is perfected there. Although there are neither morals nor virtue in cosmopolitan centres, in Paris there is at least the love of these, and there is an 'exquisite sense' there. Paradoxically, novels that are most critical of life in cities are appreciated the most by precisely those who are the object of criticism. It is well-known that cities exert a sort of magical pull on people like Rousseau, who flock to the cities to 'devour' their fellow human-beings; and it is their 'self-interest' which impels them to do so. We also find that it is not the city in general that is the object of attack, but only large cities like Paris, metropolitan centres which exert such dominance on surrounding areas; the solution in that case is found to lie in the even distribution of people over the whole length and breadth of a country. Finally, just as things generally often have to worsen before they can improve, so we find that St. Preux, for instance, has to go 'down' to Paris as part of the preparation for his re-entry into the community at Clarens. We also find that the critique of the city in so many of Rousseau's writings, as well as the portrayal of the city as the moral antithesis of the original state of nature, is a fundamental critical tool on the way to, and is an essential

pre-requisite for, redemption.⁽⁹³⁾

In other words, we must always be realistic in our critique of the status quo. For instance, there is no point in anyone's trying to go on living in a sort of state of nature if, that is, everyone else has gone off to live in society. Nature's first law is that of self-preservation, and we must be thoroughly realistic about our prospects. This subject is well treated in Emile. There is no point in moaning on about the world in which we live; the thing to do is to be ready for anything, to be prepared to do our duty whenever called upon to do so, to relive the 'golden age' in whatever way is possible, and to take advantage in every way of what opportunities are present in the existing society. After all, as we have already implied in the discussion of the difference between the 'real worth' and 'true value' of occupations as compared with the imaginary value that society places on them, there is a world of difference between a situation in which everyone works away at the occupation for which he or she is naturally most fitted and adapted, and a situation in which all value lies in appearances and in which each takes as much advantage as he can of everyone else's weakness. In this case at least, Rousseau is most decidedly not referring to man as an 'appendage of the machine', to quote the classic image of Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto. He is talking about the way of life of an independent artisan who combines all aspects of the production process in his own person: 'And, what seems unbelievable, each joins in himself all the various crafts into which watch-making

is sub-divided and makes all his tools himself'.⁽⁹⁴⁾ We can thus see why Rousseau has no real difficulty in reconciling Emile to his fate in these uncertain times: 'Emile sees that to get tools for his own use, other people must have theirs, and that he can get in exchange what he needs and they possess. I easily bring him to feel the need of such exchange and to take advantage of it.'⁽⁹⁵⁾

Finally, we have to remember that what began as a non-question, our ability to remain free and independent, first of all became an economic question of our willingness to be dependent on other people for the provision of our subsistence, then became a social question as a certain form of society emerged from the ability of naturally stronger individuals to transform their strength into representative signs of wealth, namely, riches and possessions, then became a political question as the rich people managed to gain everyone's agreement to the authorisation of inequality that had by then resulted, and, finally, became the most fundamental political and ethical question of all--is one to suffer a life of servitude and misery or to enjoy a life of happiness and freedom? In other words, what is to be done?⁽⁹⁶⁾

There is one way out, clearly anticipated by Rousseau towards the end of the Second Discourse. He says that the changing of legitimate to arbitrary power authorised the statuses of master and slave, the ultimate degradation of human freedom, 'the last degree of inequality and the limit to which

all the others finally lead, until new revolutions dissolve the government altogether or bring it closer to its legitimate institution.'⁽⁹⁷⁾ There is a marked tendency to forget the little 'or' in that passage. Something can always be done. Just what, however, remains to be seen.

NOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

¹Social Contract, I, 1, p. 169, and I, 6, p. 179.

²I do not intend to suggest that the Social Contract should be treated as a logical as well as chronological extension of the Second Discourse. As will be shown in subsequent chapters, the Social Contract is pervaded with the same kind of long-term historical pessimism as is the Second Discourse; both works are based on the same moral premise, that in the name of freedom the people must give its express and unanimous consent to its being ruled by princes and governments. If the polity of the Second Discourse is immediately characterised as a ploy by the rich to dupe the poor, and if the Social Contract seems to give a more idealised picture of the political prospect, that difference is only one of degree and it should not hide the basic moral underpinning of all Rousseau's works, which can be said to be that of testing facts by the standard of right. On all of this, see, for example, Roger Masters, 'Nothing Fails Like Success: Development and History in Rousseau's Political Teaching', paper presented at the Rousseau Bicentennial Congress, Trent University, Peterborough, June 22-25, 1978.

³Second Discourse, p. 140, my stress. The importance of 'accidents' should also be stressed, as it adds to the element of fatalism in the whole story. We need perhaps to be more precise in distinguishing the notion of man as 'free agent'--a quality which leads to his being able either to acquiesce in or to resist physical impulses or causes--from the notion of perfectibility, which is a more potential quality referring to man's ability to imagine what the future could be like, and freely act now to bring that about. The one is a basic human quality, the other is both basic and potential. The basis of a political right to live freely is the first notion of 'free agent'. On all of this, see Second Discourse, pp. 113-115, 168, note j (p. 208).

⁴Ibid., p. 141.

⁵Second Discourse, p. 197. Compare the strikingly similar argument made by Marx in his letter on 'Capital Punishment', of January 28th, 1883, to the New York Daily Tribune, reprinted in Marx and Engels, Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, ed. L. Feuer (New York, 1959), p. 489: 'Is there not a necessity for deeply reflecting upon an alteration of the system that breeds these crimes, instead of glorifying the hangman who exe-

cutes a lot of criminals to make room only for the supply of new ones?' Rousseau, of course, had no dreams like those of Marx of ever being able, as it were, to render utopia obsolete by historicising it.

⁶Istvan Meszaros, Marx's Theory of Alienation (London, 1970), p. 52. I would prefer to argue that there certainly is a tension between these two aspects of Rousseau's thinking. It is much truer to the spirit of his own sense of what he was doing to speak of tensions and paradoxes rather than contradictions, which represent a considerable hardening of the elements in the tension; in principle at least, there is no reason why the apparent contradictions cannot be resolved in the community's use of its sovereign legislative power. On 'paradox' but not 'contradiction' in Rousseau's ideas, see Emile, pp. 57, 72.

⁷I am referring, of course, to C.B. Macpherson's reading of John Locke in the Political Theory of Possessive Individualism (Oxford, 1962).

⁸Emile, p. 425 (part of which is mistranslated, cf. the original, O.C., IV, p. 841), Social Contract, I, 6, and I, 9, Corsica, p. 317.

⁹Ibid., p. 61, and see pp. 61-63. See also Social Contract, I, 9, p. 186: 'All men have a natural right to what is necessary to them', but note the conditions attached to the right of 'First Occupancy' (in ibid.)

¹⁰Karl Marx, 'Excerpt Notes of 1844', in Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, eds. L. Easton and J. Guddat (New York, 1967), p. 281.

¹¹Second Discourse, pp. 141-142.

¹²In his introduction to the Second Discourse (O.C., III, pp. lxii-lxiv), Jean Starobinski is quite precise. He distinguishes six stages, namely 1) primitive isolation, 2) sporadic association, 3) patriarchal society with little private property, 4) division of labour, primitive industry, agriculture and private property, 5) Hobbesian state of war, 6) civil society; stages 2) and 3) are equivalent to 'socialised nature'. Raymond Polin, La Politique de la Solitude (Paris, 1971), pp. 256-268, distinguishes seven stages by adding on a stage to 'socialised nature', thus, 1) solitude and abundance, 2) first difficulties and first progress, 3) infancy of the world, 4) true youth of the world, 5) the iron age: work and property, 6) the most horrible state of war, 7) contract societies and their dissolution.

These are just two of the better interpretations; obviously the number of stages that are distinguished has to do with the kinds of questions that one finds to be of importance, i.e., with what one considers to be the main problem.

¹³Second Discourse, p. 137, Language, p. 38.

¹⁴Second Discourse, p. 120.

¹⁵Language, p. 5, and see also p. 10: 'Conventional language is characteristic of man alone. That is why man makes progress, for good or ill, and animals do not.' Note the direct reference to the simultaneously good and bad effects of mankind's perfectibility.

¹⁶Second Discourse, pp. 142-143.

¹⁷Language, pp. 39, 31, and see also p. 45. Note the oblique reference to the Biblical creation myth in the reference to the 'dispersion of men', and the fact that the original state of nature can only be treated as a hypothetical abstraction about which we can write in a metaphoric way; this is well seen in the reference to the notion of 'primitive times' in the passage quoted in the text, as it would be impossible to say just when the period of primitive times began.

¹⁸See Rousseau's note 1, Second Discourse, pp. 213-220. By contrast, in both Political Economy, p. 117, and Social Contract, I, 2, p. 170, the family is referred to as a 'natural' society, and the first society. Once again, Rousseau's relativism is clearly in evidence, in that the family society only lasts for as long as the children are unable to fend for themselves.

¹⁹Language, p. 33

²⁰Second Discourse, pp. 144-146. This kind of image is, of course, relevant to international relations, past and present, which are said to be conducted within an international system characterised by a 'state of war', although that realistic view of international relations must be tempered by a recognition of the increasing interdependency and cooperation that also characterises the international system in modern times.

²¹Language, p. 33.

²²Second Discourse, p. 146.

²³Language, p. 36.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 38-39.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 40, 39. See also Second Discourse, p. 148. Note: 1) that mankind's reluctant social development means that the chains of dependency and reciprocal needs were taken on quite slowly at first; 2) the appearance of the same kind of industrious imagery in the Second Discourse as in the passage from Language quoted here; and 3) the wonderful imagery that Rousseau uses to such great effect in showing the tension between nature and society, or, in its historical version, between then and now, and also the fact that both good and bad are intermingled in these images.

²⁶Language, p. 44. It is easy to forget the conditional quality of so much of Rousseau's thinking on the effects, for good or ill, of mankind's evolution; like any good theorist, he is sensitive to the dangers of making dogmatic absolute statements, for all that he is so often misunderstood in this regard.

²⁷Ibid., p. 46.

²⁸Ibid., p. 41. In thus, as it were, historicising the myth of the importance of fire in the development of civilisation, Rousseau can be linked to both Sigmund Freud and Claude Lévi-Strauss in our own day; note, however, that in historicising the myth, Rousseau divests it of the Promethean quality of antiquity, and is content to consider fire simply as a means of keeping warm in cold places.

²⁹Ibid., p. 35.

³⁰Second Discourse, p. 148.

³¹Ibid., pp. 144-148.

³²Ibid., pp. 148-151.

³³Ibid., p. 151. In Claude Lévi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques (New York, 1975), pp. 390-391, the author 'is rather inclined to agree' with Rousseau's use of what we now know to be a model of the neolithic age as a model of the 'golden age'; it is particularly important, in Lévi-Strauss' view, to use the model as a critical tool.

³⁴Emile, p. 438. Ideally, the married life of Emile and Sophie will help to keep the spirit of the 'golden age' alive:

'Already it seems to be thriving around Sophie's home; together you will only complete what her worthy parents have begun.'
(Ibid.)

³⁵This dismay is, of course, at the root of the view of progress in the arts and sciences that is given in the First Discourse. The reference to Rousseau as an 'antique censor in modern dress' is from Peter Gay, The Party of Humanity (New York, 1964), p. 261, which rather nicely captures the ambiguity in Rousseau's character, or at least one of the many ambiguities, and it takes off well from La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part I, Letter 12 (O.C., II, p. 60), where St. Preux tells Julie about the Swiss, whom he calls 'antique people in modern times'.

³⁶Geneva Ms., I, 2, p. 156.

³⁷Ibid., p. 156, for a characterisation of the so-called social treaty, 'dictated by nature' as a 'pure fantasy', and the third of the Dialogues (O.C., I, p. 935), for another realistic appraisal of the chances of going 'back': 'Human nature does not regress and one can never go back to the times of innocence and equality when once one has left them.' See also note i, Second Discourse.

³⁸Language, p. 45, my stress. Certain of these festive features would, ideally, be recreated in communal life here and now, as we shall see in Chapter Five; festive life goes some way towards resolving the tension between being and appearances, especially in the notion of both seeing and being seen for what one really is.

³⁹Second Discourse, p. 419.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 150-151. The fact that this period was 'least subject to revolutions' suggests that 'nature' stopped fighting as well, if one can so speak of natural events. On the other hand, for all that human revolutions, for instance of a political character, were so far insignificant forces in human history, it is possible that Rousseau is here referring to upheavals of both a natural and a social variety; his usual use of the notion of 'revolutions' seems to view them as indicators of balance through their occurring in such a way as to bring things back to the beginning.

⁴¹Letter to Jacob Vernet, November 29th, 1760 (C.C., VII, p. 331, Second Discourse, p. 172. See also Lettre a Christophe de Beaumont (O.C., IV, p. 967).

⁴²Jacques Derrida, De La Grammatologie (Paris, 1967), p. 238.

⁴³See ibid., and Christie McDonald Vance, 'The Extravagant Shepherd, a Study of the Pastoral Vision in Rousseau's Nouvelle Héloïse', Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, CV, 1973, especially Chapter 2. For a very subtle version of the dialectic of opposites that is set in motion with the beginning of society, see Jean Starobinski, La Transparence et L'Obstacle (Paris, 1957), pp. 47ff, 347. In Starobinski's view, cause and effect becomes indistinguishable as each element in the account of mankind's social development is alternatively determined and determinant in the dialectical process. He sees Rousseau's account as combining a history of techniques with a history of morality, technique and morality again being interdependent and, in another version of the dialectic between 'transparency and opacity', civilisation and the progress of knowledge are seen as having veiled natural transparency, separated people from each other, particularised interests, destroyed all possibility of mutual confidence, and substituted an insincere commerce for the essential community of souls; everywhere, transparency, immediacy and other natural givens are destroyed; alienation and estrangement abound; and innocence is lost. We shall take up many of these themes as we proceed.

⁴⁴Second Discourse, p. 179. This distinction is really based on the more basic contradiction between being and appearance; nature is real and society is not, to put the matter most simply.

⁴⁵To begin with there was not a political problem involving any individual's attempting to exercise power over another; politics do not, therefore, have a natural autonomy in Rousseau's thinking, for all that they are the best means to ameliorate the situation of vast inequalities, and that they must be as natural as possible. See, on this, Chapter Five below. Note also that the tendency to compare personal attributes is quite natural and evolved quite naturally in society. See, on this, Chapter One above.

⁴⁶Ibid, pp. 151 et seq.

⁴⁷Language, pp. 33, 37. Civil society is agricultural, not commercial or industrial, for Rousseau, although the defining element is really the exchange system and the use of money. In Emile, p. 152, he says that 'money is the real bond of society', although he is, in that context, referring to it only as a conventional means of expressing the relative value of different things, something akin to a language that is itself non-evaluative; knowledge of money and exchange in that sense

is vital for the young Emile. Note also the recurring presence of simultaneously good and bad effects that are referred to in the quotation in the main text.

⁴⁸Second Discourse, p. 151. There is a clear element of fatalism in all of Rousseau's discussions of interdependence and reciprocal needs. He is always reluctant to admit that people might want naturally to help each other, and he tends to treat the notion of peoples' needing each other as a weakness on their part. In Emile, p. 34, he comments on young people's potential for using each other: 'But as soon as they can think of people as tools to be used, they use them to carry out their wishes and to supplement their own weakness.' On the other hand, this should be placed in the context of bringing up individuals who are able to fend for themselves as naturally as possible while living in a corrupt society; thus, when a less unnatural form of society can be found, there is almost no limit to the extent of communal interdependence, at which point Rousseau extols that interdependence with as much enthusiasm as he had previously shown for the naturally solitary life of 'nature'. At no time is the beneficial effect of solitude as a means to living virtuously completely given up, of course, and the two are combined in community life (see below, Chapter Five).

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 151

⁵⁰Emile, p. 197. Note well that Rousseau is no way denies that people are different, nor that they are not naturally equal in talents, skills and so on. He is arguing that what should be irrelevant natural inequalities are all too relevant in society and that relevant natural inequalities are all too irrelevant in society. As will be shown in the next chapter, Rousseau's equality is concerned with: (a) equality before the law; (b) equality of material condition to some natural degree; (c) equal voice in formulating, and equal subjection to, law; (d) inequalities according to natural differences in merit, fitness, suitability and experience, etc.

⁵¹Sven-Stelling-Michaud, 'Lumières et Politique', Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, XXVII, 1963, p. 1543, Emile, pp. 197-198. The interesting thing about Rousseau's answers is that he accepts the same notion of equality before the law while hoping that a natural equilibrium will somehow be created that moderates the built-in tendency to disequilibrium. Thus there is need of a massive political education programme, as well as a political economy of equality, in the community.

⁵²Emile, pp. 148-156.

⁵³Second Discourse, p. 154.

⁵⁴Louis Althusser, 'Rousseau: The Social Contract', in Politics and History (London, 1975), p. 159; the whole article, pp. 113-160, is highly relevant and will be discussed in Chapter Six below.

⁵⁵In his approach to 'development', and what we would now call technological progress, Rousseau was sometimes extremely conservative. In one fragmentary piece he writes: 'in everything that depends on human industry, one should forbid with care any machine and any invention that can shorten labour, spare manpower, and produce the same effect with less difficulty.' (Fragments Politiques, VIII, in O.C., III, p. 525). The aut-archic strain in his thinking is also evident in this comment: 'If I were the chief of one of the peoples of dark Africa, I declare that at the frontier of the country I would raise a gallows, where I would hang without reprieve the first European who dared to penetrate the country and the first citizen who tried to leave it.' (Dernière Response, O.C., III, pp. 90-91). The people of the 'less developed countries' could probably learn a lot from reading Rousseau.

⁵⁶See the letter to M. le Marquis de Mirabeau, July 26th, 1767, Letters, pp. 350-353, a letter in which he also rejects the notion of a 'legal despotism', as being more fitted to 'the people of Utopia; it is of no value for the sons of Adam.' (p. 351).

⁵⁷Second Discourse, pp. 194-195, and see p. 156. We should not forget that, while himself hoping for a harmony of interests in the community, Rousseau would also have rejected any notion that the end, e.g., an 'affluent society', was worthy, morally speaking.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 154. When Rousseau says that the division of the land 'necessarily' followed from its being cultivated he has in mind simply the view that, when an individual or a group of individuals takes the time and trouble to cultivate a piece of land, then some process of dividing the land is bound to occur, if only as a way of marking off the limits to the land that, say, I have cultivated so as not to confuse it with what the person next to me has cultivated.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 155. The contradiction between the 'real' and the 'apparent' is the basic form to which all the others conform in the end, as, e.g., in Emile, pp. 197-198, and in Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont (O.C., IV, p. 966), where the split between 'doing' and 'speaking' is seen to be based on that between 'being' and 'appearing'.

⁶⁰Second Discourse, pp. 155-156, and note the frequent references to 'in fact and in appearance', 'real' as opposed to 'factitious', etc. The fact that these evils are 'inescapable consequences of nascent inequality' adds yet another fatalistic element to the account of mankind's 'natural' fall into society.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 156-157. The concept of relative deprivation is of great importance in contemporary social policy.

⁶²Ibid., p. 157.

⁶³Louis Althusser, 'Rousseau: The Social Contract', op. cit., p. 121.

⁶⁴Second Discourse, p. 226 (Rousseau's note 'q').

⁶⁵Emile, p. 156. It is, therefore, utterly unrealistic to try to stay in the state of nature, as well as unnatural, given that nature's first law is that of self-preservation.

⁶⁶Second Discourse, p. 157.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 158. The importance of 'express and unanimous consent' in all of Rousseau's political works is absolutely critical, for example, although there is clearly an argument for including the naturally superior people in government, their rule must always be given explicit approval by the people or by the community as a whole, a point which is made very clearly in the Dedication to Geneva, in ibid., pp. 81-90. For just two examples of Rousseau's criticism of excessive inequalities, see note i, ibid., pp. 192-203, where he clearly distinguishes between 'necessities', 'luxuries' and 'superfluities'; the poor are deprived even of necessities, a point that is repeated at ibid., pp. 180-181. See also his Discours Sur La Richesse, (date uncertain, around 1755), in C. E. Vaughan, Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Cambridge, 1915), I, p. 347: 'and it is the very superfluity that the rich have that puts them in the position of being able to deprive the poor of what is necessary to them', in other words, the rich are rich because the poor are poor.

⁶⁸Second Discourse, pp. 159-160. Note Rousseau's insistence, pp. 161-168, that the political society does not start out as arbitrary in nature, or, at least, that it categorically ought not to, as that would be an offence against the basis of our humanness, our freedom. As we shall see in Chapter Six, even a community that starts out on a legitimate basis is

bound to fail in the end, so that Rousseau's fatalism can be seen to run even more deeply than if he were simply concerned to criticise arbitrary government. Note the Lockean liberal, makeshift and pragmatic approach to politics and government at first: 'Nascent government did not have a constant and regular form . . . At first society consisted only of some general conventions which all individuals pledged to observe . . . Experience had to show how weak such a constitution was.' (pp. 162-163).

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 159-160.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 177, and see all of pp. 168-181. The encroaching death of the body politic gives rise to a new state of nature, and is, in that sense at least, quite natural; there are frequent examples of the 'natural' quality of the decay, e.g., at p. 175.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 172.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 177-178. Revolution is simply a natural right, in that one must preserve himself; that is nature's first law, as Rousseau says in Emile (p. 163). In the new state of nature, nothing can be taken for granted, and everything is legitimate, if one's life is endangered.

⁷³Pierre Burgelin, La Philosophie de l'Existence de Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris, 1952), p. 200.

⁷⁴Political Economy, p. 148. Marx quotes the passage in full but inserts the phrase, 'says the capitalist', after 'I will permit you . . . ' (Capital, Moscow, n.d., I, p. 698). Rousseau is not referring, of course, to a situation wherein both bourgeois and proletarian are enslaved by the realm of capital.

⁷⁵Political Economy, pp. 146-148, and see pp. 133-134. For further criticism of what the rich take for granted and of the kind of arbitrary power that the law grants to the rich, see Emile, pp. 158, 185, 197-198, 310-320, 369, 386 and, by implication, all of 414-444, where Rousseau gives an abbreviated version of political 'right' by which Emile can judge existing societies. Rousseau is not engaged in what we would now call class analysis; he seems to believe in a natural ordering of society and is concerned that the powerful people--who are usually at the bottom of a scale of 'real' utility--can arrange things so that they are run for their benefit alone, at everyone else's expense, as we have said in note 67 above. One

thing that an unbalanced social ordering makes impossible is the natural, free love between St. Preux and Julie, to take one obvious example. In Emile, Rousseau counsels the young couple to steer well clear of the rich and powerful, 'Above all, secure yourself from annoyance on the part of the rich and great', and to hope that the rich will not want to start enclosing their land (p. 421). A comment by E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth, 1964), pp. 237-238 is particularly trenchant at this juncture, and it could certainly apply to those propensities of the rich and powerful which so aroused Rousseau's ire: 'Enclosure (when all the sophistications are allowed for) was a plain enough case of class robbery, played according to fair rules of property-owners and lawyers.' How much less 'fair' the game was in absolutist France can well be imagined, of which Rousseau was obviously well aware.

⁷⁶Second Discourse, p. 161, and see, of course, Rousseau's translation and commentary on the Abbé de St. Pierre's writings on the subject of how to secure a perpetual peace in Europe (O.C., III, pp. 563-682).

⁷⁷D'Alembert, pp. 113, 62-65.

⁷⁸I am not, of course, trying to imply that Rousseau would thus have used the language of the 'dependency' school in development theory. I am simply at pains to point out that when it comes to discussing power politics, there is little that has not been said or at least implied by Rousseau.

⁷⁹Social Contract, I, 1, p. 169. Second Discourse, p. 156. In Emile, p. 59, Rousseau says that Emile will be brought up in the country, 'far from those miserable lacqueys, the most degraded of men except their masters'.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 320.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 316. On pp. 310-320, Rousseau gives us a fine version of what the good life could be like for an individual such as himself who wanted simply to live in the country, away from all the noise and distractions of city life. His life would be simple, tasteful, pleasurable, festive, unsophisticated, unpretentious and unexploitative. He would of course possess everything, without actually having to appropriate anything (pp. 319-320), and all else, apart from 'good taste', is 'illusion, fancy and foolish pride'. (p. 320).

⁸²Emile, p. 149, in the context of a discussion of the 'real value' and 'true worth' of arts and occupations, as opp-

osed to 'imaginary value'. The same point is made in the Second Discourse, p. 175. The rich, of course, are utterly disdainful of everyone else, have no pity of anyone, and seem to think that they are going to live safely and happily ever after; they are also idlers, and, in the end, they have not a trace of communal virtue, thus, a stranger is quoted as saying that 'I am one of the rich', when he is asked to what country he belongs (Emile, p. 313). The other comments are made in ibid., pp. 158, 185. Much of the community's attention is focussed on preventing people from being idle citizens, and all of Rousseau's political works contain strictures against idleness and arguments in favour of working for the community.

⁸³Second Discourse, pp. 173-174. On politics of 'divide-and-rule', see p. 176, where appearance once again triumphs when the leaders give society 'an air of apparent concord while spreading a seed of real division'. See also Corsica, p. 281: 'The divisions of the Corsicans have ever been a trick of their masters to make them weak and dependent.'

⁸⁴Second Discourse, pp. 178-181.

⁸⁵Preface to Narcisse (O.C., II, pp. 968-969). See also First Discourse, p. 38.

⁸⁶Second Discourse, p. 174. See also First Discourse, p. 51: 'Ancient politicians incessantly talked about morals and virtue, those of our time talk only of business and money.' As we shall see in the next chapter, Rousseau's answer to these problems is couched in terms of a natural relation between the qualities mentioned in the text, and, if he were to go into details, he would 'prove that the agreement or conflict of these various forces is the surest indication of a well- or ill-constituted state.'

⁸⁷Second Discourse, p. 176.

⁸⁸Rousseau's economic theories are all concerned with that real and concrete aspect of equality, as in Political Economy, p. 152, Emile, p. 250, and Social Contract, I, 9, p. 189.

⁸⁹Second Discourse, pp. 151, 140.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 154.

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 171-172

⁹²Emile, pp. 433, 438, La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part II, Let-

ter 23 (O.C., II, pp. 280-289), Christie McDonald Vance, 'The Extravagant Shepherd', op. cit., pp. 105-108. See also D'Alembert, as well as my previous chapter.

⁹³For some of these themes, see D'Alembert, p. 117, Confessions, p. 400, Emile, pp. 418, 432.

⁹⁴D'Alembert, p. 89. In the context of a discussion of Rousseau's picture of Neuchâtelois peasant life in D'Alembert, Lucio Colletti, 'Rousseau as Critic of Civil Society', in his From Rousseau to Lenin (new York, 1972), p. 164, makes the point that, when division of labour is viewed as 'cooperation', it is 'inevitable' in any society. Exchange relations have a different status, however, being tied into the market and extrinsic valuation. We might usefully distinguish between production and consumption in a fully communalised society, and we would hope, presumably, that one's place in the production sector would not, necessarily, affect what one received in consumption goods. Rousseau must have hoped for some equivalent arrangements in his stress on real equality of condition.

⁹⁵Emile, p. 156

⁹⁶See Second Discourse, p. 163: 'Now in relations between one man and another, as the worst that can happen to one is to see himself at the discretion of the other'.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 172.

CHAPTER FIVE

'TOUT TENAIT RADICALEMENT A LA POLITIQUE.'

At the end of the preceding chapter, we found ourselves at a critical juncture in the history of civil society. Having retraced the steps taken by mankind in the evolution of society, we reached a point at which the progress of inequality left mankind with a life or death question: Is the body politic going to die? Are we going to live in freedom or in slavery? What is to be done?

In retracing the steps taken by mankind in its reluctant entry into society, we found that the history of society led in a direction that was further and further away from the state of nature and towards a life that was antithetical to a natural way of life. If a natural way of life is true, real and good, then social life is false, apparent and evil. We could equally describe the historical developments in terms of a genealogy of passion, such that whereas we used to be fully self-reliant and felt for ourselves alone, we now find ourselves completely dependent on our fellow-humans for our sense of ourselves and of what we are.

As we have emphasised at the end of the last chapter, we need, however, to be relativistic in our critique of the kind of society that has evolved from its hypothetical beginnings in the state of nature. Life in civil society is not all bad, and, if nothing else, we do develop a taste for the finer things in life. City life tends to produce an exquisite sensibility, which gives rise to compensations like love, language

and music for those who must dwell in cities. Rousseau himself was one of those city-dwellers and he makes no secret of the paradoxical situation that he found himself in as he set out to criticise a life-style that even he found had its rewards and compensations.⁽¹⁾

The compensatory aspect of life in civil society requires of us that we recognise an element of simultaneity as between bad society and good nature. Society has evolved for better and for worse; there is good in the bad and bad in the good. We must, therefore, avoid positing nature and society as concrete abstractions only, which would be an entirely undialectical position to take. For all the benefits of solitude and abundance in the state of nature, natural life could have offered only more and more of the same, and only the insufficient development of his ability to understand himself would have saved natural man from the doom that would probably befall a modern city dweller who might, for example, try to revert to life in a state of nature. Natural man is potentially capable of identifying with his fellow-creatures, which makes it philosophically untenable to treat nature and society as concrete abstractions. There is a natural society, however reluctantly Rousseau--or any of us for that matter--may admit to it.

As we have discussed in our third chapter, the key element in the society of nature is that ability to identify with one's fellows, especially one's fellow-sufferers. We might have had very few opportunities for actively identifying

with fellow-sufferers in the solitary and wandering life of the panorama of the true state of nature, but, like all our social feelings, the feeling of compassion was present in potential. It begins as an instinctual feeling about which we do not have to think at all. Like all our natural feelings it undergoes some transformation as we begin to think and to imagine. Our ability to think and our ability to imagine go hand-in-hand, each presupposes the other to a certain extent. Imagination presupposes an ability to think both about what we are and about what we are not; in other words, we can imagine both the presence of pain and the absence of pain, in ourselves as well as in others.

The history of mankind's entry into society can, therefore, be written as either the genealogy of passion or the history of perfectibility. In the latter form it is the history of our historical self-development. A simplified version of both these aspects would run like this: we are all born with sensibility and feelings, and these operate as instincts, prior to our having to think about them. Strong feelings can be characterised as passions. Imagination determines their course, for better and for worse. We use our natural ability to form images, an ability which, to begin with, is only present as a potential, and we act now to make those images a future reality. In that sense, we can presuppose a certain level of human consciousness from the very beginning. The level of sophistication and the specific contents of consciousness are clearly going to vary

throughout history, but it presumably is possible for different sets of people to share the same kinds of understandings and meanings about those things that mean something to them. From that point of view, we have also been dealing with the history of culture, in both a general and a specific sense. We must beware, of course, of inferring that the history of the overall passage from nature to culture has been one from a state of ignorance to a state of knowledge, for that would be somewhat at odds with Rousseau's moral intention in undertaking a review of the development of society. If anything, the exact reverse is the case.

If we are talking about imagination and consciousness, we are clearly referring to our overall sense of who and what we are, to our awareness of our feelings, and to our awareness of the links between our feelings, our thoughts and our actions. Through our actions we create history, and through deliberately and intentionally intervening in the received course of history, we create politics, public actions that people undertake in society with a view to governing themselves consciously. Rousseau is saying that there must have been a time when the human race did not know itself collectively, nor did any two individuals have very much by way of particular knowledge of each other. In that sense, human reasoning power was at a minimum, and the activity of politics would have had very little, if any, autonomy, if only because there would be no need of any conscious attempts at the governance of society until much

later on. Rousseau does refer to a form of natural reason that is involved in the simple business of survival, quite different from the kind of cold, calculating reason that was so much in evidence in his own day. Nonetheless, he is clearly referring to a time when humans were not much different from animals, living by instincts and feelings alone.

From the point of view of mankind's social development, the invention of property, the bête noire of the whole conjectural account that is given in the Second Discourse, is really just another metaphorical way of referring to a change in ourselves. We used to be concerned with ourselves alone, with no need to think about, and little need to feel for, others; with the invention of property we find that we have to think about other people as obstacles on the path to self-preservation. Our original indifference to other people in no way bordered on contempt, as is shown in the neatest summation of natural man's ethics: 'Savage man is not evil precisely because he does not know what it means to be good.'⁽²⁾ The invention of property is coterminous with the birth of evil. It is equivalent to the point at which our natural self-love becomes transformed or modified into social vanity. It represents the historical moment when our instinctual powers, rooted in our body, give way to our intellectual powers, rooted in our head. History was at first made in a quasi- animal fashion, as a response to instinct and feeling. We gradually humanised ourselves as we historicised ourselves and we devel-

oped the ability to reason about our feelings and our actions. The distinction between natural self-love and social vanity is intended to take account of the process whereby the balance between mind and body can sometimes be cast in such a way that the individual loses all true sense of himself. Rousseau's conception of a natural development of self would involve the transformation of self-love into vanity, but into a natural kind of vanity somewhat akin to a pride in intrinsically worthy objects, the kind of pride which could be combined with natural self-love to form the basis of a virtuous and lasting love of one's fellows in community.

No such natural development occurs in the account of mankind's social development that is given in the Second Discourse, which recounts the story of the decline and fall of social man. A certain measure of fatalism underlies the events in that account of the story, a fatalism which contains a quality of accidentally-on-purpose. The fatalistic element would seem to be most prominent in the uttering of the apocryphal words that ushered in the epoch of civil society in Rousseau's account of the dialectic of progress and decay. Those words were uttered by the first person who put up a fence around his land, and, it must be noted, who then found people 'simple enough to believe him' when he said, 'This is mine'.⁽³⁾ Simple enough words, but, as we noted above, words which were earth-shattering for the collective well-being of the human society. Enter a society characterised by scarcity

exclusion, competition, vanity, corruption and self-interest--all elements which are associated with an entirely self-centred view of life and in marked contrast to natural man's self-centred life, which did not necessarily exclude others.

The consequences for mankind of the invention of property-right have been extensively treated in the previous chapter, and we need only remind ourselves that the civil society based on the transformation of possession into property is anything but civil, in Rousseau's account. The whole story of the decay, decline and fall can very aptly be summarised in the view that civil society--usually referred to as 'society' in general--is the negation of the natural order of things. So much is society the negation of nature that at the end of the progress of inequality the basis of our humanness, our ability and freedom to live as we please, is at stake. Then it is that a community-based politics become ethically imperative as the only way of combating a situation in which appearances count for all, as in the apparently egalitarian basis of the new civil society that is used as a rationalisation for vast and real social inequalities.

The strong ones were very clever when they set up the first political society, and it is their cleverness which makes the situation so pressing. Rousseau takes great pains to point out that, at least to begin with, there would have to be a communitarian basis to the profoundly unequal society that was being set up. In other words, it was crucial to emphasise the 'we' aspect of the thing: 'Let us get together

and set up a civil society that guarantees us all the right to keep whatever we have managed to get so far.' The heroes--or more likely, the anti-heroes--of Rousseau's version probably used more elegant words when they offered a political society to the simpletons at the bottom of the natural hierarchy. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that, for better, and , more likely, for worse, there would have to be a legitimate communitarian basis for the inequality that had by then resulted and which the new laws of the civil society only served to perpetuate even further until the stage was reached at which the imminent death of the body politic seemed likely. The fact that there was in the civil society a 'vain and chimaerical equality of right' only adds insult to subsequent injury. In this, as in so many other cases, Rousseau's concern is to unmask the reality that lies behind appearances, and he is always clear and precise when engaged in social or philosophical criticism of those who are unable or unwilling to look behind appearances, as , for example, in his argument that no one had ever looked carefully for the 'true state of nature'.⁽⁴⁾

From one point of view, the story is all over bar the writing of it. If we consider the matter from a linear, historical perspective, then we can see that the human race has passed through all the tensions about which we spoke in our introduction. We began with a statement concerning the basic tension between nature and society, which, most simply,

represent good and true as opposed to evil and false, respectively. The beginning of mankind's reluctant social development set up a tension between society and history; in other words, the history of society is the history of our passage away from a naturally true life towards an ever more unnatural life. From that point of view, the society of the 'golden age' represents an attempt to abstract society from history. In stressing--although in two separate accounts--its timeless and festive quality and its balanced quality, Rousseau clearly wanted to remove the model of the 'golden age' from the overall history of decay and decline represented by mankind's social development. That is underlined even further by the fatalism with which Rousseau usually views any notion of either remaining in or attempting to reconstruct the 'golden age'. We cannot even be relied upon to love the 'golden age', which might be all that is needed for its restoration.

The tension between history and politics has, so far, been given a much less explicit treatment for the simple reason that politics have as yet not figured very prominently in this account of the progress of inequality and evil. Politics do not play a very important role in the highly concise account of the decay and death of the body politic that is developed so systematically in the Second Discourse. No sooner do we witness the setting-up of civil society, i.e., a society which is based on the rule of law and in that sense a political society, than it starts to decay and die, for the simple reason that it is presented to us as a ploy by the rich and

strong members of society. The attempt to politicise society is immediately characterised as a power play by the newly enriched members of the general society, they being most afraid that their possessions will not be safeguarded until and unless everyone's 'express and unanimous consent' to their having appropriated more than is necessary for bare subsistence is obtained.

In other words, there is, at least to begin with, a makeshift character to the polity that was set up. We did not begin with a very deliberate political intervention against the perceived course of history so far: 'Nascent government did not have a constant and regular form . . . At first society consisted only of some general conventions which all individuals pledged to observe, and regarding which the community became the guarantor for each individual.' Men lacked philosophy and experience and their initial attempts at political interventions left too much to the workings of chance; and where chance rules, so does natural necessity, such that we can easily see how civil society came to be based on the worst features of a state of nature with fewer and fewer compensations to make it all seem worth while.⁽⁵⁾

If one reason for the death of the body politic is the inegalitarian basis on which it was set up, then another and equally important one is the insufficient politicisation of the mass of the people. Therein we can see the two primary foci of Rousseauian politics, a political economy of

equality combined with an interventionist political morality designed to establish the reign of virtue, and both for the purpose of enhancing human freedom. To this we shall return in more detail below.

The inadequate politicisation of the people made it impossible for them to see the machinations of the rich in thier true light. They were, quite simply, duped into believing that the rich had everyone's interests in mind. As George Orwell said, in a very famous adage, 'All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.' Rousseau explicitly refers to the lack of philosophy and experience and to the inadequate development of natural goodness into its communitarian counterpart, civic virtue, as reasons for the continuation of a war of all against all, as well as for the beginnings of political decay represented by the people's willingness to entrust public authority to magistrates.⁽⁶⁾

The art of politics was insufficiently developed and history resumed its course. Neither was there time to educate the citizenry in the joys of participation in public life.

Put another way, if all the passions including the bad ones are in fact natural, then we can say that natural self-love had only been transformed into its antithesis, social vanity, the tendency to live unauthentically, through the medium of other people. Natural pity had not yet been transformed into humanity, a generalised love of the human race. It had certainly not been focussed into the communit-

arian ethic of virtue, combining love of one's country with pride in its achievements and a desire to outdo one's fellows in heroic, community-regarding actions. This is all another way of saying that perfectibility was not sufficiently developed, for over the whole story we see the spectre of perfectibility, the innate human quality that has been the motive force in our development, for better and for worse. If only, if only, and if only--if only we had said no to the first material surpluses and the beginnings of the easy life; if only we had said no to the first signs of interdependence; if only we had said no to the first encloser; if only we had said no to that small, perverse voice in the back of our heads that said, 'I can't be bothered going to the assembly tonight'; and so on. (7)

The problem is that human beings have certain basic tendencies like ignorance, curiosity, creativity, perversity, and stubbornness, qualities which make us who and what we are, for better and for worse. As we noted in the previous chapter, an important reason for the collapse of the first political society was the seemingly natural human tendency not to want to spend all day, every day, discussing politics and engaging in community-based politics. In other words, we tend naturally to place our own interests, feelings and needs at least on a par with, and frequently ahead of, those of our fellow-citizens. That leads us to entrust the dangerous commission of public authority to magistrates and governments;

and they inevitably abuse that trust, as we abused our ability to trust in ourselves. The tendency for private and personal interests to usurp the common and general interest is absolutely basic in this view of political life, and it makes necessary the art of politics in the first place. In Rousseau's view, there is simply a natural tendency for all bodies politic to decay and die. His metaphorical use of the term, the body politic, is very nearly allegorical at that point.

Thus we arrive at the last tension, between politics and nature, which ends with the reassertion of nature and the continuation of the most basic tension of all, between nature and society. The rudimentary attempt at intervening against the history of society ended in failure. The attempt was carried out against and within history, in other words, Rousseau envisaged no attempt at breaking out of the vicious circle comprised of the fundamental tension between nature and society. All attempts at politicising society must, in the long run, fail, and there will always be a reassertion of nature's ascendancy. The sad thing is that nature is not some abstract quality at this point but is present in every one of us in the form of our tendency to think of ourselves first. Thus, the body politic dies because the strain put on its heart, the legislative power of the sovereign people, is too great. If there is going to be a tension between the demands of the community and the demands of one's self-interest,

and if the demands of one's self-interest are likely to be more pressing in the long run, there must come a point when the tension is too great for the body politic to bear and it dies of heart failure, represented in this case by the usurpation by the executive power--the brain of the body politic, in another of Rousseau's metaphors--of the sovereign authority of the whole body. In other words, despotism rears its head, and we are back in a state of nature that is the antithesis of the pure, beginning state of peace and ignorance. This one is the fruit of excessive corruption, sophistication and cynicism, and we return once again to a life in which the most basic law is the law of the strongest, only this time there will be none of the indifference to one another that characterised life in the original state of nature.⁽⁸⁾

As we all know, all is not over, and we shall now reconsider what can be done. In his last summation of the progress of inequality, Rousseau does leave us with an alternative:

If we follow the progress of inequality in these different revolutions, we shall find that the establishment of the law and of the right of property was the first stage, the institution of the magistracy the second, and the third and last stage was the changing of legitimate into arbitrary power. So that the status of rich and poor was authorised by the first epoch, that of powerful and weak by the second, and by the third that of master and slave, which is the last degree of inequality and the limit to which all others finally lead, until new revolutions dissolve the government altogether or bring it closer to its legitimate institution.⁽⁹⁾

It should be noted that Rousseau does not say that we necessarily should attempt to reconstitute the body politic on a more

legitimate basis. One part of the art of politics that is practised by the legislator consists precisely in knowing whether and to what extent the diseased body politic can be operated on. Really decrepit bodies are often best left to die a natural, if painful, death. Rousseau himself was highly realistic on that point. In a letter to the King of Poland he said that 'With pain I must pronounce a larger and fatal truth . . . I have never seen a people, once corrupted, return to virtue.' In similar vein, he states in the third of his Dialogues that his aim is not to slow down the progress of large states and return them to a more natural life but only to arrest the progress of those states whose 'smallness and situation' had preserved them from a rapid march towards a 'perfection of society and a deterioration of the species'.⁽¹⁰⁾

We are now going to take very seriously Rousseau's statement that 'everything is rooted in politics' and ask ourselves what is meant by this, and what we might expect by way of political actions. We are going to re-open the case of the body politic and ask whether and in what ways it might all have been different. Can we prevent the death of the body politic, and, if so, for how long? We are, then, going back to reconsider the tension between history and politics with a view to seeing what can reasonably be expected from our attempts to politicise history.

It would seem that the tension between nature and

society is part and parcel of the human condition. This is especially apparent when we recall all the arguments in which Rousseau more or less reluctantly admits that society is natural and that social passions are also natural. On the other hand, we have also seen that the tension between nature and society takes on many different aspects as we review the conjectural history of mankind's socialisation. The tension has always been present throughout history but in the society of the 'golden age', for example, a degree of balance was attained which made that epoch the most durable and most stable of all. By contrast, the tension reaches a peak as we approach the time when the body politic is near death, and we find that there is a tendency for the natural forces to re-establish themselves.

If the presence of a basic tension between nature and society is one of the most important general observations made by Rousseau throughout his life-time, his observation that everything is rooted in politics is surely as important. The general notion of society as the antithesis of everything natural came to Rousseau in the semi-mystical Illumination of Vincennes in 1749, while Rousseau was on his way to see Diderot, then a prisoner in Vincennes. Rousseau wrote about that vision in his confessional letter to M. de Malesherbes in 1762, at a time when he felt the need to justify his conduct in seeking to have the Social Contract and Emile printed and published in France. Even later, when he wrote the Dialogues, he referr-

ed to that observation as a 'great principle'. The observation that 'everything is rooted in politics' came to him at an even earlier time, while he was serving as secretary to the French ambassador in Venice in 1743-1744; even if that observation was attended by much less mystical circumstances, it surely ranks as one of the most important that Rousseau made. (11)

It is clear that, for Rousseau, the only way to affect the basic tension between nature and society--a tension which, as we have said above, would seem to be part of the human condition--is through political actions. Rousseau might well have subscribed to an ancient Chinese saying that was much revived in the days of the late Mao Tse-tung, 'Put politics in command.' The Chinese did not at all mean that everyone should run around craving power; quite the reverse. They had in mind the importance of everyone's considering the morality of the actions that he undertook in the public life of the community. They meant that we should think about the consequences of our actions in ethical terms; conversely, they intended that ethical problems should be translatable into the vernacular of public actions. (12)

Politics involve active and purposive interventions by the citizens of a community to preserve and build the community; politics are profoundly ethical and moral, and, as Rousseau tells us in Emile, anyone who ignores the inseparability of politics and morals will never understand either. If

morals are mainly concerned with the individual actions of individual people, then politics are concerned with the collective actions of groups of people who together form a society. (13)

There is no denying the fact that the moral actions undertaken by individuals are political, but we do need to distinguish between politics at the individual level and politics at the collective level. In fact, it would be useful at this point to remind ourselves of the kinds of political actions that individuals can undertake, individuals who might live in a society that in no way approaches the model reconciliation of the real with the ideal that is envisaged in such works as the Social Contract.

Many of the possibilities have been discussed in the previous chapters and we shall re-state these as well as add on some new ones. In the first place, it is out of the question to try to return to the state of nature. Assuming that we are all like Rousseau, 'whose passions have forever destroyed our original simplicity', we must face the fact that society is here to stay. We can certainly expect to live in a state of more or less complete alienation in which appearance continually triumphs over reality; we can scorn and criticise the hypocrisy, domination and decrepitude of the societies in which we do live. However, we can and should obey the laws of those societies, and we might even arrive at a position of realistically accepting some aspects of life in

society and of accepting some social institutions, for example, a simple form of property and exchange, as quite natural and advantageous. We can undertake to educate both ourselves and the Emiles of this world, teaching them to live as naturally as possible while in society. We can try to set as good an example as we can in our own lives and we might learn a lot from the example of Rousseau himself. He clearly considers his own life as a case study of the problems and prospects of an individual who has to try to come to terms with himself and with the society in which he finds himself living. At a purely personal level, the point is to live as simply and as naturally as possible, trying to retain as many features of the balanced and timeless life of the 'golden age' as we can; and we might even find that our love for the 'golden age' is enough to bring about its restoration, as Rousseau intimates in Emile. Like Rousseau, we should try to involve ourselves in contemporary politics at the collective level, even if these politics are in no way ideal and even if there is a personal stake in the endeavour. Rousseau's regaining of Genevan citizenship in 1754, his attempt to return to Geneva in 1762 and after, his active interest in Genevan politics generally, and his espousal of the causes of Corsican and Polish nationalism are all examples of that kind of activity.⁽¹⁴⁾

Not only should we try to live as simply and as naturally as possible, but we should also try to set an example in our own lives of how people ought to behave. In other words,

even if we find that we are not destined for great we should try to live as virtuously as possible. The point of so carefully distinguishing between the natural principle of self-love and the social principle of vanity is a moral one, intended to give us a guide in the conduct of our lives. We can certainly do worse than follow the advice that Rousseau gives in the First Discourse, advice which is intended for the 'common men' who are destined to live 'in obscurity', not that he means anything remotely pejorative in so designating most of us. He advises us to make sure and act virtuously while leaving it to others to tell people how they should act, and in a famous passage, he exclaims:

O virtue! Sublime science of simple souls, are so many difficulties and preparations needed to know you? Are not your principles engraved in all hearts, and is it not enough in order to learn your laws to commune with oneself and listen to the voice of one's conscience in the silence of the passions? That is true philosophy, let us know how to be satisfied with it . . . (15)

Philosophically, then, the point is to practise virtue. If we are in a position to know more about virtue we can and should undertake to teach other people how to act virtuously. If we should find ourselves in positions of authority then we should undertake the 'reign of virtue'. It is in the combination of virtue, science and authority that the crux of collective politics can be seen to lie. (16)

As we have seen, collective political interventions are needed to try to arrest two basic tendencies, both of

which are natural, but one of which is also historical. The first is the natural tendency of all organic bodies to decay and die, and the second is an historic tendency to progressively greater inequality, and to the death of organic bodies politic brought about through the neglect of their members as they all go about the task of pursuing their individual interests. We can see that a politics of the human condition would have to try to combat both the overall tendency and its particular, historical manifestations, as seen in the example given in the Second Discourse, where the body politic dies more quickly than it might because of its inegalitarian basis and the insufficient politicisation of its members.

At the collective level, Rousseau's are obviously a politics of community and not a politics of power. He is not concerned with a vertical image of authority (for which we can properly read power), in which those at the bottom do little more than obey the commands of those at the top, whether or not they really want to. While being unlikely to say, for instance, that politics is an activity whereby those who were made to help each other do help each other--for no such teleological communitarianism lies at the basis of his thinking, nor does a vision of man's essence as the 'ensemble of the social relations', in Marx's phrase--Rousseau would probably subscribe to one modern, horizontal image of politics, in which friends participate in a 'common union to meet and resolve differences with a minimum of violence'.⁽¹⁷⁾ Rousseau is obviously

a democrat but he would not be interested in democracy as simply a system of government whereby the many rule the few, as opposed to vice versa. On the other hand, Rousseau is not simply an idealist, thinking little and caring less about the actual forms of government that people create with a view to ruling themselves. In fact, he considers it both undesirable and unlikely that the mass of the people would be able to rule themselves if only for the reason that their natural pursuit of their individual interests would inevitably result in a form of government much closer to anarchy than to any ideal democracy. As Rousseau says:

It is not good that he who makes the law should administer it, nor that the body of the People should have its attention diverted from general principles to particular instances. Nothing is more dangerous than the influence exerted by private interests on public affairs . . . A people that was never guilty of abusing the powers of government would certainly never abuse its own independence. A People that always governed well would stand in no need of being governed at all. If we take the term in its strict meaning, no true democracy has ever existed, nor ever will. It is against the natural order that a large number should rule and a small number be ruled . . . Were there such a thing as a nation of Gods, it would be a democracy. So perfect a form of government is not suited to mere men.⁽¹⁸⁾

On the other hand, his politics are obviously concerned with the broader ramifications of the democratic government and they are clearly intended to bring us as close to a 'nation of Gods' as mere mortals can come, which explains why he lays such enormous stress on the other aspects of political life as well as concerning himself with who does the actual ruling.

We can see that politics involve a subtle blend of

realism and idealism, principles and practice, status quo and change, optimism and pessimism. Politics involve the art of compromise, the art of bringing good sense and a realistic perspective to bear on both moralistic ideals and naturalistic fatalism. Our politics must attempt to reconcile nature and society and make it possible for people to live as naturally as possible while in society. Politics are potentially limitless and yet they confront nature as limit; some kind of balance has, therefore, to be sought. We should never be realistic or idealistic alone; we must combine elements of both in our politics. Throughout his writings, Rousseau makes it clear that political actions afford us the only way of combating some of the more unfortunate and harmful effects of our most human tendencies. In other words, if we were not what we are--or what we have become in the course of our evolutionary development--there would be no need of politics and government. In the same vein, as we noted in reference to democracy as a form of government, Rousseau knows that the same vices that make politics and government necessary also make their abuse inevitable.⁽¹⁹⁾ As theorists and practitioners of politics, therefore, we find ourselves having to operate within a fairly circumscribed area. On the other hand, as we have just noted above, there is considerable scope for manoeuvre, and, in one view, the art of politics is concerned precisely with finding the area of common agreement between competing, particular interests. If there were no competing interests,

says Rousseau, then society would work automatically and there would be no need of the art of politics at all. The 'great' art of government is said similarly to consist in the 'skilful and economic management of civil power'; governments are expected to try to create a 'mutual correspondence' between subjects and sovereign. Finally, in this context, the legislator's 'true science' involves knowing how relative we need to be in our condemnation of people's actions and knowing how to strike a balance between laws and the vices that they are intended to repress. (20)

Two other features stand out in this business of combining the real and the ideal. In the first place, we must be very careful that we do know what is real. It is one thing to accept realistic limitations on what can be done, but it is quite another to descend to despairing cynicism as one contemplates the contemporary social reality around one. That is why it is so important to penetrate beneath appearances, as Rousseau does in his philosophical and social criticism. From this it follows that, as we go about testing facts against the standard of right, more can often be done with the facts than might at first glance appear to be the case. (21) That is what Rousseau himself frequently does. For example, after a very sober and realistic assessment of the argument that there is or could be a natural and general political society of the whole human race, i.e., one which required no deliberate political intervention on our part, he says that, 'It is apparent from this that the

so-called social treaty dictated by nature is a true illusion.' We should not, however, despair, and he urges us to 'attempt to draw from the ill itself the remedy that should cure it'. If the problem is that of people's passionate pursuit of their self-interest, we should try to show them, for example, that it is in their interest to engage in some form of association with their fellows: 'Let us use new associations to correct, if possible, the defect of the general association . . . Let us show him in perfected art the reparation of the ills that the beginnings of art caused to nature.' We can learn how to reason and how to know virtue; and we can learn how to separate our real interests from our apparent interests. (22)

We find the same combination of real and ideal in all Rousseau's writings on politics, be they explicitly or implicitly concerned with political possibilities. The First Discourse combines an exposée of social hypocrisy and the deleterious effect of progress in the arts and sciences on the moral fibre of society with an exhortation to individuals to live as virtuously as they can. The Second Discourse is certainly a work of scathing social criticism, but the dedication to Geneva with which that work opens contains an idealised picture of what community life could be like. The Discourse on Political Economy combines criticism of existing practices with sound advice to rulers who are concerned to create as just and durable a polity as possible. The Letter to D'Alembert

contains a sustained critique of the portrayal of love in the theatre in particular, and the workings of passion in the society in general; and yet there is ample evidence in that work of the worthy and virtuous place of passions in the community. Rousseau himself said that, in contrast to the 'virtuous indignation' that had prompted his earlier works, the Letter to D'Alembert was inspired by 'warmth and gentleness of spirit'.⁽²³⁾ La Nouvelle Héloïse contains a similar blend of criticism of the social life of large cities and a picture of what life could be like in a small, rural community like Clarens. Emile is concerned with the upbringing of a natural man who must live in society and it is full of criticism of the abuses and contradictions of the social system; but it concluded with a brief statement of the criteria that Emile should use in judging existing polities and in searching for the ideal society. Finally, such obviously political writings as the Social Contract, the Letters from the Mountain, the Constitutional Project for Corsica, and the Government of Poland all attempt to reconcile theory with practice as well as possible.

As we noted above, there is a remarkable passage in the Confessions in which Rousseau comments that 'everything is rooted in politics'. The passage is worth quoting at length:

I had seen that everything is rooted in politics and that, whatever might be attempted, no people would ever be other than the nature of their government made them. So the great question of the best possible government seemed to me to reduce itself to this: 'What is the nature of the government best fitted to create the

most virtuous, the most enlightened and, in fact, the best people, taking the word "best" in its highest sense?' I believed that I saw a close relationship between that question and another, very nearly though not quite the same: 'What is the government which by its nature always adheres closest to the law?' From this one comes to: 'What is the law?' and to a chain of questions of that magnitude.(24)

In other words, the basis of a social contract community is that government must be legitimate. In order for government to be legitimate its laws must be as completely expressive of the general will of the sovereign people as possible. In principle, legitimate government is simply lawful government. Rousseau means more by government, however, than we are accustomed to mean. He is less concerned with the institutional form of government, e.g., whether it be democratic, aristocratic or monarchical in form, than with the nature of government. In effect, he wants government to be of the people, for the people, and by the people, to the greatest extent possible. It must, in principle, be republican: 'By a Republic, then, I understand any State ruled by law, quite irrespective of the form its government may take. For only then is public interest in the ascendant, only then does the word Commonwealth have any meaning. All legitimate government is, of its nature, republican.'(25)

When Rousseau begins to undertake the reconciliation of real and ideal that is envisaged in the Social Contract, the problem is well stated at the outset: 'It is my wish to inquire whether it be possible, within the civil order, to discover a legitimate and stable basis of Government. This I shall do by

taking human beings as they are and laws as they might be.' In other words, can we intervene within and against history and so blend the real and the ideal as to make possible the good life--in both a practical and an ethical life--here and now? Can we, in fact, create a legitimate and stable republican government?⁽²⁶⁾

As we have seen above, Rousseau wanted to find the nature of the government that was most fitted to create the best people, but we can see at once that there are two elements in the relationship, people and government, and that there is a dynamic relationship between them. This is well seen in the Constitutional Project for Corsica, where he says that we could either set up a government that suited a people or change a people to suit a certain type of government; he says that the former is expedient while the latter is desirable.⁽²⁷⁾ Thus, there is a dynamic principle at work here, between people as they are and people as they become in the course of engaging in community politics.

'Human beings as they are' could have either or both of two meanings. It could either refer to human beings as they really are in their most natural way of being or it could refer to human beings as they have developed in the course of their social development. There is a considerable difference between these two possibilities. If it is the latter sense that is meant, our human beings are people who have learned reluctantly and badly how to live in society;

they are people who have found themselves in the dire predicament of being unable any longer to live as freely as they did in the state of nature. They can no longer muster the power necessary to enable them to overcome the obstacles to their living as freely as they want to. If we are able to take human beings as they are as referring to how humans really and most naturally are, there is certainly less of a problem. Our task then consists in going as far back in hypothetical time as necessary, and, as it were, beginning all over again. (28)

It would seem that we can combine both senses of the phrase. We can hardly go all the way back to mankind's original condition for there would then be no need for, nor possibility of, creating a natural political society. Given that the basic problem is a moral one, that of regulating our conduct in such a way that we do least harm to others, it is clear that there would in fact be no problem in the broad and spacious panorama of the true state of nature. It is only as mankind enters the relatively cramped and disorderly way of life of civil society that the problem of infringements on each other's right to live freely arises. As we have noted above, the need for moral and orderly politics arises only from the historic problem of abuses and vices, and from the tendency of natural self-love to develop into the more restrictive principle of social vanity.

Realistically speaking, we must go as far back as we can while attempting to build on the good things that have

transpired, such as the development of people's imaginative, thinking, communicative and creative powers. The point is to make use of the reasoning ability that we do have and to combine it with our consciousness of what is right and wrong, i.e., with our consciences, rooted in our hearts, and all with a view to enhancing human freedom and making possible once again a life of freedom and happiness. The difference this time is that human art is required to create the atmospheric conditions that make possible everyone's attaining the maximum freedom and the best possible outlets for his potential. In all of this we can see a blend of the natural and the social, a blend of a belief in the individual's capacity for solitude and self-sufficiency with a recognition of the very real benefits that have accrued to the human race as a result of its social development. If we used to live by instinct and feeling alone and if we find that human development has led to an exacerbation of both our bad passions and our selfish, if seemingly rational, pursuit of our perceived interest, then the point is somehow to blend our passionate feelings and our calculated self-interest. We must somehow be made aware that it is in our interest to feel for our fellow-citizens. Not only that, but we shall hopefully find that our own feelings and our recognition of mutual and common interests will combine in a truly virtuous and passionate love of our fellow-citizens. We can, therefore, see that there is always going to be a blend of feelings and interests in the community.

We shall all be influenced by our reasoning powers, rooted in our heads, and our feelings of compassion and humanity, rooted in our hearts. It is from the union of these that truly virtuous community-oriented actions will result.⁽²⁹⁾

The second component in our task is the notion of 'laws as they might be'. Laws as they might be are simply those that come closest to creating a stable and durable ordering of human societies while at the same time doing as little injury as possible to individuals' conceptions of what they want to do. The problem is everywhere and always the same, how to reap all the benefits of community and yet be as free as one ever was to do the things that one wants to do. If we can solve that age-old problem then we shall have found a way of reconciling freedom and happiness. It is well seen that the problem of the grounds of political obligation is a central problem of political philosophy.⁽³⁰⁾

In one very clear version, the problem can be stated as follows: 'Some form of association must be found as a result of which the whole strength of the community will be enlisted for the protection of the person and property of each constituent member, in such a way that each, when united to his fellows, renders obedience to his own will, and remains as free as he was before.'⁽³¹⁾ The answer to that problem is to be found in the formation of a social contract community in which the sovereign people pass laws that are the fullest possible expression of their general will. Then and only then

will freedom and obligation be reconciled. In seeking to set up a community in which laws are what they might be, the most creative art work is necessary: 'The physical make-up of a man is the handiwork of nature: the constitution of the State is the product of art. It is not in men's power to prolong their own lives, but they can prolong the life of the State for as long as possible by devising for it the best conceivable form.'⁽³²⁾

We must work with people as they are, organic and natural, and yet we must try to fashion an artifice that is as good as it can be in the circumstances. We are not exactly creating an artificial body politic, but there is some semblance of the machine in what we are building. It is rather like a machine with a heart, in other words, a human machine, with all of the advantages and as few of the disadvantages of each as possible. The human machine must be organic and natural inasmuch as its constituent parts, and, most definitively, its heart, are human beings. The head of the body politic contains the brains of the whole operation, the executive government, and it is more the product of scientific knowledge. Continuing this version of Rousseau's corporeal analogy, we could say that industry and agriculture are the stomach of the body politic, and so on. The main task is to ensure both that the whole machine stays in good working order and that there is a stable and lasting equilibrium between the different parts of the machine. To take but one example of what can go wrong,

one of Rousseau's arguments against the establishment of a theatre in Geneva is that it might well disturb, if not destroy, the carefully balanced equilibrium that has been established between the constituent parts of the body politic.⁽³³⁾

While the machine-like body politic is composed of many parts, the whole artifact does not simply consist of this, this and this part, and no more. Rousseau's conception of the body politic is a holistic one, and we find that the whole body consists of more than just the sum of the parts. Again to take a specific example. the general will is frequently characterised as being different from, and more than, simply the quantitatively arrived at will of all.⁽³⁴⁾ The holistic properties of the body politic have obviously been responsible for the so-called totalitarian tendencies in Rousseau's thinking. We shall return to this problem again, but it is worthwhile stating that the fear of totalitarianism is bound to arise on the part of people who are accustomed to take a fragmented and piecemeal approach to reality and to politics, and who forget that there is always going to be an element of the total about society. It is clear that, in Rousseau's thinking, any totalitarian tendencies would have to be combated by the strong working of the heart of the body politic, the sovereign people. If the sovereign people do not resist such tendencies, either the body politic is already past the point of no return or the people themselves simply do want what it seems to the observer that they ought not to want. In other words, is it possible that the people who live

in communist countries might actually prefer communism?

As with all political arguments, there is an unsatisfactory and unresolved quality to the previous argument. A more complete resolution requires an act of faith, a great deal of hypothetical reasoning, lucid argumentation, and a lot of political work on our part. And that is precisely what Rousseau offers, as well as a very important yardstick by which to judge our efforts, namely, whether or not our efforts enhance the prospects for human freedom. The social contract community is like a very large rationalistic hypothesis. It is like an a priori category, arrived at by deduction; on the other hand, when we come to consider the practical politics of legislating equality and educating the people in the practice of virtue, we shall see that much of the reasoning is derived from induction.

Rousseau actually refers to the creation of the body politic as a 'primal act',⁽³⁵⁾ and yet it is more of a hypothetical act. He presumes that a people, in order to call itself a people, must at some hypothetical point have formed itself into a people, as such.⁽³⁶⁾ The point is to find a principle, a starting-point for our discussion. Not just any starting-point will do, however. In the first place, we cannot simply assume that there is a natural political society. All our arguments about the society of nature and the immanence of nature in society notwithstanding, it does not follow that we can simply assume that there is a natural and general soc-

iety of the human race. There certainly is the potential for a society that is almost completely natural, and the most important element in the potential is our compassion, our ability to feel for others in their suffering. Imagination is needed to start our feelings working, however, and imagination is only developed in society with others. The vicious circle can, therefore, be broken only by a fatalistic quality, combining purpose and accident. We cannot assume that any society is natural, and the closest that one comes to a natural society is the family: 'The oldest form of society--and the only natural one--is the family.' Even then, it lasts only for as long as the children need the parents, after which the children are, as it were, free to go.⁽³⁷⁾

The second possible starting-point is the notion that force alone could create a political society, that might could make right. Here we encounter Rousseau at his most stridently moralistic as he deals with arguments that a people could, either by choice or by necessity, alienate its freedom. The crux of ethical politics is that we want to be free. It is a matter on which Rousseau is quite categorical. There is simply no question of our choosing not to be free. There is no room for the kind of perversity that has resulted in contemporary notions of the absurdity and pointlessness of life. In Rousseau's view, there is always a purpose to life, and in that sense his moral and political theory is also a religious theory. So much is it the case that there is a point to life

that we find our life is not in fact ours to do with as we see fit. We simply have no right not to live freely. We must want to be free. There is no conceivable alternative to choosing freedom, for it is implied in the very act of choosing.

When Rousseau tests facts by right, as he frequently does in his political writing,⁽³⁸⁾ he simply has no time for any theories that justify our not living in freedom. Living in servitude is 'contrary to good sense'; it is 'inconsistent'; it is degrading one's nature and offending against the author of one's being; and it is contrary to nature and reason. In effect, freedom forms the essence of our being, and the God-given purpose of our lives is to live freely, such that we just have no right to give freedom up:

When a man renounces his liberty he renounces his essential manhood, his rights, and even his duty as a human being. There is no compensation for such renunciation. It is incompatible with man's nature, and to deprive him of his free will is to deprive his actions of all moral sanction.⁽³⁹⁾

These views are all incorporated into the opening chapters of the Social Contract, and Rousseau's argument against either a voluntary or compulsory renunciation of one's freedom to a master repeatedly leads him to seek a human source of the basic convention by which a political society was founded:

But the social order is a sacred right which serves as a foundation for all other rights. This right, however, since it does not come by nature, must have been built upon convention . . . Since no man has natural authority over his fellows, and since Might can produce no Right, the only foundation left for legitimate

authority in human societies is Agreement.⁽⁴⁰⁾

A perfect example of what Rousseau does mean is his argument that the institution of a practice like majority-rule must have required the unanimous consent of everyone involved at least once. There must have been a moment, even if only theorétical, when everyone said, 'Let us abide by a decision of the majority.' The concern here is less with the empirical reality of absolutely despotic governments than with the notion of unanimity as a starting-point, a principle, with as much observance in practice as necessary expediency allows. The more important the matter under discussion, the closer to unanimity should the vote be.⁽⁴¹⁾

It is, therefore, essential that there be complete unanimity in agreeing to the social contract in the first place; that is inherent in the nature of that contract:

'There is only one law which, by its very nature, demands unanimous consent, and that is the social pact.'⁽⁴²⁾ There is nothing to stop individuals from not consenting to it, but those people are simply excluded thereby from being party to the social contract. The social contract is the first and most basic expression of the general will of the people. Clearly, then, it must be as simple and general as possible, and it must speak to everyone's sense of where his interest lies. The hypothetical quality of the contract is well seen in this passage: 'Even though they [the clauses] may never have been formally enunciated, they must be everywhere the

same, and everywhere tacitly admitted and recognised.' In the last analysis, the contract simply entails 'the complete alienation by each associate member of all his rights'. Only in this way will each and every individual have an interest in preserving the community, as well as feeling that everyone is affected equally.⁽⁴³⁾

While the state is 'the master of all its members' goods', we also find that there is a potential limit to the community's power, and that 'what each man alienates of power, property and liberty is only so much as concerns the well-being of the community.'⁽⁴⁴⁾ At first reading, this might seem to contradict the previous argument that each one alienates all his rights. In fact, this is not necessarily so. Hypothetically speaking, the individuals must alienate everything, but only so far as the well-being of the community is concerned. Furthermore, 'it must be admitted that the sovereign alone can decide how much that is.'⁽⁴⁵⁾ If there is to be only one clause to the social contract then it must require the complete alienation of all one's rights, for how else could the community function when it became necessary, for example, to raise money for the common defence? The hypothetical character of the argument needs to be borne carefully in mind at this point, as does the possibility of a tension between the community as a whole and individual members within.

If any one individual or group of individuals felt that such God-given rights as freedom were being infringed upon,

there would then be a major political problem that it is the business of community politics to try to resolve as amicably as possible, using persuasion wherever possible and force where absolutely necessary. In the first place, then, it is incumbent on us to try to persuade the potential dissenters that the community really does protect and further the interests of its members, and Rousseau goes to great lengths to show that it does. As we indicated earlier in the chapter, the art of politics is premised on the fact that individuals do have particular interests and it seeks to find the area of common agreement between them. We find, therefore, that the contract is continually justified in terms of its best meeting the particular needs of the participating members. Rousseau says that it is 'human nature' for each person to have a preference for his own interests and, in typically realistic vein, he argues that this is precisely what gives such force to the general will. By the contract we gain the 'exact equivalent' of what we lose, as well as the power to conserve what we have; we lose natural liberty and the right of exclusion that is entailed by property; in another place, it is even said that the individual makes a 'profitable bargain'.⁽⁴⁶⁾

While it is true that the object of such scathing criticism in the Second Discourse, private property, is now being accepted--even glorified, in some contexts--as the basis and justification for the community, there is, in principle, nothing to suggest that a group of people might not join together

to protect the property that they hold in common. Nor is there anything to prevent the community from socialising its members' property, provided that it be done on a universal basis, with no exceptions: 'Thus the sovereign has no right to destroy the property of one or many; but he may lawfully take possession of the property of all.' The point is that, a priori, the community must take precedence over the individual, but the community being composed of those same individuals in their capacity as sovereign people, community politics would obviously be centred on the need to make the most just and reasonable decision.⁽⁴⁷⁾

The social contract community does more than just provide the opportunity for profitable bargains and the protection of property. It lays the basis for a complete change in the quality of people's lives. Given, as we have discussed above, that the prime criterion is always human freedom, the social contract does no less than make it possible for everyone to reconcile freedom and obligation. We have to make one fundamental premise, that we do want to be free, and that we prefer to make free, rational choices than to be the slaves of our surging passions. Once that premise is accepted, we have nothing to lose. Instead of the insecurity of the state of nature, the preservation of our person and property is guaranteed and we are free to enjoy the fruits thereof. Instead of being subject to the workings of chance in the form of naturally stronger or more ingenious individuals who can ride rough-shod over

our carefully planned lives, we are compensated in the civil state for our natural disadvantages. We enjoy all the privileges of being equal with everyone else in the eyes of the law. There is also a moral side to all of this, as we now find ourselves in a position to distinguish right from wrong. Legal equality is also moral equality as we all begin to think about what we ought to do in order to make the community a better one. We begin to undergo a change as a result of entering the community, for our selfish appetites are brought under control. We begin, therefore, to enjoy moral freedom, the freedom to obey the laws laid down by society and that we know to be the best laws possible. We can see that 'human beings as they are' would begin to undergo a transformation from the moment they entered the new civil society, and Rousseau positively eulogises the possibilities that are inherent in living in a society that is subject to the rule of law:

The passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces a truly remarkable change in the individual. It substitutes justice for instinct in his behaviour, and gives to his actions a moral basis which formerly was lacking. Only when the voice of duty replaces physical impulse and the craving of appetite does the man who, till then, was concerned solely with himself, realise that he is under compulsion to obey quite different principles, and that he must now consult his reason and not merely respond to the promptings of desire . . . By dint of being exercised, his faculties will develop, his ideas take on a wider scope, his sentiments become ennobled, and his whole soul be so elevated, that, but for the fact that the misuse of the new conditions still, at times, degrades him to a point below that from which he has emerged, he would unceasingly bless the day which freed him forever from his ancient state, and turned him from a limited and stupid animal into an intelligent being and a Man.⁽⁴⁸⁾

One way of justifying the complete alienation by each participant of all his rights is simply to point out the very real advantages that accrue to him for so doing. The advantages are not simply material, however, as we have just seen. Were they only that, then an individual would have a sound instrumental reason for entering a social contract community, but there might be nothing inherently good about the community itself, nor about the individual's motivation in entering it. If natural man has no idea of an intention to do either good or evil to his fellow man, then Rousseau is saying that the social contract community gives us the opportunity to act intentionally. It enables us to do the right thing for the right reasons. Two premises are involved here, first, that we can know what is the right thing to do, and second, that we do want to do the right thing if we can find out what it is. Those two premises are supported by the fundamental premise, that we do want to be free, including, in this case, being free from the persistent demands of our more base instincts; in other words, that we want to live virtuously, in accordance with the criteria of our consciences, made known to us through reason.

As we can see, there is a great deal of rationalist faith to this argument. There is a faith in the individual's ability to reason and to practise virtue, but there is also a faith in the ability of a sovereign people to know best and to choose to do the right thing where there is a choice and where it is adequately informed about both possibilities. This all-

ows us to re-state the hypothesis. If there is some matter of common concern that is being considered by the citizens in their capacity as sovereign people; if all the members of the community who want to do so take part in deliberations; if they all get a chance to air their views and to make their protests; if they consider the common interest ahead of their particular interests; if they know how to act virtuously; if they are not disturbed by large groups of people who claim to be able to represent their interests for them in the public arena, or by governments that claim to be able to do their work more efficiently than they themselves can; if they think only of the community when they vote; then what results from this expression of the general will of the sovereign can reasonably be called a law. (49)

It would be incumbent on everyone in the community to obey the law, on pain of being punished. That is simply entailed by membership in the community. As Rousseau says, 'Who wills the end wills also the means . . . ' (50) The end is safety and stability; the means are persuasion where possible, violence where necessary, and then only the most economical use of violence in the circumstances. While this argument again raises the spectre of the whole community ganging up on certain individuals or groups of individuals, there is nothing to be done except to remember that means and ends are dialectically related and that part of the autonomy of politics consists precisely in having to make undesirable choices, in other words, in having to choose between the lesser of two

evils. Rousseau's argument that it might be necessary to 'compel him to be free' should come as no surprise in the light of all that we have been saying about moral freedom and the nature of law. When it is placed in context, it is hardly the 'perverse' or 'obscure' argument that it is sometimes thought to be:

In order, then, that the social compact may not be a vain formula, it must contain, though unexpressed, the single undertaking which alone can give force to the whole, namely, that whoever shall refuse to obey the general will must be constrained by the whole body of his fellow-citizens to do so: which is no more than to say that it may be necessary to compel a man to be free--freedom being that condition which, by giving each citizen to his country, guarantees him from all personal dependence and is the foundation upon which the whole political machine rests, and supplies the power which works it. (51)

There is something slightly reified about the body politic at this point, but that is precisely what we are looking for, given that politics do not, in this view, have any natural autonomy, per se, and that we want to safeguard ourselves against the harmful effects of other people's pursuit of their personal interests; in other words, our interventions are as artificial as necessary and as natural as possible, with a view to preserving as much of the independence of the state of nature as we can. We do have another element to work with now, the new moral qualities of the citizens, the hypothetical aspects of which come to the fore in Rousseau's discussions of what, precisely, the general will is.

Once again, there is a hypothetical quality to the

general will, as we are, after all, looking at laws as they might be, with the principle of the thing foremost in our minds. In the unpublished version of the Social Contract, he asks why people might want to enter a social contract community:

This whole dispute about the social compact seems to me to come down to one very simple question. What can have engaged men to join together voluntarily into a social body if not their common utility? The common utility is, therefore, the foundation of civil society. Given this, how are legitimate States to be distinguished from forced, unauthorised groupings, if not by considering the object or end of each? If the form of the society tends towards the common good, it follows the spirit of its institution; if it envisages only the interest of the leaders, it is illegitimate by right of reason and humanity.(52)

Once again, we find a combination of the real--their 'common utility' is what leads people voluntarily to enter a social body--with the ideal--that the society ought to conform to the common good. Rousseau does not tell us how, precisely, we are to tell whether the society is being run for the common good, and we can thus see the hypothetical and post facto quality in the whole argument. We can only know after the fact whether or not the chief of a society is pursuing his own interest alone, and by then it is usually too late. On the other hand, the practical aspects of life in the community would hopefully encourage citizens to be eternally on their guard against tyranny in all its guises.

In the Discourse on Political Economy, there is a similar hypothetical quality to the discussion of the general

will:

The body politic, therefore, is also a corporate being possessed of a will; and this general will, which tends always to the preservation and welfare of the whole and of every part, and is the source of the laws, constitutes for all the members of the State, in their relations to one another and to it, the rule of what is just or unjust . . . (53)

In this passage, he simply assumes that the general will tends to the welfare and preservation of the whole. As he says in the Social Contract, the general will tends always to equality and particular wills to privilege. These are both hypothetical statements, and necessary implications of the notion of the general will, the proof or disproof of which can only be found in the existing practices of actual societies. Even then, however, we can still say, with Rousseau, that if, for example, the community embarked on what turned out to be an unjust war, then appearances had triumphed, or that their real interests lay in the direction of one policy when subsequent investigation and experience revealed that the contrary was the case. Rousseau himself simply says that the people could never enter an unjust war, unless it is 'seduced by private interests', that the general will is 'always for the common good', and ultimately that, in order to follow the general will and adopt the most equitable policy, rulers need only 'act justly, to be certain of following the general will'. (54)

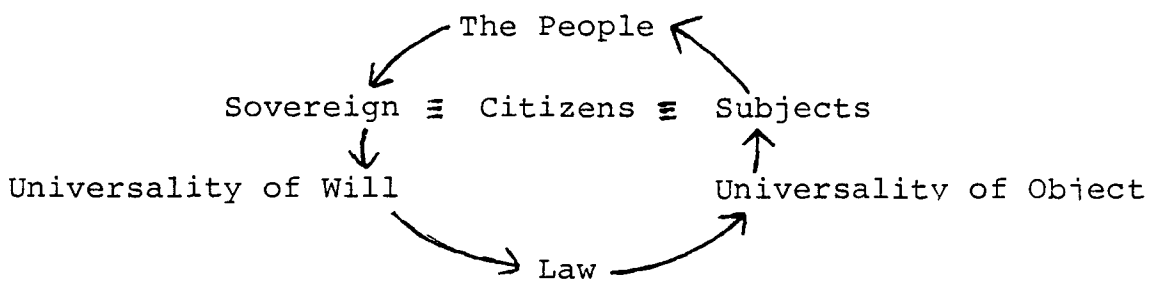
As with all rationalist theories of politics that have a very strong moral basis to them, there is a lot of faith and hope in all of this. Rousseau says that it is neither necessary

nor desirable for the whole people to be gathered together every time the government is wondering what to do or wondering where the general interest lies. It is impractical to gather the whole people together at frequent intervals and it may in fact be a bad thing to do, given that the people might well have difficulty themselves in knowing where their general interest lies; thus, it is enough to entrust such policy decisions to the just and equitable people who, hopefully, form the government, bearing in mind that the whole people is sovereign.⁽⁵⁵⁾ On the other hand, the fact that the people are willing to assemble frequently and publicly is an indication of the health of the body politic; in the Government of Poland Rousseau advocates frequent diets and a form of delegate democracy.⁽⁵⁶⁾ A modern version of what Rousseau is talking about would be an argument about whether it was a good thing to have electronic referenda, with everybody recording his votes on many different matters by telephone. Rousseau would obviously much prefer that people gather together for such deliberative decisions, as they would then see and be seen. The art of politics is concerned with creating visible agreement and concurrence between the different parts of the body politic, and we can also see why it is so important that individuals know how to act virtuously, and how to 'generalise their ideas', i.e., how to reason. This is well seen in this definition of the general will, as it affects each individual citizen: 'No one, indeed, will disagree with the view that the general will

is, in each individual, a pure act of the understanding which reasons, when the passions are silent, about what a man can ask of his fellows and what his fellows have the right to ask of him.' The importance of such natural attributes as solitude and calmness of passions, and of such social attributes as the ability to engage in rational discourse, is very well seen in that passage. (57)

We can begin to sum up this consideration of laws as they might be by considering what, exactly, laws are. In Rousseau's words, 'Laws are nothing but the authentic acts of the general will.' The body politic's chief power of expression is through legislative enactments of its heart, the sovereign people. Laws give public and solemn expression to the wishes of the sovereign people on some matter of common concern. Laws combine universality of will with universality of object and are made by people who have a double relation to them, as sovereign legislators and as willing subjects. (58)

This can be illustrated schematically in this way:



The rule of law is of enormous importance in the social contract community. A community that has the utmost re-

spect for the rule of law will be as natural as it can be given that the rule of law comes closest to recreating the necessary dependence on things rather than on people, which (59) was a feature of life in the state of nature. Rousseau waxes positively lyrical about the law in general and his eloquence reaches its greatest heights in the Discourse on Political Economy. He asks a series of fascinating questions that raise all sorts of apparent difficulties as far as reconciling freedom and obligation is concerned. How can public needs be met without giving up private property? How can anyone's liberty be preserved without trespassing on others? How can I be constrained--as a subject--and yet be free? How can the properties, persons, and even the lives of the members of the community be made use of by the community without their being consulted individually about it? How can each be the more free as he loses only that part of his liberty that might hurt others? All these apparent difficulties have been removed by 'the most sublime of all human institutions', a 'divine inspiration', the law:

These wonders are the work of law. It is to law alone that men owe justice and liberty. It is this salutary organ of the will of all which establishes, in civil right, the natural equality between men. It is this celestial voice which dictates to each citizen the precepts of public reason, and teaches him to act according to the rules of his own judgment, and not to behave inconsistently with himself. It is with this voice alone that political rulers should speak when they command; for no sooner does one man, setting aside the law, claim to subject another to his private will, than he departs from the state of civil society, and confronts him face to face in the pure state of nature, in

which obedience is prescribed solely by necessity.⁽⁶⁰⁾

Once again, we can see the combination of natural and social that is made possible through the workings of law. Natural equality is preserved but it is combined with all the virtues of living in a society that is the product of the workings of human reasoning ability. If one of the problems in the worst form of civil society is that one's being is fragmented and that there is no coherence or consistency as between one's inner, private self and one's outer, public and masked self, then the rule of law gives us such fine guides as to how we ought to behave in society that there is no longer any inconsistency between these two aspects of being who one is. In that sense, life is going to be much more authentic than hitherto, to which it is an added bonus that we, ourselves, are authors of the laws by which we live.

It is well seen that law is the 'essence of the State', as Rousseau remarks in the Second Discourse, and that the first of all laws must be to love the law. The more we love the law, the longer the law will stay in force, the more venerable particular laws become, and the more worthy life in the community will be. Naturally, no one should be exempt from the law and the strictest integrity should be applied to all, rich and poor alike, when laws are being enforced. As far as Rousseau is concerned, the fewer laws there are the better for all concerned, as, in thoroughly realistic vein, he says that the more laws are multiplied, the more officials needed to enforce them,

and the more officials there are, the more corruption there will be. Apart from anything else, there would then be need of more civil servants and administrators, who are likely to usurp the task of ruling from the people: 'Order is good, but liberty is better.' One sure sign of a well-run state is the small number of punishments that are handed down; conversely, a sure sign of the decay of the body politic and the degenerate state of the powers that be is the number and severity of the punishments, punishments which are invented by 'little minds to substitute terror for that respect which they have no means of obtaining'. A more concise summary of police-state terror tactics--involving the substitution of force for legitimacy--could hardly be found anywhere. (61)

We cannot and should not take the rule of law for granted. Rousseau was obviously no stranger to the arbitrary and whimsical nature of the legal system in France and elsewhere. His works are full of trenchant criticism of existing legal and political practices, e.g., the rights enjoyed by the rich when it comes to evading punishment or avoiding taxation, as well as the difficulty that the poor experience when they try to seek redress for very real injuries that they have suffered at the hands of the rich. In his famous letter to the Marquis de Mirabeau in 1767, Rousseau likens the problem of putting laws over men to 'squaring the circle in geometry'. The problem of tyranny and corruption is an ever-present one and it is enough to make him shudder just to think about it.

In that letter, Rousseau wonders if there really is a viable middle ground between 'the most austere democracy', i.e., a joyless and stern community in which everyone is busy keeping an eye on everyone else, and 'the most perfect Hobbism', i.e., a situation where anarchy and lawlessness prevail in a war of all against all, a war characterised by such a clash of private, vested interests as to make unlikely that there will ever be a genuine expression of the genral will of the people.⁽⁶²⁾

As with governments, the real problem with law is that the vices which make laws necessary also make their abuse inevitable. In the long run, our only hope for an orderly and stable life lies in subjecting ourselves voluntarily to the rule of law, but it is always the case that abuses will arise which will threaten the viability of the body politic as, 'in general the laws are everywhere insufficient to repress the vices which arise out of the nature of things.'⁽⁶³⁾ There are two basic problems with laws. First of all, notwithstanding the obvious benefits of living in a community which is governed by the rule of law, laws by themselves are unable to change human nature. Laws contain human passions but they do not change them.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Secondly, the people might not be in a position to know where the public good lies, for all that they always desire it. The people need guidance if they are to avoid being seduced by sectional interests. In order, therefore, to forge a link between the way people are at their worst and their most naive and the way people need to be to

live in a just and durable polity, another hypothetical element is needed. Rousseau finds this element in the person of the legislator.

The legislator is like a human deus ex machina, a hypothetical element that is introduced from outside the human quality of the polity for the purpose of breaking the vicious circle which is entailed by the inability of laws, in themselves, to change people, and the inability of the people, by themselves, to know what is best for them:

In order to discover what social regulations are best suited to nations, there is needed a superior intelligence which can survey all the passions of mankind, though itself exposed to none: an intelligence having no contact with our nature, yet knowing it to the full: an intelligence, the well-being of which is independent of our own, yet willing to be concerned with it: which, finally, viewing the long perspectives of time, and preparing for itself a day of glory as yet far distant, will labour in one century to reap its reward in another. In short, only Gods can give laws to men.⁽⁶⁵⁾

In one version of his task, the legislator has to undertake nothing less than to change, if not also to mutilate, human nature:

Whoso would undertake to give institutions to a People must work with full consciousness that he has set himself to change, as it were, the very stuff of human nature: to transform each individual who, in isolation, is a complete but solitary whole, into a part of something greater than himself, from which, in a sense, he derives his life and being; to substitute a communal and moral existence for the purely physical and independent life with which we are all endowed by nature.

No wonder, then, that Rousseau makes mention of two seemingly incompatible things that have to be combined in the real person of the legislator, namely, a super-human quality and an author-

ity that has no authority. Perhaps the legislator is more of a deus ex nihilo, although we must remember, once again, that there is a hypothetical quality to the argument and that the legislator is the main link between principles and practice. (66)

Given that the citizens of the body politic need to be the same as the laws and practices of community life would hopefully make them, the legislator has to reflect the if-then quality inherent in devising the best laws now. He makes it possible for the effect to precede the cause. In other words, his own 'greatness of soul' must compensate for the present lack of the 'social spirit' which only the experience of living under good laws can bring. He must have leadership qualities without himself being a leader. He can have recourse to neither force nor authority, and he must 'lead without violence and persuade without convincing', otherwise he would become an all-powerful and an all-knowing leader, both of which qualities should, hopefully, reside within the sovereign people. To aid him in his task, the legislator can only have recourse to vision, foresight, perhaps some divine inspiration, and sufficient 'greatness of soul' as to make use of religion in the service of politics. (67)

The legislator is, however, a less hypothetical quality inasmuch as there are solid, historical examples to go by, in the persons of Moses, Lycurgus of Sparta and Numa of Rome. (68)

The legislator's authority is not as obviously charismatic as

was that of those leaders; while he obviously has about him an aura of dedication and knowledge, he has no authority, as such. He cannot actually tell the people what to do; he can only advise them as to what they ought to do. As we said, it is up to him to be fully conversant with the 'social spirit' of the people. He is like a highly expert scientific adviser, but in no way desirous of divorcing scientific and ethical issues. He gives advice about such different circumstances as history, geography, population, and the manners and morals of a people. He needs to know what the best proportion of size of administration to size of population is; what the best ratio of population to size of country is; and what the best balance between stability and change is, in other words, he needs to know about the real problem involving which existing institutions to destroy and which to preserve, given that it is nearly impossible to find 'the simplicity of nature joined with what is necessary for social organisation'.⁽⁶⁹⁾ In one view, the 'true science' of the legislator is seen as consisting in knowledge of the relation between laws and the vices that they are to suppress. In other words, just as different circumstances produce different requirements for a country's constitution, so do the laws have to be varied in different circumstances. The legislator must be realistic and relative in his advice. As Rousseau notes in the Letter to D'Alembert, it is 'less a matter of the best laws in themselves than the best of which it admits in a given situation.' For example, it

is not necessarily advisable to censor the amusements of city-dwellers because of the deleterious effect of those amusements on public morals; in fact, agreeable pleasures should be set up and encouraged, 'in order to deprive individuals of the temptation of seeking more dangerous ones.' On the other hand, small communities need quite different laws as individuals are constantly in the public eye and harmful vices would multiply rapidly. (70)

As we have said, the legislator is the first link between 'human beings as they are', in the worst sense of having just emerged from a state of nature that was more akin to a state of war, and the kind of virtuous communards who are essential if the body politic is indeed to be given a more stable and legitimate basis. The best material to work with is a young, robust and yet mature people, given that decrepit people and decayed bodies politic are perhaps best left alone: 'Most people, like most men, are tractable only in their youth. As they grow old they become incorrigible. Once customs have been established and prejudices have taken root, any attempt at reform is a vain and dangerous enterprise.' As always, a certain balance needs to be struck. For instance, in a fine simile, Rousseau likens liberty to a strong wine which can easily affect one's head and stomach rather badly. The body politic needs to be robust enough to be able to stomach freedom. Many of the elements in the balance are contained in this passage from the Social Contract, worth quoting at length:

What people, then, is the best material for laws? One which has a certain basic bond of common interests or agreed conventions, but has not yet borne the yoke of government: whose customs and superstitions are not yet deeply rooted: which is in no fear of being overwhelmed by sudden invasion. One which, without being involved in the quarrels of its neighbours, can stand alone against each one of them, or can call in the help of one to aid it in resisting another. One in which every man has personal knowledge of his fellows and none has laid upon him a greater burden than he can bear. One which is not dependent upon other nations, nor needed by them. One which is neither rich nor poor, but self-sufficient. One, finally, which combines the solidity of an ancient people with the docility of a new one. (71)

The main purpose of practical, everyday community politics is in fact to create that kind of a people, wherever and whenever it is expedient to do so. Community politics are also intended to translate those general requirements into particular policies which affect particular people and groups of people. As we have said elsewhere, the main foci of community politics are a massive and mass politicisation programme and a political economy of equality. The two areas of action are combined rather well in the maxim that 'Every citizen should be completely independent of his neighbours, but wholly dependent on the city,' (72) In another sense, we can say that community politics are designed to come as close as possible to creating the conditions necessary for the democratic form of government, that unlikely possibility which is more applicable to a 'nation of Gods' than of mere men, wherein the many rule the few as opposed to the more normal--statistically speaking only, of course--situation of the few ruling the many. The conditions are: small state; simple way of life; large measure of equality;

and little or no luxury.⁽⁷³⁾

Rousseau makes mention of four kinds of laws that he considers to have a bearing on the life of a body politic. The fourth kind is, in his view, the 'keystone' of the arch, the 'manners, customs and, above all, opinion' of a people. This kind of law is, he says, unknown to most politicians although it is the most important of all. It can maintain a state in the spirit of its constitution, and is, in fact, the 'true foundation on which the State is built'; when all else fails, it can breathe new life into the body politic. Not surprisingly, it is an area with which 'the great legislator is unceasingly occupied in private'.⁽⁷⁴⁾ This is the area in which moral politics really come into their own. This is the area that arouses the most complete expression of the indignation in the mind of Rousseau, the moralist; it is the primary focus behind such works as the First Discourse and the Letter to D'Alembert, and it is certainly of paramount importance in the other political works. The French word for morals and manners is moeurs, meaning the customs or mores of a people, with both a sociological and a moral connotation. Very simply, we are entering the ideological superstructure of the body politic, to adopt a much more recent term, and we immediately encounter some very important difficulties. The practical problem that is caused by a people's pursuit of bad morals and manners is that it has such a harmful effect on their love of liberty. Very simply, when a communard is busy chasing a

grande dame he is unlikely to be diverted from his task by the prospect of what, to him, could well appear to be yet another drab and boring political meeting at which the same old issues are aired and the same limited results are achieved. To Rousseau the moralist, this is all most distressing, and, as he is in the habit of telling us, the pen often falls from his hand at the prospect of what goes on in the high society gatherings of the rich and powerful. What a terrible example for the rest of us to follow! (75)

Rousseau tells us in the Letter to D'Alembert that, 'I know of only three things with which the morals (manners) of a people can be acted upon: the force of laws, the empire of opinion, and the appeal of pleasure.' We have already considered the limited effect of laws as far as changing people is concerned; basically they can contain passions but they cannot change them. Similarly, the government cannot be relied on to do very much either, except at the beginning of the life of the body politic:

If the government can do much in morals (manners), it is only in its primitive institution; when once it has determined them, not only does it no longer have the power to change them without itself changing, it has great difficulty in maintaining them against the inevitable accidents which attack them and the natural inclination which corrupts them. (76)

We can certainly make an appeal to pleasure by holding as many public and festive gatherings as possible. We were told, however, that morals and manners are absolutely vital in retaining the spirit that emanates from the founding of a new community

and in rekindling that spirit when it starts to burn low. We are left, at this point, with the 'empire of opinion', and here we clearly can do something. Rousseau suggests that there is a chain reaction from the maxims of a people, through prejudices and opinions, and culminating in an effect on morals and manners. In the long run, the point is to affect maxims through education.⁽⁷⁷⁾ It follows that the most important part of the ideological apparatus of the body politic is certainly the educative process.

A situation needs to be created in which, quite simply, education and participation in the public life of the community are two sides of the same coin, as part and parcel of establishing the reign of virtue.⁽⁷⁸⁾ The educative process is a lifelong affair, stretching from the cradle to the grave. It has both formal and informal aspects. For instance, aware of the need to use religion in the service of politics, Rousseau advocates the establishment of a civil religion. The main problem with which the civil religion is intended to deal is that of the divided loyalties of the citizenry. It is very important that the citizenry do not have competing and conflicting sources of authority, such as, for example, church and state. Sovereignty must be inalienable and indivisible, or it makes a mockery of the notion. It simply will not do to have the people dependent on a spiritual authority which might, for instance, suggest that nothing can be done in this life and that one must simply accept one's suffering fate with as much

grace as one can muster. At a purely individual level, that is often what individuals like Rousseau have to do; but at the community level, something much more positive is needed if the citizenry are not to be torn between the demands of different spheres of authority. He, therefore, favours the establishment of community articles of faith: 'But there is a purely civil profession of faith, the articles of which it behoves the Sovereign to fix, not with the precision of religious dogmas, but treating them as a body of social sentiments without which no man can be either a good citizen or a faithful subject.' Interestingly enough, we can again see the rational and moral tenor of Rousseau's thought in the one negative injunction, against intolerance. In other words, one is not permitted not to tolerate anyone. There is no room for human perversity in that argument, which, from the community's point of view, is quite understandable. (79)

Education generally is simply the most important way in which the main source of problems in the polity, the divergence of particular wills from the general will, can be overcome. Education is designed to bring all the particular wills into harmony with the general will. Once again, a very important chain reaction is involved here, between education, citizens, virtue; liberty, patriotism, and so on back to education. As Rousseau says, in a series of statements:

If it is good to know how to deal with men as they are, it is much better to make them what there is need that they should be . . . Make men, therefore, if you would command men . . . It is not enough to say to the citiz-

ens, be good; they must be taught to be so . . .
 create citizens, and you have everything you need;
 without them, you will have nothing but debased slaves,
 from the rulers of the State downwards. (80)

It is no wonder that education is 'certainly the most important business of the State', and it is well seen that the magistrates in charge of education have to be very carefully chosen from among the most worthy of the citizens. Rousseau greatly disfavours any specialisation of function in the community and much prefers that individual citizens respond to the needs of the community as the occasion arises. As a compensation to fathers who might be distressed at the thought of entrusting the upbringing of their children to the community, he urges them, as citizens, to take an interest in public education. (81)

There is obviously a very modern flavour to Rousseau's advocacy of public, universal education, and to his urging parents to involve themselves in the public aspects of the education process. His concern with the morals and manners of the young people is also similar to the kind of concern that was voiced in the nineteenth century, although the concern at that time was much more the worry of the status quo powers that hordes of immoral and unruly young people might well come and take their property away from them. On the other hand, Rousseau's argument obviously recalls Plato's Republic and its advocacy of communal education. Rousseau is firmly in the tradition of attempting to create virtuous citizens, dedicated to preserving the liberty which they all enjoy. As he says in the Government of Poland: 'Here we have the most important topic: it is educat-

ion that you must count on to shape the souls of the citizens in a national pattern and so to direct their opinions, their likes and dislikes that they shall be patriotic by inclination, passionately, of necessity.'⁽⁸²⁾ Rousseau's citizens would ideally shudder at the thought of serving the community in a mercenary capacity, and they would run to enlist in the citizen army at the first sign of trouble.⁽⁸³⁾ In the Government of Poland Rousseau implies that it would suffice for the defence of Poland if the young Poles were brought up in such a way that it was inconceivable for them ever to want to be Russians; he has, however, no thoughts of armindless xenophobia, hell-bent on making the rest of the world like Poland. His is a defensive and limited nationalism, and, in the same work, he advocates the formation of a guerrilla army much like the People's Army of the Chinese Communists which was forged in the 1920's and 1930's.⁽⁸⁴⁾

The kind of education programme envisioned by Rousseau is not the work of a day. From birth until death, the focus is the same: the community, viewed both as a nurturing, loving mother and a stern, resilient father. We can at once see why a political economy of equality is so important, given that the community must be worth living in and dying for. To begin with, at least, public education should be 'negative'. The concern is less to inculcate virtues than to choke off vices as they appear or to make unlikely their very appearance. There is, however, bound to be a grey area in which we find

ourselves, at the very least, creating situations and facilitating possibilities through which virtue will be learned. There is always both a negative and a positive aspect to education. In the individual case of Emile, for example, Rousseau argues strongly in favour of the autonomy of childhood and of the need to leave children alone to savour its special delights. On the other hand, as soon as the child reaches the age of reason and is being made ready to take his place as a fully participating member of the society, he has to be told about life on the social stage, about the passions to which he is going to be subject, and about how he can control them with a view to living virtuously. In the compromised case of Emile's education, the point is to hold off for as long as possible before subjecting the individual to the vicissitudes of life in contemporary civil society. In the kind of community with which we would ideally be involving ourselves, we can be much more positive from the word go. We can set up situations that will, right from the start, introduce children to the intrinsic pleasure of being constantly in each other's eyes, accustoming them to the fact that their own sense of pride and well-being is intimately bound up with that of their future fellow-citizens. If we go about it in the right way, then there is no reason why natural love of self need develop into its restrictive form, social vanity. The only kind of vanity that need make an appearance would be the kind of vanity that would lead one to want to achieve an honour-

able place among one's fellows. From the beginning, then, Rousseau favours competition for honours among the young people; their desire to emulate their peers will make for the best and most worthy kind of community life.⁽⁸⁵⁾

On the other hand, it would be entirely unrealistic to think that people are not going to have individualised feelings and interests. For all that community-based education is intended to create a group of people who view their individuality only in relation to their fellow-citizens, and that a citizen should, ideally think of himself as but the numerator of a fraction, it is quite obvious that there will never be such a complete harmony between, say, particular wills and the general will. The point is to narrow the areas of disagreement to the greatest extent possible. Were there no differences between people then there would be no need of the art of politics at all, and we would find ourselves living in either a blissful communitarian heaven or the most drab and conformist no-man's land. As we have noted in our third chapter, Rousseau is thoroughly realistic as far as human passions and interests are concerned. He knows that the man without passions is a 'chimaera', and that such a man would certainly make a very poor citizen. He also knows that an appeal to people's sense of where their self-interest lies must be made; one cannot rely solely on altruism. The point, then, is to settle for a hierarchy of passion in which virtuous love of country is at the top, followed, presumably, by a virtuous love of a wife and family, followed

if necessary, by the love of a mistress, which is better than loving no one or nothing at all. The best feeling of all is, of course, love of country:

It is certain that the greatest miracles of virtue have been produced by patriotism: this fine and lively feeling, which gives to the force of self-love all the beauty of virtue, lends it an energy which, without disfiguring it, makes it the most heroic of all passions . . . and the love of one's country, which is a hundred times more lively and delightful than the love of a mistress, cannot be conceived except by experiencing it. (86)

Love of one's country is all the more strongly felt because of the common interests which unite one to one's fellow-citizens and because of the habits of seeing each other and participating together which develop in community. It is necessary to focus one's feelings somewhat; it would not do to pretend to be able to love the whole of humanity with the same kind of force that one reserves for the community. It might even be undesirable, given that international relations are usually in a state of war and that a common interest is usually hard to find in that situation. One should certainly be able to love one's spouse and family with a patriotic fervour akin to one's feelings for the community-at-large. Ideally, the community's womenfolk would be exemplary in their chasteness, modesty, reason, moderation, gentleness, amiability, wisdom and so on, and they would have no difficulty in setting a fine example for the men to follow; in that sense, it is quite natural that the women would in fact govern the men of the community. (87)

The lifelong educative process is designed to create

citizens who would consider it an honour to give their lives in defence of the freedom of the homeland. As Rousseau says, 'There is no great likeness between Regulus and the men of our day.'⁽⁸⁸⁾ Although the aim is to make everyone think of himself only in relation to the community, and in that sense to make each one as dependent on the city as possible, nothing like the harsh and totalitarian sense of the city's telling them what to do at every turn is intended. Rousseau simply hopes for, and believes in, a situation wherein the citizens would never think twice about what they ought to do. All of the rational, moral argumentation about freedom needs to be borne in mind at this point.

As the adage about Regulus that we have just quoted implies, a great deal would be done to recreate the conditions for the kind of life that we led in earlier times. At this point it is not quite clear whether or not Rousseau intends the model of the 'golden age' to be taken as similar to life in the great republics of Sparta and Rome. The focus of Rousseau's nostalgia is not always clear, although it is certain that the festive and balanced quality of life in the 'golden age' is certainly worthy of being emulated, and, if possible, recreated. It is more likely that Sparta and Rome (as well as the Geneva of his own day, albeit in somewhat idealised form) simply represent the only authentic and relatively modern models of a patriotic community-based politics to which Rousseau can refer. He derives some hope from the

prospects for regenerative politics in places like Corsica and Poland, which is why he was so willing to devote his time and energy to considering those country's problems. Rousseau almost takes on the role of legislator for those communities and he certainly embraces the opportunity of translating theory into practice. The Government of Poland, in particular, is like a case-study of the workings of education and love of country. (89)

There would, ideally, be a heroic and almost mythological quality to the lives that we lead, given that one of the most distressing features of modern life is its scant respect for ancient models, traditions and virtues. We are simply too busy and too engrossed in ourselves to care for any reminders of the past. It used not to be like that:

One cannot reflect on morals without delighting in the recollection of the simplicity of the earliest times. It is a lovely shore, adorned by the hands of nature alone, toward which one incessantly turns one's eyes and from which one regretfully feels oneself moving away. When innocent and virtuous men enjoyed having gods as witnesses of their actions, they lived together in the same huts; but soon becoming evil, they tired of these inconvenient spectators and relegated them to magnificent temples. Finally, they chased the gods out in order to live in the temples themselves, or at least the temples of the gods were no longer distinguishable from the houses of the citizens. (90)

The model in this image would seem to be the 'golden age, a time of relative innocence and simplicity. Now that we are fully versed in doing evil we are not content merely to undo nature's work for her but we even try to attain god-like status ourselves, clearly the height of depravity.

One aim of community life is to rediscover that simple respect for the immortal and that unpretentious heroism which characterised life in earlier and more virtuous times. This would be done by emphasising such public and open spectacles as military displays, parades, athletic competitions and public balls. In situations that called for a degree of competition for public honour, there would hopefully be such a strong desire to emulate one's fellow-citizens that a ferment of feeling and activity would result all to the good end of loving the country. As we just implied, however, it is not feverish and noisy activity which is called for. Rousseau is far from wanting the kind of hollow shell of ornamentation, glamour and display that is so visible in decadent, contemporary societies; he wants the activities themselves to provide an occasion for real ornamentation and lustre; in that sense, an intrinsic value is being sought.⁽⁹¹⁾ There is a virtuous, unself-conscious, intimate and chaste quality to the kind of festive, public participation that is favoured by Rousseau. Once again, the ideal is beautifully expressed in a long passage from the First Discourse, in which there is an obvious stress on authentic experience, good faith, and on so overcoming the split between being and appearance that communal life would involve a process of truly seeing and truly being seen:

How pleasant it would be to live among us if exterior appearance were always a reflection of the heart's disposition; if decency were virtue; if our maxims served as our rules; if true philosophy were inseparable from the title of philosopher! But so many qualities are

too rarely combined, and virtue seldom walks in such great pomp. Richness of attire may announce a wealthy man, and elegance a man of taste; the healthy, robust man is known by other signs. It is in the rustic clothes of a farmer and not beneath the gilt of a courtier that strength and vigour of the body will be found. Ornamentation is no less foreign to virtue, which is the strength and vigour of the soul. The good man is an athlete who likes to compete in the nude. He disdains all those vile ornaments which would hamper the use of his strength, most of which were invented only to hide some deformity.

Before art had moulded our manners and taught our passions to speak an affected language, our customs were rustic but natural, and differences of conduct announced at first glance those of character. Human nature, basically, was no better, but men found their security in the ease of seeing through each other, and that advantage, which we no longer appreciate, spared them many vices. (92)

So many contradictions between being and appearance would hopefully be overcome, but we should note most carefully the realistic tenor that accompanies this eulogy on earlier times, in the observation that 'Human nature, basically, was no better . . .' Earlier times were more stable, more secure, more intimate, more unselfconscious, more unpretentious, more vigorous and more virtuous. We loved the law and, therefore, needed no laws by which to be governed. What a far cry from the present! Is this image simply the product of nostalgic longing? It really is up to the members of the body politic; in that sense, human nature is what it always has been: perfectible.

There is obviously an element of idealism in all of this, idealism about the past as well as idealism about the results of an interventionist community politics for the future well-being of the body politic. There is something rather heart-warming about the model of active, participatory politics

that Rousseau gives us. Above all, he lays great stress on the importance of feeling the bonds between ourselves and our fellow-citizens. Perhaps he exaggerates somewhat regarding the extent to which transports of communal feeling can take us out of ourselves--'No, the only pure joy is public joy'--and perhaps his models are often based on the rather faulty workings of his memory, but his ideas should be taken very seriously, as they have been.⁽⁹³⁾ If nothing else, they serve as a very healthy antidote to our jaded and cynical feelings as we view the so-called progress of the human race. In that sense, Rousseau's theories are perennially timely.

In at least one practical example, Rousseau indicates just how beneficial and exciting public entertainments in places like Geneva could be. During their participation in public spectacles, the audience itself becomes a spectacle:

But what then will be the objects of these entertainments? What will be shown in them? Nothing, if you please . . . Do better yet; let the people become an entertainment to themselves; make them the actors themselves; do it so that each sees and loves himself in the others so that all will be better united.⁽⁹⁴⁾

In that sense, there would be none of the unauthenticity and alienation felt by the actor when he sells himself for money; in effect, basic divisions between, for example, subject and object, personal and public, and inner and outer could be overcome during communal manifestations of that sort.

Participation in public need not, however, be noisy. In the Social Contract Rousseau talks of the silent communication that takes place between members of the community while

they are discovering where the general will lies. 'He who actually voices the proposal does but put into words what all have felt.' Clearly, then, the public, affective and non-verbal dimension of communal life is of great importance here, and it needs to be borne in mind when considering an apparent ban on communication between individual citizens and a ban on small-scale political groupings in the community:

If the People, engaged in deliberation, were adequately informed, and if no means existed by which the citizens could communicate one with another . . . If, then, the general will is to be truly expressed, it is essential that there be no subsidiary groups in the State, and that each citizen voice his own opinion and nothing but his own opinion.

Rousseau is concerned that the general will should be the product of the citizens' engaging in a public, deliberative process as opposed to the product of private bargaining between individuals or groups of individuals. The ban on subsidiary groups applies only to those groups which might represent sectional, vested interests and which might prevent an authentic expression of the truly general will of the people.

Rousseau in no way favoured a ban on social groupings, per se, as his enthusiasm for the Genevan cercles makes clear.⁽⁹⁵⁾

From all of this public, educative process there would hopefully emerge a thoroughly natural hierarchy of authority. Rousseau was clearly at pains to criticise the outrageous inequalities in the society of his own day, inequalities which are so ridiculous that we see 'a child command an old man, an imbecile lead a wise man, and a handful of men be

glutted with superfluities while the starving multitude lacks necessities.' This situation is 'manifestly against the law of nature, in whatever manner it is defined', and Rousseau will only accept moral (i.e., social) inequality when it conforms as exactly as possible to natural inequality.⁽⁹⁶⁾ By natural inequality Rousseau means such personal qualities as strength, ingenuity, skill, wisdom and learning, and he is quite desirous and willing that there be inequalities based on those criteria, as well as assuming that as one grows older one will gain in experience and will thereby deserve to be in a position of authority. As we have noted at the beginning of this chapter, he would like to see a balance struck between the four principle areas of inequalities, inequalities of wealth, power, nobility or rank, and personal merit. The best situation is one in which the personal merits of deserving individuals are recognised in the granting of positions of nobility or rank.⁽⁹⁷⁾ The problem, of course, is to try to prevent the progress of inequality, which is described in such detail in the Second Discourse, a progress which culminates in all things being measured in the language of money, which can be used to buy all the other distinctions. Let us assume, however, that we are able to achieve a natural agreement between the four elements mentioned above, and that personal merit alone is used as a criterion for elevating individuals to positions of authority. We then begin to find ourselves with a naturally created government. It is time, therefore, to con-

sider in what, precisely, government consists.

Very simply, the formation of governments involves the recognition by a sovereign people that it cannot afford the time and energy to maintain an administration in common. Rousseau oscillates somewhat on the matter of whether administration in common, by which he usually means to refer to the democratic form of government, is a good thing or not. On the one hand, it is clearly desirable that mere humans come as close as they can to attaining the kind of God-like status which he sees as necessary if the people are to maintain the administration in common, and if the many are indeed to rule the few, as is entailed by a strict definition of democracy. He considers that the first governments emerging from the state of nature would have been democratic in form: 'Those whose fortunes or talents were less disproportionate, and who were the least removed from the state of nature, kept the supreme administration in common and formed a democracy.' He also considers that the best human material for laws is a people that has not yet borne the 'yoke of government'. On the other hand, the realist knows that the presence of private and sectional interests would likely wreak havoc with any attempt on the part of the people to govern itself. Clearly, democracy is only for small communities, and even then there would probably always be too many people. Rousseau even goes so far as to say that he would 'flee' a self-governing community, although he was probably at least partly concerned to say

'the right thing' when he wrote that. (98)

Equally clearly, though, democracy is only for communities characterised, as we noted above, by simplicity of life, a large measure of equality, little or no luxury and smallness. It is certainly not for large states like the France of Rousseau's day, for which Rousseau would recommend a monarchical form of government, which has the advantage of enabling speedy action to be undertaken when necessary given that there is less need always to be consulting the whole people. In fact, he adduces a maxim, that the larger the state, the smaller the government should be, given the ever-present danger of large administrations breeding factionalism and corruption, and the likelihood that of the three 'wills' involved, namely, individual wills, the will of the government, and the will of the people, all of which are deemed to be acting on a member of the government, the personal will is likely to carry the most weight. In other words, Rousseau sees us as split, as it were, into a private and a public side, a situation which has three facets when one is also a member of the government. (99)

The best combination of real and ideal is held to lie in an aristocratic form of government. By this, Rousseau means that the sovereign people should recognise the very real and natural merits of certain wise and experienced individuals in their midst and should be willing to raise them to the status of rulers, provided always that the rulers keep the general in-

terest of the whole people foremost in their minds: 'In a word, it is the best and most natural arrangement that can be made that the wise should govern the masses, provided that they govern them always for their good, and not selfishly.' Ever the realist, Rousseau specifies certain conditions for this generalisation. The state should neither be too small--in which case the whole people might well be capable of both making and executing the laws in a semi-automatic fashion--nor too large--in which case far-flung officials might well try to usurp sovereign authority and set up small dictatorships of their own. As always, a balance is sought, and Rousseau claims to find in aristocracy a 'spirit of moderation in the rich and of contentment in the poor.' (100)

We must never forget that the people as a whole are sovereign; it is by their choice and their choice alone that they freely submit themselves, in the first place, to the rule of law, and, in the second place, to the authority of governments which are set up to administer the laws. Rousseau is quite adamant regarding the fact that the institution of government is not a contract; it is much more a matter of expediency, but it also involves, as we have said, a recognition by those who are their equals by education and by the rights of nature and of birth, of the singular merits of certain individuals in their midst. The people use their reason to recognise the virtue of their leaders. The people voluntarily raise worthy individuals to the status of rulers precisely because

they are able to judge that those individuals would do a fine job of governing them. For all of this, magistrates ought to be profoundly grateful, and they ought always to set an example of moderation, virtue, wisdom, ability, uprightness, enlightenment, reasonableness, and so on. (101)

Government is not very important from a formal point of view, but it is very important to the on-going practices of the community. In stressing the importance of popular sovereignty, community politics, and as much administration in common as expediency allows, Rousseau's ideas come close to the anarchist ideals that were so clearly formulated in the next century. (102) At its minimum, government is simply a neutral instrumentality, an agency, set up to facilitate communication between the people considered in one guise and the same people in another guise:

What, then, is government? It is an intermediate body set up to serve as a means of communication between subjects and sovereign, and it is charged with the execution of the laws and the maintenance of liberty, both civil and political. The people commission the government to act as their delegates and to speak in their name, and it is up to the sovereign to amend the commission in any way that it sees fit. (103)

Similarly, any notion that the people's delegates in an assembly are anything more than delegates is anathema to Rousseau, with his faith in the sovereign abilities and powers of the people. In his view, the English people were simply no longer free as they had entrusted the task of expressing their wishes to representatives, who, at that, were barely accountable. As we have noted above, he advocates frequent diets and a form of

strictly accountable delegate democracy in order for the people to be well informed and closely involved. (104)

Informally, on the other hand, government has a major role to play. It is a political rather than a legitimated, institutional role, as the overall authority of government in making possible a more virtuous communal life is highly important. At least implicitly, we have referred to the role of government in trying to establish and, if possible, maintain good morals and manners in the people. If the government leaders are the kind of people that we have said they ought to be, then the example of their own conduct would do much to encourage people to act virtuously. We should also remind ourselves of the argument that rulers need only act virtuously in order to be sure of following the general will, an example of Rousseau's thinking at its most hypothetical. Ideally, though, government figures must be of the people, for the people, and by the people. There would, ideally, be a mutual love, trust and affection between the people and the rulers whom they have voluntarily chosen for themselves. As we have mentioned earlier, the prime criteria for pre-eminence are virtue, knowledge and authority, qualities possessed by Bacon, Descartes and Newton, and which made them worthy advisers to sovereigns. We end up with something like Plato's philosopher-kings, but in a much less hierarchical sense, as they have less power and less overall pre-eminent status. The important thing is not that rulers be powerful but that they

be authoritative. Anything less would result in the people's being subject to their power, contrary to the nature of sovereignty, and giving rise to situations in which the people might be forced to do something that they did not want to do, which would defeat the purpose of the whole exercise, the maintenance of the people's sovereignty. While Rousseau was quite in favour of monarchical government because of the speedy action that it can undertake, he was opposed to the idea of hereditary monarchy. On the other hand, the realist was fully aware of the prospects of corrupt and factional politics that would result from more frequently having to choose a monarch. (105)

The government is, at best, a worthy instrumentality in the business of ensuring a degree of concurrence between the general will and particular wills, in other words, between sovereign and subjects, and in the business of making sure that the people do engage in the practice of community politics. The point of Rousseauian politics is to make it highly unlikely that anyone would ever think twice about the moral desirability of participating in the public life of the community. We have seen that, under the rule of law, a man could well find himself, as it were, being compelled to be free, if, that is, he were punished for disobeying a law of which he and his fellow-citizens were the authors. That would not happen very often if the body politic is as healthy as Rousseau would like it to be. It is extremely unlikely that large numbers of people could be compelled to be free without placing the legitimacy of the laws

severely in question. In that sense, it is simply absurd to argue that there is a totalitarian tendency in Rousseau's thinking about politics. There is a very clear recognition of the limited amount of force and compulsion that a healthy community can make use of without endangering its survival, both ethically and practically. We thus find that the 'great art' of government consists in the 'skilful management of civil power', that is, in making sure that the people attach themselves to, take pride in, and pursue objects that are intrinsically worthy. The community is a worthy object of pride, and the point is to encourage a natural and communitarian form of love of self, a form which transcends the restrictive social category of vanity. (106)

One area of concern remains to be dealt with, the political economy of equality. Irrelevant inequalities must be abolished and a far greater measure of equality achieved. This has to do with deliberate political intervention into the economic system of the community with a view to lessening inequalities. In Rousseau's view, the 'fundamental law' in the community should concern itself with legislating equality. In similar vein, he writes: 'The tendency of your laws should be toward a continuous reduction of inequalities of wealth and power.' (107) However, the concern is not that we should all be treated in an identical fashion, all earn the same, eat the same, and so on; the concern is that inequalities should not be irrelevant. It is, therefore, highly important that everyone be treated equally in the administration of the legal system; that goes without

saying. We have already considered a very important example of the kind of relevant inequality that could and should be recognised, the pre-eminence of certain individuals in the community, leading to a recognition of the pre-eminence of certain individuals in the form of entrusting to them the task of forming the government. This certainly assumes an ability on our part, or on the people's part, to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant inequalities, i.e., between natural and social inequalities. It would not at all do if the people were swayed, for example, by the kind of hollow brilliance that only money can buy. As we have said, the point is to be able to distinguish the real from the apparent, the natural from the social, perhaps even the hereditary from the environmental, to borrow the terminology of a much more contemporary debate on inequality.

In effect, Rousseau would have us intervene against what he knows is a natural tendency for inequalities of skill and ingenuity to be translated into more money, more power and more freedom. We have to intervene against the free market system that enables everyone to present himself on the market to the highest bidder, and God help the inadequate, the infirm, the old, etc. Rousseau would seem to be attempting to break the vicious circle entailed by a person's expecting to receive more money simply because he has more ingenuity, more skill, or more luck. At the very least, he wants to ensure that everyone has enough before anyone has

too much. Ideally, everyone should occupy a middle position between riches and poverty. Given that the law, by definition, protects and excludes, and, therefore, favours the status quo distribution of wealth in the community, it becomes of great importance that everyone should have a real stake in the community and should have something to lose. There should be neither millionaires nor beggars, as 'life in a social community can thrive only when all its citizens have something, and none have too much.'⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ Presumably, then, there could be redistributive taxation policies in the community for the purpose of ensuring that everyone has at least a subsistence level income. Rousseau favours a proportional tax on land as it is the most natural tax with the distinct advantage of being payable in kind, thus lessening the use of money. Similarly, he would favour taxes on the consumption of luxuries; such taxes do no injury to freedom when one remembers that no one is made to consume the luxuries in the first place. There should only be low, if any, taxes on necessities; Rousseau was fully aware of the regressive nature of taxes on necessities, on which has to be spent a far higher proportion of a poor person's income.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

The political economy of equality cannot be considered in isolation from the other areas of community politics as so much of the force of policies to promote equality is moral. Rousseau's economic policies really amount to strictures against the extrinsic valuation made necessary by the

use of money. He knows that, where money is the language of human intercourse, then we can expect an exacerbation of inequalities. That is why he would like people to evaluate their contribution in real terms, not in dollars and cents terms. From the fact that a jeweller is paid more for the objects that he creates it does not necessarily follow that his activities are more valuable to the community than those of, say, a farmer. In fact, as we have considered in our previous chapter, the usual situation is that people are paid in inverse proportion to the real usefulness of what they are doing. Thus the farmer, the stonemason, the carpenter and the mill-wright would probably find themselves earning less than the jeweller, the pastry cook and the engraver.

Rousseau would have us reverse this state of affairs. He wants the community to be rich in people not in money, because people preserve freedom. People breed on and are fed from the land, and the community should, therefore, promote an agricultural way of life, with maximum self-sufficiency, little industry, commerce and foreign trade, little by way of sophisticated urban living, little ostentation, and overall as simple, intimate, robust and virtuous a life as possible. The point, then, may be less a matter of taxing people's incomes than of engaging in moral strictures about the need to slow down the rate of change, progress or decay, whichever one prefers to read. It is less a matter of taxing people's expenditures than of encouraging them not to

buy the things in the first place. The point is to 'slow down' the circulation of money. (110)

Rousseau's political economy is designed to stop anything from happening; it is based on a policy of conserving what we have got so far and of not in any way exacerbating defects by moving too fast. Basically he would have us restrict our needs, be they for material or for personal help, and we should be as completely independent as possible of our neighbours for the provision of our basic needs. That will lessen the likelihood of our having mutually exclusive personal interests. All this is in stark contrast to 'progressive' ideas of the evolution of a society in which all of people's basic, human needs would be met, and scarcity overcome. In that sense, Rousseau's economic ideas are very much pre-capitalist, although there is a very accurate perception of the workings of free market political economy. One suspects that, even if it seemed likely that more and more needs of people (for which we might sometimes feel like saying wants of people) could be met from within the productive capacity of the community, Rousseau would still have said 'no', because of his evaluation of the predictably serious and deleterious effects on the morals and manners of a people. His argument for 'conserver' economics is very much a moral one, the plea of a rather censorious commentator concerned about the moral fibre of a society. On the other hand, he is also greatly concerned that the people be, simply, happy, and that

is where the political economy of equality and the politicisation of the people have but one end: to create a free and happy citizenry. Many of the elements are combined in this passage from the Letter to D'Alembert:

Good morals (manners) depend more than is thought on each man's being satisfied in his estate . . . One must like his trade to do it well, The disposition of the State is only good and solid when, each feeling in his place, the private forces are united and co-operate for the public good instead of wasting themselves one against the other as they do in every badly constituted State. (111)

In this chapter we have done three things. We have considered the kinds of political actions that are necessary in a general sense if the case of the body politic is to remain on the agenda of the human race. We have considered the theoretical and hypothetical aspects of life in a social contract community. Finally, we have shown how theory would be translated into practice by looking at the primary concerns of Rousseauian community politics, a mass politicisation programme and a political economy of equality. Borrowing from a contemporary theoretical vocabulary, the politicisation programme is highly interventionist and future-oriented in approach, with a view to retaining as many features as possible of life in the past. We have seen that political actions are moral actions in Rousseau's scheme of things; the enormous importance of freedom as a rational and moral criterion of the efficacy of political actions was stressed, as was the importance of the on-going practice of freedom if the people are not in fact going to have to be compelled to be free. Apart from

the emphasis on freedom, one other factor is of key importance, that there would be no room in the community for idlers or loners; it is well seen that 'every useless citizen may be considered a pernicious man.'⁽¹¹²⁾ On the other hand, it is obvious that much of Rousseau's moral stricture arises from a realistic appraisal of the actual likelihood of finding the kind of human material that is needed to keep the body politic alive. In our concluding chapter, therefore, we shall re-examine the reasons for the decay and death of the body politic.

NOTESCHAPTER FIVE

¹See, for example, the Preface to Narcisse (O.C., II, p. 973).

²Second Discourse, pp. 129-130.

³Ibid., p. 141.

⁴Ibid., pp. 158-168, Emile, p. 197, Second Discourse, pp. 91-97, 102-103.

⁵Ibid., pp. 162-163.

⁶Ibid., pp. 157, 163.

⁷One of the best images of the workings of perfectibility is one we have quoted in an earlier chapter, from the Confessions, p. 69, in which Rousseau imagines God to be saying to us through our consciences that 'I have made you too feeble to climb out of the pit, because I made you strong enough not to fall in.'

⁸We shall, of course, be returning to this argument in the next chapter.

⁹Second Discourse, p. 172.

¹⁰O.C., III, p. 56, O.C., I, p. 935. Note simultaneity of 'perfection of society and a deterioration of the species.'

¹¹Letters, p. 208, O.C., I, p. 936, Confessions, pp. 376-377.

¹²There is a superb paper on this subject, written by Joseph Needham 'History and Human Values: A Chinese Perspective for World Science and Technology', Canadian Association of Asian Studies Conference, Montreal, May 1975.

¹³Emile, p. 197. The relationship between politics and ethics is also seen clearly in, e.g., D'Alembert, p. 109: 'everything which is bad in morality is also bad in politics', and in the First Discourse, p. 49: 'In politics as in ethics, it is a great evil not to do good, and every useless citizen may be

considered a pernicious man.' We can at once begin to see why the theory and practice of virtue are so important in the life of the community. Very simply, an attempt has been made to bridge the gap that is usually seen to exist between individual and the collective morality (or the lack of it).

¹⁴Second Discourse, note i, pp.201-203, Letter to Rey, May 28th, 1762 (C.G., VII, p. 255), O.C., III, p. 809, Emile p. 437. Rousseau was frequently at pains to point out that he was not concerned with urging the destruction of most of the governments of Europe; as I have cited above, at note 10, his concern is always to do what can be done where it is clear that something really can be done; it must, therefore, have been particularly distressing to him when his books were proscribed and burnt at Geneva of all places. As he says in the sixth of the Letters from the Mountain (O.C., III, p. 809): 'I therefore took your constitution, which I found to be quite fine, as a model for political institutions, and in proposing you as an example to all of Europe, far from seeking to destroy you I set forth the means of preserving your Republic.' He was referring, of course, to the Social Contract.

¹⁵First Discourse, p. 64.

¹⁶Political Economy, p. 128, First Discourse, pp. 63-64. It must always be stressed that Rousseau means nothing pejorative in so distinguishing between the 'preceptors' whose possession of virtue, science and authority places them in a superior position when compared with the rest of us. As will be made clear below, there is a form of natural authority that is highly desired by someone like Rousseau, who has such faith in the ability of a whole people to act as sovereign legislators for themselves; even if there are leaders in a community, they are always in office subject to the people's wishing to keep them there; they are accountable.

¹⁷Karl Marx, 6th Thesis on Feuerbach, Marx and Engels, Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, ed. Lewis Feuer (New York, 1950), p. 244, Robert J. Pranger, The Eclipse of Citizenship (New York, 1968), p. 89.

¹⁸Social Contract, III, 4, pp. 231-233. C.B. Macpherson, The Real World of Democracy (Toronto, 1965), is also relevant, especially in his Chapter 1, where he distinguishes between a 'broad version' of democracy, akin to a concern with community, and a 'narrow version', concerned only with democracy as a form of ruling.

¹⁹Second Discourse, pp. 172-173.

²⁰Social Contract, II, 3, p. 194, Corsica, p. 327, O.C., III, p. 808, D'Alembert, p. 66.

²¹See, for example, Second Discourse, p. 166: 'Continuing thus to test the facts by right'.

²²Geneva Ms., I, 2, pp. 159-163.

²³Confessions, p. 459. It can hardly be said that his comments on Parisian salon ladies were inspired by 'warmth and gentleness of spirit', and yet, when we remember that his criterion is, in fact, the warm and virtuous community, then the tenor of his remarks is softened somewhat. Recall the discussion at the end of the previous chapter.

²⁴Confessions, p. 377. Cf., Denis Diderot, 'Force me to keep silent on religion and government and I will have nothing more to say.' ('La Promenade du Sceptique', O.C., I, p. 184, quoted in Franco Venturi, Utopia and Reform in the Early Enlightenment (Cambridge, 1971), p. 2.

²⁵Social Contract, II, 6, p. 203. In a note to the same section, Rousseau goes on to say that republican government simply refers to government that is guided by the general will, i.e., by law, so that even a monarchy could be republican; in the final analysis, the people are sovereign and always sovereign, as will be made clear below.

²⁶Ibid., Introductory note to Book I, p. 69.

²⁷Corsica, pp. 277-278.

²⁸I do not think that we can be conclusive as regards Rousseau's intended meaning of 'human beings as they are'; I had assumed that it referred to a realistic sense of what human beings are as they confront the extreme exigencies that lead to their having to enter a social contract community. However, Ronald Grimsley, in The Philosophy of Rousseau (Oxford, 1973), pp. 95-96, takes 'human beings as they are' to refer to one's original, true being.

²⁹See, for example, Poland, p. 70, D'Alembert, pp. 117-118, Emile, pp. 196-197, 407-410.

³⁰I am thinking here of a distinction that can easily be made in utopian thinking on education, for example. A writer like B. F. Skinner creates a utopia in which the main value is that of happiness, which is achieved through predict-

ability, control and social engineering; on the other hand, a writer like Sylvia Ashton-Warner is much more concerned that her pupils be in a position to express what is deep inside them, whatever the consequences for the existing social order. Obviously, the conflict--if there has to be one--is between the 'last men' and the 'nihilists', as Nietzsche put it, i.e., between those who crave order and those who will have no order at any price.

³¹Social Contract, I, 6, p. 180.

³²Ibid., III, 11, p. 254.

³³O.C., III, p. 808, Poland, pp. 69-70, Second Discourse, p. 79, Political Economy, p. 117, Social Contract, III, 11, p. 254, D'Alembert, pp. 113-115.

³⁴Social Contract, II, 3, pp. 193-194, and II, 7, p. 206.

³⁵Ibid., II, 6, p. 201

³⁶Ibid., I, 5, p. 179.

³⁷Ibid., I, 2, p. 170.

³⁸See, for example, Second Discourse, p. 166, and Emile, pp. 421-422, where Rousseau carefully distinguishes between principles and practice; he notes that Montesquieu was the only one in 'modern' times who could have done this, but he chose to look at the existing practices only: 'Yet he who would judge wisely in matters of actual government is forced to combine the two; he must know what ought to be in order to judge what is.' (Emile, p. 422).

³⁹Second Discourse, pp. 163-168, in the context of his long argument against the notion that even presently corrupt and arbitrary government could have started that way. On the other hand, what Rousseau is saying is that they ought never to have started that way, as he knows that, in practice, they do frequently start that way, on which see Geneva Ms., I, 2, p. 162, Social Contract, III, 10, p. 251, and IV, 4, p. 113, where Rousseau makes it clear that even such heroes as Hercules and Theseus were actually brigands, and that, in the founding of Rome, 'force' preceded 'law'. On the law of nature not permitting us not to be free, see also Poland, p. 29.

⁴⁰Social Contract, I, i, p. 170, and I, 4, p. 173.

⁴¹Ibid., I, 5, p. 179; and see ibid., IV, 2, pp. 271-274 on the expediency argument. The point is that on a really vital matter, consensus would have to be reached. However, Rousseau means a true consensus, one that comes about as a result of long and hard deliberations about what is best for the community at large, not one that is more akin to a compromise bargaining position that is designed to appease competing groups of interests.

⁴²Ibid., IV, 2, p. 272.

⁴³Ibid., I, 6, p. 180.

⁴⁴Ibid., I, a, p. 186, II, 4, p. 195.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., II, 4, p. 196, I, 6, p. 181, I, i, pp. 185-186, II, 4, p. 198.

⁴⁷Political Economy contains many examples of the notion of the protection of property as the basis of the community. See also Social Contract, I, 9, p. 188, for the argument concerning communal property as prior to the social contract, Emile, p. 425 for the quotation concerning socialising property.

⁴⁸Social Contract, I, 8, p. 185. See also Ibid., I, 8, p. 186, and I, 9, p. 189. Not surprisingly, modern commentators find Rousseau's glorification of the community somewhat idealistic, for example Auguste Cornu, The Origins of Marxian Thought (Springfield, 1959), p. 9: 'Society is now thought of not as a means of oppressions, but as an organism born of spontaneous agreement between free and equal men; it is their natural milieu.'

⁴⁹Social Contract, I, 7, pp. 182-184, IV, 1 and 2, pp. 269-274.

⁵⁰Ibid., II, 5, p. 199.

⁵¹Ibid., I, 6, p. 184, John Plamenatz, 'Ce qui ne signifie autre chose sinon qu'on le forcera d'être libre', in Hobbes and Rousseau, eds. Maurice Cranston and Richard Peters (New York, 1972), says at pp. 319-320: 'Perverse or not, this phrase about being 'forced to be free' is certainly obscure.' Note the stress in Rousseau's argument on being free from 'all personal dependence', recalling the argument in Emile, p. 49.

⁵²Geneva Ms., I, 5, p. 174.

⁵³Political Economy, pp. 120-121.

⁵⁴Social Contract, II, 1, p. 190, Political Economy, pp. 122-123, 126.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 126.

⁵⁶Social Contract, III, 12, pp. 255-256, III, 15, p. 260, Poland, pp. 31-42.

⁵⁷Geneva Ms., I, 2, p. 161.

⁵⁸Social Contract, III, 12, p. 255, II, 6, pp. 201-203, Poland, p. 42, Corsica, pp. 277-278, O.C., III, pp. 807-808 (Letters from the Mountain).

⁵⁹Emile, p. 49.

⁶⁰Political Economy, pp. 125-126.

⁶¹Second Discourse, p. 170, Social Contract, II, 11, p. 255, Poland, p. 66, Second Discourse, p. 82, Political Economy, p. 125, Poland, pp. 40-41, Social Contract, II, 5, p. 201, Political Economy, pp. 124-125

⁶²Letters, pp. 351-352. Rousseau's concern with the problem of putting law over men leads him to a well-known bout of rhetorical despair: 'But the Caligulas, the Neros, the Tiberiuses? . . . My God! . . . I fling myself writhing to earth, and groan because I am a man.' In the sixth of the Letters from the Mountain (O.C., III, p. 811), he refers to those who would subject the law to the passions of men as the 'true destroyers of Governments', and that was, of course, not his intention in writing the Social Contract, the work which he was defending in those Letters.

⁶³D'Alembert, p. 122. Note the reference to nature as limit, in the notion of 'the nature of things'.

⁶⁴Second Discourse, p. 172.

⁶⁵Social Contract, II, 7, pp. 204-205.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 205, p. 207. The Geneva Ms., II, 2, p. 180,

of the legislator that 'He must in a sense mutilate man's constitution in order to strengthen it.' See also Poland, p. 18, where he says that the founder of a nation must learn 'to dominate men's opinions, and through them to govern their passions.'

⁶⁷Social Contract, II, 7, pp. 207-209.

⁶⁸For a discussion of the historical and theoretical roots of Rousseau's conception of the legislator, see Roger D. Masters, The Political Philosophy of Rousseau (Princeton, 1976), pp. 354-368.

⁶⁹Ibid., II, 7-10, pp. 204-216. In the Geneva Ms., I, 4, p. 168, the legislator's work is referred to as a 'science' consisting of 'difficult research' into the question of ensuring the best working of the political machine through bringing the different individual wills into harmony with the general will; this, we can presume, is on a different plane from consideration of right. See also Political Economy, pp. 125-126.

⁷⁰D'Alembert, pp. 66, 57, 57-62.

⁷¹Social Contract, II, 8, p. 209, II, 10, p. 126, Second Discourse, p. 80. See also Geneva Ms., II, 3, p. 188, where the force of the laws is likened to the 'flavour of salt', i.e., it cannot do more than give strength to a people that never had it, it cannot give it back when once it is lost.

⁷²Social Contract, II, 12, p. 220. Strictly speaking, Rousseau is referring only to the area of legislation concerned with 'civil laws', that area which deals with people's relations to each other, the second of four sets of relations which bear on the body politic.

⁷³Ibid., III, 4, pp. 231-233. It should, of course, be noted that Rousseau's economic theories are always designed with precisely those conditions in mind, and the conditions serve as criteria of what a small self-preserving and virtuous community should be like; this is amply seen in such works as Poland and Corsica.

⁷⁴Social Contract, III, 12, p. 220.

⁷⁵See, for example, D'Alembert, p. 123, where he expresses the moralist's concern at the prospect of such a politics: 'the elections will take place in the actresses'

dressing-rooms, and the leaders of a free people will be the creatures of a band of histrions. The pen falls from my hand at the thought.'

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 22, 74.

⁷⁷Ibid., where he also comments: 'All that human wisdom can do is to forestall changes, to arrest from afar all that brings them on.' Education is clearly a good way to do that. The view of the legislator's task from Poland, p. 19, is also relevant (see note 66 above).

⁷⁸See Carole Pateman, Participation and Democratic Theory (Cambridge, 1970).

⁷⁹Social Contract, IV, 8, pp. 305-306; the whole chapter is, of course, relevant.

⁸⁰Political Economy, pp. 127, 130, 135. The whole of that work is concerned with the question of creating a life-long mutual responsibility between rulers and ruled, so that the former look to the welfare of the latter and the latter are ready at all times to act virtuously in community life. The chain reaction is spelled out on p. 135.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 135-136. Presumably the mother's communal duty lies in her role as provider of spiritual nourishment to both husband and children so that they will stay on the path of communal virtue. See also Poland, p. 20.

⁸²Poland, p. 19.

⁸³See, for example, Second Discourse, p. 175, where one of the symptoms of the encroaching death of the body politic is the fact that 'one would see politics limit to a mercenary portion of the people the honour of defending the common cause', which does not, at that point, say much for 'politics'. The same anti-mercenary argument is very evident in such works as Corsica and Poland, e.g., at p. 62, and in the Social Contract, III, 15, p. 254, where serving the state with money is a sure sign of the approach of 'ruin'.

⁸⁴Poland, pp. 11, 81-83.

⁸⁵On 'negative education', see Emile, p. 9: 'We can do much, but the chief thing is to prevent anything being done', and Poland, p. 21: 'I cannot repeat too often that

good education must always be negative education. Choke off vices before they are born and you will have done on behalf of virtue all that needs doing.' The theme of lifelong education is obviously paramount in such works as Political Economy, Corsica, and Poland. On competition and emulation, see Poland, pp. 21-22. On Emile's education, see Chapter Three of this work.

⁸⁶Emile, p. 7, D'Alembert, pp. 117-188, Poland, p. 70, Political Economy, p. 130.

⁸⁷Poland, pp. 19, 88, Political Economy, p. 130, Second Discourse, p. 89.

⁸⁸Emile, p. 7. Rousseau tells one marvellous, possibly apocryphal, story that is intended to underline his point about the decline of civic virtue in modern times: 'A Spartan mother had five sons with the army. A Helot arrived; trembling, she asked his news. "Your five sons are slain." "Vile slave, was that what I asked thee?" "We have won the victory." She hastened to the temple to render thanks to the gods. That was a citizen.' (Ibid., p. 8).

⁸⁹See, for example, Poland, pp. 5-9, where Rousseau waxes lyrical about the exploits of Moses, Lycurgus and Numa, who managed to make the community such an important focus of the people's lives; we moderns are prevented by 'the prejudices, the base philosophy and the passions of narrow self-interest' from ever being like the Greeks and Romans. Jean Starobinski, 'La Pensée Politique de Jean-Jacques Rousseau', in Samuel Baud-Bovy, et al., Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Neuchâtel, 1962), p. 97, suggests that Rousseau was probably quite flattered at being asked to play the role of the legislator for Corsica and Poland, but Judith Shklar, 'Rousseau's Images of Authority', in Hobbes and Rousseau, eds. Maurice Cranston and Richard Peters, op.cit., p. 347, strongly disagrees, citing his statement in the Reveries (O.C., I, pp.1057-1059), that he lacked the necessary personal qualities, as well as other examples. It would seem, however, that there was something of both Wolmar and St. Preux in Rousseau, or perhaps it is simply that he would have liked to have been more like Wolmar, and like Claude Anet, his predecessor as Mme. de Waren's lover, on whom it is possible that Rousseau based Wolmar's cold, dispassionate, authoritative and utterly reasoned character (Confessions, pp.192-193, and Judith Shklar, op. cit., p.348).

⁹⁰First Discourse, pp. 53-54. On Rousseau's 'cult' of antiquity, see Denise Leduc-Fayette, J-J Rousseau et la Mythe de l'Antiquité (Paris, 1974), especially pp. 139-162.

⁹¹Poland, pp. 14-16, 67-68, 74, 87-88, D'Alembert, pp. 78-79, 101, 126, 135-136, note, in all of which Rousseau extols the habits of the 'ancients' who spent so much time out of doors, and engaged in such fine communal spectacles; Second Discourse, p. 90, Corsica, pp. 327-329. See also the marvellous discussion in Emile, pp. 286-287 of the various means by which rhetorical politics can be made more effective. He suggests the use of 'expression', 'eloquence', 'signs' and 'persuasion'.

⁹²First Discourse, p. 37.

⁹³D'Alembert, p. 136. It is likely that Rousseau's memory failed him somewhat when he waxed so lyrical about the patriotic fervour and communal excitement of the Geneva of his youth, and when he more or less eulogised about his relationship with his father, the 'Citizen of Geneva', for example, Second Discourse, pp. 86-87, and see the editor's notes, pp. 230-231.

⁹⁴D'Alembert, pp. 126, 79-81. In the traditional Chinese practice of a speaker or a guest applauding his audience we can see something of the same desire to overcome the split between speaker and audience, i.e., between subject and object.

⁹⁵Social Contract, IV, i, p. 269, II, 3, p. 194, D'Alembert, pp. 98-113.

⁹⁶Second Discourse, pp. 180-181.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 174. We should immediately recognise how difficult it really is to distinguish natural and social inequalities, as it is easy to see that there is bound to be a social element in one's acquisition of, for example, certain socially useful skills.

⁹⁸Social Contract, III, 4, pp. 232-233, Second Discourse, p. 171, Social Contract, II, 10, p. 216, Political Economy, p. 140, Second Discourse, p. 82, Social Contract, III, 16, p. 262.

⁹⁹Ibid., III, 1-3, pp. 221-231.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., III, 5, p. 235. Note that Rousseau is not necessarily referring to a hereditary or landed aristocracy. He is almost referring to a 'meritocracy' in which, hopefully, only the naturally wisest would rule.

¹⁰¹The Dedication to the Second Discourse, pp. 81-90, is particularly clear on this, and I have drawn many of the terms

from there. See also Social Contract, III, 16-17, pp. 263-265.

¹⁰²Otto von Gierke, The Development of Political Theory: The Life and Work of Johannes Althusius (London, 1939), p. 98, refers to Rousseau's 'permanent revolution', and, in the same author's Natural Law and the Theory of Society (Boston, 1957), p. 150, he refers to Rousseau's 'complete annihilation of the idea of a constitutional state'; similarly, Lucio Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin (New York, 1973), p. 137, claims as follows: 'My thesis is that revolutionary 'political' theory, as it has developed since Rousseau, is already foreshadowed and contained in the Social Contract; or to be more explicit, that so far as 'political' theory in the strict sense is concerned, Marx and Lenin have added nothing to Rousseau, except for the analysis (which is, of course, rather important) of the 'economic' bases for the withering away of the State.' These views are, perhaps, rather extreme, and we must be careful not to take Rousseau too far out of context. On the other hand, I have certainly been arguing in this work for a recognition of the importance of political actions in combating the tendency for nature and society ever to be in contradiction to each other. There can certainly be no quarrel with Carole Pateman's view in her Participation and Democratic Theory, op.cit., pp. 21-27, of Rousseau as 'the theorist par excellence of participation', but not, it should be noted, of participation as an end in itself, but only as a means to maintaining a virtuous and republican community. The problem with so many partial readings of Rousseau is, of course, that they tend to forget the other side of Rousseau's political coin, made up of his deeply felt pessimism regarding the overall evolutionary prospects of mankind.

¹⁰³Social Contract, III, 1, p. 222.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., III, 15, pp. 259-263, where he even comes up with an extraordinarily realistic argument in which he recognises that perhaps it was only because of the institution of slavery in Greece, which got all the necessary work done, that the polis was such a worthy example for others to emulate: 'What? Can liberty be maintained only on the basis of slavery? Perhaps. Extremes meet.' He simply leaves it to us to decide whether we really are better off, i.e., more free, in having our sovereign will represented for us by the likes of Members of Parliament, or whether slavery was worth it in terms of the real freedom it left for the citizens. As he says, everything in the civil order has its disadvantages, and there is a loss of freedom either way, from which all his arguments concerning smallness, simple way of life, etc., follow, as the only means then available to enhance freedom. See also Poland, pp. 31-42.

¹⁰⁵Second Discourse, pp. 81-90, where, for instance,

of how Rousseau combines a more or less revolutionary conception of the importance of the people acting as sovereign with an incredibly static, not to say regressive, view of the workings of the economy (perhaps we should say, of how the economy should work, in his view).

¹¹²First Discourse, p.49.

the distinction between the sovereign people and the honoured magistrates is very carefully maintained, Political Economy, pp. 216-217, First Discourse, pp. 63-64, Poland, pp. 48-54.

¹⁰⁶Corsica, pp. 327-329.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 289, Poland, p. 65, Political Economy, p. 151, and see the whole of that third section on taxation policy. See also Social Contract, II, 11, p. 216, and Emile, p. 198.

¹⁰⁸Social Contract, I, 9, p. 189.

¹⁰⁹Poland, p. 77, Political Economy, pp. 151 et seq.

¹¹⁰Corsica, p. 282, Poland, pp. 67-78, especially p. 73. Obviously the whole of Corsica is relevant to this discussion, and it is very difficult to isolate particular parts of Rousseau's political ideas, as the theoretical and practical go hand-in-hand.

¹¹¹D'Alembert, p. 126. Note the rather old-fashioned and at least potentially conservative tenor of phrases like 'in his estate' and 'in his place', which serves as a reminder of how the importance of the people acting as sovereign with an incredibly static, not to say regressive, view of the workings of the economy (perhaps we should say, of how the economy should work, in his view).

¹¹²First Discourse, p. 49.

CHAPTER SIX

'LA MORT DU CORPS POLITIQUE.'

'If Sparta and Rome perished, what State can hope to endure for ever?'⁽¹⁾ Rousseau poses this question in the Social Contract, and it very aptly sums up the situation as we once again confront nature as the limit to political actions. We have considered, in the preceding chapter, what can be hoped for from the art of politics as it confronts both the history of existing societies and a tension between the natural and the social which seems to be part of the human condition; this tension represents a limit that is always present in human affairs. The tension between nature and society takes the form of a problem that is posed whenever and wherever people attempt to live together. While recognition of common needs might act to unite them, conflicting passions are likely to divide them.⁽²⁾ In that sense our passions are the issue; but our passions also make us what we are, they are the expression of our deepest and innermost feelings. They can be controlled, harnessed, balanced, diverted, even repressed, but they cannot be assumed out of existence. They are what makes us human in the first place, they are part of human nature.

It is also part of human nature that we must surely die, rich and poor alike. All organic bodies go through a cycle of birth, infancy, childhood, youth, maturity, old-age, senility, decay and death, and the process of decay begins from the moment of birth. Humans are no exception to this pattern, and neither are human creations of which the body

politic is certainly an example, even if, as we have noted in the previous chapter, it does have something of an artificial and machine-like quality to it.⁽³⁾ The heart of the body politic is certainly human, being made up of the legislative power of the whole people as sovereign. Thus, in the notion of the nature of things are combined two aspects, first of all, a natural and inevitable tension between individual humans when they meet in social settings, and, second, a natural and inexorable tendency on the part of human creations to decay and die.

In the previous chapter, we re-opened the case of the body politic, which, to all intents and purposes, had been closed at the end of the previous chapter to that. We asked what kinds of interventionist political actions might preserve the body politic and increase its life expectancy. We found that community-oriented actions are a priority, designed to create a situation in which government is of the people, for the people, and by the people, to the greatest extent possible. We found that Rousseauian politics seek to put politics in command, but not simply in the sense of ensuring that everyone share in the pursuit and exercise of power. There is a basic moral and affective dimension to Rousseauian politics which is all too obviously absent in so many modern accounts of the political process, and in such views of democracy as a competition among elites for the people's votes and nothing more.⁽⁴⁾ In placing a premium on voter apathy and in assuming that voters are likely to be irrational and entirely in-

capable of governing themselves, such views are entirely foreign to Rousseau's belief, hope and faith in the ability of the people at large to involve themselves in as many aspects of the public life of the community as is consistent with actually getting things done in an expedient manner.

On the other hand, Rousseau's are nor simply a politics of participation as an end in itself, for all that, in his image of an audience becoming a spectacle to itself, there is an element of transcending the split between subject and object in the very act of participating in public. Such occurrences are likely to be rare, however, and what really matters to Rousseau are the moral and educative aspects of the politics of participation. Politics and morals are inseparable; education is intended to make possible moral politics and moral politics are clearly intended to be educative, in an on-going dialectic. Political actions are intended to create a community that is a good place in which to live, morally and practically. In that sense, Rousseauian politics involve the public practice of morality. The moral dimension becomes of paramount importance when the very essence of one's person, freedom, is at question. We have seen that the need for principled interventions in the political sphere arose out of a situation of extreme exigency, in which one's freedom to live as one pleased was jeopardised by the appearance on the scene of a master-slave relationship, a sure sign that might has triumphed over right, that the body politic is all

but dead, and that we were about to find ourselves in a corrupted version of the state of nature in which lawlessness, anarchy and the right of the strongest prevail. In a word, people could no longer muster the powers necessary to meet their needs, thus destroying the possibility of continuing in a natural way, based on an equilibrium between powers and needs.

For Rousseau, freedom is a moral issue. His is a rationalist theory in that it presumes that, if given the choice, we would freely choose to do what we know we ought to do. That presupposes that we can know what we ought to do, and Rousseau certainly makes that assumption. On the other hand, it is clear that one major aspect of community politics is precisely concerned with ensuring that we do all take the time and trouble to find out what we ought to do. As Rousseau says, education is 'certainly the most important business of the State'.⁽⁵⁾ Freedom is also an affective issue. It matters not only that I freely choose what I ought to do but that I feel free while doing it. I must want to do it. Rousseauian rationality is not only rooted in the head but in the heart as well. Virtue is known not only intellectually but also emotionally, and this is a point on which Rousseau insists in many places. He is convinced that we can all feel the distinction between right and wrong through the workings of conscience; that we can reason about right and wrong through our intellectual

powers; and that we do or should have the freedom to choose right from wrong. That is, quite simply, the basis of Rousseau's philosophy of life. It does of course take for granted that we are also able to silence our restrictive social passions while making the distinction between right and wrong. (6)

The freest community is one in which the people are sovereign so that one simply obeys oneself when one obeys others. The freest community is one in which the rule of law prevails, and where laws are the most authentic possible expressions of the general will of the whole people. In that community, life will be as natural as it can be, given that the worst feature of life in a state of war, a dependence on individual persons, is replaced by a necessary and natural dependence on things, in the form of laws. As we noted at length, there is a hypothetical character to Rousseau's theory of politics and the social contract community. The general will is a hypothetical notion, based on the assumption that there is a right and true expression of what a whole people would want, not just what some, many, or even all of them in a purely quantitative sense want, but what all of them would want if, quite literally, they knew what was good for them. Again, the hope on Rousseau's part is that a whole people can know and feel what is good for it, and that it does not have to be told what it should want. It can be seen that politics inhabit the realm between the

immediately apparent and automatic expression of public aspirations and the contrived and controlled expression of public aspirations by mediators who might claim to know exactly what the people want. On the one hand, if the expression of public aspirations were so automatic that it followed immediately on the collective feeling of them, then there would be no need of the art of politics at all. On the other hand, the fact that particular interests cannot be assumed to harmonise perfectly and automatically makes the art of politics both necessary and desirable: necessary, in that anarchy and a war of all against all would probably ensue in a situation where there were no basic ground rules, and desirable, in that open and public debate is one sure means of developing a virtuous citizenry and of preventing the triumph of one sectional interest or one interest that claimed to be able to speak for everyone in the community.

When we speak of ground rules, we do not simply mean them in a game-theoretic or competitive sense. We mean a rule that has minimum content and which is the simplest and most general statement of what the community is all about and of what living in the community entails. From the community's point of view, it is simply pre-requisite that, in the final analysis, but only in the final analysis, the community does take precedence over any of the individuals in it. It must be possible for the community to make use of all its members' lives, liberty and property if the need arises, i.e., if the lives, liberty and property of the memb-

ers were gravely threatened. This use must of course be universal and general or else there could be no sense of a universal commitment to accept the working through of the general will and its enactment in law. In other words, law must combine universality of will with universality of object.

We have just given a very brief summary of Rousseau's statement of the principles that ought to govern political life in the community. The other side of the coin is the attempt to put principles into practice, or, to make practice cohere with principles. Practically speaking, the pursuit of freedom as an end of political life requires a massive political education programme designed to create a virtuous citizenry as well as a policy of legislating equality to the greatest possible extent so that inequalities are permitted only if they arise from truly natural differences between people. In this practical dimension, we also encountered a hypothetical element in that a way has somehow to be found of bridging the gap that presently exists between principles and practice. The fundamental problem posed by Rousseau's treatment of the political question is that of how to get there from here, or, how to get the effect to precede the cause. If, for instance, the polity of the Social Contract arises from the remnants of the deliberate and duplicitous attempt by the rich to legitimate inequality, which is the model for the polity of the Second Discourse, then how could such a poorly politicised society be expected

think in terms of a general will, or even to know what the general will was? Put another way, if a good people makes good laws, but the converse is not necessarily the case, how can a good people be created, ab initio?

To make matters even worse, i.e., even more realistic, we must bear in mind that, in Rousseau's view, we can intervene only in situations where a people has not actually lost its liberty. Although he implies in the Second Discourse that governments can be made more legitimate even when they have become tyrannical, in the Social Contract he is much less optimistic, in that he warns us to remember the following maxim: 'Liberty can be gained, but never recovered.'⁽⁷⁾ Quite clearly, there is a subtle dialectic at work here. In general, it would seem that bodies politic should be worked upon only at the time of their 'maturity'; on the other hand, there is always hope that something might be done to repair the damage that will inevitably be done. Considerations as to how, whether, when and where to intervene are on the agenda of the hypothetical figure of the legislator, to whom Rousseau has recourse in an attempt to break the vicious circle of corrupt people making corrupt laws, or, simply, naive people making naive laws.

As we have argued previously, the legislator is virtually a human deus ex machina, authoritative, experienced and wise, knowing all of the human passions but himself affected by none of them, able to reason with people and yet leave them free to convince themselves, able to persuade them with-

out forcing them, so in touch with the nature of the material with which he has to work and with the 'social spirit' of the people that he does, in fact, make possible the prior appearance of the effect before the cause.

One way for the effect to precede the cause is in affect, through feeling what is going to happen in the future and acting now on the basis of that. If a people, for example, could somehow be made to feel what could happen in the future, both good and bad, then perhaps it would act now to avert the bad and promote the good. That, of course, is the task of the legislator, to give personal expression to the affective possibilities of life in a community. On the basis of his knowledge of the past, he acts now to institute a community and to give it laws that would prolong its life for as long as possible, bearing in mind that the relations between many variables of place, climate, soil, custom, neighbourhood, to name but a few, have to be balanced. The legislator does even more, of course. Given that even good laws cannot by themselves change people, he must initiate the educative process whereby the people will in fact become what the laws themselves cannot make them. He is charged, in one view, with the task of 'mutilating' human nature; in another, with 'dominating' men's opinions so as to 'govern' their passions. In other words, each and every individual must be taken and moulded into a part--albeit a highly discrete part--of a solid, enduring and indivisible whole.⁽⁸⁾

The legislator is the personification of the lifelong process of educating and re-educating the people such that their morals and manners are truly reflective of a life of civic virtue. The people must be encouraged to know and practise virtue in every aspect of their public and private lives. It is often forgotten just how often Rousseau addresses himself to the leaders of a political community. For all that he has a strong faith in the ability of the people at large to know where their general will lies, there is much more of faith than of knowledge in this. One criterion of a healthy body politic does lie in the real willingness of the people quite literally to run to the assembly to engage in the deliberative process of legislation; it is clear, however, that the actual practice by the people of their sovereignty is a limit, a principle by which one can then judge the practices of existing societies. Obviously, there should be as much adherence to the notion of the whole people engaging in legislative actions as expediency allows. In practice, however, the people need rulers, governments and legislators; individuals like Emile need tutors; St. Preux needs Wolmar, Lord Bomston and Julie; Julie needs Wolmar; and it is quite arguably the case that Rousseau himself needed at least the patronage and help of such people as M. and Mme. de Luxembourg and Maréchal Keith.

In practice, therefore, there is need of a contingency that frequently borders on contrivance. Emile's tutor spends a lot of time setting up situations by which Emile

ill freely learn about a life in which natural necessity is the limit; at the very end of Emile, Emile asks the tutor to continue his work: 'Advise and control us; we shall be easily led; as long as I live I shall need you.'⁽⁹⁾ Julie and Wolmar together create an Elysium that has all the appearance of being natural, but which is in fact quite artificial and contrived. Julie and St. Preux need the help of Lord Bomston and Wolmar in order that they might make the sacrifice entailed in renouncing their love for each other, necessary if they are to be re-integrated into the life of the community at Clarens. In just one example of the kind of advice that Rousseau sometimes gives to the leaders of a country, he advises the leaders of a small republic like Geneva to give the people festivals and entertainments so as to keep them satisfied with their lot, thereby encouraging them to be active and laborious. Similarly, the whole of the Discourse on Political Economy consists of advice to rulers on how they might follow the general will in their actions, on how they might establish the 'reign of virtue', and on how to provide for the needs of the people through taxation.⁽¹⁰⁾

One question obviously springs to mind, which is basically the totalitarian one again. What is the difference between all these contrivances and a situation where a Nero offers his people bread and circuses, the better to divert their attention from the widespread corruption at higher levels, or where a Communist Party of the Soviet

Union sends millions of people to their deaths in slave-labour camps in the name of defending the ideological purity of the mother land and its new rulers, or where, as some might want to say, a contemporary capitalist society doles out bits of charity to those at the bottom of the meritocracy scale, the better to divert their attention from the real ills of the economic system? In all of these cases, the basic criterion of authenticity would seem to be broken, in that the people are being duped by appearances. The problem, very simply, is the old one of certain individuals or groups claiming to know what the rest--usually the majority--of the people want. The problem is that of elitism, or, in Marxist-Leninist theory, that of the vanguard.

There is one essential difference or distinction that would have to be made in all of these cases. Bearing in mind that there is always going to be an element of contingency in human affairs, given the extreme unlikelihood and philosophical untenability of ever being able to say quite definitively what the future is going to bring, we must remember that there is a dialectical relationship between means and ends. That brings us to the notion of intentionality as distinct from the notion of effect. We tend to say that rulers like Nero and Caligula were monsters because they quite simply intended evil, whereas, following Marx, for instance, we would be inclined to say that the contemporary capitalist does not really know what he is doing in that he is just as enslaved

by the realm of capital as is the more directly suffering worker. About individuals such as Stalin we are not usually so sure. Perhaps he really did think that forced collectivisation, rigid ideological purity within the party ranks and rapid and disciplined industrialisation were the only means of ensuring that the Soviet Union would survive a likely future attack by the Nazis. We can certainly say that with genuine tyrants like Nero and Caligula--and, of course, Hitler in our time--they might at best do the right thing for all the wrong reasons, and they would likely not even do that. (11)

About Rousseau's intentions there need be no doubt and to blame him for all the excesses (sic) of every revolution since his time is simply to deny his work of all the credibility that it so obviously has. It is true that his solutions were often contrived; but he himself was fully aware of the hypothetical quality of much of his argumentation. As he says of the legislator, clearly recognising the contrived nature of that personage: 'In short, only God can give laws to men.' (12) Rousseau's intentions at least are pure. He intends that political actions, whether they be the actions of rulers, governments, tutors, legislators, parents, or even himself, do conform to an ethical standard of what is right, and that, for instance, rulers do everything in their power to establish the 'reign of virtue'; obviously, they should set a high standard of probity and uprightness in their own

conduct. The rulers must have the people's welfare at heart in everything they do, or else it makes a mockery of the notion of an ethical politics designed to maintain and enhance freedom. We should also remember that, no matter what concessions are made to expediency, the people are sovereign. Governments and rulers are answerable to the people as a whole. The act by which government is instituted has nothing like the status of the original contract by which a sovereign people is instituted, as such, involving their unanimous and informed consent. The people consent to and choose those who will govern in their name. Government must, in that sense, arise as naturally as possible from the existing situation. Government should not be like a cancerous sore on the body politic or it would defeat its purpose, which has to be the well-being of the whole people, and in pursuit of which end government is set up simply to expedite matters, to maintain or improve channels of communication between the people in one guise and the people in another guise, as sovereign and subjects, and to make provision for needs that are best met at a national level.

There is a problem in all of this, and we cannot simply assume it away in somewhat of a tautological manner by saying that government is set up simply to meet certain basic needs that the people as a whole find it hard to meet on their own, or words to that effect. The fact is that bodies politic do decline, and that governments do become corrupt. We must

somehow deal with that situation, and hopefully in as uncontrived a way as possible.

In the previous chapter, we maintained that there were two primary foci of politics in a Rousseauian community, first of all, a massive politicisation programme designed to educate the people in the practice of virtue, and second, a political economy of equality, designed to lessen the irrelevant inequalities which, historically, have become so prevalent. Both areas of concern are intended to enhance the prospects for living freely. The first is based on the assumption that a virtuous people would engage in patriotic actions to preserve its liberty. The second is based on a recognition that, if the natural and historic tendency to increasing inequality is not radically interrupted, then the public and free life in community will soon be reduced to the hell of life in a despotic and tyrannical regime.

These political practices are, in fact, two sides of one coin. The politicisation programme is designed to create a body of citizens who, in the future, will put the community foremost in their affections. The political economy of equality is designed to slow down, if not actually to stop, the perceived and natural course of events by which things will get worse in the future. We thus find ourselves intervening now in order to convince people not to place their private concerns ahead of those of the community. We intervene now so that, in the future, people will be willing

to stop anything from happening in the future. A politics of on-going cultural revolution is needed to conserve the status quo. No wonder that Rousseau can be termed both a reactionary and a revolutionary. No wonder that, while accurately predicting that a 'crisis' was imminent and that a century of revolutions was about to begin, he also said that the revolutionary option left as much to be feared as desired. (13)

As we have noted already, these political practices are made necessary by the same situation that makes necessary the art of politics in the first place. The fact is that the same inherent vices that make politics and government necessary also make their own abuse inevitable in the long run. From that point of view, the political situation is fraught with contradiction in that government is destroyed by the self-same forces which made it necessary in the first place.

It should be clear that throughout this work we have given a thoroughly Rousseauian reading of Rousseau, with full recognition of the tensions, paradoxes and contradictions that are part and parcel of his view of the human situation. Rousseau's remedies are always prescribed on the basis of a recognition of very real problems, problems which make highly unlikely the long-term success of the remedies. The basic problem and the on-going reality is that individuals have passions and interests. When existing in and by them-

selves, individuals did each other no harm. When once they find themselves in relatively restrictive social situations, however, they confront each other as obstacles, and, while it is always possible that a recognition of their common needs could bring them together in relatively structured social settings, it is likely that the virtual quality of self-perfection combined with passionate interpersonal conflicts would create a state of war rather than a natural and general society of the whole human race. As we have considered at length in previous chapters, natural and expansive self-love always undergoes a transformation into its much more restrictive opposite, vanity. It does not matter how unnatural Rousseau would like to take vanity to be, nor does it matter how slow and reluctant the social development of the human race would have been. Nor, for that matter, can we really try to maintain that social passions are entirely 'factitious', being based on appearances only, or that they arise from a situation in which, so to speak, human nature has undergone a change for the worse. (14)

The fact is that, like it or not, individuals have perfected themselves at the expense of deteriorating prospects for the species as a whole. And yet, when considering the overall balance of progress and decay, we probably would conclude quite simply that development has been for better and for worse and leave it at that. The danger that inheres in treating the development of social passions in a hypothetical manner, in that they are said to arise from a

situation in which human nature has, so to speak, undergone a change for the worse, is that we repress the real difficulty involved. We also run the risk, as we have seen, of treating nature and society as concrete abstractions; Rousseau might well want to do that but he usually realises that it is untenable to do so. His typical recourse is to a style of hypothetical reasoning, typified in such comments as this one: 'If nature destined us to be healthy, I almost dare affirm that the state of reflection is a state contrary to nature and that the man who thinks is a depraved animal.'⁽¹⁵⁾ The point is that we can only assume that nature destined us to be healthy. We can never finally know.

In the meantime, Rousseau is face with an enormous problem. He cannot assume away the evil, private face of individual human beings. He can certainly hope that the political practices, which we have described in some detail above, will ameliorate the situation and slow down the likely rate of decay. On the other hand, he nowhere denies that people have passions, or that they act on the basis of their perceived self-interest, or that, in the final analysis, no matter how far we go in 'testing facts by right', the social contract community is likely to be a deliberate and evil machination on the part of one sectional interest, the rich, designed to dupe the mass of people into legitimating their ill-gotten gains, and that most, if not all, societies, are in fact founded out of bloodshed and brigandage, that right

is often established by force.⁽¹⁶⁾ It is well seen that Rousseau would deny that the Social Contract is in any way utopian.⁽¹⁷⁾ In fact, it can be inscribed quite easily into the story of the progress of inequality that is contained in the Second Discourse, and Rousseau further suggests that it can be treated as a sequel to Emile,⁽¹⁸⁾ in which the main ideas are summarised to give young Emile a principled guide to how civil society should operate, with which he can then compare the existing societies that he encounters on his travels.

In the previous chapter, we maintained that the polity of the Second Discourse collapsed because of three factors, its makeshift character, the insufficient politicisation of the mass of the people, and the inegalitarian basis on which it was set up. It certainly is true that, if the programme of community-oriented actions were to be followed, then the life expectancy of the body politic would be greatly increased. It is also true that, while Rousseau does appear explicitly to take for granted that all bodies politic go through a similar cycle of birth, life and death, he does leave the situation open at the end of the most pessimistic account of the progress of inequality. We can never know for certain whether individual bodies politic will come back to life. The example of China in our own day would seem to refute Rousseau's 'fundamental' maxim that liberty once lost can never be regained,⁽¹⁹⁾ although we should bear in mind that Rousseau is really talk-

ing about the life and death of political regimes. Once a dynasty had collapsed, as did the Manchu dynasty of China in 1911, the society finds itself in a state of complete lawlessness from which a new dynasty might well emerge, as did the Communist regime in 1949. Presumably the process of life and death will go on for ever, or for as long as there are human beings on the planet. One thing is certain, as we have implied throughout: all is flux and paradox in human affairs, and at certain periods all is contradiction, from which resolution is only possible through the workings of a scission or rupture with the past, and then we run the risk of our hypothetical reconstruction taking on all the reality of a stage-managed contrivance, as we have noted above.

The hypothetical character of Rousseau's remedy for the ills of the body politic is well seen when we examine what Louis Althusser has called a series of 'Discrepancies' in the theory of the social contract as it is formulated by Rousseau.⁽²⁰⁾ The discrepancies are equivalent to theoretical difficulties that must somehow be assumed away, or at least dealt with in some way that makes their recognition less damaging to the overall plausibility of the theory. The trouble is that each discrepancy can only be 'chased away', as Althusser puts it, at the cost of its reappearing further down the line. At a certain point the discrepancies arrive at the plane of actual, concrete practices that are entailed in Rousseauian politics; in other words, the hypo-

thetical quality of the theory confronts the actual existence of the reality that made necessary the discrepancy, and its subsequent denegation or repression, again to use Althusser's terms, in the first place. When once the discrepancies arise at the level of concrete reality, nothing can be done except to take off again, forwards in the future-oriented ideological superstructures or backwards in the past-oriented policy of conserver economics.

The problem, as always, arises from the absence of a sense of community among those who inhabit civil societies. Following Althusser's suggestion, then, we can begin with his Discrepancy III, between the notion of a particular interest as it applies to individuals and particular interest as it applies to sectional groups, classes or parties. Rousseau wants to find an interest that is general for all individuals and which represents, in that sense, the good of all of them, while in no way would he be satisfied with a notion of general interest as only the sum of particular interests and no more. On the other hand, he lays great stress on the importance of excluding from the general will any sectional group or groups that might be large or influential enough to sway particular individuals to the detriment of a full and free expression of what is of common concern to them all. The problem is that particular sectional interests do exist in concrete practice while the general interest as an expression of every particular individual interest

has to be assumed. This difficulty can only be chased away by the kinds of political policies that we have already considered. The difficulty, however, appears right at the outset of the social contract community, as there is a discrepancy between the two parties to the contract, one of which, the community, does not exist prior to the hypothetical signing of the contract.

At the outset we were faced with a situation of extreme exigency in which individuals could no longer muster the force necessary to enable them to overcome the obstacles to their continuing to live in a state of nature. The state of nature had become a state of war, dependence had replaced independence, and a radical rupture with the past became necessary if the human race was to survive. As we have said, an immediate discrepancy can be noted in the status of the two recipient parties to the contract that is designed to remedy this situation. A contract usually involves a mutual give and take between two parties of relatively equal standing. In this case, one of the parties, the community, is constituted by the act of association itself. And yet, the act of association is characterised as a contract, and what is even more startling, as a contract demanding, in the final analysis, at least the tacit recognition that the individual alienates to the community all of his goods. Each gives everything to a community that has no prior existence in fact.

The contract has an immediately hypothetical character, which is recognised by Rousseau's language, thus indicating

his awareness of the discrepancy and his attempt to denegate or repress the difficulty. If the absence or non-existence of one of the parties to the contract, a general interest or community that is not to include particular group interests but only particular individual interests, is to be construed as a negation of the idea of the contract, then the way in which Rousseau deals with this problem can be considered as itself a negation of that negation, in other words, as denegation. In this case, however, the denegation takes the form of a repression of the problem, exemplified by a resort to hypothetical language. The nature of the social pact is said to be 'private and peculiar to itself, in that the people only contracts with itself.' The people does not contract with itself because the people at this stage consists of individuals only. Similarly, each individual 'contracts, so to speak, with himself', thereby binding himself in a double capacity as sovereign and subject.⁽²¹⁾ The discrepancy between individuals as individuals and individuals as part of a common whole is here dealt with by a play on words that reduces the common to the individual, in a hypothetical sense. On the other hand, the individual is also raised to the communal in that the 'people' is said to contract with itself. Both the autonomous individual and the autonomous people are, therefore, born as a result of this play on words, giving rise to both Kantian and Hegelian readings of Rousseau.⁽²²⁾

Rousseau can now confront the extreme problem posed at the outset of the Social Contract by the existence of a 'universal state of alienation', again to use Althusser's phrase. The situation can now be dealt with by an alienation that is as universal as the existing one. It was not possible to conceive of alienating all of one's goods to the community before there was a community, but now that the category of the communal has been made possible at the level of thought--in conceiving of the primitive act of association as a contract that one makes, so to speak, between one's communal and one's individual self, and, in that sense, not as an exchange but a precondition of exchange--the notion of alienating all of one's goods can now be thought.

As Althusser points out, Rousseau thus gives a rather startling answer to the problem posed by Hobbes's contract in the Leviathan, in which individuals contract with each other to give all power to a third party who is not, in fact, a party to the contract at all. Rousseau internalises the whole problem in posing the contract as an act of alienation that one makes with oneself. The discrepancy in status between the two parties to the contract, the individual and the community, has thus been dealt with by internalising the contract so that, quite literally, it is all inside my own head. In that way, it is quite conceivable that the contract could, at least tacitly, include the one clause that requires the alienation of all one's goods to the community. In effect,

there is still no community.

The discrepancy continues, therefore, and it reappears when we realise that what is at first posed as an act of total alienation is not in fact so total after all, that it is, in fact, an act of exchange with all the implications of commensurability, profit and loss, and accountability that are entailed in acts of exchange. Rousseau himself appears to recognise this discrepancy when he says that the contract produces a 'strange' effect, the transformation, through total alienation, of possession into legitimate property right; but the discrepancy is at once denegated or repressed in Rousseau's noting that the possessors have 'acquired, so to speak, all that they have surrendered'.⁽²³⁾ The community is still at large, and even more so when we realise that, so far from the alienation being total, it is up to the sovereign to decide what it is important for the community to control. In other words, I decide in one capacity what I must do in another capacity. I can limit the totality of alienation. Thus, 'total alienation only applies to a part of that whole. How better express: it must be total so as not to be total. Discrepancy II.'⁽²⁴⁾

The point is that all of these plays on words, discrepancies and use of the language are needed to make the contract and the community of real interest to participating individuals. Each man naturally has a preference for his own interests and this is fully expressed in the theory behind the social contract, as well as in the language of individual

rights, interests, liberty and equality that surrounds it. Overall, the problem is that there really is no prior category of the communal for, if there were, there would presumably be no need of an autonomous human agreement between people to unite themselves in a more intimate community than that which, presumably, already existed.

What is chased away throughout is precisely the category of the communal that the social contract is supposed to institute. It was chased away at the outset in the discrepancy between the two parties to the contract; it reappeared in the notion of the contract's entailing the alienation by each of all of his goods to the community; but it was chased away again by the reappearance of the individualised language of exchange and of profit and loss; it thus reappears as a problem in Althusser's Discrepancy III with which we started; that discrepancy might usefully be called 'The Case of the Missing Community'. The fact that the category of the communal cannot be taken for granted makes necessary the political programme of the community. And we end up with the possibility of an entirely contrived solution to the problem that is posed by the reality of the existence within civil society of sectional interests which are detrimental to any notions of a community of interests. Althusser's Discrepancy IV entails, therefore, the necessity to chase away the problems of clashing, particular interests through a never-ending cycle of 'flight forward in ideology'

and 'regression in reality', each of which chases the other for ever. End of Discrepancy. (25)

All we can add to this is to repeat what we have said all along, that Rousseau was completely aware of these problems that arise from living in civil society. The clash of sectional interests arises from a situation of scarce resources, and in Rousseau's view there would always be a necessary and natural limit to human potential. The only thing to do, therefore, is to seek an equilibrium between desires and powers, at both the individual and the national level. (26)

To that extent, the concept of the natural becomes a moral criterion for policy to follow. People are encouraged to live as simply and as unostentatiously as possible and societies are encouraged to lessen irrelevant inequalities. Inequalities of skill, strength and age, for example, are natural; inequalities of merit and desert that arise from those basic inequalities are also natural; but it is simply not relevant, in his view, to translate inequalities of merit into inequalities of nobility, power or wealth. On the other hand, Rousseau knows that in a free market situation where everyone can sell himself for whatever he can get, inequalities of skill and strength will be translated into the language of money and a situation will arise in which some people are forced to sell themselves and other people are able to buy them for money. Rousseau wants, therefore, to slow down the circulation of money; rather than actually destroy the

free market mechanism, he would try to discourage people from becoming so embroiled with money that it is the only medium through which they communicate with each other. Conversely, given that money can be used to buy all the other distinctions in society, a rather exact measurement can be made of how far a people is removed from 'its primitive institution' and how close it is to the 'extreme limit of corruption'.⁽²⁷⁾ Policy should be used in such a way as to prevent the situation arising in which some people are so poor that they have to sell themselves for money and other people are so rich that they can buy people for money. It is precisely because 'the pressure of events' tends to destroy the kind of proportionate equality that is deemed desirable that 'the force of legislation' should seek to maintain it. As always, however, Rousseau freely recognises that many people will consider such equality as 'but an airy day-dream'.⁽²⁸⁾

Let us, finally, remember Rousseau's assumption that all the bodies politic will decay and decline in the long run. The Second Discourse gives a systematic treatment of the process whereby irrelevant natural inequalities give rise to social inequalities that are legitimated in a civil society based on the transformation of possession into property, which inequalities culminate in the absolute asymmetry of a master-slave relationship. In the Social Contract an explicit treatment is given of the process whereby government

gradually usurps sovereignty from the people, and it is no accident that fully one-half of that work is given over to an analysis of the place of the government in the body politic, an analysis of the effects of different kinds of government on the sovereign, legislative process, and to an analysis of the way in which such institutional practices as representative government further hinder the prospects for frequent and true expressions by the people of their sovereign will. Rousseau simply takes for granted the fact that even the best constituted government will usurp the people's sovereignty, that democracy--that form of government which is clearly seen as an ideal form more suited to immortals than to mortals--will give way to aristocracy, which will in turn result in a monarchical form of government that is sure to end in a tyrannical despotism. In monarchical government there is no corporate, governmental will that can perhaps help to maintain the prospects for true expressions of the general will by resisting the will of the prince alone and so achieve equilibrium; collapse is inevitable: 'it must happen that sooner or later, the Prince will oppress the Sovereign and break the social treaty. This is the inherent and inevitable vice of the body politic which, from the moment of its birth, tends consistently to its destruction, just as old age and death ultimately destroy the human body.' (29)

The problem is the same one that besets the community when an attempt is made to replace individuals with a general

will common to all. The problem is always that of the missing community, the problem which, as we have seen, led to the need to buttress the hypothetical nature of the social contract community with a series of discrepancies. There are a series of problems with government, as Rousseau sees it. In general, we can see that there is need of both an affective and a moral appeal to the subjects to obey the expression of their general will through law. The affective appeal has two aspects, first of all, an appeal to people's self-interested side in order that they should feel like doing what they ought to do as it furthers their perception of their self-interest, and, second, an appeal to people's more purely emotional side in that love of country has hopefully replaced the restrictive passion of vanity. On the other hand, as my direct and individual participation in sovereign legislation diminishes, so too is my desire to obey the laws likely to diminish; I will simply have less of an affective tie to the actions of the community, which will then diminish my moral tie. As a consequence, the repressive force of government will probably have to be increased; and thus it follows that, the larger the community, both the more powerful the government will have to be, and the smaller the government will have to be, given that the will of the government is a more effective force the smaller government is. It can be seen, therefore, that democratic government will indeed work only in small communities, as Rousseau himself believed

and that in anything larger than a small and intimate community, government is simply bound to become both more oppressive and more concentrated, leading inevitably to its assuming a despotic form. It is interesting to note that, while Rousseau does adduce a series of calculations designed to show that, as the number of people involved goes up, so does their share in legislation go down, (given that each person has only one vote but is still expected to obey all laws), his real basis is not at all quantitative but, rather, affective. It is far less a matter of quantity of participation than of quality of participation, and then, as we have seen, many more factors come into play.⁽³⁰⁾

If one side of the decay of government involves its relationship to the sovereign people, then another side involves the members of the government itself. We have seen that the individual citizens have both a private side and a public side in that they are both sovereign legislators and individual subjects of that same legislation. Government members are, as it were, split three ways, which only goes to compound the problem still further. They are operated on by their particular wills, by their wills as members of the government, and by the general will. Ideally, as Rousseau says, individual, particular wills, which 'tend always to privilege',⁽³¹⁾ should play no part at all in either legislation or administration of the body politic; the will of the corporate government, which is, in effect, a particular

sectional will both in legislation and in administration, should play very little part; and the general will should be dominant:

According to the natural order, however, these different wills become the more active the more concentrated they are. And so it is that the general will is always the weakest, the will of the corporate government coming next, and the will of the individual holding first place: so that, in the government, each member is primarily himself, secondly a magistrate, and only at the third remove a citizen. This arrangement is directly contrary to the needs of the social order.(32)

Thus it is that, in the tension between politics and nature, nature is bound to win in the end, given that politics have both to be as unnatural as possible and as natural as possible. The body politic has to be given as natural a basis as possible but in certain crucial respects we have to work to undo the work of nature, for instance, in taking each discrete individual and transforming him into a part of something much bigger than himself and all the other individuals, considered purely numerically. The basic problem is that it is impossible to regulate private individuals' actions to the extent that is made necessary by the demands of the social order. Politics operate in a circumscribed area within which they have to be as pervasive as possible. We cannot live without politics and government, but we certainly cannot live with them either, and the most that can be hoped for in this utterly realistic view is to achieve as permanent a balance as possible, given that human affairs are inherently in a state of flux, confusion and decay.

We can and must do everything that we can to keep the heart of the body politic, the sovereign legislative power, working for as long as possible. For as long as the whole people is in the habit of hastening to the assembly, there is no problem. As Rousseau says, with a characteristically rhetorical flourish: 'But, I shall be told, the idea that the whole of a People can be assembled is a mere chimera. It certainly is today, but it was not two thousand years ago. Has human nature changed?' To the extent that citizens are willing to serve the state with 'their strong right arms' and never resort to mercenary service and other signs of the importance of money in their social relationships, the state will hold.⁽³³⁾ To the extent that the state can be kept within 'rational bounds', and there is a balance between town and country in terms of population, between different regions in terms of population, productivity of the soil, etc., between commerce and industry, between expansive behaviour and self-restricting behaviour on the part of the whole community, then the body politic will endure for as long as possible.⁽³⁴⁾ In general, there is no need of the four pre-conditions that Rousseau considers necessary for democratic government in the formal sense: smallness, simple tastes, large measure of equality, and no luxury.

The point is, simply, that the community is never expected to supplant the individual. We can hope, desire and pray that everyone will be ceaselessly occupied in public-

spirited actions to uphold civic virtue, but given the nature of the human material with which we have to work, we cannot expect such an unnatural situation to endure for ever. And if we try to effect too radical (and in that sense unnatural) a break between the real and the ideal, we run the risk of our politics becoming completely contrived and controlled from above, entirely to the detriment of a spontaneous expression by the people of their sovereign will. This is the problem that, presumably, resulted in Rousseau's argument for the social contract community being full of discrepancies which, as we noted, are recognised in the very language of Rousseau. Nature as real limit will triumph in the end; in one example that we have cited, the people are bound to choose magistrates who are older, more experienced and wiser members of the community; they will tend to die sooner than would younger members of the community; the need for frequent elections increases the likelihood of corruption and factionalism as well as the likelihood that money will be used to buy and sell votes. The general will could never be fully expressed in situations like that, thus hastening the death of the body politic. (35)

We should never forget that all may not be lost. The body politic might have died, but that does not necessarily mean that all of the individuals in it are dead. Although Rousseau doubted that a people could recover its liberty, it is always possible that a more creative tension between politics and nature could result in successful attempt at politi-

cal interventions in the course of history. We should always remember that, at the end of the most pessimistic account of the development of the human race--a development which results in a perfection of the individual at the expense of a deterioration of the prospects for the species as a whole--the question of what will happen next is left open:

If we follow the progress of inequality in these different revolutions, we shall find that the establishment of the law and of the right of property was the first stage, the institution of the magistracy the second, and the changing of legitimate power into arbitrary power the third and last. So that the status of rich and poor was authorised by the first epoch, that of powerful and weak by the second, and by the third that of master and slave, which is the last degree of inequality and the limit to which all the others finally lead, until new revolutions dissolve the government altogether or bring it closer to its legitimate institution.(36)

NOTESCHAPTER SIX

¹Social Contract, II, 4, p. 254.

²Geneva Ms., I, 2, p. 158. Note that, prior to the 'golden age', our needs would have kept us apart (or, perhaps we should say, our relatively simple needs), while it is the arousal of strong feelings between the sexes that first unites them when they happen to meet each other at watering places, as we have discussed in Chapter Four above.

³See, for example, the explicit statements concerning the inevitability of the death of the body politic in Social Contract, III, 11, p. 254, and Corsica, p. 299.

⁴As we have said in the previous chapter (note 91), there is also a rhetorical dimension to Rousseauian politics, on which see Emile, pp. 286-287.

⁵Political Economy, p. 136.

⁶The point is made most effectively and most beautifully in the 'Creed of the Savoyard Vicar' (Emile, especially pp. 249-258), where Rousseau is at pains to prove, if such be possible for Rousseau to say, p. 253, 'Again, if, as it is impossible to doubt, man is by nature sociable', which goes some way towards lessening the overall pessimism with which he usually views the development of that sociability, as in the Second Discourse. This also shows us just how far Rousseau was from ever being, simply, cynical regarding the basic nature of mankind, even if he does consider that mankind's social development was such a reluctant process. See also Emile, p. 437, and Third Promenade, Reveries, p. 69.

⁷Social Contract, II, 8, p. 210.

⁸Ibid., II, 7, pp. 204-209, Political Economy, pp. 125-126, Geneva Ms., II, 2, p. 80, Poland, p. 18.

⁹Emile, p. 444. See Chapter Three for other examples of the constant 'control' on the tutor's part (note 76), and some other examples can be found on pp. 280-300, especially this, on p. 298: 'It is true I allow him a show of freedom, but he was never more completely under control, because he obeys of his own free will.' The completely hypothetical character of

the tutor is also worth mentioning at this point (p. 17):
'The more you think of it the harder you will find it. The tutor must have been trained for his pupil, his servants must have been trained for their master, so that all who come near him may have received the impression which is to be transmitted to him . . . Can such a one be found? I know not . . . But let us assume that this prodigy has been discovered. We shall learn what he should be from the consideration of his duties.'

¹⁰D'Alembert, p. 126, Political Economy, pp. 127-128.

¹¹This debate is brilliantly highlighted in Arthur Koestler's Darkness at Noon (London, 1940), and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Humanism and Terror (Boston, 1969), which is a response to Koestler's argument.

¹²Social Contract, II, 7, p. 205. We have given many other examples of the hypothetical quality of Rousseau's argument throughout this work.

¹³The prediction is made in Emile, p. 157: 'The crisis is approaching, and we are on the edge of a revolution.' Of course, this is to be read in the context of an argument concerning the need to be fatalistic about one's prospects in such uncertain times. The same tone is evident in his letter to Stanislas, King of Poland (O.C., III, p. 56), where he claims to see no remedy for the ills of society than 'some great revolution that is as much to be feared as the evil it could cure, and which it is culpable to wish for and impossible to foresee', although the high status of his correspondent might well have led Rousseau to tone down his comments somewhat. For other views concerning 'revolution', see Chapter Five above, notes 10, 14 and 102.

¹⁴Second Discourse, pp. 178-180.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁶Poland, p. 42, Second Discourse, p. 166. See note 39 in the previous chapter.

¹⁷Sixth of the Letters from the Mountain (O.C., III, p. 810).

¹⁸Letter to Duchesne, May 23rd, 1762 (C.G., VII, p. 233).

¹⁹Social Contract, II, 8, p. 210 and see the letter

to Stanislas, King of Poland (O.C., III, p. 56).

²⁰Louis Althusser, 'Rousseau: The Social Contract', pp. 113-160, in his Politics and History (London, 1972). I shall cite only specific references to Rousseau's Social Contract, so that the reader can compare the original.

²¹Emile, p. 425, Social Contract, II, 7, p. 182.

²²Ernst Cassirer's is a clear example of a Kantian reading, and Lucio Colletti's is a clear example of a Hegelian reading of Rousseau. Althusser also refers to what he calls a Husserlian reading of Rousseau, a reading which would stress the phenomenological significance of a people's constituting itself (see Althusser, op. cit., p. 133).

²³Social Contract, I, 9, p. 188.

²⁴Althusser, op. cit., p. 142.

²⁵Ibid., p. 159.

²⁶See, for example, Second Discourse, note i. The same tone also pervades Emile.

²⁷Second Discourse, p. 174.

²⁸Social Contract, II, 11, p. 217.

²⁹Ibid., III, 10, p. 251. Concerning the cycle that goes from democracy to tyrannical despotism, i.e., from the involvement of the whole people in government to the rule of one person, see the note to ibid., pp. 251-252, and the sixth of the Letters from the Mountain (O.C., III, p. 808). See also Bertrand de Jouvenel, 'Theory of the Forms of Government', pp. 484-497, in Hobbes and Rousseau, eds. Maurice Cranston and Richard Peters (New York, 1972).

³⁰Social Contract, III, 1-4, pp. 221-231. See also de Jouvenel, op. cit.

³¹Social Contract, III, 2, p. 190

³²Ibid., III, 2, p. 228.

³³Ibid., III, 15, p. 260, III, 12, p. 255, III, 15, p. 259.

³⁴Ibid., III, 13, p. 257, and see II, 9-10, pp. 211-217.

³⁵Second Discourse, pp. 171-172.

³⁶Ibid., p. 172. This is not intended as a note of optimism but of realism; in effect, anything is possible, especially if 'things have to get worse before they can get better'.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

'JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, CITOYEN DE GENEVE.'

In this work we have dealt with Rousseau's ideas on politics in terms of a series of tensions between, respectively, nature and society, society and history, history and politics, and politics and nature. We have seen that political actions are made necessary by the exigencies of an historical situation in which the fundamental tension between nature and society becomes so extreme as to place the future survival of the human race in jeopardy. Political actions are, quite simply, necessary if we are to ameliorate the human condition. We have also seen that there is a limit to the effectiveness of political interventions, a limit which is constituted by the organic element in bodies politic. Bodies politic are comprised of human beings, and human beings are conceived to be divided, between a private self and a public self. The human, political community will survive to the extent that, and for as long as, the individual communards are prepared to place the community interest above their particular, private interests. Rousseau could see no way of transcending that basic split between the private and public spheres of life. He did not, for example, contemplate any overcoming of the material problem of scarcity, through which more recent writers have looked for a lessening of conflict between individuals or groups, as they compete for scarce resources. That is why Rousseau placed so much emphasis on what we would now call 'conserver' economics, which is one

main aspect of the community's activities. The other major aspect of communal life is, of course, the stress on education and participation in communal activities.

We have, in effect, concluded our study of the importance of political actions in enhancing the survival, in freedom, of the human race. We have noted, at the end of the previous chapter, that even when bodies politic seem to be close to death--signified by the appearance on the political scene of a despot, and the institutionalisation of an unfree relationship--out of the ensuing anarchy could come a more legitimate government. The cycle of life and death of bodies politic could presumably be endless. While it is inevitable, in Rousseau's view, that bodies politic will decay and die, due to the impossibility of reconciling particular interests in the community, it does not follow that particular bodies politic will not be reconstituted in a way that would enhance the prospects for the human race as a whole. In that sense, as we have argued in the previous chapter, Rousseau would seem to be talking about the life and death of political dynasties.

It is important to recognise that Rousseau does not dismiss any and all possibility of political regeneration as idle day-dreaming, nor, on the other hand, does he himself engage in wildly unrealistic speculations. His continuing appeal in the present must be due to his ability to embrace both realism and idealism. He knows that there has been some

'progress' in human affairs while he is equally ready to denounce what others might be too quick to embrace as 'progress'. In effect, he knows that historical development has been for better and for worse, and he retains that dialectical perspective throughout his writings.

The most fitting conclusion to this work would seem to be to raise once again the question of Rousseau's personal commitment to community. That involves trying to make an assessment of how he resolved the tension between nature and society within himself, in other words, how he balanced the public sphere and the private sphere in his own life. As we have seen, Rousseau never contemplated overcoming that basic division between public and private spheres, and it was a continuing presence in his own life. It has been said of Rousseau that, in contrast to Voltaire who took another person's cause truly to heart in the Callas sense, he had only one case, his own. Similarly, he has been called 'indifferent' to history, by which is meant contemporary events and problems.⁽¹⁾ In other words, was Rousseau obsessed with himself to the exclusion of a genuine interest in the fate of others? We must say that many of his concerns were those of an individual, albeit of heightened sensibility, but an individual for all that. His concerns were always that he should be judged to have acted morally, that there should be no lack of coherence between what he actually felt and did and what he appeared to others to have done. In that sense,

Rousseau's own life is actually highly symptomatic of the problems that beset a moral being as he attempts to come to terms with life in a society that is far short of ideal, a society in which, for example, all is judged on the basis of appearances, and in which extrinsic measurements of a person's worth, such as wealth, are constantly being used. There was obviously some justification for Rousseau's tendency to concentrate so much energy on his own problems, for he was subject to very real persecution and torment. Furthermore, there were few enough opportunities in contemporary civil society for an individual even to hope to find a community that was worth living in and dying for.

On the other hand, we have to ask whether Rousseau was not rather self-indulgent in his so obviously being concerned to express his every feeling. Rousseau does at times seem to be in love with feeling itself. So much of his life's happiness seems to have depended on the anticipation of being able to leave his normal self behind, rather than actually being able to do so; and we have also remarked, in our second chapter, the fundamental sense of a void in the universe that no amount of satisfaction of one's heartfelt desires could fill, as well as the admission by this man of sensibility that he really rather liked it that way. We can, therefore, raise, but probably leave unanswered, the question of whether Rousseau would ever have been satisfied with the kind of lasting fulfillment that one can perhaps achieve in others'

company. Even in the most intimate communal setting, one is still primarily oneself, and, from that point of view, Rousseau's notion that the community should so replace the society as the focus of people's loyalties that one should become but the numerator of a fraction, as he himself expressed it, does become rather incredible. One must wonder just how he himself would have fitted into a community like that, should such a one ever be found.

Rousseau was always himself, and often to the chagrin of those around him. As we have remarked in our second chapter, he was highly imaginative, enormously sensitive, and very affectionate if he felt that he could trust those around him. He was frequently rather unsure of himself, especially when he found himself in fashionable, sophisticated company. Anyone who has mixed in fashionable circles, intellectual, social or political, must surely agree with Rousseau's assessment of the fundamentally insincere quality that is so prevalent thereabouts; and he must also be aware of the universal scorn that so often is directed against the traitor who actually tries to say what these circles are really about, which is often very little. About Rousseau's relationship to his Enlightenment contemporaries, therefore, it is hard to be conclusive. They must have felt really piqued that, in the middle of a 'progressive' struggle to introduce the realm of reason into political affairs in eighteenth century France, one would-be and potentially influential member of their

cause should, as it were, turn around and denounce the very progress that they were espousing. Unsure of himself and timid Rousseau might sometimes have been; he was also supremely confident and self-assertive when the occasion arose. As he himself was so well aware, he was a man of contrasts, a rather paradoxical figure, to put it mildly.

Let us finish by placing Rousseau in an unashamedly good light and giving him the benefit of the doubt. For all that he was so concerned, obsessed even, with the problems of his own existence, his understanding of what it can be like in community with others cannot, surely, be faulted. There is an inspiring quality to Rousseau's writings on politics, whether they are concerned with a formal analysis of political institutions or with the simple, informal and highly personal aspects of what it is like to live in community with one's fellows. Even in his more discursive works, one always feels that Rousseau really meant what he said, and he is one of those writers whose style of writing is just as important as the content of the writing. That makes his writings a joy to read. He is, quite simply, a beautiful writer.

It must be obvious that we have, in this work, taken a highly informal and personalised view of what politics are all about. If definitions are in order, a possible definition of the activity politics is that it is about how people who were made to help each other do help each other. We have said in an earlier chapter that Rousseau would hardly have subscrib-

ed to what might be called the teleological communitarianism that is inherent in such a definition, but that may well be due to the perceived unlikelihood of ever finding a setting in which it was possible that people would, in fact, feel like helping each other. A less exalted definition of politics might well centre on the notion that political actions are, simply, concerned with the ways in which people organise themselves in order to live as good a life as they possibly can. Politics are therefore concerned with what Bertolt Brecht called 'the great art of living together'. With that definition Rousseau would certainly have less quarrel, and it is clear that his view of community-based politics is that they are both affective and moral. It is very important that people do develop the habit of feeling what is the right thing to do in different circumstances, given always the unfortunate fact that political actions all too often involve having to choose between the lesser of two evils, rather than between the greater of two goods. The point for Rousseau is that he knew that one could not simply take the community and its importance as a focus in people's lives for granted. While we must concern ourselves with a problem posed by the possibility that his solutions are so hypothetical as to border on contrivance, that is precisely where politics enter on the scene. In the final analysis, politics always depend on people, and everything must necessarily be rooted in such a politics. It simply is up to the people to make sure that

politics are truly ethical; and if there is a problem with 'human beings as they are', then a truly radical political education is called for. Ironically, however, the education is only radical in its range, for the whole point is to create a body of citizens who would simply take for granted that one does in fact do what one's fellow communards would expect one to do, provided that the expectations are always mutual and reciprocal, and not, repeat not, solely in a self-regarding manner. And yet, the community must appeal to people's sense of what they want, and then there enter all the problems associated with the notion that the community does not, in fact, exist and has somehow to be thought, and hopefully created, out of very little. Rousseau's greatness must in part lie in the boldness and range of his thinking about the possibilities of politics; and he does always leave the question of possible regeneration open, however unlikely he might have thought it to be.

Speaking of his own existence, Rousseau presents us with a beautiful image of what can be achieved in terms of a balance between the tendency on one's part, and on the part of fellow members of society, to expansiveness as opposed to retrenchment: 'When everything was in order about me, when I was content with all that surrounded me, and with the sphere in which I had to live, I filled it with my affection.'⁽²⁾ The fact that he invariably found frustration and anguish in so filling the universe with his affection, and that he was

of necessity thrown back on his own resources, does not lessen the quality of this image of an individual expanding the range of his affections to encounter, one hopes and presumes, other people who are doing the same thing. That is precisely what the affective dimension of community amounts to. Rousseau simply could not take for granted that other people would in fact do that, again to repeat a point that we have already made above. He could not, therefore, realistically subscribe to an essentially humanist notion of ourselves as only truly ourselves in community with others. In other words, would Rousseau have insisted quite so heavily on the amoral, asocial, indifferent and essentially banal life of natural man had the observed reality of people's attempts to live together in society not been quite so prone to arouse nothing but cynicism in the eye of the beholder? Once again, under the circumstances, his argument about man's natural state becomes something of a bold attempt to rescue the natural in us from the throes of civil society, and from the tendency to take so little good in us for granted. In that respect, it is extremely important to emphasise the ignoble and banal aspects of Rousseau's savage man, rather than the idealised picture of the supposedly noble savage. Otherwise, we would really have to wonder why there was ever any social development on mankind's part, and we would certainly be faced with nothing but hypothetical abstractions in the notions of both the state of nature and the social contract

community. Rousseau's models of both the state of nature and the community are hypothetical, the image of the state of nature, in particular, being the result of an exercise in 'hypothetical and conditional reasoning', rather than, say, an examination of historical data. They also have very strong critical and, therefore, moral power, enabling a radical critique to be made of the status quo society. In that sense, Rousseau's political thought has a very fine rhetorical sense to it, given his ever present awareness of the need to alter his tune to suit the particular audience that he was addressing.

We can do no better than conclude with some more examples of Rousseau's personal political commitment. Whatever his contemporaries might have thought of his move to the country in 1756, Rousseau seems to have known well what he was doing. It is only a pity that he did not spend a lot more of his life in similar circumstances, although he probably had to experience the inner workings of city life at first-hand in order to be able to criticise it so fully and to present such strong alternatives, as he viewed them. As usual, we are confronted with the subtler ironies of life. Just how much are we to believe Rousseau when he prates on about the horrors of city life and yet spends so much time there himself? His one-time friends in the d'Holbach circle obviously viewed his departure for the Hermitage with an amusement bordering on contempt, although that probably turn-

ed into jealousy as they witnessed the solid, forthright and massive outpourings from Rousseau's pen in the years 1756-1762, years which produced La Nouvelle Héloïse, the Letter to D'Alembert, Emile and the Social Contract, not to mention his work on the Abbé de St. Pierre's project for perpetual peace in Europe. The departure for the relative solitude and peace of the country was the second major step in what can really be called a personal revolution for Rousseau. Let us give Rousseau the full benefit of the doubt and accept this account of his reform in 1752, after the success of his First Discourse had, virtually overnight, made him a celebrity:

I renounced all fine apparel; no more sword, no more watch, no more white stockings, gold thread, coiffure; a simple periwig, a good coarse suit of cloth; and better than all of this, I uprooted from my heart the cupidities and the covetings which gave a value to all that I had quitted. I renounced the post which I then occupied, for which I was in no way fitted, and I set myself to copying music at so much the page, an occupation for which I had always had a decided taste.⁽³⁾

As we have just said, the departure for the country in 1756 was the second stage in that reform, and clearly viewed by him as such. The move was obviously more truly symbolic than actual, given that he lived at a distance of only twenty miles from Paris and that he was often besieged by hordes of visitors whom he would, as often as not, rather not have seen at all. As always with Rousseau, it is the thought that has to count, as well as the feelings on which the the thought is, in the first and last analysis, based.

It has been said of Rousseau that he presents us with

two roads that never meet, one leading back to nature and the other leading on to community.⁽⁴⁾ Surely, however, it behoves us to see that the two are never as mutually exclusive as that view implies. The argument in this work has been that we must take a dialectical approach to the question of 'back to nature or forward to community'. In an earlier chapter we have quoted Claude Lévi-Strauss' view that some of Rousseau's works convey the message that we should go back to the society of nature to reflect upon the nature of society. Other writers have also taken a dialectical approach to that question. Jean Starobinski has referred to the possibility that through human art we can perfect our culture and achieve a sort of 'second nature', and he insists that this must always be seen as possible. Havelock Ellis even referred to Rousseau as going 'forward to nature' in the form of the social contract community. Finally, as early as 1912, Gustave Lanson had posed Rousseau's question as follows: 'Without returning to the state of nature and without giving up the advantages of the social state, how can the man of civil society recover the good things of natural man, innocence and happiness?'⁽⁵⁾ We must remember that development is for better and for worse. In Rousseau's view bodies politic are going to come and go; there is always going to be a tension between nature and society and the point is to reconcile the two as well as possible without going to abstract extremes in either direction. From that point of view Rousseau succeeded remark-

ably well in his endeavours, both personal and public.

Let us leave Rousseau with the last word, in this beautiful and touching testimony to his sense of what it means to say, 'I am a Citizen'. It is from a letter to Du Peyrou, dated April twenty-second, 1765:

Once, I had a surname which I think I now deserve more than ever. At Paris they simply called me "the Citizen". Give me this title which is so dear to me, and for which I have paid so dearly; see to it, in a way, that this usage spreads, and that all those who love me never call me "Sir", but say in speaking of me "the Citizen", and writing to me, "My dear Citizen". I charge you to make known my desire, and I believe all your friends as well as my own will gladly give me this pleasure. Meanwhile, begin by setting the example . . . (6)

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¹See, on this, Judith shklar, Men and Citizens (Cambridge, 1968), especially Chapter 1, where, at p. 8, she repeats her view of Rousseau's 'characteristic indifference' to history.

²Eigth Promenade, Reveries, pp. 156-157.

³The first part of his reform is described in the Second Promenade, Reveries, pp.62-63 (the quote in the text), and Confessions, pp.374-376.

⁴Allan Bloom, 'Rousseau', in The History of Political Philosophy, eds. Leo Strauss and David Storey (Chicago, 1962), p.552.

⁵Claude Levi-Strauss, 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau, fondateur des sciences del'Homme', in Samuel Baud-Bovy et al., Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Neuchatel, 1962), p.245, Jean Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La Transparence et l'Obstacle (Paris, 1957), p.345, Havelock Ellis, From Rousseau to Proust (Freeport, New York, 1968), p.112, Gustave Lanson, 'L'Unite de la Pensee de J.J. Rousseau', Annales Societe Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1912, p.16.

⁶Letter to Du Peyrou, April 22nd, 1765 (Letters, p.314).

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