

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Discourse on the Origin of Inequalities among Men

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1. State of Nature

a. Probably never existed

i. Importance:

1. Nature of men

a. Guideline to judge or present state

i. Foundation of society

1. Natural Rights

b. Objection to Enlightenment thinkers

i. Modern Thinkers

1. Laws of Nature→Society

a. Contradiction

i. Enlightenment needed to understand Laws of Nature

1. Society→Enlightenment→Laws of Nature→ Society

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1. State of Nature

- a. Amoral
- b. Humans live dispersed
 - i. Solitary lifestyle
 - 1. No communication
 - ii. Fight or flight reaction
 - 1. Most commonly: flight
 - a. Fight only in rare circumstances when outcomes are known
- c. No property
- d. Freedom
- e. Propitious for Peace

Discourse on the Origin of Inequalities among Men

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1. Nature of Human Beings

a. Equal

i. Animal species

b. Principles of the Human Soul (prior to reason)

i. **Self-preservation (main concern)**

ii. **Compassion**

a. **Duties toward men**

i. Source: sentient being (not rational)

2. Conjunction of Principles:

a. **Self-preservation and Compassion=Laws of Nature**

3. Never harm others unless threat to the self

Discourse on the Origin of Inequalities among Men

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1. Nature of Human Beings

a. Inequalities

- i. Natural/Physical
- ii. Moral/Political (**not part of Nature**)

b. No negative characteristics

- i. Society: avarice, greed, need, oppression

c. Resourceful

- i. Satisfies all his needs
 - 1. No intrinsic instincts: appropriate from other animals

d. **MAINT TRAIT: FREE AGENCY**

- i. **Chooses or rejects by act of freedom (not as other animals)**
 - 1. **Awareness of this freedom**

Discourse on the Origin of Inequalities among Men

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1. Society

- a. Changes human soul
 - i. More accumulation of knowledge → less knowledge of nature of man
 - 1. (Criticism to Enlightenment)**
- b. Moral/Political Inequalities
 - 1. “Privileges enjoyed by some at the expenses of others”
 - ii. By convention
 - 1. Authorized by the consent of men
- c. Humans:
 - i. Reason:
 - 1. Negative Characteristics: egocentrism, avarice, greed, need, oppression
- d. Education: corrupted natural qualities

Discourse on the Origin of Inequalities among Men

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“In instinct alone, man had everything he needed to live in the state of nature; in cultivated reason, he has only what he needs to live in society”

On the Original Contract: Signature–Meaning

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- Signature:
 - “By Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Citizen of Geneva”
 - What does this tell you about the thinker?
 - What can you preview about his political theory?
 - Private v. Public
 - Individual v. Citizen

Introduction

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1. Goal:

- a. Legitimate rule of administration
 - i. Man as they are (state of nature)
 - ii. Laws as they may be (protecting H.B.)

Book I: Chapter I

1. Social Order (Sacred Right)
 - a. Basis of all other rights:
 - i. By convention.
2. Force v. Freedom
 - a. "...so long as people is constrained to obey, it does well. As soon as it can shake off the yoke and does shake it off, it does even better"
3. "Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains"
 - a. Meaning of chains?

Book I: Chapter II

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1. Natural Society

a. Family

i. Bond=need

1. After obedience (age of reason)→ Liberty

a. Common liberty

b. Own Master

ii. Unity of family

1. By convention

Book I: Chapter II

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1. Family

- a. Prototype of political society
 - 1. Father: leader
 - 2. Children: populace
- ii. Born: equal and free
 - 1. Give up liberty for utility

Book I: Chapter II

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1. Objection to Aristotle

a. Aristotle:

i. Men are not equal

1. Born to be masters
2. Born to be slaves

b. Rousseau's answer

- i. "If there are slaves by nature, it is because there have been slaves against nature. Force has produced the first slaves; their cowardice has perpetuated them"

Book I: Chapter III

1. The right of the strongest
 - a. Problems: **Force does not bring about right.**
 - i. Force is not enough
 1. Cannot transform: Force into right
 - a. Force is physical, not moral
 - b. Necessity, not will.
 2. Cannot transform: Obedience into duty
 - a. If not forced to obey → no obligation
 - ii. Superior force → Always right
 1. Disobey with impunity = disobey legitimately
 2. If obey because of force → No duty
 - a. Not forced to obey → Not obliged

Book I: Chapter IV

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1. Convention is Source of Authority

a. Argument

1. No man has natural authority
2. Force does not give rise to any right
3. Therefore, Convention = Source of Legitimate Authority.

Book I: Chapter IV

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- Objection to Absolute Power
 - i. Objection
 - 1. Slaves: sell themselves for sustenance
 - a. Citizens→ King takes its sustenance
 - b. Kings→ wars
 - 2. Man: Give oneself gratuitously→ illegitimate
 - a. Populace→ mad men
 - i. Madness→ no right.
 - 1. “Renouncing one’s liberty is renouncing one’s dignity as a man”
 - 2. Removing liberty = Removing morality

Book I: Chapter IV

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- Objection to Absolute Power
 - Contradictory
 - Absolute authority--Limitless obedience
 - No commitment from government to citizen
 - Absolute government: right to demand everything

Book I: Chapter IV

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- State of War
 - Relationship between things and not men
 - Impossible:
 - State of Nature: no property
 - Society: authority of the laws
 - Relationship between states
 - Men → enemies as soldiers not private individuals.

Book I: Chapter V

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1. Subduing a multitude

- a. Aggregation
- b. Private interest
- c. No body politic

2. Ruling a society

- a. Association
- b. Public good
- c. Body politic

Book I: Chapter V

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1. True Foundation of Society

- a. Act whereby people become a people
 - i. Prior to choosing a government
 - ii. If not existing
 - 1. No reason for minority to follow majority
 - a. Majority rule
 - i. Established by convention
 - ii. Presupposed unanimity

Book I: Chapter VI

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1. State of Nature: Obstacles

- a. Harmful to self-preservation
- b. Need to alter mode of existence
 - i. Man: unite forces
 - 1. Forces + Single Moving Power

2. Problem:

- a. “Find a form of association which defends and protects with all common forces the person and goods of each associate, and by means of which each one, while uniting with all, nevertheless obeys only himself and remains as free as before”

Book I: Chapter VI

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1. Problem

- a. Individual Liberty and Force → means of sustenance
 - i. How can he unite without harming himself?

Book I: Chapter VI

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1. Solution:

a. Social Contract: Association

1. If violated → resumes natural liberty

ii. **“The total alienation of each associate, together with all of his rights to the entire community”**

1. Each to all: equal → no burden

2. Gains what he loses + Greater amount of force

3. Alienation made without reservation = perfect

iii. **“Each of us places his person and all his powers in common under the supreme direction of the general will”**

1. Each member = indivisible part of the whole.

iv. Product: **moral and collective body**

Book I: Chapter VII

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1. Association

- a. Commitment: public and private individual
 - i. sovereign → private individuals
 - ii. citizens → sovereign
- b. **Sovereign:** (made up of private individuals)
 - i. No need to offer guarantees to subjects
 - 1. Impossible: body hurting all members
 - 2. Sovereign → It is as it should be
- c. **Subject:**
 - i. Needs to offer guarantees
 - 1. Private will contrary to General Will

Book I: Chapter VII

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1. Ruin of Body Politic

- a. Enjoy rights of citizen without duties of subject
- b. **“Whoever refuses to obey the general will will be forced to do so by the entire body. This means merely that he will be forced to be free”**

Book I: Chapter VIII

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1. Transition to Civil State

- a. Changes in men: new advantages
 - i. Instinct→ justice
 - 1. Behavior: moral quality
 - a. Appetite→ right
 - b. Physical impulse→ duty
 - ii. Reason
 - 1. Before inclinations

iii. “Transformed him from a stupid, limited animal into an intelligent being and a man”

Book I: Chapter VIII

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1. Gains in Society:

a. Moral liberty

i. Master of himself

1. Driven by appetite = slavery

ii. “Obedience to the law one prescribes to oneself is liberty”

Book II: Chapter I

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1. State

- i. Goal: common good
- ii. Force: general will
 - 1. What the private interests have in common
- b. Sovereignty: exercise of general will
 - i. Cannot be alienated**
 - 1. Power can be transmitted, but not the will.
 - 2. The moment there is a master, there is no sovereign
 - a. Master: private will
 - i. Preferences
 - 3. Leaders: manifestation of general will
 - a. Sovereign: free to oppose them

Book II: Chapter II

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1. Sovereignty

a. **Indivisible**

- i. General will: act of sovereignty
- ii. Partial will: private will

Book II: Chapter III

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1. General Will

- a. Always right
- b. Toward public good
 - i. We always want what is good
 - 1. Not always see what it is
 - a. Populace is tricked
 - b. Need: sufficiently informed populace

Book II: Chapter IV

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1. State

a. Moral person

i. Life: union of its members

ii. Main concern: own conservation

1. Sovereignty

a. Universal compulsory force of the State

i. Absolute power over its members (source: social contract)

b. Directed by General will

Book II: Chapter IV

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1. Act of Sovereignty: A convention of the body with its members
 - a. Convention
 - i. Social contract as basis→ legitimate convention
 - ii. Convention common to all→ equitable convention
 - iii. Convention's goal is general good→ useful convention
 - iv. Solid convention→ public force and supreme power as a guarantee

Book II: Chapter IV

1. Private v. Public Individual

a. Citizen v. Sovereign

i. Men

1. Alienate only what is of consequence to the community

a. What's of consequence → decided by the sovereign

ii. Duties as subjects

a. All services the sovereign demands

b. General Will → derived from all, applied to all

i. Mutual commitments → Obligatory commitments

1. Working for sovereign = working for oneself

Book II: Chapter IV

1. Rights and Duties

- a. Depend on commitment and convention

2. As part of the sovereign

- a. Natural Independence → Liberty
- b. Power to harm → own security
- c. Force (could have been overcome) → right (invincible by social union)
 - i. Conclusion:
 - 1. "Their life itself, which they have devoted to the state, is continually protected by it"

Book II: Chapter VI

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1. Purpose of Social Contract

- a. Existence to body politic

2. Purpose of Legislation

- a. Giving a will to the body politic

- i. Lack of natural sanctions

- 1. Rights and duties by conventions

- ii. What is a law?

- 1. The enactment of a statute by the populace that concerns the entire populace

- a. Subject matter: general as the will that enacts the statute

Book II: Chapter VI

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1. Laws

- a. Acts of the general will
- b. Above everyone
 - i. Prince is not above the laws
 - 1. Prince=Member of the state
- c. Cannot be unjust
 - i. No one can be unjust to themselves
- d. Records of our own will
 - i. There is no oxymoron: free but subject to law

Book II: Chapter VI

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1. Republic

- a. A state ruled by laws
 - i. Populace should be the author
 - ii. Independently of rule of administration
- b. Governed by public interest
- c. Only legitimate government