

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712-78)

- Passing over: Montesquieu and the **Scottish Enlightenment** (David Hume and Adam Smith)
- Rousseau's engagement with—and eventual break from—the French **philosophes** (Voltaire, Diderot, etc.)
- Emile*, social inequality, and the role of **amour propre** as the handmaiden of reason and compassion
- From Hobbesian **negative liberty** to Rousseau's "forced to be free" **positive liberty**

Key questions

- To what extent can thinkers—whether Rousseau, Marx, Nietzsche, or others—be 'held accountable' for the use of their ideas by subsequent leaders?
- How does Rousseau challenge some of the key themes of the **enlightenment**?
- What is the **general will**? How is it different both from the '**particular will**' and the '**will of all**'?

A Dissertation on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind

- What two 'types' of inequality does Rousseau distinguish?
- How is Rousseau's 'state of nature' different from both Hobbes' and Locke's?
 - A key distinction: It is [compassion] which will always prevent a sturdy savage from robbing a weak child or a feeble old man...it is this which, instead of inculcating that sublime maxim of rational justice, *do to others as you would have them do unto you*, inspires all men with that other maxim of natural goodness, much less perfect indeed, but perhaps more useful; *Do good to yourself with as little evil as possible to others.*"
- Are you convinced by Rousseau's view of the **noble savage**? Of civilized man?
- What does it mean to say that "moral inequality, authorized by positive right alone, clashes with natural right, whenever it is not proportionate to physical inequality." (MPT 142)

The Social Contract – "man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains"

- In some respects, Rousseau's prescription is the most demanding we have come across so far: while Hobbes defended an outmoded authoritarianism and Locke could be viewed as defending the status quo of (capitalist) liberal democracy, what does Rousseau's ideal look like—and have any societies to date ever come close to realizing it?
- "For Rousseau, natural liberty and freedom in society are totally different things and we have to realize this and stop striving for independence and instead focus on social equality as our goal." (Roberts & Sutch 117)
- "The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty." (MPT 144) Can you think of examples? And why is Rousseau unconvinced?
- What does Rousseau have to say about the Dutch jurist Grotius' view on the 'right of slavery'? (146-7)
- A question for 'majority rule' democracies: "how have a hundred men who wish for a master the right to vote on behalf of ten who do not?"
- "The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before. This is the fundamental problem of which the *Social Contract* provides the solution." How?
- "each man, in giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody; and as there is no associate over which he does not acquire the same right as he yields others over himself, he gains an equivalent for everything he loses"
- What does the infamous phrase '**forced to be free**' actually mean in context (IPT p. 150)?
- "What man loses by the social contract is his **natural liberty** and an unlimited right to everything...what he gains is **civil liberty** and the proprietorship of all he possesses...the mere impulse of appetite is slavery, while obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty." (IPT 151) What is this saying? Do you agree?
- "The **particular will** tends...to partiality, while the general will tends to equality...the moment a master exists, there is no longer a sovereign, and from that moment the body politic has ceased to exist." (IPT 152)
- Special focus on "Chapter III: Whether the general will is fallible" (IPT 153-4)

For next Tuesday: Immanuel Kant (bring a printout of both of these documents to class)

- "**Perpetual Peace**" – read the whole thing carefully (ideally twice)
- "**What is Enlightenment**" – focus on the first four and a half paragraphs