



**Paper : Themes in Comparative Political  
Lesson: Rousseau on Inequality  
Lesson Developer: Swaha Das  
College/ Department: Indraprastha College for  
Women**

## Rousseau on Inequality

### Contents

- Rousseau--Why equality?
- A partial biographical sketch of Rousseau, the maverick man: From a difficult childhood to sudden fame
- Challenging civilization: Declining virtues and the origin of political inequality
- Necessity of the social contract
- Gender inequality in Rousseau's the social contract
- Glossary
- Exercise
- Multiple choice questions
- References



### Rousseau--Why equality?

The idea of equality - or, the passionate belief that all human beings ought to be considered equal - is perhaps the single most defining characteristic of modern Politics. In the conserved canon of Modern European political philosophy, nobody before Rousseau had ever placed as great an emphasis on the equality of men as he did. But when we say men, we are literally alluding to one gender, and one gender alone. Despite his profound sensitivity, Rousseau failed to perceive the perils of gender inequality. His writings thus provoked Mary Wollstonecraft's *A vindication of the rights of woman* (1792), in which she ran Rousseau's presumptions against his own arguments. This work marked, according to traditional history, the rising tide of Modern feminism. Despite this glaring deficiency within Rousseau's diagnosis of the origins and foundations of inequality, it nonetheless ideologically inspired the French revolutionaries of 1789, while also influencing the worldview of Immanuel Kant, arguably the most emblematic moral philosopher of the European Enlightenment.

### **From a difficult childhood to sudden fame: A partial biographical sketch of Rousseau, a maverick man**

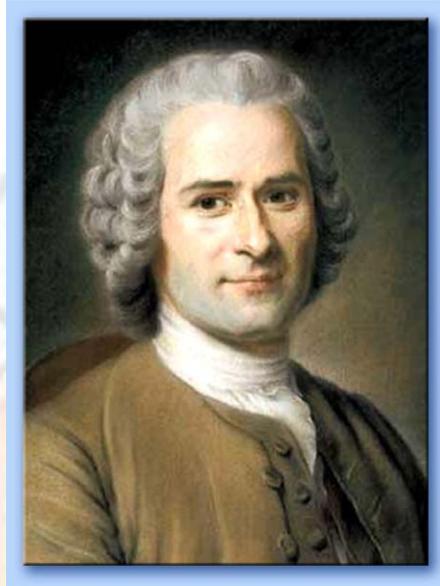
If it were believed that the personal life of an individual isn't central to an understanding of his/her political writings, such a belief might be belied in the case of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78). His unconventional critique of established society and the consequent defense of the moral equality of all human beings are best understood in the light of Rousseau's life that was not quite ordinary. He mingled with paupers, princes, and the Parisian elite; travelled widely, while fleeing often from persecution for holding and publishing-in-print contrarian views; struggled through a difficult childhood to be enveloped in uncommon relationships with women; loved music more than anything else, except perhaps, Nature that was removed from human civilization; and suffered immensely from angst, guilt, and paranoia - all of which he poured out through his pen.

## Rousseau on Inequality

**Jean Jacques Rousseau** (1712-1788)

Portrait by Maurice Quentin de La Tour

Pastel on paper; Antoine Lécuyer Museum



Source:

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/b/b7/Jean-Jacques\\_Rousseau\\_%28painted\\_portrait%29.jpg/220px-Jean-Jacques\\_Rousseau\\_%28painted\\_portrait%29.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/b/b7/Jean-Jacques_Rousseau_%28painted_portrait%29.jpg/220px-Jean-Jacques_Rousseau_%28painted_portrait%29.jpg) accessed on March 19 2015

Jean-Jacques was born on 28 June 1712 in Calvinist Geneva as the second son of Issac Rousseau, a watchmaker who had travelled widely. The mother died a few days after his birth and was brought up by his father, who encouraged his son in returning to the classics of European literature. When his father fled Geneva in 1722 to escape a prison sentence, Jean-Jacques came under the care of his maternal uncle. Around the age of fourteen, we find that Rousseau was apprenticed to Abel Ducommun, a cruel master-engraver. So, when Rousseau found himself outside the locked city gates of Geneva after returning late from a walk, he chose the opportunity to run away.

Runaway Protestant youths were often taken-in by priests, who wished to convert them to Catholicism. Rousseau soon ended up with one such priest, who put him under the care of Francoise-Louise de la Tour, Baroness de Warrens. She sent Rousseau to Turin for training in ecclesiastical matters. Rousseau supported himself by working for different aristocratic families as a servant though he aspired to be an intellectual, and consequently, resented being treated as an inferior. This forced him to abandon Turin after a short-stay,

## Rousseau on Inequality

and after an adventurous trip with “dubious companions” Rousseau returned as a young adult to the bosom of Madame de Warens, who though once his guardian had now become his lover. The Baroness would have a lasting impact on Rousseau’s life. Her encouragement led him to spend much time reading and studying, and of course, walking. But, Rousseau was entirely self-taught. When Warens began a liaison with another man, Rousseau left for Paris dissatisfied as he was her relationship.

During this period Rousseau discovered that music was his true calling, and in 1743, published his *Dissertation on Modern Music*. The Academy of Sciences in Paris was not quite impressed with Rousseau’s work but that did not prevent Rousseau from connecting and networking with the Parisian elite. An influential and wealthy Parisian socialite Madame Dupin helped Rousseau find employment as secretary to the French Ambassador to Venice. Rousseau however became embittered by the humiliating treatment that he received at the hands of the ambassador and he began to confirm his opinion that justice could never be realized in a social system based on the inequality of status. He returned to the fold of Madame Dupin and worked as a research assistant, while composing operas and plays.

In the meanwhile, he gained a mistress in Theresa le Vasseur, who worked as a hotel maid. Rousseau fathered five children with her but sent each one to an orphanage in the belief that such homes were better for his children. Rousseau would compensate this guilt-ridden action with a treatise on children’s education and psychology that would later inspire Modern educationists, like Maria Montessori, amongst others. Rousseau married Theresa, when he was 56 years old, and she would remain his constant companion till his death.

In the 1740s, Rousseau made acquaintances with the leading French philosophers of the Enlightenment, especially Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, who were the editors of the *Encyclopedia*. He thus contributed a number of entries to the *Encyclopedia*, and en route one of his visits while calling on Diderot, Rousseau saw an advertisement for an essay writing competition organized under the auspices of the Academy of Dijon. The essay was expected to be a response to the question: Has the progress of sciences and arts contributed to the purification of morals?

<b>Value addition-Did you know</b>
<b>What effects has Science produced on Modern human beings?</b>
“[The sciences] ... are even more dangerous in the effects they produce” (para 39). “Our souls have become corrupted in proportion as our sciences and our arts have advanced toward perfection” (para 16). “As the sciences grow, the conveniences of life increase, the arts improve, and luxury spreads; true courage is enervated, the military virtues vanish...”

## Rousseau on Inequality

(para 47)

Extract from *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*

Rousseau became extremely excited by flashes of thoughts, and with encouragement from Diderot, who loved controversy, Rousseau turned in his essay. His central argument was: "not only does progress in arts and sciences fail to foster moral/political progress, it actively fosters the very opposite; and it does so always and necessarily". The Academy awarded Rousseau the first prize, and stated that it did so because of the contrarian nature of the response. This essay is known as the *First Discourse* or the *Discourse on the sciences and arts* (1750).

The polemics generated by this award winning essay and the success of his musical titled *The Village Soothsayer* (1752) announced the arrival of a truly original critic of civilization on the horizon of European Enlightenment.

### Value addition-for better understanding

#### What effects has Modern civilization brought upon human morality?

"[Earlier, in the Ancient period] ... men found their security in how easily they saw through one another ..." (para 12). "[But now,] ... a vile and deceiving uniformity prevails our morals ..." (para 13). "... No more sincere friendships; no more real esteem; no more well-founded trust. Suspicions, offenses, fears, coolness, reserve, hatred, betrayal will constantly hide beneath this even and deceitful veil of politeness, beneath this so much vaunted urbanity which we owe to the enlightenment of our century ..." (para 14). "[There are even philosophers who urge that] ... there are neither virtues nor vices, and that moral good and evil are chimeras." (para 57)

Extract from *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*

But in the face of acclaim, Rousseau would begin to disdain fame, turn down an invitation to meet the King and engage in quarrels with esteemed intellectuals such as Voltaire and David Hume. This was strange indeed because Rousseau hardly ever spoke ill of anyone, was always polite, charming, and extremely sensitive at heart.

**François-Marie Arouet (1694-1778) better known as Voltaire Epitome of the French Enlightenment and defender of Modernity; challenged Rousseau's critique of progress -Portrait by Nicholas de Largillière, Palace of Versailles**

## Rousseau on Inequality

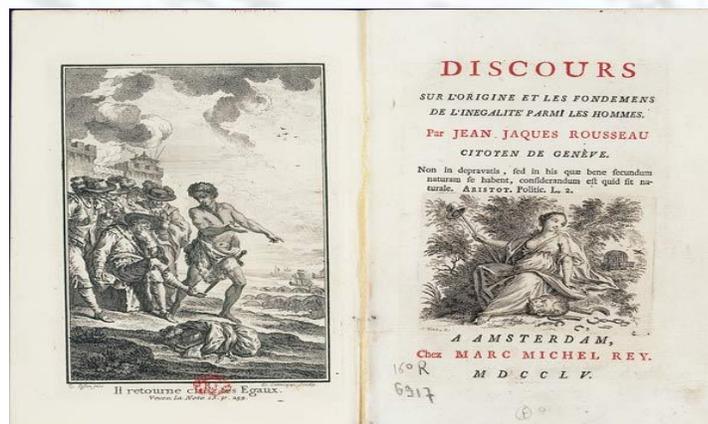


Source:

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/39/Nicolas de Largilli%27s%20Portrait\\_of\\_Jean-Jacques\\_Rousseau.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/39/Nicolas_de_Largilli%27s%20Portrait_of_Jean-Jacques_Rousseau.jpg) accessed on March 19, 2015

Rousseau's arguments against inequality are dispersed across at least five of his published works written over a period of twelve years. These works are the *Discourse on the sciences and arts* (1750), *Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality among men* (1755), *Discourse on political economy* (1755), *On social contract or principles of political right* (1762), and *Émile or On education* (1762). For an understanding of Rousseau's ideas on (in)equality, one would have to travel along very same road of molting that he undertook while writing these texts.

**Title page of an edition of Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* (1754), published in 1755 in Holland.**



## Rousseau on Inequality

Source: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/06/DOI\\_Rousseau.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/06/DOI_Rousseau.jpg)

Accessed on March 19,

20[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/06/DOI\\_Rousseau.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/06/DOI_Rousseau.jpg)

### Challenging civilization: Declining virtues and the origin of political inequality

Rousseau was amongst the first significant Modern critics of the belief that civilization necessarily implied progress. In response to the question “whether the restoration of sciences and arts has contributed to the purification of morals” posed by the Academy of Dijon, Rousseau wrote out an essay, now known as, the *First Discourse* or the *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*.

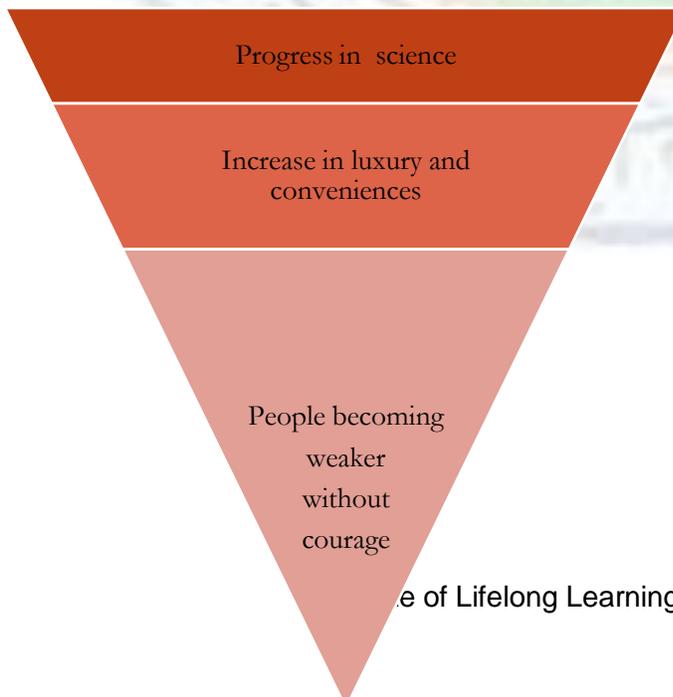
#### Value addition-know it better

#### Why was Modern civilization devoid of virtue according to Rousseau?

“Every artist wants to be applauded. His contemporaries’ praise is the most precious portion of his reward. ...” (para 44) “People no longer ask about a man whether he has probity, but whether he has talents ... Rewards are lavished upon wits, and virtue remains without honors. There are a thousand prizes for fine discourses, none for fine deeds.” (para 53).

Extract from *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*

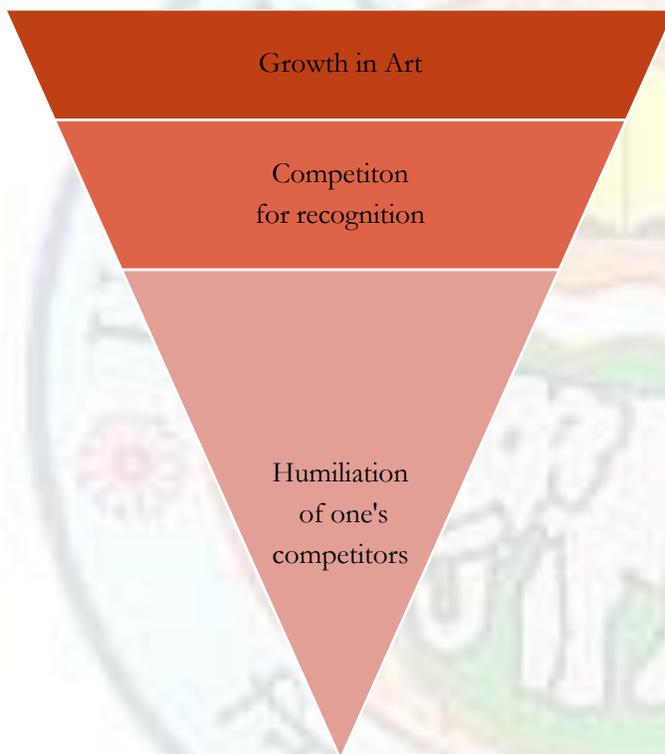
In this discourse, Rousseau argued that the progress in science produced luxuries, and these have made people indolent. Indolence has led to an evaporation of courage and other military virtues.



## Rousseau on Inequality

### Source: Author

Similarly, Rousseau argued that the pursuit of the arts led individuals to attract distinction for oneself and away from others. This urge for distinction led to competition, which in turn led to suspicions, fears, offenses, betrayals and desires to humiliate other people. Thus, while people pretended to be courteous they were constantly deceitful. In short, Rousseau claimed that progress in the sciences and arts led to people becoming less virtuous.



### Source: Author

#### Value addition-Did you know

#### What differences did Rousseau perceive between the Ancient and the Modern?

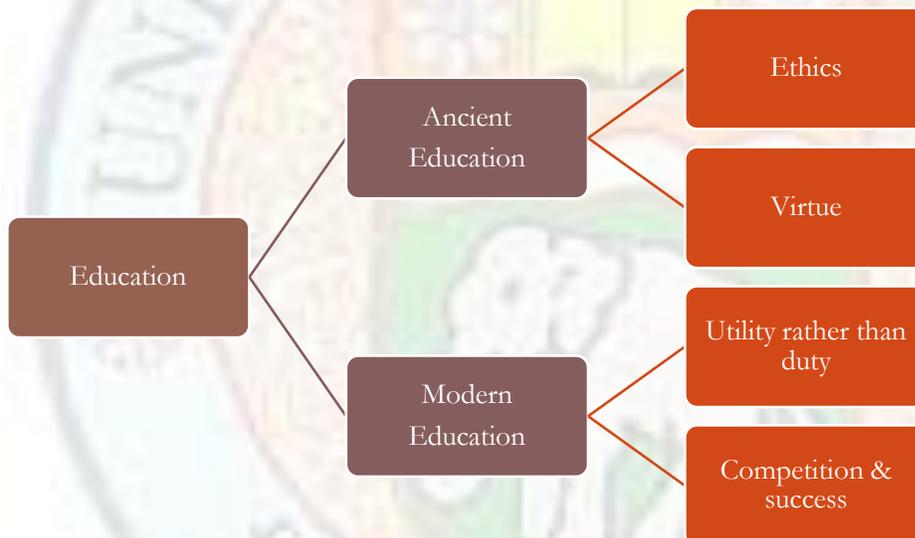
"The ancient politicians forever spoke of morals and of virtue; ours speak only of commerce and of money. One will tell you that in a given land a man is worth the sum for which he would be sold in Algiers; another, pursuing this calculation, will find countries where a man is worth nothing, and others where he is worth less than nothing. They appraise men like herds of cattle. According to them a man is worth to the State only what he consumes in it."

## Rousseau on Inequality

(para 41) "Everywhere I see huge establishments, in which young people are brought up at great expense to learn everything except their duties. ... they will not know the meaning of the words magnanimity, equity, temperance, humanity, courage, ..." (para 51)

Extract from *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*

Modern education fomented competition and urged people to be achievers and successful rather than become virtuous individuals. While Ancient education emphasized the building of character (ethics) and practicing virtues like humility, honesty, magnanimity, equity, and temperance, Modern education was guided by utility or how much money could one make. Young people were now being brought up without a sense of duty towards others unlike previously. Consequently, only achievers were honoured, not virtuous individuals.

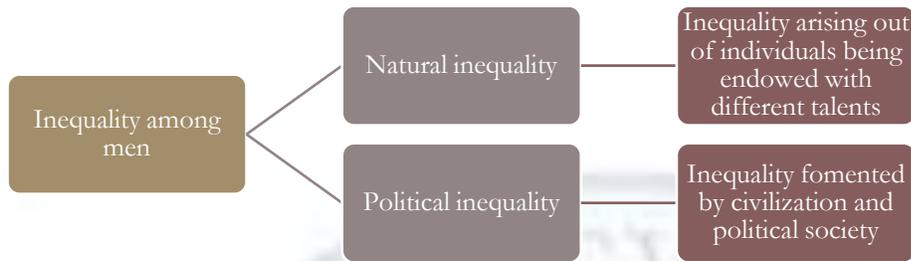


### Source-Author

Consequently, Rousseau concluded his *Discourse on the sciences and arts* with the claim that the decline in values was a consequence of the inequality between human beings. But, such a conclusion led him to another question: what were the origin and foundations of inequality among men, which Rousseau attempted to answer in his *Second Discourse* or the *Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality among men* (1755).

Rousseau delineated two kinds of inequality amongst human beings: natural inequality and political inequality. By natural inequality, Rousseau was referring to some people being endowed with greater talents than others by nature. Political inequality, on the other hand, was the inequality fostered by political society.

## Rousseau on Inequality

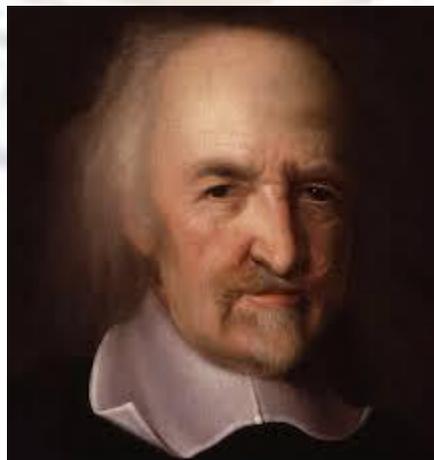


### Source-Author

Rousseau's *Second Discourse* was similarly a response to another question: "What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorized by natural law?", posed by the Academy of Dijon. This time, however, he did not win the prize but Rousseau but his discourse still generated considerable controversy. In this discourse, Rousseau provided a rational reconstruction of the emergence of political inequality and concomitant growth of vices.

Rousseau disagreed with Thomas Hobbes, who lived a century before him, on the nature of human beings. Hobbes believed that life in the state-of-nature was "nasty, short, and brutish". Rousseau was agitated by the Hobbes' conclusion that human beings were naturally cruel and required civil or political institutions for making man milder. Rousseau, unlike Hobbes, believed that human beings in the state-of-nature (a condition prior to the creation of political society) struggled to survive but had innate feelings of compassion.

**Thomas Hobbes (1588-1677-Author of the *Leviathan*, which contained the idea of the all powerful State-Portrait by John Michael Wright, National Portrait Gallery, London**



## Rousseau on Inequality

Source:

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d8/Thomas\\_Hobbes\\_\(portrait\).jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d8/Thomas_Hobbes_(portrait).jpg)

accessed on March 19, 2015

Such feelings of compassion and political equality in the state-of-nature disappeared with the introduction of property. Property led to distinctions of “mine versus thine” or “this belongs to me” versus “that belongs to you”.

### **Value addition- for better understanding**

#### **What was the relationship between property and political society according to Rousseau?**

“The first man, who having fenced off a plot of land, thought of saying “This is mine” and found people simple enough to believe him was the founder of civil [political] society.” (Part II, para 1)

Extract from the *Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality*

As human beings discovered metallurgy and agriculture, there arose the process of dividing and delegating labour amongst men. The more ingenious human beings devised means of diminishing one’s labour and delegating tasks to less gifted men, while acquiring more property for themselves.

### **Value addition- Know it better**

#### **How did natural inequality develop with the emergence of civilization and the division of labour?**

“... from the moment one man began to stand in need of the help of another; from the moment it appeared advantageous to any one man to have enough provisions for two, equality disappeared... slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and grow up ... Metallurgy and agriculture were the two arts which produced this great revolution. ... the most ingenious devised methods of diminishing his labour ... while the other could hardly support himself.”

Extract from the *Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality*

## Rousseau on Inequality

Wealthier men derived pleasure in commanding and disdain others as well as by subduing and enslaving their neighbours. This led to the emergence of vices like vanity. As the rich accumulated more property, and property increased their desires and wants, the poor resorted to robbery. The rich men thus conceived of a plan for legitimizing their property and invented laws. The implementation of these laws required institutions for which political society was created. As a result, political society institutionalized political inequality that emerged through clever usurpation of property by the rich while political society destroyed the natural liberty of human beings in the state-of-nature. Rousseau concluded that political society led to perpetual labour, slavery and wretchedness.

### Value addition- for better understanding

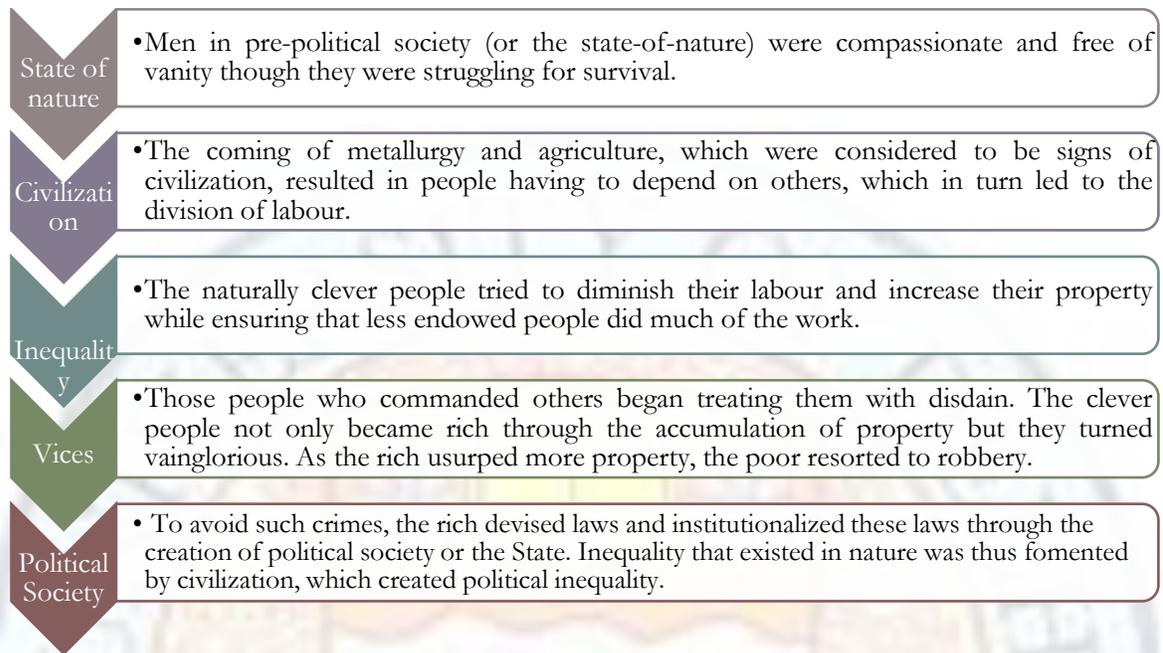
#### How did the establishment of political society foment inequality?

"The rich, in particular, must have felt how much they suffered by a constant state of war ... however speciously they might disguise their usurpations, they knew that they were founded on precarious and false titles; ... the rich man, thus urged by necessity, conceived at length the profoundest plan that ever entered the mind of man: this was to employ in his favour the forces of those who attacked him, to make allies of his adversaries, to inspire them with different maxims, and to give them other institutions as favourable to himself..."

"Let us join to guard the weak from oppression, to restrain the ambitious, and secure to every man the possession of what belongs to him ... All ran headlong to their chains, in hopes of securing their liberty; for they had just wit enough to perceive the advantages of political institutions, without experience enough to enable them to foresee the dangers. ... The origin of society and law, which bound new fetters on the poor, and gave new powers to the rich; which irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, eternally fixed the law of property and inequality, converted clever usurpation into unalterable right, and for the advantage of a few ambitious individuals subjected all mankind to perpetual labour, slavery and wretchedness."

Extract from the *Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality*

## Rousseau on Inequality



### **Necessity of the social contract**

Although Rousseau romanticized the state-of-nature for being free of vices, he was not suggesting that human beings avoid political society and return to the state-of-nature. Instead, he proposed a plan to create a legitimate and just political society or State. The foundation of this plan was based on the philosophy of the social contract, which is one of the defining characteristics of Modern politics. In this sense, Rousseau is often compared with the Thomas Hobbes and John Locke – the two other noted social contract philosophers. However, there were essential differences in the manner in which each one of them conceived of the social contract.

## Rousseau on Inequality

**John Locke (1632-1704)- Author of the *Two treatises on government*; One of the prominent social contract philosophers along with Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau; considered to the founder of the liberal tradition of political philosophy and the Modern discourse of natural rights**



Source:

[http://t0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQF5XTv7KO0q5MhAq26X6rsgLDFN9IsEJIRo4Fj\\_12I-tbZ9Aje1Q](http://t0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQF5XTv7KO0q5MhAq26X6rsgLDFN9IsEJIRo4Fj_12I-tbZ9Aje1Q) accessed on March 19, 2015

The elements of Rousseau's social contract appeared in nascent form in his *Third Discourse* or the *Discourse on political economy*, which was published first as an entry in the *Encyclopedia* (volume V or 1755) edited by Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert but was also published independently in 1758. Rousseau's ideas for establishing a legitimate State or political society were further developed in *On social contract* (1762) - Rousseau's most renowned treatise.

### **Value addition- for better understanding**

#### **How did Rousseau explain the emergence of vices?**

"[...] property and his power to serve or injure others, wit, beauty, strength or skill, merit or talents became the only qualities capable of commanding respect, and it soon became necessary to possess or to afford them. [...] It now became the interest of men to appear

## Rousseau on Inequality

what they really were not. To be and to seem became two totally different things; [...] from this distinction sprang insolent pomp and cheating trickery, with all the numerous vices that go in their train. [...] in consequence of a multiplicity of new wants [...] each became in some degree a slave [while] even in becoming the master of other men [...] thus he must have been sly and artful in his behaviour to some, and imperious and cruel to others; being under a kind of necessity to ill-use all the persons of whom we stood in need, when he could not frighten them into compliance [...] vile propensity to injure one another, and with a secret jealousy, which is more dangerous, as it puts on the mask of benevolence, to carry its point with greater security [...] All these evils were the first effects of property, and the inseparable attendants of growing inequality. [...] The wealthy, on their part, had no sooner begun to taste the pleasure of command, than they disdained all others, and, using their old slaves to acquire new, thought of nothing but subduing and enslaving their neighbours; like ravenous wolves, which, having once tasted human flesh, despise every other food and thenceforth seek only men to devour. [...] Usurpations by the rich, robbery by the poor [...] title for the strongest and that of the first occupier [...] The new-born state of society thus gave rise to a horrible state of war."

Extract from the *Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality*

In the *Discourse on political economy*, Rousseau discussed issues of public finance and taxes in considerable detail. The purpose of taxation, for Rousseau, was to reduce the difference between the rich and the poor. Along with the discussion on taxation, Rousseau also deals with the question of the body politic, which is represented by the General Will. The General Will, according to Rousseau, aimed at the preservation and welfare of the whole and every part of society. These ideas were further developed in his *On social contract*, which provided a plan for establishing a legitimate State; and legitimacy was possible only if all members of the State had the freedom to participate in enacting their laws for themselves. For Rousseau, direct democracy was the institutional device that guaranteed the desired freedom. Thus, Rousseau demonstrated the close connection between direct democracy and legislative freedom.

## Rousseau on Inequality

### Value addition- surf and know

#### Review

To read different voices on Rousseau ,you may read from :

Reviewed Works: *On the Social Contract* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Judith Masters, Roger D. Masters; *Of the Social Contract* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Richard W. Crosby

Review by: Millard B. Stahle

*The Western Political Quarterly*

Vol. 32, No. 4 (Dec., 1979), pp. 499-501

Published by: [University of Utah](#) on behalf of the [Western Political Science Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/447911>

### Gender inequality in Rousseau's the social contract

Although Rousseau has been credited with analyzing the origin and foundations of political inequality, he has been criticized for re-establishing gender inequality. In Rousseau's *Emile*, there was a reassertion of the subjugation of women. [Insert Box 9 here] Rousseau feared that as women could not control their unlimited desires and their bodily passions, they were incapable of developing the morality required in civil or political society. Therefore, women threatened the political order and could bring out a ruin of both men and women. Consequently, Rousseau argued that women must be subjected to a man or the judgment of men.

To bring about a restraint in the behaviour of women, Rousseau suggested that women's education must foster modesty and cleanliness, while enabling them to be pleasing to men. The purpose of women's actions must be to do whatever is required for ensuring that her husband was a good citizen. To be a good citizen, a man must be a good husband and householder for which he required a wife, who upholds order at home. The good wife thus reigned over the family, and the strength of her reign was her ability for heeding the commands of the head of the household.

The inevitable conclusion of Rousseau's argumentation was that for men to be good citizens they had to be in charge of the household, for which they desired complete access to women's bodies and minds. Rousseau thus clearly destroyed any possible autonomy of the female gender. It was therefore not surprising that Mary Wollstonecraft critiqued

## Rousseau on Inequality

Rousseau's arguments in her *A vindication of the rights of woman* – a work that is often considered to mark the beginning of Modern feminist writing.

**Mary Wollstonecraft (1757-97)**

**Considered to be one of the founding figures of feminism Portrait by John Opie circa 1797; National Portrait Gallery, London**



Source: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/dc/Marywollstonecraft.jpg>  
accessed on March 19, 2015

### **Value addition- Surf and know**

#### **Rousseau and gender inequality**

To read more about Rousseau's perspective on gender inequality you may read from :

#### **The Machiavellian Rousseau: Gender and Family Relations in the Discourse on the Origin of Inequality**

Emanuele Saccarelli

*Political Theory*

Vol. 37, No. 4 (August 2009), pp. 482-510

Published by: [Sage Publications, Inc.](http://www.sagepub.com)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25655496>

Page Count: 29

## Rousseau on Inequality

Far more significant is the fact that in the history of Western political philosophy, from Aristotle to Rousseau, women were either portrayed as subjugated beings or their participation in politics was ignored altogether. Rousseau critiqued inequality between men as a consequence of civilization and the growth of political society but re-established gender inequality that was equally pervasive since the establishment of the polis in Ancient Greece and the beginning of political theory in the West.



## Rousseau on Inequality

### Glossary

**Baroness:** Wife or daughter of a baron; belonged to the first Estate (nobility) in the hierarchical social order of the ancient regime

**Calvinism:** Christian creed founded in Geneva by John Calvin, who organized the Protestant doctrine into a comprehensive theological system in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

**Citizenship:** Individual membership of a political community/State; According to Aristotle, a citizen is both the ruler as well as the ruled, therefore a citizen rules over himself.

**Civil Society:** Notional sphere of human activity or the set of non-State and non-governmental institutions

**Enlightenment:** An eighteenth century intellectual movement that emphasized the application of reason

**Feminism:** Variety of intellectual and activist currents that challenged the male domination of women for liberating women

**French Revolution:** Series of events since 1789 that resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of the ideas of the people, natural rights and the republic

**Gender:** Psychological and social construction of identity that may transcend the binary sexes of male and female

**General Will:** According to Rousseau the General Will is preoccupied with the common interest of the people. It may be distinguished from the Will of All, which is the sum of particular wills.

**Modern:** The word itself means "in our time". Often referred to the period since 18<sup>th</sup> century

**Natural Law:** Universally applicable norms governing human behaviour

## Rousseau on Inequality

**Patriarchy:** Rule of the elder male over the younger, and of the male over the female.

**Protestantism:** An umbrella term referring to the variety of denominations that challenged the Holy Roman Church since the time of Martin Luther in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century

**State:** A political community with the power to make laws and punish citizens or subjects for the transgressions of laws

**State of Nature:** Social condition of human beings without a common power to make laws or punish transgressions; often equated with pre-political society/ prior to the establishment of the State

**Social Contract:** A contract by the people for establishing a political system through the consent of the governed

### Exercise:

1. What was Rousseau's answer to the question whether the restoration of sciences and arts has contributed to the purification of morals?
2. What effect has science produced on modern human beings?
3. What differences did Rousseau perceive between the ancient and the modern?
4. What effects has modern civilization brought upon human morality?
5. Why was modern civilization devoid of virtue according to Rousseau?
6. What according to Rousseau was the relationship between property and political society?
7. How did natural inequality develop with the emergence of civilization and the division of labour?

## Rousseau on Inequality

8. How did Rousseau explain the emergence of vices?
9. How did the establishment of political society foment inequality?
10. How did Rousseau perceive the role of women?
11. Spot Geneva, Paris, Turin, and Venice on the world map.

### Multiple choice Questions

1. Who is the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*?
  - a. Rousseau
  - b. Mary Wollstonecraft
  - c. Thomas Hobbes
  - d. Carol Pateman
2. The source of all laws according to Rousseau is
  - a. The Parliament
  - b. The General Will
  - c. The monarch
  - d. The government
3. The author of *Patriarcha* which says that fathers and kings are equivalent and fathers are monarchs of their families is
  - a. Robert Filmer
  - b. John Locke
  - c. Adam
  - d. Rousseau
4. The first discourse of Rousseau is
  - a. The Discourse on the Sciences and Arts

## Rousseau on Inequality

- b. Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men
- c. The Social Contract
- d. The Discourse on Political Economy

5. Whose example did Rousseau take to praise humility?

- a. Hobbes
- b. Locke
- c. Socrates
- d. David Hume

### Sources and Studies in English

Dent, Nicholas, *Rousseau*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005. [Panoramic introduction to those uninitiated to Rousseau's works]

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *The discourses and other early political writings*, edited by Victor Gourevitch, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997. [This book contains the *Discourse on the sciences and arts* (1750) and *Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality* (1755) besides the correspondence of Rousseau with his critics. Contains a "guide to further reading", editorial notes, notes on texts and translations besides the introduction by the editor.]

-----, *Rousseau's Political Writings*, Norton Critical Edition, translated by Julia Conaway Bondanella and edited by Alan Ritter, New York and London: WW Norton Company, 1988. [Contains the *Discourses on inequality...*, *Discourse on political economy*, ... *On social contract...*, plus a number of contemporary reactions to Rousseau from Voltaire, Hume, Kant et al. There are important essay length studies by Jean Starobinski, Robert Nisbet and Judith Shklar.]

-----, *Emile: Or, on Education*, translated by Allan Bloom, New York: Basic Books, 1979.

-----, *Confessions*, translated by Angela Scholar and Patrick Coleman, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Pateman, Carole, *The sexual contract*, USA: Stanford University Press, 1988 [Important feminist critique of Rousseau and other social contract theorists.]