

(LK note to RR: *In Part I, Rousseau presents man in the pure state of nature: solitary, independent, speechless (and relatively mindless), living the life of an orangutan with possibilities, pursuing the elementary needs of life, and given over to the “sole sentiment of present existence.” In Part II, he traces the processes whereby man by stages emerges from the purest state of nature, eventually to become the “civilized” creatures that we are—with our inequality, our unhappiness, and our vices. We pick up the story with the first habitations and the formation of settled families. The psychological and social insights are remarkable—on the subjects of (a) desires/needs/and technological progress; (b) love and jealousy; (c) the birth of vanity and the desire for recognition; and (d) the claim to consideration and the desire for vengeance when it is violated.*)

(11) These first advances finally put man in a position to make more rapid ones. The more the mind was enlightened, the more industry was perfected. Soon, ceasing to fall asleep under the first tree or to withdraw into Caves, they discovered some kinds of hatchets of hard, sharp stones, which served to cut wood, scoop out earth, and make huts from branches they later decided to coat with clay and mud. This was the epoch of a first revolution, which produced the establishment and differentiation of families, and which introduced a sort of property—from which perhaps many quarrels and Fights already arose. However, as the stronger were probably the first to make themselves lodgings they felt capable of defending, it is to be presumed that the weak found it quicker and safer to imitate them than to try to dislodge them; and as for those who already had Huts, each man must seldom have sought to appropriate his neighbor's, less because it did not belong to him than because it was of no use to him, and because he could not seize it without exposing himself to a lively fight with the family occupying it.

(12) The first developments of the heart were the effect of a new situation, which united husbands and Wives, Fathers and Children in a common habitation. The habit of living together gave rise to the sweetest sentiments known to men: conjugal love and Paternal love. Each family became a little Society all the better united because reciprocal affection and freedom were its only bonds; and it was then that the first difference was established in the way of life of the two Sexes, which until this time had had but one. Women became more sedentary and grew accustomed to tend the Hut and the Children, while the man went to seek their common subsistence. The two Sexes also began, by their slightly softer life, to lose something of their ferocity and vigor. But if each one separately became less suited to combat savage beasts, on the contrary it was easier to assemble in order to resist them jointly.

(13) In this new state, with a simple and solitary life, very limited needs, and the implements they had invented to provide for them, since men enjoyed very great leisure, they used it to procure many kinds of commodities unknown to their Fathers; and that was the first yoke they imposed on themselves without thinking about it, and the first source of the evils they prepared for their Descendants. For, besides their continuing thus to soften body and mind, as these commodities had lost almost all their pleasantness through habit, and as they had at the same time degenerated into true needs, being deprived of them became much more cruel than possessing them was sweet; and people were unhappy to lose them without being happy to possess them.

(14) At this point one catches a slightly better glimpse of how the use of speech was established or perfected imperceptibly in the bosom of each family; and one can conjecture further how particular causes could have spread language and accelerated its progress by making it more necessary. Great floods or earthquakes surrounded inhabited Cantons with water or precipices; Revolutions of the Globe detached and broke up portions of the Continent into Islands. One conceives that among men thus brought together and forced to live together, a common Idiom must have been formed sooner than among those who wandered freely in the forests on solid Ground. Thus it is very possible that after their first attempts at Navigation, Islanders brought the use of speech to us; and it is at least very probable that Society and languages came into being on Islands and were perfected there before they were known on the Continent.

(15) Everything begins to change its appearance. Men who until this time wandered in the Woods, having adopted a more fixed settlement, slowly come together, unite into different bands, and finally form in each country a particular Nation, unified by morals and character, not by Regulations and Laws but by the same kind of life and foods and by the common influence of Climate. A permanent proximity cannot fail to engender at length some contact between different families. Young people of different sexes live in neighboring Huts; the passing intercourse demanded by Nature soon leads to another kind no less sweet and more permanent through mutual frequentation. People grow accustomed to consider different objects and to make comparisons; imperceptibly they acquire ideas of merit and beauty which produce sentiments of preference. By dint of seeing one another, they can no longer do without seeing one another again. A tender and gentle sentiment is gradually introduced into the soul and at the least obstacle becomes an impetuous fury. Jealousy awakens with love; Discord triumphs, and the gentlest of the passions receives sacrifices of human blood.

(16) In proportion as ideas and sentiments follow upon one another and as mind and heart are trained, the human Race continues to be tamed, contacts spread, and bonds are tightened. 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 one hand vanity and contempt, on the other shame and envy; and the fermentation caused by these new leavens eventually produced compounds fatal to happiness and innocence.

(17) As soon as men had begun to appreciate one another, and the idea of consideration was formed in their minds, each one claimed a right to it, and it was no longer possible to be disrespectful toward anyone with impunity. From this came the first duties of civility, even among Savages; and from this any voluntary wrong became an outrage, because along with the harm that resulted from the injury, the offended man saw in it contempt for his person which was often more unbearable than the harm itself. Thus, everyone punishing the contempt shown him by another in a manner proportionate to the importance he accorded himself, vengeance became terrible, and men bloodthirsty and cruel. This is precisely the point reached by most of the Savage Peoples known to us, and it is for want of having sufficiently distinguished between ideas and noticed how far these Peoples already were from the first state of Nature that many have hastened to conclude that man is naturally cruel, and that he needs Civilization in order to make him gentler. On the contrary, nothing is so gentle as man in his primitive state when, placed by Nature at equal distances from the stupidity of brutes and the fatal enlightenment of Civil man, and limited equally by instinct and reason to protecting himself from the harm that threatens him, he is restrained by Natural pity from harming anyone himself, and nothing leads him to do so even after he has received harm. For, according to the axiom of the wise Locke, where there is no property, there is no injury.

(18) But it must be noted that the beginnings of Society and the relations already established among men required in them qualities different from those they derived from their primitive constitution; that, morality beginning to be introduced into human Actions, and each man, prior to Laws, being sole judge and avenger of the offenses he had received, the goodness suitable for the pure state of Nature was no longer that which suited nascent Society; that it was necessary for punishments to become more severe as the occasions for offense became more frequent; and that it was up to the terror of revenge to take the place of the restraint of Laws. Thus although men had come to have less endurance and although natural pity had already 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 *amour propre*, 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 (Note XV), and that he must have come out of it only by some fatal accident, which for the common utility ought never to have happened. The example of Savages, who have almost all been found at this point, seems to confirm that the human Race was made to remain in it always; that this state is the veritable youth of the World; and that all subsequent progress has been in appearance so many steps toward the perfection of the individual, and in fact toward the decrepitude of the species.

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Note XV: *Amour-propre* and love of oneself (*amour de soi-meme*), two passions very different in their Nature and their effects, must not be confused. 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. *Amour-propre* is only a relative sentiment, artificial and born in Society, which inclines each 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 honor.

This being well understood, I say that in our primitive state, in the genuine state of Nature, *amour-propre* does not exist; for each particular man regarding himself as the sole Spectator to observe him, as the sole being in the universe to take an interest in him, and as the sole judge of his own merit, it is not possible that a sentiment having its source in comparisons he is not capable of making could spring up in his soul. For the same reason this man could have neither hate nor desire for revenge, passions that can arise only from the opinion that some offense has been received; and as it is scorn or intention to hurt and not the harm that constitutes the offense, men who know neither how to evaluate themselves nor compare themselves can do each other a great deal of mutual violence when they derive some advantage from it, without ever offending one another. In a word, every man, seeing his fellows hardly otherwise than he would see Animals of another species, can carry off the prey of the weaker or relinquish his own to the stronger, without considering these plunderings as anything but natural events, without the slightest emotion of insolence or spite, and with no other passion than the sadness or joy of a good or bad outcome.