

Rousseau, The Second Discourse: On the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Mankind
Reid Blackman

p. 81- top 98, 104-140, 146-7 (note "o")

Hobbes' big mistake: to "include in that care which savage man takes of his preservation, the satisfaction of numberless passions which are the work of society" **p. 105-6** (See also p. 88).

What's the State of Nature like?

STAGE 1: SERENITY NOW

- I. PHYSICAL CIRCUMSTANCES: Abundance (or at least enough for all)
- II. PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES:
 - a. Emotions and Desires
 - i. *Self-love (amour de soi)*, not selfishness (*amour propre*), **p. 146**
 - ii. *Pity/compassion*
 - "It is this pity which will always hinder a robust savage from plundering a feeble child, or infirm old man, of the subsistence they have acquired with pain and difficulty, if he has but the least prospect of providing for himself by any other means (108).
 - All the social virtues flow from pity (**107**).
 - iii. *Modest desires*: Man is easily content in SN, **p. 90**. "His desires never extend beyond his physical wants" (97).
 - iv. *Primitive pride*: Comparing himself with animals in the SN, man looked inside himself and found pride in his species, thus preparing him for the pride of himself as an individual (115).
 - b. Capacities/Relations with others
 - i. *The faculty of self-improvement*: the source of vices and virtues, and in the long run, renders him both his own and nature's tyrant (96). But it does not do anything without raw material to work with, without any change in his circumstances.
 - ii. *Rational capacity to grasp concepts/language*
 - iii. *Self-sufficient*: The savage has all his resources at his disposal; he grows weak when he gets his tools. There is great advantage in "having all our forces constantly at our disposal, in being constantly prepared against all events, and in always carrying ourselves, as it were, whole and entire about us" (**91**).
- III. SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: man has no duties, no obligations, no virtues or vices, are neither good nor bad (105).

Summary of Stage 1: p. 110.

STAGE 2: STEPPING OUT OF SERENITY

We need a change in circumstances to cause a change in human nature. People begin to build homes and so the family unit is born, and with it conjugal and paternal love (117).

Independence → property/community → new desires → dependence/slavery → misery, **p. 120**.

New Emotions and Desires: The set of desired objects, and so our desires themselves, expand due to natural developments of the heart when living with others and developments of the intellect granting the capacity to judge and make comparisons.

- a. *Desire for luxury*: With property he now has leisure time, so he learns to provide himself with luxuries. These degenerate into real needs, and not as good to have as it is bad to lose **p. 117**.
- b. *Sexual jealousy*: Sexual desire + ideas of merit and beauty → love/preference → jealousy, **p. 118**.
- c. *The demand for esteem*. Compare ourselves with others, want to be recognized and esteemed, and become angry when don't get it. Vanity and contempt, envy and shame have been born, **p. 118-9**.
- d. *The desire for having more than others* leaves everyone unhappy, and the happiness that glory gives is dependent upon the others being miserable, **p. 134-5**.

New Capacities/Relations to others

- a. *A slave to the opinions of others*: Certain traits commanded respect. But if you don't have them you have to pretend to have them. And now arises the desire to raise one's fortunes, not because one needs more but because one wants to be most esteemed. Such were the first effects of property **p. 122-3**.
- b. *A slave to the material goods of others*: Due to a multitude of new needs, he becomes dependent and a slave. Whether slave or master one needs others to subsist.
- c. Selfishness (*amour propre*), not just self-love (*amour de soi*)
- d. Savage man lives in himself, social man without, **138-9**.

“It is thus that the usurpations of the rich, the pillagings of the poor, and the unbridled passions of all, by stifling the cries of natural compassion, and the still feeble voice of justice, rendered men avaricious, wicked, and ambitious (123).

NOW WE HAVE WAR

How do we escape the war?

- Form a government; politics introduced to solve problem of destructive social interactions

What sort of government? How does it get formed?

- The rich, terrified of losing their wealth, convince the poor to unite and be bound by law so that strong and weak must all bow to the law, to this sovereign (125). The rich have “changed an artful usurpation into an irrevocable right” (125).

Does it work?

- Even with these laws set up we still have might, not right, and there will be wars and revolutions as long as a government of a different sort is not set up (136).
- “What are we to think of a commerce, in which the interest of every individual dictates to him maxims diametrically opposite to those which the interests of the community recommends to the body of society; a commerce, in which every man finds his profit in the misfortunes of his neighbor?” (139).

Why doesn't it work?

This government doesn't have any real authority. Conquest does not give right. The conquered must choose so freely, and so cannot be pushed into having an authoritative ruler over him; only a stronger one.

Why would “they give themselves superiors, if it was not to be defended by them against oppression?” “People gave themselves chiefs to defend their liberty and not to be enslaved by them. ‘If we have a Prince,’ said Pliny to Trajan, ‘it is in order that he may keep us from having a master’” (128).

Problem: How do we get an authoritative government?

It must be a government we assent to freely. The sort of freedom required is more robust than that of Hobbes' notion of freedom