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## The Enlightenment Indicted: Rousseau's Response to Montesquieu

*Of all the truths that I have proposed for consideration by the wise, here is the one that is most surprising and cruel. Our Writers all regard as the masterpiece of politics in our century the sciences, the arts, luxury, commerce, the laws, and the other bonds that draw tight among men the knots of society by way of personal interest, placing them in a position of mutual dependence, giving them reciprocal needs and common interests, and obliging each of them to contribute to the happiness of the others in order to provide for his own. These ideas are fine, without a doubt, and they have been presented in a favorable light. But, in examining them with attention and without partiality, one finds much in the advantages that seem at first on offer that is inflated and in need of correction.*

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau

AT 7:30 A.M. ON THE 24TH OF JULY, 1749, a young writer of great ambition and promise was arrested at his apartment in Paris. Subsequently, he was interrogated, and—after having perjured himself by denying under oath that he was the author of various incendiary works that, everyone knew, he had in fact composed—he was imprisoned in the dungeons at the *château*

of Vincennes outside Paris. A month later, apparently at the instigation of Voltaire's mistress, who happened to be the sister of his jailer, he was released from his cell, given comfortable quarters in the *château*, and allowed to roam the park, receive visitors, and hold court. There, while under house arrest, he amused himself by translating Plato's *Apology of Socrates*. There he remained until the prospective publisher of the *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts, et des métiers*, which this writer was about to launch in collaboration with Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, intervened on his behalf with the authorities. And there, until his final release on 3 November, Denis Diderot was visited with some frequency by his closest friend, the hard-working secretary of Louise-Marie-Madeleine Dupin, the wealthy and spectacularly beautiful wife of the tax farmer Claude Dupin.<sup>1</sup>

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was then, as always, impecunious, and it was his custom to make the six-mile journey to Vincennes on foot. Often, he brought something with him to read on the road. "One day," he tells us in his *Confessions*, "I took the *Mercur de France*, and while walking and perusing it, I stumbled on the question proposed by the Academy of Dijon for the following year's prize competition: *Whether the progress of the sciences and the arts has contributed to corrupting or purifying morals?* At the instant that I read this, I saw another universe and became another man."<sup>2</sup>

Elsewhere, Rousseau gave an even more arresting account of what took place that fateful October day. "If ever anything resembled a sudden inspiration," he wrote, "it is the movement produced in me by reading this advertisement; at once I felt my mind dazzled by a thousand lights; crowds of lively ideas presented themselves to me at the same time with a force and confusion which hurled me into inexpressible turmoil."

I feel my head seized by a dizziness similar to inebriation. A violent palpitation oppresses me, turns my stomach (*souleve ma poitrine*). Not being able to breathe while walking, I let myself fall under the trees along the avenue, and there I passed a half hour in such an agitation that when I got up I perceived that the entire front of my shirt was damp with tears that I had not felt while I was shedding them. . . . Had I ever been able to write a quarter of that which I saw and felt under that tree,

with what clarity would I have made visible all the contradictions of the social system, with what force would I have exposed all the abuses of our institutions, with what simplicity would I have demonstrated that man is naturally good and that it is by institutions alone that men have become wicked. All that I have been able to retain of the crowds of great truths which came to me as an illumination in a quarter-hour under that tree has been weakly scattered in my three chief works, which is to say, the first discourse, that on inequality, and the treatise on education, which three works are inseparable and together form a single whole.

On the spot, Rousseau tells us, he wrote down the so-called prosopopeia of Fabricius,<sup>3</sup> and when he arrived at Vincennes, he not only showed his friend the advertisement in the *Mercure de France* but also told him what had happened on the road to Vincennes and had him read what he had composed—and Diderot encouraged him to expand upon the prosopopeia and to enter the competition for the prize offered by the Academy of Dijon.<sup>4</sup>

How much of this is true is uncertain. That Rousseau came upon the pertinent advertisement that day and that Diderot encouraged his candidacy for the prize is clear enough, as is the fact that the latter was genuinely amused at the prospect that, while he was himself busy composing the prospectus for a massive encyclopedia dedicated to promoting the sciences and the arts, his closest friend would be hard at work in a distant corner of Paris developing his argument that progress of this sort would serve only to corrupt morals and bring misery on men. We know as well that Rousseau submitted his entry to the academy at some point prior to 1 April 1750 and that his success in the competition was announced on 9 July 1750; that Diderot did what he could to help his friend to capitalize on his victory in the prize competition by arranging for the publication of his *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*; and that Rousseau's friend Guillaume-Thomas-François, abbé Raynal, who had become editor of the *Mercure de France* that very year, went to great lengths in 1751, after the little book had come out, to make its argument the talk of Paris. But the story that, like Paul on the road to Damascus, Rousseau experienced a revelation of sorts that October day may be a product of the

latter's well-known propensity for self-dramatization. Years later, a number of those who knew both men reported that Diderot had told them that it was, in fact, he who first conceived of the notion that, in answering the question posed by the Academy of Dijon, Rousseau should take the part of a contrarian.<sup>5</sup>

To this brief account, one other fact can be added—that even if Rousseau told the truth in these accounts and nothing but the truth, he did not divulge the truth in its entirety. Among other things, in his various autobiographical writings, he deliberately concealed the fact that he had spent a great many hours in the months immediately preceding that October day reading Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des lois*, taking copious notes,<sup>6</sup> and helping Claude Dupin with the first of the two replies he penned.<sup>7</sup> At no time did he expressly acknowledge the full scope of his intellectual debt to the author of that great work—which was, as we shall soon see, profound.<sup>8</sup>

#### A SOURCE OF ILLUMINATION

It would be easy to prove that Montesquieu and Rousseau were opposed. The former was a proponent of enlightenment; the latter was its preeminent critic. The older man was friendly to commercial society; the younger man was hostile. The Frenchman was intent on dispelling the allure of classical republicanism; the Genevan did everything that he could to restore and enhance its allure. All of this is true, and it is exceedingly important, but it is also in one crucial particular misleading. For the arguments that Rousseau deployed against enlightenment and commercial society and those that he presented on behalf of ancient Sparta and early republican Rome were for the most part borrowed from Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws*.

Rousseau was a polemicist; for the most part, in *De l'Esprit des lois*, Montesquieu was not. The latter's aim was impartiality, and to this end, in assessing the various forms of government and the diverse modes of subsistence, he took great care to describe them in all their complexity and to delineate the advantages and disadvantages attendant on each. Although he was highly critical of the ancient city, he was also perfectly willing to acknowledge that, with its demise, something very impressive of great value was forever lost. When the virtue of the ancients was "in full force," he concedes, "they did

things that we no longer see and which astonish our little souls." It is this which explains his passing reference to "the dregs and the corruption" that typify what he calls "modern times."<sup>9</sup>

Montesquieu was a proponent of modern science, but he was prepared to concede that "the speculative sciences render men savage." Similarly, though he favored commerce, Montesquieu acknowledged that its advantages come at a price. It may "cure destructive prejudices" and give rise to "gentle (*douces*) mores." But, by the same token, it "corrupts pure mores."<sup>10</sup> He had visited Holland, and at first he had been taken aback.<sup>11</sup> "In countries," he observed,

where one is affected solely by the spirit of commerce, we see that one traffics in every human action and in all the moral virtues: the smallest things, those which humanity demands, are there done or given for money.

The spirit of commerce produces in men a certain sentiment of exact justice, opposed on one side to brigandage and on the other to those moral virtues that cause one not always to discuss one's interests with rigidity and that enable one to neglect them for those of others.

Commerce may render nations "reciprocally dependent" and thereby promote peace. But, Montesquieu admits, if "the spirit of commerce unites nations, it does not unite individuals at the same time." It makes of them rivals and sets them at odds. It promotes a "communication between peoples" and causes "knowledge of the mores of all the nations to penetrate everywhere," but in the process it dissolves intimacy at the local level, and it produces estrangement thereby.<sup>12</sup> And though he valued politeness and celebrated it as a French achievement, Montesquieu nonetheless described it frankly, in unfavorable terms, as an outward, artificial, insincere display of flattery suited to promoting "the vices of others."<sup>13</sup>

In similar fashion, while Montesquieu marveled at the "commerce of luxury" and welcomed the great cities to which it gave rise, he was perfectly willing to concede the drawbacks that city life brings with it. "The more there are of men together," he wrote,

the more vain they are and the more they sense the birth in themselves of the desire to draw attention to themselves in trivial ways (*par de petites choses*). If they are so great in number that the majority are unknown to one another, the desire to distinguish oneself redoubles because there is more hope of success. Luxury gives this hope; each assumes the marks of the condition given precedence to his own. But as a consequence of the wish to distinguish themselves all become equal, and one distinguishes oneself no longer: where everyone wishes to make himself noticed, no one is noticed at all.

And he did not conceal from his readers the fact that from all of this there comes “a general discomfort (*une incommodité générale*)” rooted in a mismatch “between needs and means,” and thereby he allows his readers to discern that the ancient Greeks were, indeed, right to suspect that, if they failed to proscribe “silver” and to outlaw commerce, these would “multiply infinitely their desires and supplant (*suppléer*) nature, which has given us very limited means for irritating our passions and for corrupting one another.” As a consequence of the vanity to which commerce gives rise, Montesquieu readily admits, men who live in towns and cities come to have “more desires, more needs, more fantasies.” Commerce can never increase their means at a rate faster than vanity augments what they conceive of as needs. It is, as he puts it, in its “nature to render superfluous things useful and useful things necessary.”<sup>14</sup>

Finally, while Montesquieu describes “the constitution of England” as a “beautiful system” and analyzes in some detail the many advantages that it confers on the English,<sup>15</sup> he is nonetheless careful to make it clear that the liberty that such a constitution actually would confer on its citizens is in no way conducive to the sense of security and the attendant tranquility of soul that he describes as “political liberty in relation to the citizen.”<sup>16</sup> Instead, he tells us, the English form of government would leave “all the passions there . . . free” so that “hatred, envy, jealousy, the ardor to enrich and distinguish oneself would appear in their full extent,” and the English would exhibit an *inquiétude* that would render them uneasy, restless, anxious, and, on occasion, irrationally afraid. Equality under the law would cause each of them to

think of himself as “a monarch” of sorts, graced with a species of “independence” comparable to that possessed by men in the state of nature.<sup>17</sup> This would, in profound ways, affect their “character” as a “nation,” encouraging them to live “much among themselves” in a condition of “retirement” or “retreat,” and making them “people collected within themselves” inclined to “think each entirely on his own.” Their predilection for solitude would, in turn, render them savage in the technical sense—which is to say, unso- ciable. They would be inclined “to forget the laws of friendship and those of hatred” and to conduct themselves as “confederates rather than fellow citizens.” In the women, this spirit of independence would inspire “timidity”; in the men it would give rise to a lack of “gallantry” and a predilection for a “debauchery which would leave them their liberty and their leisure intact.” In such a polity, there would be “many people who would not care about pleasing anyone.” These “would abandon themselves to their own humors,” and “the better part of those with intelligence and wit (*esprit*) would be tormented by that very *esprit*: out of a disdain or disgust for every- thing, they would be unhappy with so many reasons (*sujets*) for not being so.”<sup>18</sup>

Montesquieu's poignant description of England's men of *esprit* and of the unhappiness that besets them should give us pause, for it has a double aspect. Although divorced from theology and resolutely political and historical in focus, his description of the psychology of the English owes a great deal to John Locke's adaptation of the moving account that Blaise Pascal provided in his *Pensées* of the role played in human life by *ennui*, *inquiétude*, and *divertissement*.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, however, this description of the English reads as if Montesquieu had set out to pen a discerning profile of Jean- Jacques Rousseau and of his life in Paris.

Rousseau was a watchmaker's son, reared on the fringes of a frugal, relatively egalitarian, self-consciously republican society.<sup>20</sup> In sophistication and urban polish, he was sadly deficient. He was, moreover, an exceedingly sensitive soul—an artist, deracinated both by temperament and trade—and he shared many of the predilections that caused Voltaire to denounce Pascal as a “sublime misanthrope.” Indeed, in Molière's portrait of Alceste in *The Misanthrope*, Rousseau recognized a cruel and misleading caricature of men

possessed of a disposition and capacity for discrimination much like his own.<sup>21</sup>

Although, at first, he appears to have found life in the great metropolis thrilling, and although for an extended period he put up a good front, Rousseau soon became profoundly uncomfortable with the social whirl. He could not abide his status as a parasite of sorts, confined to the outskirts of high society, and he deeply resented the role played in that great capital by wealth, breeding, politeness, and the passing whimsies of fashion. Parisian society was, for all of its elegance, artificial and false. This he deeply felt. It was the offspring of vanity, as Montesquieu had readily acknowledged; and to Rousseau—given his personal awkwardness, his peculiar disposition and background, and an embarrassing urological malady that flared up with considerable frequency—all of this seemed a personal affront and a profound moral offense. For nearly everything he encountered in Paris, the man who sometimes called himself *le pauvre Jean-Jacques* really did come to feel disdain and disgust. Life in the great capital he eventually found an unending torment.<sup>22</sup>

Prior to his sojourn in Venice in 1744–45 as secretary to the French ambassador, there was nothing in Rousseau's experience or conduct to suggest a real interest on his part in great political questions.<sup>23</sup> And, prior to 1746, he may have lacked the intellectual tools requisite for addressing these. It was at Madame Dupin's behest, and not on his own hook, that he pored over Plato, Jean Bodin, Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and the like and dipped into the travel literature produced in the wake of the great voyages of discovery by missionaries, merchants, and the great venturers themselves. Thereafter, however, as he steadily worked his way through *De l'Esprit des lois*, we can be confident that the passages singled out above, and others of a similar sort, leapt out at him. It was only then, after he had devoted considerable energy under the direction of Madame Dupin and her husband to what he calls "the historical study of morality," that he came to see that "everything is radically related to politics (*tenoit radicalement à la politique*)" and that "no people will ever be anything except what the nature of its Government makes it."<sup>24</sup> If he experienced an epiphany on the road to Vincennes, if then and there Jean-Jacques Rousseau really did see "another



universe” and become “another man,” it was because, in the course of historicizing the Jansenist portrait of fallen man, Montesquieu had given him the intellectual framework within which to explain to himself in political terms the misery and discomfort that he so powerfully felt.<sup>25</sup>

#### THE INDICTMENT OF ENLIGHTENMENT

When Denis Diderot encouraged his friend Jean-Jacques Rousseau to compose his *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* and to submit it to the Academy of Dijon, he did not initially understand what he had unleashed. He knew that his friend was an odd duck, to be sure, and he recognized that the man had talent and even, perhaps, genius. But he thought Rousseau's initial venture a supremely clever joke nonetheless.

Looking back nearly a quarter of a century after the event, Diderot marveled at the trajectory taken by his erstwhile friend, and in response to the claim, advanced by Claude Adrien Helvétius, that the man's sudden achievement of fame proved “the power of accident,” he wrote, “Rousseau was no more a masterpiece of chance than was chance the masterpiece of Rousseau.” He compared the author of the *Discourses on the Sciences and the Arts* with “a barrel of gunpowder meant for a canon.” All that it took to produce an “explosion” was a “spark,” and “if the impertinent question of Dijon had not been proposed,” Rousseau would have been no “less capable of composing his discourse.” Everything that had happened was a function of the man's peculiar character and temperament: “Rousseau did that which he had to do because he was Rousseau.” Imagine, Diderot urged, that

I am no longer the one who is at Vincennes, that it is, instead, the citizen of Geneva. I arrive. The question that he then put to me I now put to him; he responds to me as I, in fact, responded to him. Would you believe that I would have devoted three or four months to propping up an ill-conceived (*mauvais*) paradox by means of sophisticated arguments, that I would have given this sophistry all the vividness (*couleur*) that he gave it, and that I would thereafter have constructed a philosophical system from what had then been only a *jeu d'esprit*?<sup>26</sup>

With these last words, Diderot did his former friend an injustice and demonstrated the limits of his own understanding. Rousseau never regarded his argument as an intellectual game. But it is, nonetheless, easy to see why Diderot conceived of the matter as he did.

The work that Rousseau came to speak of as his *First Discourse* is, as the noun used to describe it suggests, a highly rhetorical exercise. In accord with the terms of the contest, it was brief—fit to be read within half an hour—and the compression required was then and remains today an obstacle to clarity. Moreover, Rousseau wrote in circumstances that rendered complete candor exceedingly imprudent: if in public he were frankly to display the genuine hatred that he felt for monarchy,<sup>27</sup> if he were openly to attack every form of social and economic inequality, he would render untenable the precarious perch that he occupied within the Dupin household and in France more generally.<sup>28</sup> He could hint at what he thought. He could adopt more than one pose—as a humble citizen of Geneva, as an ordinary man of French nationality, as a genuinely civilized man condemned to live in Paris among the barbarians in the manner of a barbarian incapable of making himself understood. He could even present himself as a philosopher, distant from the fray and far above the madding crowd. And by oscillating between different identities, by speaking in different voices, and by other literary tricks, he could unobtrusively direct his argument to a number of different audiences at once. Than this he could do no more. He had to obfuscate, and obfuscate he did.<sup>29</sup> But what Rousseau's oration lacks, as a consequence, in obvious logical coherence and in lucidity, it makes up for in eloquence.

In the work, Rousseau makes two points that seem incompatible.<sup>30</sup> At the beginning and near the end, he celebrates the accomplishments of natural—and political—philosophy. “It is,” he begins, “a grand & beautiful spectacle to see man somehow emerge from nothing by his own efforts; dissipate, by the light (*lumières*) of his own reason, the darkness with which nature has enveloped him; raise himself above himself; launch himself into the celestial regions; traverse, like the Sun, the vast extent of the Universe with the stride of a Giant; & what is grander & more difficult still, return into himself, there to study man & to know his nature, his duties, & his end.” He follows this with a conventional Enlightenment depiction of Europe in its Christian centuries

as having tumbled into a “Barbarism” like that of “the first ages” and as having entered into “a condition worse than ignorance” under the influence of scholasticism, and he celebrates the fall of Constantinople and the recovery of learning in the Christian West, which eventuated in a “commerce with the muses” that “renders men more sociable by inspiring in them the desire to please one another by works worthy of their mutual approbation.”<sup>31</sup>

In this fashion, already by then conventional, Rousseau begins; and near the end of his discourse, he picks up the same thread, singling out “the Verulams, the Descartes, & the Newtons” as “the Preceptors of Humankind.” There, he raises the possibility that the first of these, the “Chancellor of England,” the very man who had launched the Enlightenment project, was “the greatest of the Philosophers”; and, with a discreet nod in the direction of Plato’s suggestion that philosophers be made kings and that kings become philosophers, he calls on the world’s monarchs to admit into their councils “learned men (*savants*) of the first rank.” “Let them there obtain,” he writes,

the only recompense worthy of them: that of contributing by the credit they possess to the happiness of the Peoples whom they will have instructed in wisdom. It is only then that one will see what virtue, science, & authority can do when animated by a noble emulation & when working in concert for the happiness of Humankind. But as long as power stands alone on one side, and enlightenment (*les lumières*) & wisdom in solitude on the other, learned men will rarely think of great things, Princes will even more rarely do fine things (*belles*), & Peoples will continue to be vile, corrupt, & unhappy.<sup>32</sup>

One could hardly confer greater tribute on the Enlightenment project than Rousseau seems to confer in these passages, and it is easy to see that he regarded his own efforts as its culmination.<sup>33</sup> After all, as he would make clear in his *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men* and in his *Social Contract*, he was the figure who had returned “into himself, there to study man & to know his nature, his duties, & his end.”

In between these two passages, however, Rousseau takes what appears to be an entirely different tack, more consistent with the pose he assumes in his political works as “a Citizen of Geneva,”<sup>34</sup> arguing at length that, while the

“progress” made in “the sciences & the arts” since the fall of Constantinople has been profound, it “has added nothing to our real happiness” and “has corrupted our morals.”<sup>35</sup> In doing so, he makes a direct, but nonetheless circumspect allusion to Montesquieu on one occasion. But, in this work, he never mentions *The Spirit of Laws* or its author by name. What he does do, however, in the sentence immediately preceding this allusion, is to paraphrase one of Montesquieu’s more striking formulations, and it is on this observation that he grounds his argument. Where Montesquieu had remarked that, while “the Greek statesmen and political writers (*les politiques grecs*) who lived under popular government knew of no force able to sustain them other than virtue,” their counterparts in the republics of his own day “speak only of manufactures, of commerce, of finance, of wealth, and of luxury itself,” Rousseau writes. “The ancient *Politiques* spoke without cessation of morals & virtue; ours speak only of commerce & money.”<sup>36</sup>

Much of Rousseau’s argument is devoted to a survey of classical antiquity, a period to which in later years he would frequently recur.<sup>37</sup> In conducting this survey, he repeatedly returns to Montesquieu’s analysis of republics, of the virtue essential to their well-being, and of the role played by luxury and the arts in their corruption.<sup>38</sup> This analysis he then applies, in a manner consistent with Montesquieu’s overall discussion of corruption, to despotisms such as ancient Egypt, modern China, and the Byzantine Empire,<sup>39</sup> and this he does for the purpose of laying the foundation for his critique of the emerging commercial and enlightened societies of his own time. He exhorts us never to forget ancient Sparta—“this City as celebrated for its happy ignorance as for the wisdom of the Laws, this Republic of demi-Gods rather than of men, so much superior to humanity did their virtues appear”—and, precisely because the Spartans chased from their city “the Arts & Artists, the Sciences & Learned Men,” he takes Lacedaemon as his cultural model. “Rome,” he observes, had once been “the Temple of Virtue.” Later, however, at the time of the Ennius and the Terences, it began its decline; and “after the Ovids, the Catulluses, the Martials, & that crowd of obscene Authors whose names alone suffice to alarm the sense of moral decency and shame (*pudeur*),” Rome “became a Theater of crime, the shame of Nations, & the plaything of barbarians.”<sup>40</sup>

Nowhere does Rousseau's jeremiad have greater force than in the prosopopeia of Fabricius. If that Roman patriot had been recalled to life, he wrote, addressing him directly,

"Gods," you would have said, what "has become of the roofs of thatch & the rustic hearths where moderation & virtue made their habitation? What lethal (*funeste*) splendor has succeeded Roman simplicity? What is this strange language? What are these effeminate morals? What mean these statues, these Paintings, these buildings? Lunatics, what have you done? You, the Masters of Nations, have you made yourselves the slaves of the frivolous men you conquered? Are you governed by Teachers of Rhetoric? Is it to enrich the Architects, the Painters, the Sculptors, & the Actors that you shed your blood in Greece & Asia? The spoils of Carthage—have they become booty for a flute player? Romans, make haste to tear down these Amphitheaters; smash these marbles; burn these paintings; chase out these slaves who are subjugating you, & whose lethal arts are corrupting you. Let other hands become illustrious on the basis of vain talents; the only talent worthy of Rome is that of conquering the world & of making virtue there reign. When Cineas took our Senate for an Assembly of Kings, he was dazzled neither by vain pomp nor by a studied elegance. He did not there hear that frivolous eloquence, the study & charm of futile men. What did Cineas then see that was so majestic? O Citizens! He saw a spectacle which neither your wealth nor all your arts can produce: the most beautiful spectacle that has ever appeared under heaven, the Assembly of two hundred virtuous men, worthy of commanding at Rome and of governing the earth."<sup>41</sup>

Such is the standard by which Rousseau proposes to measure the polities of his own time, and he finds that they all fall short in much the same fashion as late republican Rome.

Here, again, Rousseau looks to Montesquieu, pointing to the liberty enjoyed by men in the savage state,<sup>42</sup> and emphasizing that the commercial and enlightened world in which man now lives is built upon flattery, vanity, and vice. He does not spell out his argument in full, as he will in his

*Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*. He is not yet in a position to do so. But he does hint at the argument that will be presented in that work, which, he later says, is “of all my writings the one in which my principles are revealed with the greatest boldness, not to mention the greatest daring.”<sup>43</sup> In this vein, he suggests that “the Sciences, Letters, and the Arts” serve despotism. He points to man’s natural freedom, and he intimates that the emergence of civil society is coeval with his subjugation. The arts, he contends, “spread garlands of flowers over the chains of iron with which men are burdened, stifle in them the sentiment of that original liberty for which they seem to have been born, make them love their slavery, & form from them that which one calls *Peuples policés*”—peoples polished, polite, and, of course, well-policed.<sup>44</sup>

It was human need that “elevated thrones.” This much Rousseau readily concedes, but he insists at the same time that it was “the Sciences and the Arts” that “made these thrones strong.” The “Powers of the Earth” have ample reason to love “talents” and to “protect those who cultivate them,” for their cultivation reduces men to “happy slaves.” To talents, he writes, these slaves owe “the delicate and fine taste” in which they take such pride, “the gentleness (*douceur*) of character & the moral urbanity” that causes “the social interchange (*commerce*)” among them to be “so engaging and easy.” To talents, “in a word,” they owe “the appearance of all the virtues without the possession of a single one.”<sup>45</sup>

Such, Rousseau implies, is what men of his own day, the French above all others, mean when they speak of *politesse*: “a philosophic tone without pedantry, manners natural yet engaging, equally removed from Teutonic rusticity & ultramontane Pantomime. . . the fruits of a taste acquired by way of a good education (*bonnes études*) and perfected by” the social interchange that he pointedly speaks of as “*commerce* in the World.” He admits that it would, indeed, “be sweet (*doux*) to live among us, if the exterior countenance were always an image of the dispositions of the heart, if decency were virtue, if our maxims served as rules for our conduct, if true Philosophy were inseparable from the title of Philosopher.” But, of course, all is false. Subtle research and refined taste “have reduced the Art of pleasing to principles,” and there “reigns in our morals a vile & misleading uniformity”

so that “all minds seem to have been cast in the same mold: unceasingly politeness demands, propriety ordains: unceasingly one follows the usages, never the genius that is one’s own.” In a world governed by *politesse*, no one ever dares to present himself as he is, one remains profoundly uncertain with regard to one’s connections, and from “this incertitude” comes a veritable “procession (*cortège*) of vices.” As Rousseau sadly puts it, “No more sincere friendships; no more real esteem; no more well-founded confidence. Suspicions, offenses, fears, coldness, reserve, hatred, treachery will conceal themselves unceasingly under the uniform & perfidious veil of *politesse*, under that urbanity so much vaunted, which we owe to the enlightenment (*aux lumières*) of our century.”<sup>46</sup>

There is, as Rousseau sees it, one more dire consequence that flows from the spirit of *commerce*, *politesse*, and *lumières*, and it is political. “National hatreds will be extinguished, but the same will happen with love of the Fatherland. For an ignorance that is despised, one will substitute a Pyrrhonism that is dangerous.” The “idle *Literati*” who flourish in this atmosphere do much more with “their lethal paradoxes” than “sap the foundations of the faith.” They “annihilate virtue. They smile with disdain at the old words Fatherland & Religion, & they consecrate their talents & their Philosophy to destroying and demeaning (*avilir*) all that is sacred among men.” With “the distinction of talents” promoted by commercial society comes not only a “lethal inequality,” fatal to all fellow-feeling, but a “demeaning (*avilissement*) of the virtues.” “We have Physicists, Geometricians, Chemists, Astronomers, Poets, Musicians, Painters,” observes Rousseau. “We no longer have citizens; or if there still remain some among us, they are dispersed in country districts that have been abandoned; there they perish indigent & despised.”<sup>47</sup>

All of this is implicit in the critical, muted remarks that Montesquieu makes in passing with regard to the peculiar species of sociability dominant within the emerging commercial society that he observed while in Paris, and it can be inferred as well from the penetrating account that he gives of the unsociable character of those then living across the water in enlightened, fully commercial England. As both Montesquieu and Rousseau recognize, the tinsel world produced by the “commerce of luxury” has more in common

with the drab world produced by the “commerce of economy” than immediately meets the eye. If anything, despite appearances, Parisians are further along the trajectory defined by commercial sociability than are Londoners, who are distracted in some measure from a total immersion in the social whirl by a genuine, if attenuated, participation in public affairs.

The chief difference between Montesquieu and Rousseau is that what the French aristocrat consciously embraces, albeit not without grave reservations, the self-styled citizen of Geneva in a great fury rejects. When Montesquieu contemplates the future, he is anything but complacent. But he does entertain the hope that, in France and in Europe more generally, something like commercial republicanism on the English model will become the norm, and he foresees the possibility that the various peoples of Europe will learn to live alongside one another for the most part in prosperity and peace. Rousseau is far less sanguine.<sup>48</sup> When he contemplates the sociopolitical logic unfolding before his eyes in Paris, he foresees the emergence of a Europe much more akin to the Byzantine Empire, which had been “a place of asylum for the Sciences & the Arts proscribed from the rest of Europe—perhaps,” he now says, reversing his rhetorical course, “more by wisdom than by barbarism.” The “fabric” of the despotism that took hold in Constantinople was formed, he insists, by “everything that is most shameful in debauchery and corruption; everything that is darkest in treachery, assassinations, & poisonings; everything that is most dreadful (*atroce*) in the combination of all crimes.” Such, he observes, is “the pure spring (*source*) from which emanates the Enlightenment (*les Lumières*) in which our century glories.”<sup>49</sup>

#### INTELLECTUAL CELEBRITY

There is one argument that Rousseau advances in his *First Discourse* that has no obvious analogue in the *Persian Letters*, the *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline*, or *The Spirit of Laws*, and it deserves close attention for two reasons. To begin with, it helps explain how Rousseau can remain consistent while celebrating the sciences and the arts and while praising Bacon, Descartes, and Newton in a work so critical of the political and social consequences of progress in the sciences



and the arts. At the same time, it points to the particular element within commercial society that he finds the most offensive and worrisome.

In *The Spirit of Laws*, Montesquieu had not only observed that “the speculative sciences render men savage”; he had also laid considerable stress on the tension that exists between the contemplative impulse and the needs of civil society.<sup>50</sup> Rousseau agreed, and in 1753, when he seized on the publication of his comedy *Narcissus* as an occasion in which to write a preface defending himself from the charge of hypocrisy and inconsistency, he wrote,

The taste for philosophy relaxes all the ties of esteem and benevolence that attach men to society, and this is perhaps the most dangerous of the evils that it engenders. The charm of study soon renders insipid every other attachment. What is more, as a consequence of reflecting on humanity, as a consequence of observing men, the Philosopher learns to appreciate them at their value, and it is difficult to have much affection for that which one despises. Soon he brings together in his person all the interest that virtuous men share with those like them: his contempt for others is turned to the profit of his pride: his *amour propre* grows in the same proportion as his indifference regarding the rest of the universe. Family, fatherland become for him words void of sense: he is neither parent, nor citizen, nor man; he is a philosopher.

In the same work, however, Rousseau insisted that the philosopher's detachment from his fellow man was not a judgment on him as such. Here, as in his *First Discourse*, he was perfectly prepared to praise as “sublime geniuses” and as “privileged souls” the handful “who know how to penetrate the veils with which the truth is enveloped.” He even describes them as “the beacon (*lumière*) and the honor of human kind.” And he insists that “it is fitting that they, and they alone, exercise themselves in study for the good of all,” adding that “this exception itself confirms the rule—since if all men were Socrateses, science would not then be harmful to men, but they would have need of it.”<sup>51</sup>

What enables Rousseau to depict philosophers as unsociable while praising them as well is the razor-sharp distinction that he draws between philosophers and men of letters. “At the same time,” he observes, “that the

cultivation of the sciences withdraws, so to speak, the heart of the philosopher from the crowd, in another sense, it engages with the crowd that of the man of letters.” The reason is easy to discern.

Every man who occupies himself in developing talents which are agreeable wants to please, to be admired, and he wishes to be admired more than anyone else. Public applause belongs to him alone: I would say that he does everything to obtain it—if he did not do still more to deprive his rivals of it. From this is born, on the one side, refinements of taste and *politesse*; vile and base flattery; cares seductive, insidious, childish, which, in the long run, diminish the soul and corrupt the heart; and on the other side, jealousies, rivalries, the renowned hatreds of artists, perfidious calumny, duplicity, treachery, and every element in vice which is most cowardly and odious.

What distinguishes the philosophers from mere men of letters is that they are “capable of resisting the folly of vanity, the base jealousy, and the other passions that the taste for letters engenders.” What distinguishes philosophers in Rousseau from the *litterati* is the strength of soul and the profound desire for knowledge that had distinguished philosophers from sophists and poets in Plato’s *Republic*.<sup>52</sup>

This distinction is presupposed in the *First Discourse*. It explains why, in the preface to that work, Rousseau goes out of his way to explain that he does not “care to please the Wits (*Beaux-Esprits*) or the Fashionable (*Gens à la mode*),” why he contends that “in all times there will be men made to be subjugated by the opinions of their age, of their Country, of their Society,” and why he then so ominously adds that “the sort who acts the part of the Freethinker (*l’Esprit fort*) & Philosopher today would have been for the very same reason nothing more than a fanatic” during the French wars of religion “at the time of the [Catholic] League.”<sup>53</sup>

Later in the same work, Rousseau asks what, precisely, is at stake in the “question of luxury,” and in answering his own query he not only abandons the concerns that had animated the prosopopeia of Fabricius but also raises a question that carries him beyond the analysis provided by Montesquieu. For, in his opinion, what is most at stake is the fact that “Minds (*Esprits*) degraded

by a multitude of futile cares can never raise themselves to anything great." Even, he says, "when they have the strength for it, they lack the courage."<sup>54</sup>

After all, Rousseau explains, "every Artist desires applause. The praise of his contemporaries is the most precious part of his recompense." Then, he goes to the heart of the matter.

What then will [such an artist] do to obtain [applause] if he has the misfortune to be born among a People & in times when Learned Men (*Savants*), having become fashionable (*à la mode*), have put frivolous youth in a state to set the tone; when such men have sacrificed their taste to the Tyrants of their liberty; when one of the sexes, daring to approve only that which is proportioned to the pusillanimity of the other, lets the chief works of dramatic Poetry fall by the wayside, and prodigies of harmony are dropped. What will he do, Gentlemen? He will lower his genius to the level of the age, &, by preference, he will compose vulgar (*communs*) works that will be admired during his lifetime, rather than marvels that will not be admired until long after his death.

Then, lest the full significance of his point be lost on his readers, Rousseau names as a malefactor along these lines no less a figure than the prince of the *philosophes*—the great Voltaire. "Tell us," he wrote, "renowned (*célèbre*) Arouet, how many manly & powerful beauties you have sacrificed to our false delicacy, & how many grand things has the spirit of gallantry, so fertile in small things, cost you. It is in this fashion," he then remarks, "that the dissolution of morals, a necessary consequence of luxury, carries with it in turn the corruption of taste."<sup>55</sup> Such is Rousseau's response to Montesquieu's favorable depiction of the role played by women within French society as the arbiters of morals and manners.<sup>56</sup>

That Voltaire was henceforth Rousseau's enemy should come as no surprise. That for a time Rousseau retained the friendship and admiration of Diderot, d'Alembert, and others like them is a sign that the radicalism implicit in what the self-styled citizen of Geneva had to say simply lay at first beyond their ken. The most serious charge that he leveled against the project in which they were engaged was not that it subverted morality, friendship, and citizenship—though he certainly thought and claimed that it did just

that. The most grievous charge was his flat denial that the Enlightenment project would result in a liberation of the human intellect.

It was Rousseau's claim that, since commercial society makes everything a matter of traffic, it will establish a tyranny of fashion in matters of the intellect just as it had in matters of dress. By way of transforming learned men, such as Voltaire, into what we now call celebrities, it will contribute mightily to the enslavement of the human mind. In Voltaire, Rousseau recognized the first and perhaps the most distinguished in what we can now see as an endless line of exceptionally talented artists and composers, novelists and journalists, poets and playwrights, filmmakers and actors, scientists, professors, and the like, who take to the public stage to strut and fret; preen, pose, and pander; and condescend from a posture of pretended moral and intellectual superiority—and he regarded the example that this supremely capable man had set for men of letters not only as a disgrace but also as the harbinger of a profound threat to freedom of thought. It was with Voltaire in mind that he wrote, in the preface to the work, that “the sort who acts the part of the Freethinker (*l'Esprit fort*) & Philosopher today would have been for the very same reason nothing more than a fanatic at the time of the League.”

#### PRIESTCRAFT OLD AND NEW

As his sneering reference to the Catholic League may suggest, Rousseau was no friend to the Christian church, and he was especially hostile to Roman Catholicism, which was, he intimated, conducive to barbarism and to fanaticism as well. When he began drafting his *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality*, he composed and polished a brief but trenchant passage analyzing the “*proud curiosity*” that causes man to suppose that he can “penetrate mysteries which are beyond his intelligence,” and that engenders “follies and crimes” by erecting “idols” and inspiring “fanatics.” To this propensity, Rousseau traced not just “astrology, the renown of the divinatory art, Magic, and the other pretended supernatural reveries that constitute the shame of reason, the recourse of malcontent imbeciles, and the triumph of con men,” but “a novel sort of inequality,” established neither by nature nor by convention, which rests solely on “chimerical opinions,” and

which enabled “a species of singular men,” a congeries of “idolatrous and ambitious Priests,” to raise themselves on high, “representing themselves as interpreters of things incomprehensible and as Ministers of the divinity” authorized “to subject the Human Race to their decisions.”

Adroitly substituting Gods of their own fashioning for the true God who did not suit their turn, and substituting their absurd and interested maxims for those of right reason, they redirected the Peoples insensibly away from the duties of humanity and the rules of morality that they did not dispose of at their whim—all for the purpose of subjecting them to practices indifferent or criminal and to arbitrary punishments and fines of which they were the sole dispensers and judges. Mortal enemies of the Laws and their ministers, always ready to authorize unjust usurpations on the part of the supreme magistrate for the purpose of usurping more easily themselves *his* legitimate authority, by always speaking of spiritual rights, they arranged affairs so that the goods, life, and liberty of the Citizen were secure only in so far as he placed himself at their discretion. Their power was all the more formidable because, establishing themselves without shame as sole judges in their own cause and suffering no common measure of the differences that they set up between themselves and other men, they overturned and annihilated all human rights without anyone ever being able to prove to them that they had exceeded their own.

If, in the end, Rousseau excised this passage from his discourse, it was not because he had in any substantive fashion changed his mind. It was rather because, he realized, that his attempt to couch it in such a manner as to slip it past the censor was bound to fail.<sup>57</sup> It was one thing to attack scholasticism and to pour scorn on the Catholic League; it was another to launch what everyone would recognize as a direct assault on Holy Mother Church, charging it with the terrible crime that the English republican James Harrington had dubbed “Priestcraft” a century before.<sup>58</sup> Even in the heyday when Rousseau’s great patron and admirer, the liberal statesman Chrétien-Guillaume Lamoignon de Malesherbes, served as *Directeur de la librairie* and made sure that the censors he employed gave *permission tacite* for the

anonymous publication in France under a false imprint of many a scandalous tract,<sup>59</sup> a measure of authorial discretion was required. Malesherbes was a man of audacity and cunning, capable of astonishing feats. When forced by the Jesuits to issue an order providing not only for the suppression of the first two volumes of the *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts, et des métiers*, but also for a confiscation of all the articles written for subsequent volumes as yet unpublished, he was not only prepared to tip off Diderot and d’Alembert in advance but also offered and actually provided sanctuary for the outlawed manuscripts in his own house. But not even Malesherbes could protect an author who openly attacked the Christian religion and insisted that authorial integrity required that he forego anonymity.<sup>60</sup>

Rousseau would later take up the theme of priestcraft in his *Social Contract*,<sup>61</sup> and for his audacity in this work and in the *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar* that he buried in his pedagogical novel *Emile, or On Education*, he would soon thereafter pay a very high price.<sup>62</sup> Eventually, also, in an apologetic work entitled *Dialogues: Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*,<sup>63</sup> he would systematically apply his analysis of “priestcraft” to the *philosophes* as well, spelling out in detail the implications of his claim that “the sort who acts the part of the Freethinker (*l’Esprit fort*) & Philosopher today would have been for the very same reason nothing more than a fanatic at the time of the League,” and suggesting that Voltaire, Diderot, d’Alembert, and the like were, in fact, party to a conspiracy no less insidious than the one first mounted in the distant past by “idolatrous and ambitious Priests.”<sup>64</sup>

The suspicions that Rousseau entertained in the 1770s may have been exaggerated, especially as they pertained to the conspiracy that, he believed, the *philosophes* had concocted against himself; and, in expressing these suspicions, he had frequent recourse, as always, to hyperbole. But his fears, though blown out of proportion, were by no means utterly without foundation, for Rousseau’s erstwhile friends among the *philosophes* really were party to a philosophical conspiracy, and they really did aim at dominating opinion and at giving direction to the larger society thereby. They were, moreover, in no way sorry to see this philosophical turncoat harried from refuge to refuge; and, in modest ways, they actively contributed to the difficulties he faced.<sup>65</sup>

To this one can add that, when judged in light of the history of Europe and of the larger world after 1789, Rousseau's analysis of the role that intellectuals, loosely organized as a party, had come to play in the fabrication of public opinion seems remarkably prescient. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the first to recognize that, within modern society, what we now call political ideology performs a function comparable to that served in earlier times by religious doctrine and that—as ideologues—scientists, men of letters, and artists now occupy a status once reserved for none but high priests.

Rousseau traced this remarkable revolution in human affairs back to the period in which Diderot and d'Alembert launched the *Encyclopédie*. Prior to the 1750s, he wrote, “opinions wandered in an incoherent fashion (*sans suite*) and without regulation at the whim of men's passions, and these passions, constantly banging into one another, caused the public to roam from one place to another in a direction inconstant.” Thereafter, however, a profound change took place. A “spirit methodical and consistent” was applied for the purpose of guiding “public opinions,” and “prejudices themselves” came to possess a “logic of progression (*marche*) and rules all their own.” Rousseau had no doubt that he had been present at the creation of something entirely new. This trend, he argued, was “among the peculiarities (*singularités*) that distinguish the century in which we live from all others.” It had its inception when “the philosophical sect” of which he had once been a member “united itself into a body under chiefs.” It was underway the moment “these chiefs by the art of intrigue to which they applied themselves” made of themselves “the arbiters of public opinion,” capable of determining “the reputation, even the destiny, of particular individuals and through them that of the State.” And it reached its culmination when they made alliances with “powerful men” for the purpose of becoming “the arbiters of society” as well. These chiefs made their newfound allies “feel,” he wrote, “that, working in concert, they would be able to extend their roots under the feet of men in such a fashion that no one would any longer find solid footing (*assiette*), and no one would be able to march forward except on terrain that had been countermined.”

Crucial to all of this was the fact that “the chiefs of” what Rousseau pointedly describes as “the philosophical league” possess a “doctrine” all

their own and have mastered “the art of making their doctrine circulate . . . in the seminaries and colleges so that the newborn generation is devoted to them from birth.” He acknowledges their animosity to the Jesuits, but he insists that this animosity is rooted solely in “professional jealousy (*jalousie de métier*),” and he contends that the *philosophes* are, in fact, “great imitators of the mode of proceeding (*marche*) followed by the Jesuits.” They “govern minds with the same imperial control (*empire*), with the same dexterity that these others employ in governing consciences,” and they are “shrewder” than these priests “in that they know better how to conceal themselves while acting.”

The Jesuits rendered themselves all-powerful by exercising divine authority over consciences and by making themselves, in God’s name, the arbiters of good and evil. The *philosophes*, not being able to usurp the same authority, applied themselves to its destruction; and then, in the course of appearing to explain nature to their docile sectaries and of making of themselves its supreme interpreters, they established, in its name, an authority no less absolute than that of their enemies—although it appears to be consistent with freedom (*libre*) and to rule over wills solely by way of reason.

The struggle between the two parties Rousseau compared with that between Carthage and Rome. “These two bodies,” he wrote, “both imperious, both intolerant, were, in consequence, incompatible—since the fundamental system of both was to rule despotically. Each wishing to rule alone, they could not share the empire and rule together.” Gradually, then, and inexorably, “the new” league, “following the erring ways of the other but with greater adroitness, supplanted it by way of debauching its supporters and through them brought about its destruction.” Now, Rousseau adds, we can see this league “marching along” the tracks laid out for it “with as much audacity” as its predecessor “and with more success since the other always encountered resistance and this one no longer encounters any.” In this fashion, moreover, the *philosophes* managed to “substitute little by little a philosophical intolerance” for the religious intolerance once propagated by the Jesuits; and



## ROUSSEAU'S RESPONSE TO MONTESQUIEU

“without anyone perceiving it, they became even more dangerous than their predecessors.”

The danger posed by this new “philosophical league” he thought rooted in the fact that “the proud despotism of modern philosophy has carried the egotism” associated with the spirit of profound insecurity and fierce vainglory, which Rousseau calls *amour propre*, “to its ultimate extreme.” It eventuates in a “taste for domination” that gives life to “all of the angry passions related to *amour propre*”; and from among “the apprentice *philosophes*,” it produces “a generation of Despots” who, having “become slaves in order to be tyrants,” exhibit “the liveliest intolerance.” This intolerance may be “more hidden” than that once promoted by ambitious and idolatrous priests, but, Rousseau insists, it is “no less cruel.” If the new conspiracy does not “appear to exercise the same rigor” as the old, it is only because “it no longer encounters rebels.” If, however, there were a renaissance of religious belief, if “some genuine defenders of Theism, of tolerance and morality,” were once again to present themselves on the public stage, “one would soon see raised up against them the most terrible persecutions,” for quite “soon a philosophical inquisition, more cunning and no less sanguinary than the other, would burn without mercy anyone who dared to believe in God.”<sup>66</sup>

Such was the ultimate import of Rousseau’s indictment of the Enlightenment. Such was the warning that he issued near the end of his life to all who were willing to pay attention. “The sort who acts the part of the Freethinker (*l’Esprit fort*) & Philosopher today would have been for the very same reason nothing more than a fanatic at the time of the League.” So he wrote in his first published work.

## NOTES

This article has been adapted from a chapter forthcoming next year in Paul A. Rahe, *Soft Despotism, Democracy’s Drift* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). I cite Charles de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes* (1721), ed. Edgar Mass, from *Œuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, ed. Jean Ehrard, Catherine Volpilhac-Auger, et al. (Oxford, UK: The Voltaire Foundation, 1998), I, by number and, where appropriate, line; Charles de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* (1757), from *Œuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, ed. Roger Caillois (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1949–1951), II 225–995, by part, book, chapter, and, where necessary for precision, page; and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750), ed. George R. Havens (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1946), by page and, where appropriate, line number. Rousseau’s other works are cited from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*

de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959–1995). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

1. For the details, see Arthur M. Wilson, *Diderot* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 103–16, and Maurice Cranston, *Jean-Jacques: The Early Life and Work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1712–1754* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), 226–70. In this connection, note Raymond Trousson, *Socrate devant Voltaire, Diderot, et Rousseau: La Conscience en face du mythe* (Paris: Minard, 1967), 105–24.
2. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions* (1770), eds. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, VIII, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, I, 350–51. For the advertisement, which appeared in *Mercure de France* (October 1749), 153–55, see Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 91.
3. Letter to Chrétien Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes on 12 January 1762, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, I, 1134–38 (at 1135–36).
4. See Rousseau, *Les Confessions* VIII, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, I, 351.
5. See Wilson, *Diderot*, 113–15, and Cranston, *Jean-Jacques*, 227–70.
6. These notes—hundreds of pages as yet unpublished—languish in the Bibliothèque municipale in Bordeaux and elsewhere largely unremarked: see Anicet Sénéchal, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau, secrétaire de Madame Dupin d’après des documents inédits avec un inventaire des papiers Dupin dispersés en 1957 et 1958,” *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau* 36 (1963–65), 173–288, with Bernard Gagnebin, “Notes sur la dispersion des papiers Dupin,” *ibid.*, 289–90.
7. Rousseau’s claim that Madame Dupin “never employed” him “except to write under her dictation and for research of pure erudition” is, to say the least, misleading: see *Les Confessions* VII, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, I, 341–42.
8. See Alexis François, “Rousseau, Les Dupins, Montesquieu,” *Annales de la société Jean-Jacques Rousseau* 30 (1943–45), 47–64; Michel Launay, “Le *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*: Jean-Jacques entre M<sup>me</sup> Dupin et Montesquieu,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et son temps: Politique et littérature au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, eds. Michel Launay et al. (Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1969), 93–103; *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Écrivain politique*, reviewed and augmented with a preface by Jean Starobinski second edition (Geneva: Éditions Slatkine, 1989), 158–62; and Bernard Yack, *The Longing for Total Revolution: Philosophic Sources of Social Discontent from Rousseau to Marx and Nietzsche* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 35–60; then, consider Jean Ehrard, “Rousseau et Montesquieu: Le mauvais Fils réconcilié,” *Annales de la société Jean-Jacques Rousseau* 41 (1997), 57–77, reprinted as “Le Fils coupable,” in Ehrard, *L’Esprit des mots: Montesquieu en lui-même et parmi les siens* (Geneva: Droz, 1998), 256–75.
9. See Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* 1.4.4, 6.
10. See Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* 1.4.8, 4.20.1.
11. See Montesquieu, *Voyage de Gratz a La Haye*, in *Œuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, ed. Roger Caillois, I, 863–64, 873–74.
12. Cf. Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* 4.20.1–2, 21.5, with *ibid.*, 1.4.6. See also *ibid.*, 3.14.10, 16.11, 19.5–9.
13. See Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* 3.19.16.
14. Cf. Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* 1.4.6, 7.1, 4.20.23.
15. See Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* 2.11.6, 3.19.27, 4.20.7, 21.7.
16. Cf. Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* 2.11.2–5 and 6, p. 407; 3.19.27, pp. 574–77, with *ibid.*, 2.11.1, 6, pp. 397, 407; 12.1–2.
17. Cf. Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* 3.19.27, pp. 575–77, 582–83, with *ibid.*, 1.1.2, 2.11.3, 5.26.15. In this connection, see also *ibid.*, 5.24.2, 5.
18. See Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* 3.19.27, pp. 575, 582–83.
19. After absorbing Paul A. Rahe, “Forms of Government: Structure, Principle, Object, and Aim,” in *Montesquieu’s Science of Politics: Essays on the Spirit of Laws*, eds. David W. Carrithers, Michael A. Mosher, and Paul A. Rahe (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 69–108 (esp. 80–97), one should read Blaise Pascal, *Pensées sur la Religion et sur quelques*

- autres sujets, qui ont été trouvées après sa mort parmi ses papiers*, ed. Étienne Périer third edition (Paris: Guillaume Desprez, 1671), and then consider John Lough, "Locke's Reading During his Stay in France, 1675–79," *The Library*, 5th ser., 8 (1953), 229–58, and Maurice Cranston, *John Locke* (New York: Arno, 1979), 140–41, 158–83 (esp. 158–64, 172–77), as well as Gabriel Dominique Bonno, *Les Relations intellectuelles de Locke avec la France (d'après des documents inédits)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 49–63 (esp. 59–62), 74, 101, 103–04, 210, 224–26, 244–49, 251–52, who emphasizes Locke's interest in Pascal; John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 89–90, 313–37, 151–52, 157, 168, 178–86, 188–97, who pays close attention to the first and the third of the three essays by Pascal's disciple Pierre Nicole that Locke translated; and Antony McKenna, *De Pascal à Voltaire: Le Rôle des Pensées de Pascal dans l'histoire des idées entre 1670–1734* (Oxford, UK: Voltaire Foundation, 1990), I, 450–502. Note also Arnoux Straudo, *La Fortune de Pascal en France au dix-huitième siècle* (Oxford, UK: Voltaire Foundation, 1997), 312–16. For a bilingual edition of the three essays of Nicole translated by Locke—with Nicole's original on one side of the page and Locke's translation on the other—see Jean S. Yolton, ed., *John Locke as Translator: Three of the Essais of Pierre Nicole in French and English* (Oxford, UK: Voltaire Foundation, 2000). In this connection, see John R. Harrison and Peter Laslett, eds., *The Library of John Locke*, second edition (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1971), nos. 2040–40b, 2222–23. Note also *ibid.*, nos. 586, 1803, 1803a, 2085a.
20. In many of his works, Rousseau highlighted—and even exaggerated—his ties to Geneva, and much of what he had to say in his political works was directed to his compatriots: note Arthur M. Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau's Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 253–82, and Helena Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva: From the First Discourse to the Social Contract, 1749–1762* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Whether it was aimed exclusively at them is, of course, another question. Rousseau was, after all, a dramatist with a keen sense of how comedies and operas would play on the stage.
  21. Consider Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre à M. d'Alembert sur les spectacles* (1758), ed. Bernard Gagnebin, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, V, 1–125 (at 31–43), in light of Voltaire, *Lettres philosophiques*, ed. Gustave Lanson third edition (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 1924), II, 184–226, esp. 185, and see Straudo, *La Fortune de Pascal en France*, 77–104, 179–88, 227–39, 301–29, 362–70; then, *ibid.*, 215–26; and Mark Hulliung, "Rousseau, Voltaire, and the Revenge of Pascal," in *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau*, ed. Patrick Riley (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 57–77.
  22. That Rousseau's peculiar temperament was a powerful spur to his ruminations he makes clear in his biographical works. In the process, he virtually demands that his thinking be interpreted in this light. For exceedingly intelligent attempts to do so, see Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction* (1957), tr. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), and Ronald Grimsley, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: A Study in Self-Awareness* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961). Although the Marxist interpretation articulated by Launay, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* passim, suffers from all of the usual defects, it has the great virtue of paying close and intelligent attention both to the society in which Rousseau lived and to contemporary events. See also John McManners, "The Social Contract and Rousseau's Revolt Against Society," in *Hobbes and Rousseau: A Collection of Critical Essays*, eds. Maurice Cranston and Richard S. Peters (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), 291–317, and Georges May, "Rousseau and France," *Yale French Studies* 28 (1961), 122–35.
  23. Consider Rousseau, *Les Confessions* IX, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, I, 404–05, in light of what can be inferred from Rousseau, *Dépêches de Venise*, ed. Jean-Daniel Candaux, in *ibid.*, III, 1043–234.
  24. See Rousseau, *Les Confessions* IX, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, I, 404–5.
  25. See Leo Strauss, "On The Intention of Rousseau," *Social Research* 14 (1947), 455–87, which is reprinted in Cranston and Peters, eds., *Hobbes and Rousseau*, 254–90, along with François, "Rousseau, Les Dupin, Montesquieu," 47–64; Launay, "Le Discours sur les sciences et les

- arts: Jean-Jacques entre M<sup>me</sup> Dupin et Montesquieu,” 93–103, and *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 158–62; and Yack, *The Longing for Total Revolution*, 35–60.
26. See Denis Diderot, *Réfutation suivie de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius intitulé L'Homme* (ca. 1773–74), in Jules Assézat and Maurice Tourneux, eds., *Œuvres complètes de Diderot* (Paris: Garnier, 1875–77), II, 275–456 (at 285–87).
  27. That he was, even then, a republican, he expressly indicated in Letter to François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire on 30 January 1750 (no. 149), in *Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. Ralph A. Leigh (Oxford, UK: Voltaire Foundation, 1965–98), II, 123–26, which, as it happens, is the first letter he is known ever to have signed “Citoyen de Genève.”
  28. If one neglects the circumstances in which Rousseau was writing, one will be likely to underestimate the continuity between the analysis that he lays out in his *First Discourse* and that which appears in his *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*. See, for example, Robert Wokler, “The *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* and its Offspring: Rousseau in Reply to his Critics,” in *Reappraisals of Rousseau: Studies in Honour of R. A. Leigh*, eds. Simon Harvey et al. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 250–78, and John Hope Mason, “Reading Rousseau’s *First Discourse*,” *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 249 (1987), 251–66.
  29. In describing and analyzing Rousseau’s dilemma, Launay, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 158–61, is especially perceptive.
  30. See Strauss, “On the Intention of Rousseau,” 455–87; Victor Gourevitch, “Rousseau on the Arts and Sciences,” *Journal of Philosophy* 69 (1972), 737–54; Clifford Orwin, “Rousseau’s Socratism,” *Journal of Politics* 60:1 (February 1998), 174–87; and Sally Howard Campbell and John T. Scott, “Rousseau’s Politic Argument in the *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*,” *American Journal of Political Science* 49:4 (October 2005), 818–28. In this connection, see Claude Pichois and René Pintard, eds., *Jean-Jacques entre Socrate et Caton: Textes inédits de Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1750–1753)* (Paris: José Corti, 1972), and Laurence D. Cooper, “Human Nature and the Love of Wisdom: Rousseau’s Hidden (and Modified) Platonism,” *Journal of Politics* 64:1 (February 2002), 108–25.
  31. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 99.10–100.3, then *ibid.*, 100.6–101.13.
  32. After reading Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 158.14–16, and 159.18–21, note Plato, *The Republic* 5.473c11–e51; and see Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 160.3–161.7.
  33. See Mark Hulliung, *The Autocritique of Enlightenment: Rousseau and the Philosophes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).
  34. Note, for example, Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 1; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l’origine et les fondemens de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755), ed. Jean Starobinski, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, III, 109; and the title pages of Rousseau, *Lettre à M. d’Alembert sur les spectacles*, in *ibid.*, V, 1, and of Rousseau, *Du Contrat social; ou, Principes du droit politique* (1762), ed. Robert Derathé, in *ibid.*, III, 347; then, consider the second preface to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, ou La nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), ed. Henri Coulet, in *ibid.*, II, 11–30 (at 27), where Rousseau explains why in some works he calls himself “a Citizen of Geneva” and why in others he does not. In this connection, see Graeme Garrard, *Rousseau’s Counter-Enlightenment: A Republican Critique of the Philosophes* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2003), *passim* (esp. 87–101).
  35. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 157.12–15. In this connection, see Victor Goldschmidt, *Anthropologie et politique: Les Principes du système de Rousseau* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1974), 45–104.
  36. Cf. Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 134.15–21, with Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* 4.23.17; then cf. Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois* 1.3.3, with Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 134.12–15. In this connection, see Antoine Adam, “De quelques sources de Rousseau dans la littérature philosophique (1700–1750),” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et son œuvre: Problèmes et recherches* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1964), 125–32 (at 127–28).
  37. See Denise Leduc-Fayette, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et le mythe de l’antiquité* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1974).
  38. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 110.16–112.2, 114.17–124.10, 133.12–135.8, 140.7–142.2, 142.18–145.3.

39. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 110.6–15; then, *ibid.*, 112.18–113.18; and, finally, *ibid.*, 112.3–17.
40. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 116.3–11; then, *ibid.*, 111.9–112.2.
41. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 122.5–124.10.
42. Cf. Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des lois*, 1.1.2, 2.11.5, 3.18.10–14, 18–19, 19.4.
43. See Rousseau, *Les Confessions* IX, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, I, 406–07.
44. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 101.14–102.6. For the significance given the word *police* and its cognates at this time, see Peter France, “Polish, police, *polis*,” in his *Politeness and Its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 53–73, and Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670–1789* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 18–23.
45. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 102.6–103.5.
46. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 103.6–107.3.
47. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 107.12–16, 132.5–133.4, 149.6–9, 150.14–21.
48. In this connection, consider the epigraph to this article: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Préface a *Narcisse*” (1753), ed. François Bouchardy, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, II, 959–74 (at 968).
49. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 112.3–17. In this connection, see Pierre Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, tr. Rebecca Balinski (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 53–79 (esp. 63–72).
50. See Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des lois* 1.4.8; 2.14.7; 4.23.21, pp. 705–07; 5.24.10–11.
51. See Rousseau, “Préface a *Narcisse*,” in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, II, 967, 970–71.
52. Cf. Rousseau, “Préface a *Narcisse*,” in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, II, 967–68, 971, with Plato, *The Republic*, 6.487b1–506d1.
53. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 94.3–14. For the origins and import of the phrase *l'Esprit fort*, see Paul A. Rahe, *Against Throne and Altar: Machiavelli and Political Theory under the English Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 155–68, 297–312.
54. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 136.20–137.10.
55. See Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 137.11–139.6. Elsewhere, by way of a discussion of playwrights and the theater, Rousseau explores more fully the social and political import of the artist's dependence on his audience: See Rousseau, *Lettre à M. d'Alembert sur les spectacles*, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, V, 1–125 (esp. 14–84). Cf., also, the note at the end of Rousseau, *Du Contrat social* 3.9, in *ibid.*, III, 420, in which he takes an oblique shot at Voltaire, with Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes* 46.59–69. Note also the indictment levelled in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre à M. de Voltaire*, 18 August 1756, ed. Henri Gouhier, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, IV, 1059–75.
56. Cf. Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des lois* 1.7.8–9, 14, 3.16.11–12, 19.5–6, 8–9, 12, 14–15, 6.28.22, with Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondemens de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, III, 119–20; see Rousseau, *Julie, ou La nouvelle Héloïse* II.xxi, in *ibid.*, II, 265–78, and note Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes* 61, 96–97; then, consider Ursula Vogel, “‘But in a Republic, Men Are Needed’: Guarding the Boundaries of Liberty,” in *Rousseau and Liberty*, ed. Robert Wokler (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 213–30.
57. Rousseau's attempt to disguise his point was so maladroit, as he must have recognized in the end, that it could never have passed muster: see the critical edition of Bibliothèque publique et universitaire de Genève MS. fr. 228, fol. 39 recto - 40 verso, and Bibliothèque de la ville de Neuchâtel MS R. N. a. 9 fol. 1, which is printed in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Diskurs über die Ungleichheit/Discours sur l'inégalité: Kritische Ausgabe des integralen Textes, mit sämtlichen Fragmenten und ergänzenden Materialien nach den Originalausgaben und den Handschriften neu ediert, übersetzt, und kommentiert*, ed. Heinrich Meier fifth edition (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001), 386–403, and consider Robert Shackleton, “Censure and Censorship: Impediments to Free Publication in the Age of Enlightenment,” *The Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin* n. s. 6 (December 1973), 25–41, which is reprinted in his *Essays*

- on *Montesquieu and on the Enlightenment*, eds. David Gilson and Martin Smith (Oxford, UK: Voltaire Foundation, 1988), 405–20; and William Hanley, “The Policing of Thought: Censorship in Eighteenth-Century France,” *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 183 (1980), 265–95.
58. See Mark Goldie, “The Civil Religion of James Harrington,” in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 197–222. With regard to the history and character of the crusade against priestcraft, see Rahe, *Against Throne and Altar*, passim.
  59. In this connection, see François Furet, “La Librairie du royaume de France au 18<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Livre et société dans la France du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, eds. Geneviève Bollême et al. (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1965–70), I, 3–32, which is reprinted in translation as “Book Licensing and Book Production in the Kingdom of France in the Eighteenth Century,” in Furet, *In the Workshop of History*, tr. Jonathan Mandelbaum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 99–124.
  60. Note Christopher Kelly, *Rousseau as Author: Consecrating One’s Life to the Truth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), and see Pierre Grosclaude, *Malesherbes: Témoin et interprète de son temps* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1961), 63–186, and Maurice Cranston, *The Noble Savage: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1754–1762* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 6–7, 133–39, 151, 203–04, 215–16, 220, 226, 232–53, 266–69, 278–362.
  61. See Rousseau, *Du Contrat social* 4.8, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, III, 460–69.
  62. See Maurice Cranston, *The Noble Savage*, 323–62, and *The Solitary Self: Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Exile and Adversity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
  63. For a brief introduction to this neglected work, see Christopher Kelly and Roger D. Masters, “Rousseau on Reading ‘Jean-Jacques’: *The Dialogues*,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* 17:2 (Winter 1989–90): 239–53.
  64. For a more detailed discussion than is possible here, see Arthur M. Melzer, “The Origin of the Counter-Enlightenment: Rousseau and the New Religion of Sincerity,” *American Political Science Review* 90:2 (June 1996), 344–60 (esp. 344–51).
  65. For a brief but telling discussion of the foundations for Rousseau’s claim, see Judith N. Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau’s Social Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 95–99. Note also Melzer, “The Origin of the Counter-Enlightenment,” 347 n. 7, and Garrard, *Rousseau’s Counter-Enlightenment*, 11–27, 83–87.
  66. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dialogues: Rousseau, Juge de Jean Jacques* (ca. 1772), ed. Robert Osmond, II–III, in *Œuvres complètes de Rousseau*, I, 889–91, 964–68.