

ROUSSEAU ON SOCIETY,  
POLITICS, MUSIC AND LANGUAGE

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An Historical Interpretation  
of His Early Writings

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## ABSTRACT

This study is focused upon a variety of specific problems which I believe the early writings of Rousseau were designed to solve. Most of the works that are discussed here were drafted by Rousseau between 1750 and 1756, and I shall argue that a proper grasp of this fact about their temporal proximity is important to an understanding of the conceptual relations which underlie them. I hope to show that any accurate account of Rousseau's meaning must incorporate a careful examination of the context in which his ideas were developed, and I shall therefore be concerned very largely with the manner in which his writings were conceived as replies to arguments that were produced by other thinkers.

The first chapter is devoted to an account of some mistaken interpretations of Rousseau's meaning. We often confuse our own beliefs about the contemporary significance of certain ideas with the sense which their authors originally intended they should have, and in this chapter I consider a number of misconceptions of that kind, as well as some mistaken correctives to them, which have appeared in Rousseau studies. The views of C.E. Vaughan and Robert Derathé, in particular, are discussed with reference to these problems.

The second chapter is concerned with the influence of Diderot upon Rousseau and especially with the intellectual debt which Rousseau owed to Diderot's article 'Droit naturel'. The 'Economie politique' and the Manuscrit de Genève are shown to exhibit the influence of Diderot in two quite different ways, and the conceptions of the 'volonté générale' of the two figures are compared in the light of the differences between their accounts of the natural society of mankind.

In the third chapter the arguments of the Discours sur l'inégalité are examined in connection with the ideas of several other figures from whom Rousseau drew some inspiration or against whom he raised some objections in that work. The chapter opens with a challenge to the thesis that the second Discours bears the stamp of Diderot's influence, and it continues with several sections, which are concerned with the historical, anthropological, linguistic, and political views of Buffon, Condillac, and Hobbes and Locke, respectively, while two final sections describe Rousseau's account of the transformation of natural into social man.

The fourth chapter compares a number of ideas about the nature and origin of music which were put forward by Rameau and Rousseau. It traces the course of their controversy about this subject through the writings of both thinkers, and in the case of Rousseau it is addressed especially to his articles on music in the Encyclopédie, his Lettre sur la musique françoise, his Examen de deux principes, and his Essai sur l'origine des langues. It also attempts to establish that the Discours sur l'inégalité at first contained a section about the genesis of music which Rousseau eventually incorporated in the Essai sur l'origine des langues. The chapter, moreover, offers an interpretation of the place of music and language in the general context of Rousseau's social theory, and it provides a critique of several accounts

of the historical relation between the Essai and the second Discours which have neglected that common feature of their meaning.

The final chapter is concerned with the Discours sur les sciences et les arts and with the writings which Rousseau produced between 1751 and 1753 in defence of that text against its critics. I argue there that while the first Discours is the most shallow and least original of all of Rousseau's major works, the controversy which followed its publication helped him to focus his ideas about culture and society much more sharply than he had done before. I try to show that Rousseau's replies to the detractors of the Premier Discours constitute a refinement of his views along the paths which he was then to pursue further in the Discours sur l'inégalité and the Essai sur l'origine des langues, and I conclude with some reflections about the systematic nature of his early social theory as it was developed in the period between his composition of the first and second Discours.

The appendix consists of an annotated transcription of the manuscript on the origins of music and language discussed at length in chapter IV.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND SIGNS

<u>Annales</u>	<u>Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau.</u>
<u>Archives</u>	<u>Archives de philosophie du droit et de sociologie juridique.</u>
Assézat-Tourneux	Oeuvres complètes de Diderot. Jules Assézat and Maurice Tourneux eds. 20 vols. Paris 1875-77.
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
<u>Correspondance complète</u>	<u>Correspondance complète de Jean Jacques Rousseau.</u> R.A. Leigh ed. Genève 1965-71, Banbury 1972-.
<u>Correspondance générale</u>	<u>Correspondance générale de J.-J. Rousseau.</u> Théophile Dufour [and Pierre-Paul Plan] eds. 20 vols. Paris 1924-34.
<u>Correspondance littéraire</u>	<u>Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique.</u> Maurice Tourneux ed. 16 vols. Paris 1877-82.
CTWR	Jean-Philippe Rameau. <u>Complete Theoretical Writings.</u> Erwin R. Jacobi ed. 6 vols. N.p. 1967-72.
Derathé	Robert Derathé. <u>Jean-Jacques Rousseau et la science politique de son temps.</u> Paris 1950 and 1970.
Dufour	Théophile Dufour. <u>Recherches bibliographiques sur les oeuvres imprimées de J.-J. Rousseau.</u> 2 vols. Paris 1925.
<u>Encyclopédie</u>	<u>Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers.</u> 35 vols. Paris 1751-80.
<u>Essai sur l'origine des langues</u>	Jean-Jacques Rousseau. <u>Essai sur l'origine des langues.</u> Charles Porset ed. Second edition. Bordeaux 1970.
Genève	Bibliothèque publique et universitaire de Genève.
Havens	Jean-Jacques Rousseau. <u>Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts.</u> George R. Havens ed. New York 1946 and 1966.
Jansen	Albert Jansen. <u>Jean-Jacques Rousseau als Musiker.</u> Berlin 1884.

Launay	Jean-Jacques Rousseau. <u>Oeuvres complètes.</u> Michel Launay ed. Paris 1967-.
Lough	John Lough. <u>Essays on the 'Encyclopédie'</u> of Diderot and D'Alembert. London 1968.
Moultou-Du Peyrou	<u>Collection complète des Oeuvres de</u> J.J. Rousseau. Paul Moultou and Pierre-Alexandre Du Peyrou eds. 17 vols. in-4to. Genève 1782[1780]-89.
Neuchâtel	Bibliothèque de la Ville de Neuchâtel.
O.C.	Jean-Jacques Rousseau. <u>Oeuvres complètes.</u> Bernard Gagnebin, Marcel Raymond, et al. eds. Paris 1959-.
OPB	<u>Oeuvres philosophiques de Buffon.</u> Jean Piveteau ed. Paris 1954.
OPC	<u>Oeuvres philosophiques de Condillac.</u> Georges Le Roy ed. 3 vols. Paris 1947-51.
Pichois-Pintard	<u>Jean-Jacques Rousseau entre Socrate et</u> <u>Caton. Textes inédits de Jean-Jacques</u> <u>Rousseau (1750-1753).</u> Claude Pichois and René Pintard eds. Paris 1972.
PMLA	<u>Publications of the Modern Language</u> <u>Association of America.</u>
Proust	Jacques Proust. <u>Diderot et 'l'Encyclopédie'.</u> Second edition. Paris 1967.
RHLF	<u>Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France.</u>
Streckeisen-Moultou	<u>Oeuvres et correspondance inédites de</u> <u>J. J. Rousseau.</u> Georges Streckeisen-Moultou ed. Paris 1861.
SVEC	<u>Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth</u> <u>century.</u>
Vaughan	<u>The Political Writings of Jean Jacques</u> <u>Rousseau.</u> C.E. Vaughan ed. 2 vols. Cambridge 1915 and Oxford 1962.
[ ]	Intercalations.
< >	Deletions.