

5b. Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* and *On the Social Contract*
Sept. 25-October 2, 2001

Sept. 25: "A Discourse on the Origins of Inequality" (1754)

Announcements:

Upcoming response paper:

- for *Social Contract* books III & IV: What is the difference between the government and the sovereign? Is Rousseau's philosophy radically democratic or does it prefigure totalitarianism? Explain.

I. Intro to Rousseau (1712-1778)

A. **The key question** for Rousseau is this: Is it possible to achieve a society of **diversity and unity**? That is, how can we create a common good out of a society of diverse interests and wills? How can we achieve the common good and satisfy individuals' interests without sacrificing one or the other?

1. His answer is through the **general will**.

2. It's a very contemporary question, even if his answer seems a bit strange.

B. the *Discourse* is his critique of modern society. *Social Contract* is his attempt to spell out the basic political principles of a just society.

C. "All theory is autobiography." —Nietzsche. One thing to know about Rousseau's life is that he was largely a recluse even though he was one of the most celebrated figures in 18th century France, noted as a philosopher, novelist, and writer of music. He was a recluse because he valued his **independence** and didn't want to be dependent on anyone. To be dependent on someone else is to be a slave to that person. Independence and fear of dependence is a driving theme of his political work, especially the GW. The advantage of the GW is that we are no longer dependent on each other but on the laws.

1. Explains why despite his fame he still made his living by being a music copiest. May also explain why he gave all of his five children to an orphanage.

2. May also explain why he hated French high culture, even though he was one of its most famous contributors. A watchmaker's son, he preferred peasants to elites, though he rarely hung out with peasants.

II. Introduction to the *Discourse on Inequality*

A. Rousseau writes this essay as an entry in a **contest** sponsored by the Academy of Dijon. The contest is to answer the following question in an essay that can be read aloud in 45 minutes or less: "What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorized by natural law?" 31

B. The first thing he does is to refine the question by distinguishing between **natural inequality**, or inequality according to age, strength, and intelligence, and **political or moral inequality**, or the privileges and rights enjoyed by persons, including wealth, honor and power.

C. The **real question**, he asks, is what is the source of political equality among humans? How does natural inequality get turned into political inequality? What causes this enslavement? 49-50

D. To answer this question we have to follow Hobbes and Locke and investigate man in the **state of nature**.

III. Rousseau's state of nature

A. Hobbes and Locke's SoN was hypothetical: "Let's *imagine* what life would be like without government and civil society." Rousseau takes an **anthropological approach**: Such a time did actually exist, so let's examine what it actually looked like.

1. He does say on pp. 50 that this investigation "must not be considered as historical truths, but only as mere conditional and hypothetical reasonings," but he says this only to avoid getting in trouble with the religious censors, since his story runs contrary to the story of creation in the Bible. R is relying on the latest in anthropology to construct his SoN, unlike H and L. He thinks he's describing an actual condition.

B. Man in the SoN was not selfish and violent, like Hobbes says, but peaceful and primitive. People were strong, robust, and healthy, and lived largely without fear. Basically, people were like apes or dumb brutes: animals without language, generally peaceful and concerned with little else beyond finding food. This is the image of the **noble savage**.

C. There were also **no social bonds** in the SoN: no families, homes, villages, property, etc. Individuals were isolated. 65 No such thing as fathers, and mothers were with their children only until they could find their own food.

D. Humans don't differ qualitatively from animals in terms of their reason or their moral worth, like Aristotle argues, only **quantitatively**. Every animal has a degree of reason, it's just that humans have more. 59 **Reason and virtue do not define humans**, contra Locke or Aristotle.

E. The key characteristic that distinguishes humans from animals is humans' capacity for **self-improvement**, or perfectability. 60

1. **Perfectability** is the ability to imagine an outcome and make it happen.

2. Animals are incapable of improving themselves, while humans can. Animals act according to instinct, but humans are **free from instinct**.

3. Think of perfectability as **the ability to adapt**, not necessarily as **progress**. Perfectability is not necessarily an unqualified good. It can lead humans to good things, but also to slavery. It is what leads them out of the peaceful, idyllic state of nature and into society, and society enslaves people.

F. There was no morality in the SoN. Instead, it was a **pre-moral** era, since it was pre-society. People in the SoN were not good or evil because they had no conception of good or bad, virtuous or vicious. Morality only emerges when society does. 71 Rather than morality, people in the SoN had only **natural sentiments**:

1. **Sentiment of present existence**. Savage man lacks foresight. He only lives for the moment. "he will improvidently sell you his cotton-bed in the morning, and come crying in the evening to buy it again, not having foreseen he would want it again the next night." 62 He is simply happy if his immediate needs for food, shelter, and sexual gratification are met.

2. **Self-preservation, or amour de soi**. This is a sort of self-respect that leads us to be concerned for our own self-preservation, but exhibits no jealousy or competitiveness with others. 73

3. **Compassion**, pity for others and a desire to not see them suffer. It's not exactly the golden rule, but it does say, "do good to yourself with as little evil as possible to others." 76 It's not altruism, but it's not evil, either. These are natural feelings. All our modern virtues—generosity, forgiveness, benevolence, friendship, etc.—derive from this natural sentiment. 75

G. Thus, there may be natural inequality, but **there is no political inequality in the SoN**.

1. **Q**: Is this a charitable sketch of pre-civilized humanity? How does it make civilization look by comparison?

2. **Q**: Is the formation of society from the SoN a good thing according to R?

3. If there is no political inequality in the SoN, then **political inequality must have emerged from society itself**. Rousseau uses this portrait of the SoN to **criticize modern society**. Civilization is not necessarily an advancement from the SoN, like Locke maintains.

4. **Modern society has domesticated human beings**. By separating us from our original condition it has made us weak, servile, effeminate. We've lost our natural love for freedom. 57 Ironically, our use of reason has not led us to freedom, as Aristotle and Locke argue, but to dependence and inequality. It's dragged us out of the idyllic SoN and into society.

IV. The creation of society

A. **Society emerges unintentionally** from the SoN. Folks start cooperating with each other to hunt. Then metallurgy and agriculture are invented, and people begin to stay in one place rather than wander. Gradually, people begin to live together, in families and villages.

B. This was the "**golden age**" of society. People were no longer in the SoN but life was good. People engaged in relationships and were still free and independent, and there was still no political inequality.

C. **Q:** What went wrong? What took people out of this happy, idyllic condition? What created inequality? What made man "wicked while sociable"? 82

1. **Two things:** amour-propre and property.

D. Amour-propre

1. **amour-propre:** think of it as a warped self-love. It's vanity and self-love to the point in which people feel they are superior to others. It leads people to think primarily of themselves at the expense of others.

2. Amour-propre replaces the **amour de soi** of the SoN. In the SoN people loved or respected themselves, but without any vanity or sense of superiority over others. 73

3. Amour-propre leads to competition among humans, and this leads to the rise of property. Rousseau blames the rise of amour-propre on the rise of **reason**.

4. **Read 75.**

5. This is a **critique of reason**. Reason and the philosophers don't help humankind, they hurt it because it leads to amour-propre and selfishness. The common market-woman is more virtuous than the most rational philosopher, because the philosopher is so caught up in reason that he's forgotten how to be compassionate.

E. Property

1. **Read 84**

2. Inequality lies with the origins of property.

3. Man's downfall from the "golden age" begins with an act of theft: someone makes a claim on a piece of property and everyone else believes him.

F. The rise of property leads to a vicious **state of war**. It's very nasty. **Read 96-97** if time.

G. In order to **leave the SoW**, the rich conceive of the idea of creating civil society. Their goal is not freedom or equality but the protection of their property.

1. **Read 98, 99**

2. **Locke** argues that property emerges from human labor, and that unequal amounts of property are the result of humans' natural inequality. The purpose of civil society is to protect humans' property. In other words, the goal of civil society is to **protect humans' political equality as well as economic inequality**.

3. **Rousseau** argues that civil society and the social contract that created it is not a good thing, but a **con game** by the rich played on the poor. **Property is theft**, and civil society only makes that theft legitimate. Civil society does indeed protect property, but it does so for the benefit of the rich, not for the benefit of everyone.

The social contract and civil society is a trick by the rich to protect their property and to ensure inequality.

H. **The origins of inequality, then, lies in the origins of society**, and in the rise of reason. The *Discourse* is a powerful critique of modern society.

1. Read 116

2. Not surprisingly, his essay didn't win the prize.

V. Locke's SoN vs. Rousseau's SoN:

A. Locke: SoN → SoW → SC → CS

B. Rousseau: SoN → society ("golden age" with hints of the bad) → property → SoW → SC → CS [correct?]

C. The SoW emerges *after* society for Rousseau, not before it. Society is where war, violence, and destruction take place, not the SoN.

D. The second *Discourse* is a critique of Hobbes and Locke. *On the Social Contract* is Rousseau's attempt to provide a positive vision, i.e. to describe what a good society could be.

E. **Q for Thursday:** What is the General Will? What does R mean when he says people who disobey it will be "forced to be free"?

September 27, 2001

Announcements

Upcoming response paper

I. Introducing the general will

A. The purpose of the social contract is to recapture the freedom and happiness we enjoyed in the state of nature. He doesn't want to return to the SoN (that's impossible) but to recapture its principles.

B. Rousseau's solution to the ills of modern society is to create a **paradox**: let's create a society that unites people so tightly that each person becomes dependent on the whole, and by that fact, becomes free from dependence on another individual. By depending on the entire society (i.e. the general will) we are dependent on no one. Thus we assert our dependence even as we unite with others. We are independent through our dependence on others. (Wolin, 371, 373)

1. The next best thing to a world without rules (the SoN) is a world in which we provide the rules for ourselves. The next best thing to natural equality is a society where everyone is equally subordinate to the general will. Wolin 374

C. **"Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains"**

1. **Read 181**

2. **Q:** What does Rousseau mean by this?

3. As a species, originating in the SoN, we were free, but we have been shackled by the chains of civil society, law and government.

4. There's no hope of going back to the SoN. There's no hope of ridding ourselves of the chains. All we can try to do is **make the chains legitimate**. This is the purpose of *Social Contract*. Key to doing so is the general will.

5. Notice how Rousseau explicitly takes issue with Aristotle, 183. Aristotle says some humans are born for slavery, but people are "born for slavery" only because they are born in a society that makes them slavish. **Society makes the slave**, the slave is not made for (and before) society. That's why he refutes any defense or justification of slavery in Book I, chap. 4.

II. The general will

A. The only way for government to be legitimate is for it to enable humans to come together to form society yet without harming their individual interests. In other words, we have to find a way to create **unity from diversity**.

1. **Read Q₁**, p. 191.

2. The task is seemingly impossible: we need to form a polity that serves the common good (as Aristotle desires) yet that respects individuals' natural liberty (as Locke desires). We have to **combine Aristotle with Locke**, the ancients with the modern.

B. The solution is to enter into a **social contract** (*not* the SC the rich swindled us into in order to protect their property. This is a *new* SC.) This social contract creates the **general will**. [correct? I think so]

1. **Read Q₂**, p. 191, Q₃, p. 192.

2. **Q:** What does R mean by this?

3. "Each, in giving himself to all, gives himself to no one." By surrendering our rights to everyone, we in effect **don't surrender them at all**, because we only give them to the people as a whole, not to any individual. Plus we **gain the freedoms that others give us**. By becoming totally dependent on the general will, ironically we preserve our independence and remain as free as we were before.

C. **The sovereign** is the whole body of people created by the SC. It's like a **corporate body**.

1. **General vs. particular wills:** Sovereignty is the exercise of the general will. A particular will acts in the interests of a particular individual or group. The sovereign acts for the common good. It is not concerned with the particular will of a person or social class.

2. **Citizens and men**

a. Citizens are public persons who act in the public/general will.

b. Men act according to their private interests/will.

3. **General will vs. will of all:** The general will considers only the common interest, i.e. what is good for the community. The will of all is the sum of particular wills, with no concern for the common good. 203

4. Think of Aristotle's distinction between "correct" and "deviant" constitutions.

5. **Q:** But what happens when a person's own will or interests conflicts with the general will?

D. **"Forced to be free"**

1. **Read 194-95**

2. **Q:** What does Rousseau mean by this? Isn't this an oxymoron?

3. It means that compulsion might be necessary to force people into dependence on the whole community, but such a dependence will free them from dependence on particular individuals, hence it will make them free. Wolin 375

4. **Citizens and subjects**

a. citizens = the people when they act in their sovereign authority

b. subjects = the people when they obey the laws of the state.

c. Under the SC, we are all **both citizens and subjects**. We can't enjoy our **rights as citizens** unless we bear our **duties as subjects**. If we try to avoid our duties as subjects, we can be forced to do them (i.e. punished), i.e. forced to be free.

E. So, through the general will we've created a collective body that acts for the common good, yet we've also managed to maintain our individual freedom.

F. **Questions on the GW**

1. **Q:** Has Rousseau solved the dilemma? Does the general will create unity from diversity?

2. **Q:** Does the social contract successfully replicate the principles of humans' natural condition in the state of nature?

3. **Q:** Is it possible to achieve the unanimous consent of the people through individual suffrage? Won't this require making everyone's opinions and ideas the same?

4. **Q:** Does Rousseau assume that we all have common interests? Does he ignore or paper over differences such as race, sex, and class?

5. **Q:** How can the GW deal with "factions," or a set of competing interests, such as rich vs. poor, Black vs. white, men vs. women?

a. Rousseau's purpose is to eliminate or reduce factions, not to accommodate them. Factions or particular wills are a constant threat to the GW.

6. **Q:** Isn't this "forced to be free" stuff totalitarian doublespeak? I.e. Freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength. Is the GW the forerunner of the totalitarian state?

a. Also, **read 204**. This seems pretty scary.

b. Rousseau himself is *not* a totalitarian. He's trying to *preserve* our individual freedom, not destroy it.

c. Remember, Rousseau **hates personal dependence**. A person who is dependent on another person is that person's slave. The purpose of the GW and for "forcing people to be free" is to replace personal dependence with impersonal dependence, i.e. dependence on the laws. Legal dependence is independence.

G. Rousseau and property

x. We also surrender our possessions/wealth as well as our rights when we enter into the SC. However, doing so does make our property more secure, not less, because we now have the legal right to our possession rather than the right of the stronger. [correct?] Bk. I ch. 9

x. Nevertheless, the rights of the community ultimately trump the rights of the individual.

x. Also, can't be too great a gap between the rich and the poor. The common good requires limits on the amount of property a person can possess. If that gap gets too large, the poor will become dependent on the rich.

III. The lawgiver

A. The general will is created by the unanimous consent of all its members.

Everyone comes together to form the GW. If you don't consent to it (either explicitly or tacitly) then you don't form part of the social compact. You are a "foreigner among citizens" [dc quote]

B. The GW always acts in the common good. But sometimes it is unable to see the common good because it doesn't have enough information.

C. Thus, in order to create the initial laws of the society, the GW needs a **legislator**, or lawgiver. Bk. II chaps. 6 & 7 It needs someone of superior intelligence to lay down these laws. (Shklar, *Men and Citizens* 170)

D. The function of the legislator is to establish the laws best suited for that particular polity that will **put particular wills in check** and promote the general will. Then, once these laws are created, the legislator must step down and become a regular member of the GW. Thus, his is a one-time job. 213-214

E. In other words, a good society needs the equivalent of a Lycurgus (Sparta), a Solon (Athens), a Romulus (Rome), a Moses (Hebrews).

IV. Characteristics of the GW

A. The GW is founded by unanimous agreement via the social contract. The GW founds the **sovereign**, or the body politic.

B. The initial, founding laws of the body politic come not from the people but from a **legislator**.

C. The GW **acts in the common good**. The GW is not the "will of all." It is not merely the collection of individuals' opinions. It is the whole body of the people, acting as one. It is like the people put into one corporate body, acting together according to the will of that body. The GW is when we **act as citizens**, the will of all is when we **act as men**.

D. Thus, **the GW is always right**. The GW is infallible. Bk. II ch. 3 If the people have enough information, their deliberations will always result in the general will. If it makes a mistake, it's our own fault as individuals, not the GW's.

1. Read 205 if time.

E. **Once created, the GW is found through majority rule.**

1. The SC is created by unanimous agreement, but once the sovereign has been formed, it makes its decisions by majority rule.

F. The function of the general will is to defend people from the **dangers of amour-propre**. (Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 166)

G. In other words, the GW is "**the will against equality**." It pursues the interests of humans in general rather than privileges for particular groups or individuals. (Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 185)

1. People will always be self-interested, but that tendency should not be allowed to play a significant part in public life.

2. The function of the GW is to **prevent inequality and personal dependence**. By making ourselves completely dependent on everyone (the sovereign), we make ourselves dependent on no one.

H. Rousseau's fundamental concern is inequality and dependence. The GW is designed to eliminate them—or to show how society rests upon them?

1. In other words, it might be more likely that *On the Social Contract* is less a prescription for how to create a good society than it is a critique of modern society, just as the second *Discourse* is.

x. **Definitions** (from pp. 192-93):

x. state = republic = body politic = polis = power

x. state = the body politic in its passive state

x. sovereign = the body politic (or state) in action

x. people = members of the sovereign/state.

x. citizens = the people when they act in their sovereign authority

x. subjects = the people when they obey the laws of the state.

x. **Equality** for Rousseau: It means lack of personal dependence on another. He doesn't call for exact equality regarding wealth, only that the distribution of wealth doesn't make the poor dependent on the rich. He doesn't say that everyone should have equal power in society, only that no one has enough power to do violence to another person, i.e. to subject them to his/her will. Equality thus implies "moderation in goods and position" as well as "in avarice and covetousness." 225

x. **Q:** Does this sound similar to Aristotle?

October 2, 2001

Announcements:

Key points:

I. Sovereignty vs. government (Book III, chap. 1)

A. **Sovereignty:** the whole body of citizens in a society. It's where political authority resides. It is a **legislative** authority: it makes the laws. The sovereign **determines the general will.**

B. **The government:** the body that **executes** the laws. Its function is to **carry out the general will.**

C. The government is an **intermediate body** between the subjects and the sovereign. 230-31

1. subjects (individual wills) <—> govt. <—> sovereign (GW)

D. The function of the legislative branch, i.e. the sovereign, is to make laws "from a **general standpoint**" (239), i.e. for the common good. The role of the executive branch is to apply these laws to **particular situations.** The sovereign is concerned with the general, the executive is concerned with the particular.

1. The **sovereign is not the same thing as the government.** The sovereign is the whole body of the people, the citizens. Government is the executive branch, the institution responsible for executing the laws. The sovereign legislates, the government executes.

2. The government is an institution that lies in the hands of a relatively small number of people, but sovereignty is unanimous and absolute. The sovereign (i.e. the GW, the people) give the government authority to carry out its functions.

II. Aristocracy, democracy, decay

A. **Q:** If Rousseau is all about participation, why does he advocate aristocracy over democracy?

B. The size of the sovereign and the size of the government are **inversely proportional.** The function of the executive is to carry out the GW. If you have a small state with a small number of citizens, then you can have a relatively large number of people in the executive branch. But if you have a large number of people in the state, you need more power to enforce the laws, and that is more suited to a government run by fewer people, i.e. an **aristocracy.** 236-238

1. Thus, even though all citizens must participate in making the laws, only a few should have the task of executing and administering the laws.

C. **Q:** Why does he say "real democracy" is impossible? 239

1. See 239, 240 for answer [finish next time]

D. Rousseau believes that **the sovereign is democratic** but the **government should be aristocratic.**

1. **Q:** How can he support aristocracy, i.e. a rule based on political and economic inequality, given his sharp criticism of inequality in *Discourse on Inequality*?

2. Seems like a contradiction in his thought

3. He recognizes that governments ultimately will tend to rule in the government's own interests (corporate will) or the interests of its deputies (particular will) rather than the general will. It's an efficient means of governing, but it can stray from the GW. 242

E. **Governments degenerate** because the desire to serve one's particular will among the magistrates overcomes one's commitment to the GW.

1. This speaks to Rousseau's republican pessimism: the body politic inevitably **corrupts and decays.**

2. Read 260 if time.

III. Rousseau, representation, and participation

x. **Q:** What is Rousseau's critique of representation?

x. **Representation breed dependence.** Representatives let citizens ignore their public duties to pursue their private interests. This laziness leads to the enslavement of citizens to their representatives, as well as the subordination of the GW to particular wills.

x. Sovereignty, the will of the people cannot be represented.

x. **Read 266**

x. Representatives or "**deputies**" are necessary in the government, i.e. the executive branch, but the general will (leg.) cannot be represented. The people must consent to the laws themselves, but deputies can and should carry them out. 267

x. **Read 268** and explain, if time?

x. After the GW has been created through the SC, the legislator has laid down the essential laws, and government has been created, it is still necessary to have "**fixed periodical assemblies**" of the people that meet to pass laws.

x. Only through these assemblies do you get a unity of the particular and the general, the subject and the Sovereign, unified in the single word "citizen." 263

x. **Participation in the assemblies**

x. **Q:** Is there much debate and deliberation in these assemblies?

x. A state governed by a collection of citizens acting as a single body will need little discussion and debate, since it acts as one. "The more concert reigns in the assemblies, that is, the nearer opinion approaches unanimity, the greater is the dominance of the general will." 276

x. The fewer "**factions or intrigues**," the better.

x. At the same time, you can't have total unanimity all of the time. If you do, that's just flattery and servitude. 276

x. The GW is created unanimously, but once it has been formed, decisions are made on the basis of **majority rule**.

x. **Q:** If there is little debate and discussion, how much participation does Rousseau really provide for in determining the GW?

x. Rousseau argues that even when you lose a vote, you are still free. Further, even when you are punished for breaking a law, you are still free.

x. **Q:** How can he say that?

x. By entering into the GW you give your consent to all of the laws, even ones you disagree with and/or break. When you vote on a proposal, you're supposed to vote according to whether or not you think the law comports with the GW. If your vote wins, it does, if it doesn't, you were wrong. Thus, the GW is never wrong, only citizens are. 278

x. This point is similar to his "forced to be free" argument.

x. **Q:** What does R mean when he says the general will is **indestructible**?

x. The general will can never be destroyed, but it can be subordinated to particular wills. The rise of factions, conflict, etc. indicates that people are no longer acting for the public good but out of self-interest.

x. **Read 275** if time.

IV. Rousseau the lover of liberty

(Patrick Gardiner, "Rousseau on Liberty"; James, *Modern Politics* 18-22)

x. **Q:** Is Rousseau a radical democrat or a totalitarian?

x. **C.L.R. James** argues that Rousseau is a radical democrat.

x. **Read** 20, 21.

x. **Q:** Is he correct?

x. James argues that R was seeking a form of political organization in which the individual would feel herself in relation to the government in much the same way that the Greek citizen felt in relation to the polis. 21 That was Rousseau's goal with the GW but he was unable to attain it.

x. **Read** 21-22

x. Political theorist **Patrick Gardiner** argues this: "It is fair to say that no political theorist has pitched the claims of liberty higher than he [Rousseau], or has insisted more eloquently upon its implications for a proper understanding of man's development and potentialities in a social setting." 83

x. Gardiner argues that despite the strange elements of his GW and phrases such as "forced to be free," Rousseau was always hostile to limitations on human liberty, limitations that are caused by one person imposing his will on someone else. 85

x. For Rousseau, **freedom means self-mastery and obedience to rules we prescribe for ourselves.** 94 That's what the GW does: it allows us to make rules for ourselves. It **brings freedom and obedience together:** we are free because we obey only those rules we have made for ourselves. Thus, **freedom lies with collective deliberation and decision-making.**

x. The chief enemy of freedom is not being explicit restrictions on our freedom through obstacles such as laws, power of the stronger, or enslavement, but **the redefinition and distortion** of how we understand freedom in modern society. 87

x. E.g. **Amour de soi** in the SoN is replaced by **amour-propre** in society. The kind of self-respect that prompts us to do what we need to do to maintain our well-being and independence is replaced by a vain self-love that sees us as constantly in competition with each other. As a result, we don't consider ourselves free based on our own **well-being**, but **only in comparison to others:** I can only tell if I'm doing well if I'm doing better than the guy next to me.

x. This is a shallow conception of freedom. We confuse our real personalities and desires behind a screen of behaviors and beliefs designed to get us ahead in society. Eventually, it **shapes and distorts our understanding** of ourselves and our independence, as the mask becomes the man. 88

x. Rather than acting as a spontaneous individual, we act according to culturally conditioned habits of response. This is a loss of freedom.

x. Thus, it is possible for humans to be unfree even when we act according to our own desires and even when we face no external compulsion. Our very notion of what freedom is has been distorted, so we think we are acting freely when we are really not.

x. **"Pushpin is as good as poetry."**—Bentham Rousseau would disagree with that. Certain ideals and activities thwart our freedom.

x. Marx and Foucault will make the same critique.

x. Thus, Rousseau was no totalitarian. However, we can see how such criticisms emerge, in his argument that we must acquiesce to the opinion of the majority and be "forced to be free." 96-97. This implies coercion. Further, his notion of the general will seems to fear diversity and require homogeneity.

Democrat
- part. in rep.
- no rule
- deliberation

totalitarian
- homogeneity
- diversity of poly interests
- serobconflict
- "forced to be free"

V. Rousseau vs. Locke and Aristotle

x. **Q:** Is the GW an attempt to recreate the polis?

x. Keywords

x. Aristotle: Man is a **political animal**, by nature

x. Locke: Humans create political society by **consent**

x. Rousseau: Humans act according to general and particular **wills**.

x. Arendt says will = interest.

x. Cole says will = judgment (xxxviii-xxxix)

x. **Q:** Who is right?

x. Locke provides for government by consent but **no machinery for popular participation**. He says government must rest on consent, but he doesn't seem to be too concerned about people's participation in government. There's no notion that participating in government and exercising one's judgment/*phronesis* is necessary to live a good life. The government's job is to protect property, not to get people to participate.

x. **Q:** Does the general will provide that machinery?

x. [think of representative government vs. direct democracy, tacit consent vs. active agreement, etc.]

x. **Q:** Is Rousseau's notion of "will" similar to Locke's notion of "consent"? Is R's notion of "will" an emulation of Greek ideals or a betrayal of them?

x. Arendt argues that the notion of consent implies choice, deliberation, and considered opinion, while "will" excludes mediation and exchange of opinion and insists on complete unanimity and indivisible unity. (*On Revolution* 76)

x. She argues that "will" is not equal to consent for Rousseau, but instead that will = interest. The general will is thus the **general interest vs. particular interests**.

x. **Q:** Is this similar to Aristotle's distinction between the common good and seeking the good of a particular group?

x. No, she says, because the common good for Aristotle involves *phronesis*, or practical wisdom and judgment. The general will does not imply judgment but unanimity, hence it is not the same as the common good.

x. Thus, Rousseau betrays not just Locke but Aristotle and classical republicanism. The general will strays from Greek ideals even as Rousseau seeks to emulate them, because he neglects the importance of **deliberation** and **dissent**.

x. The GW is Rousseau's attempt to **fuse the ancient with the modern**, Greece (especially Sparta) with Locke. It's his attempt to forge a concern for the **common good** with the **will and interests of the individual**.

x. The GW is similar to Locke's civil society in that both rest on the sovereignty of the people.

x. **Q:** In what way are they different?

x. The GW involves everyone and is unanimous, while entering into civil society requires only a majority.

x. **Q:** Is the GW equivalent to the will of the majority? [A: No]

x. Rousseau, like Socrates, is a gadfly. He turns others' beliefs upside down. His job is to criticize society and show how it is a construction of human society, not nature. Hence, if we built this society we can change it. Similar to Marx.

← make into a heading next time

x. Characteristics of the GW

- x. Rousseau's desire: to create community.
 - x. His enemies: dependence, faction, self-interest.
 - x. His question: How to create community in a self-interested society? How to create unity out of diversity?
 - x. His solution: the general will. The GW can restore the freedom and equality humans enjoyed in the SoN, while limiting faction and class conflict. It replaces natural liberty with moral liberty.
 - A. The GW is founded by unanimous agreement via the social contract. The GW founds the **sovereign**, or the body politic. The general will is like a **corporate body**: a body of people who act as a single body.
 - B. The initial, founding laws of the body politic come not from the people but from a **legislator**.
 - C. The GW **acts in the common good**. The GW is not the "will of all." It is not merely the collection of individuals' opinions. It is the whole body of the people, acting as one. It is like the people put into one corporate body, acting together according to the will of that body. The GW is when we **act as citizens**, the will of all is when we **act as men**.
 - D. Thus, **the GW is always right**. The GW is infallible. Bk. II ch. 3 If the people have enough information, their deliberations will always result in the general will. If it makes a mistake, it's our own fault as individuals, not the GW's.
 - 1. **Read 205 if time.**
 - E. **Once created, the GW is found through majority rule.**
 - 1. The SC is created by unanimous agreement, but once the sovereign has been formed, it makes its decisions by majority rule.
 - F. The function of the general will is to defend people from the **dangers of amour-propre**. (Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 166)
 - G. In other words, the GW is "**the will against equality**." It pursues the interests of humans in general rather than privileges for particular groups or individuals. (Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 185)
 - 1. People will always be self-interested, but that tendency should not be allowed to play a significant part in public life.
 - 2. The function of the GW is to **prevent inequality and personal dependence**. By making ourselves completely dependent on everyone (the sovereign), we make ourselves dependent on no one.
 - H. Rousseau's fundamental concern is inequality and dependence. The GW is designed to eliminate them—or to show how society rests upon them?
 - 1. In other words, it might be more likely that *On the Social Contract* is less a prescription for how to create a good society than it is a critique of modern society, just as the second *Discourse* is.

x. R and Marx: The public and the private

- x. Rousseau makes us face a choice: should we devote our lives to the public good or for private gain?
- x. Marx takes up this relationship between the public and private, and argues that in modern society, the private individual is the one with the power, and that the goal isn't to put power back in the public person, but to change the relationship between public/private selves.