COMMENTARY

ROUSSEAU AND THE CALL FOR ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropologists tend to be preoccupied with the search for precursors. This search follows from our new-found understanding, barely a generation old, of anthropology as an interpretive (or as we say, semantic) study rather than as a pseudo-natural science. The intellectual history of the discipline, unlike the history of science, is intrinsic to the work itself, since the work of interpretation requires self-understanding. Put another way, our new-found 'paradigm' demands that we anthropologize ourselves, that we situate ourselves as part of the field. Unlike the natural scientists, we find ourselves as an opacity to be highlighted, a problem in culture to be interpreted rather than as a forgettable given. To get on with the job we have to recollect how we got it in the first place.

There is, in this self-investigation, a touch of anxiety over the legitimacy or propriety of the discipline, a hint of the nouveau riche looking for some obscure relationship to a noble ancestor. Such anxiety is probably a concomitant of all interpretive studies, since the authority of the interpreter always remains ungrounded, but it seems more acute in anthropology. Perhaps because it is such a young discipline, perhaps because the subject's inherent inclusiveness undercuts the academic legitimacy of secure departmental borders, perhaps because, unlike psychoanalysis and historical materialism, our hermeneutic has not passed into the public domain, or passed itself off, as economics or linguistics have done, as a new kind of science, we seem plagued with doubts about the integrity of our method, our theoretical capital, even our object of study. And we trace genealogies like the child who half-suspects his illegitimacy.

If we pay close attention to our history, what we find there should not really comfort us. Anthropology, which I use here to mean the universalistic study of human nature through the pluralistic study of particular cultures, seems to emerge in an unself-knowing way, as a series of theories which yield no actual work (Enlightenment 'philosophical anthropology' and, in another way, evolutionism) or as description untutored by any ideas (eighteenth century reports of colonial administrators, nineteenth century amateur expeditions). By the time anthropology comes to resemble its present form--with a theory of culture which admits of some version of pluralism and so entails fieldwork--by the time, that is, of the Année Sociologique and the Malinowskian revolution, the discipline is already contemporary and still lacks those precursors we now seek. Anthropology seems to come from nowhere, or to take bits from several traditions which collect in only arbitrary ways. Despite the seeming continuities of social theory, the study has grown in a piecemeal way, leaving the past generally half-digested and so depriving itself of a straightforward pedigree. We are hard put to define the historical necessity by which it arose as a domain of knowledge, the moment in which to think of man was to think of anthropology.

The Enlightenment is the most important example of this uncertain emergence, because it seems to be the moment in which new social experience and the changed organization of knowledge required anthropology as I have specified it. The end of the epoch of exploration and the start of a new epoch, where the space that had been explored would be domesticated politically (through the inscribing of colonial borders) and economically (through the appropriating of indigenous resources) turned the philosophes toward non-European man with a mixture of universalism and particularism that Dumont describes as the principle of anthropology (see 1978). This appropriation of the New World had proceeded far enough for non-civil peoples to seem encompassable objects of knowledge,

but not far enough for them to have relinquished their mystery; the New World could become the site no longer of adventure, but of science, a science of man celebrating his plurality and fecundity. Certainly such a science was demanded by the notion of enlightenment itself, a process at once intellectual and moral, a gaining of autonomy through self-knowledge. We recognize our own modern pieties here and so understand the fascination with which the philosophes regarded the Tahitians, the Brazilian Indians, the Hottentots, and closer to home, the Persians and Turks. For the first time, then, there emerged a class of intellectuals emancipated from the presumption that their society incarnated the general humanity, yet sure enough of their own autonomy to seek out that general humanity elsewhere. Within a moment made possible by the processes of colonialism and capitalism, they could develop a study of man which was at once a science and a critique of these processes. And for the first time they had, through the proliferation of travel narratives and colonial administrators' reports, access to a world of information that could match their daring. They had an object of study, a nascent theory of the pluralism of social manners, and, in the broadening of travel to include non-adventurers, the suggestion of a method. Anthropology was on the tip of their tongues, and it is Rousseau, perhaps the most perspicacious of them, who announced explicity the demand for it:

> ...we know no other men except the Europeans; furthermore, it appears, from the ridiculous prejudices which have not died out even among men of letters, that under the pompous name of the study of man everyone does hardly anything except study the men of his country. In vain do individuals come and go; it seems that philosophy does not travel....
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> Shall we never see reborn those happy times when the people did not dabble in philosophy, but when a Plato, a Thales, a Pythagoras, seized with an ardent desire to know, undertook the greatest voyage solely to inform themselves, and went far away to shake off the yoke of national prejudices, to learn to know men by their likenesses and their differences, and to acquire that universal knowledge which is not that of one century or one country exclusively, but which, being of all times and all places, is so to speak the common science of the wise?
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> ...Let us suppose a Montesquieu, Buffon, Diderot, Duclos, D'Alembert, Condillac, or men of that stamp travelling in order to inform their compatriots, observing and describing...Turkey, Egypt, Barbary, the empire of Morocco, Guinea, the land of the Bantus...: then, in the other hemisphere, Mexico, Peru, Chile,...the Caribbean islands, Florida, and all the savage countries: ...we ourselves would see a new world come from their pens, and we would thus learn to know our own. (Second Discourse, 211, 212-3)

Nothing could be clearer or more contemporary than this call 'to know men by their likenesses and their differences'. What surprises us, then, is how little of what we would recognize as social anthropology emerged from the Enlightenment, beyond the programme itself. Despite the curiosity and pluralism evident in Rousseau's burgeoning catalogue of peoples (of which I omitted half), the Enlightenment thinkers turned to savage man much more to characterize the natural unity of man and to delimit the boundary between humanity and non-human animals, than to explore social diversity. Their interests, in other words, were with philosophical anthropology rather than ethnology. The latter concern derives not from philosophical humanism but from nineteenth century racial theories. Robert Wokler writes in a piece on Rousseau's anthropolgy:

> Around the turn of the nineteenth century, that is, with the exhaustion of the Enlightenment discussions of the primate limits of humanity, anthropology came instead to be focused upon the boundaries and distinctions within our species, upon the study of races... (1978: 110).

The philosophes turned to savage man largely to find man in the state of nature, not a rival version of social man, and their purposes grew primarily from a sense of the unnaturalness and artificiality of European civilization. The New World provided them, whatever its possibilities, not so much with the site of a new science, as with a point d'appui from which to apply their critique of the Old World. The state of nature was merely the negative projection of the civil state, and the savages they found there were not objects of new knowledge but mouthpieces for a critical meditation on Europe. In dialogues like Diderot's Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville and mock travel narratives like Gulliver's Travels and Montesquieu's Persian Letters, it is the outsider who is (either literally or implicitly) the proto-anthropologist and Europe which is the field. The far more radical question of alternative social states, equally denatured but unencompassed by Western categories, was left aside; or if it was broached, as in Voltaire's Histoire des moeurs, it was treated with a general (if satirical) poverty of imagination, domestic squabbles simply being exported to exotic milieux. However radical its aims--the abolition of slavery, the undermining of 'superstitious' Christianity, the reform of political corruption--Enlightenment anthropology remained Eurocentric. The New World was a space for use.

Of the few writers who were, I think, capable of taking the anthropological leap out of European categories and purposes, among the most important were two of the century's greatest political philosophers, Montesquieu and Rousseau. Each of them stressed a certain version of cultural relativism and refused to define political right apart from the plurality of social conditions in which politics could appear - Montesquieu emphasized material and ecological pre-conditions, Rousseau moral and religious ones. Yet neither of them truly did anthropology; they turned their nascent theories of cultural interpretation into theories of politics. Here again, despite a greater imaginative breadth, the philosophical purpose remains Eurocentric: not the education of men concerning their humanity, but the self-education of civil men as citizens.

But here our own genealogical task should make us pay attention. Enlightenment political philosophy failed to metamorphose into anthropology, however akin the two seem to us, not because imaginatively it could not, but because it chose not to. The organization of knowledge required not anthropology but something close to it, something which could educate and reform European man, but from within his native categories of politics. The Enlightenment sought to present the image of universal humanity, but in the dress of a European--as a citizen. Thus political theory assimilated to itself what we may now take as the calling of anthropology. Discovering why this bypass occurred may tell us more of what that calling is and why we seem hard put to locate the time and place that it became necessary. Rousseau, in his early work, especially the Second Discourse, calls explicitly for a social anthropology, yet by the Social Contract and the Emile refuses the same call himself. Thus he seems the exemplary figure by which to explore the displacement of the nascent discipline into political theory.

The call to anthropology occurs in a long footnote to the Discourse on the Origins of Inequality (the Second Discourse), which Lévi-Strauss describes as 'the first treatise of general ethnology' (1977:35). The passage quoted above makes a double claim: first, that ethnographic inquiry is the proper method for arriving at an understanding of universal humanity

(rather than, say, some form of introspection); second, that this universal knowledge of man is neededforself-knowledge; '...we ourselves would see a new world come from their pens, and we would thus learn to know our own'. Anthropology is thus a means of obeying the Delphic inscription; it is the method of philosophical wisdom. Why? Several assumptions are at work here: that humanity is fundamentally pluralistic, and hence that no particular society incarnates its essence; that 'the common science of the wise' can only start when one leaves one's home-world behind; and, most important, that the society which believes itself to incarnate humanity is the most deluded and self-estranged of all. This is, of course, characteristic of Rousseau's Europe: '...we know of no other man except the Europeans;...from the ridiculous prejudices which have not died out even among men of letters,...under the pompous name of the study of man everyone does hardly anything except study the men of his country...'

Anthropology is necessary, then, because of European (or as Rousseau calls it, civil) man's self-estrangement, because of the distance between his conventional wisdom and his essential humanity. He must go out to other cultures in order to know himself because he has fallen away from his own nature. This fall from nature into civil society is the principal theme of Rousseau's work, its main assumption and primary problem, and in the Preface to the Second Discourse Rousseau ties it explicity to the difficulty of self-knowledge:

> The most useful and least advanced of all human knowledge seems to me to be that of man; and I dare say that the inscription of the temple of Delphi alone contained a precept more important and more difficult than all the thick volumes of the moralists. ...how will man manage to see himself as nature formed him, through all the changes that the sequence of time and things must have produced in his original condition...? Like the statue of Glaucus, which time, sea, and storms had so disfigured that it looked less like a god than a wild beast, the human soul, altered in the bosom of society by a thousand continually renewed causes...has, so to speak, changed its appearance to the point of being nearly unrecognizable...
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> What is even crueler is that, as all the progress of the human species continually moves it farther away from its primitive state, the more new knowledge we accumulate, the more we deprive ourselves of acquiring the most important knowledge of all; so that it is, in a sense, by dint of studying man that we have made ourselves incapable of knowing him. (Second Discourse, 91-2)

The crisis of self-effacement which made anthropology necessary, in other words, itself derives from the fall from nature, the disfiguring of the human soul which civil man undergoes. As opposed to writers like Diderot, who use the doctrine of the state of nature to replace a more sophisticated cultural relativism, or those like Hume or Adam Ferguson, who simply dismiss the doctrine as a fiction and turn to society itself, Rousseau links the 'nature'-critique of European artificiality with the call for a pluralistic study of culture. Anthropology as a means of self-knowledge arises in response to the self-forgetfulness of the civilizing process. To understand why Rousseau calls for it, we must see what is unnatural in civil society.

As the 'statue of Glaucus' passage implies, the fallenness of contemporary society is at once intellectual and moral. Our ignorance of our true nature amounts to our moral self-abasement--the soul looks 'less like a god than a wild beast'--because nature is the standard of goodness. Rousseau identifies

'true philosophy' not with knowledge but with virtue, 'sublime science of simple souls' (First Discourse, 64); for virtue entails the recovery of nature, while (at least some forms of) knowledge may estrange it: '...by dint of studying man, ...we have made ourselves incapable of knowing him'. By the same token, to teach men of their own nature will amount to a moral transformation of them, a reinstatement of their humanity. When souls are not simple, the vocation of 'true philosophy' will become not only wisdom but education, the effecting of this transformation. This is why Rousseau's most self-avowedly philosophical work is the Emile, his treatise on education. If anthropology is indeed called for by Rousseau's project, it will be as a method of education, not as a mode of pure inquiry.

What civil man has forgotten about his nature--hence what he has corrupted--is his freedom. Freedom is the essence of humanity for Rousseau, the basis of morality as well as of social life, so that nothing could be more corrupt or more self-ignorant than the abnegation of it:

> To renounce one's freedom is to renounce the quality of being a man, the rights of humanity, even its duties. There is no compensation possible for whoever renounces everything. Such a renunciation is incompatible with man's nature; it takes away all morality from his actions just as it takes away all freedom from his will. (Social Contract I:4)

Though Rousseau speaks against slavery here, the same critique could be put to the entry into civil society, since it entails a similar renunciation. The compensations of being civilized can only 'spread garlands of flowers over the iron chains with which men are burdened, stifle in them the sense of that original liberty for which they seemed to have been born, make them love their slavery, and turn them into what is called civilized peoples' (First Discourse, 37).

Rousseau gives a principally twofold account, psychological and political, of the slavery of civil society. Psychologically, he argues that the public/private distinction on which civil bonds are based--and which leads on the one hand to a hypocritical realm of 'public relations' and on the other to the ruthless competition of private interests--derives from the extremest form of vanity (amour-propre). Vanity is inimical to freedom, because it forces civil man to depend for his sense of self upon the regard others have for him. The competitive individualism to which it gives rise has only the mask of individual freedom; under the guise of the free play of interests, it enslaves men's wills to their desires, and their desires to their recognition by other men:

> ...there is a kind of men who set some store by the consideration of the rest of the universe and who know how to be happy and content with themselves on the testimony of others rather than on their own...the savage lives within himself; the sociable man, always outside of himself, knows how to live only in the opinion of others; and it is, so to speak, from their judgement alone that he draws the sentiment of his own existence...everything being reduced to appearances, everything becomes factitious and deceptive: ...we have only a deceitful and frivolous exterior, honor without virtue, reason without wisdom, pleasure without happiness. (Second Discourse, 179-80).

We recognize in this a whole tradition of attack on the inauthenticity of European, especially bourgeois, culture, of which Rousseau's First Discourse (On the Arts and Sciences) is perhaps the foundation-text. The Second Discourse follows up this psychological critique with an analysis of the

institutional relations inherent in civil society. Rousseau asserts that the privileging of private interests must take the ultimate form of private property--the personal, exclusive appropriation of nature--before the political forms of civil society are necessary or even conceivable: 'The first person who, having fenced off a plot of ground, took it into his head to say this is mine and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society' (Second Discourse, 141). As property becomes scarce, the competition of interests causes a class division between rich and poor (landed and landless) and a consequent Hobbesian state of war of all against all[2]. Finally the preservation of self-interest demands that a public realm be created to oversee the competition of private interests, to secure orderly ways of serving one's vanity. An original compact creates that public realm with the institution of law, which will administer the play of interests and wills. The institution of law, of political relations, signals the birth of civil society.

This original compact (not to be confused with the one described in the later Social Contract)is illegitimate, since it requires the renunciation of freedom, the submission of personal will to the will of political magistrates:

> All ran to meet their chains thinking they had secured their freedom, for although they had enough reason to feel the advantage of a political establishment, they did not have enough experience to foresee its dangers. Those most capable of anticipating the abuses were precisely those who counted on profiting from them... (Second Discourse, 159-60).

Those who counted to profit from the compact are, of course, the rich, for the rich had the most to lose from the stage of pre-legal private property; in Rousseau's myth, it is they who offer the compact to the poor. The poor are thus doubly enslaved; as with the Marxist doctrine of the state, the public-ness of the public domain is itself an illusion, for it is the precinct of class interests. This is not to say, however, that Rousseau sees the rich as in any sense free. They have renounced freedom in becoming rich; they are slaves to their wealth and even to the poor who define by negativity their wealth for them[3]. No citizen of such a state is free.

We know then what the lack of freedom looks like in European society: it is psychologically the dependence on others for one's sense of identity, and politically the submission of one's actions to others' wills and interests. We still do not know, however, what natural freedom looks like, and we must if we are to restore ourselves to it; our education depends on what we have fallen from. In the Second Discourse Rousseau describes it as the quality which delimits humanity from the rest of nature:

> ...it is not so much understanding which constitutes the distinction of man among the animals as it is his being a free agent. Nature commands every animal, and the beast obeys. Man feels the same impetus, but he realizes that he is free to acquiesce or resist; and it is above all in consciousness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul is shown. (Second Discourse, 114).

This freedom in which the quality of humanity resides is purely freedom-from, not freedom-for. It consists in the capacity to withhold oneself from compulsion; it does not itself compel. It implies no content; it does not give humanity anything in particular except the empty will to choose everything in particular. Because the general humanity has no essence, no content to

identify it, Rousseau describes its freedom as not only of will, but as a sort of freedom to become anything; he assimilates it to 'the faculty of self-perfection, a faculty which, with the aid of circumstances, successively develops all the others'. The quality of humanity is its plasticity, a freedom from necessary conditions. (That is, whatever conditions men are subject to are contingent to their humanity.)

This 'freedom of being', which Rousseau names perfectability, is the only version of freedom which can at once characterize the state of nature and account for the fall from it; there is a certain economy, then, to his argument which requires it:

> ...it is this faculty which, by dint of time, draws him out of that original condition in which he would pass tranquil and innocent days; ...it is this faculty which, bringing to flower over the centuries his enlightenment and his errors, his vices and his virtues, in the long run makes him tyrant of himself and of nature. (Second Discourse, 115).

Perfectability--ironic name--is what makes possible the fall from nature; it shows us that even the most slavish social life is grounded in freedom, the freedom to renounce everything. This is small comfort, however: it holds up the image of our nature without being able to restore us to it, nor remove the self-contradictions of our freedom. Indeed Rousseau emphasizes as a concomitant to his version of the state of nature that once it is left, there is no return to it:

> What! must we destroy societies, annihilate thine and mine, and go back to live in forests with bears? A conclusion in the manner of my adversaries, which I prefer to anticipate than leave them the shame of drawing it. Oh you, ...who can leave your fatal acquisitions, your worried minds, your corrupt hearts, and your unbridled desires in the midst of cities; reclaim, since it is up to you, your ancient and first innocence; ...men like me, whose passions have forever destroyed their original simplicity, ...can no longer nourish themselves on grass and nuts, nor do without laws and chiefs... (Second Discourse, 201-2).

If the plasticity of our nature implies that we cannot return, it implies as well that we can still go forward.

Perfectability allowed us to fall; it also allows us to reverse the irony and perfect ourselves. We will never be renaturalized, but we can aim to reintroduce freedom at the level of civil society, aim to legitimize what cannot be reversed: 'Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains. ....How was this change made? I do not know. How can it be rendered legitimate? I believe I can resolve that question'. The opening lines to the Social Contract (I:1) describe the vocation of 'true philosophy' for Rousseau: to discover what freedom in society looks like and to educate the citizenry to that freedom.

We may start this education by excluding what Rousseau clearly does not mean by social freedom: the freedom of liberal bourgeois society. Liberal freedom--the individual's freedom to pursue his self-interest, the privileging of self-interest over common values, and the consequent retention of certain "natural" rights--implies for Rousseau a nonsensical conception of freedom, nature and society. Especially invidious is the notion that there

is such a thing as natural right after the institution of civil society and conventional value:

> ...the social order is a sacred right which serves as the basis of all others. However this right does not come at all from nature; it is therefore founded on conventions. It is a question of knowing what these conventions are. (Social Contract I:1)

There is an absolute discontinuity between nature and civil society; one cannot go back again. This discontinuity is what makes the fall from nature so devastating, but it also makes any appeal to nature from within civil society--as in the liberal defence of private property--illegitimate. Such an appeal merely masks conventionally grounded rights as "natural" ones--yet another instance of the self-ignorance of civil man and his actual estrangement from nature. These deluded claims to freedom, cannot, therefore, even be free: the privileging of private interests, as I stressed above, only makes men slaves of their vanity. It masks the worst corruptions of civility as natural freedom (note the similarity here to the Marxist critique of bourgeois ideology).

The civil state lacks, apparently, the categories necessary for restoring its self-understanding, especially an intelligible concept of freedom by which to educate itself. The state of nature supplies us with that concept in the form of perfectability, a radical freedom-from, but renders it unusable as such in our re-education: the discontinuity between nature and society requires us to find a social version of freedom. Here finally is where anthropology emerges as an intellectual necessity; as the method of exploring social perfectability. For it is perfectability which gives anthropology its object of study in the first place: the diversity and indeterminacy of social life, the plasticity of man as a social being, a plasticity which yields virtuous societies as much as corrupt ones. We cannot return to the empty general humanity of nature, but we may draw upon, and import, the range of substantive particular humanities to which it gives rise. By leaving our own particular humanity behind, we may find a 'universal knowledge of man' residing in the contrasts with particular social worlds which co-exist with us: 'When one wants to study men, one must consider those around one. But to study man, one must extend one's range of vision. One must observe the differences in order to discover the similarities'. In other words, because of the subtle emptiness of Rousseau's state of nature, because it contains already the possibility of a plurality of denatured social life, consideration of it leads--"naturally"--to social analysis and to a relativistic theory of culture as the consequence of this perfectability. The philosopher's task, to restore the soul of civil man through education, becomes the ethnographer's, to show us how the other, more human half lives.

Rousseau offers, in the Second Discourse, an idealized ethnographic sketch of such an alternative society in what he calls 'nascent society', the form of society said to exist after the development of kinship bonds and language but before that of agriculture and the consequent institution of private property. It largely resembles, in fact, paleolithic hunting and gathering communities[4], combining loose-knit relations of material dependence--' they applied themselves only to tasks that a single person could do and to arts that did not require the cooperation of several hands' (Second Discourse, 151)--with strong bonds of cultural solidarity:

> People grew accustomed to assembling in front of the huts or around a tree; song and dance...became the amusement or rather the occupation of idle and assembled men and women,

> Each one began to look at the others and want to be looked at himself, and public esteem had a value. (Second Discourse 149).

The underside of this public esteem is the breeding of a strong, crude vanity and the emergence of revenge as a regulative social relation:

> As soon as...the idea of consideration was formed in [men's] minds, each one claimed a right to it, and it was no longer possible to be disrespectful toward anyone with impunity. From this came the first duties of civility, even among savages; and from this any voluntary wrong became an outrage, because...the offended man saw in it contempt for his own person....Thus, everyone punishing the contempt shown him by another in a manner proportionate to the importance he accorded himself, vengeances became terrible, and men bloodthirsty and cruel. This is precisely the point reached by most of the savage peoples known to us... (Second Discourse, 149-50).

We are reminded of societies like the Nuer, where feuding is a systematic relation, and where the competition between lineages generates overall structural incorporation; similarly, the vanity of nascent society does not undermine it, as does the vanity of European society, but somehow becomes the means to orderly relations: '...it was necessary for punishments to become more severe as the occasions for offence became more frequent; and ...it was up to the terror of revenge to take the place of the restraint of laws' (Second Discourse, 150). Whereas competition in civil society necessitates the public overseeing of law, here it heads it off; for in spite (or rather because) of its bloodiness, the members of nascent society have not become the slaves of escalated needs. With its emphasis on personal respect, common physical activity and story-telling, the inability of its members to conceive their person apart from relations to others, yet without submission to others, this form of society is the best one possible, giving the advantages of solidarity with no erosion of independence:

> ...this period of the development of human faculties, maintaining a golden mean between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activity of our vanity, must have been the happiest and most durable epoch. The more one thinks about it, the more one finds that this state was the least subject to revolutions, the best for man, and that he must have come out of it only by some fatal accident, which for the common good ought never to have happened, The example of savages, who have almost all been found at this point, seems to confirm that the human race was made to remain in it always... (Second Discourse, 151).

Nascent society is the 'best for man' most of all because it is free, but this is to mean something quite different from liberal, or any form of civil, freedom. Civil freedom means freedom of the will, the capacity to act according to the perception of one's interests. In nascent society there is, in a sense, freedom <u>from</u> will and from interest, freedom from the compulsion to act; this is why Rousseau emphasizes its idleness, in contrast to 'the petulant activity of our vanity'. There is a self-acceptance which issues in two seemingly contradictory aspects of nascent society: its independence and its solidarity. Because solidarity is based on an ideal of commonly-acknowledged self-esteem, personal bonds are minimal at the same time as they are psychologically absolute; but both these aspects reflect a

freedom from the impulse to self-constitution or self-transformation. There is indeed freedom from almost everything but membership in the community itself; this is the sole, but the essential, difference in relation to the state of nature. Where civil freedom issues in laws and enjoins citizens to duty--the paradigm of freedom-for-- nascent society is 'prior to law (150) and enjoins men only to leisure: '...they lived free, healthy, good, and happy insofar as they could be according to their nature, and they continued to enjoy among themselves the sweetness of independent intercourse' (Second Discourse, 151).

If nascent society is a sketch of what the anthropologist has to offer civil man for his delectation--and Rousseau clearly develops the concept from his own reading of the ethnographic travel literature--we are left more with a vague feeling of disappointment than a healed soul. However free and human, nascent man seems irrelevant to the citizen, and Rousseau knows it. Despite savages who have rested in this way of life, he presents the description elegaically ('must have been the happiest and most durable epoch'). Like the state of nature, once nascent society is left, it is left utterly. Thus Rousseau would, I think, dismiss the project which Lévi-Strauss grants to anthropology, the project of integrating the 'neolithic intelligence' back into civil society:

> If men have always been concerned with only one task--how to create a society fit to live in--the forces which inspired our distant ancestors are also present in us. Nothing is settled; everything can still be altered. What was done, but turned out wrong, can be done again. (Tristes Tropiques, 1975:393).

For Rousseau what has been done wrong cannot be done again: 'L'humanité ne rétrograde pas.' But this amounts to saying that anthropology cannot answer Rousseau's call for it: it cannot show us a new world in order to make us know our own. We cannot restore to the soul forms of freedom that the emergence of civil society has effaced.

Rousseau makes the call to anthropology in two (probably) contemporaneous texts, the Discourse on the Origin of Inequality and the 'Essay on the Origin of Languages', both written in the early 1750s. By the final version of the Social Contract, published in 1761 but the fruit of a decade of work, the anthropological perspective seems completely abandoned. No reference is made to nascent society, or any other form of non-civil society; the only important movement is the one from the state of nature to the civil state. In contrast to the Second Discourse with its open-ended emphasis on perfectability, the Social Contract has few traces of a pluralistic theory of society; civil freedom is the only form to be analyzed. The philosopher does not go travelling in order to show us who we are; he remains a citizen and becomes a political theorist. He takes the categories of law, interest, will, politics in general, for granted, and seeks a way of rendering them legitimate from within. The form of freedom he seeks is no longer the naturalistic freedom-from, but the freedom-for of the citizen's autonomy and responsibility. This shift is no mere necessary evil for Rousseau; in reading the Social Contract and the Emile, we feel not only that the entrance into civil society is irrevocable, but also that it is a step upward, however painful, for humanity. Rousseau's highest form of moral freedom--the willing acceptance of duty, 'obedience to the law one has made oneself'--is civil. In these later texts politics is the only appropriate solution to the problem of political society. The philosophe who spends too much time abroad is only evading his calling.

I do not want to elucidate much this new strategy of educating civil man from within; suffice it to say that it is the basis for the strategy of the Social Contract, the basis for the radically political freedom of the general will which Rousseau announces as the foundation of the just society. Louis Althusser's commentary on the contractual act itself summarizes this:

> ...the total alienation of the Social Contract is the solution to the problem posed by the state of universal alienation... The solution cannot come from outside, and even within the world of alienation it cannot come from outside the single law governing that world. It can only consist of returning in its origin to that law itself, total alienation, 'while changing its manner of existence', its modality. This is what Rousseau very consciously states elsewhere when he says that the remedy of the evil must be sought in its very excess. In a word, a forced total alienation must be turned a free total alienation. (1972: 127-8).

We are far here from the idle freedom-from of nascent society and from the call to philosophers to shake off their national prejudices and to travel far away. Political inquiry has replaced ethnography because, in a sense, politics rather than a theory of culture is what is called for. However radical his vision, Rousseau's aims remain civilized and Eurocentric; this is why, even in the Second Discourse, he signs himself citoyen de Genève and begins it with a dedicatory epistle to his native city.

Such a Eurocentrism and a consequent détournement from anthropology to political philosophy characterizes the central strand of Enlightenment social theory, and it will characterize, I think, any view of anthropology as a vehicle for civil education--of which Dumont (1965, 1972, 1977, 1978) and Lévi-Strauss (1975) are two principal modern exponents. This turning-away at just the moment of anthropology's noblest ambitions--to be an unacknowledged legislator of the world--may account for our initial difficulty in finding precursors; the ones we do find (evolutionists, racial theorists, colonial expeditionaries) are so much less ennobling than the philosophes who always seem to have us on the tip of their tongue, but never seem to speak us. And when we do invoke names like Rousseau as founding fathers, and dedicate books to them, perhaps the authority we gain is not an anthropologist's authority at all. Perhaps, without knowing or acknowledging it, we want the theory of culture to instruct us in things that only a theory of politics (or more generally, a self-knowledge gleaned from within our world) can give.

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Throughout the text I have quoted the First Discourse and the Second Discourse in the Masters translation, The First and Second Discourses (Rousseau 1964), and have cited the page number of that edition. The quotation and page citation for the 'Essay on the Origin of Languages' are from the Moran translation (Rousseau 1966). Both Masters and Moran are Americans and American spelling has been retained in their translations. Quotations from the Social Contract are my own translations of the French and are cited by book and chapter.

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1. This discussion of the development of anthropology in the Enlightenment is influenced heavily by Michele Duchet's Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumieres.

2. Note that Rousseau does not disagree with Hobbes about the description of the state of war, only with Hobbes' equation of it with the state of nature. For Rousseau the state of war is a conventional state just prior to (and making necessary) the institution of contract, law and civil society. Hobbes' mistake is in not going back far enough, in attributing to nature relations and passions that can only be the product of primitive society. As I say later in the paper, he makes the same criticism of the liberal version of natural right.

3. Compare to the analysis of the enslavement of the master in Hegel's master/slave dialectic.

4. Levi-Strauss in Tristes Tropiques (1975:391) and Geertz in his commentary on it (1973:357-8) identify 'nascent society' with contemporary neolithic communities. In one important sense this is mistaken. Rousseau makes clear that nascent society is pre-agricultural; it lacks the division of labour and the institution of property entailed in cultivation of the land. Indeed the appearance of agriculture, and of these accompaniments to it, signals the end of nascent society and the start of the decline into civil society. Levi-Strauss 'science of the concrete' notwithstanding, Rousseau's ideal time is before the neolithic revolution.

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