

## Chapter 7

# Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Forming the Humanist Society

The great philosophers presented in this book are all true giants who exerted enormous influence upon the Western world. Their ideas set the course for entire nations, cultures, and civilizations. They formed the worldview that undergirds the thinking and life of the average person living in Europe and America today. Few others in the history of the world have exerted so much influence upon the lives of so many people.

It's important to understand the sheer magnitude of what they accomplished, eroding Christian civilization in the West and elsewhere. After 1,500 years of Christian culture, these men managed to secularize education and culture, undermine the traditional nuclear family, and build the modern humanist state. A few of them, such as John Dewey and Friedrich Nietzsche, openly acknowledged their opposition to Christ and His church. However, if Jesus Christ is alive and seated at the right hand of the Father, this can only be seen as a temporary setback. If Christ is indeed "far above" all principalities and powers (Ephesians 1:20–22), we can be sure that these humanist giants and the ideas they espoused will not prevail.

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might



and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church.” (Ephesians 1:18–22)

## Rousseau’s Influence

Of all the modern humanist writers, the most imposing figure may very well have been the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). Rousseau is the pivotal philosopher who gave birth to the modern age, which historians generally agree began in 1820. When Will Durant set out to write his extensive history of the world, he dedicated an entire volume to Rousseau. In Durant’s words, Rousseau “had more effect upon posterity than any other writer or thinker of that eighteenth century in which writers were more influential than they had ever been before.”<sup>1</sup>

Rousseau’s fingerprints are all over the institutions of the modern world. Schools, churches, and governments have incorporated his ideas into their organizational methodologies. The political, social, and educational institutions that provide the modern context for life on earth were very much defined by this man. In turn, many churches came to accommodate the social systems imposed upon them. Tragically, revolutions in France, Germany, China, and Russia that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of millions of people were rooted in Rousseau’s doctrine. Karl Marx’s communist ideologies, including the elimination of private property ownership, were influenced by Rousseau’s *The Social Contract*.

Historian Paul Johnson also recognizes Rousseau as the most influential of all of the philosophers who gave birth to the modern world:

[Rousseau was] the first of the modern intellectuals, their archetype and in many ways the most influential of them all. Older men like Voltaire had started the work of demolishing the altars and enthroning reason. But Rousseau was the first to combine all the salient characteristics . . . the assertion of his right to reject the existing order in its entirety; confidence in his capacity to refashion it from the bottom in accordance with principles of his own devising; belief that this could be achieved by the political process; and, not least, recognition of the huge part instinct, intuition, and impulse play in human conduct.<sup>2</sup>

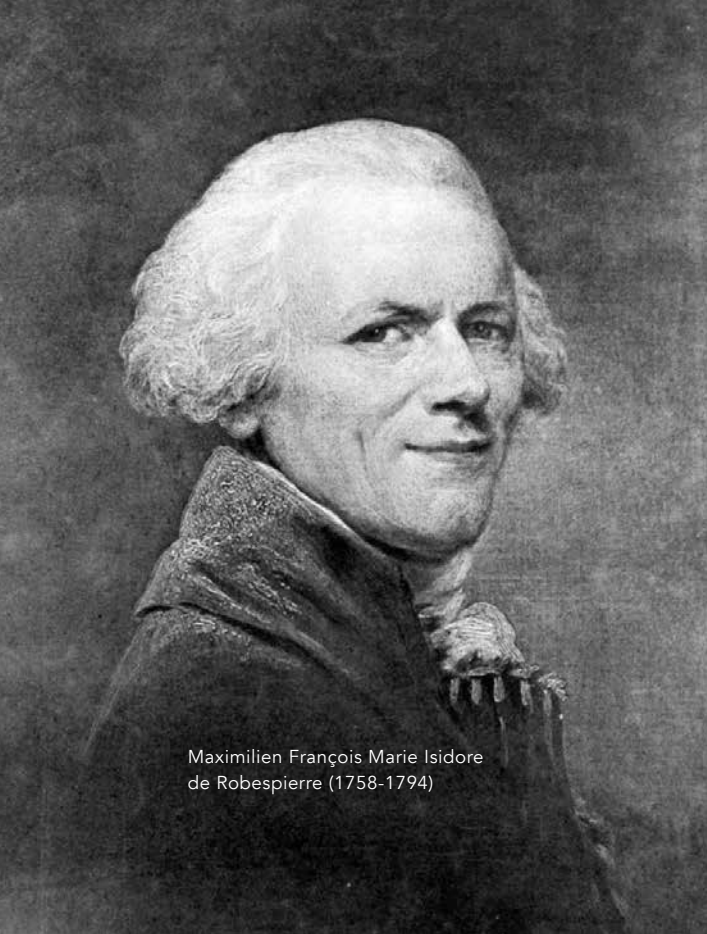
The first of the modern revolutions took place in France in the 1790s under the auspices of Maximilien de Robespierre, the chief architect of the French Revolution. Although Rousseau had died by the time the French Revolution began, his teachings still had a very significant influence on the revolutionary Robespierre. Robespierre was particularly proud of his acquaintance with the philosopher behind the revolution. In a letter to Rousseau, he wrote, “I saw you during your last days, and the memory remains a source of pride and joy. I contemplated your august features, and saw on them marks of dark disappointments to which you were condemned by the injustice of mankind.”<sup>3</sup>

Ideas have consequences, and it was the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau that

undergirded the spirit of revolution, the Reign of Terror, the guillotine, the forced redistribution of wealth, and 40,000 dead bodies by 1794 when Robespierre was overthrown. Rousseau was to Robespierre what Marx was to Lenin and Mao. First came the ideas, and then the consequences. By their fruits you will know them.

It's difficult to pinpoint which of Rousseau's writings were most influential. His book *The Social Contract* shaped political states everywhere. However, his book *Émile, or On Education* may have been the most damaging of all. This book had a powerful influence upon the thinking of John Dewey, the father of modern education. The book was radical for its day. When Rousseau told fathers they owed "their children to the state,"<sup>4</sup> he laid out a fundamental social view that would come to dominate in the succeeding three centuries. Plato had alluded to this notion in *The Republic*, but no other empire or nation had ever used language that required such absolute service to a civil magistrate. Rousseau's vision for statist education found fertile ground in Prussia around the time of the publication of *Émile* in 1762, though it would take another century before America enacted compulsory attendance laws. The modern statist system was finally in place when the state of Mississippi adopted the law in 1917, marking the birth of the socialist state.

"You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit." (Matthew 7:16-18)



Maximilien François Marie Isidore de Robespierre (1758-1794)



"Execution of Louis XVI" - Isidore-Stanislas Helman (1743-1806)

## Rousseau's Personal Life

As with so many other of the great humanist minds, Rousseau originally came from a rich Christian heritage. Born in Geneva, Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the grandson of a Calvinist preacher. His mother died within a week of his birth, and his father abandoned him to a boarding school in his tenth year. Five years later, he set out to wander Switzerland on his own. Still homeless and rootless at sixteen, Rousseau attempted to commit adultery with another man's wife.

As an adult, Rousseau's philosophy turned sharply towards humanism, which some believe was related to his dislike of the biblical view of human nature. Tragically, he noted in his writings that followers of Christ would not make good citizens,<sup>5</sup> and this paved the way for the persecution of Christians at the hands of France and other humanist nations. He also revived the old myth that Christianity had weakened the Roman Empire and brought about the fall of Rome. This is not to say that Rousseau did not believe in God or did not advocate some of the truths of Scripture in his writings. In a nation where a thousand years of Christianity still permeated the culture, it would have been imprudent for him to deny God and the Scriptures altogether. In France in 1765, the establishment would not have paid much attention to a self-proclaimed atheist.

Nevertheless, the cultural slide from Christian orthodoxy was moving along smartly in Rousseau's day. Throughout his writings Rousseau clearly exalted human reason over divine revelation. He repudiated the doctrine of hell, rejected

original sin outright, denied the possibility of miracles, and considered all religions as equally credible.<sup>6</sup> These were daring notions for an eighteenth-century humanist.

Twenty years before writing *Émile*, Rousseau experienced a life-changing event when his live-in girlfriend gave birth to his first child. Immediately, Rousseau bundled up the child and deposited it on the steps of an orphanage. This happened in the dead of winter, at a time when abandoned children had a scant chance of survival. In subsequent years, Rousseau fathered a total of five children, and each received the same treatment.

Incredibly, Rousseau referred to himself as the greatest lover of mankind who ever lived. "I love myself too much to hate anybody," he once noted. His narcissism and hubris had no limits. "If there were a single enlightened government in Europe," he said, "it would have erected statues to me."

Indeed, this hopelessly utopian, wildly arrogant man was highly influential and outrageously popular among academics. He was the archetypal humanist philosopher who lives in an ivory tower, loving mankind but failing real people—especially his own children and common-law wife. In his writings, Rousseau provides some insight into what he was thinking when he abandoned his children on the steps of an orphanage: "How could I achieve the tranquility of mind necessary for my work, my garret filled with domestic cares and the noise of children?" In other words, how could he ever create a utopia for the rest of the world if he had not dispensed with his own children?

By the end of his life, Rousseau was

hated by almost everybody who knew him personally. But the tragic part of the story is that most of the rest of the world adored him and followed him as they developed their socialist states. Rousseau created a new world in his own image; a world in which over 50 percent of American children are born to single women under 30 years of age<sup>7</sup> and 64 percent of children under six are left alone for large portions of the day.<sup>8</sup> Today, Rousseau's assertion that the state should educate our children has taken the form of government-funded day schools, kindergartens, preschools, daycares, and foster care. Governments control almost all educational programs in most developed countries around the world, while parental freedoms are rapidly disappearing in Europe and America.<sup>9</sup>

“You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.” (Exodus 22:22–24)

## Rousseau's Philosophy

From the very first words of *The Social Contract*, Rousseau veers off the biblical track and abandons his Christian roots. He writes, “Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains.”<sup>10</sup> The words sound wonderful to the humanist mind, but not to the mind of a person trained to think biblically. The Bible tells us that humans are born enslaved to sin (Psalm 51:5; Romans 6:16; Ephesians 2:1), and this is their basic problem. Humanist leaders usually focus

on surface problems, promising redemption but failing to address the underlying issue. In the end, humanists miss the root of social problems, so their solutions are unsatisfying. Because mankind is sinful, a change of social system will never be enough to make the world what it ought to be.

In his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Rousseau explicitly rejects the biblical view of man, which describes man's nature as sinful and depraved (Romans 3:9–18). According to Rousseau, primitive man has no depraved nature. Instead, he says, it's a wrongly ordered society that is responsible for the evil in the world. In fact, Rousseau pointed at the old Christian order as the source of modern man's problems. He believed that the right social system, the right ideas, and the right civil rulers would transform man into a better creature.

Rousseau writes in *The Social Contract*:

The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before.<sup>11</sup>

Here, Rousseau proposes an unrealistic world of maximum freedom through “autonomy” where each man is a law to himself. Somehow, the state is supposed to protect everyone, while the individual is left to “obey himself alone,” which is the goal of humanism. Of course, this is not real freedom; this is sin. In fact, it was the original sin. When Eve succumbed to the temptation in the garden, the devil promised that she could determine good and evil for

herself (Genesis 3:5). As modern man rejects God as Lawgiver and seeks to “obey himself alone,” he is embracing the original sin committed by Adam and Eve in the garden.

Of course, fallen man is more than happy to take the place of God and become his own lawgiver. Contrary to Rousseau’s hopes and aspirations, this sinful inclination does not produce maximum freedom, nor does it release man from his chains. In the end, rebellion nearly always heightens governmental tyranny, which is exactly what happened in nations that followed Rousseau’s ideas.

Rousseau’s proud confidence in human nature and his rejection of God’s law produced a damaging social theory. He admired the “natural” man who is born free and lives for himself, but he hoped that this man would grow into the ideal citizen. Yet Rousseau’s ideal citizen looks more like a slave of a socialist state:

[The citizen is] but the numerator of a fraction, whose value depends on its denominator; his value depends upon the whole, that is, on the community. Good social institutions are those best fitted to make a man unnatural, to exchange his natural independence for dependence: to merge the unit in the group, so that he no longer regards himself as one, but as a part of the whole, and is only conscious of the common life.<sup>12</sup>

Rousseau cannot find the happy medium between the preferences of the individual and the preferences of a corporate group of humanity. He cannot identify a line between the “one and the

many” or between the anarchy of the individual who does whatever he wants to do and the tyranny of the corporate state that dictates all human action.

Christians believe that the one and the many are equally important in God Himself, the Trinity, who is both one and three. This is what balances out a Christian social order, because Christians understand that both individual liberty and the structure of the corporate body politic are important for a stable society. In Rousseau’s time, however, the Western world had already rejected Trinitarian Christianity as having nothing to do with philosophical knowledge or social orders. Therefore the Western world devised its own political and social systems, based on human reason unaided by God’s revelation. The individual had entirely merged into the group, and a person no longer valued his own individuality. This harmful philosophy has been the source of much tyranny, which has reduced individual freedom for billions of people over the last two centuries.

George Washington, America’s first president, was strongly influenced by the old Christian world when he wrote, “Government is like fire—a dangerous servant and a cruel master.” Our Founding Fathers did not trust government to hold unlimited power because of a right understanding and a fundamental mistrust of the nature of man. Rousseau did not share this belief; instead, he created a world of tyranny, social disintegration, moral decay, and civil unrest.

In *Discourse on Inequality*, we find Rousseau’s words that influenced Karl Marx and later served as a fundamental operating principle for almost every modern nation:

The first man who, having fenced in a piece of land, said “This is mine,” and found people naïve enough to believe him, that man was the true founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.<sup>13</sup>

Rousseau falsely attributes all the horrors and misfortunes on earth to private property. It’s obvious from the above quote that he rejects the biblical law of the eighth commandment. When God wrote “You shall not steal,” He established private property ownership. Moreover, in passages like Exodus 20:15 and Deuteronomy 19:14, the Bible teaches respect for private property.

Rousseau is a true socialist at heart. Some humanists want to turn individual man into a god. Others will turn “the people” into god, especially by making the state too powerful. Although Rousseau is tempted towards the first option, he settles for the second because he would rather worship corporate man. At the end of all of the fancy rhetoric, Rousseau settles on the state as god, limiting individual liberties. Of course, he also had to reject family and church community as important elements of the human social system. And as with many of the Enlightenment men, he held marriage in low esteem and never wed.



George Washington (1732-1799)



## Rousseau's Philosophy of Education

Will and Ariel Durant summarize Rousseau's book *Émile* with these words: "Rousseau wanted a system of public instruction by the state. He prescribed many years with an unmarried tutor, who would withdraw the child as much as possible from parents and relatives."<sup>14</sup> Rousseau's weakness as a parent is evident in the very first section of his book, where he at first entertains the notion that fathers ought to educate their own children but then dispenses with this idea as impractical.

According to Rousseau, the father is expected to raise the child for the state, first and foremost: "A father owes men to humanity, citizens to the state."<sup>15</sup> Rousseau also refers to Plato's *Republic* as "the finest book ever written on education."<sup>16</sup> To refresh your memory concerning Plato's social theory, I quote:

The wives of our guardians are to be

common, and their children are to be common, and no parent is to know his own child, nor any child his parent. . . .

A woman, I said, at twenty years of age may begin to bear children to the State, and continue to bear them until forty.

In order for the humanist vision of society to progress, it's essential that family relationships take a back seat. Father-son relationships are largely unimportant in the humanist vision. God-ordained covenant relationships of family and church are considered impediments to the authoritarian, anonymous, all-powerful state. This was the pattern of Rousseau's life, and he passed it on to future generations through his writings. Further on in *Émile*, we find that Rousseau is impressed by a Spartan woman who did not care that her five sons were slain in battle. It was their winning of the victory for Sparta as a nation that brought her to rejoicing.

Rousseau reveals more of his agenda for education in his 1755 work *A Discourse on Political Economy*. In it, he takes the word "economy," or *oikonomia*, and applies it to



the government of a nation.<sup>17</sup> Transliterated from the Greek, the word means “the vision of the family.” But in the first paragraph of his essay, Rousseau takes the word “family” and applies it to “that great family the state.” Rousseau, the man without a family, turns the state into his family. He clarifies, “Government ought the less indiscriminately to abandon to the intelligence and prejudices of fathers the education of their children, as that education is of still greater importance to the State than to the fathers.”<sup>18</sup>

Over previous centuries, education had been a matter of family and church jurisdiction. But Rousseau understands that government-funded education is indispensable to the powerful modern nation state that is so important to his vision. He knows that education must come under the authority of the state, for this is the only way in which the state could replace the family and bring the majority of the population into dependence upon state welfare and state employment. As the state replaces the family with its welfare programs, education programs, medical programs, and economic systems, eventually fathers would become obsolete. This would destroy family economies and create a society where the majority of children are raised without fathers and the majority of marriages end in divorce.

Rousseau goes on to describe education as “the most important business of the State.” To the Christian mind trained in biblical truth, Rousseau’s educational program is revolutionary and troubling. His religious instruction compromises almost every doctrine of the Christian faith. Here are a few examples:

“It is not part of a child’s business

to know right and wrong.”<sup>19</sup>

“Never make him say, ‘Forgive me,’ for he does not know how to do you wrong.”<sup>20</sup>

“He deserves neither punishment nor reproof.”<sup>21</sup>

“The only natural passion is self-love or selfishness taken in a wider sense. This selfishness is good in itself.”<sup>22</sup>

Christians ought to recognize that this social theory contradicts biblical social theory. However, because many Christians frame their ethical and social systems according to the teachings of Rousseau and Marx more than those of the Bible, they have unknowingly participated in this vision by effectively adopting a humanist worldview.

But those who rely on Scripture to determine the responsibilities of family, church, and state instantly recognize the destructive nature of Rousseau’s program. They know that state control of children limits freedom, as explained by the prophet in 1 Samuel 8:11–13. They are troubled by the decline of family economies and doubtful toward a state-controlled system of education, since there is no example of it in Scripture, let alone any mandate for it. Throughout the Word, God requires fathers to oversee and steward the education of their children (Deuteronomy 6:7–9; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21; and the book of Proverbs). Fathers and mothers raise their children, teach their children, and work together towards family economic goals. It can be argued that this is assumed in the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:10). But social systems such as those

proposed by Rousseau have destroyed family economies, family inheritance, family care for the elderly, family charitable systems, and family-centered education.

## Rousseau's Contribution to the Romantic Period

The Enlightenment alone, with its focus on the supremacy of human reason, was insufficient to bring about the political and cultural revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It's true that Rousseau started out as a firm believer in human reason. Before long, he followed every other humanist philosopher from reason to unreasonableness. Inevitably, the self-sufficient humanist abandons tradition and history. He rebels against the past, casting off the old social norms and morals. He takes on a revolutionary

spirit, he trusts in his own heart and feelings regardless of the consequences.

This was how Rousseau bridged the Enlightenment into the Romantic era. Rousseau is often identified as the first of the Romantic thinkers. There would have been no Marx, no Friedrich Nietzsche, and no Richard Wagner without Rousseau's Romantic worldview. Arguably, Rousseau paved the way for many of the violent revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Indeed, Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the most influential humanist thinker of the last 500 years. His ideas formed the contours of modern life more than any others. He prepared the way for the social revolutions, political revolutions, and cultural revolutions that destroyed the family, eroded political freedoms, and unraveled entire civilizations.

## Engaging the Weapon of Prayer

Father in heaven, You are sovereign over all. Men try to break your law with impunity, but You have promised that You will call every work into judgment. People will argue with Your truth, but only to the detriment of their souls and their societies. They turn governments into another false god and create tyrannies. They have set themselves and their followers on a path to destruction. Forgive us, oh God, for adhering to the ideas of men who rejected your Word and despised Your laws. Please protect the church from the destructive influences of such ideas. Help us to reject these ideas in light of Your law, for You are the very essence of goodness. You will never abandon your children. I thank You for Your loving kindness and Your sacrifice for my sins in my Lord Jesus Christ. In His name I pray. Amen.

## Chapter 7: Assignments

### Vocabulary

**Body politic** | The social and governmental organization knitting the people of a country or state together. The body politic includes the people of a state or political group, as well as their communal commitment to each other through a political organization.

**Consistent** | **2a:** marked by harmony, regularity, or steady continuity : free from contradiction **2b:** marked by agreement :

compatible usu. used with with **2c:** showing steady conformity to character, profession, belief, or custom

**Critique** | an act of criticizing; esp : a critical estimate or discussion

**Impediment** | something that impedes or blocks a process or effort

### Reading 1: The Social Contract & Discourse On Inequality

#### Book 1

**Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains.** One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they. How did this change come about? I do not know. What can make it legitimate? That question I think I can answer. . . .

But the social order is a sacred right which is the basis of all other rights. Nevertheless, this right does not come from nature, and must therefore be founded on conventions. Before coming to that, I have to prove what I have just asserted.

“The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before.” This is the fundamental problem of which the Social Contract provides the solution.

The clauses of this contract are so determined by the nature of the act that the

slightest modification would make them vain and ineffective; so that, although they have perhaps never been formally set forth, they are everywhere the same and everywhere tacitly admitted and recognised, until, on the violation of the social compact, each regains his original rights and resumes his natural liberty, while losing the conventional liberty in favour of which he renounced it.

These clauses, properly understood, may be reduced to one—the total alienation of each associate, together with all his rights, to the whole community; for, in the first place, as each gives himself absolutely, the conditions are the same for all; and, this being so, no one has any interest in making them burdensome to others.

Moreover, the alienation being without reserve, the union is as perfect as it can be, and no associate has anything more to demand: for, if the individuals retained certain rights, as there would be no common superior to decide between them and the public, each, being on one point his own judge, would ask to be so on all;

the state of nature would thus continue, and the association would necessarily become inoperative or tyrannical.

Finally, each man, in giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody; and as there is no associate over whom he does not acquire the same right as he yields others over himself, he gains an equivalent for everything he loses, and an increase of force for the preservation of what he has.

If then we discard from the social compact what is not of its essence, we shall find that it reduces itself to the following terms:

“Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.”

At once, in place of the individual personality of each contracting party, this act of association creates a moral and collective body, composed of as many members as the assembly contains votes, and receiving from this act its unity, its common identity, its life and its will. **This public person, so formed by the union of all other persons formerly took the name of city, and now takes that of Republic or body politic; it**

**is called by its members State when passive, Sovereign when active, and Power when compared with others like itself.** Those who are associated in it take collectively the name of *people*, and severally are called *citizens*, as sharing in the sovereign power, and *subjects*, as being under the laws of the State. But these terms are often confused and taken one for another: it is enough to know how to distinguish them when they are being used with precision.

Source: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1920).

## Discourse on Inequality

The first man who, having fenced in a piece of land, said “This is mine,” and found people naïve enough to believe him, that man was the true founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.

Source: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1920).

## Study Questions

1. In what state is man born, according to Rousseau? Does this agree with a biblical view of man?
2. What is the nature of the slavery Rousseau is concerned with here? What is the fundamental nature of human slavery, as defined by Christ in John 8:34?
3. What is true freedom and how do we get this freedom according to Christ in John 8:36? Do you think Rousseau would agree with this?
4. What is the means by which a man may "obey himself alone," and be completely free? How does this fit with Scripture?
5. Who then, becomes the Source of Law under Rousseau's view?
6. If Rousseau taught that the source of law was the people (voting as a democracy), and many monarchies in Rousseau's time believed that the King was the source of law, what do Christians teach is the Source of Law? Give a Scripture reference.
7. Given that ultimate slavery is slavery to sin, what is sin (according to 1 John 3:4)?
8. What is a good summary of the law of God (in the Bible)?
9. When Rousseau finds man's freedom in "obeying himself alone," what must we think concerning this freedom?
10. According to the last paragraph of Rousseau printed here, what is Sovereign? How does this agree with Scripture?
11. What does Rousseau think about private property rights (in his *Discourse on Inequality*)?
12. What does the Bible say about private property rights in Exodus 20:15 or Deuteronomy 19:14 or Matthew 20:15?

## Reading 2: Émile

## Book 1

The natural man lives for himself; he is the unit, the whole, dependent only on himself and on his like. The citizen is but the numerator of a fraction, whose value depends on its denominator; his value depends upon the whole, that is, on the community. **Good social institutions are those best fitted to make a man unnatural, to exchange his independence for dependence, to merge the unit in the group, so that he no longer regards himself as one, but as a part of the whole, and is only conscious of the common life.** A citizen of Rome was neither Caius nor Lucius, he was a Roman; he ever loved his country better than his life. The captive Regulus professed himself a Carthaginian; as a foreigner he refused to take his seat in the Senate except at his master's bidding. He scorned the attempt to save his life. He had his will, and returned in triumph to a cruel death. There is no great likeness between Regulus and the men of our own day.

The Spartan Pedaretes presented himself for admission to the council of the Three Hundred and was rejected; he went away rejoicing that there were three hundred Spartans better than himself. I suppose he was in earnest; there is no reason to doubt it. That was a citizen.

A Spartan mother had five sons with

the army. A Helot arrived; trembling she asked his news. "Your five sons are slain." "Vile slave, was that what I asked thee?" "We have won the victory." She hastened to the temple to render thanks to the gods. That was a citizen.

He who would preserve the supremacy of natural feelings in social life knows not what he asks. Ever at war with himself, hesitating between his wishes and his duties, he will be neither a man nor a citizen. He will be of no use to himself nor to others. He will be a man of our day, a Frenchman, an Englishman, one of the great middle class.

To be something, to be himself, and always at one with himself, a man must act as he speaks, must know what course he ought to take, and must follow that course with vigour and persistence. When I meet this miracle it will be time enough to decide whether he is a man or a citizen, or how he contrives to be both.

Two conflicting types of educational systems spring from these conflicting aims. One is public and common to many, the other private and domestic.

If you wish to know what is meant by public education, read Plato's Republic. Those who merely judge books by their titles take this for a treatise on politics, but it is the finest treatise on education ever written.

Source: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, or Education*, trans. Barbara Foxley (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1921).

## Reading 3: Plato's Republic

### Book 4

The law, I said, which is the sequel of this and of all that has preceded, is to the following effect,—'that the wives of our guardians are to be common, and their children are to be common, and no parent is to know his own child, nor any child his parent.' . . .

Let us, however, proceed with our scheme. We were saying that the parents should be in the prime of life?

Very true.

And what is the prime of life? May it not be defined as a period of about twenty years in a woman's life, and thirty in a man's?

Which years do you mean to include?

A woman, I said, at twenty years of age may begin to bear children to the State,

and continue to bear them until forty; a man may begin at five-and-twenty, when he has passed the point at which the pulse of life beats quickest, and continue to beget children until he be fifty-five.

You agree then, I said, that men and women are to have a common way of life such as we have described—common education, common children; and they are to watch over the citizens in common whether abiding in the city or going out to war; they are to keep watch together, and to hunt together like dogs; and always and in all things, as far as they are able, women are to share with the men? And in so doing they will do what is best, and will not violate, but preserve the natural relation of the sexes.

I agree with you, he replied.

Source: Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato translated into English with Analyses and Introductions by B. Jowett, M.A. in Five Volumes*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1892).

## Study Questions

1. What were Rousseau's sins? Provide Scripture references for why each thing you list is a sin.
2. How did Rousseau view himself? What does this say about this man's character?
3. Why is Rousseau so impressed with the Helot woman? What does this tell you about Rousseau's commitments?
4. What motivation does Nehemiah give the men to fight in Nehemiah 4:14?
5. Why should parents beget children, according to Rousseau?
6. What is the goal of education, according to Rousseau?
7. Critical Thinking Question: What is the biblical view of the one group and the individual parts, the one and the many?
8. What was the best book ever written on education, according to Rousseau?

9. What does the parent-child relationship look like in the idealized world of Plato (for the Guardians)?
10. What is the goal of child bearing and education, according to Plato?
11. What is the goal of child bearing and education, according to Ephesians 6:4, Malachi 2:15, and Matthew 6:33?
12. Is there any exclusive marriage relationship in Plato's idealized state (with the Guardians)?
13. What does the Bible say about marriage and family (in contrast with Plato and Rousseau's lifestyle)? Give Scripture references.

## Reading 4: Émile & A Discourse on Political Economy

### Book 2

Give your scholar no verbal lessons; he should be taught by experience alone; never punish him, for he does not know what it is to do wrong; never make him say, "Forgive me," for he does not know how to do you wrong. Wholly unmoral in his actions, he can do nothing morally wrong, and he deserves neither punishment nor reproof. . . .

Let us lay it down as an incontrovertible rule that the first impulses of nature are always right; there is no original sin in the human heart, the how and why of the entrance of every vice can be traced. The only natural passion is self-love or selfishness taken in a wider sense. This selfishness is good in itself and in relation to ourselves; and as the child has no necessary relations to other people he is naturally indifferent to them; his self-love only becomes good or bad by the use made of it and the relations established by its means. Until the time is ripe for the appearance of reason, that guide of selfishness, the main thing is that the child shall do nothing because you are watching him or listening to him; in a word, nothing because of other people, but only what nature asks

of him; then he will never do wrong.

I do not mean to say that he will never do any mischief, never hurt himself, never break a costly ornament if you leave it within his reach. He might do much damage without doing wrong, since wrong-doing depends on the harmful intention which will never be his. If once he meant to do harm, his whole education would be ruined; he would be almost hopelessly bad.

Source: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, or Education*, trans. Barbara Foxley (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1921).

### A Discourse on Political Economy

From the first moment of life, men ought to begin learning to deserve to live; and, as at the instant of birth we partake of the rights of citizenship, that instant ought to be the beginning of the exercise of our duty. If there are laws for the age of maturity, there ought to be laws for infancy, teaching obedience to others: and as the reason of each man is not left to be the sole arbiter of his duties, **government ought the less indiscriminately to abandon to the intelligence and prejudices of**



**fathers the education of their children, as that education is of still greater importance to the State than to the fathers:**

for, according to the course of nature, the death of the father often deprives him of the final fruits of education; but his country sooner or later perceives its effects. Families dissolve, but the State remains.

Should the public authority, by taking the place of the father, and charging itself with that important function, acquire his rights by discharging his duties, he would have the less cause to complain, as he would only be changing his title, and

would have in common, under the name of citizen, the same authority over his children, as he was exercising separately under the name of father, and would not be less obeyed when speaking in the name of the law, than when he spoke in that of nature. Public education, therefore, under regulations prescribed by the government, and under magistrates established by the Sovereign, is one of the fundamental rules of popular or legitimate government.

Source: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1920).

## Study Questions

1. What is the nature of children (at birth) according to Rousseau? How does this compare with Scripture?
2. What are you supposed to do if your student does something wrong, according to Rousseau? How does this comport with Scripture?
3. What is the most important business of the state, according to Rousseau's "A Discourse on Political Economy"?
4. What is the most important business of the state according to Romans 13:3,4 and Genesis 9:6? Do you think most politicians today would agree with Rousseau or the Bible?
5. Why should a father have "less cause to complain" when the state replaces him in his obligation to educate his children? Compare with Scripture.
6. How might Rousseau's iniquity as a parent himself have contributed to this conclusion?
7. Who are the "great" thinkers and philosophers who have appreciated Jean-Jacques Rousseau?
8. How does Jean-Jacques Rousseau compare to Descartes in his morality and his philosophical teaching? Provide similarities and differences.

## Application Questions

1. Is God pleased with brilliant philosophers who want to change the world by their ideas (even though their lives are messed up)? What does God expect of you in your life? How will you handle ideas? How will you live your life?
2. What does God expect of parents according to Ephesians 6:4, Deuteronomy 6:7, and the book of

Proverbs? Does God expect parents to delegate the education, the welfare, and the training of their children to professionals? How much delegation is too much delegation?

## Notes

1. Will and Ariel Durant, *Rousseau and Revolution* (Simon and Schuster: New York, 1967), 3.
2. Paul Johnson, *Intellectuals* (Harper and Row: New York, 1988), 2.
3. Otto Scott, *Robespierre, the Fool as Revolutionary* (Windsor: The Reformer, 1995), 18.
4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile* (London: Everyman, 1992), 19.
5. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, trans. G.D.H. Cole (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1923), Book 4, Chapter 8.
6. Rousseau, *Émile*, 274-330.
7. Jason DeParle and Sabrina Tavernise, "For Women Under 30, Most Births Occur Outside of Marriage," *New York Times*, February 17, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/18/us/for-women-under-30-most-births-occur-outside-marriage.html?pagewanted=all&r=0> (accessed December 11, 2013).
8. Mary Eberstadt, *Home-Along America* (New York, NY: SentinelHC, 2004).
9. The state increasingly expands the requirements of the compulsory attendance laws for children. Parental rights have continued to dissipate for families sending their children to public schools since the U.S. 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Palmdale case (2005). The reader may refer to the following sources for evidence of the expanding power of the state in the sphere of the family:  
  
"Compulsory Education Laws: The Dialogue Reopens," *The Homeschool Court Report*, 16, no. 5 (September/October 2000). <http://www.hslda.org/courtreport/v16n5/v16n501.asp>
- Alex Newman, "Homeschoolers Flee Persecution in Germany and Sweden," *The New American*, November 3, 2012. <http://www.thenewamerican.com/world-news/europe/item/13503-homeschoolers-flee-persecution-in-germany-and-sweden> (accessed December 11, 2013).
- "Parental Rights in the Schools: Do they exist after Palmdale?" *Education Law Consortium*. <http://www.educationlawconsortium.org/forum/2007/papers/Marino2007.pdf> (accessed December 11, 2013).
10. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Introduction.
11. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*.
12. Rousseau, *Émile*, 8.
13. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, trans. G.D.H. Cole (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1923), Second Part, Paragraph 1.
14. Durant and Durant, *Rousseau and Revolution*, 179.
15. Rousseau, *Émile*, 19.
16. Rousseau, *Émile*, 8.
17. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on Political Economy*, trans. G.D.H. Cole, (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1923), Introduction.
18. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on Political Economy*, Section II.
19. Rousseau, *Émile*, 64.
20. Rousseau, *Émile*, 66.
21. Rousseau, *Émile*, 66.
22. Rousseau, *Émile*, 66-67.