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Wikisource has original works written by or about: Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Wikipedia has an article about: Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Jean Jacques Rousseau And The Discourse On 18. Democracy and Participation: Rousseau's Discourse Jean-Jacques Rousseau can be considered both an influential and controversial philosopher. Questions do linger as to whether or not his philosophy contributed to the brutal Reign of Terror that followed the French Revolution soon after. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born on June 28,in Geneva.Additional site navigationThis pride likely contributed to the emergence of his philosophy over time. We do not know much about his young life as the main reference for it was the posthumously published work Confessions. However, we are able to see a somewhat clear picture of his life and influences. This led the family to move to a more humble location known for its high population of craftsmen. Young Jean-Jacques Rousseau would notice the craftsmen may have here the polish and aesthetic skills of artists, but he respected their work ethic. Slowly, he began to see artists as those who served the idle folly of the wealthy.Shop by categoryYoung Rousseau would also become a lover of the written word. He read voraciously and concentrated a great deal on works that deal with history and escapism. This certainly contributed to his desire to become a writer himself. Rousseau also kept a watchful eye on the local militias whom he had a great deal of respect for. He did not like the armies of the ruling class because he saw them as thugs for the powerful and wealthy. As a teen, he was disowned by his father and he had to work various jobs to support himself. As he grew older, he delved into the study of music, math, and philosophy. Unlike other philosophers who saw their material as a ray of hope contributing help to the world, Rousseau created works that were dark and almost depressing.Rousseau did not even like philosophers very much. He saw them in a negative light and felt they mainly contributed to social decay and tyranny. In a sense, they were to be the errand runners of the ruling class. Rousseau was a strong believer in human freedom. He felt the natural order of human beings was to do good for others.↓Original editionAuthorJean-Jacques RousseauOriginal titleDiscours sur les sciences et les artsCountryFranceLanguageFrenchPublisherGeneva, Barillot & fils [i. e. Paris, Noël-Jacques Pissot]Publication date1750Published in EnglishLondon, W. Owen, 1751 A Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences (1750), also known as Discourse on the Sciences and Arts (French: Discours sur les sciences et les arts) and commonly referred to as The First Discourse, is an essay by Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau which argued that the arts and sciences corrupt human morality. It was Rousseau's first successful published philosophical work, and it was the first expression of his influential views about nature vs. society, to which he would dedicate the rest of his intellectual life. This work is considered one of his most important works. Topic of the essay Rousseau wrote Discourse in response to an advertisement that appeared in a 1749 issue of Mercure de France, in which the Academy of Dijon set a prize for an essay responding to the question: "Has the restoration of the sciences and arts contributed to the purification of morals?" According to Rousseau, "Within an instant of reading this [advertisement], I saw another universe and became another man." Rousseau found the idea to which he would passionately dedicate the rest of his intellectual life: the destructive influence of civilization on human beings. Rousseau went on to win first prize in the contest and—in an otherwise mundane career as composer and playwright, among other things—he had newfound fame as a philosopher. Scholar Jeff J.S. Black points out that Rousseau is one of the first thinkers within the modern democratic tradition to question the political commitment to scientific progress found in most modern societies (especially liberal democracies) and examined the costs of such policies.[1] In the Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, Rousseau "authored a scathing attack on scientific progress...an attack whose principles he never disavowed, and whose particulars he repeated, to some extent, in each of his subsequent writings."[1] Rousseau's account about his initial encounter with the question has become well known. Rousseau's friend Denis Diderot had been imprisoned at Vincennes for writing a work questioning the idea of a providential God. As he walked to the prison to visit him, Rousseau was pursuing a copy of the Mercury of France, and when his eyes fell upon the question posed by the Academy of Dijon, he felt a sudden and overwhelming inspiration "that man is naturally good, and that society in which they live in." In this he includes "wits" and "those who follow fashion". He maintains that those who reflexively support traditional thinking merely "play the free-thinker and the philosopher", and had they lived during the age of the French Wars of Religion these same people would have joined the Catholic League and "been no more than fanatics" advocating the use of force to suppress Protestants.[3] Oddly Rousseau, who claims to be motivated by the idea of bringing forth something to promote the happiness of mankind, sets most of humanity as his adversaries.[1] Scholar Jeff J. S. Black points out that this is because Rousseau wants his work to outlive him. Rousseau holds that if he wrote things that were popular with the fashionable and trendy, his work would fade with the passing of fashion, "To live beyond one's century, then, one must appeal to principles that are more lasting and to readers who are less thoughtless."[1] Rousseau's argument was controversial, and drew a great number of responses. One from critic Jules Lemaitre called the instant defication of Rousseau as "one of the strongest proofs of human stupidity." Rousseau himself answered five of his critics in the two years or so after he won the prize. Among these five answers were replies to Stanisław Leszczyński, former King of Poland, the Abbé Raynal, and the "Last Reply" to Charles Bordes. These responses provide clarification for Rousseau's argument in the Discourse, and begin to develop a theme he further advances in the Discourse on Inequality - that misuse of the arts and sciences is one case of a larger theme, that man, by nature good, is corrupted by civilization. Inequality, luxury, and the political life are identified as especially harmful. Rousseau's own assessment of the essay was ambiguous. In one letter he described it as one of his "principal writings," and one of only three in which his philosophical system is developed (the others being the Discourse on Inequality and Emile), but in another instance he evaluated it as "at best mediocre."[4] Notes ^ a b c d e f Jeff J.S. Black (January 16, 2009). Rousseau's Critique of Science: A Commentary on the Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts. Lexington Books. ^ Todd Breytogle, ed. (1999). Literary Imagination, Ancient and Modern: Essays in Honor of David Greene. University of Chicago Press. ^ Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1973). The Social Contract and Discourses. G.D.H. Cole (trans.). Everyman's Library. ^ Campbell (1975), 9. References Blair Campbell. "Montaigne and Rousseau's First Discourse." The Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 28, No. 1. (Mar., 1975), pp. 7-31. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The Social Contract and Discourses. Trans. G.D.H. Cole. London: Everyman. 1993. Introduction referenced for general background. External links Wikiquote has quotations related to: Discourse on the Arts and Sciences Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, full text in HTML format, at the Online Library of Liberty. Retrieved from " Rousseau's views on a flaw education system19 January 2013 It is difficult to tell whether Rousseau is being serious in this discourse or not. Apparently this won an award in an essay competition (and mind you when I read these essays, and then read one of the essays that I wrote in university I realise how crap my writing was back then, and probably still is), but it seems that Rousseau is being a little hypocritical since he is a very educated person who is attacking education. The other thing about this is that his argument is actually quite flawed, but then again, he did not have the benefit of Twentieth Century history. The basis of his argument is that an educated society is a weak society in that people become lazy and are more reliant upon others to do their work for them. He points to Egypt, Athens, and Rome as an example, but once again I consider that he is misinterpreting the evidence that was available to him at the time. It is difficult to tell whether Egypt was really an enlightened society like that of Athens and Rome, and even then Egypt have a very long history. However, we must remember that there were periods of greatness, and periods when Egypt was under the yoke of foreign powers. In any event, despite invasion, Egypt hasdalways managed to maintain its own unique identity, and was always able to rise up out of the ashes. As for Athens, despite their so called laziness and pursuit of leisure, they were not only able to fight off the Persians twice, but they also managed to hold their ground against the Spartans for over thirty years, even after their navy had been decimated: never underestimate the power of freedom. With regards to Rome, granted the Republic collapsed to be replaced by a dictatorship, but Britain lasted centuries, and still holds the record for being the longest contiguous empire in the history. Now, I shall turn to the Twentieth century to once again demonstrate how Rousseau was wrong, and we simply need to look towards World War I as evidence. Here we have a militaristic German Empire at war against the Liberal Democracies of Britain and France. The war was seen as a test of the strength of the liberal democracies, and the liberal democracies passed with flying colours. There was also World War II and the Cold War, in which the Liberal Democracies once again both won with flying colours. I do accept that art and science can create complacency and laziness, but we must not forget the power that freedom gives people, and the lengths that they will go to to fight for their freedom. The Viet-Cong held off the Americans for fifteen years, despite being out numbered and out gunned, and the same is true of Iraq in recent years. In both cases, the invaded people did not want to live under American imperialism because they knew and understood that the Americans were not going to offer them the sort of lifestyle that they wanted. Granted, Germany, Japan, and Korea have become advanced economies, but these miracles have not been replicated in any of the other countries that American has intervened in, and it was clear that this freedom and economic prosperity was not going to necessarily be awarded to to Iraqis or the Viet-Cong. In fact, as we have seen, the so called economic miracle never arose in Iraq, in the same way that it never arose in Haiti, Granda, or Afghanistan.Another reading of Rousseau's discourse21 February 2013 I have now read this discourse a second time, and also having had the benefit of listening to a couple of lectures on Rousseau, and reading it in light of Immanuel Kant, I have come to understand his arguments a lot more. I do not think Rousseau is being satirical in this discourse, rather I believe that what he writes here suggests that he is being deadly serious. The question that Rousseau raises is whether education is a dangerous element to our society and as I reread the tract I have come to understand that Rousseau was quite prescient in predicting the flaws within our social structure. We also need to understand that Rousseau was raising was not some future prediction but problems that he could see in French society at that time. Now Kant, in his pamphlet entitled 'What is Enlightenment', says that enlightenment is being able to think for oneself without having to defer to another person's opinion to make your decision. In the example that I used previously, it is like making the decision to ask a girl out on a date and rather than simply asking her, going and asking all of your friends whether you should ask her out on a date. Now, Rousseau attacks education in that it does not teach us how to think but rather to regurgitate what has been told to us by our teachers. In fact, the problem with modern education is not that we are taught to think, but rather that there are all these people out there wanting us to pay them money so that we can teach us how to think. The problem is that being able to think for oneself is dangerous because by being able to think for ourselves give us freedom. After I read 'What is Enlightenment' I handed it to a friend. The reason I did that is because I read the first paragraph of the tract and it so blew me away I felt like I should give it to him. The reason I did so was because he had gone to an 'insecure beta male' (a term that another of my friends uses) to ask for advice (which I believed was a really bad thing) at which point this particular guy suddenly sunk his claws into him and took control of his life. It is not the question of bad advice, it is that by going to the wrong person for advice can end up enslaving you to that person. This is what Rousseau is on about. At the beginning of his tract 'The Social Contract' he writes 'Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains'. In this discourse he writes 'up until that time Romans had been content to practise virtue; everything was lost when they began to study it.' Here he suggests that by adhering to a code of morality you in the end become enslaved by it, but in reality this code of morality is not actually virtue, but it is virtue that is taught to us and in turn it is expected by us, and that in the end we become enslaved by it. Christ teaches in a broad stroke 'love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength ... and love your neighbour as yourself and then humanity comes along with a large set of rules to tell us how to do that. When the Bible talks about virtue, it talks about characteristics, such as love, joy, peace, patience, while the church teaches us what it believes these things are (that is, it studies virtue). Granted, while our society tells us that we should not walk around the street naked (and Rousseau goes as far to suggest that clothes were originally developed to hide deformities, and we even see in the Bible that clothes were invented to hide our shame) to go against that norm is probably not a really good idea. I mentioned previously that I do not believe that Rousseau is entirely correct in his examples, until you remember that it is indeed true that the Persian Empire was overthrown by a bunch of barbaric savages (and remember one of Alexander's chief tactics was to simply charge the king rather than to fight some set piece battle). We see the same thing in Vietnam and in Iraq. The might and sophistication of the American military was brought to a halt by a group of rag-tag insurgents, and it seems that that is the new tactic that is now being used against the West. ...more

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