

Rousseau and the Ancients
Rousseau et les Anciens

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Ancient postmodernism in the philosophy of Rousseau

Unless it was Immanuel Kant, who declined to believe it, no one who lived in the age of enlightenment ever took note of that fact.¹ The term *The Enlightenment* only made its inaugural appearance in the late nineteenth century, the *Scottish Enlightenment* was first ushered into print in the early twentieth century, and the *Enlightenment Project*, about which virtually every contemporary social philosopher now speaks with authority, is an expression invented more than thirty-five years after the demise of the Manhattan Project, whose adherents, by contrast, at least knew its name. Throughout its relatively brief history, The Enlightenment has largely assumed the identity assigned to it by its inventors determined to denigrate its achievement. The *Oxford English Dictionary* still defines *the enlightenment* as an age of “superficial intellectualism,” marked by “insufficient respect for authority and tradition,” adding, for good measure, that a *philosophe* is “one who philosophizes erroneously.” In the French language, matters are, if anything, worse still, since no Frenchman has ever managed to coin a term for *The Enlightenment* at all. At least God, even if He never existed either, somehow managed to get Himself invented, as Voltaire famously remarked, but not, alas, *The Enlightenment*. Frances Hutcheson in Glasgow observed that he was called “New Light” there, but no sparkling luminary in Paris, so far as I know, ever noticed that he was one of *les lumières*.

Of course a concept is not the same as a word, and it may have meaning without a name. Monsieur Jourdain in Molière’s *Bourgeois gentilhomme* realised that he had been speaking prose all his life without ever knowing exactly what it was, and so too I think, just by virtue of their campaigns, were Voltaire and the international brigade of *engagés volontaires* he mobilised to *écraser l’infâme* thereby enlisted in the service of enlightenment, albeit ignorant of its name. Not only was Voltaire the chief spokesman of The Enlightenment, but, to my mind, he may even be described as the principal adherent of the “Enlightenment Project” in precisely the sense that Alasdair MacIntyre defines it in *After Virtue*. Who else but MacIntyre could Voltaire have had in mind when, in his *Lettres philosophiques*, in the most celebrated of all Enlightenment pleas for toleration, he portrayed a London Stock Exchange where Muslims, Jews, Anabaptists and Presbyterians exchange a common currency, before they go off to practise their religions quietly in their diverse churches, denouncing as an *infidel* only those who go bankrupt? When, however, they are at

home, in Scotland, he continues, when Presbyterians form what is currently called a moral majority, they adopt a solemn bearing and preach through their nose, denouncing the spirit of cosmopolitan enlightenment, if I may here add my own gloss on Voltaire's remarks, by way of Scottish Nationalist Party broadcasts of the songs of Ossian.²

Rousseau, likewise, without ever inventing a term for it, was similarly well-acquainted with the Enlightenment Project, by which I don't just mean the *coterie holbachique* or international conspiracy he supposed was plotting to defame him, but rather that intellectual world constituted by its holy writ (as it can surely be so described), the *Encyclopédie*, dedicated to the promotion of freedom and virtue through the advancement of knowledge. Although they are unfortunately seldom noticed, there are many features of Rousseau's philosophy which address the empty formalism and abstract foundationalism of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century metaphysics in terms later to be embraced by Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard and their followers. In denouncing the cosmological framework and universalist pretensions of Rameau's acoustical theory of harmony allegedly based upon the resonance of a corps sonore, Rousseau put forward a theory of musical expression which allowed for aesthetic diversity, difference and uniqueness in embracing ancient Greek, Persian and Chinese melodies as well as the octave of the relatively modern Western scale. In combating Diderot's notion of the *volonté générale* based upon a premise of common humanity, Rousseau, above all in his *Manuscrit de Genève*, deconstructed the myth of the natural society of the human race upon which that cosmopolitan notion depended, much in the manner adopted by Hegel in his critique of the abstract formalism of Kant and later by postmodernists in their objections to the so-called metanarratives of Enlightenment philosophy as a whole.³

Notions of circumscribed specificity as against generic definitions of human nature, wrongly presumed to be everywhere the same, inform Rousseau's objections to Hobbes's theory of the state of war, Locke's notion of the family, and indeed virtually every one of the natural jurisprudential doctrines — of Grotius, Pufendorf, Cumberland and others — he attempted to explain with reference to the peculiarly local and deliberately manufactured contexts in which alone they might have validity. Rousseau was both the Heidegger and the Foucault of the eighteenth century, anticipating Heidegger's ontological puns and the playfulness of his language, on the hand, and Foucault's brutally sharp cleavage of the categories of knowledge to the disciplines of order and punishment, on the other. Where Heidegger introduces the linguistic turns of *Das sein* and *Wass sein* and *Wahr sein* and *Dasein* in his *Sein und Zeit*, Rousseau offers an account of

the corruption of civilization as a whole in terms of the corruption of language, as the savage languages of passion would have been transfigured into barbarian languages of need and then, in commercial society, the languages of exchange; so that *aimez-moi* would have been superseded by *aidez-moi* and finally, today, when we are utterly estranged at once from ourselves and everyone around us, all that say to each other, he contends, is *donnez de l'argent*.⁴

What else is Rousseau's whole philosophy of history, moreover, but a portrayal of mankind's self-inflicted incarceration in the great Panopticon of our civilization as a whole? The connection between *savoir* and *pouvoir* is not just a Marxist or Nietzschean or postmodernist and Foucauldian theme. It forms the kernel of the critique of what may be termed the Enlightenment Project itself by one of its main protagonists who, to employ Hegelian language, was *an sich aber nicht für sich*, that is, who was part of it but in large measure did not subscribe to it. How else but with respect to *pouvoir's* determination of *savoir* are we to understand the central theme of his first *Discours*, in which Rousseau portrays our arts, letters and sciences as "garlands of flowers round the iron chains by which [mankind] is weighed down" (*D1 7*)? His understanding of the trappings of civilization is, to my mind, even richer than Foucault's, not least because, in Heideggerian fashion, he understood the force of language and metaphor, and the ways in which, through language, individuals became the victims not just of one another's abuse of power but also of their own ideals, subjugated by their own conjugations, as it were, running headlong into their chains, thinking themselves free. In his fragment on *L'État de guerre*, probably drafted in the mid-1750s, he remarks that "With a tranquillity like that of the imprisoned companions of Odysseus waiting to be devoured by the Cyclops, we can only groan and be quiet." Here is Rousseau's myth of the cave. No post-modernist critic of the Enlightenment Project ever plumbed the depths of his deconstruction of *Homo sapiens* into *Homo deceptus* more deeply.⁵

I take Rousseau to have well understood what the Enlightenment Project was about and to have recognised his own philosophy as shaped by it, even when in defiance of some of its central aims. His was not a grotesque caricature such as, soon after his death, would embrace his own philosophy together with Voltaire's, as if these two fiercest ideological enemies of the whole eighteenth century were some homogeneous Gilbertonsullivan compound, pointing arm in arm to the new dawn of civilization, projecting the Enlightenment together. But just as Voltaire managed to refute Alasdair MacIntyre before the inventor of the expression The Enlightenment Project was born, so, for his part, did Rousseau man-

age to portray the ethnic cleansing of Bosnia and Kosovo even before Yugoslavia was created. Here are some more lines from the same passage of *L'État de guerre*. "I lift my eyes and look into the distance," he writes;

There I see fire and flames, a countryside deserted, villages pillaged. Monstrous men, where are you dragging these poor creatures? I hear a dreadful noise, such uproar, such screams! I draw near. I bear witness to a murderous scene, to ten thousand slaughtered men, the dead piled together, the dying trampled by horses, everywhere the sight of death and agony. All of this is the fruit of peaceful institutions! Pity and indignation rise up from the depths of my heart.⁶

One of the reasons why this passage, and indeed *L'État de guerre* in general, has been less frequently considered by Rousseau's readers than perhaps should have been the case is that his philosophy, by way of its alleged confusion of ancient liberty or popular sovereignty, on the one hand, with modern liberty or the protection of individual rights, on the other, has itself been blamed for many of the horrors it decries. According to his fiercest critics, his conjunction of absolute freedom with absolute power even engendered the Terror in the course of the French Revolution, giving rise to both the Jacobin and Bonapartist dictatorships, as if the *volonté générale* or general will must always be translated as the *volonté du général*, the general's will. His interpreters who stress the extent to which the modern state has apparently been shaped by his own political doctrines thereby contrive to overlook his philosophy of history and the critique of modernity which it embraces, since it points uncomfortably in much the same direction as they do against him and is indeed often couched in images they would come to adopt themselves. From different ends of the political spectrum Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida have each written at some length about Rousseau's linguistic turns in several of his writings,⁷ without ever addressing his reflections on the corruption of language in the *Essai sur l'origine des langues* and elsewhere as a measure of the failure of an Enlightenment Project whose principles postmodernists have frequently opposed for reasons not dissimilar to his own. Foucault has introduced Rousseau's tortured *Dialogues* as an anti-confessional autobiography, but where he might have been expected to find common cause with Rousseau's attack upon modernity, he instead, as in his course of lectures on the idea of "governmentality" at the Collège de France, identified the political doctrine of the *Contrat social* with the institutions of totalitarian surveillance he had earlier associated with Jeremy Bentham.⁸

I mean to address just a few of these themes, and in particular Rousseau's conceptions of ancient and modern liberty, in a moment. But in

commenting here on the abiding pertinence and topicality of both Voltaire and Rousseau, I must not regard them as authors of a fresh Book of Revelations. I must not adopt the stance of those admirers of *Emile* who lay undue emphasis on Rousseau's remark there to the effect that Europe is approaching a century of revolutions which will ensure that its monarchies do not have long to survive, or of readers of the *Confessions* who note that in this work Rousseau employs the expression "Qu'ils mangent de la brioche" which Marie-Antoinette herself never uttered.⁹ Rousseau's reflections on war in *L'État de guerre* are not addressed to the recent crisis of the Balkans but to the writings of Hobbes and indirectly to the natural jurisprudential tradition that formed the nexus both of modern political thought, as he understood it, and of the modern state in so far as its subjects also imagined themselves to be its rulers. That is its proper focus, or as we might say in Cambridge, its context. In contending that the state of war is a social and not a natural state, Rousseau set out to explain that our political institutions were themselves responsible for the crimes they were purported to solve, providing solutions to problems of which those solutions were in fact the cause. This is how the work begins, not as it is inaccurately assembled in all French editions included the Pléiade *Œuvres complètes*, but quite recently by Grace Roosevelt, who found that the creases in the original manuscript in the Bibliothèque de la Ville de Neuchâtel had somehow been turned inside out. "I open the books about law and morality," Rousseau remarks.

I listen to wise men and jurists and, moved by their penetrating words, I deplore the miseries of nature, I admire the peace and justice established by the civil order. I bless the wisdom of public institutions and take comfort from my being a man in seeing myself as a citizen. Well instructed in my duties and my happiness, I shut the book[s], leave the class, and look outside. [There] I see unfortunate people trembling under an iron yoke, the whole of humanity crushed by a handful of oppressors, a starving multitude racked by pain and hunger, of whom the rich peacefully lap up the blood and tears, and throughout the world nothing but the strong holding sway over the weak, armed with the redoubtable strength of the laws.¹⁰

As against modern notions of absolute sovereignty put forward by these wise men and jurists — that is, by men such as Bodin, Grotius, Hobbes and Pufendorf — Rousseau elaborated an alternative idea of sovereignty which also embraced an ancient republican commitment to civil liberty. Prior to its use in his philosophy, the concept of *sovereignty* had been connected by its interpreters to the idea of force or empire, and it characteristically pertained to the dominion of kings over their subjects rather than to citizens' freedom. For both Bodin and Hobbes, in particular — the best-

known advocates of absolute sovereignty before Rousseau — the terms *souveraineté* or *sovereignty* were derived from the Latin *summa potestas* or *summum imperium*, which defined the prevailing power of the ruler. For Rousseau, by contrast, the idea of sovereignty was essentially a principle of equality, which identified the ruled element, or the subjects themselves, as the supreme authority, and it was connected with the concepts of will or right rather than force or power; it expressed *le moral* of politics and not *le physique*. To my mind, it is precisely because of his innovative conjunction of an altogether unlikely pair of terms — *liberté*, as drawn from an ancient republican tradition of self-rule, and *souveraineté*, from a modern absolutist ideology addressed to the need for predominating power — that liberal critics have judged his doctrine more sinister than any other collectivist conception of freedom. How can absolute force and perfect liberty possibly go hand in hand? To be “forced to be free,” as Rousseau stipulated in one of the most famous passages of the *Contrat social*,¹¹ seems the vilest deception imaginable from one who made the idea of liberty the most central principle of his political philosophy.

On this subject Rousseau has a case to answer, and as a matter of fact he answered it. The absolute authority of the sovereign, he wrote, must both come from all and apply to all. The voice of the *volonté générale* it enacts cannot pronounce on individuals without forfeiting its own legitimacy, since it articulates in law the common interest of every citizen, whereas the exercise of force over individuals is reserved exclusively for a nation’s government. Rousseau’s sovereign never implements its own laws and never punishes transgressors against it,¹² nor indeed forces anyone to be free.

Beyond all major political theorists before or after him Rousseau distinguished right from power, the formulation of principle from its application — in this context the moral will which determines laws from the physical force that implements them — by placing each in different hands, here, respectively, the legislative power and the executive power. His point about force and freedom means scarcely more than that citizens must always be bound by their own agreements, even when they feel inclined to disregard them. No force is exercised except over persons who have renegeed on their decision to abide by laws they enact themselves, and no force is exercised at all by the sovereign. The tyrannical abuse of power which liberal critics impute to Rousseau’s sovereign was actually perceived by him to be a misappropriation of the powers of government, against which the absolute sovereignty of the people was the only real safeguard. With the executive power of the Republic of Geneva (that is, the *Petit Conseil*) substituted for the popular will of the assembly of all citizens (that is, the

Conseil Général), absolute right had been corrupted into unfettered force. And “where force alone reigns,” as Rousseau remarked in his *Lettres de la montagne*, “the state is dissolved. That [...] is how all democratic states finally perish.”¹³ Rousseau’s conception of absolute sovereignty was thus designed to ensure civil liberty by virtue of an infrastructural separation of powers, exactly contrary to the notions of sovereignty put forward by Bodin and Hobbes. Liberty was made secure, in his view, by the very institution which, his liberal critics have since alleged, can only destroy it. So long as the general will of a community remained general, citizens kept their freedom under the rule of its laws.

I take this novel association of the ideas of sovereignty and freedom to have informed the meaning of what he termed *la liberté civile* in Book I, chapter VIII of the *Contrat social*, though it should not be forgotten that the same chapter also introduces a second idea of liberty gained by citizens in their membership of the state, which Rousseau called *la liberté morale*, or “obedience to the law we prescribed to ourselves.”¹⁴ That concept is also drawn from Rousseau’s understanding of ancient history and philosophy, but whereas *la liberté civile* is inspired fundamentally by the same Roman republican sources which enthralled his beloved Machiavelli, *la liberté morale* is essentially Greek in origin, as is plain from the word *autonomy* which we will still employ to define it. Both in his use of the political and moral meanings of *liberté* and in his novel use of the expression *la volonté générale*, Rousseau articulated classical ideals of liberty in a modern vocabulary which may, at first glance, seem as alien to them as is his invocation of ancient liberty in justification of modern sovereignty. Some of his most striking images indeed derive their force from just such attempts to illuminate the values of old cultures in a new language commonly thought to have dispensed with them, and much may be learnt about his political ideals if we regard him, to use his own words from his *Jugement sur la Polysynodie*, as one of those “moderns who had an ancient soul,” although he is not speaking of himself there but of the abbé de Saint-Pierre.¹⁵

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of his concept of *la liberté morale* is its peculiarly reflexive element of self-prescription. Every morally free agent, Rousseau insisted, was required to follow rules established only within the depths of his own conscience in a self-reliant manner, free from the influence of all other persons. The most absolute authority, he observed in his *Discours sur l’économie politique*, “is that which penetrates into man’s innermost being,”¹⁶ incorporating him in the common identity of the state, as he put it in the *Contrat social*.¹⁷ Liberal critics recoil in horror from these claims, in so far as they take them to imply the complete submergence of our separate wills under the collective will of the body

politic which envelops and moulds us. Yet what Rousseau meant by his conjunction of moral liberty with the general will was designed to avert rather than achieve the social indoctrination of individuals. Not only did he insist upon the fact that a nation's general will could only be realised through opposition to the particular wills of each of its members, with the constant tension between two kinds of will or interest — instead of the suppression of one by the other — indispensable to the achievement of the common good. He also stressed that the same opposition was present in the minds of all citizens, so that every person was motivated by both a particular will and a general will, dividing his judgment of what was beneficial to himself from what was right for the community.

Especially in the modern world, Rousseau believed, our general will was much weaker than our particular will, and it was to be strengthened and animated not by our imbibing the collective opinions of our neighbours in a public assembly, but just the reverse — by all citizens expressing their own opinions alone, “having no communication amongst themselves,” as he put it in the *Contrat social*, which might render their separate judgments partial to this or that group interest.¹⁸ To ensure that in the assembly there were as many votes as individuals, every member must act without regard to the rest, consulting his own general will as a citizen, thereby still obeying himself alone. Our personal identity was only lost when in legislation we echoed the opinions of an unreflective, undiscriminating multitude. For Rousseau, the more perfect our independence from others — the more profoundly we turned into ourselves for guidance — the more likely were our deliberations to yield the common good.

In the social contract state which he envisaged, deep introspection was therefore the corollary of the outward pursuit of that common good or public interest. The idea of will in this context expresses the voluntarist, contractarian strain of modern political thought — or, if I may put my point another way, it mediates a fundamentally Greek notion of *autonomy* through the language of conscience drawn from the Protestant Reformation — whereas what is general encapsulates the Roman republican idea of a public good towards which each person's will should be aimed. It follows that according to Rousseau's philosophy, in order to be a citizen of a *res publica* one must look deep within oneself for a personal commitment to a collective goal, which alone renders our *liberté morale*, as he conceived it, so much grander than the *liberté naturelle* he claimed men forfeit when they enter into civil society. In the eighth chapter of Book I of the *Contrat social*, and again, as I mean to show presently, in the fifteenth chapter of Book III, Rousseau puts forward his case on behalf of ancient as opposed to modern liberty — in an exposition which might well have borne the title

De la liberté des anciens contre celle des modernes, so as to refute in advance the case made by Benjamin Constant on behalf of modern liberty conceived as personal freedom and the protection of individual rights, in his celebrated lecture of 1819 designed to show the inappropriateness to the modern age of principles such as those of Rousseau.¹⁹

We have only to turn to the *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne* to note how passionate was Rousseau's commitment to ancient political liberty as against this alternative, individualist, notion. In a chapter of that work entitled "Esprit des anciennes institutions," itself anticipated in his fragmentary *Parallèle entre les deux républiques de Sparte et de Rome*,²⁰ and before that by many contributors, including Fenélon, to the late seventeenth- and early-eighteenth century "Querelle des anciens et des modernes,"²¹ Rousseau grieved over the civil and moral liberty we had lost in passing from antiquity into the modern world. "Modern men," he wrote, "no longer find in themselves any of that spiritual vigour which inspired the ancients in everything that they did." Ancient legislators sought to forge links that would attach citizens to *leur patrie* and to one another, in religious ceremonies, games and spectacles. The laws that rule modern men, by contrast, are solely intended to teach them to obey their masters.²²

The continually assembled citizens of Sparta, as he portrayed them in his *Lettre à D'Alembert (sur les spectacles)*, consecrated the whole of their lives to amusements which were great matters of state. Why should it not be so in modern republics as well? he exclaimed, in which the people could be "forever united" through festivals held "in the open air, under the sky." Yet what do we find instead? "Private meetings (*les tête-à-tête*) [...] taking the place of public assemblies." Where today, asks Rousseau in the same passage, is the concord of citizens from which the men of antiquity derived all their strength? Where is *la fraternité publique*?... Where is peace, liberty, equity, innocence?"²³ The term *fraternité* cited here in conjunction with *liberté* does not figure often in Rousseau's works, however much its meaning seems so obviously infused in his conception of the general will and, indeed, resonates throughout his political writings as a whole. But it is employed as well, once again, in his *Gouvernement de Pologne*, where he calls upon Polish youth to follow the example of the people of Rome rather than emulate the decadence of the French, so as to become accustomed to *égalité* and *fraternité* as citizens of a truly free state, "living under the eyes of their compatriots, seeking public approbation."²⁴

By so linking hand in hand the ideas of *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*, Rousseau — in this as in so much else — heralded the French Revolution whose advent he anticipated in *Emile*, just by fixing his gaze upon an ancient world that of course had never really existed any more than did l'état

de nature, similarly pieced together out of his own imagination. In *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, moreover, he drew all three principles together by way of depicting an exultant feast of grape harvesters in which all partake freely, equally and and fraternally,²⁵ thereby evoking an image of freedom radically different from the ideal of personal liberty which would be elaborated by Constant and other modern liberals virtually at the moment that their intellectual movement was formed, and for that matter when the word liberal was coined, largely by way of reaction to Rousseau's alleged abuse of the term.

I have already mentioned the passages of his *Essai sur l'origine des langues* in which he complained that whereas our ancestors had once sung *Aimez-moi* to one another, we now only mutter *Donnez de l'argent*. The same expression, *Donnez de l'argent*, repeated in Book XIV of the *Contrat social*, is described there as the harbinger of a society in chains, ruled by the slavish institution of finance, unknown to the men of antiquity, who also had no grasp of our modern notion of representation, he adds for good measure.²⁶ Representation, on the one hand, and finance or public taxation, on the other, were for Rousseau the most centrally defining features of the political world of modernity as a whole, whose adoption of these principles and their attendant institutions had marked the demise of ancient liberty as he understood it. We moderns have been transformed into mute auditors of declamations from the pulpit and proclamations from the throne, our collective voice stilled, he lamented in the concluding chapter of his *Essai sur l'origine des langues*.²⁷ While once our interests were openly shared and inscribed in our hearts, he added in the *Contrat social*, now they are in conflict, secreted away in the linings of our purses. Have we forgotten that once we aspire to serve the state with our purses rather than our person, it is on the edge of ruin? Have we forgotten that "in a well-ordered city everyone flies to the assemblies"?²⁸ Modern liberty, shorn of its ancient associations with fraternity, on the one side, and equality, on the other, stands exposed as nothing more than private gain. But so far from it embracing the only proper use of the term *liberté*, the contemporary ethos of private gain was for Rousseau just ancient slavery in a modern form, all the more psychologically insidious for our pursuing it as if it were real freedom. Turned inward on himself and outward against his neighbours, modern man in fact, like primeval man in fiction, had run headlong into chains which he supposed had made him free.

By focusing upon Rousseau's vision of ancient liberty, I have here addressed the impassioned rhetoric that his French Revolutionary admirers came to love, the imagined community of *Roma redivivus*, whose utter unsuitability for the modern era would prompt Mme de Staël and other

liberals who did not welcome it to charge that Rousseau “n’a rien découvert, mais il a tout enflammé,”²⁹ the passions, the senses, the Terror. Voltaire formed a similar judgment of the incendiary prose of Rousseau’s *Lettre sur la musique française*, the first of his works that made him appear to be a threat to the French nation, even if Rousseau himself was convinced that it actually had merited the King’s gratitude since, as he relates in his *Confessions*, the public outcry it provoked in the autumn of 1753 diverted an impending revolution against the state into a revolution against him alone.³⁰ There are indeed close parallels between Rousseau’s political tributes to republican Rome over monarchical France, on the one hand, and his endorsement in the Querelle des Bouffons of the melodious Italian language over the bark and bray of French, on the other. Recognising that link, d’Alembert, in his essay *De la liberté de la musique* of 1759, asserted that if we wish to conserve the kingdom we must preserve opera as it is, since the terms *bouffoniste* and *republican* may be used interchangeably.³¹

I should like, however, to conclude these reflections on Rousseau’s ancient postmodernism by addressing not his role in the French Revolution that failed to occur but rather the significance of his classical republican ideals with respect to the Revolution that *did* take place, whose greatest successes and failures alike were to earn for him the status of chief poet and acknowledged legislator of the age of modernity we still inhabit. I regard as manifestly false all the arguments known to me — including those of Hegel, Constant, Proudhon and Talmon — to the effect that it was Rousseau’s political philosophy above all others in the Enlightenment which engendered the collectivist or totalitarian tyranny of the modern nation-state, and in the little space that remains available I mean to show that his critique of modern despotism by way of invoking ancient liberty remains as trenchant today, with respect to political institutions unheralded by his doctrines, as it was in his own lifetime.

As is implied in the very title of Mercier’s work of 1791, *Rousseau, considéré comme l’un des premiers auteurs de la Révolution*, Rousseau was of course the spiritual guide of a regenerated France. He pointed the way to the promised land. But while his *Contrat social* would come to be esteemed as if it formed the French Revolution’s first commandments, its most central tenets were in fact to be repudiated in the age of modernity launched by the political upheavals of 1789. Even in adopting much of his rhetoric, France’s revolutionary leaders deliberately abandoned most of his principles and, at each stage of their deliberations, triumphantly opposed everyone who endorsed them. In the course of its gestation the political system they devised suffocated the most fundamental strictures of that system’s putative founder. Like Freud’s conception of the birth of the Jew-

ish people through an act of primal parricide as outlined in his *Moses and Monotheism* — even like Rousseau's birth, which cost his mother her life — the first modern nation-state that ostensibly embraced his doctrines suppressed them.³² In the act of its self-creation, if I may so put this point, modernity killed the Rousseauist ideals to which it purportedly subscribed. Let me try to explain what I mean, by way of pursuing the logic of Hegel's treatment of "Absolute Freedom and Terror" in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in order to refute the case he makes himself against Rousseau in his *Philosophie des Rechts*.

On 17 June 1789, the deputies of the Estates General, which had been convoked the previous autumn by King Louis XVI, resolved that they were no longer assembled at the monarch's behest but were rather agents of the national will (*le vœu national*), entrusted with the task of representing the sovereignty of the people of France. The three estates thereby constituted themselves as a single *Assemblée nationale*, bearing sole authority to interpret the people's general will. It is in this way, Hegel suggests, that political modernity was born, with a unicameral legislative system corresponding to a unitary will, a unified state speaking on behalf of an undifferentiated nation.³³

Since the motion that was carried had been put to the National Assembly by the abbé Sieyès in the light of principles already enunciated in his famous pamphlet of the previous winter, *Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?*, Sieyès himself may with some justice be deemed the progenitor of the modern nation-state. Hegel, who had witnessed modernity's birth and was to devote much of his life to portraying its childhood, came eventually to reflect upon Sieyès' paternity of modernity, as it were, in his essay, *Über die englische Reformbill*, of 1831, where he remarked that Sieyès had been able to extract out of his own papers the plan which was to give France the constitution it came to enjoy.³⁴ For my part, as I interpret the extent of Sieyès' influence not only upon the course of the French Revolution, but also on the subsequent development of the state in both theory and practice, no one, including Rousseau, has ever contributed more to shaping the modern world's political discourse.

In pursuit of the reasoning which had led to the formation of the National Assembly, Sieyès insisted that the King of France must be denied any kind of veto, absolute or suspensive, over legislation which could not articulate the nation's sovereign will if the monarch stood above the people's representatives. Both in the spring of 1789 in the Estates-General and again in the National Assembly at the end of July, he also argued, in this case successfully, that the people of France must similarly be denied a binding mandate, or *mandat impératif*, over their own delegates, since such a man-

date, just like a royal veto, would deprive the people's representatives of their freedom and would accordingly substitute the multifarious particular wills of scattered citizens for the collective will of the nation as a whole. The act of creation of the National Assembly which Sieyès had sponsored declared that the Assembly was *une et indivisible*. If the general will was to speak with one voice in a unitary nation-state, he insisted, it could no more be accountable to the people at large than to a king.

At the heart of his conception of modernity lay an idea of representation which in Sieyès' eyes was to constitute the most central feature of the French state. The modern age in its political form, which he termed *l'ordre représentatif*, depended for its prosperity upon a system of state management which adopted the same principle of the division of labour as was necessary for a modern economy. This system entailed that the people must entrust authority to their representatives rather than seek its exercise directly by themselves, their delegates articulating their interests on their behalf while they accordingly remain silent. In thus distinguishing the effective agents of state power from its ultimate originators, Sieyès merely pursued the logic of his own differentiation of active from passive citizens, whose separate identification for a brief period under the French Constitution of 1791 was to prove one of the crowning achievements of his career (see Sewell).

There could be no confusion in France between representation and democracy such as inspired Paine and others to imagine that the hybrid form of government established in America had nourished a classical principle of self-rule in a large state. For Sieyès, who sometimes spoke of direct democracy as a form of *démocratie brute*, it would be tragic for the first genuinely modern state of human history to make a retrograde step. In establishing a political system that was without precedent, France could not hesitate between ancient and modern principles of government. Despite his endorsement of other constitutional safeguards against the sovereign assembly's abuse of its powers, Sieyès did not permit any allegiance to Montesquieu with respect to such matters to overcome his mistrust of Rousseau, since he was adamant that the people themselves, lacking discipline, must be deprived of such means as would put public order at risk. Democracy, he thought, was no more fit for modernity than was the mixed constitution that would issue from the preservation of a royal veto. Sovereignty thereby passed from the nation's multifarious fragments to the people's delegates constituted as one body, the populace ceasing to have any political identity except as articulated through its representatives, who by procuration were granted authority to speak for the electorate as a whole.

While the conception of the modern state put forward by Sieyès

thus required that both the King, on the one hand, and the people, on the other, should be marginalized from the government of France, the implementation of his plan did not proceed as smoothly as he might have hoped. Apart from the King's disinclination to yield all his powers to an assembly which he had originally called into being himself, the people had their revolutionary champions as well. The Jacobins, in particular, regarded Sieyès' distinction between active and passive citizenship as anathema and, opposing his principle of the indivisibility of the general will as articulated by the nation's representatives, they sought to return directly to the people, in their districts and through their communes, the indivisible sovereignty of the whole nation which had been expropriated by their independently minded political delegates. Their notion of sovereignty, conceived as residing with the people as a whole, thus seemed to contradict the logic of modernity pursued by Sieyès and his associates, in so far as the Jacobins portrayed themselves as standing for the people rather than for the nation that had been substituted for them.

As Hegel correctly perceived, however, the Jacobins' contradiction of Sieyès' logic of modernity was fundamentally illusory, since the nation which they envisaged to be comprised of all its people was to prove as monolithic as Sieyès' conception of a nation represented by the state. When they came to power within the Convention in the autumn of 1793, they behaved as Sieyès and his associates had done earlier, but in reverse — that is, they attempted to root out the people's enemies within the state, just as Sieyès had sought to silence the enemies of the state within the nation. Pure democracy was to prove as incompatible in practice with Robespierre's populism as it was alien to Sieyès' notion of representative government, so that in 1793, no less than in 1789, when these two enemies had last been in agreement in their opposition to the royal veto, they could once again be of one mind. The Terror of the Jacobins was to follow directly from their idea of the sublime unity of the nation, which required a lofty purity of public spirit that made the vulgar purity of democracy seem an uncouth substitute for virtue. Popular sovereignty was not only to be given voice but actually created by the nation's genuine representatives. The greatest enemy of the people for whom they stood, and who had still to be manufactured in the image of what they might become, were all the fractious people cast in recalcitrant moulds resistant to such change, who thereby stood in the way of the agents of the people of the future. In concluding this section of his *Phänomenologie*, Hegel thus contends that in its abstract existence of unmediated pure negation, the sole work of freedom is death, a death without inner significance, the coldest and meanest of deaths, like splitting a head of cabbage.³⁵

But Hegel's attribution, in his *Rechtsphilosophie*, of ultimate responsibility for the Terror to Rousseau, is altogether misconceived. Rousseau was convinced, contrary to Hegel, Sieyès and Robespierre, that to express their general will citizens must deliberate together and then heed their own counsel; they could not just vote for spokesmen who, as their proxies, would determine the nation's laws. In large states, he observed, there must be means whereby the true sovereign could exercise its will even when assemblies were entitled, over prescribed periods and subject to general ratification, to speak with the consent of the people as a whole. There must in such circumstances be plebiscites, he believed, such as had been enjoyed by the citizens of the Republic of Rome, entitled to dispense with their tribunes at will, for in the presence of the represented, as Rousseau put it, there could be no representation.³⁶

For all his misgivings about democracy as a form of government, Rousseau believed more passionately than any other eighteenth-century thinker in the idea of popular or democratic sovereignty. It was principally this doctrine, which was presumed to have been inscribed in the *Déclarations des droits de l'homme* and the constitutions of the revolutionary years, that ensured his renown as the patron saint of a regenerated France. But the doctrine was upheld by him in its pure form, embracing the people as a whole,³⁷ while the purity of purpose sought by Sieyès, Robespierre and their associates with respect to the sovereignty of the nation was always of another, contradictory, sort. As is perhaps plainest from his *Gouvernement de Pologne*, Rousseau subscribed to just that notion of a mandat impératif which in the modern world most closely approximated the full legislative authority of citizens acting collectively, such as he understood to have prevailed in the free republics of antiquity.³⁸ He was a democrat against representation, he stood for the direct and unmediated sovereignty of the people against all forms of delegated power, and not once in the course of a revolution said to have been framed by his ideas did the advocates of his philosophy — in the National Assembly, the Commune of Paris, the Jacobin Club or the Club of the Cordeliers — come to prevail.

Hegel's conceptual history of political modernity, within which Rousseau's idea of absolute liberty is portrayed as having engendered both the National Assembly and the Terror, was thus only made possible, to my mind, by the category mistake of his confusing Rousseau's political doctrine with the philosophies of both Sieyès, whom he supposed to have put Rousseauism into practice, and Robespierre, whom he regarded as having brought Rousseauism to its dreadful climax. As the father of modernity, Sieyès was of course no more likely to assume responsibility for the Terror than was God ever inclined to accept blame for original sin. If he was aware

of it, he was never persuaded by Hegel's reading of the French Revolution and always remained convinced that the Terror had actually sprung from the betrayal of his own ideas on the part of populists who could not abide the principle of indirect sovereignty which his theory of representation prescribed. From his point of view, a form of Rousseauism had indeed been responsible for the Terror, in dissolving all his achievements in the National Assembly through its successful implementation of just that brutish form of direct democracy which was unfit for the modern world. For their part, in their advocacy of one nation, the Jacobins likewise proved as little democratic as was Sieyès in upholding the integrity of one state.

The inappropriateness of democracy for modernity was as striking to Sieyès as was the unsuitability of modernity for democracy in the eyes of Rousseau. With regard to his grasp of the meaning of Rousseau's political principles Sieyès was as clear as was Hegel obscure, and he devoted much of his career to combating those democrats of the National Assembly who espoused them. As against Rousseau's democratic notion of sovereignty he turned instead to that of Hobbes. Rousseau's followers in the National Assembly had no understanding of the system of representation required in a modern state, he supposed, but at least a sketch of it could be drawn from the sixteenth chapter of the *Leviathan*.³⁹ To the Hobbesian theory of representation, the nation-state as conceived by Sieyès adds the dimension of the comprehensive unity of the people, the representer and represented jointly forming an indissoluble whole, the state and nation bonded together, each understood through the other.

Much like Hegel himself, but contrary to Rousseau, Sieyès sought to establish the foundations of a new and progressive political order which would embrace rather than destroy the trappings of commercial society, in a state whose legislative system could express the solidarity of a national community only indirectly through representatives. Finance and representation lie at the heart of both Hegel's and Sieyès' conceptions of the modern state, as indeed they are embraced by all governments which preside over what are now termed *representative democracies* — that is, the exact opposite of democracies as guardians of their subjects' civil and moral liberty in the sense explained by Rousseau. The triumph of systems of representative democracy in this age of so-called *democratic republics* may be said to mark the abandonment, and in the case of France the suppression, of the most central ideals of Rousseau's social contract state.

Let me, finally, return to Rousseau's own portrayal of modernity in *L'État de guerre*. In opposing the democratic mandat impératif, Sieyès resisted what he perceived to be the threat to the expression of the nation's general will which might be constituted by the people. It was of the essence

of his plan that the nation in assembly spoke for all the people and must never be silenced by the people themselves. Over the past two hundred years the nation-state has characteristically achieved that end because it represents the people, standing before them not just as monarchs had done earlier, as the embodiment of their collective will, but rather by assuming their very identity, bearing the personality of the people themselves. With some notable exceptions — the United States of America, of course, foremost among them — most of the world's population now lives in nation-states. All peoples that have accredited identities form nation-states. What Sieyès did not foresee was that in the age of modernity heralded by his political philosophy, a people might not survive except by constituting a nation-state. In the age of modernity, it has proved possible for the nation-state to become the enemy of the people.

As Hannah Arendt rightly noted in her *Origins of Totalitarianism*, it has been a characteristic feature of the nation-state since the French Revolution that the rights of man and the rights of the citizen are the same.⁴⁰ By giving real substance and proper sanction to the various declarations of the rights of man within the framework of its own first constitutions, the French revolutionary nation-state invented by Sieyès joined the rights of man to the sovereignty of the nation.⁴¹ It defined the rights of man in such a way that only the state could enforce them and only members of the nation could enjoy them, thereby ensuring that henceforth only persons comprising nations which formed states could have rights. Yet the history of modernity since the French Revolution has characteristically been marked by the abuse of human rights on the part of nation-states which alone have the authority to determine the scope of those rights and their validity. Not only Rousseauism but the Enlightenment Project itself has been largely abandoned in an age in which so many nation-states have collectively rescinded that Project's eighteenth-century restoration of the Edict of Nantes, if I may so put it, whose first revocation in 1685 had given rise to the ethnic cleansing of France and thereby heralded, by way of their response to religious bigotry, the genesis of the Enlightenment Project and Rousseauism together.⁴²

Throughout our century whole peoples which comprise nations without states have found themselves comprehensively shorn of their rights. Thanks ultimately to the political pioneers of the French Revolution, ours is the age of the passport, the permit, the right of entry to each state or right of exit from it which is enjoyed by citizens that bear its nationality alone. For persons who are not accredited as belonging to a nation-state in the world of modernity, there are few passports and still fewer visas. To be without a passport or visa in the modern world is to have no right of exit or

entry anywhere, and to be without a right of exit or entry is to risk a rite of passage to the grave. That above all is the legacy bequeathed to us, not by way of our adoption of a Rousseauist reversion to ancient republican ideals, but from the political inception of the modern age, on 17 June 1789. “We now enter into a new order of things,” Rousseau had remarked in *L’État de guerre*, “in which we shall see men united by an artificial accord coming together to cut one another’s throats, and in which all the horrors of war arise from the efforts that were taken to prevent it.”⁴³

At the moment of Rousseau’s illumination on the road to Vincennes in the summer of 1749 that was to spark the composition of most of his major works, he managed to retain an impression of just the smallest sliver of the thunderbolt that struck him, which he then conveyed to Diderot in prison. It was the prosopopœia of Fabricius, inspired by Plutarch’s *Life of Pyhrrus*, in which he called upon two eminent kings of France to recognise, as “the noblest sight that ever appeared beneath the heavens,” the two hundred virtuous Senators of the ancient republic of Rome.⁴⁴ In attempting to exculpate Rousseau from responsibility for the new modes and orders of the first modern republic of the Old World which put an end to the ancien régime, I must not just blame Sieyès and Robespierre instead, even if their revolutionary careers and aspirations make them far better candidates for scrutiny. But I believe that, more than any other figure of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, Rousseau glimpsed the heart of darkness beneath civilization’s new dawn. “Où veux-tu fuir?” he asked in *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, recalling some of Satan’s lines in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. “Le Phantôme,” he answered, “est dans ton cœur.”⁴⁵ Across what would now be termed different disciplines, Rousseau managed to probe and uncover some of modernity’s deepest faults, and, to my mind, the flawed world which he portrayed throughout his writings was not only his but also ours.⁴⁶

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Notes

¹With respect to Kant’s and other eighteenth-century German treatments of the question “Was ist Aufklärung?” see especially Schneiders and Schmidt. For an analysis of Michel Foucault’s varied interpretations of Kant’s seminal essay, see Norris, d’Entrèves, and Wartenberg 283–314. Foucault had edited, and provided the first French translation of, Kant’s *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* as the *thèse complémentaire* he submitted for his doctorate in 1960.

²I have addressed MacIntyre’s notion of the Enlightenment Project in “Pro-

jecting the Enlightenment,” in James Horton and Susan Mendus (eds.), *After MacIntyre* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 108–26. Having originally imagined that the expression “The Enlightenment Project” dates from the 1930s, I should be grateful to any reader who may have located it in print prior to the publication of *After Virtue* in 1981. For Voltaire’s description of the London Stock Exchange, see the sixth of his *Lettres philosophiques*, on the Presbyterians.

³Rousseau’s critiques of Rameau and Diderot along these lines are addressed in my “Rousseau on Rameau and Revolution,” in R. F. Brissenden and J. C. Eade (eds.), *Studies in the Eighteenth Century*, IV (Canberra: Australian National U P, 1979), 251–83, and “The influence of Diderot on the political theory of Rousseau,” *SVEC* 82 (1975): 55–112, respectively.

⁴See *OL* ch. x and xx, 5: 408 and 428.

⁵This is one of the main themes of my “Perfectible Apes in Decadent Cultures: Rousseau’s anthropology revisited,” in *Rousseau for our Time* (*Daedalus*, summer 1978), 107–34.

⁶*L’État de guerre*, *OC* 3: 609.

⁷See De Man 1973 and 1979, and Derrida.

⁸See *Rousseau, juge de Jean Jaques: dialogues*, texte présenté par Michel Foucault (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1962), ; Foucault ; Burchell et al., Kritzman, Mitchell, and Simon.

⁹See *Em*, livre III, 4: 468n., and *C*, livre vi, 269.

¹⁰*L’État de guerre*, 3: 608–9. On the reconstitution of this text, see Roosevelt, pp. 13–17.

¹¹See Rousseau, *CS*, 1: vii, *OC* 364. A notable treatment of this passage is provided by John Plamenatz in his “Ce qui ne signifie autre chose sinon qu’on le forcera d’être libre,” in Maurice Cranston and Richard Peters (eds.), *Hobbes and Rousseau: a collection of critical essays* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1972), 318–32.

¹²See *CS*, II.iv, II.v and III.i, *OC* 373, 377 and 397.

¹³*Lettres de la montagne*, lettre 7, 3: 815.

¹⁴*CS*, I.viii, *OC* 365.

¹⁵Rousseau, *Jugement sur la Polysynodie (de l’abbé de Saint-Pierre)*, *Pléiade* 3: 643.

¹⁶*EP*, *OC* 3: 251.

¹⁷See *CS*, I.vi ; *OC* 361.

¹⁸See *CS*, I.vii and II.iii, *OC* 363, 371 and 371n.

¹⁹In ch. I of his *Benjamin Constant and the Making of Modern Liberalism* (New Haven: Yale U P, 1984), 28–52, Stephen Holmes usefully discusses that lecture with respect to Constant’s divergence from Rousseau.

²⁰3: 538–43. See also Pichois and Pintard.

²¹A classic treatment of this subject can be found in Gillot.

²²See *CGP*, ch. ii, *OC* 3: 958 and 959. Wide-ranging treatments of Rousseau's passionate attachment to the civic spirit of ancient institutions are provided by Leduc-Fayette and Vernes.

²³See *LD*, 114, 121, and 122.

²⁴*CGP*, ch. iv, *OC* 3: 968.

²⁵See *J*, V.vii, *OC* 607–9.

²⁶See *CS*, III.xv, *OC* 429. Cf. *Projet de constitution pour la Corse* and *CGP*, ch. xi, *OC* 3: 929 and 1004.

²⁷See *OL*, ch. xx, *OC* 428.

²⁸See *CS*, III.xv, *OC* 428–29.

²⁹Germaine Necker (Mme de Staël), *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* (Paris: Maradan, [1800]), 2.33.

³⁰See Voltaire's letter to Charles Borde of 4 January 1765 (Leigh 3835) and *C*, livre VIII, *OC* 384.

³¹See D'Alembert, *De la liberté de la musique*, in Denise Launay (ed.), *La Querelle des Bouffons* (Genève: Minkoff, 1973), 3: 2217.

³²See Freud 58–64 and 130–45, and Wokler.

³³See Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, IX.315, lines 14–15 and 27–28.

³⁴See Hegel, *Über die englische Reformbill*, first published in the *Allgemeine preußische Staatzeitung*, in his *Politischen Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966), 310. It must be noted that Hegel here refers, not to Sieyès' role in establishing the National Assembly in 1789, but to his authorship of the constitution of the year VIII, which he drafted as provisional consul a decade later, following the bloodless coup d'état of the eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte that marked the transition of France's revolutionary government from the Directoire to the Consulat. As First Consul, Bonaparte altered Sieyès' scheme to suit his own advantage and ambition.

³⁵See Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 320, lines 9–13.

³⁶See especially *CS*, III.xiv and xv, and *CGP*, chs. II and VII, *OC* 427–31, 957–59, and 975–89.

³⁷By which Rousseau of course meant just the citizenry, or the whole of the electorate eligible to serve public office. As opposed to sovereignty, which must be exercised directly by the people and from which no one could be excluded, government, he argued, was inescapably representative and therefore could never be democratic.

³⁸See *CGP*, ch. vii ("Moyens de maintenir la constitution"), *OC* 978–85. On the implications of Rousseau's critique of representation as perceived in the constitutional debates of 1789, see Baker, ch. 10, pp. 224–51.

³⁹With respect to Sieyès' debt to the Hobbesian theory of representation, see especially Forsythe. In a notable treatment of Sieyès' conception of the

nation-state, Istvan Hont concludes that “as a political definition of the location of sovereignty, Hobbes’s ‘state’ and Sieyès’ ‘nation’ are identical. Sieyès’ ‘nation’ is Hobbes’s ‘Leviathan’” (Hont 203). Both are powerful interpretations, in a sharply converging manner, of the modern popular *civitas*.” With respect to the contrast between Sieyès’ and Rousseau’s conceptions of representation, but also the apparent convergence of their ideas of the general will and indivisible sovereignty, see Baczkó.

⁴⁰See Arendt 230–31. Arendt here comments on what she terms “the secret conflict between state and nation,” arising with the very birth of the nation-state on account of its conjunction of the rights of man with the demand for national sovereignty. Her reflections on this subject have occasioned extensive commentary. See, for instance, Kristeva 206–9.

⁴¹The phrasing of the third article of the declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen, which begins, “Le principe de toute souveraineté réside essentiellement dans la Nation,” is owed principally to Lafayette. For the fullest histories of the sources and drafting of the whole document, and of the deliberations leading to its endorsement by the Assemblée nationale on 26 August 1789, see Rials and Gauchet.

⁴²I have recently addressed this subject in an essay on “Multiculturalism and ethnic cleansing in the Enlightenment,” in Ole Peter Grell and Roy Porter (eds.), *Toleration in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 69–85.

⁴³*L’État de guerre*, 3: 603.

⁴⁴See *DI* 14–15. On Rousseau’s appreciation of the career of Fabricius as recounted by Plutarch, see George R. Havens’ edition of this text (New York: Modern Language Association, 1946), n. 152, pp. 203–4, and Starobinski.

⁴⁵Pléiade 2: 770. As is noted by Philip Stewart (see his “Julie et ses légendes,” *SVEC* 260 (1989), 275–76), this inscription for Gravelot’s tenth plate of *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse* does not figure anywhere in the novel itself; it is a textual addition. See also Rousseau’s remark in the “Profession de foi du vicaire Savoyard” (*Em*, livre IV, *OC* 588: “Homme, ne cherche plus l’auteur du mal, cet auteur c’est toi-même.”) The passage from Milton I have in mind comprises lines 73–75 in book IV of *Paradise Lost*: “Me miserable! Which way shall I fly? [...] Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell.”

⁴⁶In accepting the invitation of the Rousseau Association to speak at its eleventh biennial colloquium at Duke University, I originally hoped to complete the last of twelve chapters of a study of *Rousseau’s Enlightenment* on which I have been intermittently engaged for many years. That chapter, entitled “The Ancient Modernity of Rousseau’s Kosovo,” is addressed to

his philosophy of international relations, and in the course of drafting it I have come to put my case in the light of three particularly notable recent works: Noel Malcolm's *Kosovo*, Roosevelt's *Reading Rousseau in the Nuclear Age*, and Yves Touchefeu's *L'Antiquité et le christianisme dans la pensée de Rousseau*. But although it now exists *in nuce* the text I had in mind was not in presentable form in the spring of 1999, when as my lecture I offered instead the current paper, serving as a kind of draft of or preface to the other, partly recast from material already in print or press. This work embraces, on the one hand, fragments of some of my earlier writings, including "Rousseau on Rameau and Revolution"; 'La Querelle des Bouffons and the Italian Liberation of France: A Study of Revolutionary Foreplay', in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century* 6, *Eighteenth-Century Life* n.s. 11. (1987), 94–116; and, above, all, "Rousseau's Two Concepts of Liberty," in George Feaver and Fred Rosen (eds.), *Lives, Liberties and the Public Good* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 61–100; on the other hand, it incorporates extracts from some of my most recent work on the conceptual history of modernity and Hegel's interpretation of the French Revolution, including "The Enlightenment and the French Revolutionary birth pangs of modernity," in Johan Heilbron, Lars Magnusson and Björn Wittrock (eds.) *The Rise of the Social Sciences and the Formation of Modernity: Conceptual Change in Context, 1750–1850, Sociology of the Sciences Yearbook* 20 [1996] (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998), 35–76; "Contextualizing Hegel's Phenomenology of the French Revolution and the Terror," *Political Theory* 26 (1998), pp. 33–55; and "The Enlightenment, the nation-state and the primal patricide of modernity." I am especially grateful to Ruth Grant and Philip Stewart for their patience in nursing this essay to press.

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