A Critical Analysis of Rousseau’s Narrative of Subjectivity

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to undertake a critical analysis of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s philosophical anthropology as found within his *Discourse on Inequality*, and his subsequent prescriptive theories within both *The Social Contract* and other works. The particular focus of the thesis is the manner in which subjectivity alters over time, especially in relation to the development and role of complex forms of conceptuality, its structural and psychological components, and the catalysts provoking such change. Relying upon a set of methodological categories and placing specific demands of philosophical rigour on Rousseau’s thought we seek to assess Rousseau’s narrative in order to discover how successfully explained the alterations that individuals undergo within it are. To accomplish this we apply a working definition requiring the ‘explanation’ of social and psychological changes in contrast to the less philosophically successful ‘description’ of such events, enabling us to discover those moments in Rousseau’s account which betray what we term ‘explanatory gaps’. What is discovered is that crucial moments within Rousseau’s narrative reveal a lack of explanatory rigour in relation to the complex alterations of subjectivity outlined in his works, most especially in relation to free will, the ground of amour propre, and the transformation of the latter into Rousseau’s *moi commun*. 
# Contents

*Introduction* ................................................................. 1

1 Methodological Framework

1.1 Why Rousseau? ............................................................ 2
1.2 Which Rousseau? .......................................................... 4
1.3 Rousseau as a Philosopher of ‘Subjectivity’ ....................... 6
1.4 Assessing and Categorising Claims Concerning Subjectivity .... 10
1.5 What is an Explanatory Gap? .......................................... 12
   1.5.1 The Implicit as an ‘Argument from Givenness’ ............. 14
   1.5.2 Rousseau’s Argumentative use of ‘Simple Causality’ ...... 17
   1.5.3 The Dialectic Model of Argumentation ....................... 19

2 Rousseau’s Narrative of Human Development

2.1 Subjectivity in the State of Nature ................................. 22
   2.2.1 Free Will and the Weakness of Arguments from Givenness 27
2.2 Rousseau’s Methodology and the State of Nature ................ 39
2.3 The Phase of Association ............................................... 44
2.4 The Introduction of Amour Propre ................................... 54
   2.4.1 Complex Conceptuality and the Dialectic Growth of Amour Propre 59
   2.4.2 Rousseau’s Model of Conceptuality ............................ 66
2.5 The Rise and Fall of Amour Propre .................................. 73
   2.5.1 The Ground of Amour Propre and the Social Self .......... 74
2.6 The Taming of Amour Propre through Social Engineering ......... 80
2.7 Analysing Rousseau’s Prescriptive Claims Concerning Subjectivity 86

*Conclusion* ................................................................. 91
Introduction

This thesis will seek to offer a critical reading of Rousseau’s theory of human development and society with a particular focus on the manner in which Rousseau charts the changes that human nature undergoes. In order to justify the prescriptive aspects of his social theory Rousseau utilises a philosophical anthropology consisting of a narrative stretching back to pre-social times up until the formation of civil society. This narrative offers an explanation of the development of both human nature and psychology, and, the subsequent social arrangements that Rousseau describes as arising out of them. Just as Rousseau diagnoses what he sees as the pathology of a failed society he in turn attempts to formulate a remedy, suggesting a set of corrective measures aimed at neutralising the socially corrosive effects of the egocentrism that according to Rousseau develops within individuals in society and is responsible for society’s ills. As such, this thesis has both a central line of critical enquiry to undertake which will form the major part of the thesis, with a smaller concluding strand relating to Rousseau’s prescriptive thought.

Firstly, we will assess Rousseau’s argumentation according to a set of conditions of adequacy (section 1.4) that aim to define what is required of Rousseau’s philosophical argumentation in seeking to characterise human development. Secondly a close reading of each stage of human development that Rousseau describes (section 2), with a special focus on the forms of change that subjectivity undergoes, and in particular an analysis of the causal mechanisms that such development consists in. Broadly speaking Rousseau’s theory relies on a conception of human nature that emphasises its plasticity and adaptability, accordingly, when individuals are faced with changes in their circumstances and social lives, there is a concomitant change within their psychology and behaviour as they adapt to the newly encountered situation. It is this aspect of Rousseau’s narrative – the exact nature of these psychological changes and their precise catalysts and processes – that this thesis will initially examine and critique. Once this has taken place we will be able to judge whether or not Rousseau is philosophically justified in relying on his narrative as a source for normative social designs. In large part the question of the validity of the prescriptive aspect of Rousseau’s work is reliant upon the success of his philosophical anthropology, because of this the task of analysing that narrative will constitute the main body of this thesis.
In the final analysis it will be discovered that Rousseau’s account fails to be sufficiently systematic, this leads to the absence of convincing argumentation for his characterisation and explanation of the changes he seeks to describe. In particular this problem is brought into focus when we come look at the mechanism(s) for change that Rousseau asserts and the methods utilised to derive aspects of human nature relied upon in forming his conclusions. We will demonstrate that throughout his philosophical narrative Rousseau fails to offer a level of explanation that can be considered sufficiently rigorous philosophically speaking. These moments we will term ‘explanatory gaps’. We will also demonstrate that Rousseau relies on more than one method without providing an explanation as to why his stated method has been set aside and also moves between the various methodological approaches without attributing any reason for doing so. As a result of this Rousseau’s prescriptive claims are weakened as he seeks to provide solutions to problems he has not been able to accurately or satisfactorily explicate.

We will rely primarily upon Rousseau’s work *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality Among Man*,¹ as this contains the lion’s share of his thought on human development prior to the beginnings of what Rousseau considered to be a truly civil society one founded upon the famed social contract. Rousseau’s detailed treatment of this theory as found is to be found in *On the Social Contract* and his ideas therein will also feature in our thesis, though to a lesser extent.² For the purpose of this thesis we will view those works by Rousseau utilised within as constituting a narrative whole. This strategy enables us to side step issues which, though important within the field of Rousseau studies, would serve to detract from the central purpose of the thesis.³

1 Methodological Framework

1.1 Why Rousseau?

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¹ Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, in, Jean-Jacques Rousseau Basic Political Writings, (Hackett Publishing Company Inc., USA, 1987), hereinafter referred to as *SD* (*Second Discourse*).


This section offers some contextualisation in regards to the origins of and motivation behind the subject matter of this thesis. The project began upon encountering normative social theories, both prescriptive and diagnostic, that appeared to rely on particular conceptions of human nature for their justification. For instance, in the works of Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, Hegel, Marx and then later, Freud or MacIntyre, and further still in regards to both Game Theory and Rational Choice Theory, it is apparent that the choice to argue for a particular vision of society is strongly tied to a conception of human nature. Why is this, and further, how are such positions justified and explored? After having noted the very many theorists who relied upon such a conception a question arose as to whether a pattern was emerging regarding the claims, structure and methodology of such arguments. At its most elementary level when a given theorist recommends as necessary social policy (a) because of a quality of human nature (b) do they then carry out the required philosophical contextualisation of (b)? Contextualisation here refers to whether the component, or general theory, of human nature is explained, i.e. whether or not the theory is sufficiently rigorous in justifying its claims.

Investigations into human nature are notoriously complex and often involve a vast range of academic disciplines all of which are capable of shedding light on the issues at hand. Philosophically speaking, however, the most egregious problem is that of relying implicitly upon a conception of human nature or the self without exposing that assumption to the light of critical analysis. In those cases the form of critique useful to unpack such hidden assumptions is often that of the transcendental question What are the necessary conditions for x to be the case? This enquiry requires a certain willingness to move in an open-ended manner, whether into socio-political themes, an existential viewpoint or perhaps even to reach metaphysical or religious conclusions, and yet it is on this very issue where many of the above mentioned theorists fail to question their own standpoints. For example Rousseau rightly accuses Hobbes of simply projecting his own observations of his contemporaries into a history of humanity, failing to justify the necessary conditions for this conception of human nature. MacIntyre asserts the utility of ‘practices’ for both individuals and society, but fails to explore an ontology of the self in lieu of which such activities are rendered meaningful.

In the case of the medical practice seeking to diagnose an ailment one must first be cognizant with the cause(s) and behaviour of the condition, and the nature of the host who houses the affliction. Indeed the diagnostic model is founded upon an explicit and thorough analysis of the causes and context of the ailment in order that medical conclusions should be seen as valid and
authoritative before the fact of treatment, and effective afterwards. Would it be going too far to suggest that the same logic be applied to prescriptive social theories and their justifications? This question inspired a critical eye towards those theories making claims about society with reference to a particular human individual to whom such theories should apply, but that were lacking in a philosophically rigorous attempt to fully characterise, let alone justify, their portrait of ‘human nature’. The medical analogy is particularly apt given that many of the above theorists explicitly situate a socially debilitating causal factor either within human nature as in Hobbes and Freud, in society, as in MacIntyre, or in both (and generally born of the interaction between the two), such as in Marx.

While this problematic as outlined above may seem academic in nature, a further cause of interest in the topic arose when considering the political implications of such theoretical positions. Prescriptive social theories, when adopted by policy makers with authority in government, function, then, according to a particular conception of human nature. This, coupled with the influence that such ideas may accrue within a society, shaping and determining the lives of its citizens through cultural or other forces, raises the issue of whether or not such theories are either well justified or indeed true, that is, whether they are both valid and sound. Such theories have had and continue to have significant impact on the lives of individuals, as such, considerable care is needed in order to restrict the possibility that misleading, unreflective social theories founded upon insignificant theoretical consideration might come to dominate and restrict the freedom of individuals. What conceptions of human nature lead to what religious theories, to what political theories and programmes, indeed what is the impact of the philosopher and their characterisation of humanity?

1.2 Which Rousseau?

When reading the works of Rousseau it soon becomes clear that his writings are not limited to any one particular field of enquiry, and that further he does not approach any of one those fields within the framework of a specific academic discipline. He can rightly be thought of as a political theorist, as a political philosopher, as a sociologist, anthropologist, educational theorist, novelist, and so on. Accordingly, one of the tasks of this thesis has been to determine the focus of our particular reading of Rousseau, and in this section we will explore that choice and its justifications.
In many ways determining an all-inclusive label for Rousseau’s work would entail anachronistically applying a retrospective appellation based upon distinctions that did not exist during the period when Rousseau was writing. Although it is clear that many of these designations are in fact accurate, as, we suggest, can be evidenced by the use made of Rousseau’s texts throughout the Humanities, we have taken our lead on this matter from Rousseau’s own intellectual heritage as found in his numerous references and intellectual inheritances. Understanding Rousseau in this way leads us to the simple conclusion that broadly speaking he can be justifiably read as a philosopher, and more specifically as a political philosopher. Indeed Rousseau quite plainly situates himself within this category when, in the SD, he outlines his strategy of subtracting those qualities given to humanity by society in order that he can determine the nature of individuals in pre-social times, as following in the footsteps of John Locke and Thomas Hobbes as ‘state-of-nature’ theorists. It is, then, alongside these famed political philosophers that Rousseau takes his place, and, in a point to be addressed more fully below, opens himself up to the rigours of the philosophical analysis of his works.

If it is credible that Rousseau can be read as a political philosopher then we are still left with the task of further delimiting the arena of this paper in relation to his political thought. Rousseau is often rightly characterised as a social contract theorist, and there are many secondary works available which focus on this aspect of his thought. Indeed his theory of the social contract and what contributes to its successful implementation very much forms the context, if not the content, of this thesis, and so before outlining our particular reading of his philosophical anthropology it is worth briefly discussing the SC and explaining how it overshadows much of Rousseau’s other theories, including those that form the main body of this paper. Rousseau’s On the Social Contract is a complex work of political philosophy that attempts to formulate what Rousseau understood to be the ideal arrangement of social and political life. Given the role that some form of authority plays within managing and governing a social collective Rousseau’s concern was to ensure that such governance was carried out according to the authentic needs of the population living under that governance.

Following on from his general theory of human development, rooted in the interactive dynamic between individuals and their environment, Rousseau’s primary problem was to formulate how

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Ibid, p.38.
the authentic wishes of the majority of the population should become institutionalised in the various branches of governance. With the social contract Rousseau thought he had found his answer:

‘instead of destroying natural equality, the fundamental compact [i.e. the social contract], on the contrary, substitutes a moral and legitimate equality to whatever physical inequality nature may have been able to impose upon men, and that, however, unequal in force or intelligence they may be, men all become equal by convention and by right.’

Rousseau aims at securing the conditions for the successful amalgamation of the general will in order that the social contract authentically represent the populace, ‘only the general will can direct the forces of the state according to the purpose for which it was instituted, which is the common good.’

Rousseau also concerns himself with the conditions which might detract from such success, and it is in this sense that the SC contextualises the subject of this thesis, he says '[i]t is what . . . different interests have in common that forms the social bond, and, were there no point of agreement among all these interests, no society could exist.' The analysis he offers of the causes of the potential obstacles to a successful social contract form the thematic threads upon which his narrative of human development is strung in the SD. Within the SD Rousseau charts the manner in which a society descends into a maelstrom of competition and inequality, and how once power is achieved by the few it is deployed against the interests of the many. We will return to the SC towards the end of our thesis in order to evaluate Rousseau’s prescriptive theories.

1.3 Rousseau as a Philosopher of ‘Subjectivity’

As noted above Rousseau is a multifaceted theorist and there is by no means one obvious manner through which to undertake an analysis of his work, some serve certain purposes, and some of those are not the focus of this thesis. Accordingly we have chosen to offer a reading which, while not attempting to assert the inaccuracy of previous readings, does attempt to highlight the extent to which Rousseau can be seen as a philosopher of subjectivity, that much

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
of his sociological, anthropological, and political thought is dominated by his attempts to characterise human subjectivity, even when he appears to be undertaking a task with some other aim, such as arguing for the correctness of social contract theory or determining the origin of inequality. As Neuhouser puts it concerning the SD, Rousseau is looking to answer ‘which new element (or elements) of human psychology must be added to his account of original human nature in order to explain why humans create inequalities beyond those that nature bestows on them?’

The conclusions that Rousseau reaches when attempting to discern the origin of inequality in particular provide strong support for the emphasis on subjectivity within this thesis. In the final analysis, when Rousseau argues that social inequality is the result of an institutionalised power grab, he is in fact concluding that the form of subjectivity dominated by what he calls *amour propre* – love of self – has become externalised as a mode of social organisation. Thus, not only is Rousseau characterising a particular organisation of our internal world, he is also seeking to demonstrate how that world necessarily seeks to mould the social sphere in its own image and according to its idiosyncratic needs. On the surface then it is entirely credible to examine the political and economic realities Rousseau outlines and to conclude that inequality derives from the rich attempting to secure their social standing simply because it is to their benefit to do so. However, Rousseau himself digs deeper into the rationale and causal factors behind such inequality, situating the need for institutionalised power imbalance within a deep seated pathological desire for social recognition, in order to substantiate an ultimately contingent, and thus fragile, identity. As Trachtenberg puts it ‘Rousseau presents despotism as the political manifestation of *amour propre*.’

In this sense it is crucial that the necessary conditions for certain social and environmental claims Rousseau makes are clearly emphasised and this, we suggest, can be successfully undertaken through applying a hermeneutic of subjectivity. For example, once Rousseau reaches the point where he is characterising a mature, and familiar to the reader, form of society, various claims are made in terms of the effects that society has on its members. Rousseau states

‘([I]et human society be admired as much as one wants; it will be no less for it that it necessarily brings

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9 Ibid, p.118, italics in original.
men to hate one another, to render mutually to the extent that their interests are at cross-purposes with one another.\textsuperscript{10}

Taken at face value it might be assumed that the guilty party in this relationship is society and society alone, however, the effects Rousseau speaks of are simply not possible without a prior aspect of subjectivity coming to dominate human psychology, in this case, that of amour propre. Any attempt to analyse and discuss Rousseau’s theory of society should not be undertaken without constantly bearing in mind the form of subjectivity that is occurring during the phase of social organisation Rousseau is speaking of. It is only then that any such effects can be said to make sense. This point will be given a more thorough treatment below, beginning in section 1.5.1.

What then, do we mean by the term ‘subjectivity’ and, as a terminological choice, what justifies its inclusion in this thesis? The term ‘subjectivity’ is being used herein to describe the overall constitution of the individual, both in terms of the changing structural conditions of consciousness that Rousseau charts, and their psychological orientations during any given phase of development. Further, this definition is inclusive of both an objective, or external, analysis of the individual, and, the subjective, internal, experience that individuals have of themselves, both of which are inclusive of the structure of the self, identity, its psychological dimension, and its relation to the ‘outside world’. Subjectivity, as a term, has been chosen in preference to two other terms which might ordinarily be associated with the above definition of individuals, namely, ‘human nature’ and ‘the subject’, which have similar, unhelpful, connotations for modern readers.

In Rousseau’s work it is common for him to utilise the term human nature to refer to individual’s constitution and behavioural propensities, however, we are avoiding the use of that term in view of the twentieth century debates around essentialism and non-essentialism in regards to what constitutes individuals on both ontological and qualitative levels.\textsuperscript{11} The use of the expression ‘human nature’ has come to be associated with the theoretical position that there are essential, non-relational, facts about individuals that determine behaviour, social status, identity, and so forth. While this thesis is not advancing a non-essentialist position, neither is it

\textsuperscript{10} Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, in, Jean-Jacques Rousseau Basic Political Writings, (Hackett Publishing Company Inc., USA, 1987), p.89.

concerned with debating the issue and so to avoid association with any particular position we have chosen to limit our choice of terminology.

In regards to the use of the term the ‘subject’ our choice arises out of the wish to avoid a misconstrual of Rousseau’s position. The interactive origin and character of human life, the interplay between a malleable being and the environment by which it is shaped – and that it in turn shapes – is key to how Rousseau understands what he calls human nature, as such, it is crucial that individuals should not be theoretically reduced to islands of self-contained agency acting upon the world, as opposed to interacting with, and being shaped by, the world. Where readers might understand something of this character by the use of ‘the subject’ as an appellation, we have felt it important to draw a distinction by our use of the term ‘subjectivity’ as an on-going, dynamic, and interactive being, which nevertheless does not necessarily imply a non-essentialist position.

Taking up this point in relation to ‘essentialistic’ accusations levelled at ‘talk of true human nature’ Neuhouser comments ‘Rousseau does not need to learn from us that human nature is highly malleable and historically conditioned; it would be closer to the truth to say that we learned it from him.’12 It is also true that because of the situatedness of Rousseau’s individual, because of the profound analysis of the fundamental and inescapable interplay between individuals and their environment he offers, Rousseau foreshadows and anticipates much of what has become known as continental thought, from Hegel to Heidegger and beyond, in relation to this topic. As the use of terminology such as the subject has come to be eschewed by this tradition, we have felt it necessary to rely on other terms.

Interpreting Rousseau in this manner also has an important methodological component relating to the close analysis of the phases of human development we will be undertaking. Assessing Rousseau’s theories through a lens focussed upon the changing nature of human subjectivity is a hermeneutic strategy which acts to encourage as close as possible analysis of the broad strokes outlining the various developments that Rousseau proposes, the small details which constitute the mechanism of such change, but also the points where his reliance on a particular understanding of subjectivity is left implicit within his work, and further, to emphasise just how reliant he is upon a highly specific understanding of what constitutes subjectivity. In this sense,

then, it can be seen that where Rousseau discusses an instance of change within human nature, focussing on what that means in terms of human subjectivity allows us to demonstrate the extent to which such concerns are central to Rousseau’s entire project. We will, then, concentrate on two main strands of Rousseau’s political philosophy with a special focus on the role of subjectivity: i) the philosophical anthropology; his depiction of the development of humanity from solitary creatures into society born of the social contract; our aim is to assess the effectiveness of Rousseau’s arguments as he attempts to chart and explain the developments in each phase of human life, and ii) how far that thesis allows him to make his normative claims regarding the curative measures that he suggests are necessary for society.

Our reading is further justified in relation to (ii) in that much of Rousseau’s prescriptive assessments revolve around the manner in which subjectivity can be made fit for civil society, highlighting the necessity for substantial ontological and qualitative alterations in order to secure the occurrence of the ‘general will’, its implementation, and the removal of obstacles to those goals:

“This is the grand transformation of human nature Rousseau assigns to the Legislator. The Legislator exploits the plasticity of human psychology, including the ability of men to change the attitudes they take toward their wants, to mold human nature into a form consonant with successful political cooperation.”

This phase of human development is discussed in the SC and is alternatively characterised within commentarial literature as a question of political success, cultural transformation, participatory democracy, totalitarianism, the dynamic of opacity, and in the case of this thesis, as a further phase of subjectivity: the evolution of the self. As such, it can be seen that our reading is as much a matter of emphasis as anything, and that the issue can be examined from many angles.

1.4 Assessing and Categorising Claims Concerning Subjectivity

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Rousseau’s sometimes complex description of humanity and the development it has undergone when subject to new circumstances outlines both substantial and superficial alterations. Not only are these changes numerous they are also varied and in order to navigate them with the requisite degree of clarity we will be categorising them according to their ontological and qualitative characteristics. The ontological categorisation will first pose the question: In what does our subjectivity consist? Is it in our souls; our psychologies; our biology, or is it epistemic, or perhaps metaphysical, and further, what are the origins and structure of such components. The qualitative categorisation serves as a shorthand that enables us to be aware of and highlight that the change undergone within subjectivity is of a qualitative nature, that is to say, that it is self-interested or civically motivated; free or determined; driven by instinct or rationality, and so on. Further to this both categories consist in the analysis of whether the component of subjectivity in question is either necessary or contingent, explicit or implicit, and, active or inactive.

Making clear the extent to which a particular quality is necessary or contingent, and on what terms, is crucial to assessing the extent to which Rousseau can successfully justify his evaluation of the necessity of his social policies, arising as they do out of an assessment that they are politically required as correctives to anti-social tendencies with individual’s constitutions. The distinction between the implicit and the explicit refers to whether a quality is given a priori as a component of subjectivity, as Rousseau puts it ‘in a state of potentiality’, or is on the other hand introduced through some external source, by the environment, social circumstances, and so on. An example of an implicit capacity is Rousseau’s notion of ‘self-perfection, a faculty which, with the aid of circumstances, successively develops all the others, and resides among us in the species as much as in the individual.’ For an example of an explicit component we can highlight amour propre, of which Rousseau says ‘[it] is a sentiment that is relative, artificial, and born in society.’ The implicit category in particular will feature heavily when we come to discuss and critically apply the concept of ‘arguments from givenness’ within Rousseau’s explanation of the causal mechanism(s) of subjective change, and his depiction of the earlier phase of the state of nature.

15 Ibid p.45.
16 Ibid, 106. Though accurate, this categorisation of amour propre is not so straightforward, as shall be shown below.
The final categories – the active and inactive – pick out ontological or qualitative components which are implicit and inactive until an external catalyst activates them, one such example is our capacity for free will. While Rousseau grants humanity a free will, as with many other philosophers, the will is only free to the extent that it is neither governed by instinct nor animal appetites. Thus, the full capacity for exercising the will is only available to individuals once it has been elicited through a truly civil society, as Rousseau comments ‘the acquisition in the civil state of moral liberty. . . alone makes man truly the master of himself. For to be driven by appetite alone is slavery’. Rousseau’s narrative with its portrait of a changing subjectivity means that many components of subjectivity remain fluid in terms of how they come to be categorised according to the above criteria. The implication of Rousseau’s normative claims, for example, means that where a component might once have been active, it can, under the influence of a change in social or environmental circumstance become inactive, and vice versa. Unsurprisingly, very different social theories arise according to where different components fall on this spectrum and therefore this method both clarifies a complex set of theoretical positions and provides an informative bridge which allows us to understand how Rousseau’s social theory is justified by highly specific ideas about human nature.

1.5 Explanatory Gap in Rousseau’s Arguments

In order to discover whether or not Rousseau succeeds, not only in relation to his own stated aims but also when subject to a philosophical analysis of his arguments and theories, we will need to propose a set of criteria with which we can assess his argumentation. Rousseau, then, we suggest, will need to be tested through two forms of argumentation. Firstly, is Rousseau’s account of the process of human development sufficiently explicated such that it is able to offer adequate explanation for both the ontological and qualitative alterations that he proposes? Secondly, is his prescriptive reliance on the narrative he proposes rigorous, i.e. are the ontological and qualitative considerations of subjectivity sufficiently accounted for in his prescriptive theories. That is to say does he follow through argumentatively speaking on the positions he outlines in the narrative? To turn to the first question, does Rousseau go into enough detail to satisfy the philosophical demands we are placing on his thought, in particular, we are asking whether his arguments evince explanatory gaps, and thus, whether or not he is

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able to pinpoint the causal mechanism(s) for the developmental transitions he attempts to explain. Let us look at this in greater detail.

In order to clearly utilise the category of explanatory gaps it is important to explain both what is and is not meant by the term. For example, some forms of gaps in Rousseau’s account of human development will not be considered to be explanatory gaps on our terms due to the fact that the resolution of all of the philosophical issues at stake within his work would be an impossible criterion of adequacy to fulfil, and thus an inadequate criterion to apply. One such example of this is Rousseau’s discussion in the *SD* of the origin of language where he outlines the apparently circular problem involved with language acquisition and the use of abstract thought in relation to the instigation of stable communities. Without social association, Rousseau notes, he cannot assert the communality necessary for the development of language, and yet without language he is left without the grounds for the development of sophisticated forms of thinking, such as abstract conceptuality, necessary for the beginnings such concepts as ownership and property.\(^\text{18}\) Unable to come to a decisive conclusion Rousseau postpones his deliberations.\(^\text{19}\)

Explanatory gaps, then, will refer to something more specific, namely, whether the forms of argumentation Rousseau relies upon in his explications of the phases of change in subjectivity can be said to be sufficiently explanatory, or on the other hand, whether what they offer is a mere description. Mere description takes place when an alteration occurs in subjectivity but the exact manner in which this takes place is either under explained, glossed over in some manner, or is characterised without explanation. Explanation, on the other hand, is demonstrated when the argumentation utilised to secure a thesis sufficiently explicates what we shall call a dialectic mode of argumentation. My proposal is that Rousseau relies most heavily upon two different models of subjective development in the *SD* and accordingly on different forms of argumentation. The first of these, which we will call ‘simple causality’, is consistently culpable of evincing explanatory gaps, and the second, ‘dialectic change’, satisfactorily explains, we contest, the causal mechanism(s) at work. Our thesis is that Rousseau’s narrative is most successful when he relies upon a dialectic model of change, that the dialectic model carries the

\(^{18}\) Ibid, p.50-51.

\(^{19}\) The choice of what is and is not admissible to be passed over in Rousseau’s work is likely highly individualistic given that some interests will be guided to delve into certain aspects and leave to one side others, this is not a philosophical problem in itself, however, merely a necessary aspect of the division of labour on the part of any author.
greatest explanatory force, and, is thus the model of change which best establishes the foundations for his prescriptive social theories.

1.5.1 The Implicit as an ‘argument from givenness’

Another aspect of Rousseau’s argumentation is in need of being highlighted, which, while not a model of change in itself, features in examples of both simple causality and dialectic change, and on some occasions can also be considered to be an explanatory gap. We spoke above of the ontological category of the implicit, while that explanation emphasised the descriptive, ontological, categorisation of the implicit, the side we would like to emphasise here is the argumentative use to which Rousseau puts such a category.

Rousseau’s narrative seeks to determine the origin and progress of both the ontological and qualitative components of subjectivity in service of his broader aim of understanding their impact on society; in his own words he attempts

‘discovering and following . . . the forgotten and lost routes that must have led man from the natural state to the civil state. . . It is in this slow succession of things that [we] will see the solution to an infinity of moral and political problems . . . [We] will realize . . . the human race of one age is not the human race of another age . . . In short, [we] will explain how the soul and human passions are imperceptibly altered and, as it were, change their nature; . . . why . . . society [is] an assemblage of artificial men and factitious passions which are the work of all these new relations and have no true foundation in nature.’

The emphasis here on those aspects of subjectivity that ‘have no true foundation in nature’ reveals an important component of Rousseau's narrative, which he relies upon in a two-fold manner.

Firstly, Rousseau utilises what we shall call an ‘argument from givenness’, that is, he deploys the ontological category of the implicit either as an attempted justification for aspects of subjectivity within the initial phase of the state of nature, or, as a step in his subsequent

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narrative of human development and change. On Rousseau’s terms ‘givenness’ refers to aspects of the human constitution given in human nature.\(^\text{21}\) From where and how they are ‘given’ is often unclear, because of this, our task has been to determine the ontological and qualitative status of these components of subjectivity, examine what justification Rousseau offers, and subsequently what their role in Rousseau’s arguments is. What we will discover when we come to properly discuss Rousseau’s narrative of human subjectivity is that by and large where Rousseau utilises an argument from givenness this weakens the presentation of his argument overall. Why? Simply because they lack the necessary explanation and contextualisation, and, due to their uncertain origins, blur the line between Rousseau’s stated methodology of abstracting from society and what would appear to be either empirical observations, or more simply, components of human nature taken for granted. For example, and speaking now from the ontological perspective, Rousseau discusses the existence and role of a free will. He posits this component as an implicit aspect of subjectivity and yet offers little explanation of its operations and origin. We will examine this in detail in section 2.1.1.

Secondly, our analysis of arguments from givenness will seek to reveal moments in Rousseau’s narrative where to make sense of the mechanism of change we must assume that such arguments are in fact being relied upon where no such argument is given. For example, should Rousseau suggest a qualitative development triggered by a new social circumstance, it is our task to determine whether the alteration is sufficiently explained by the social circumstance or whether it logically requires further causal explanation from the input of an implicit quality. Not only does this serve to clarify Rousseau’s position it also throws into light some important points concerning the distinction between the state of nature and civil society. Does the state of nature end when society develops, and if so, according to what criteria, if not, then why not?

The distinguishing factors between the state of nature and later phases that Rousseau outlines are both subjective, such as the concept of property, and circumstantial, such as the existence of property, but what of those qualities that are implicit within the state of nature, and therefore natural, but that only surface during a later phase of development? If the implicit is equivalent for Rousseau to that which is natural in humanity then those components of subjectivity which come to be activated through interaction with the social world occur only as a matter of fact after the state of nature. These are themselves natural on Rousseau’s terms, and yet, the rhetoric

\(^{21}\) Ibid, p.45.
of the natural is utilised in the SD as a thematic device which brings into focus the contrast, as Rousseau sees it, between natural and civilised subjectivity.22 As we shall see below because of points such as these Rousseau is unable to sustain some of his arguments and we suggest that this is due to his (mis)use of arguments from givenness.

When assessing arguments from givenness, without the provision of sufficient argumentation and contextualisation from Rousseau, on some occasions we are not able to ascertain how the component of subjectivity under discussion falls into the ontological categories we have proposed, and thus unable to properly grasp their import in relation to the social policies which are justified by Rousseau for their existence. For example, if a given component of subjectivity is both ontologically and qualitatively necessary, and qualitatively undesirable, it constitutes an intractable problem in that it cannot be subject to modification and so its effects will continue to impact upon society. In that case a social theory that seeks to alter or in some way negate such a component is doomed to failure. Arguments from givenness to do not allow an analysis of this type to be performed, and thus do not carry any real explanatory force. However, where Rousseau relies on arguments from givenness, we cannot out of hand suggest the inaccuracy of his account, rather, questions must be asked as to whether sufficient philosophical work as been undertaken to qualify such a claim.

We are also at liberty to question where the theorist derived such qualities from at all, and the answer we propose is that such theories derive from empirical observation and the belief that such qualities are necessary in an anthropological portrait for it to be considered credible. This question is especially relevant to our study of Rousseau’s theory because he is at pains to demonstrate that his portrait of the ‘abstract individual’23 existing in the state of nature is the result of the stripping away of all socially derived qualities. If that is the case then it is difficult to ascertain how arguments from givenness find their content if not through empirical means on behalf of the theorist, and in this case, such an origin is conceivably inadmissible as relevant to

22 While Rousseau’s treatment of naturalness in the SD has, over the years, come to be something of a straw man on the basis of which his detractors claim Rousseau argues for a return to nature as the cure for societies ills, this simplistic reading belies the complex, ambiguous relationship that Rousseau demonstrates towards what he see as natural. For example Neuhouser determines at least two separate uses of the term natural in the SD. The first normative, i.e. ‘the kind of existence that humans and other beings ought to have’ and the second explanatory “‘natural” contrasts not with “corrupt” or “unbefitting” but with “artificial.” When Rousseau employs “natural” in this sense, he associates the artificial with the intervention of human opinions, or judgments.’ Neuhouser, Rousseau’s Critique of Inequality, Reconstructing the Second Discourse, (CUP, Cambridge, 2014), p.29.
23 Trachtenberg, Making Citizens, Rousseau’s Political Theory of Culture, (Taylor & Francis, USA, 2003), p.82.
the state of nature. It follows from this assertion that Rousseau’s methodology of stripping away socially derived modifications of subjectivity is in fact less rigorous than he claims. It may turn out to be more of a stylistic choice than a philosophical one, given that his model of the past so neatly fits with his diagnosis of the present. In this sense we suggest that the strength of Rousseau’s arguments rely on the strength of arguments from givenness in general. We will explore this line of thought more thoroughly below.

1.5.2 Rousseau’s Argumentative use of ‘Simple Causality’

As has already been noted Rousseau offers a model of human development founded upon two central notions, the first of which is the adaptability and plasticity of human subjectivity, and the second being the role that interaction between individuals and their environment plays in determining subsequent alteration. Our question here is to determine exactly how Rousseau suggests such change occurs. Before discussing this further it should be made plain that where ‘change’ is discussed this refers to either ontological or qualitative alterations in subjectivity. An ontological change, such as the increased sense of self-awareness that for Rousseau occurs during the phase of human development known as ‘association’, may take place with a concomitant qualitative change, such as a desire for recognition from one’s peers, but it need not a priori. Likewise, a qualitative change may take place without affecting the ontological structures of subjectivity, for example the redirection of self-interest towards patriotism that Rousseau envisages, where the ontological dimension acts as a container, so to speak, for the qualitative change.24

The first model of change within subjectivity which Rousseau relies upon – which we are labelling ‘simple causality’ – is a model which follows the causal logic of \( a \) causing \( b \), where \( a \) is the environment (whether natural or social), and \( b \) is either humanity in general, or an individual.25 On this model a change occurs in individuals (either as a group or otherwise) when a change occurs in their environment, and that change is the catalyst and cause determining the alteration in subjectivity. Our critique of this model, as insufficiently rigorous

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24 When such occasions occur where both ontological and qualitative change do in fact take place simultaneously, or imply each other necessarily, one of the categories may still be utilised without reference to the other for the purpose of emphasis.

25 Of course the causal emphasis could flow in the other direction, though instances of this occurring lack philosophical relevance to our thesis.
philosophically speaking, is that it functions more as a description of change than as an explanation. This model leaves itself open to the charge that causal mechanisms other than the ones it highlights are in fact responsible for the alteration that occurs. And, the change described is too general in manner to warrant reliance upon it to formulate further philosophical principles, and yet as we shall see, Rousseau does exactly that.

If, for example, a object fell over in a room and someone were to ask ‘what happened?’, and they were answered ‘when the door opened the air blew through the room’, while plausible as an explanation, if we look closely it might just as plausibly function solely as a narrative description; we are not at able to assess whether or not such a statement is correct, simply because there is insufficient evidence within the statement, and yet neither is this to say that it is inaccurate either. In regards to an explanation of such an event, more detail is required, something along the lines of air pressure, the requirement for another opening somewhere in the room to create a through draft, and so on. Should such details be furnished then we are approaching something that resembles the notion of explanation that we are pursuing. Aside from this without such details it can never be clear that the theorist genuinely understands the mechanism being described. Perhaps the theory is simply wrong, perhaps at the moment the door opened someone somewhere else opened a window and that was the cause of the draft.

Nevertheless, in regards to Rousseau’s conception of human development, the point is that examples of simple causality are not sufficient as support for an argument, on philosophical terms. To provide an example, when Rousseau asserts that an excess of material goods produces individuals who relate to such objects ‘without being happy about possessing them’ and yet who are also ‘unhappy about losing them’, on this model the relation between such goods and the ensuing psychological response is left unexplained. We could assume, as an argument from givenness would encourage, that this qualitative response is something embedded within subjectivity, but, unless further contextualisation is present this only frames the same problem in a different manner, as we are still unable to determine why such a quality should exist in situ within the human psyche in the first place. Issues such as this demonstrate both a lack of logical necessity, and so fail to secure the analysis on those grounds, and the absence of strong historical necessity, hence our suspicion that Rousseau is projecting from his own observations into this phase of human development. For these reasons, then, it is our contention that this

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model is insufficient and that further explanation is required in order for a rigorous justification to emerge.

A possible objection to this account of Rousseau’s argumentation arises because it could seem as if the deeply interactive, mutually affective, nature of his narrative is being waylaid. If simple causality – the environment affecting subjectivity – were to be the form of Rousseau’s argument then does this not deny the causal processes working in the other direction i.e. from the individual upon the environment? The reason for this seeming imbalance is simply that the necessary conditions needed to account for changes upon the environment are quite minimal. All that is required to explain the outcome of such activity is the malleability of the physical world and its materials; given the cognitive ability and the drive to manipulate such materials there is no philosophical issue that we would wish to pursue that would problematise this situation in relation to this thesis. When we analyse the situation in the direction of the environment changing subjectivity, however, the situation becomes more complex, and the need for a clear understanding of the necessary conditions for such change to occur becomes more pressing. The various changes that occur in subjectivity necessitate that the condition of the individual is constantly updated in relation to how an interaction with the environment can be understood to create a particular response within individuals. For this reason we turn to the dialectical model of change for assistance.

1.5.3 The Dialectic Model of Argumentation

The second model of change, and the most successful argumentatively speaking, is a dialectic model; the difference between this and the model of simple causality is that the dialectic includes a third causal component, which we shall call the constitutive component (cc). This component is the inclusion of the constitution of the individual, prior to the environmental encounter responsible for triggering the modification in subjectivity, and is the key component responsible for the greater explanatory force we find through this model. Within the dialectic model, Rousseau includes the current ontological and qualitative status of the individual, and then introduces a social or environmental situation that, upon interacting with the individual, produces a new form of subjectivity as the result of the interaction. Rousseau’s argumentation on these occasions is at its most thorough and carries greater explanatory force than when he neglects, or simply cannot ascertain, the explanation of the causal mechanism. The dialectic
explanation lays bare the process with sufficient clarity for the argument to come fully into focus, allowing for an informed assessment to take place. In using this term we seek to refer to a process by which the individual, as thesis, encounters an environment which through placing certain demands upon the individual negates the individuals current form, thus acting as antithesis, the result of which is the synthesis of the previous two, resulting in a new form of subjectivity.27

Though this model differs only slightly in form from the previous causal model it nevertheless alters the horizon of explanation substantially. When Rousseau argues, for example, that the cultural sophistication of a fully fledged society (a), encourages the assumption of a fake persona (b) – because the dictates of amour propre compel the individual to seek the approbation of others (cc) – even if we disagree in terms of rightness we can recognise the logic at work as being sound. Alternatively, following the model of simple causality, let us omit the role of amour propre (the constitutive component) and instead assume that greater cultural sophistication necessarily produces fake personas, simply because that is the case. Naturally if that were the form of argumentation presented the reader would be right to question why such a thing is the case, and on this occasion Rousseau is able to answer that the cause is produced through the interaction of amour propre and a sophisticated cultural environment. Presuming that Rousseau’s characterisation of fake personas is in fact accurate, clearly, the dialectic model justifies its position with greater force, explaining the situation rather than describing it. This demonstrates the success of the dialectic model but it is in need of being deployed at each stage of subjective modification for us to make sense of such changes, unless, that is, Rousseau can justify his use of arguments from givenness.

Once we are able to ascertain why a given catalyst should produce a particular result, then a number of possibilities arise: i) due to the increased transparency of the mechanism of modification in subjectivity we are able to assess the soundness of the argument, ii) we are well placed to assess the extent to which the cause of the modification is necessary or contingent, and further, iii) we discover whether or not the alteration itself is fixed or malleable. Such possibilities secure not only the argumentative force of Rousseau’s thesis but also the basis for any interpretation we may offer of it. Further, as previously stated, once we are in a position to

27 Note that this definition and the use of the term ‘dialectic’ does not require Rousseau himself to have understood his argumentation in such a manner. Rather we are reconstructing his arguments in such a way so as to garner greater clarity and explanatory force.
determine the ontological and qualitative status of the various components within subjective modification we are then able to fulfil the aims stated in the Introduction, namely, the assessment of the causal mechanisms Rousseau describes, and, the reliance the prescriptive elements of Rousseau social theory have on the previous phases of subjectivity outlined by him.

Importantly, such prescriptivity is only argued for by Rousseau subsequent to having established a significant amount of analysis into the human condition. Through attempting to chart the origins of inequality Rousseau aims to stretch the reach and range of his insight into the distant past, into those moments of our history that in turn characterised our social structures, our identities, psychological compulsions and motivations, our needs, our compliance with the status quo, and our inability to formulate a political consensus founded upon equality. In so doing Rousseau was engaged in a grand argument, one that functions as the basis, that is, as the constitutive component in a dialectic argument, aiming to resolve the human condition as it is, combined with a remedial social vision, with the goal of creating a successful, cooperative, political body.

In this sense both the theory of the SC and Rousseau’s theories of education, all rely on a dialectic argument, and this comes as no surprise, given the greater argumentative force secured through the dialectic model. Rousseau establishes the basis for an encounter with the new social arrangements facilitated by what he terms the Legislator, and that basis is none other than the form of subjectivity that his narrative of the SD establishes. The entire shape of his thought can thus be seen as dialectic, as indeed it has been by some interpreters. For our purposes, however, the key point to bear in mind is the pre-eminence of the dialectical form of argumentation as found in the specific moments of subjective modification, and the prescriptive element to Rousseau’s thought demonstrates this in decisive fashion. It does this through reducing the findings of the SD into a constitutive component, contributing to a new form of subjectivity, under the influence of the Legislator’s social program. Of especial relevance in regards to this program is Rousseau's moi commun, an attempt to correct the trajectory of

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subjectivity, to mould it into new forms. Naturally, a mechanism for such activities is required, and therefore the dialectic is not only the best explanation for the causal mechanism of change, but also the required theoretical tool for carrying out the social engineering project that Rousseau envisions.

2 Rousseau’s Narrative of Human Development

This section of the thesis will begin the close reading of the phases of subjectivity that Rousseau understands as characterising the development of both humanity and the cultural and social forms it produces. We will follow Rousseau’s narrative in a roughly chronological fashion apart from those occasions where including material from a later phase enables the argument to gain greater clarity or force, or, when to do so would make the text unhelpfully repetitive.

We begin with Rousseau’s well-known analysis, or portrayal, of ‘the state of nature’. The role that this phase plays in Rousseau’s thesis is substantial and yet exactly what that role is is not entirely clear and much debate has been spawned by its ambiguous status. For example, is his account as an attempted history or rather speculative and hypothetical, and what are the merits of these positions? We shall not endeavour to analyse these questions in any detail however because the focus of our thesis requires us to attend to the arguments that Rousseau proposes for the changes to subjectivity. Whether or not the state of nature was fictional or historical does not affect these arguments significantly.

2.1 Subjectivity in the State of Nature

In this section, we will provide an overview of the components of subjectivity within the state of nature; subsequent to that we will offer an analysis of these components according to the criteria outlined in the above sections. In particular we will focus on Rousseau’s claim that subjectivity in this phase of his narrative is capable of exercising a free will. Although Rousseau himself does not dwell on this point at any length we find it to be a sufficiently significant omission within his metaphysical account of human development that such an investigation is warranted in relation to the attributes of subjectivity. This analysis will proceed according to the application of our methodological criteria, in particular providing examples of how the implicit comes to be deployed in an argument from givenness by Rousseau. Further, our account of this component will provide useful contextualisation of the crucial role that reason plays within Rousseau’s narrative overall.

Rousseau begins Part One of the SD by describing humanity as biologically fully developed, and existing within the state of nature as a natural being:

‘I strip that [biological] being . . . of all the supernatural gifts he could have received and of all the artificial faculties he could have acquired only though long progress . . . I consider him . . . as he must have left the hands of nature.’

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Such a being then, according to Rousseau, lived a somewhat idyllic life, in part due to the favourable environmental circumstances Rousseau envisages, but also because of the absence of both psychological and social complexity. Individuals lived a solitary and nomadic lifestyle, with the adults living together for only a short spell when breeding, while the mothers and their offspring maintained their relationship just as long as was necessary to promote the latter’s chance of survival.

31 Due to the fact that their lives were solitary language did not exist, and, because conflict was at a minimum, basic needs were readily satisfied due to a lack of competition for resources.

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32 Ibid, p.49.
33 Ibid, p.57.
In regards to the characteristics of subjectivity, individuals lacked both complex, ‘abstract’ conceptuality, and a strong sense of self, a state in fact wherein ‘a private self and a public self [had] no existence whatsoever.’ They did however exhibit self-regard, which Rousseau termed *amour de soi*, a basic impulse towards of self-preservation. Rousseau saw them as being subject to passions which were but ‘minimally active’, and acting out of ‘pity’ towards others where such action would not contradict the impulses of amour de soi. This quality of pity is also translated as ‘compassion’ and can be understood as a basic sense of benevolence towards others. The quality of ‘self-perfection’ – the ability to develop greater cognitive capacities – is proposed by Rousseau to be innate within humanity. This capacity provides the ground for the maturation of both intellectual and moral qualities, though also begs the question as to what extent such developments arise according to some form of predestination. Neuhouser, for example, states that ‘the obviously teleological connotations of the term [self-perfection] must be construed very weakly: human beings by nature possess a number of latent cognitive faculties that are in principle capable of being perfected in the relatively meager sense of undergoing qualitative development from the simpler to the more complex.’ Further to these, individual’s temporal horizons were limited to the present only; individuals were, according to Rousseau, incapable of conceiving of the future.

The above qualities, however, are those which suffer least at the hands of Rousseau’s famed ambiguity within the *SD*. There are other significant elements to subjectivity which are not so open to being unassumingly described. The relationship between the degree of subjection to

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34 Ibid, p.56.
36 Ibid, p.106.
38 Ibid, p.54.
39 Ibid, p.45.
41 Ibid, p.46.
instinctual behaviour and the exercise of a free will within humanity, in particular, is unclear, and it will take closer analysis of these concepts to determine their exact status. The manner in which the valorisation of the natural is accompanied by admiration for the skills and capacities that develop solely within society is another source of ambiguity. The role and source of morality is also a point of contention in that for Rousseau it derives from the use of reason, and yet reason can only be developed within the network of social developments that Rousseau sees as causing the degradation of humanity. Nevertheless should these issues play a part in the alteration of subjectivity then they will be further assessed. For now we turn now to the criteria set out in section 1.3 in order to deepen our analysis of subjectivity in the state of nature.

Ontologically speaking Rousseau portrays pity as an implicit response active within the state of nature generally and activated more specifically when faced with the suffering of another being. Further its structure is that of a two-fold psychological process. Firstly, upon encountering another being’s suffering individuals are subject to a psychological response in the form of a ‘repugnance’ towards the suffering, and secondly, respond by empathising with the suffering being through an act of ‘identification’. As an innate component pity seems to fall outside of any particular analysis that Rousseau might offer of its origins. Its inclusion is justified by Rousseau weakly when he argues that it is improbable that animals could display such a sentiment and not humans. The problem with this line of reasoning hardly needs pointing out and we shall take a closer look at it in section 2.2. when discussing Rousseau’s methodology. Trachtenberg suggests that Rousseau includes this component in order to balance the asocial lifestyle he imparts humanity with, stating ‘pity is necessary to fill the theoretical gap left by the denial of natural sociability: it ensures that Rousseau’s theory accounts for the survival of man in the state of nature beyond two generations.’ If this assumption is correct then it would lend

46 Ibid, p.54.
weight to an argument that Rousseau’s methodology was mixed, relying as it would upon a basis of logical necessity as much as stripping ‘that [biological] being’ of socially derived traits.\textsuperscript{48}

Qualitatively speaking pity is akin to an unfavourable aesthetic response in that it makes us cringe upon witnessing the discomfort of another’s suffering. In this sense it is worth mentioning that pity cannot be seen as truly moral, partly because it takes place prior to the advent of rationality, and Rousseau holds that a being must demonstrate reasoning as a necessary condition to qualify as ethical, and partly because it is in some sense involuntary. Rousseau denies individuals in this phase ‘the sublime maxim of reasoned justice \textit{Do unto others as you would have them do unto you}, and instead allows them the ‘natural sentiment’ ‘\textit{Do what is good for you with as little possible harm to others}’.\textsuperscript{49} Further to this pity is contingent upon the absence of a dominant, distancing, abstract conceptuality; this issue will be given a detailed treatment below but suffice to say that when abstract conceptuality develops it instigates a form of subjectivity characterised by a decreasing capacity for imaginative identification.

In regards to amour de soi’s origin Rousseau is able to rely on the probability of such a feature existing in order to fulfil the logical conclusions supported when continued human existence is considered in general. Even though there are broader and narrower ontological and qualitative interpretations of the status of amour de soi,\textsuperscript{50} if we take the narrower view that it is, in Rousseau’s words ‘a natural sentiment which moves every animal to be vigilant in its own preservation’, such a claim is entirely uncontroversial, given that without such an instinct it is highly unlikely that any species would survive for generations, and as such its status as an argument from givenness does not detract from its inclusion.\textsuperscript{51}

We turn now to address Rousseau’s characterisation of subjectivity in relation to free will, a component of subjectivity that is outlined early on in the \textit{SD}. In some sense Rousseau’s inclusion of a discussion of free will is confusing in that while it features prominently due to his unequivocal statements of its existence there is very little meat on the bones of such

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, p.55.
\textsuperscript{50} See Simon-Ingram, \textit{Alienation, Individuation and Enlightenment in Rousseau’s Social Theory}, \textit{Eighteenth-Century Studies}, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Spring, 1991), pp. 315-335. (John Hopkins University Press), for an argument that amour de soi has sufficient ontological material to sustain identity, for example.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid, p.106.
metaphysical certainty. Accordingly Rousseau’s position is somewhat scant when it comes to the details of his position and in fact he at times offers a contradictory viewpoint. In the next section we will seek to both critique Rousseau’s position and subsequently argue that despite the lack of detail there is within the SD sufficient argumentative material on this issue to offer a reconstruction of Rousseau’s position, one capable of developing a more credible theory of the will.

2.1.1 Free Will and the Weakness of Arguments from Givenness

In assessing the argumentation that Rousseau offers for his portrait of subjectivity it becomes clear that there are elements of his thesis which demonstrate greater rigour than others. Following from our stated aims we have chosen to include an analysis of Rousseau’s theory of free will because in doing so the relevance of our methodological categories is clarified and justified, and further the extent to which our critique of Rousseau’s argumentation is accurate, or not, can be subject to the reader’s judgment. Our task in this section then will be to piece together the somewhat disparate comments Rousseau includes within the SD, present them and then offer a critique followed by a reconstruction. Ultimately, we believe that Rousseau offers an unconvincing and contradictory argument for a free will, and yet within his ontology there are arguments available that would make his position more credible.

Such arguments involve naturalising his account, and repositioning the timeframe within Rousseau’s narrative wherein a free will can be realistically exercised. In this way we seek to demonstrate that a free will can be exercised only when certain conditions have been met, that greater ontological material is required than Rousseau himself proposes. On the basis of this point Neuhouser for example asks whether Rousseau is in fact describing ‘a primitive form of free will’, one requiring further ground to function fully.52 In regards to Rousseau’s reliance on a weak argument from givenness our reconstruction also stands as an example of providing greater explanatory force through implementing dialectical argumentation. Important questions to be considered are: in what processes such a will can be said to be constituted, how its inclusion within the state of nature is justified, and also the manner in which his account of free will straddles the line between the pure state of nature and later phases of development. Once a

clear picture emerges of Rousseau’s thesis we shall then go on to offer a reconstruction of his position, one that we feel strengthens his position on this matter.

Though there are contradictions and ambiguities in Rousseau’s account, to begin we can at least say that qualitatively, and regardless of the ontological formulation being relied upon, free will as a component of subjectivity consists in the absence of a motivational compulsion characterised by instinct. Instinct occurs but the individual need not follow its demand. Let us take a closer look at a key passage that discusses this point:

‘Nature commands every animal, and beasts obey. Man feels the same impetus, but knows he is free to go along or to resist; and it is above all in the awareness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul is made manifest. For physics explains in some way the mechanism of the senses and the formation of ideas; but in the power of willing, or rather of choosing, and in the feeling of this power, we find only purely spiritual acts, about which the laws of mechanics explain nothing.’

Although this passage clearly describes subjectivity as characterised by a free will the bulk of the description focuses on what Rousseau understands to be an intuitive knowledge of such freedom, a knowledge that exists in relation to, and perhaps relies upon, a supernatural source for the will, i.e. the soul. He speaks of individuals who have ‘knowledge’ and ‘awareness’ of free will, and ‘the feeling of . . . power’ connected to this. When it comes to how such freedom is transferred to the realm of action, however, he says very little, highlighting ‘the power of willing, or rather the power of choosing’, but how exactly should we understand this as taking place? In this way relying upon an argument based upon a theological position glosses the exact means by which such a will might operate within individuals.

There is only one other explicit comment concerning the will in the SD which, demonstrating how an individual can overrule instinct, in this case to their detriment, Rousseau states ‘dissolute men abandon themselves to excesses which cause them fever and death, because the mind perverts the sense and because the will still speaks when nature is silent.’ Rousseau’s point here seems to be that where nature speaks for the benefit of the individual through an instinct, in this case speaking to curb overindulgence, the mind in conjunction with the will can overrule such injunctions. However, this passage, though informative, is somewhat vague, what does

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53 Ibid, p.45.
54 Ibid, p.45.
Rousseau mean by ‘the mind’? What level of cognitive complexity is required for an individual to choose something other than that suggested by instinct? We will take Rousseau’s reference to ‘the mind’ to mean some form of mental activity, activity that operates in conjunction with the will to produce an outcome in the form of a choice for one result instead of another; further we will argue that such activity takes the form of judgment and deliberation. Indeed it is difficult to know how choice can take place without concepts to form and inform the decision making process.

As outlined in section 1.5, this is an example of Rousseau providing the reader with a description but not including sufficient justification for the material to qualify as an explanation. The key explanatory gap within his description of the free will is, as we have already hinted at, the manner in which knowledge of the will comes to be converted into actions arising out of the will. Why might Rousseau have failed to include such an explanation? We suggest two possibilities, the first is his failure to make a clear distinction between the existence or knowledge of the will and the ability to exercise it. This results in an incomplete explanation, one that concentrates on the source of the will to the detriment of its enactment. On our terms this failure is the result of Rousseau, when discussing feeling the power of the will and the experience of an awareness of the will, emphasising the qualitative aspects and neglecting the ontological. Simply put, he describes what it is like to experience the will, but not what it is, what processes the will consists in. What of the second cause for Rousseau’s lack of clarity?

The second possibility is that because Rousseau situates the free will within individuals during the pure state of nature he does not have recourse to elements of human experience ordinarily associated with agency, such as the capacity for judgment. In particular an analysis of choice-making and its relation to concepts is lacking due to the fact that according to his thesis individuals were not capable of such cognitive complexity at this point in their development. Therefore, given the delimited status of subjectivity during this phase, is a complex act such as one based in a free will credibly situated within this form of subjectivity at all?55 For example, Rousseau, as we have seen, is clear that within this phase of subjectivity individuals lacked

55 Hill makes a similar point when he asks ‘Is the notion of a human being without a social identity a coherent conception?’ This comment forms part of a similar attempt by Hill to assess what forms of subjectivity are implied by Rousseau’s depiction of a pre-social individual acting in the world. See, Hill, Rousseau’s Theory of Human Association, Transparent and Opaque Communities, (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006), p.18-20.
‘foresight and curiosity’, he describes them thus: ‘[h]is soul . . . is given over to the single feeling of his own present existence, without any idea of the future’.\textsuperscript{56} That being the case what contribution to the process of acquiescing or rejecting the dictates of an instinct could an individual make, given the requirement for at least a minimal sense of the consequences involved with either outcome?

Any possible reason for accepting or rejecting such an instinct must necessarily include an awareness of the future that on Rousseau’s account individuals simply did not have. To be motivated at all to choose or reject something is necessarily linked with the outcome of one’s choice, otherwise in what sense can we mean when we use the term ‘reject’? To use such a word is to recognise that such rejection will \textit{result in} a specific \textit{outcome}, namely the lack of the thing rejected. How might a creature unable to conceive of the future meaningfully relate to the dimension of choice-making when it is necessarily tied into the notion of an outcome? This point is taken up by Trachtenberg in his discussion of the development of the phase of association, where he says ‘Rousseau does not explain how men take the crucial step of gaining foresight; he simply presumes it \textit{must} have been taken before the development of agriculture.’\textsuperscript{57} Indeed such explanatory gaps demonstrate that Rousseau lacked the notion of a catalyst capable of initiating various cognitive developments and instead resorted to the mists of time to provide an answer.

We continue now to our attempt to reconstruct this area of Rousseau’s thought. In doing so we are hoping to cast some light upon the complex role that reason plays with the \textit{SD}, a topic which will feature strongly later in the thesis when we discuss the growth of amour propre. Our reconstruction will begin with a conception of reason derived in part from Rousseau’s analysis within the \textit{SD} of the effects reason has on pity, and in part from \textit{The Last Word} by Thomas Nagel. Our usage of Nagel’s theory is due to the fact that advancing our own reconstruction of Rousseau’s position on reason and the will is supported and enriched by Nagel’s. This reconstructive step is essentially to naturalise the account of the will, removing the soul as the seat of the will and replacing it with a quality found within reason itself, namely, reason’s capacity for creating distance between the object of its thought which in turn creates a gap within which free choice can be made. This leads to the second point of our reconstruction

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, p.46.  
which is, as we already have to some degree described, that judgment and deliberation necessarily play a part in the exercising of the will. Thirdly we will then resituate the activity of a free will further into Rousseau’s narrative timeline.

For Rousseau the metaphysics of the soul provide the space out of which unconditioned action can occur, or at least that is the assumption one makes upon reading his comments within the SD. Rousseau does not give details nor spend more than a paragraph or two discussing the matter and so we are left to assume that when in discussing the freedom of the will he says ‘[it is] in the awareness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul is made manifest’ and that behaviour born of the will constitutes ‘purely spiritual acts’ the soul is in some sense free. The SD is not a metaphysical tract and so the absence of detail on this matter is not surprising, and yet it is clear that Rousseau sought to establish a form of subjectivity capable of free acts, after all, plasticity and adaptability mean little if they are governed entirely by nature. As we shall see Rousseau’s conclusions regarding the political solutions to the dominance of amour propre require a rational, self-conscious, free individual to enact them. In a sense it is this free act – the decision to enter into a community of likeminded individuals – that helps to demonstrate the manner in which it is possible to situate the free will within complex conceptuality itself, as we intend to argue for.

A free will does not require a mysterious spiritual source to obtain then, it requires a causal process free of strictly determining factors, a process within which should instinct arise a facet of subjectivity might act to interrupt its dictates, such that the impulse can become one option amongst others. The possibility for such a situation requires that the subject can – to whatever degree is necessary – take the instinct for an object, that some degree of separation might occur; such separation provides the requisite gap capable of allowing for the interpolation of the subjects agency. There are two qualities within reason that facilitate just such a scenario. The first is described by Rousseau when he assesses the impact that reason has upon the innate component of pity. As we have already seen pity involves two movements of the mind arising in response to the suffering of another being. The first is a ‘repugnance’ at witnessing suffering or pain of any sort, and the second is an act of identification with the individual going through such a situation. Rousseau saw the capacity to identify with the victim of suffering as ‘a sentiment that is obscure and powerful in savage man, developed but weak in a man dwelling civil
What he meant by this was that individuals lacking complex conceptuality had a greater facility for identifying with another being, born out of the immediacy of their ‘imaginative’ capacity. In this sense to ‘identify with’ is a process which closes the gap between the individual and their experience, and it is reason for Rousseau, through its objectifying qualities, that opens this gap up.

When Rousseau states that the imaginative quality is ‘weak’ in individuals capable of complex conceptuality it is because complex conceptuality provides for a moment, or moments, of reflection, and such reflection is quite literally a pause for thought, a gap within which an individual can choose to act according to the dictates of pity or not. Of pity Rousseau writes ‘[p]ity is what carries us without reflection to the aid of those we see suffering.’ Before the possibility for reflection instinct had been both an instruction and an inescapable cause for action but with the advent of complex conceptuality individuals gained access to abstract thought, a capacity which on the ontological level utilises generalised categories, and on both ontological and qualitative levels distances individuals from the object of their consideration. It is our thesis then that this distance is established not only in relation to the object of pity but also to experience in general, inclusive of the internal experience of subjectivity and therefore in relation to instinct. Objectification creates a space within subjectivity itself such that the internal landscape alters from a deterministic arena of instinct to an opportunistic arena characterised by choice, one comprised of moments wherein internal compulsion is literally interrupted by the distancing power of reason.

This theory will be developed further as we proceed to examine the rise and impact of amour propre, in that regards of especial importance will be the manner in which self-objectification takes place and the implications of that in relation to distance as estrangement and the impossibility of healthy supportive community as a result. Before that though we must turn to the second aspect of our reconstruction of Rousseau’s thought on free will, namely, the role of judgment and deliberation. In The Last Word Thomas Nagel puts forward a thesis regarding logical thought and reason in which he argues for reason as having access to ‘universally valid methods of objective thought.’ Such universality is a condition of rationality such that when

reason asserts something true ‘it simply cannot be dislodged by any other suppositions.’\textsuperscript{61} While Nagel uses examples from logic and mathematics to illustrate his point he holds that working on the basis of such simple examples ‘may help with more complicated cases’, such as that of ethical matters.\textsuperscript{62} Nagel’s central thesis is that arguments seeking to relativise reason through asserting that it is a culturally produced and therefore culturally conditioned phenomenon are bogus, in part because this is de facto not true of reason, but also because the criticism of reason uses reason to establish its point, and therefore relies on the very thing it seeks to undermine.\textsuperscript{63}

However, Nagel’s central thesis is not the focus of our discussion, rather, while developing his theory he touches upon a quality of reason that is relevant to the process of exercising a free will that he labels ‘the standpoint of decision’\textsuperscript{64}, this quality dovetails neatly with the distancing effect of reason we noted above such that, in effect, we can see how such arguments are at the very least embryonic with the SD. Nagel’s argument for the objectivity of reason builds to include an analysis of how such objectivity is instantiated within reason’s activity, i.e. within the process of deliberation. He observes that ‘[o]nce I see myself as the subject of certain desires, as well as the occupant of an objective situation, I still have to decide what to do, and that will include deciding what justificatory weight to give to those desires.’\textsuperscript{65} There are two points of import within this quotation.

Firstly, we would agree with Nagel when he follows the Kantian position and argues that choosing whether to follow an instinct necessarily requires an apprehension such that ‘I see myself as the subject’ of that instinct, coupled with the structural condition of an ‘objective situation’. That this capacity should be concomitant with the position of choosing stands in distinction to that of passively experiencing an instinct wherein instinct and the impulse to act are equivalent, thus the individual, animal or human, gains no perceptual position, or as Nagel would have it, has no ‘standpoint’. It is this latter situation, or one like it, that we would suggest Rousseau is referring to when he comments that ‘nature commands and beasts obey’. Should a standpoint obtain then we are presented with a conception of subjectivity capable of developing an internal duality between the subject and an internal object. The requirement of this

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} Ibid, p.55.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Ibid, p.24.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Ibid, p.109.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
capability rests with the necessity for deliberative space within the cognitive process. This
standpoint is the very same distancing effect that we noted earlier and Rousseau utilises the
same framework when describing the absence of pity within those capable of complex
conceptuality. Once again we are left with the question as to whether Rousseau has
satisfactorily demonstrated that a being capable of such internal maturity is nevertheless found
within the state of nature.

While Rousseau is keen to assess the role of instinct and conceptuality he fails to properly
theorise this point and the implications of its role within subjectivity during the state of nature.
He relies implicitly on this structuring of subjectivity when he refers to ‘the power of choosing’
but does not extend his analysis of it to secure his argument concerning the exercising of the
will. This leads us to the second important phrase in the above quotation where Nagel rightly
emphasises what we claim is a necessary step in the process of choosing, namely, that of
deliberation. If we were to grant Rousseau his thesis and remove deliberation from the ontology
of a free act then it seems we arrive at a conception of freedom purely based upon intuition,
given that it does not involve rationality, or some form of non-discursive conceptuality, and yet
the SD itself does not provide such a clear cut view. As we have seen Rousseau does place
responsibility for this situation within ‘the mind’, as such it is clear that the spiritual source of
freedom in the soul requires some form of mental activity to bring about the fulfilment of such
freedom. Indeed the same point can be made when Rousseau states that ‘the power. . . of
choosing’ reflects the spirituality of the soul, for what is choosing if not deliberation, holding
alternatives in the mind and finding favour for one over the other? It is this process that Nagel
assesses when he undertakes an analysis of the manner in which deliberation and ensuing
action necessarily include a moment of decision.

Nagel characterises the deliberative process as possible because of the simple fact that there is
space within subjectivity allowing it to take place, he says ‘[t]his standpoint introduces a subtle but
profound gap between desire and action, into which the free exercise of reason enters.’66 Thus the
structural divide of an internal duality is deliberatively fortuitous; the act of choosing
piggybacks on the already established ontological ground of subject-object perception. This
state of affairs provides us with an ontology which while not conclusive goes someway towards
explaining how subjective maturation, in particular the maturation of cognitive complexity,
allows for the exercise of the subject’s agency. Rather than the soul it is the deliberative opportunity that manifests a free will. For choice to take place it must be the case that individuals can be said to be aware that alternative actions are available to them, actions which may be chosen in distinction to the impulse of the arisen instinct. Once alternatives are present within the mind the eventual prioritising of one over the other is, we suggest, not possible without a mature form of conceptuality, on Rousseau’s terms. Such a deliberative process would include both an understanding of the content of instinct and of the availability and content of other options, and, an understanding of the desirable or undesirable outcomes should either option gain priority. As Nagel points out

‘Having stopped the direct operation of impulse by interposing the possibility of decision, one can get one's beliefs and actions into motion again only by thinking about what, in light of the circumstances, one should do. . . One is. . . in the position of judging what one ought to do, against the background of all one's desires and beliefs, in a way that does not merely flow from those desires and beliefs but operates on them.’

The question then is how might it be possible for a being such as the one Rousseau depicts, without language, without abstract concepts, without foresight, to hold in their minds alternatives, and to then make a decision as to what course of action to take?

We suggest, then, that there are two necessary clusters of processes that Rousseau needs to allow for subjectivity in this phase if he is to satisfactorily justify his inclusion at this point of an exercised free will, the first is an act or acts of recognition, and the second one of judgment and deliberation. Regarding the first Rousseau suggests a certain complexity shared by both humans and animals that could feasibly provide for acts of recognition when he says ‘every animal has ideas, since it has senses; up to a certain point it even combines its ideas.’ He also understands both animals and humans to be ‘nothing but an ingenious machine to which nature has given senses in order to renew its strength and protect itself’, with the crucial difference that ‘[t]he former chooses or rejects by instinct and the later by an act of freedom’, as we have already noted. The capacity to combine ideas is certainly a necessary component of the recognition we are discussing, for example, learning from experience such that past mistakes are not repeated

69 Ibid, p.44.
includes the combining of memory and present situations. It is clear though that Rousseau is here talking about a non-discursive ideational ability and despite the fact such capacity ‘differs . . . only in degree’ between animals and humans, we know that Rousseau is not at this stage of his narrative claiming anything more complex, for example the usage of abstract categories.\(^{70}\)

Non-discursive ideation has a threshold of complexity after which it is not functional, however, and this is the reason that Rousseau’s account is lacking. Acting according to instinct, running from danger, searching for safety, combining ideas such that past experience is learnt from and mistakes not repeated, all function without the need of complex conceptuality, that is, without a mature form of discursive analysis or the use of abstract concepts based within linguistic abstraction. Once we include the possibility of choice, of holding alternatives and their respective outcomes within the mind, and then assessing the benefits and detractions of perhaps multiple possibilities, non-discursive ideation becomes insufficient as a ground for such complex decision-making. Accordingly, while the first cluster of processes required for recognition can certainly be justified at this stage in subjectivity’s development, there is not sufficient justification that this alone can account for the cognitive maturity necessary for the exercising of the will. Neuhouser makes a similar observation stating ‘[w]hereas Rousseau’s ascription of perfectibility to original human nature is relatively unproblematic . . . his position regarding free will in the state of nature is more controversial, especially its claim that free choosing is possible in the absence of language and reason.’\(^{71}\) As such, we would argue that to accommodate the exercising of the free will the process of deliberation, such as the one outlined above, is required.

Without judgment, then, without the concepts required for judgment, the exercising of a free will through choice is impossible, and as we have already seen, according to Rousseau such capacities arrived only once communal living and language took shape. The implication here is that Rousseau prematurely involves himself with a discussion of free will during his depiction of the pure state of nature, that subjectivity during this phase is insufficiently sophisticated to exercise a free will even if a non-discursive ideation or intuitive awareness were to exist. Accordingly the final step in our reconstruction is to reposition the exercising of a free will to a later phase of subjectivity’s maturation, one containing the requisite cognitive tools for

\(^{70}\) Ibid, p.45.

deliberation. Arguing for such a possibility requires that the quality of perfectibility be related to the will such that it displays the qualities of gradual maturation rather than the *sui generis* theological account that Rousseau offers. As such our reconstruction attempts as much as is possible to utilise Rousseau’s own theory for its position. Despite the fact that a narrative rearrangement runs counter to Rousseau’s own narrative order we feel that this step is not without support from within the *SD* due to the fact that all of Rousseau’s descriptions of an exercised will include the component of reason as a crucial aspect of the process, specifically in regards to pity and acts which run contrary to instinct. Further, there is some ambiguity in Rousseau’s narrative in relation to the point at which he argues the free will comes to be exercised; we will turn to the former issue first before examining Rousseau’s timeline.

It is clear that later stages of subjectivity’s development point to greater complexity in relation to choice-making; once individuals formed communities alongside bourgeoning cultural forms and the growth of labour we can confidently assert that the use of deliberation plays a central role in choice-making and therefore in the exercising of the will. In this general sense, then, reason facilitates the maturation of the will in its ability to explore a range of possible actions and outcomes. What though of the particular instances where the will is described by Rousseau as contributing to action contrary to instinct, what can they show us concerning the arguments available in relation to deliberation? Firstly, Rousseau provides the example of the implicit component of pity being countermanded by the will specifically through the use of reason. In this example reason acts as a justificatory method enabling the individual to ignore the feeling of pity towards another’s suffering. Secondly, we have seen the example wherein an individual, again through the use of justification via reason overindulges against the better judgement of instinct. Our point in reiterating these examples is that when Rousseau chooses to provide concrete descriptions of the will acting contrary to instinct he can only conceive of the process as one inclusive of reason.

That reason should for Rousseau provide individuals access to acting contrary to instinct demonstrates the ambiguous role that reason plays throughout the *SD*. Reason at once gives us access to a freedom from instinct, to exercise the will, and yet also allows us to develop lifestyles contrary to pity, to nature, lifestyles which eventually enforce inequality within the social sphere. It is reason that allows for the predominance of amour propre as the major motivation for organising the social sphere and yet without reason we would argue subjectivity could not call itself free, as Rousseau would like to do. Indeed the narrative of human freedom
that Rousseau espouses is substantially determined by the manner in which that freedom is trampled under the feet of amour propre, itself being driven in large part by a rationale explicitly substantiated by the faculty of reason. It is the case then that at both the general and specific levels Rousseau utilises in his argument the effects of reason to characterise the history of an exercised free will. It is telling that when Rousseau argues that reason can facilitate the freedom of the will the example he chooses is one that demonstrates how reason ‘perverts the senses’ and justifies a damaging and unhealthy lifestyle. Such contradiction arises as a result of Rousseau’s omission of the means through which a free will should operate in relation to both instinct and a distinct lack of deliberative faculties.

An example of such ambiguity within Rousseau’s presentation of the timeframe wherein subjectivity instantiates a free will can be found at the very opening of his metaphysical comments on ‘primitive man’ where he, as we have already shown, categorically affirms that freedom of the will is characteristic of such individuals, later he alters his depiction somewhat when he states that ‘[s]avage man [is] left by nature to instinct alone’. However, the above quotation occurs at the beginning of a paragraph at the bottom of which he also says ‘[w]illing and not willing. . . will be the first and only operations of his soul until new circumstances bring about new developments in it.’ These comments generate some confusion; in suggesting that individuals within the pure state of nature were left by nature to instinct, is Rousseau arguing that the will is not granted by nature and therefore unnatural, or, is he rather contradicting his own previous statement that individuals during this phase had the capacity for a free will; or is he perhaps inferring that the will is activated through the process of self-perfection, as we have suggested? Where Rousseau suggests that ‘willing and not willing’ take place within subjectivity it is unclear as to whether this constitutes a freedom of the will exactly, or some sort of primitive example of one yet to come into its maturity, and, in what sense such freedom can be considered mature, or contrarily, incipient at all? Further, does ‘willing or not willing’ equate to choosing and should the concept of choice be placed on a sliding scale of complexity? Unfortunately within the SD there is no conclusive evidence that answers these questions, Rousseau paints with broad strokes when it comes to metaphysical matters and thus in some sense we are left to draw our own conclusions as we have done during this reconstruction.

72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
To conclude, Rousseau’s problem stems from a general failure to sufficiently theorise his account of the will; more specifically he fails to theorise the various aspects of the will in relation to both the qualitative and ontological, and as such his account lacks the required analysis of decision making. Despite this we argued that within the SD there is a nascent ontology through which we can inject Rousseau’s position with greater argumentative ballast. Our reconstruction, then, began with focussing on a possible ontology of a free will formulated out of Rousseau’s own theory of perfectibility and the objectifying capacity of conceptuality. This distancing effect of reason creates a pause for thought within which deliberation and judgment – decision making – can play their part. Arguing that such components are required for the exercising of a free will we then include within the reconstruction the role of perfectibility and resituate the possibility for such a will later in the narrative, specifically in Part Two of the SD within the phase of association where complex conceptuality arises, thus providing the necessary cognitive capacity for the exercise of the will through decision making. In this way our reconstruction follows a dialectic argument in an attempt to provide explanatory rigour. Subjectivity (a) replete with a ‘free soul’ and the implicit capacity for self-perfection stands for the constitutive component, the catalyst (b) of social interaction produces linguistic and thus conceptual development, and a new form of subjectivity (c) is produced, one capable of exercising judgment and thus free will.

We turn now to examine and question Rousseau’s stated - and unstated - methodological claims regarding the origin of the content he depicts within the state of nature. The evaluation of Rousseau’s methodological aims is closely linked with an analysis of the state of nature because Rousseau’s claim is that the lifestyle of individuals, and the particular form of subjectivity, can be established through this method. Is Rousseau consistent in his stated methodology, or does he utilise other means to establish his thesis?

2.2 Rousseau’s Methodology and the State of Nature

In evaluating the role of the state of nature within the SD it is useful to remind ourselves at this point of the particular focus of our thesis in relation to this topic as some of the most common lines of enquiry within literature on the SD will not be pursued. It is common to find commentators addressing the ontological status of the state of nature, that is, did Rousseau consider it to be an historical account, or on the other hand, the basis for a philosophical
narrative the likes of which required no real historical grounding. Our focus, however, is on the explanations that Rousseau provides for the successive changes to subjectivity and so whether or not Rousseau’s state of nature was intended as historical or otherwise is of lesser importance. Of greater relevance to our project are the methodological tools Rousseau deploys in filling out the content of subjectivity during this phase. In particular we shall focus on how Rousseau justifies his inclusion of certain traits during this most speculative phase because this concerns itself with the success or failure of his arguments regarding subjectivity’s development in general.

What method(s) then does Rousseau utilise in his approach to constructing his narrative, is it empirical, theoretical, or perhaps even rhetorical? Addressing these issues provides clarification because of the argumentative use Rousseau puts his portrait of primitive individuals and society; where Rousseau justifies his conclusions through his depiction of the state of nature it is important that we attend to the those arguments in order to assess his claims. Relevant to this issue, and central to our interpretation of his goals in depicting the state of nature, is a crucial distinction that Rousseau makes within the SD. When discussing the possibility for benign qualities within individuals, Rousseau mentions the ‘pure state of nature’, by which he means the state of nature utterly devoid of societal characteristics.75 This distinction of course implies the existence of later, less ‘pure’, phases of the state of nature, which Rousseau does not provide a label for.76 It is within the pure state of nature particularly that Rousseau stresses the essentially benevolent character of humanities innate qualities, a depiction that carries significant rhetorical force throughout the SD. It is here that Rousseau anchors his argument within a portrait that he then relies upon to draw a stark contrast between this age of innocence and the oncoming degradation brought about by the formation of society.

Clear distinctions then need to be drawn between the role of the pure state of nature, including the method(s) utilised by Rousseau to characterise it, and those later phases because of the substantial differences between their subjective and circumstantial content, and what reliance Rousseau places upon them in his thesis as a whole. In particular Rousseau’s aim is to justify his argument that the origin of inequality is not to be found within the given characteristics of humanity. And yet the complexity of assessing Rousseau's intentions within the SD is

increased by the fact that he does not apply a singular methodology but at different times utilises different approaches. Examining these approaches, then, will provide further context for both Rousseau’s own project and our interpretation of it.

We contest that Rousseau’s use of the state of nature consist in the following points, i) it is a combination of: (a) a rational reconstruction of a possible past; and (b) in part consists in empirical observations of subjectivity from his own time, of perennial features of ‘human nature’, and thus not derived from his expressed method of stripping away all that humanity gains from society and social interaction; and ii) Rousseau’s conception of the pure state of nature offers little justification for the components of subjectivity situated within it, its import is simply to announce certain qualities Rousseau understood as implicit within subjectivity, and as a philosophical what if?, to paint a portrait of pre-social individuals shorn of those attributes Rousseau assumes to be given only through communal life. We will address these points in greater detail below.

The standard presentation of Rousseau’s method in the SD – supported by Rousseau’s own assertions – has him following in the footsteps of Hobbes and Locke, stripping away all of those features he understood to be derived from society, resulting in the abstract individual of the state of nature. However, we contest that not only can this be said solely of the pure state of nature, and not of the later phases, but that even within the pure state of nature there is evidence that certain elements of subjectivity that Rousseau posits are derived empirically, as evidenced by his use of arguments from givenness. Rousseau’s claim is that to discern the origin of inequality it is necessary to discern whether inequality is natural or born within society, and he states ‘how can the source of the inequality among men be known unless one begins by knowing men themselves?’\footnote{Rousseau, \textit{Discourse on the Origin of Inequality}, in, \textit{Jean-Jacques Rousseau Basic Political Writings}, (Hackett Publishing Company Inc., USA, 1987), p.33.} This is then a methodological claim, one that questions the means by which Rousseau derived the components within this phase of subjectivity.

In order to secure this point we must revisit the formula of the argument from givenness that we outlined in section 1.5. As already noted an argument from givenness is an example of relying philosophically upon a feature of subjectivity considered to be implicit – or innate – within individuals, a component not derived from any developmental occurrence. In Rousseau’s view such components include pity, perfectibility and a measure of free will, which
are all given in the pure state of nature. The question pertinent here is simply From where does Rousseau derive these qualities? If their inclusion is a result of Rousseau’s method of stripping away then they suffer less from the charge of being merely rhetorical, or alternatively, if in fact they reflect a strategic positioning of Rousseau’s empirically derived beliefs concerning subjectivity, then the pure state of nature begins to look more like a method for shaping and honing a pleasing narrative of human development, but one without significant philosophical justification. Usage of a literary device such as this does allow for the reader to clearly ascertain the import and impact of the rise of amour propre by way of the contrast it provides. As such it is not without philosophical merit, even if it lacks argumentation.

When Rousseau states that ‘[t]he philosophers’, in their characterisation of pre-social individuals ‘transferred to the state of nature those ideas. . . acquired in society’, it was his intention to demonstrate how such a task should be more correctly undertaken. The results, as we shall see in more detail below, were largely secured through the stripping away of complex conceptuality and the portrait that emerges reflects that alteration. Rousseau claims, and is read in this manner by many commentators, as attempting to remove all the social characteristics individuals gain through society with the outcome being that everything depicted within his characterisation is discovered through such subtraction. However, many of the components of subjectivity within the pure state of nature are not discovered through this particular method by Rousseau, rather, they are simply announced as a matter of fact, and most likely from a pre-thought out picture of human behaviour, indeed Judith Shklar surmises of Rousseau’s methodology in reference to the instinct of justice as natural to humanity that ‘[i]t was drawn solely from the evidence of introspective psychology. The laws of human nature were the laws of psychology. They are the sum of predictable human responses.’ This seems to us to be a fair characterisation of Rousseau’s methods and is evidenced well in his thoughts on pity, as we shall see below.

Rousseau, giving himself away somewhat, states that ‘[p]ity is what carries us without reflection to the aid of those we see suffering’ as if to suggest that by virtue of pity being evidenced within ourselves we should then retrospectively project that quality into the past. Of course this is the

80 Ibid, p.55.
very accusation that Rousseau charges Hobbes of committing in relation to the untrammelled egotism that Hobbes holds central to his portrait of the state of nature, and demonstrates clearly Rousseau use of empirical argumentation. The same charge can be levelled at Rousseau in regards to his presumption of the male dominated family unit, and further of his portrait of child raising within such a unit rather than for example through communal means. As we shall see in our discussion of pity below Rousseau argues that if we subtract complex conceptuality from subjectivity then the sentiment of pity is given greater ground to function. Is this perhaps an example of Rousseau applying his stated methodology? Despite appearing to evidence such a method if we look at the steps in his argument it is clear that the argument relies on the pre-existence of pity, and so remains culpable of the same error that Rousseau suggests Hobbes makes. When Rousseau argues that within the pure state of nature pity’s capacity was greater, and that rationality precludes the activity of pity, while we can agree that stripping away rationality’s activity could feasibly have such an influence, it is still the case that Rousseau is not here arguing that an absence of rationality is responsible for the origin of pity, rather, simply that a pre-existing yet stifled pity is given more room to breathe.

Rousseau, then, having identified pity within individuals in his own time is suggesting that because of this individuals within the state of nature must also have demonstrated the same quality. Yet this example of empiricism is not the only methodology Rousseau utilises, for example, in regards to pity Rousseau also uses some argumentation which falls into the area of a rational reconstruction. He attempts to give the justification for his inclusion of pity within the pure state of nature because pity is ‘so natural that even animals sometimes show noticeable signs of it’. Of course that animals might demonstrate pity is not of itself proof that humans should also. Animals demonstrate all manner of behaviours and so Rousseau is here guilty of cherry picking this example from the animal world. That Rousseau should rely on this rather weak argument alongside his empirical methodology is perhaps suggestive of a rather confused methodological approach, and further, neither go into enough detail for the reader to sufficiently understand the basis for such assertions. As we suggested in section 1.5 the lack of sufficient contextualisation is a general feature of arguments from givenness, and in situating an empirically observed characteristic within the state of nature without explanation – a feature


\[82\] Ibid, p.53.
that will later serve as a constitutive component – Rousseau diminishes the strength of his narrative overall, and subsequently makes more sense when understood as a rhetorical presentation of his own beliefs.

To conclude it is quite possible that Rousseau, in the SD, was juggling more than one methodological and philosophical task; there is no particular reason to reject the possibility that even though he did not expect his work to stand up to historical criticism, as a project of rational reconstruction, he did in fact think that he had a firm hold on a likely trajectory of human development. Further, given Rousseau’s literary skills it also quite possible that the structure of the SD is organised so as to utilise stylistic devices to enhance the overall argument. It is certainly the case that Rousseau’s depiction of the state of nature had a rhetorical effect upon its readers, with many commentators levelling accusations of primitivism upon his valorisation of more simple times. In regards to the substance of the SD such accusations are clearly false and yet rhetorically speaking Rousseau utilises the idyllic portrait he presents of the state of nature as a leverage throughout the work, highlighting the corrupting manners of ‘civilisation’, and in that way makes himself open to the charges of primitivism. Perhaps on this issue we do well to bear in mind the fact that Rousseau’s work was entered into a competition, and, was not designed to be read by professional academics but by all interested educated people. As such a rhetorical element to his work skillfully simplifies the general themes, making the work memorable, and, somewhat notorious and inflammatory.

2.3 The Phase of Association

We now embark upon our analysis of Part Two of the SD wherein the solitary life of the state of nature gives way to a burgeoning communality which we shall term the phase of association. It is here that Rousseau embarks upon his assessment of social inequality that contributes to any natural inequalities arising out of biological differences in strength or intelligence that could have impacted prior to this point in the narrative. Individuals within the phase of association eventually come to develop family groupings which ally themselves with other such

groupings. These simple communities form the basis for an upsurge of complexity across both the social and subjective spheres. This takes place through a long process of development whereby Rousseau traces the manner in which social and subjective complexity bring individuals to the point where they become capable of productive leisure and an ensuing cultural complexity. As Rousseau comments,

‘human understanding owes much to the passions, which, by common consensus, also owe a great deal to it. It is by their activity that our reason is perfected. We seek to know only because we desire to find enjoyment; and it is impossible to conceive why someone who had neither desires not fears would go to the bother of reasoning.’

Thus cognitive maturation is provoked by needs, desires, wants and fears and the pure state of nature, as we have seen, contains little of these, hence the simple of form of subjectivity it evinces. As is already established, due to the dialectical nature of the changes that occur throughout Rousseau’s narrative, alterations are arrived at incrementally and this results in a period wherein despite the establishment of stable communities the needs and wants of individuals have not multiplied sufficiently to warrant any significant change within subjectivity. It is the phase of association proper, then, that is responsible for laying the foundations for society as we know it, for the new responses within subjectivity prompting it towards greater sophistication and capabilities over time. Let us now look at this transition in greater detail.

In assessing the transition from the pure state of nature towards the phase of association let us remind ourselves of the criteria to be applied which were outlined in section 1.4. Firstly, we will provide an outline of subjectivity as the constitutive component as it segues into this phase. Subsequent to that we will describe and assess Rousseau’s narrative with especial attention to the absence or presence of explanations for the various alterations occurring within subjectivity. We will attempt to demonstrate that Rousseau utilises mixed methodologies and the forms of argumentation connected with them and so achieves mixed results. When he attempts a rational reconstruction of a possible past he relies upon dialectical arguments and is therefore more successful. When projecting empirical observation into the past he relies upon arguments based within simple causality and thereby fails to provide explanation and instead

offers mere description. We begin with the initial phase of association which leads up to the point of Rousseau’s ‘first revolution,’ and then move onto to association proper which proceeds until the ‘great revolution’, the discovery of metallurgy and agriculture. These two phases are somewhat distinct in that due to the transitional nature at this point in Rousseau's narrative the rise of communities stabilises and then subsequent to the institution of property develops into a more complex form of proto society.

Entering the phase of association occurs only after a ‘slow succession of events and advances in knowledge’ wherein individuals grew into a new sense of self-awareness and understanding of the world around them. Subjectively this process is made possible in large part by the implicit component of self-perfection. Rousseau’s inclusion of self-perfection in his ontology allows him to explain the on-going process of cognitive maturation instigated in this case through environmental, in contrast to societal, familiarity. Familiarity in this phase refers to subjectivity, encountering the repetitive content of the environment over time, beginning to recognise patterns within the world, face challenges and overcome them through ingenuity. Knowledge of the environment initiates a progressive sense of self-awareness that in turn provokes a recognition of capabilities possessed by the individuals themselves. When such capabilities are honed and deployed within their environment skills come to be habitualised and a profound shift has occurred within subjectivity.

This shift is the crucial moment whereby subjectivity is primed to embark upon an exponential increase in the complexity of its self-awareness, in both ontological and qualitative terms and is further characterised by the recognition of superiority over both the environment and other species. Rousseau determines this crucial episode to be ‘the first stirrings of pride’. The introduction of this sentiment at this point in Rousseau’s narrative is somewhat problematic however, given that it appears to be both unexplained and suggestive of an implicit tendency towards egotism. Rousseau otherwise argues that egotism occurs within subjectivity as a result of socially derived approbation and that individuals outside of society are not subject to such

87 Ibid, p.65.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid, p.60.
91 Ibid, p.61.
competitive attitudes.\(^92\) Such conditions go some way towards providing an explanation, whereas at this point in the narrative the reader is left wondering why subjectivity should necessarily evince pride given that it lacks an implicit causal catalyst.

Rousseau prefaces his account of this development in his portrait of individual’s ability to both recognise and utilise judgment in regards to the qualities of other species, he continues

‘[t]he new enlightenment which resulted from this development increased his superiority over the other animals by making him aware of it. He trained himself to make traps for them; he tricked them in a thousand ways. And although several surpassed him in fighting or strength or in swiftness in running, of those that could serve him or hurt him, he became in time the master of the former and the scourge of the latter.’\(^93\)

In terms of narrative this neatly establishes the ground for the arrival of pride within subjectivity, and yet, philosophically there is much left to guess at. For example, Rousseau asserts that with self-reflection and self-awareness comes egocentrism, that the birth of the ego is not a plain ontological fact, but rather, that co-extensive with the ontological appearance is a concurrent qualitative, psychological, characteristic. Rousseau explains this qualitative development as a response to the recognition of superior capacities, yet the form that his characterisation takes falls foul of our formulation of the logic available to Rousseau in his developmental account of human nature. More precisely, Rousseau would like to argue that the individual (a) is caused by their recognition of superiority (b) to develop the feeling of pride (c). However as an example of simple causality this argument does not suffice to explain this phenomenon. Why is it necessary that (b) should evoke (c)? Through what mechanism does this take place? Or, to put it another way, what is it within subjectivity prior to (b) that accounts for (c); where in all of this is the account of subjectivity as the constitutive component?

Rousseau, then, collapses together within a single moment the recognition of superiority and the ensuing response of pride. He does not explain the occurrence of pride, he describes it, and fails to offer a reason, a mechanism, for its taking place. Our point here is that the increase of comparative self-awareness outlined above does not necessarily have to result in a qualitative assessment, such as ‘I am better’, but rather, could function as a simple process of

\(^92\) Ibid, p.106.
\(^93\) Ibid.
categorisation, or, if it does, then Rousseau needs to demonstrate why that is the case. Without the dialectical argument we are left with an incomplete picture unable to follow the argumentation.\textsuperscript{94} Again we are left wondering whether Rousseau is repeating the mistake (as Rousseau himself describes it) of Hobbes in projecting back into the past those qualities found within subjectivity in society during his own time, thus utilising an empirical argument that confuses the topic both methodologically and in relation to the theme of a social origin to amour propre.

In introducing the theme of pride at this point of the narrative Rousseau in some sense is foreshadowing the upcoming arrival of amour propre, characterised as it is by the even greater need for a sense of superiority and validation. Thematically this foreshadowing is effective because in suggesting an innate proclivity towards pride its later flourishing seems all the more justified and yet Rousseau will later come to argue that amour propre is ‘relative, artificial, and born in society’ thus blurring his explanation for the source of this component. Indeed it is primarily through the qualitative aspect of subjectivity, as we shall see, that Rousseau attempts to argue for a corrupting influence of society upon the psychology of humanity. Once again however it is the failure to distinguish between the ontological and qualitative that causes Rousseau’s argument to falter, nor is this an isolated instance of such a misstep, as we shall see below. Ontologically speaking Rousseau’s failure is his omission of the origin of such an occurrence, the attempt to describe the psychological mechanisms that account for this response.

Having recognised their superiority over other species individual’s now come to engage in mutually beneficial cooperation with others of their own species, thus adding another increment in the slow march towards association proper. Such moments of nascent cooperation are characterised by Rousseau as precarious at best. Utilising a dialectical argument he suggests that despite groups hunting as an ensemble these efforts were likely to be thwarted because when hunting one animal if another should cross their path ‘no doubt he would have pursued it without giving it a second thought, and that, having obtained his prey, he cared very little about causing his companions to miss theirs.’\textsuperscript{95} Thus amour de soi functions as a part of the constitutive

\textsuperscript{94} Trachtenberg acknowledges this moment in Rousseau’s narrative but finds it uncontroversial and describes it merely as foreshadowing, see Trachtenberg, \textit{Making Citizens, Rousseau’s Political Theory of Culture}, (Taylor & Francis, USA, 2003), p.94.

component within subjectivity responsible for the failure of the group hunt. Faltering experiments such as these fall into the category of a rational reconstruction, given that, on Rousseau’s terms, cooperation is a learnt trait it can be reasonably assumed that its success was not guaranteed at the moment of its insipience. Such anthropological guesswork remains just that – guesswork – and assessing its accuracy is not the subject of this thesis, rather, we seek to perform an analysis of the argumentation and assess its strengths and weaknesses. Nevertheless events such as these contribute to a bourgeoning intelligence which, Rousseau claims, soon leads to the recognition that materials can be utilised to ‘make huts from branches they later found it useful to cover with mud and clay.’

We have now reached the period of Rousseau’s first revolution ‘which formed the establishment of the distinction among families and which introduced a kind of property,’ and which segues into association proper. Families provided a division of labour of sorts and thus an increase in efficiency in regards to managing the basic needs of the group. With such needs now easily satisfied ‘men enjoyed a great deal of leisure time, they used it to procure for themselves many types of conveniences unknown to their fathers; and that was the first yoke they imposed on themselves without realizing it, and the first source of evil they prepared for their descendants.’ Rousseau’s claim here is that the production of surplus-to-requirement possessions binds them to those who use them, that rather than existing as useful bonuses they ‘degenerated into true needs.’ Rousseau substantiates this claim with an under-argued for psychological portrait, the traits within which seems to arise sui generis. He suggests that such objects ‘through habit lost almost all their pleasure’ such that ‘being deprived of them became much more cruel that possessing them was sweet; and they were unhappy about losing them without being happy about possessing them.’ Rousseau problematises the relationship to material possessions in order to begin his negative assessment of subjectivity’s life within society and yet fails to make us understand why such a situation should arise according to any necessity.

Rousseau’s argument begins with his claim that the absence of an ability to enjoy material items occurs over time; this claim, though plausible, relies upon a empirical familiarity with which such a statement may be greeted by those who have such an experience for themselves,

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96 Ibid, p.62.  
97 Ibid.  
98 Ibid, p.63.  
99 Ibid.  
100 Ibid.
but is not explained within the context of subjectivity’s ontological or qualitative existence. It is an uncontroversial claim, but methodologically, one that smacks of a projection into the past of present observations. Again we can see that Rousseau fails to situate a form of subjectivity as the constitutive component, and the result is that his argument lacks justification. It does however add to the thematic of a burden free existence within the pure state of nature, where individuals were not slaves to possessions but rather owned nothing. Again, we suggest, this is another example of Rousseau’s rhetorical emphasis on the valorisation of the ‘natural’. To ascribe a lack of appreciation, for perhaps crucial objects, to individuals during this tentative phase of collaboration and interconnectivity cannot be taken as an obvious fact. Within the context of a newly won framework of cooperation amidst challenging environments it is certainly not a given that those objects cultivated by bourgeoning skills would so quickly be taken for granted. This faltering methodological approach is also evidenced in his account of sustained romantic relationship, to which we turn next.

Within the move towards stable communities and regular cultured interactions we find Rousseau painting a portrait of romantic relations. Whereas during the first revolution ‘[t]he habit of living together gave rise to the sweetest sentiments known to men: conjugal love and paternal love’¹⁰¹ we now find a disturbing trend inculcated by a growing competition for affection and the social kudos associated with successful partnering. At this point in the narrative Rousseau is attempting to demonstrate the ever-increasing effects of the birth of amour propre within human society. Eventually amour propre will come to be characterised as rising up and washing over everything, leaving nothing untouched and impacting on the lives of everyone for generations to come, but Rousseau begins with the impact upon those seeking to live as partners. He states

‘[p]eople become accustomed to consider different objects and to make comparison. Imperceptibly they acquire the ideas of merit and beauty which produce feelings of preference. [Between individuals a] sweet and tender feeling insinuates itself into the soul and at the least opposition becomes an impetuous fury. Jealousy awakens with love; discord triumphs, and the sweetest passion receives sacrifices of human blood.’¹⁰²

¹⁰² Ibid, p.63.
The inclusion of such graphic, bold, assertions is not well justified by Rousseau. He appears to assume the worst of individuals and does so without allowing us to understand where such flammable mentalities find their origins. In this regards our problem is not the inclusion of such a claim but rather the omission of argumentation; while Rousseau may indeed be correct our agreement or disagreement with such proposals could only be said to be the product of our own justifications, and not Rousseau’s.

The occurrence of pride, then, is the first of a set of qualitative alterations during the phase of association within subjectivity that are not sufficiently justified by Rousseau, but rather, simply stated. These include an unfortunate psychological impact of more stable familial relations, and the unhappy relationship between individuals and material goods. These moments flavour the narrative with a sense of the gradual ‘degeneration’ caused by society that Rousseau would like to argue for and yet we are struck by the lack of argumentation and as such suggest that such statements are, rather than philosophical, aimed at continuing the narrative theme of the natural as a source of goodness. For example, alongside these developments sits Rousseau’s account of the manner in which subjectivity and social arrangements are shaped by the challenging changes occurring within the natural environment: ‘[g]reat floods or earthquakes surrounded the inhabited areas with water or precipices. Upheavals of the globe detached parts of the mainland and broke them up into islands. Clearly among men thus brought together and forced to live together, a common idiom must have been formed’.103 On the one hand Rousseau paints a convincing picture of how environmental challenges shape subjectivity’s ability to mature, on the other hand his series of psychological claims are far less convincing, and seem to function to bring him to the point of the narrative where he would like to be in terms of the rise of amour propre as the source of inequality. Indeed in terms of his narrative they are skilfully placed and interwoven into the development of subjectivity, but by contrast, in terms of philosophical argumentation, are lacking and appear expedient rather than explanatory.

It is within the phase of association that Rousseau includes a passage that has substantial relevance to his characterisation of subjectivity as subject to circumstantial influence, particularly in relation to amour propre. Although we will not spend long addressing the passage it is worth visiting briefly because of its clear demonstration of the manner in which amour propre reacts and how its strength fluctuates according to the environment surrounding

103 Ibid, p.63.
it. Though activated this component fails to become the disastrous cause for societal fragmentation that it later does, rather, it exists here in a more benign manner ‘maintaining a middle position between the indolence of our primitive state and the petulant activity of our egocentrism.’ This state of affairs is a foreshadowing of sorts, pointing towards the ameliorative designs that Rousseau will later in his career attempt to formulate as a curative towards the more malignant version of amour propre that flourishes within society proper. Rousseau’s reasoning is that if it were possible for individuals to be affected by amour propre but without being driven entirely by its pathology then might there be other circumstances under which similar results might be achieved. Of this question we will return later in the thesis.

We are now placed to finish our account of the phase of association. Within this phase there are three important and indispensible occurrences that form the basis of inequality within human life, with which Rousseau attempts to ground his thematic account of the ‘decay of the species’. The first, as we have mentioned, is the birth of amour propre, the second, the dawn of private property, and the third, that of the division of labour within the proto-industrialisation of agriculture and metallurgy. These three are, according to Rousseau, the source and momentum for inequality up to and including the time of his writing of the SD. While the first is subjective, the second and third are circumstantial and as we have already asserted brings to a close the state of nature, for with the division of labour is allied a profound level of interdependency fuelled by new found wants and needs, the likes of which come to be regarded not as luxuries but as necessities. Thus, the simplicity and self-sufficiency of the state of nature is ended, and complex society is encroaching on the horizon. For Rousseau this state of affairs is the perfect breeding ground for the virus-like amour propre which infects subjectivity and drives its hosts towards spreading its pathological strategies, thus substantially altering subjectivity on both the ontological and qualitative grounds. Before detailing the rise, impact, and meaning of amour propre let us briefly turn to the circumstantial arena of the division of labour and the creation of work forces.

The origin and foundation of social inequality is to be found within the phase of association, and Rousseau looks to the role that industry has to play in establishing forms of inescapable disparity between individuals. For Rousseau the value of self-sufficiency is that individuals can

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104 Ibid, p.65.
105 Ibid, p.65.
to some extent remain in control of their own economies, whereas with the division of labour one individual forms a bond of economic dependency with another. As we can see in the quotation below, which we shall quote at length, the theme of the corrupting influence of society found throughout the SD is nowhere better evidenced than during this transition:

‘as soon as one man needed the help of another, as soon as one man realized that it was useful for a single individual to have the provisions of two, equality disappeared, property came into existence, labor became necessary. Vast forests were transformed into smiling fields which had to be watered with men’s sweat, and in which slavery and misery were soon to germinate and grow with the crops.’

This passage stands to be analysed from a number of perspectives, the socio-political critique it embodies is relevant to a number of schools of thought, however, we shall not embark upon these many issues, but rather continue in focussing upon the evident changes that have been brought to bear upon subjectivity up to this point.

For Rousseau the ownership of arable land, for example, and the employment of others to work that land, contributes to the manner in which social inequality bourgeons out of natural inequality. When Rousseau says ‘natural inequality imperceptibly manifests itself together with inequality occasioned by the socialization process’ he is referring to the opportunity such inequalities created for those willing to take advantage of their fellow beings. Thus the inclinations arising out of amour propre are fuelled by the material mastery that individuals find themselves capable of. The circumstantial changes highlighted in the previous paragraph are of course the result of a significant maturation of both qualitative and ontological components of subjectivity. The shift from the state of nature to society is equivalent to a shift from simpler to more complex forms of subjectivity, but these changes for Rousseau are not simply that of lesser to greater intellectual capacities, but also that of the progression from less to more complex structures of subjectivity itself.

What this means is that after the phase of association subjectivity can be said to house a new form of identity, a new self, one founded upon the social context into which individuals are thrown. What we hope to demonstrate is that the structures of this new self are built upon both the social situation but in particular the qualitative aspects of the complex conceptuality, which

itself gave birth to the dramatic changes within the circumstantial arena during this phase, as Glass points out "[p]roprietary relationships require an intricate logical system of ordering and remembrance". With the arrival of amour propre, for example, we are witness to certain qualitative effects that conceptuality has upon the structures of the self, and subsequently are able to perceive how subjectivity comes to structure the social world in general as the projection of a divisive consciousness.

2.4 The Introduction of Amour Propre

The portrait of subjectivity that Rousseau presents within the state of nature, as we have seen, offers a very specific form of subjectivity, one that lacks complexity in both ontological and qualitative terms. Ontologically, in terms of the content of subjectivity, there is an absence of abstract conceptuality, temporal awareness, and any sense of social identity in terms of embodying a role or establishing a persona, "[n]atural man, as Rousseau describes him in the Second Discourse, lacks the ability to make classifications and distinctions, to think "logically" and to "abstract" from experience common categories of meaning". As we shall see it is conceptuality such as this that lays at the heart of the difference between Rousseau’s conception of subjectivity for it is conceptuality that gives rise to the vast sway of developments that occur in the phase of association. Further, it is the absence of conceptuality within the state of nature that is a necessary condition for the simplicity of that phase. What though, exactly, is conceptuality for Rousseau? How does it operate, how does it arise, and having done so what effects does it have upon subjectivity? Furthermore, what is the relationship between conceptuality and amour propre?

Before embarking on our discussion of conceptuality however we will briefly continue with Rousseau’s narrative and explain how he portrays the occurrence of amour propre within the phase of association. Amour propre enters the stage between Rousseau’s two revolutions of human life, namely the arrival of fixed abodes and the rise of industry. Within this phase of increasing interaction between families and the growth of communities a shared language evolves and subsequently brings about greater intellectual sophistication made possible by the

implicit capacity of self-perfection. A central aspect of this bourgeoning conceptuality that Rousseau emphasises is the contribution that categories play in assessment, analysis and judgment and of particular importance to amour propre is the manner in which such new capacities are applied self-reflexively; the individual comes to create self-assessments and apply categories and judgments that pick themselves out as the object of such cognition.

Thus amour propre is driven by a very particular form of self-representation qualitatively speaking, one that arises specifically in relation to the new social environment. The key point in understanding the origin of amour propre is that in applying self-reflexive and self-reflective categories the individual derives the impetus and content socially, from the communities in which they find themselves, and further, such categories are of a very particular kind. Rousseau states

‘In proportion as ideas and sentiments succeed one another and as the mind and heart are trained. . . relationships spread and bonds are tightened. People grew accustomed to gather in front of their huts or around a large tree; [to sing] and dance. . . Each one began to look at the others and to want to be looked at himself, and public esteem had a value. The one who sang or danced the best, the handomest, the strongest, the most adroit or the most eloquent became the most highly regarded. And this was the first step toward inequality and, at the same time, toward vice. From these first preferences were born vanity and contempt on the one hand, and shame and envy on the other.’

This environment then is the catalyst for the growth of amour propre and it is worth noting that this moment occurs according to a dialectic formulation and thus can be considered explanatory on our terms.

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110 Ibid, p.63.
111 Hill critiques Rousseau on this issue asking how it might be that the development of language, and thus of categories and judgment, could occur without individuals recognising the likelihood of themselves being the object of others’ judgments, i.e. how these could develop without amour propre also doing so. In this way Hill questions Rousseau’s chronology of complex conceptuality and amour propre, though in a different manner than presented in this thesis. See, Hill, *Rousseau’s Theory of Human Association, Transparent and Opaque Communities*, (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006), p.18.
112 The difference between these terms is as follows: in being self-reflexive consciousness is evincing a capacity to take itself as an object, this is thus a structural, ontological term. To be self-reflective is to reflect on the character of one’s self, i.e. to think about the content of one’s identity, this is thus also ontological but not structural.
113 Ibid, p.64.
Rousseau’s portrayal of amour propre as the dominant force within what he saw as a corrupt form of society evinces a two-fold origin, the first of which – biology – is less confused than the second – that of pride. In terms of the biological origin to amour propre Rousseau suggests that the simple desire for a sexual partner is the key to the beginnings of social identity.\textsuperscript{114} In this manner individuals seeking to fulfil their desire find themselves competing for the attentions of those they seek and so attempt to either develop the prevalent desirable qualities or fake them. From this state of affairs arises increasing competition, rivalry, and strategising which at first probably remained within the sphere of competing for sexual partners and only later became the de facto mode of relating to the social sphere in general. Thus, sexual desire acts as an aspect of the constitutive component, this encounters an environment of sexually available individuals, yet there is competition for sexual interaction, this results in individuals attempting to manifest that which can advantage them in the sexual arena, namely, the appearance of desirable qualities.\textsuperscript{115} Amour propre is the result of this dialectic alteration in subjectivity.

The second origin of amour propre, pride, is less clearly derived by Rousseau, and in contrast to his explanation arising out of a biological impulse, lacks a dialectically based origin, making the alteration harder to analyse. On this account individuals aim to acquire or feign socially approved qualities not only to acquire sexual partners but also to look good in the eyes of others, and thus experience the pleasure of this sentiment. Pride then is a psychological response which produces pleasure for the one subject to it. The response of pride in relation to embodying socially valorised qualities is of course entirely plausible, yet Rousseau relies on this plausibility without offering an explanation as to its origin. As in the state of nature the realisation of superiority could conceivably arise separate from any secondary impulse towards self-valorisation, or, if this secondary occurrence should necessarily occur, Rousseau needs to explain why. In this way Rousseau muddies the explanatory waters through failing to offer an explanatory origin for this impulse. We shall return to this in section 2.5.1 where we will discuss amour propre further.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, p.64.
\textsuperscript{115} In this instance the constitutive component is characterised by far more than solely a biological instinct; it also evinces a rich resource of ontological material from which amour propre arises. We shall turn to this in greater detail in section 2.5.1.
The growth of amour propre, then, arises out of the newly developed social situation and an atmosphere of competition for positive attention, which subsequently gives way to a new form of self-realisation, that of social identity, or persona. Rousseau explains 'as soon as men had begun mutually to value one another, and the idea of esteem was formed in their minds, each one claimed to have a right to it, and it was no longer possible for anyone to be lacking it with impunity.'

Amour propre, as social identity, can be understood simply as the interiorisation of the social categories relating to personal dis/approbation, and the individual’s subsequent attempt to embody them in the eyes of others. Once such categories became popular within a community those failing to hold themselves accountable to them found themselves losing out on the social kudos available, as such, their ability to succeed within a community decreased. Alongside this is the realisation that robbing others of such traits contributes to eliminating them as a source of competition. Amour propre as a social phenomenon functions to create a degree of conformity to the prevailing mores and thus promotes unity, and crucially, reliance upon others for one’s sense of self-worth. This final point is central for it is this quality that binds once free individuals to their lives within society; in need of valorisation from their peers to feel good society and subjectivity are now intertwined in a dance of mutual entailment. This need for self-esteem creates a willingness to outshine others and justifies all manner of actions, thus individuals become in Rousseau’s words ‘bloodthirsty and cruel’.

The socially derived aspects of amour propre, then, function to create a certain type of reliance amongst members of a given community upon each other for a sense of self-esteem, encouraging individuals to project and assume a certain persona in order to gain the esteem of those around them, and further ‘human vanity and the capacity for deception — a combination fatal to cooperation — develop hand-in-hand and reinforce each other.’ This characterisation furthers Rousseau’s analysis of the origins and increase of inequality, situating it within the psychological arena as a profound need for recognition and valorisation and the willingness to subject others to conditions favourable to one’s own success in this regard. Crucially, such is the force of the pathological need for a sense of superiority – which manifests in both small scale social interactions and as institutionalised forms of domination – that Rousseau deems amour propre to be the root cause of inequality for the rest of history. Moreover, as

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117 Ibid, p.64.
Trachtenberg comments ‘[a]s nascent society progresses, the hold of amour propre on human psychology grows more and more complete. . . man becomes more and more a social creation.’  

In this way the path has been laid for the eventual domination of the qualitative sphere by amour propre, a domination that comes to create vast indifference to the plight of the less fortunate within those for whom social, and to some extent natural, inequality has provided power and wealth.

Before further assessing the circumstantial element to amour propre we turn now to the implications for subjectivity in relation to how such a persona might come to be instantiated within individuals given the paucity of ontological material available to them within the state of nature. This transition is neither described nor explained explicitly by Rousseau and so we are here embarking on a reconstruction, providing an account of the constitutive component in order to fully explicate the dialectic of change Rousseau envisages. Amour propre is a profound alteration within subjectivity both structurally and qualitatively, it is closely tied to the rise and maturation of complex conceptuality and our task now is to explain how such a development could have occurred and to examine exactly what such changes consist in. Our close reading of the alterations that Rousseau argues subjectivity undergoes demands that, especially in relation to amour propre, as clear a picture as possible is encouraged to emerge. In giving a detailed treatment of this issue we are aiming not only to gain evaluative clarity but also to demonstrate the depth of Rousseau’s thought in relation to this component of subjectivity. Other commentators, while recognising the importance of amour propre to Rousseau’s thought, under-evaluate the extent of the changes that it produces in subjectivity. Simpson, for example, glosses amour propre as ‘vanity’, a definition which leaves a significant amount left unsaid.

A psychological definition of amour propre such as the one Simpson puts forward is, we suggest, necessary but not sufficient to fully explicate the concept as Rousseau discusses it within the SD. Simpson states

‘there arose a desire to be regarded highly by one’s peers, which Rousseau argued is the basic

120 Trachtenberg refers to amour propre as ‘a complex structure of consciousness’ though chooses to emphasise the psychological and social implications of this phenomenon. See, Trachtenberg, Making Citizens, Rousseau’s Political Theory of Culture, (Taylor & Francis, USA, 2003), p.121.
cause of violence. To express this idea he used the term *amour-propre*, a very complicated concept in his work, which I will translate as 'vanity'. At the risk of simplifying too much, vanity is a socialized form of the natural human concern for one's own well-being.  

Simpson’s over-simplification here focuses on the qualitative while neglecting the ontological almost entirely and our aim in referencing his treatment of amour propre is to provide some context for the following lengthy analysis of how subjectivity comes to instantiate such a complex mode of identity formation. To fully understand Rousseau’s idea an ontological analysis is indispensable because it is only when the structure and origins of amour propre are examined that we get to the core of what Rousseau meant when discussing the origin of inequality. In this sense an ontological analysis provides more than just a structural account, but also deepens our qualitative, psychological, understanding of amour propre. Finally, examining amour propre in this manner demonstrates, we suggest, the utility of our methodological categories, given that they reveal much that would, as in the case of Simpson’s treatment, be left unsaid or perhaps even undiscovered.

2.4.1 Complex Conceptuality and the Dialectic Growth of Amour Propre

According to Rousseau, then, there stands a significant difference between the iterations of subjectivity within the state of nature and the phase of association, and in order to understand how something as complex as amour propre could arise within individuals requires that we chart the origins of such a development. As already noted the structures of subjectivity within the state of nature are underdeveloped and thus cannot function as the necessary basis for the instantiation of persona. The ontological structures required for an individual to take their social identity as an object and reify both the world of experience and self are clearly lacking during that phase, and persona requires such a framework to operate. However, prior to this situation is the introduction of a cognitive capacity which itself shapes the structures of subjectivity as well as provoking a great leap in intellectual faculties, namely, abstract or complex conceptuality. This development begins the process that allows subjectivity to assume new and more complex forms, with the chief result being that subjectivity matures such that it

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122 Ibid.
can understand, and to some extent observe, itself as a unique agent individuated structurally, and, increasingly within the phase of association, qualitatively.

Chronologically complex conceptuality and amour propre arise in sequence within Rousseau’s narrative but the somewhat symbiotic relationship between them needs clarification for a number of reasons. Firstly, Rousseau himself tells us that ‘reason engenders egocentrism’,\textsuperscript{123} that is, complex conceptuality makes possible amour propre, yet he omits a detailed explanation of this developmental process, instead outlining only the most significant alterations to subjectivity: ‘I am flying like an arrow over the multitude of centuries’.\textsuperscript{124} Thus when amour propre is introduced by Rousseau, descriptions of the structural and cognitive complexity necessary to house and fuel its operations are absent from his narrative, though implied, allowing us to follow the clues within the text in order to develop our thesis. This absence stands as another example of an explanatory gap in Rousseau’s narrative given that while it describes it clearly fails to explain clearly the links between reason and amour propre. Further, when Rousseau states that amour propre derives from making comparisons he fails to account for the many cognitive achievements that this possibility represents, such as the acquisition and use memory and an understanding of the utility of objects. Also, prior to the rise of amour propre individuals had already gained the use of language, formed family units, and covered wooden frameworks ‘with clay and mud’.\textsuperscript{125}

Our task in this section then is two-fold. Generally speaking we will undertake an analysis of subjectivity as the constitutive component, as it contributes to the rise of amour propre. Once again it is our contention that through the addition of the constitutive component a dialectical analysis garners greater explanatory force and argumentative clarity. The first step in this aim will be to undertake an analysis of the import of the absence of complex conceptuality within the state of nature in order to demonstrate by way of contrast the impact of this component on subjectivity as a whole. The lack of complex conceptuality within the state of nature can be understood as a crucial factor in relation to both the content and structure of subjectivity during that phase. This also stands as a demonstration of Rousseau’s methodology, in that when removing the capacity for complex conceptuality from subjectivity we are witness to more than

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid, p.62.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
a case of simple subtraction. Rather, the other components come to function differently when left unfiltered by complex conceptuality.

This analysis functions to justify and contextualise our argument outlined above regarding the consequences of conceptuality’s development during the phase of association and its relation to amour propre. It also enables us to gain a clear understanding of what complex conceptuality is by witnessing what occurs to other subjective components when it is absent. Secondly, in section 2.4.2 we will assess exactly what model of conceptuality Rousseau is working with in order to clarify its origins and development. In particular this issue will be examined in order to distinguish between complex conceptuality and amour propre as examining the extent to which conceptuality is or is not free from the pathological traits that amour propre exhibits is crucial to clarifying the origins of the pathology within amour propre.

Commentators rightly emphasise *amour de soi* and *pity* as characterising the state of nature, and indeed they are both substantial and important subjective components, however, to do so without an analysis of conceptuality, we contest, is to miss the opportunity to fully understand Rousseau’s characterisation of subjectivity within this phase. For example, Trachtenberg states that ‘[f]or Rousseau . . . amour de soi and pity are what remain when the traits due to social existence are abstracted away from people, these are the characteristics of abstract individuals,’ and, ‘the instinct for self-preservation and pity are the ingredients of the psychological picture Rousseau offers of life in the state of nature.’

Also, Simpson suggests, in relation to individuals in the state of nature, that ‘[t]heir only drives were a basic instinct for self-preservation and the capacity to feel pain at the suffering of others.’ Through our hermeneutic of subjectivity the manner in which a lack of complex conceptuality shapes and allows for the functioning of these other components comes to the fore. In this way, then, we can see how Rousseau arrives at his characterisation of pre-social subjectivity through his methodological process of stripping away from qualities derived in society.

While both of the above authors point out that other components, such as free will and perfectibility, play their part in this phase of subjectivity, neither emphasise the important role that a lack of conceptuality plays. In part this is because in order to include a lack of

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conceptuality as qualitatively influential we must allow for a qualitative element to such absence. To arrive at such a point requires paying close attention to exactly how the alteration from the delimited form of subjectivity in the state of nature to the complex form found during the phase of association occurs. We shall argue that we can and should view a lack of complex conceptuality as being not solely an ontological or narrative ‘fact’, but as a substantial reason for the particular structural and qualitative configuration Rousseau proposes within the state of nature. That Rousseau’s portrait of subjectivity during the state of nature is derived in large part through removing abstract conceptuality from subjectivity in order to arrive at its delimited status.

As we have already seen, during the pre-social phase of Rousseau’s narrative he describes the abstract individual whose subjectivity is far removed from a common conception of what constitutes a human being. In this section we are arguing that the stand out difference between this phase and later phases is the absence of abstract conceptuality, and we would now argue that Rousseau himself demonstrates this not only through his philosophical narrative in general but also when, in criticising Locke and Hobbes, he notes that

‘The philosophers who have examined the foundations of society have all felt the necessity of returning to the state of nature, but none of them has reached it. Some have not hesitated to ascribe the notion of just and unjust, without bothering to show that he had to have that notion . . . Others started out by giving authority to the stronger over the weaker, and immediately brought about government, without giving any thought to the time that had to pass before the meaning of the words “authority” and “government” could exist among men.’¹²⁸

Thus, to go further than those who have attempted a similar project is to go beyond conceptuality, to form an analysis of subjectivity prior to the arrival of linguistic and conceptual capacities, and this is the key factor distinguishing this and later phases. This account of the role of conceptuality can be broadened by examining the implicit component of pity, to which we turn now.

Within the state of nature Rousseau describes the benevolence of those individuals whom upon encountering another suffering being encounter ‘an innate repugnance’, the likes of which places

a limit on the extent to which both experiencing another’s pain, and actively harming another being, can be tolerated. This pity then is for Rousseau one of the chief reasons why other depictions of the state of nature, such as Hobbes’, got things so wrong in presuming a high level of individual antagonism. Individuals are for Rousseau neither callous nor competitive or motivated by a desire to conquer others, rather,

‘It is . . . quite certain that pity is a natural sentiment, which, by moderating in each individual the activity of [amour de soi], contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species. Pity is what carries us without reflection to the aid of those we see suffering.’

The connection between the component of pity and a lack of conceptuality is to be found within Rousseau’s description of the conditions for pity’s successful activation, and, as we shall argue, the qualitative aspects that Rousseau himself suggests characterise reason. When contrasting the extent of its capacity within the state of nature on the one hand, and a civil society on the other, Rousseau claimed of pity that it is ‘a sentiment that is obscure and powerful in savage man, developed but weak in a man dwelling civil society.’ Rousseau’s justification for suggesting that, despite lacking a sophisticated imagination, individuals within the pre-social phase of subjectivity can nevertheless powerfully relate to others’ suffering, is that the absence of abstract conceptuality is accompanied by a greater sense of emotional immediacy between the individual and the world of their experience. This means that objectivity – the conceptual distancing that abstract thought, or reason, is capable of instigating – functions as a psychological barrier to pity, limiting its capacity for identification with another being because it inculcates and supports a stronger sense of an isolated self.

Speaking of reason Rousseau states

‘Reason is what engenders [amour propre], and reflection strengthens it. Reason is what turns man in upon himself. Reason is what separates him from all that troubles him and afflicts him. Philosophy is what isolates him and what moves him to say in secret, at the sight of a suffering man, “Perish if you

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129 Ibid, p.52.
130 Ibid, p.53.
131 Ibid, p.55.
will; I am safe and sound.” . . . Savage man does not have this admirable talent, and for the lack of wisdom and reason he is always seen thoughtlessly giving in to the first sentiment of humanity.'

Reason, then, as a contingent fact born within a post-state of nature phase of development, modifies the activity of the implicit component of pity. And where Rousseau depicts amour propre as being particularly virulent reason also acts to deactivate pity, essentially replacing it as the de facto mode of interaction between individuals. In this way then pity is a ‘pure movement of nature prior to all reflection’ not simply in a narrative chronological sense but also because it relies on an absence of conceptuality, in both an ontological and qualitative manner, to facilitate its operations. Interestingly the above quotation can be read in a manner which supports our argument that complex conceptuality (reason) has structural or ontological effects as well as those effects deriving from the content of the reasoning process in the form of ideas. As Rousseau points out in the beginning of the passage, working in tangent the structure that reason imposes aids in the creation of amour propre, and the content, the ideas utilised thereby, solidify its operations further. When Rousseau states that reason ‘turns man in upon himself’ we can see this as a description of contemplative introspection, or, as a structural episode. This latter interpretation supports our view that it is complex conceptuality that catalyses the ability of subjectivity to take its inner world as an ‘object’, and, as we shall argue below, functions as the subjective ground of amour propre.

During this phase of the simple form of subjectivity Rousseau characterises individuals as incapable of relating to a temporal horizon beyond the immediate present and accordingly structuring their lives with ‘neither foresight nor curiosity’. The extent of this temporal delimitation is characterised well when Rousseau states: ‘[h]is soul, agitated by nothing, is given over to the single feeling of his own present existence, without any idea of the future, however near it may be.’ This inability is derived specifically from the lack of the abstract concepts concerning the future, which in turn results in the absence of all manner of associated behaviours relating to temporal sophistication. For example, Rousseau notes that ‘his projects, as limited as his views, hardly extend to the end of the day’, and, through what Rousseau presumably thought was a fine anthropological comparison, and for our purposes serves solely to further

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133 Ibid, p.54-55.
134 Ibid, p.54.
135 Ibid, p.46.
136 Ibid, p.46.
our understanding of Rousseau’s position, he suggests ‘[s]uch is, even today, the extent of the Carib’s foresight. In the morning he sells his bed of cotton and in the evening he returns in tears to buy it back, for want of having foreseen that he would need it that night.’\textsuperscript{137}

Again we can see here how for Rousseau’s narrative the abstract quality of thought is related to the capacity to create distance between the individual and the object of their consideration, which in the above example is the present moment. The extent to which individuals during this phase were situated so strictly within the present moment, then, renders their experience of life radically different to later phases, both phenomenologically and in terms of lifestyle. A further significant issue that the absence of complex temporal awareness raises is the relationship between time, memory, and identity. It is unclear from Rousseau’s depiction of individuals within this phase of subjectivity whether or not their temporal awareness was supportive of a complex form of identity, given the crucial role that memory plays in constructing this component of subjectivity. If individuals were able to conceive of the past, and maintain memories, then greater material existed during this phase of subjectivity for the accumulation of identity than if they could not. On the other hand, if the past was limited to the near distant then likewise identity, in regards to memory at least, would be similarly curtailed.\textsuperscript{138} This situation is a vivid example of why we describe subjectivity as ‘delimited’ during this phase.

In relation to amour de soi, as it was for temporal awareness, it is the lack of objectifying capacities that mitigate the extent to which the ontological structures of subjectivity are capable of further development. This means that subjectivity in this phase is unable to create the internal distance required for a strong sense of self-representation. Accordingly amour de soi does not evince any sense of identity or persona, individuals within this phase related to their world without the requirements born of self-image. The lack of structural complexity evinced by amour de soi, we contest, is demonstrated in a more fluid relationship between inner and outer evidenced through the empathy found within the component of pity. Individuals during this phase crossed the boundary of their interiority far more readily than their counterparts subsequent to the phase of association. Those later phases demonstrate greater entrenchment of the structures of subjectivity resulting in a more clearly defined separation between self and other, and consequently a greater unwillingness to share the plight of other members of ones

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid, p.46.
\textsuperscript{138} For an overview of this issue see Beike; Lampinen; Behren; The Self and Memory, (Psychology Press, New York, 2004).
social grouping. The maintenance of such structures is a key factor in the pathology of amour propre and will be examined further below.

Here then we can see clearly the manner in which the ontological alterations Rousseau charts manifest qualitatively as the psychological condition and behaviours of those thus constituted. Further, the dynamic interplay between circumstance and subjectivity is evidenced in the story of the development of conceptuality through the origins of language within social groupings. In turn certain implicit components, such as pity and amour de soi, are effectively (though not completely) deactivated, while other explicit qualities become active and come to assume the role of constitutive component. In this case it is the arrival of language that inaugurates the development of conceptuality and this situation then functions as the constitutive component for the development of amour propre, in tandem with the competitive social situation Rousseau envisages. To further explore this development we will turn now to the role that language plays.

2.4.2 Rousseau’s Model of Conceptuality

In this section we will examine how Rousseau conceives of conceptuality and its relation to subjectivity as a whole. This means ascertaining the relations it has towards emotions and instinct, and other impulses such as pride. Further we will also assess what ontological alterations it contributes to subjectivity, and what effect these have upon the manner in which subjectivity’s epistemological operations function.

As we have seen, subjectivity in the state of nature is significantly simplified in contrast to its mature iteration within society, in terms of cognitive capacity, lifestyle and social organisation. These interrelated aspects of human life demonstrate an extreme lack of content, which is to say, that lacking complex concepts individuals in this phase of development also lacked the capacity to produce concomitant forms of complex social life and culture. In this sense the mutually reinforcing dynamic characteristic of Rousseau’s general conception of development is absent in this phase of subjectivity: a status quo prevails. Rousseau subsequently charts the slow growth of human faculties and embarks upon a brief discussion on the origins of complex

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conceptuality within a section on the development of language. We find Rousseau assessing the emergence of the use of proper nouns and suggesting that these were the primary elements of language; in this way he understood the notion of abstract concepts as forming the basis and the basic building blocks of a bourgeoning capacity for rationality. Rousseau notes that ‘general ideas can be introduced to the mind only with the aid of words’ and that ‘[e]very general idea is purely intellectual’. By way of an example Rousseau states ‘[t]ry to draw for yourself the image of a tree in general; you will never succeed in doing it. In spite of yourself, it must be seen as small or large, barren or leafy.’ Thus we can see that for Rousseau it is with the arrival of abstract categories such as ‘dog’ or ‘tree’ that language and conceptuality enter into the beginnings of their maturity.

These basic building blocks allow for the manipulation of concepts and this capacity is crucial for cognitive maturation. Prior to this, understanding was in some sense static, that is, it was tied to more fundamental but less sophisticated processes such as instinct, and these processes while intelligent were not intellectual. This distinction rests, we would suggest, upon the inclusion within instinct of a form of instrumental reasoning which performed basic analyses of situations in regards to action and outcome with such ‘intelligence’ providing for the survival of the species. Beyond this it is important to note that it is only with the onset of language that Rousseau can conceive of any such bourgeoning sophistication becoming possible, drawing our attention to the interactive and communal origins for a cognitive capacity not found within the pure state of nature. In this sense it is both the arrival of general concepts and their use within a community that, coupled with the innate capacity for perfection, gives rise to complex conceptuality and later, to amour propre.

In characterising conceptuality as an aspect of the subjective ground of amour propre it is important that the difference between the two is clearly demarcated. The pathology of amour propre exhibits forms of behaviour that demonstrate high degrees of compulsivity, for example,

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141 Ibid.
142 It is worth noting in this regard the similarities between Rousseau’s theories and those of his contemporary Immanuel Kant. Kant’s work on aesthetics in the ‘Critique of Judgment’ provide an interesting backdrop to our discussion of conceptuality in Rousseau because Kant also analyses both the role of abstract conceptuality in everyday experience and also what role its absence has during aesthetics moments. As with Rousseau the effect of conceptuality on subjectivity plays a considerable part in Kant’s ontology.
143 Ibid.
individuals caught in its sway are driven to conform and compete with those in their social grouping. Such compulsion is part and parcel of the manner in which amour propre shapes subjectivity but what of complex conceptuality? Does it also emerge with pathologies embedded within its operations? To put it another way, is rationality to be considered a free process, or on the other hand does Rousseau characterise it as subordinated to other more primary motivations and impulses? ‘Free’ in this sense we will take to mean whether rationality’s capacity for judgement has access to forms of logical objectivity, that it can function along logical lines without being dominated by other subjective ontological or qualitative processes such as emotionality, the pathology of amour propre, or some other such rationale deriving from the aforementioned heightened sense of interiority. For the purposes of this discussion, we can, following Nagel, say that logical objectivity provides access to ‘universally valid methods of objective thought’, and as such is at least potentially free from such influences. Does Rousseau’s narrative reflect this assumption?

Within Rousseau’s narrative the period which features the establishment of complex conceptuality prior to his introduction of amour propre is the phase of association and the build up to it discussed in section 2.2.1. Here we find social groupings forming and the beginnings of building techniques, hunting skills, language formation and other such capacities. Despite the obvious necessity for an advanced form of conceptuality to carry out such tasks Rousseau does not include a discussion of its role, but what is evident is that sufficient cooperation took place in order to establish proto communities and develop various shared skills. Complex conceptuality was active during this phase then; temporal awareness necessary for building shelters and language for communicating joint endeavours, point towards the use and communication of abstract concepts. Trachtenberg shares this view, commenting ‘[o]nly after men have come out of the state of nature, have at once developed their mental powers and begun to live together, can they apply their new-found powers of comparison to each other and thereby experience amour propre.’

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144 Ibid, p.67.
145 Assessing Rousseau’s thoughts on rationality in this manner takes its lead in part from Nagel, The Last Word, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1997).
However, let us bear in mind that when comparison-making occurred prior to this phase subjectivity was immediately moved by the ‘first stirrings of pride’, as such we can see that pride is an original influence upon the processes of reason, despite the lack of an objectifying capacity at that stage of subjectivity’s development.\(^\text{148}\) As an emotion or attitude pride acts to hijack reason according to Rousseau, which otherwise may have been successful in its employment of more free forms of thought. The extent to which this is the case however is especially unclear at the point in the narrative at which Rousseau mentions it and we shall address the issue further below. In relation to emotions Rousseau proposes an account wherein reason alone is insufficient as catalyst for decision making ‘[w]e seek to know only because we desire to find enjoyment; and it is impossible to know why someone who had neither desires nor fears would go to the bother of reasoning’.\(^\text{149}\) At other times Rousseau notes ‘[r]eason is what turns man in upon himself. Reason is what separates him from all that troubles him and afflicts him’,\(^\text{150}\) thus reason’s capacity for objectivity assures the individual the ability to go beyond the impulses of feeling and assess a situation without emotionality occupying the driving seat. What then of instinct?

We have already noted how for Rousseau rationality is able to circumvent the dictates of instinct in our discussion of the will when we saw how individuals could override instinct even if it was to their detriment. This ability evinces sufficient independence on the part of the reasoning process to conclude that complex conceptuality is able to take such impulses as instinct from a distance, to regard them objectively and assess their merit. In this sense then we can see that complex conceptuality is free to some extent from the aspect of instinct that functions as command. Thus, regarding these points we can, borrowing a phrase from moral theory, label Rousseau’s approach in relation to emotion, instinct and reason as ‘compatibilist’, with neither component being totally in control and each informing the processes giving rise to action. However, Rousseau’s conception of reason needs further explication to fully understand its role within subjectivity as a whole.

As we have already seen the development of complex conceptuality is not solely an intellectual one but also an ontological or structural feature of consciousness. As such it contributes to


\(^{150}\) Ibid, p.54.
create certain epistemological relations between the individual and object(s) of experience. We have previously referred to this as ‘conceptual distance’ in relation to the alterations that the innate component of pity undergoes and furthering our analysis of this is central to understanding how the ontological material that amour propre relies on is formed. As ‘purely intellectual’ the abstract quality of abstract (complex) concepts derives from their lack of specificity: they do not pick out a specific example in the world of their genus. Accordingly subjectivity now has at its disposal the ability to take for itself a range of ‘objects’, both inner and outer, and view them with increasing degrees of objectivity. It is this understanding of the new found objectivity that needs expanding if we are to fully understand Rousseau’s model of conceptuality and rationality, and its ontological and qualitative impact on subjectivity.

The import of conceptual objectivity in relation to the outside world is greater skill in manipulation and organisation of the material world; the manner in which it allows for new conceptual apparatus to take subjectivity’s inner world as an object allows for self-representation to occur. This ability is crucial to the development of amour propre as social self, and is a multivalent aspect of subjectivity’s development. In the first instance this capacity can be understood along merely functional lines, that is, in relation to the manipulation of concepts to navigate experience, for the greater capacity for and articulation of memory for example. Yet further to this Rousseau also includes within this development the negative impact of the absence of aesthetic immediacy that we witnessed in relation to the innate component of pity, the heightened sense of interiority objectivity inculcates, and the impact of this heightened sense in relation to the qualitative element of distance it subsequently produces. With conceptual objectivity then is allied distance, with distance comes a greater sense of separation, which in turn grants greater explanatory force for our argument, namely, that complex conceptuality is the subjective ground of amour propre.

For Rousseau it is the capacity for aesthetic empathy that characterises pity, which in turn is partly responsible for the stability and lack of aggression within the pure state of nature. Despite this boon, however, there is no true moral content demonstrated by this quality as Rousseau requires morality to be born of principles which can only be arrived at through rationality. As such Rousseau finds himself poised on a double-edged sword. On the one hand he requires rationality for moral principles to develop and yet the abstraction and distance that accompany complex conceptuality also provide the necessary cognitive capacity for the
development of amour propre, the very component of subjectivity responsible for the predominance of selfish attitudes and the downfall of civil society.

In this sense the two aspects of abstract thought and the distance connected to them can be understood as giving rise to further and more complex forms of distance as abstract thought develops into rationality proper. The abstraction of generalised concepts gives rise to the possibility for the justification of moral inaction, and the negative space, the lack of aesthetic empathy, makes possible the pathology of amour propre in terms of its attempts to concretise and substantiate itself through the objectifying capacity of conceptuality, furthering the neglect and domination of others within society. This notion of distance that we have been pursuing is alluded to by Glass when he states that ‘[t]he more "abstract" or conceptual we become, the greater the distance between the natural self and the ego, and "thinking" predicated on the maintenance of egoism and separation produces a momentous alienation.\textsuperscript{151} Here we can see that for Glass distance is linked with an alienation from a prior, more ‘natural self’, the implication being that in the state of nature alienation did not occur and moreover individuals were equipped with some form of self-realisation. As we have already seen however, this is a conclusion that is hard to find support for within the SD. Rousseau’s portrait of subjectivity prior to the arrival of complex conceptuality does not, we contest, supply sufficient ontological material to produce forms of self-awareness similar to what most individuals would recognise as human.

To summarise then, what we have found is that the ontological alterations in subjectivity derived from the development of complex conceptuality give rise to a number of qualitative changes. Those components of subjectivity within the pure state of nature are curtailed: aesthetic immediacy, temporal immediacy, the lack of self-representation, all give way to a phenomenal sense of distance and separation. Clearly then, for Rousseau, the establishment of complex conceptuality creates a lasting effect on the manner in which subjectivity comes to processes experience. Further, the effects of distance are significant and certainly impair reason’s ability towards logical thought and rationality in that these processes are caused to function alongside the qualitative effects of complex conceptuality. Related to this subjectivity becomes more complex structurally, that is to say the temporal division of past present and

future coupled with self-reflexiveness signifies that the relative simplicity of the previous iteration of subjectivity has come to an end.

Abstract concepts take on the epistemological role as modus operandi, and come to operate as the preeminent manner through which experience is processed. It is in this way that we see the development of this phase of subjectivity becoming the constitutive component for the subsequent rise of amour propre. Without the capacity for self-reflexiveness amour propre could not function as the vehicle responsible for maintaining the socially derived content for self-representation, or persona, that Rousseau so strongly advocates against. Without the stifling of aesthetic immediacy brought about through the greater sense of interiority the selfishness of amour propre would be constantly at odds with the more primitive amour de soi and pity. It is in this sense then that we would argue that complex conceptuality is both prior to, and the subsequent fuel for, amour propre, with the key difference being that amour propre piggy backs on the capacity of complex conceptuality and creates persona, a component characterised by pathological tendencies which demonstrates considerable contingency, in particular through its reliance on others. This latter facet of amour propre will be discussed in greater detail in the section below.

Rousseau’s own definition of amour propre as having ‘its source in comparisons’ lends weight to our assertion here that complex conceptuality is a prerequisite for amour propre in that the ability to make such comparisons is a necessary factor for its operations. Making comparisons occurs within the context of stable social groupings and as we have already noted this phase itself requires complex conceptuality in order to provide the cognitive capacity to undertake such tasks as planning, building, and so forth. Further, ontologically speaking it is clear that the structures of consciousness must have developed sufficiently such that the inner world of an individual is capable of being represented to that person, given that we are here talking about the internalisation of social mores and resultant attitudes of amour propre. As Hill puts it in his discussion of amour propre ‘[b]efore a person can be moved by pride, he must first have a conception of himself as the object of another person’s judgment.’

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Accordingly, as the basis for identity we can see how that for Rousseau complex conceptuality is crucial to enriching the ontological material out which amour propre grows. Important questions still remain however, such as whether or not Rousseau argues for any necessity in regards to the growth of amour propre out of subjectivity’s condition at this stage, and, to what extent is amour propre a mutable quality within society proper. In service of clarifying these questions, and in deepening out attempt to fill the explanatory gap left by Rousseau in relation to the relation between reason and amour propre, a closer look we will be taken at the above distinction between the self-reflexive and the self-reflective, given that based upon our analysis in this section the former is prior to the latter. In the next section then we will address these questions alongside Rousseau’s proposal to amalgamate the qualitative bent of amour propre within the context of a healthily functioning society. Given that for Rousseau amour propre is the cause of inequality and concomitant societal fragmentation we can see that its amelioration is of considerable concern for him. His prescriptive solution then now comes to the fore and so we are poised to assess to what extent his argumentation thus far has been successful in creating the philosophical ground for his social theory in general.

2.5 – The Rise and Fall of Amour Propre

In this section we begin our explanation of the final phase of Rousseau’s narrative in the *SD*. Once amour propre comes to dominate the social sphere over the centuries, it contributes to increased inequality, a process which engenders significant instability within society. During this phase of the *SD* Rousseau articulates his theory that while amour propre is the origin of inequality, it is in conjunction with circumstantial facts such as private property and the division of labour, that the foundations for institutionalised social inequality are formed, thus answering the question set by the Academy of Dijon. We will begin, once again, by framing the section with an explication of subjectivity as the constitutive component of this phase in Rousseau’s narrative. After that we will examine how and in what way amour propre comes to govern the lives of individuals, and assess the link between amour propre and persona in detail. Finally an examination of Rousseau’s proposals for the mitigation of amour propre will be presented. It is worth mentioning at this juncture that Rousseau was not entirely critical of amour propre, but rather frames his discussion of its impact with the idea that when regulated, i.e. when its tendency towards becoming destructive to society at large, its egotism, is kept in balance, amour propre can act as a force for good. For example in fostering a social milieu of
competition Rousseau believes amour propre encourages individuals to pursue their chosen fields to its limits, and thus contributes to the overall development of learning and advancement of skills within society.

2.5.1 – The Ground of Amour Propre and the Emergence of the Social Self

Subsequent to Rousseau’s second revolution outlined above subjectivity has now reached maturity, and accordingly produced concomitant levels of complexity within the various arenas of the social sphere: industry, culture, language, economics, industry, social interactivity, and so forth. Rationality and reasoning have come to the fore, driving exponential growth and adding new and unimagined horizons to humanity’s existence, with ‘the mind having nearly reached the limit of the perfection of which it is capable’. And yet correlative to these developments is the growth and dominance of amour propre, which eventually comes to create a highly pernicious state of social and psychological affairs. Rousseau describes amour propre vividly in this manner:

‘. . . consuming ambition, the zeal for raising the relative level of [their] fortune, less out of real need than in order to put [themselves] above others, inspires in all men a wicked tendency to harm one another, a secret jealousy all the more dangerous because, in order to strike its blow in greater safety, it often wears the mask of benevolence; in short, competition and rivalry on the one hand, opposition of interests on the other, and always the hidden desire to profit at the expense of someone else.’

This extreme portrait is typical of the extent to which Rousseau conceives of subjectivity as infected by the dictates of amour propre during this phase, but before looking closer at this phenomenon itself, let us turn again to its origins.

As per our dialectic formula outlined in section 1.5.3 we can frame our understanding of the rise of amour propre according to the ontological material available to it at the time of its

155 Trachtenberg, following Rousseau’s thinking in *The Social Contract*, frames this as the cause for ‘political failure’ as well as the origin of inequality, see Trachtenberg, *Making Citizens, Rousseau’s Political Theory of Culture*, (Taylor & Francis, USA, 2003), p.117.
156 Ibid, p.68.
emergence, coupled with the circumstantial situation contributing to its activation. Rousseau himself does not present the stages of growth of subjectivity in such detail and so we are here embarking on a reconstruction of sorts but also attempting to gain greater clarity as to exactly what is required for subjectivity such that the unique traits of amour propre can be explained. Subjectivity up to this point has developed in complexity such that ontologically it has given rise to what we will term a self-reflexive structure of consciousness and this, we argued, arose out of the capacity for abstract conceptuality and its ability to create distance. Subjectivity now has a structure which turns back upon itself and accordingly develops a richer qualitative sense of interiority. These two aspects – the reflexive ontology and the qualitative sense of interiority – we contest, function at this stage of Rousseau’s narrative as the ground upon which amour propre is based.

What amour propre contributes to this, if taken for the moment ontologically, is a strong form of self-representation which has as its content the social self, or persona. Alongside this are those predominant emotional drives such pride and fear, and of course the ability to form and manipulate abstract concepts. The constitutive component then could be said to consist in the ‘hardware’ that the ‘software’ of the social self then utilises in order to function. Simon-Ingram however regards self-reflexivity as a part of amour propre and not prior to it. In her negative appraisal of this development, which Simon-Ingram labels the ‘doubling of consciousness or a folding back of thought on itself’, she claims that self-reflexiveness leads to an ‘alienating self-objectification’. A difference between our reading of this point is one of chronology, and thus my inclusion of an analysis of complex conceptuality separate to amour propre points towards the possibility of a form of complex consciousness free of pathological dictates. On the other hand Simon-Ingram understands the structural movement of self-reflexivity as concomitant with amour propre and thus understands it to be necessarily problematic.

When assessing the qualities of amour propre it is clear that the two ontological components of subjectivity outlined above are necessary factors for its successful operation. Without self-reflexivity the individual would lack the required structures to realise any form of identity, consciousness would fail to turn its gaze towards its own content, and further, without the sense of interiority the private cultivation of a persona would be rendered obsolete in that the

phenomenal sense of a private world would fail to occur. This then is the subjective ground of amour propre which encounters a catalyst in the form of new conditions within the circumstantial arena. As we saw in section 2.4 the social sphere engenders within those who belong to it the process of comparison-making in relation to characteristics that individuals possess or lack. These characteristics are those deemed favourable or unfavourable according to the prevalent social mores and thus individuals became accustomed to either attempting to obtain such favourable characteristics, to hide or lose unfavourable characteristics, or, present themselves as if they did indeed possess such qualities when in fact they do not. This, then, is the birth of the social self.

As we have seen amour propre is, according to Rousseau, ‘a sentiment which has its source in comparisons’, 158 these comparisons began within the phase wherein individuals sought to seem popular or desirable in the eyes of the opposite sex. 159 This is the biological impulse which when faced with the circumstantial catalyst of competition for sexual partners instigates the process of amour propre. Alongside this stands the relationship comparison-making has to pride and the extent to which such pride drives amour propre. The acquisition or semblance of socially approved qualities is not merely a simple cause-effect scenario within which individuals are satisfied to acquire these qualities in order to gain what it is they aim for. Rather, a psychologically significant personal investment takes place in the form of pride. Individuals gain an unhealthy form of self-esteem in the form of self-preferential pride through instantiating, or appearing to, those qualities valued by their social group. Subsequently pride becomes in some sense hereditary due to successive generations valorising qualities which individuals are then encouraged to either assume or attain. 160

Describing this process Rousseau argues that through demonstrating possession of certain qualities individuals establish themselves in the eyes of others and thus gain satisfaction in this achievement. He states:

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159 Ibid, p.63-64.
160 To perfect human reason while deteriorating the species, make a being evil while rendering it habituated to the ways of society, and, from so distant a beginning, finally being man and the world to the point where we see them now’, ibid, p.59.
‘since these qualities were the only ones that could attract consideration, he was soon forced to have
them or affect them. It was necessary, for his advantage, to show himself to be something other than
what he in fact was. Being something and appearing to be something became two completely different
things; and from this distinction there arose grand ostentation, deceptive cunning, and all the vices that
follow in their wake.’\textsuperscript{161}

The extent to which individuals will go to gain approbation demonstrates the singular hold that
amour propre has over subjectivity. Rousseau does not characterise amour propre as one
influential trait amongst others during this phase (as he did during the phase of association)\textsuperscript{162}
but as the dominant drive within subjectivity and the sole cause of a profound degradation of
the social sphere.

Continuing his description of this component Rousseau states that, the

‘universal desire for reputation, honors, and preferences. . . devours us all. . . it excites the passions;
and, by making all men competitors, rivals, or rather enemies, how many setbacks, successes and
catastrophes of every sort it causes every day. . . it is to this ardor for making oneself the topic of
conversation, to this furor to distinguish oneself which nearly always keeps us outside ourselves.’\textsuperscript{163}

The above quotation contains a certain ambiguity in regards to the extent to which we can say
individuals inhabit their personas, and subsequently raises the issue of whether an alternative
presents itself. When Rousseau states that individuals ‘nearly always’ live in their persona, we
can compare this to a later comment that states ‘the man accustomed to the ways of society \textit{is}
always outside himself} and knows how to live only in the opinion of others. And it is, as it were, from
their judgment alone that he draws the sentiment of his own existence.’\textsuperscript{164} In offering a highly
singular account of subjectivity within this phase Rousseau has no alternatives to the social self
to present, and yet, we would suggest that the possibility that individuals could live
permanently in their persona is a claim in need of substantial support. Further, had Rousseau
theoretically separated out complex conceptuality from amour propre in a more systematic

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid, p.67.
\textsuperscript{162} Those other traits were amour de soi and pity.
\textsuperscript{163} Rousseau, \textit{Discourse on the Origin of Inequality}, in, \textit{Jean-Jacques Rousseau Basic Political
\textsuperscript{164} Rousseau, \textit{Discourse on the Origin of Inequality}, in, \textit{Jean-Jacques Rousseau Basic Political
manner, the question of how subjectivity might entertain a persona selectively would gain greater traction, perhaps solving the above mentioned ambiguity.

This issue raises a number of questions about the form of subjectivity during this phase, for example the extent to which individuals come to identify with the content of their personas. If individuals live ‘outside of themselves’ is there in any sense an inner self is being referred to? Indeed we can see from Rousseau’s description that there is more than one type of persona that subjectivity houses. For example, those who successfully acquire socially approved qualities and those who merely feign them, and others (probably the largest category) who are a mixture of both. To what differing extents do such individuals believe that their social selves are in fact the real them, and to what extent does Rousseau conceive of a ‘real’ person behind the persona? When discussing this Rousseau states ‘[b]eing something and appearing to be something became two completely different things; and from this distinction there arose grand ostentation, deceptive cunning, and all the vices that follow in their wake.’ Here then Rousseau implies that that which is not the persona consists solely in the attempt to construct said persona, and secure the social advantages accruing from its successful instantiation, as Glass puts it, in this phase ‘very little exists to impart to a person a sense of authenticity and meaning.’ Yet the SD does not examine these issues at length and so we cannot say more without leaving the text. Nevertheless, we can say that Rousseau’s portrait of subjectivity during this phase mirrors the pure state of nature in terms of its leaning towards caricature. Both of these phases then offer a distinctly singular characterisation of subjectivity, and as such, lacking in subtle psychological detail.

As noted above Rousseau’s underdeveloped analysis of the distinctions between complex conceptuality and amour propre entails that subjectivity lacks the ability to instantiate any form of identity outside that of the social self. This is because for Rousseau complex conceptuality necessarily results in amour propre, thus identity cannot exist without the persona. The ontological material available prior to the development of reason is structurally unable to support identity, introspection, and the memory capacity required to sustain a narrative self. Further, that individuals should opt out of persona and explore other possibilities whilst living in society is a contradiction in terms for Rousseau. Society and amour propre mutually entail

one another. However, as we have seen it is pride, arising out of circumstantial encouragement, that maintains amour propre, and yet pride does not feature in any well-justified account of complex conceptuality given by Rousseau. Accordingly, we would argue that despite the distancing effects of complex conceptuality already discussed, there is no pathological compulsion that drives this component of subjectivity. In relation to reason then we find reliable grounds for identity not born of the neediness within amour propre, indeed when Rousseau seeks to amalgamate amour propre within a successfully functioning society it is to conceptuality that he turns for a solution. Before explicating a solution, however, Rousseau regards society and the social self as mutually engendering and as a closed loop incapable of generating solutions outside of its own circularity.

As it was during the pure state of nature, then, the circumstantial arena is the subject of an extreme portrayal, existing as a highly circumscribed state of affairs. As noted previously a status quo arises when subjectivity stalls in its development and Rousseau’s depiction here reflects that once again. Amour propre exclusively drives the manner in which society operates and in this way the singularity of Rousseau’s portrait of subjectivity is reflected in his assessment of the social arena. It is in this way that an element of caricature can be observed in that the behaviour and relations between individuals lack both psychological nuance and realism. Once amour propre becomes dominant then there is very little room left for redeeming features of any form; each and every individual is lead on by their needy pathologies and at no point does Rousseau create room for a more measured psychological portrait. Due to this answers to questions such as Why do individuals act according to pride, or, Why is the assertion and defence of persona so central to subjectivity’s existence, do not have an answer outside of the context of amour propre; individuals live completely within its self-affirming activities, and seemingly, society, culture, and education, strictly collude with this process.

Next we see Rousseau’s focus on inequality leading him away from its origin within amour propre and towards what he considers to be the history of humanity as it shapes society according amour propre’s dictates, thus externalising inequality to the extent that chaos arises in response to the rich and the poor fighting to secure a better future for themselves.167 Rousseau understands his narrative as portraying the trajectory of a society dominated by the necessary component of amour propre; for him this trajectory is the necessary outcome of being

167 Ibid, p.69.
held under the sway of competiveness and fear of losing face in the eyes of others. Rousseau
describes society descending into conflict and then envisages the rich and powerful as looking
to guarantee their privileged position once and for all by establishing a system of law and
governance that while ending the chaos that has previously occurred also secures their right to
superiority, thus institutionalising inequality in perpetuity.168

For Rousseau this phase of development contains the main thrust of his critique of the societies
contemporary to his own life and times. It is the summit of his narrative regarding the origin of
inequality and yet this moment poses for Rousseau something of a problem in that he seeks not
only to characterise human affairs but to correct them; ‘society as it is’169 is doomed to failure
without some form of alteration, and yet Rousseau has painted himself into a philosophical
corner. When the constitutive component is a subjectivity dominated by amour propre, and the
environmental arena encourages amour propre, the only result is the continuance of the status
quo. Through what means might a new phase of development be inaugurated? Certainly not
through those caught within the cycle of inequality. Rousseau’s answer to this is a form of
social programming derived not from those within the cycle but from an outsider whom he
labels the ‘legislator’, and in this the final phase of his narrative we will come to see how
Rousseau conceived of solving the problem of institutionalised amour propre.

In works other than the SD Rousseau launched sustained attacks against culture, education and
political systems in order to argue that amour propre had come to dominate human affairs to the
extent that freedom had become a remote possibility, hence his famous quotation ‘[m]an is born
free, and everywhere he is in chains’.170 The final stage in Rousseau’s grand narrative leads us
onto his prescriptive social policies and includes a final profound alteration within subjectivity,
a form of social engineering the likes of which is aimed at ameliorating the activity of amour
propre which Rousseau understood to be an inescapable component of subjectivity within
society. How Rousseau theorised this new phase will be examined in the final section below.

2.6 – The Taming of Amour Propre through Social Engineering

168 Ibid, p.69.
169 Trachtenberg, Making Citizens, Rousseau’s Political Theory of Culture, (Taylor & Francis, USA,
170 Rousseau, On the Social Contract, in, Jean-Jacques Rousseau Basic Political Writings, (Hackett
As mentioned above the SD ends with Rousseau’s diagnosis of a failed society, in order to round out Rousseau’s narrative then requires focussing our attention on sources other that the SD, for example The Social Contract, and Letter to d’Alembert. It is within these works that Rousseau describes his prescriptive project and yet it is beyond the focus of our thesis to offer a close reading of these texts and the arguments contained therein. Accordingly we have chosen to predominantly utilise secondary sources for the bulk of what is to follow in this section while referencing Rousseau’s works where familiarity permits.

In this section we cover the final episode of Rousseau’s narrative, encompassing his prescriptive arguments for the rehabilitation of society, his proposed treatment of amour propre as a debilitating virus within the social body. Rousseau’s SD takes us as far as his analysis of his own times and the failures that he saw as having come to dominate individuals and society at large. Thus the SD is in general a commentary on society’s failure to understand and counteract amour propre and thus a failure to fully theorise the forms that subjectivity assumes, rendering ameliorative prescriptivity essentially impossible. Indeed as we reach the end of Rousseau’s narrative this point comes to the fore, namely, Rousseau’s contention that to understand society’s problems necessitates as thorough as is possible knowledge of the origins of such problems, and further, as we have seen, Rousseau argues that such an enterprise leads us towards the individual, towards the structures and psychology of subjectivity that in turn give rise to modes of behaviour, the likes of which come to constitute the shape and form of society at large.

In marshalling his argumentative analyses Rousseau builds upon his vision of interactivity between society and its members, between circumstance and subjectivity, during this phase. Just as he sought to understand the development of societies through this interaction he also sought to rely methodologically upon this model so as to prescribe interrupting the social and subjective order, taken as a fluid, seamless, whole, with the aim of diverting its course and thus paving the way for social (and political) success as he saw it.171 Alongside the continuance of a deeply interactive view of society and its members Rousseau also relies upon the conclusions he has drawn thus far in order to justify the specific processes he sees as necessary for the rehabilitation of society. We can see here how Rousseau’s use of a dialectical shape for his

prescriptive arguments comes to the fore, enabling him to demonstrate how society might be saved from itself; thus taking society dominated by amour propre as the constitutive component, Rousseau encourages a circumstantial alteration, thus giving rise to a new form of subjectivity.

A circumstantial change is required for an alteration in subjectivity, the apparent fixedness of amour propre therefore is itself circumstantially driven and thus Rousseau’s solution is situated within that arena. There is nothing a priori within subjectivity on our reading to account for the development and subsequent popularity of amour propre. The discomfort and pleasure that individuals feel when receiving dis/approbation also derive circumstantially and there is little that can be pinpointed within subjectivity ontologically speaking that can be held responsible for the uninterrupted success of amour propre above and beyond that of the ontological material interacting with circumstantial causes. On this view education (in a negative sense) is the condition which maintains amour propre; individuals are educated to seek out approbation and avoid disapprobation, and presumably it is that this gives amour propre sufficient fuel to continue for another generation. Let us turn now to Rousseau’s proposed solutions to this impasse.

Given subjectivity’s responsiveness to societal influence Rousseau sought to introduce a causal agent capable of substantially altering society such that in turn a change could be brought about within subjectivity. This process is nothing less than Rousseau’s theory of social engineering; in the SC Rousseau asserts that what is required is ‘to change human nature . . . to transform each individual . . . into a part of a larger whole from which this individual receives . . . his life and his being to alter man’s constitution in order to strengthen it’.\(^\text{172}\) As previously noted the main thrust of Rousseau’s theory was an attempt at restructuring amour propre such that it created social cohesion as opposed to social fracture, altering the manner in which competition between individuals drove amour propre to seek personal gain above society at large. Rousseau sought to inculcate within the populace a mentality capable of inclusion in regards to the pride of amour propre, and yet one that simultaneously released the individual from being the sole object of such pride.\(^\text{173}\) That is to say that what Rousseau was looking for was a state of mind that allowed for the operations of pride within amour propre to be channelled in a different


direction; any attempt to entirely remove this aspect of amour propre was doomed to failure in Rousseau’s eyes because society entails amour propre and therefore a new object of pride’s attention was required.

It was with patriotism that Rousseau thought he had found the possibility to manage the dictates of amour propre, as Trachtenberg puts it ‘amour propre can be satisfied only through a collective action, by which others cooperate to grant the individual esteem.’\textsuperscript{174} In patriotism Rousseau saw that the individual dominated by amour propre could be encouraged to redirect the object of their pride away from themselves and towards the nation as a whole.\textsuperscript{175} This seemingly simple difference allows for a further set alterations to take place. Firstly, when each member of a given society is focussed upon their country as a source of pride they discover themselves to belong to a community whose interests are shared, thus diluting the manner in which amour propre causes social competition.\textsuperscript{176} Cooperation occurs between a populace who believe themselves to be working toward the same goals, ‘[a]lthough this form of amour propre might well serve to foster rivalries between societies, Rousseau argues that within a given society it fosters unity.’\textsuperscript{177} Secondly, the need for self-esteem in the form of recognition from one’s peers is provided for when individuals are encouraged to act according not for their own benefit but for that of the country. In this way approbation is heaped upon those who act out of their country’s best interest.\textsuperscript{178}

This process of inculcating patriotism seeks to engineer a difference in the manner in which subjectivity conceives of itself at the level of identity, through a circumstantial intervention at the cultural level: ‘patriotism sustains civic virtue: it channels the force of amour propre to motivate individuals to subordinate their wants to the general will.’\textsuperscript{179} This act of subordination clearly runs counter to the status quo outlined above and as such arises not out of any form of popular collective action or grass roots disaffection towards inequality, rather, Rousseau envisages an intervention at the level of cultural governance through the Legislator. The role of governance here is to introduce social policy designed to sculpt the horizons and values of the social self in

\textsuperscript{174} Trachtenberg, \textit{Making Citizens, Rousseau’s Political Theory of Culture}, (Taylor & Francis, USA, 2003), p.121.  
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid, p.137.  
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid, p.141.  
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid, p.136.  
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid, p.141.  
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid, p.141.
order to allow patriotism to act as an alternative to the localised self, replacing it with a nationalised form of identity. This process is discussed by Trachtenberg who characterises it as a ‘kind of transfiguration . . . that dissolves the individual’s sense of self into a moi commun.’

Before examining this alteration in more detail, however, let us briefly look at how Rousseau believed the activity of the Legislator might instigate such changes.

When introducing the legislative role required to shape society and thus rework subjectivity Rousseau states that ‘[d]iscovering the rules best suited to nations would require a superior intelligence that beheld all the passions of men without feeling any of them.’ That ‘superior intelligence’ was to be found in the Legislator, an individual who was ‘in every respect an extraordinary man in the state . . . he ought to be so by his genius [and] no less so by his office’. The role of this legislator then is to inculcate the necessary attitudes through introducing social activities capable of shaping subjectivity in the desired way, namely, to alter the horizon of amour propre’s self-love to revolve around the nation. Commonly, when assessing the role that the Legislator plays Rousseau’s own prescriptions for society are taken to be those that he understood as representative of something similar to those that the Legislator might introduce, accordingly we turn now to Rousseau’s prescriptive ideas for rehabilitating society.

Rousseau, in keeping with his analysis of the manner in which amour propre is instigated and maintained through social practices, sees as central to the task of ameliorating its effects the removal from public life those practices encouraging its continuation. He especially targets the theatre for such criticism seeing it as an example of how ‘through its impact on public opinion’ theatre aids in the growth of amour propre by distracting otherwise productive citizens and enmeshing them in the world of imagination, thus ‘frustrating any possibility of

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180 Ibid, p.198. ‘Moi commun’ is generally rendered as the ‘common me’ in English, and refers to a collective identity.


182 Ibid, p.163.


185 Ibid, p.178.

186 Ibid, p.177.
happiness’.

More positively Rousseau argues that ‘circles’ (social groupings geared towards maintaining strong civic ties), ‘festivals’ and ‘balls’ could all function to channel and manage the dictates of amour propre into a healthier mode of influence. Of these three will turn to discuss the manner in which Rousseau understood formal balls as securing the subjective change required to re-channel amour propre into patriotism and social harmony, and how such changes occurred.

Rousseau’s perspective on how the setting of a formal ball influences amour propre is a clear and emblematic example of his overall theory of the interactive nature of human life, as well as functioning to clarify his prescriptive thought. The circumstantial and the subjective meet one another upon the social stage and in so doing the young individuals in attendance find themselves enacting a binding communal social rite which simultaneously enables the dictates of their amour propre to be fulfilled. In attendance at these events we find ‘the marriageable young’, who perform dances, an ‘honorable section for the old people of both sexes who, having already given citizens to the country, would now see their grandchildren prepare themselves to become citizens’, ‘the fathers and mothers . . . to watch over their children, as witnesses of their grace and their skill, of the applause they may have merited, and thus to enjoy the sweetest spectacle that can move a paternal heart’, and finally ‘a magistrate, named by the council . . . to preside at these balls’. Thus we find a broad swathe of society represented at these balls providing the opportunity for both social cohesion and public pride. Across the generations individuals find themselves a part of a larger community, and thus establish their social selves in relation to that which will bring them approbation from their peers.

On such occasions the pathology of amour propre in relation to garnering individual self-esteem from the approbation of one’s peers is accommodated through the public nature of the dances, as such these balls are a ‘modality of social regulation’ wherein ‘[s]timulated by the eyes of their fellow citizens . . . amour propre will make individuals want to please their communities’.

187 Ibid, p.179.
188 Ibid, Chapter Five ‘Culture and Political Success’, p.175.
189 Ibid, p.204.
192 Ibid, p.204.
Given over to this positive form of amour propre, qualitatively speaking subjectivity is thus driven to engage in lifestyles conducive to both personal and national satisfaction. According to Trachtenberg for Rousseau ‘culture affects political life by providing practices and institutions that exploit visibility to excite amour propre—with the result that people willingly live up to the expectations of their societies . . . culture promotes political success by promulgating society’s expectation that its citizens act virtuously.’ The material out of which identity is assumed then are those activities and roles given over to the public good, persona thus becomes a matter of public duty, and in that sense the private world is rendered suspect and eventually recedes as the publically approved social self gains traction. It is in this way then that such alterations in the formation of the social self contribute to a reorientation of amour propre.

Through these means and others Rousseau concludes his narrative of subjectivity with a vision of society garnered towards a benign form of social control, one born not out of the desire to dominate, but from the insights gleaned through philosophical reflection, reflections that serve to clarify the ‘origins and foundations of inequality’ thus anchoring his prescriptions in a vision of secular salvation, whereby the socially destructive impulses of human nature are redeemed through the enlightened influence of the Legislator. Clearly Rousseau has a great deal of work to do philosophically speaking if he is to explain how at the ontological level such changes to the structure of subjectivity might occur, and further, how it may be possible for individuals to undergo such changes successfully. It is to these questions that we turn next.

2.7 – Analysing Rousseau’s Prescriptive Claims Concerning Subjectivity

In this section we will seek to provide some assessment of how Rousseau’s prescriptive claims relate to his philosophical narrative of human development, paying close attention to the perspective of subjectivity and the alterations that it undergoes. In suggesting that identity can come to consist of a patriotic relationship to one’s country Rousseau is discussing the role of identity formation as such. What this means in this case is that identity, in lacking a priori content, is understood as a process of realising its content through choosing objects to identify with. Persona as Rousseau construes it is an image presented to the world in order to be seen to be the bearer of certain properties and given that individuals are able to feign their acquisition of such properties in such cases in what does their identity actually consist? As these qualities

are not in fact accrued by the individual it is clear that they do not represent a real world correlation and therefore exist only in the minds of those who believe them to exist. This remains true whether or not the individual comes to identify with them because in lacking any real world validity such correlation remains a mental construct – a concept.

It is at the level of conceptuality then that the identity alters and does so simply through altering those objects that constitute that which is identified with. In this case individuals come to understand themselves in relation to their role as a member of a nation, that is, in relation to their obligations and duties as a citizen; as Trachtenberg puts it ‘the patriot regards himself as similar to his fellow citizens. His identification with them leads him to place equal weight on the satisfaction of their wants as on the satisfaction of his own.’ Rousseau intends that this process will rid individuals of their territorialism through widening the boundary of what is identified with because he ‘holds that patriotism entails love for the other members of society’ thus enlarging their territory to include their fellow citizens. Clearly what we are witnessing here is Rousseau’s attempt to inculcate a qualitative change within subjectivity through utilising abstract conceptuality’s ability to provide alternative horizons to subjectivity’s internal landscape. This process is, we would argue, what Trachtenberg is referring to when he says that the ‘individual’s sense of self’ ‘dissolves’, yet this stands as somewhat under-explained and so our task now is to attempt to clarify how this alteration affects the ontology of the self.

In re-contextualising the content of identity in this way Rousseau clearly aims to alter the qualitative sense of individuation within subjectivity, yet despite Trachtenberg’s assertion quoted above the parameters of Rousseau’s goals remains unclear. If it were indeed possible for the dissolution of individuality to occur the extent and manner of this alteration would need careful analysis, the likes of which falls beyond the scope of this thesis, and is also lacking in Rousseau’s own works. The following quotation however goes some way towards outlining a possible model for the alteration Rousseau intends, a model wherein individuality is redirected through culture and reconstituted as a mirror of society, reflecting the concept of the nation to all those others within the same society:

195 For a detailed discussion on the notion of ‘boundedness’ and the self see Albahari, Analytic Buddhism, The Two-Tiered Illusion of Self, (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006).
197 Ibid, p.198.
‘Ethnographic reports speak of “the transpersonal self” . . . of the self as “a locus of shared social relations or shared biographies” . . . of persons as “the plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them” . . . Clearly the self in these societies is not synonymous with the bounded, unitary and autonomous individual as we know him . . . Rather, the individual is the locus of multiple other selves with whom he or she is joined in mutual relations of being; even as, for the same reason, any person’s self is more or less widely distributed among others.’

If this is the manner in which Rousseau conceives of subjectivity altering then it is clear that significant philosophical argumentation will be required in order to a) justify belief in such a possibility, and b) how specifically such change might be provoked within subjectivity through the implementation of social policy, i.e. at what level and through which components. As Crocker puts it ‘[t]his goal requires the extinction of personal interest as a motivating force, or . . . to be more exact, its transformation or translocation’ given the force and pervasiveness of amour propre’s personal interest the task Rousseau sets for himself is a difficult one. How might such an alteration, on a society-wide scale, be accomplished? And what are the alterations required to create such a dramatic subjective shift?

This final alteration to subjectivity occurs at the qualitative level, changing what it is like to experience identity, altering the phenomenal sense of localisation felt when one’s identity is constructed out of exclusive reference points, hence Crocker’s use of the term ‘translocation’. The movement away from exclusivity towards greater inclusivity describes well the general process that Rousseau envisages, crucially however, a boundary is still very much an aspect of the more inclusive version of identity, a boundary consisting in the nation or country one belongs to. It is this boundary that feeds the pathological sense of exclusivity that amour propre demands, the sense of specialness and pride that Rousseau argues is a fixed component of subjectivity within society. Rousseau exploits amour propre’s need for comparison-making, simply replacing other people with other nations. Self-reflexivity and the sense of interiority as the ground of amour propre are structural, and thus form the possibility for content, but do not provide the content of identity even though they are also experienced, nor does Rousseau offer any indication that they are subject to change once activated through complex conceptuality.

Thus, the alteration must necessarily occur at the level of persona. Rousseau claimed then to have found a method to realign amour propre with the needs of society, that of patriotism, yet the pathological needs of amour propre still required a sense of specialness.

If we consider persona ontologically rather than qualitatively then we need to understand how Rousseau conceives of this process diminishing under the force of the move towards inclusivity. The central problem for Rousseau in regards to persona was that it removed the possibility for social trust because it rendered members of society suspicious of others’ real motives, as Hill puts it ‘[p]eople who prefer preeminence to mutual respect and cannot read one another’s intentions are likely to find themselves in a condition of mutual hostility.’ Thus in patriotic identification Rousseau is looking for a means to render the persona obsolete reasoning that if individuals are guaranteed the honour of their peers through patriotic acts then persona is uncalled for given the availability of social esteem. Rousseau believed that ‘love of country is a transform of love of self’ and that individuals thus motivated would, to borrow the term that Hill utilises, become ‘transparent’ to one another, thus increasing public trust. Ontologically then, the persona is shaped in the public image, its content derived from a collective and publically approved source. If this is indeed close to how Rousseau conceives of subjectivity altering how realistic is such a change occurring at all?

The vagueness of Rousseau’s own account of this alteration is highlighted by Glass when he says ‘[w]e see nothing of what might actually happen within the psyche of the person assuming the political identity implicit in the community of the [SD] . . . it is also a proposition about human nature lacking any discussion as to the internal processes accompanying a change in the structure of the ego and the self’. Glass’s point is that Rousseau omits both qualitative and ontological approaches to the experience of individuals undergoing the process established by the Legislator of forming a new, publically oriented, identity, and in that sense demonstrates a psychological naiveté towards the dangers of programs aimed at restructuring the self. Ontologically speaking there is a significantly diminished role for individuality within subjectivity, so much so that, as

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202 Hill himself attributes this term to the work of Jean Starobinski.
we have seen, Rousseau’s goal is not simply a reorientation but a redistribution of the boundaries of the self. Indeed a less ambitious aim, one that held a reorientation towards the nation as sufficient would seem a more realistic proposition, Rousseau however sought something more radical and thus opens himself up to having failed to explain how such alterations might occur. Again we see that description takes the place of explanation giving rise to a glaring explanatory gap during this proposed transition. This criticism is then a call for psychological realism within the portrait of changing subjectivity and is indeed a valid criticism given the central place that this transformation of subjectivity has in Rousseau’s narrative.

Rousseau astutely uncovers areas where human psychology is driven and anchors them in a complex ontology, in so doing he makes his own task more difficult when he seeks to reconcile such deeply held attitudes within a harmonious social body. The virulence and intensity of amour propre, coupled with its pervasive hold over all levels of society depicted in the SD, create a portrait of subjectivity that is difficult to reconcile with the benign patriot that Rousseau suggests can emerge given the right conditions. Indeed if such an individual could arise out of an already existing amour propre dominated society, would such a lack of personal interest be desirable at all? Granted, such an individual may solve the riddle of amour propre but to what end? Would we choose to inculcate a pliable and receptive form of subjectivity given how open to manipulation by those in power such an individual would be? Indeed some have accused Rousseau of encouraging authoritarian, and even totalitarian, perspectives, Trachtenberg for example states that ‘[t]he prospect of the individual’s complete dependence on the state inspires the view that Rousseau was a protototalitarian.’

In relation to the state and the maintenance of its influence upon subjectivity we can see how for Rousseau the alterations that he proposes in both the subjective and social spheres demand that the manner in which individuals relate to society remain fixed, such that the requisite relations that individuals have between their amour propre and its goals do not return to placing self-love above that of the nation. Once again Rousseau here demonstrates a psychological naïveté in placing such demands upon a system as well as raising concerns of supporting unhealthy forms of state control. Rousseau seeks to replace the closed loop of social disaster referred to in section 2.5.1 with a similar closed loop created by the mutually reinforced interactions of patriotic citizens and social institutions garnered towards encouraging the same.

This demand for singularity then in both subjective and social spheres encourages in the reader not only a scepticism as to its possibility, but also a concern that in meeting such aims, a society may be given over to unhealthy forms of authoritarianism.

**Conclusion**

Now that we have followed Rousseau along his grand narrative of human development what can we conclude as to the success of his philosophical anthropology? The *SD* in its attempt to chart the alterations that may have occurred in human society clearly took for itself an ambitious aim. On our reading, Rousseau, while providing a nuanced and complex narrative, fails to analyse key moments of his own thought with sufficient rigour. These moments we labelled ‘explanatory gaps’ and we can now briefly survey the most problematic moments for Rousseau’s narrative.

Firstly, in section 2.2.1 we noted how Rousseau omits an analysis of how a free will might come to be enacted by those individuals in the state of nature that he ascribes this capacity. Our contention was that Rousseau failed to separate out the ontology of the will from his qualitative account, that is, how it functions within subjectivity, by what means, and through what components. Accordingly we reframed his account through including an outline of the processes through which a free will could operate, processes provided in large part by the *SD* itself such as perfectibility, complex conceptuality, and the manner in which judgment and deliberation provide for a more robust conception of the will. Next, in section 2.3 we questioned whether Rousseau had provided sufficient explanation for his account of the arrival of pride within subjectivity, both within the state of nature and as a component of the newly formed amour propre. We argued that he had failed to establish the necessity by which such a psychological moment should occur, arguing that as for Rousseau pride was inexplicably connected to the recognition of superior faculties, such a connection required further justification.

While for Rousseau the attitudes of pride and self-interest require mitigation due to their necessity we would argue that having under-explained the origin of the psychological response of pride within amour propre Rousseau has not established sufficient justification for his proposed treatment. Rousseau’s solution identifies a virulent component within the social body
and in aiming to resolve the situation chooses to maintain its operations rather than avulse them. Such a conclusion is of course founded upon the premise that the territorialism of amour propre is unavoidable and yet here, we would argue, Rousseau once again offers a highly delimited conception of human capacity. The individual under the sway of amour propre is a singular mode of subjectivity, tied to the worldview of competition and deceit and has no recourse to attitudes and sentiments other than that of amour propre. Ultimately Rousseau offers a caricature rather than a psychologically complex individual, as such he fails to provide a sufficiently nuanced portrait upon which to ground his proposed social policies.

In relation to the development of amour propre out of reason or complex conceptuality, beginning in section 2.4.1 we argued that this process was also under-explained. Given the sophistication evinced by the form of subjectivity housing amour propre it became clear that the exact manner in which such structures developed were not clear within Rousseau’s account. Based upon this analysis we formulated an approach to the development of amour propre drawn in part from Rousseau’s account of pity and developed a theory of ‘distance’, concluding that that was capable of bearing the argumentative weight required for the development of the complexity found within amour propre. Once again our distinction between the ontological and the qualitative proved useful in developing our position. Lastly, in our examination of Rousseau’s thoughts on the transformation of the self in section 2.7 we asserted that an explanatory gap was to be found when Rousseau fails to discuss in detail the alterations to subjectivity that are required to occur in order to fulfil the possibility of such transformation.

The focus within this thesis upon the alterations that subjectivity undergoes was discovered to be one that required significant amounts of reconstruction of Rousseau’s position due to the omission of such accounts within his own works. Alongside this we discovered that close analysis of such issues are not common within the commentarial literature, presumably because of the fact that Rousseau himself does not treat them explicitly. Reconstructing a theorist’s position is understandably not an undertaking that appeals to everyone, and many prefer to rely on the more explicit comments and theories to be found within Rousseau’s oeuvre. This may detract from the quality of our thesis in that much of its content was necessarily given over to the reconstruction of Rousseau’s position, and therefore less space was given to working through arguments found within commentarial works, due to their relative paucity. Should other literature be found relating to the specific topics of this thesis then further work would be warranted.
In our introduction we questioned whether or not Rousseau had laid sufficient philosophical groundwork upon which to anchor his prescriptive theories of the Legislator and the reshaping of the social and cultural worlds. We are now in a position where we have shown that without detailed explanations of key moments the justification for such social programs is lacking. The radical nature of the changes Rousseau seeks to implement require the clearest justification as is possible and in that sense we claim that Rousseau’s theories require greater detail in relation to the precise ontological structures and qualitative alterations that he outlines. The initial motivation for undertaking this study questioned whether social policies founded upon portraits of human nature lacking in sufficient critical analysis could function as a negative force in the world, that such policies could claim justification without earning it through sufficient argumentation, and thus create undesirable social policies. Rousseau’s theories of the Legislator contribute to this issue in offering propositions based upon theories lacking in philosophical rigour at key moments and prescribing curatives to problems that may not have been fully understand. Again, this issue is far from academic, as in Rousseau’s own times his recommendation that the city of Geneva uphold its ban upon the theatre was taken by the city, a recommendation based upon Rousseau’s theories of the role that theatre played in fuelling what he saw as socially undesirable qualities.205

Further research is required in order to treat fully Rousseau’s thought on these matters especially in regards to his theories of education where the issue of the mitigation of amour propre is treated in a more detailed manner. Also, the relationship between other social theorists and their reliance upon conceptions of human nature for their normative theories is a field that deserves a close treatment. For example, in placing our demands for philosophical rigour upon Rousseau we have held his work up to close scrutiny and a comparative undertaking in relation to other theorists would help clarify how realistic and useful such scrutiny is in regards to theories such as Rousseau’s. Further to this the question of how prevalent the reliance upon conceptions of human nature that remain either unquestioned or implicit within both past and contemporary theories is a field of enquiry that we suspect would bare close investigation and result in work of philosophical interest.

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Bibliography

Books


Articles


