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Searching for an Environmental Self-Love: Humans and Nature in Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*

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The problems of thinking ‘nature’ have never been more appurtenant to the questions of political philosophy nor to the whole of humanity than they are today. Without adequately addressing these pressing issues of the environment to the satisfaction of natural science and common political sensibilities, all other questions facing philosophy and humanity will be foreclosed by chemical mechanisms. Questions concerning nature—what is natural, definitions of human nature, the relationship between humans and nature—have been thought throughout the history of philosophy: Rousseau’s *Second Discourse* is, of course, one such text that considers these questions. A substantial amount of interpretive work has been dedicated to understanding Rousseau’s arguments that make up the *Discourse* concerning humanity (the “Savage man’s” psychic capacities, natural virtue, asocial behavior); however, in this thesis I will take up the question of what the *Discourse* can offer in constructing an understanding of human’s relationship with their environment.

So that new imaginaries of the dynamics and considerations in the relationship between human beings and nature can be developed, it is helpful to again return to the origin that Rousseau constructs in the *Discourse*. Not only does this origin depict original human (human animal), but it also depicts original nature. In other words, Rousseau presents a two-part origin. The first and most obvious is the human origin motivated by the Delphic command to “know thyself,” a knowledge that is informed by original humans who are unchanged by the cultivation of reason and society. The second is the natural origin, which is the form of *Nature* unchanged by human *beings* beyond their original state. In this sense, the statue of Glaucus takes up two images. Rousseau states that

> like the statue of Glaucus which time, sea, and storms had so disfigured that is less resembled a God than a ferocious Beast, the human soul altered in the lap of society by a thousand recurring causes…

> changed in appearance to the point of being almost unrecognizable (*Discourse on Inequality* (DI), 124; OC, 122).

On the face of the simile, as this passage is typically read, Glaucus remains merely an image of humans; however, Althusser offers an alternative interpretation of the statue in which it is also an image of nature. Society remains in its place as a vast, inescapable naturalized force, yet, this time, it is unrelentingly beating down upon nature itself—human and not:

> Nature is covered over by the whole history of its modifications, by all the effects of its history. It is 'disfigured' – the word is Rousseau's – by the whole history of its process. It is, in a word – this is Rousseau's key word – 'denatured' by the whole of history of the loss of its nature (Althusser, 48).

Here, Glaucus is not to be thought of dualistically as if there were two statues, one representing humans and another representing nature, being battered by the sea. There is instead one statue that portrays the image of a single, all-encompassing nature; the nature that 'formed' humans and is human, nature and human nature. This idea of original nature is the novel object of the *Second Discourse* that "absolutely without precedent in the entire history of natural law philosophy" (Althusser, 55) because Rousseau takes himself to be (and arguably is) the first philosopher to actually think a 'true' origin (DI, 126; OC, 124-125).

Similarly, Neuhouser has also argued that the *Second Discourse* is novel for its discussion of the origin, and the most groundbreaking quality of the text is its genealogical method, which is "the founding text of this tradition" (2012, 373). The *Discourse* is characterized as both a work of genealogy and criticism that looks back through a conjectural history of human beings in order to analyze inequalities and determine which are substantiated vis-à-vis nature and which are not. Neuhouser examines Rousseau's genealogical method in relation to his focus on inequality and posits that Rousseau's critique is "that it is their

consequences that make inequality legitimate or illegitimate," and on the other hand, his genealogy is thought of "as the retracing back of a phenomenon (moral inequality) to its psychological source (amour-propre)" (2012, 383). Rousseau needs both critique and genealogy in order to challenge the moral inequality that he observed around him. This is because without critique the artificial source of inequality could not be challenged, and without genealogy, his critique would have been baseless. In other words, genealogy without critique is historical journalism and critique without genealogy is purely speculative. To be clear, the critical function of genealogy as it relates to critique is that

> it serves to 'denaturalize' a host of social conditions whose legitimacy we tend to accept unreflectively precisely because we view those arrangements as 'eternal givens,' 'due to the nature of things.' Genealogy disrupts our unreflective "consent" to the moral inequalities of what we take to be a natural' social order, and, in doing so, it undermines one of the principal conditions of their continued existence (Neuhouser 2012, 385).

In what follows, I take up this same orientation towards genealogy and critique and attempt to reconstruct Rousseau's genealogical account of the origin of the relationship between human beings and nature as well as its subsequent developments. To elaborate further, just as Rousseau turned to this *origin* to understand the development of "the origin of inequality among men" (DI, 131; OC, 131), we can return to the same *origin*—take up a reconstruction of same genealogical project—in order to understand the origin of the relationship between human beings and nature (the environment).

In fact, given that "the whole dialectic of human development is conditioned by the dialectic of men's relationship to nature," an understanding social origin is reliant upon an understanding of the environmental origin—original nature (Althusser, 92). The entire narrative of the *Discourse* is dominated by the unfolding of the relationship between humans and nature

that finds itself in the end to be characterized by slave-nature and human slaves subjugated by human masters. It is an account of both how humans have acted upon nature to change it and themselves as well as how nature has acted upon humans so as to usher them into society.

Because Rousseau is a theorist of the psycho-social structures that shape human relations, it is necessary to devote a considerable measure of attention to the development of the psychic capacities of humans throughout the transition from human-animal to human-being-in-society. [1] The most significant development of human psychic capacities was the complication of self-love—that is, self-love in general, ambiguous, neither amour de soi nor amour-propre. It was, in the original state, merely a sentiment that facilitated the "self-preservation" of "every animal" expressed by amour de soi but, through the process of denaturation, self-love also became expressed as amour-propre, which "inspires men with all the evils they do [to] one another" (DI, 218; OC, 219). Here it will suffice to simply posit that amour-propre is also responsible for the evils that human beings do to nature, a central point that will be returned to the subsequent pages. For now, it is necessary to actually take a look at the origin that Rousseau has constructed in the *Discourse*.

The Origin: "State of Pure Nature"

As has been previously mentioned, Althusser argues in his lectures on the *Second Discourse* that the novel object of the work is the origin constructed by Rousseau. The object of previous natural law theorists has been "the essence of government… the essence of law… [and] the essence of social relations," but Rousseau's new object is "of purity, separation, or the abyss:" that is, "the state of pure nature" (Althusser,73). This is not a new interpretation of the

[1] "Capacities" is employed here reluctantly and without technical meaning. It should be thought of as interchangeable with similar terms such as faculties, passions, perception, reason.

object of the *Discourse* that Althusser suddenly imposes on it; it is rather the object that Rousseau himself declares to be the object of the work itself. In the Exordium, he castigates the previous natural law philosophers for feeling "the necessity of going back as far as the state of Nature, but none of them has reached it… They spoke of Savage Man and depicted Civil Man" (DI, 132; OC, 132). Thus, Rousseau seeks to correct the philosophical record in the natural law tradition and reveal the life of 'Savage Man' in the true state of pure nature. In other words, the object of the *Second Discourse* is to reveal, for the first time in Western philosophy, the original state of nature and humans.

There are three essential qualities of the state of pure nature that are crucial to address here: the state of pure nature is a state of 'radical absence,' it is unable to progress (to denature) from within itself, and it is an unbounded forest. The first quality is the necessary outgrowth of the object of the *Discourse*. In order to arrive at the state of pure nature—a nature that has not been denatured—Rousseau must totally 'decivilize' human beings to make them into human animals. For Althusser,

> Nature is introduced into the theory from the outset of the pure state of nature (I mean physical nature): it is introduced there as a substitute for society to make it possible to think humanity in the zero state of society, *the state of the radical absence of society* (86, emphasis added).

Society is completely emptied out of the environment (physical space) and human beings, and they are filled back up with nature in order to think of a space (the state of nature) where there is commiseration and harmony between nature and humans. In other words, society is replaced by nature, which is *the* singular operation that allows Rousseau to do what Hobbes and Locke unsuccessfully attempted: to theorize the state of pure nature.

The second quality of the state of pure nature is its inability to facilitate the development of nature beyond itself. It is "utter powerlessness," and it "is trapped in a circle… [and] cannot

leave itself by the logic of its inner essence" (Althusser, 89). That essence is complete stasis. This state is in "forever the same order, forever the same revolutions" (DI, 143; OC, 144); thus, it requires some outside force to facilitate the transition to the subsequent states—un coup de l'état de nature. In fact, Althusser's metaphor of a 'circle' obscures the complete lack of transformation within the original state. The state of pure nature does not exist in a cyclical chain of events that repeat themselves without end yet through time. As I will discuss below, there is no passage of time within the state of nature, so it is not possible for there to be any passage of time (or experience of it), cyclical nor linear. Instead, the origin should be thought of as completely lacking time, perhaps even without the variation of day and night. It is a state of complete equilibrium within itself.

The state of pure nature is played out on the scene of the limitless forest, the residence of 'savage man' and 'beasts.' For Rousseau, the Earth in the state of pure nature is "covered by immense forests which no Axe ever mutilated [and] at every step offers Storage and shelter to the animals of every species" (DI, 134; OC, 136). It is characterized by an abundant, inescapable nature that completely fills the entire space of the original state and overwhelms the animals that live with(in) the forest-nature. In this sense then, as the third quality of the state of pure nature, the boundless forest is the fulfillment of the first quality:

> *The forest is the truth of the state of nature*, the concept of the state of pure nature, the conditions for realizing the solitude and the condition for realizing the non-society that define man… The forest is a space without place, a space without *topos*… It is the realization of the existence of the state of pure nature (Althusser, 85).

This mobilization of the metaphor 'forest' is the practical application, the actualization, of the state of pure nature that allows Rousseau to get to the true origin rather than repeat the past mistakes of the theorists of the false origin (the origins that merely depict civilized human

beings). In other words, the forest is the substance of original nature. This is the 'place' where the 'savage man,' original, human animal, resided.

Human Animal in the State of Pure Nature

Having elaborated the qualities of the state of pure nature in the *Second Discourse* and arguing that it is a state completely devoid of society that is unable to develop beyond itself and is represented by the vast forest, it is possible to develop the relationship between human animal and nature in contrast to human animal to one another. The first essential feature of the human animal-nature relationship in the state of pure nature is the abundance of nature that easily satisfies the complete needs (limited to only those needs that function to sustain life) of human animal. Rousseau calls this the "natural fertility" of the Earth, which allows human animal to "[sate] his hunger beneath an oak, [slake] his thirst at the first Stream, [and find] his bed at the foot of the same tree" (DI, 134; OC, 135). It is clear then that not only are the needs of the human animal completely fulfilled by nature, but that their needs are satisfied with minimal effort: "all he needs to do is stretch out his hand" to secure resources necessary for life (Althusser, 85). There is no competition to survive—no need for evolution—in the state of pure nature. This claim is wholly reliant upon Rousseau's theorization of the forest, for, without the abundance of the trees (in quantity and quality), two of human animal's three essential needs would not be satiated. In an instructive note, Rousseau explicates and defends his theory of natural fertility on three points:

> The first is that, if there is a kind of vegetation that could compensate for the depletion of vegetable matter which, according to M. de Buffon's reasoning, is due to animals, then it is mainly woods, the crowns and leaves of which collect and absorb more water and moisture than do other plants. The second is that the destruction of topsoil, that is to say the loss of the substance suited to

> vegetation, must accelerate in proportion as the earth is more cultivated and as its more industrious inhabitants consume its various productions in greater quantities. My third and most important remark is that the fruits of Trees provide animals with a more abundant supply of food than can other [forms of] vegetation, an experiment I myself performed by comparing the production of two plots of ground equal in size and quality, the one covered with chestnut trees, and the other sown with wheat (DI, 193; OC, 198).

The first and third points here attribute to the forest the necessary qualities that are needed to maintain the static abundance of the state of pure nature. Without a mechanism to restore the nutrients of the forests taken by animals, the abundance of the forest could not be maintained and would, according to Buffon, result in the devolution of the forest into a desert (DI, 192; OC, 198). Rousseau attributes this power to the trees, which are the parts that make up the whole of the forest that is nature. It is important to notice that this conception of nature is not based upon cycles of regeneration. There is no transpiration from the trees; the nutrients that the trees pass along by their fruits to the animals are not, upon their death, reincorporated into the soil by fungi. Nature provides simply because that is what it does in the state of pure nature.

This reveals the tension in the second point, which does not actually address the realities of the original state.[2] Instead, this point elaborates one of the destructive tendencies of the human being after the invention of agriculture. As human cultivation denatures the topsoil, it destroys its 'natural fertility.' Rousseau must have arrived at this point through observation of the tendency of agriculture to exhaust soil through expanding numbers of fields and more intense methods of cultivation. Thus, because the civil state is one in which the soil is *destroyed*, the

[2] This point bears a striking resemblance to a passage in Volume I of Marx's *Capital* concerning the deleterious effects of industrial agriculture on the productive soil: "[Industrial agriculture] disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and the earth, i.e. it prevents the return to the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; hence it hinders the operation of the eternal natural condition for the lasting fertility of the soil" (637). See Foster's "Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift" for a further discussion of this passage.

natural state must be one in which the soil is not destroyed, i.e., *preserved*. It would be wrong to push to a further conclusion that the obverse of the continuous depletion of the soil in the social state is the perpetual improvement of the soil in the state of pure nature. That is to say, it is wrong to assume that the negation of the ever-increasing destruction of the soil by social labor is the negation of a perpetual improvement of the soil by the life-processes of trees. Such a finding would directly contradict one of the central qualities of the state of pure nature: its perpetual equilibrium, its stasis. Rather, the soil in the state of pure nature is maximally nutritious, so it cannot be improved because it is already as abundant as it can be.

The result of the natural fertility of the forest in the state of pure nature is what Althusser calls "the immediate proximity" between nature and human animals, "which makes it possible to understand why needs disperse men. Men's dispersion is the obverse [*l'envers*] of nature's proximity. Men are distant from one another because nature is close" (125). In other words, the complete absence of society in the state of pure nature—the complete lack of social relations between human animals—necessitates the closing in of nurturing nature around human animal. It is necessary for human animal to be so close to nature that all they need to do to satisfy their life preserving needs is to "stretch out their hand" (Althusser, 85). A form of life in which nature is so close to humans that they fail to even notice that there is a 'difference' between themselves and their surroundings: that is, in the state of pure nature, the reality of humans is experienced as "the identity of subject and substance, of man and nature" (Althusser, 133). If this were not the case, if human animal was deprived of society and close nature, their reality would be a void, a baren nothingness that requires them to seek out one another, and Rousseau would not have been able to conceive of the true origin.

Further, flowing from their 'immediate proximity' to the 'natural fertility' of nature, human animals lack the propensity for the sensing of (awareness for) time. They have no knowledge of the past and no foresight for the future because they have no need to prepare for future events. Their needs are immediately satisfied, so they do not need to prepare for their next meal or construct a shelter to rest in. Even some peoples beyond the state of pure nature have not, according to Rousseau, developed "foresight," referring to the man who "sells his Cotton bed in the morning and comes weeping to buy it back in the evening" (DI, 143; OC, 144). However, the human animal could not even experience this because they have no need for a bed. They cannot 'weep' about their lack of basic needs because, by definition, their basic needs are met by nature. In short then, human animal, "who is nature, is in nature, is naturally at home, and is therefore free" (Althusser, 109). In the experience of human animal, they are at home in nature because they identify nature as themselves; the relationship is a selfsameness.

The relationship among human animals towards one another is (again) the obverse of their relationship with nature. As the physical space of the state of pure nature that is the locus for the human animal-nature interactions that shape humans' way of living, the "forest is the space of non-recognition, of non-identification, of non-identity" between human individuals (Althusser, 131). It is the place where humans do not recognize their own species as beings that are the same as themselves, and as a result, there is no I, We, nor You. Even family relations were nonexistent in the state of pure nature: "even the child no longer meant anything to the Mother as soon as it could do without her" (DI, 161; OC, 164). This was not because mothers did not care for their children (fathers do not in fact care for nor know their children in this state); they nurse their newborns and care for their helpless children. However, at the very moment that the child no longer needs the mother, it wonders off from her. They "lose sight of one another

[and] soon were at the point of not even recognizing each other" (DI, 145; OC, 147). To highlight a crucial point, the type of non-recognition that is beings described here is not like the inability to recognize a stranger, but rather, it is the inability to recognize your child either as your own 'offspring' and as a human child. It becomes no different than any other organism. What is more, Mothers in the forest do not care for their children because of a sentiment of love. A mother cares out of "her own need" (DI, 145; OC, 147).

In what amounts to Rousseau's most complete, succinct account of the life of the human animal, he writes that they spend their lives

> wandering in the forests without industry, without speech, without settled abode, without war, and without tie, without any need of others of his kind and without any desire to harm them… [has] only the sentiments and enlightenment suited to this state, that he sensed only his true needs, looked only at what he believed it to be in his interest to see, and that his intelligence made no more progress than his vanity (DI, 157; OC, 160).

It is clear in this passage then that human animal lives in a mundane yet completely full life. They are totally devoid of most of the characteristics that are considered to be signifiers of humanity, but this is to be expected, hence the term 'human animal' instead of 'human being:' a being who *is* humane. Despite this specific lack—in that human animal lacks certain humane qualities—human animal is not characterized by their lack. That is to say, the essential quality of human animal is not that they are lacking something that they require. They are affluent in spite of their particularly humane dearth. The human animal lives in the instant of their lives: "living in the instantaneousness of the instant, the instant of need, the instant of life, the instant of sexual relations, the instant of death" (Althusser, 84). The life of the human animal is (experienced as) a Euclidean point. They have no needs because the moment of the need coincides with the moment of satisfaction. Here, there is no concept of need; no concept of lack; no without.

There are three qualities or psychic capacities of the human animal that, facilitated through the forest in the state of pure nature, make it possible for the human animal to exist in the form it does in the original state (87). These are amour de soi, freedom, and pity.[3] Amour de soi (often translated simply as 'self-love') is the essential life preserving capacity of all living things. Rousseau says that amour de soi is "a natural sentiment which leads every animal to look after its own preservation" (OC, 219). Elsewhere, he describes the sentiment more precisely: "Man's first sentiment was that of his existence, his first care that for his preservation" (DI, 161; OC, 164). Clearly then, amour de soi, as it exists in all animals, is the passion that is the actualization of the experience of their own existence. It is something altogether distinct from the care for preservation, although that care flows from the first sentiment. Cooper employs a similar reading of amour de soi:

> Existence is the soul and the measure of happiness… The whole meaning of *amour de soi*, the benign love of self that exists naturally in all sentient life, is love and enjoyment of our own *being*. Thus all happiness, as enjoyment of being, is a manifestation of self-love (24).[4]

In this sense, the 'existence' that Rousseau is concerned with in relation to amour de soi is the perception of it, and Cooper's 'being' is merely the capacity for passive sensing. There is no requirement for an understanding of the self in order to feel amour de soi. The dog that lays in the sun can 'enjoy its own being' merely from the good feelings that occur as a result of that action. There is no need for the dog to know that it *is* for it to find pleasure in its being. Furthermore, amour de soi does not in any way promote sociality, which allows human animals to fully experience this passion without moving beyond the state of pure nature.

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[3] Perfectibility is not addressed here because I follow Althusser's categorization of it as a quality of the three qualities listed (87).

[4] Here, Cooper's analysis, which focuses on the thing itself, differs significantly from Neuhouser's, which examines the ends of the sentiments.

Freedom is another capacity of the human animal in the original state. For Rousseau, freedom is expressed in relation to the 'commands of nature,' which "the Beast obeys." The same is not true for the human animal, which

> experiences the same impression, but he recognizes himself free to acquiesce or to resist; and it is mainly in the consciousness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul exhibits itself… in the power of willing, or rather of choosing, and in the sentiment of this power, and found purely spiritual acts about which nothing is explained by the Laws of Mechanics (DI, 141; OC, 142).

In interpreting Rousseau's concept of freedom in the origin, Althusser distinguishes between two types of freedom: "natural man's freedom" and "intellectual freedom." On both of these freedoms he writes that natural man's freedom is "an image that mobilized only the concrete givens required by the system" while intellectual freedom is "the power to will and to choose, and intellectual awareness of willing and choosing." Further, "intellectual human freedom is, in the state of pure nature, of no effect and non-existent" (Althusser, 133). He has stripped all powers of the human will from the original state, yet holding on to the claim that freedom is *really* non-existent in the state of nature is not entirely necessary. It is possible for freedom to effectively be non-extant in the state of pure nature while still maintaining that 'the power to will' remains a constant faculty for all human life. Living in the 'instantaneous,' human animal only experiences what is immediately at its attention, so it cannot possibly choose because there is only one choice for it. It only notices what it needs in the immediate instance and all else is lost to it. Thus, it is only true that it is intellectual freedom as the consciousness of willing that does not exist in the state of pure nature; the capacity to will is present in humans in all states. This, however, again does nothing to promote sociality among human animals.

The presence of the last quality in human animals does, on the other hand, pose challenges to the pivotal claim that the state of pure nature is the state of the absence of society. Rousseau defines pity as

> a natural sentiment which, by moderating in every individual the activity of self-love [l'amour de soi-même], contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species. It is pity that carries us without reflection to the assistance of those we see suffer (DI, 154; OC, 156).

Pity then is the animal faculty that drives one individual to aid a suffering other. For a being to feel the sentiment of pity, they must *identify* with that suffering animal; that is, one animal must identify the suffering and identify *with* the other animal. How could this be possible in the state of pure nature if it is at the same time said to be the state of non-identification? Althusser states that the "effect of pity is not to bring men together, but to prevent men from harming other men or animals… it is the concept of relation in non-relation" (134). This reformulation helps to explain why human animals do not attack each other or steal one another's resources, but this has less to do with pity than the docile nature of human animals and the abundance that eliminates competition. Further, it does nothing to explicate how human animals could identify with another animal. For this reason, Althusser concludes that "pity is nil and without effect in the state of the origin" (135). However, such a drastic expulsion of a sentiment that Rousseau attributes to the state of pure nature is, again, not necessary. It is possible to stratify 'identification' on two planes of understanding, as Rousseau does with most of the technical terms he employs: i.e., physical and moral. Physical can be thought of as the type of identification that allows for the reproduction of the species. On the rare occasion that two human animals meet in the state of pure nature, they might perceive (identify) that this is the kind of animal that can fulfill their sexual desire. Of course, this is a rationalized formulation. A better description of the process would be that the sight of another human animal brings up sexual desire, and they engage in

sexual activity. What is key is that the state of the origin is one of non-recognition, which prevents the type of identification that is presupposed by the realization that 'you and I' are the same species (moral). In the same way, pity can function physically as a sentiment that simply swells up from sensory perception. The relationship between human animals and nature in the state of pure nature is primarily characterized by their closeness, which is juxtaposed to the separateness of human animals from one another.

Nature's Separation from Humans

To return to the metaphor of Glaucus, I have so far depicted what that statue looked like in its original state before the elements 'disfigured' it beyond recognition. Just as Rousseau began the *Discourse* by describing the tattered state of that statue, it is now necessary to further develop what the beaten statute looks like now in an effort to understand the current relationship between human beings and nature. Nature in the current state, the state of society, is illustrated as

> loss and forgetting, in the form of loss and the form of forgetting. This form of loss and forgetting is the form of a cover-up [recouvrement]… *nature is alienated, that it no longer exists except in the other-than-itself*, in its contrary, the social passions and even in reason subject to the social passions. In short, nature is alienated in its real history, and the result of this alienation holds sway over the present-day (Althusser, 48).

This analysis of present nature flows directly from Rousseau's account of nature as *being 'denatured.'* Denatured nature is a nature that is removed from nature; nature removed from itself. That means that nature only exists in the newly created social-human passions: amour-propre, reason, and imagination. It remains real, but its reality is expressed through the social lens. Nature is no longer able to remain as it once was. Nature, as depicted in the section above (in its original state), is Glaucus, a sea god, but his depiction is only that. He can only exist

through human representations; that is, the statue of Glaucus. In this new state after the state of pure nature, the unity between human animals and nature, as human animals were a part of nature, has been exploded and reorganized so that the unity of the social requires nature to be subsumed under it and expressed in its terms while at the same time being other. Nature is not social but can only be expressed through—can only be realized as—sociality.

The greatest problem confronting the possibility of this kind of revolution is the question of how it could have occurred in the first place. Recall that the state of pure nature was in large part defined by its inability to facilitate any development beyond itself. That means that nature could not have acted upon itself to push itself out of the original state. Some, such as Lane, have argued that "the fundamental Rousseauian narrative emphasizes that human beings are fallen creatures" (137). In other words, human beings are being who, by their own failing, have fallen *from* nature—or human actions or choices have cause them to fall from their natural state. Here, he makes a characterization of the whole of Rousseau's work, supporting the statement with text from the *Dialogues*, but he takes this claim even further in regard to the *Second Discourse*, arguing that in the text "Rousseau offers an altered *Eden story*, a philosophical history of humanity that accounts for how we came to be alienated from nature and 'insensitive' to its claims" (Lane, 138, emphasis added). Lane reads a certain biblicality into the *Discourse* that is not supported by the text; in fact, such a reading is explicitly put aside by Rousseau. In the Exordium to the *Discourse*, he writes:

> It did not even enter the mind of most of our philosophers to doubt that the state of Nature has existed whereas it is evident, from reading the Holy Scriptures, that the first Man having received some lights and Precepts immediately from God was not himself in that state… it has to be denied that, even before the Flood, Men were ever in the pure state of Nature… Let us begin therefore by setting aside all the facts (DI, 132; OC, 132).

It is true that the *Discourse* explicates how human beings grew ever more irresponsive to the harms that they do to nature; however, he only writes to the growth rather than the origin of the phenomenon. Rousseau does not describe how human beings became "insensitive," only how they become-more insensitive. In that sense, the *Discourse* cannot be an "altered Eden story," and to suggest so is to establish false equivalents. The first man, man in Eden, was not in the state of pure nature. Thus, the story of Eden cannot inform our reading of the first "savage man" who is in the state of pure nature and refusing to 'set aside' this kind of allusion only leads to misinterpretation.

Nevertheless, it is possible that Rousseau still tells the story of a 'fall of man' from nature despite the shirking of the biblical motif. For that reason, it is necessary return to the action of the *Second Discourse* where the so-called 'fall' takes place: that is, the third and fourth paragraphs of the second part of the *Discourse*.[5] The third paragraph describes nature physically moving away from human animals, which is quoted here at length in two parts:

> Such was the condition of nascent man; such was the life of an animal at first restricted to pure sensations, and scarcely profiting from the gifts Nature offered him, let alone dreaming of wresting anything from it; but difficulties soon presented themselves; it became necessary to learn to overcome them: the height of Trees which prevented him from reaching their fruits, competition from the animals trying to eat these fruits, the ferociousness of the animals that threatened his very life… (DI, 161; OC 164-165).

This passage begins with human animal in the state of pure nature: i.e., "nascent man." Human animal exists because of itself and would continue to exist and make itself in the same way

[5] See De Man (140-145) for an alternative yet parallel account of the troubles of progressing past the state of pure nature. Here, he analyzes the section in the first part on the *Discourse* that puts forwards Rousseau's speculative account of the origin of language that is later developed in his *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. He argues that "the section on language (3: 146-51) appears as a digression destined to illustrate the impossibility of passing from nature to culture by natural means" (141).

forever if not acted upon from without itself. As “pure sensation,” its existence was amour de soi, which is the sentiment of existence. In other words, its existence was existence, and human animal could not think beyond its instantaneous existence. They could not have initiated a fall because they could not do anything different from what they had been doing since the ‘beginning’ of the state of pure nature. They had no “dreams.” Change begins with the sudden and unexplained emergence of “difficulties.” Human animals did not fall. Rousseau makes clear here that it is the trees of the forest that retreat into themselves and begin the process of denaturation. Nature folds in on itself and away from the animals and the human animals. That is not to imbue the forest with the ability to make this change of its own accord. The forest cannot will the end of the state of pure nature. In fact, just like the lives of human animals, the forest “would have reproduced itself endlessly if big cosmic accidents had not intervened” (Althusser, 76). Some unknown force beyond the forest, beyond the Earth, acted upon the state of pure nature and set in motion the process of denaturation that resulted in the civil state, the state of society. The beginning of the end of the state of pure nature was a two-part movement: the contraction of the unbounded forest into a defined space and the retreat of the trees from the surface of the Earth and the land-dwelling animals.

The movement of nature away from human animals—actualized as the restriction of life-sustaining resources (out of reach fruits, drying streams, less shade)—made it necessary for them to become more competitive in the new race against other animals and their own species for their own survival. The second part of the third paragraph describes the changes to human animals that resulted from nature moving away from them, which eventually led to the development of human beings:

> Everything forced him to apply himself to exercises of the body; he had to be agile, quick on the run, vigorous in combat. The natural weapons, which are branches of trees and stones, he soon found

> in his hand. He learned to surmount the obstacles of Nature, to, in necessity, fight the other animals, even to fight for his subsistence from men, or to make up for what had to be given up to the stronger (OC, 165, my translation).

Immediately, human animals had to take employ their natural (de facto) abilities in order to maintain their lives. The first 'tools' humans used were weapons, and the first use of tools appears in this passage. This passage also includes the first indication that a human has learned anything and that the new knowledge is preserved in some way, which is an indication that perfectibility has come into effect. Here is the moment that human animal transitions into human being, and that change is spurred by amour de soi as the love of their own existence. What is more, the passage describes the first instances of increased human-human interaction that is defined by the dynamics between the strong and weak. The strong take from the weak, and the weak are forced to compensate for their loss to sustain themselves.

Once defined by its innate fertility and propensity to nurture humans, in the states beyond that origin, nature is defined by its distance from human beings and its hostility towards them. On this point, Althusser writes that

> it is then that nature becomes distant and hostile, and that man has to 'wrest'… his subsistence from it at the price of hardship and labour. At this point, man, in his relation to nature, enters into distance and, through distance, into negativity, into mediations, and thence into language, reason, civilization, and progress (108).

The forest is fundamentally altered, and, in the fourth paragraph, human beings are confronted with "differences of terrain, Climate, seasons… barren years, long and harsh winters, [and] scorching all-consuming Summers" that require them to work towards the maintenance of their life (DI, 162; OC, 165). Nature is no longer characterized by its affinity for life; it is now experienced as a force that promotes the death of human beings. In the text of this inflection point, Rousseau facilitates an integral grammatical shift. The third paragraph, in which nature

moves away from human animal and they are forced to adapt, Rousseau employs "*il*" and "*l'homme*." In contrast, the fourth paragraph is populated by "*ils*" and "*les hommes*" to narrate the first great migrations of human beings, the emergence of hunter-gatherer societies, and the acquisition of fire. The shift to *les hommes* only takes place after the shift of *les arbres*. In other words, it was the changes in nature that result in the fundamental revolution of human somatic and psychic capacities, transforming human animal into human being and opening the state of society.

Human Beings in the State of Society

By shifting focus to the last state in the *Second Discourse*, two mediating states will, for the most part, be overlooked. An analysis of the "Youth of the World" and "Agriculture/ the State of War" is not necessary for the object at issue here.[6] However, attention will be paid to the order in which Rousseau lays out the denaturing of human capacities. In other words, causes and effects remain relevant to the subsequent analysis, but delineating in what state each denaturation occurred is not. The denaturation of human animal, which is in the same moments the emergence of human being, begins with relational thought. This is the primitive form of reason. Relational thought leads to reflection, which Rousseau defines as "a mechanical prudence that suggests to him the precautions most necessary for his safety" (DI, 162; OC, 165). It is clear here that reflective thought is concerned with the ends of amour de soi: the preservation of one's own being. However, as thought becomes ever more advanced and as a constitutive element, reason is able to develop into the human faculty that cultivates the denaturation of humans (DI, 153; OC, 155-156).

[6] See Althusser (75) for a helpful discussion and diagram of these four states.

The most important passion to be denatured is self-love, which becomes amour-propre. Rousseau defines amour-propre as "only a relative sentiment, factitious, and born in society, which inclines every individual to set greater store by himself than by anyone else, inspires men with all the evils they do one another" (DI, 218; OC, 219). Interpreting what amour-propre really is presents much difficulty, and there is not wide agreement on what Rousseau means by the term. The literature has even failed to come to a consensus on how to translate the term. "Vanity" is likely the most common translation, which is what Gourevitch adopts in his translation (218). Nevertheless, the simple translation to 'vanity' drastically and unnecessarily restrains the potential for a much richer understanding of the term, and besides the narrowing of thinking, the text does not support such a limited translation. Rousseau's use of 'vanité' does not singularly correspond to amour-propre, and other terms like 'orgueil' can also be interpreted to denote amour-propre. There are many other alternatives. For example, Neuhouser offers several alternative translations of the passion that include "self-love," "egotism," "pride," "self-esteem," and "self-interestedness" (2008, 29-30). Cooper interprets *amour-propre* as a particular kind of "self-worth" (149), and Kennedy has produced an even greater array of creative translations such as "narcissism," "a desire for wealth," "fame," and "an instrumental view of others" (15). While translations can be helpful in beginning to develop and understanding of the passion, the inadequacy of any translation is immediately apparent. Further interpretive work is needed to fully realize the meaning of this central idea in the body of Rousseau's thought.

For Cooper, amour-propre is a shift in "valuation–more specifically, self-valuation, or the need for self-esteem–[which] lies at the heart of *amour-propre*" (138). As self-valuation or self-worth, amour-propre becomes a contingent form of self-love that depends on what a human being determines their existence to be. Self-love is converted from the actualization of a non-

reflexive love of being (amour de soi) to a reflexive practice through which one determines their own value. If they find that they are of high worth, they have self-love. If they find that they are not worth much, they lack self-love. In other words, in the state of society, an "individual need[s] to establish, maintain, or confirm his or her sense of self-worth" (Cooper, 149). Further, Cooper states that amour-propre "exists only when, to the extent that, and for as long as self-esteem is problematic or contingent" (149). In that sense then, amour-propre does not arise on a species level, but is determined individually depending on whether or not a human being regards themself as a being of value or not. If a person's worth, in their own eyes, is in question, they are enveloped in amour-propre. While the attribution of contingency to the concept of amour-propre is appropriate, contingent self-worth fails to present itself as the most rigorous interpretation of amour-propre. This kind of amour-propre would be incredibly fickle, capable of oscillating in and out of existence in accord with a person's transitory thoughts.[7]

Neuhouser has offered a differing interpretation of amour-propre that is superior to Cooper's in light of its systematicity and alignment with the *Discourse*. In his reading, there are three fundamental qualities of amour-propre: a desire for recognition, relative, and artificial. This last quality is not surprising, as it appears in the definition of amour-propre in the text. However, more can be said of the first and second qualities. The desire for recognition follows from the "need to 'count' or to 'be someone'" who is distinct in their own way (Neuhouser 2008, 31). This interpretation highlights that the need for recognition is not assiduously restricted to the moral conception of the term but is so vast that it includes any need to be recognized as a distinguished being. This can be seen in a passage in the *Discourse on Inequality* that describes the emergence of the novel desire for recognition: "Each began to look at the others and to want

[7] See Cooper (172-182) "Beyond *Amour-Propre*? Prospects and Possibilities" for a further elaboration of this oscillation between amour de soi and amour-propre.

to be looked at himself, and public esteem came to be prized. The one who sang or danced the best, the handsomest, the strongest…" (DI, 166; OC, 169). None of these can be thought of as "moral" attributes. They are entirely physical characteristics, but, with the regulation of amour-propre, they can inform a person's own moral worth. To clarify this point, Neuhouser states that the crucial distinction here "is reflected in the fact that ordinary language distinguishes a large variety of 'approbative' phenomena commonly desired by humans… all of which count for Rousseau as ways in which one human being can 'count' for another" (2008, 32). In other words, the necessary quality of an attribute that established recognition is that it is desirable.

The second quality follows logically from the first, which is that *amour-propre* is "'relative' [in its] nature, in contrast to the 'absolute' character of *amour de soi*" (Neuhouser 2008, 32). What is more, *amour-propre* is "relative" in two senses: it is comparative and social. It is relative in a comparative since because the recognition requires a comparison between the one who desires the recognition and the group that the individual wants to be distinguished from. It requires the judger (recognizer) to compare the one to the others in much the same way that I choose the best watermelon from the bin at the grocery store (only watermelons have no need of recognition). As for the second sense of "relative," the social sense, it is largely related to the first. The recognition that *amour-propre* necessitates must come from our social relations, and so it is necessarily a social phenomenon (Neuhouser 2008, 32-35). It is possible now to arrive at a clear understanding of denatured self-love (amour-propre), which is nothing but a reflexive form of self-love informed both by how others regard the subject and how desirable they find the qualities of the subject to be. I return to the detrimental effects of amour-propre below.

Rousseau's psychic capacities are denatured once humanity exits the state of pure nature. In the case of pity, reason again is the source of its deformity; however, amour-propre is also a

major component of the denaturation of pity. It was the "unbridled passion of all [that stifled] natural pity and… made men greedy, ambitious, and wicked (DI, 171; OC, 177). Recall that pity, in the state of the origin and in its positive formulation, operates without reflection, and, through identification, spurs feeling beings to the aid of those in distress. Or, in the negative, pity prevents one being from harming another and functions as a limit on interaction. In the state of society, pity loses its immediate influence over action, and reflection is able to question and, in some cases, ultimately prevent human beings from intervening to stop harm. Rousseau illustrates denatured pity in the image of the philosopher—who are the most denatured beings of their time—who hears a murder occurring outside their home:

> One of his kind can with impunity be murdered beneath his window; [the philosopher] only has to put his hands over his ears and to argue with himself a little in order to prevent Nature, which rebels within him, from letting him identify with the man being assassinated (DI, 153; OC, 156).

What is most important here is that the philosopher still feels the pulls of pity, but their reason is able to overpower that compulsion so that they can ignore the other's cries for help. By overpowering pity, reason clears the way for the supremacy of another passion: amour-propre. Further, natural pity does not totally vanish in the state of society; it merely is able to be overcome and eventually diminishes to the point that it is a meager whisper in the consciousness of human beings.

Freedom meets a similar fate in the societal state. The origin of civil society, which is the establishment of the social contract, also operates as the eradication of natural freedom and the solidification of moral-political inequality among human beings. Rousseau writes that human beings had

> too much *greed and ambition [amour-propre]* to be able to do for long without Masters. [So, all] ran toward their chains in the belief that they were securing their freedom; for while they had enough

> *reason* to sense the advantages of a political establishment, they had not enough experience to foresee its dangers (DI, 173; OC, 177-178).

In the case of freedom then, the process of denaturation is reversed. First, the evils generated by amour-propre create the need for some change in the organization of humanity because of the damages of the state of war;[8] then, reason determines that the best way (known at the moment of establishment) to eliminate or restrict the various social troubles is to establish a political community. The moment of establishment is the moment of the abolition of natural freedom. It is at this point that "all our faculties [are] developed, memory and imagination brought into play, amour propre interested, reason become active, and the mind almost at the limit of the perfection of which it is capable" (DI, 170; OC, 174). This is the culmination of what Althusser calls the "process of maturation and denaturation" (76). That is not to say that this point marks some type of end of denaturation nor that the total development of the human faculties closes the possibility for future denaturations of those faculties. In other words, this point marks the end of a particular process of denaturation. It is a reaching of a particular *telos* of the faculties in a particular historical epoch. That telos is "the perfection of the individual, and in effect toward the decrepitude of the species" (DI, 167; OC, 171). In other words, it is the perfection of the liberal human being over and against the entirety of the history—past and future—of humanity.

The primary effect of this development of the psychic capacities of humans as it relates to their relations toward one another is the new capacity for recognition. The closing of the state of pure nature as the state of non-recognition allowed for the emergence of its obverse, which is the opening of the state of society as the state of recognition. The groundwork for recognition is laid

[8] Interestingly, it is pity that creates this desire.

by the perception and reflection of the first human beings as they began to come into contact and look upon one another, and it is brought about by reason:

> The conformities which time may have led him to perceive between [other human beings], his female, and himself, led him to judge regarding those he did not perceive, and seeing that they all behaved as he would have done in similar circumstances, he concluded that their ways of thinking and of feeling fully corresponded to his own (DI, 162-163).

This first kind of recognition is entirely physical in that it is not imbued with any moral or political sentiments. Beginning with simple perception, a power common to both human animal and human being, observations about the qualities and behaviors of certain things (other human beings) were made by a subject. Upon reflection, it was determined by the subject that those qualities and behaviors corresponded to their own. Through reason, they were able to determine (to judge) that those 'things' were like themself. In other words, they recognized their commonality—their sameness—with other, members of their species purely on behavioral grounds.

Later, human beings revolutionized the spaces that they inhabited. They no longer spend their nights out in open, exposed nature; instead, they moved to the confines of a rudimentary dwelling (a cave). While this change is designated to be the cause of the establishment of family units, Rousseau does not explicate the process by which human beings began to live with one another. However, the family does allow for the second stage of recognition; that is, recognition of a human being as a particular (DI, 164; OC, 168). Previous recognition was purely general in the sense that one recognizing another only meant that they recognized that they were like themself, as a member of the same species. With the family unit, individuals can recognize one another as specific human beings: my child, my parent.

The final development of recognition is its turn from a mere psychic phenomenon to a desired good; that is, a shift from recognition *of* humanity to recognition *for* humanity. This occurs in the state of society that has advanced past family societies and into village/tribe societies. Rousseau states that this is the point at which

> everyone began to look at everyone else and to wish to be looked at himself, and public esteem acquired a price… this was the first step at once toward inequality and vice: from these first preferences arose vanity and contempt… shame and envy… [and] eventually produced compounds fatal to happiness and innocence (DI, 166; OC, 169-170).

Here, recognition takes on its full moral/political force as the determinant factor in a human beings' feelings towards themselves: their self-love. In other words, in this passage it is evident that recognition is bound up in self-love, which have been denatured to its social form as amour-propre. That means that a central way that human beings relate to one another—their ascension to the reality that they each are members of the same species and community—(recognition) is bound up with their sentiments towards their own being. Human beings' love of existence is, in the state of society, always dependent upon other' attitudes toward them. Thus, recognition moves beyond a desire and becomes a new need. In this way, in the state of society humanity is "subjugated by a multitude of new needs to the whole of Nature, and *especially to those of his kind*" (DI, 170; OC, 174-175, emphasis added). However, just what the relationship is between human beings and nature in the state of society needs to be further analyzed.

Humans' orientation towards nature is completely denatured in the fully developed state of society—no part of the relationship remains the same as it once was. This is entirely the result of amour-propre and the change in the ends of self-love. The end of amour de soi is "directed at

self-preservation" experienced as the enjoyment (love) of one's existence,[9] "whereas *amour-propre* is concerned with judgements of merit and honor, with how highly one is 'regarded'… a need to be esteemed, admired, or thought valuable," experienced as love of other's glances (Neuhouser 2008, 30). In other words, the love of existence (amour de soi) engenders the pursuit of continued existence, while the love of glances (amour-propre) engenders the pursuit of perpetual looks. Recall the retreat of the forest, which was followed by the birth of nascent reason (reflection) and the new need to labor to acquire life-preserving objects. It is this change that spurred the denaturation of self-love.

As a result of the shift in self-love, human beings begin to deceive nature so that they can take advantage over it:

> He practices setting traps for [other animals], he tricked them in a thousand ways, and although a number of them might surpass him in strength at fighting, or in speed at running; in time he became the master of those that could be useful, and the scourge of those that could be harmful to him. This is how his first look at himself aroused the first movement of pride in him; this is how, while as yet scarcely able to discriminate ranks, and considering himself in the first rank as a species, he was from afar preparing to claim first rank as an individual (DI, 162; OC, 166).

In their desperation for sustenance, human beings move from their purely vegetarian diet (the fruits of trees) to an omnivorous one based upon the cunning of animals. It is in this development that human beings first turn their reflection toward themselves in introspection. They 'looked' [*regard*] at themself and, seeing that they were good, looked down upon everything else that is not like them. They felt 'pride' [*orgueil*], which was the first movement of amour-propre.[10]

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[9] Neuhouser embraces an expanded understanding in regard to the ends of amour de soi, in congruence with the thought of Dent, on the grounds that "the goods that *amour de soi* inclines humans to seek varies with their self-conceptions," so, if a person pursue something that they believe to be "good because of its inherent rewards, apart from the esteem it brings to [them], then [their] efforts… are motivated by *amour de soi*" (30, n3).

[10] See the original French: "C'est ainsi que le premier regard qu'il porta sur lui-même y produisit le premier mouvement d'orgueil…" (OC, 166).

Because nature cannot look at human beings in order to fulfill their need for amour-propre, nature loses all its natural value for them, and becomes an object useful only for what can be extracted from it.

In the beginning of the extractive relationship between humans and nature, humans remain reliant upon nature for the means of their subsistence. They remain as hunter-gatherers until amour-propre engenders another fundamental shift in their attitudes toward and use of nature:

> The moment one man needed the help of another; as soon as it was found to be useful for one to have provisions for two, equality disappeared, and property appeared, work became necessary, and *the vast forests changed into smiling* Fields that had to be watered with the sweat of men, and where slavery and misery were soon to sprout and grow together with the harvests (DI, 167; OC, 171, emphasis added).

Rousseau goes on to state that,

> metallurgy and agriculture were the two arts the invention of which brought about this great revolution. For the Poet it is gold and silver; but for the Philosopher it is iron and wheat that civilized men, and ruined Mankind (DI, 168; OC, 171).

It is amour-propre that, as the sentiment that "inclines every individual to set greater store by himself that by anyone else" (DI, 218; OC, 219), drives the desire for one human to acquire the life sustaining objects fit for two. It is this desire that exacerbates the scarcity of nature after the closing of the state of pure nature. Thus, human beings usurp the task of nature—producing life sustaining objects—as their own by means of the invention and practice of agriculture. The forest, once their home and source of all that was good to them, becomes an obstacle to their quest for riches, and they destroy the last remnants of the original state: in themselves and in the world. It is at this point that nature 'falls out' of the *Discourse*, and its focus shifts exclusively to "men."

Environmental Recognition?

Of course, the pressing environmental needs of the contemporary necessitates a change in the way that each human being relates to nature, regardless of the power they might (not) exercise. In other words, the pressing ecological catastrophe requires a reformulation (a modification) of social self-love as amour-propre in order to ensure the continued existence of modern civilization, and for that matter, human beings altogether. Environmental political theorists have already begun to look to the work of Rousseau for answers on how to move beyond the present crisis. One common reading of Rousseau's environmental thinking rests on the idea that human beings can, in some way, return to nature or a state that approximates the state of pure nature. To be clear, that does not mean that human beings can in a literal way reenter the state of pure nature, thereby undoing all of history and eliminating our psychical denaturation. On the contrary, a 'return to nature' merely means a near-restoration of the experiential relation to nature: how it feels to be in nature; to feel at one with nature.

Lane puts forward one such interpretation of Rousseauvian thought that is based largely on his later works, *Confessions* and *Solitary Walker*. He argues that Rousseau's work takes up a romantic attitude towards the original, natural life of humans before they began to live in societies that dreams of a reinstated 'unity' between humans and nature. As such, the "essential goal for a relatively naturalized, or re-naturalized, human existence"—that is, the essential goal of Rousseauvian environmental thought—is "recovering or creating some simulacrum of that lost or imagined unity" (Lane, 142). Here, Lane posits a goal for a 're-naturalized human existence,' but then states that the means of this goal is by producing a "simulacrum" based upon something that is "lost or imagined." He is miraculously ambivalent as to whether or not the state

of the origin is a *real* historical past or a simple thought experiment invented by a philosopher in his armchair. It is possible that Lane's ambivalence follows from Rousseau's because "each of Rousseau's models [for 'returning' to the natural life] provides a formal imitation of the unity that characterized natural man, and yet each implicitly concedes that a substantive return to our original unity is no longer possible" (Lane & Clark, 72). In other words, Rousseau must be ambivalent towards the reality of the state of pure nature because, in these later works, he suggests an attempt to return to a location in time that never was. This statement is nonsensical: one cannot return to something that never was because they could not have once been to something that never was. Thus, Lane's simulacrum is in fact a simulacrum of a simulacrum; it is the construction of an unreal reality that is based on another reality that is unreal that is based on a third reality that is unreal: the negative of a negative of a negative.

This reading of the environmental program of Rousseau's works is based upon a fundamental misunderstanding of the cause of the transition from the state of pure nature to the state of society. He writes that "the fundamental Rousseauian narrative emphasizes that human beings are fallen creatures" (Lane, 137), however the characterization of 'the Fall of man' does not accurately capture the changes that lead to the closing of the state of pure nature. Lane argues that the cause of the 'Fall' was the expansion of human desires driven by amour-propre:

> Rousseau argues that natural man was entirely free of any systemic conflict with nonhuman nature because he lacked *the passions* that fuel the expansive desires that lead to the degradation of the natural world. The expansion of the scope of human desire by vanity, the passion that Rousseau terms *amour-propre*, ultimately leads to the technologies that have first expanded human desire, and then human capability, albeit at a tremendous cost to the natural world (139).

Here, the cause of the 'degradation' (denaturation) of the natural world is identified as the development of new human passions; however, recall that the inverse is true. It was the

degradation of nature that led to the development of new passions. First, the trees grew taller, making human animals compete with themselves and other animals for life sustaining resources. New or modified human passions emerged only after that initial change in nature. Amour-propre is the root of human beings' abuse of nature, but it is not the cause of the original denaturation of nature. In the state of pure nature, human animals were "neither food nor wicked, and had neither vices nor virtues" (DI, 150; OC, 152). The suggestion that amour-propre could have arisen before the development of human beings directly challenges this statement by Rousseau. Human animals were amoral creatures who were no more able to commit a moral failing than a dog. Human animals could not fall from the state of pure nature because they had no faculties nor needs to develop themselves. This is the basic premise of the state of pure nature in the *Second Discourse*.

What is perhaps more important, however, is that the proposition that amour-propre could have existed in the state of pure nature requires that human beings also existed in that state; thus, undermining the defining feature of human beings: that of lack. The beginning of the state of lack—as the first movement after the closing of the state of pure nature that required human beings to compete for the requirements of life—simultaneously brought about the transmutation of human animals into human beings; thereby opening the possibility for humans to be "distinguished from animals, and the rest of nature, not by a presence but by a privation or absence" (Dienstag, 622). For Rousseau, human beings came into existence because nature deprived them of their natural needs to maintain their existence. There was no desire in the state of pure nature (or, at the most, the instant of desire coincided with the instant of the satisfaction of that desire). A human being is a desiring being.

As such, the boundary between human beings and nature is irremovable (both in reality and in simulacra). Nature itself has created this boundary, and any hope to remove is necessarily manifest as the desire for the totalization of the human will over and against the whole of nature. It is the hunting down of a departed lover to lock them away so they can never leave you again masquerading as the whims of a romantic. However, the boundary can still be modified in order to change the ways in which human beings interact with nature because human beings continued to denature ourselves after the first movement of nature. Our desires and needs changed over time; we progressed from the state of artificial nature to the state of war to the state of society. The question remains then how much human beings are able to change ourselves and our environments. Particularly, because amour-propre is the root of the harms that human beings do to the environment, how much can human beings change amour-propre so that it is less harmful to one another and nature?

Rousseau focuses on the former half of this question in the *Social Contract* and *Emile*, which lay out the 'best methods' for the curtailment of harmful amour-propre through social and political solutions and domestic education. Neuhouser has typologized the five types of "inflamed amour-propre" and the four kinds of "social and domestic remedies" that Rousseau hypothesized were available to human beings in modern societies. The five types of inflamed amour-propre are over-zealous amour-propre, one that seeks preeminence over others, amour-propre that gives up one's own freedom for the regard of others, the confusion of "appearing to be" for "actually being" (duplicitous) and "an exaggerated sense" of one's own value (Neuhouser 2008, 90-91). It is not necessary to delve into these five types of inflamed amour-propre here;[11] however, it is important to note that these directly inform their remedies.

[11] See Neuhouser, Chapter 3: The Varieties of Inflamed *Amour-Propre* (90-116).

The four remedies to inflamed amour-propre are divided into two groups: two are considered "social" and two are "domestic." The first social remedy is the "limiting of social inequality," specifically economic inequality. According to Neuhouser, Rousseau considers two types of economic inequality: class, which he holds should be eliminated, and wealth, which he believes should be reduced as much as possible (but it cannot be totally eliminated). For Rousseau, class is an entirely artificial construct flowing from property relations, and Neuhouser draws this point explicitly to a Marxist conception of class as owners and non-owners (workers). The fundamental problem with class is that it "represents for Rousseau (as for Marx) a species of dependence that is both inimical to freedom and avoidable, and for this reason he is committed to its abolition" (Neuhouser 2008, 163). Class represents a threat to republican freedom. On the other hand, Rousseau finds that difference in wealth is an inescapable effect of natural inequality, for wealth is dependent upon "'natural' factors [such] as luck, determination, and innate talent [that] are not completely divested (by 'artificial' means [i.e., denatured through human intervention]) of their power to affect individuals' fortunes" (Neuhouser 2008, 165). The only way to eliminate variation in wealth—thought of as resources, beyond monetary wealth—is to completely extinguish natural inequalities that make human beings individual persons.

The other social remedy for inflamed amour-propre is the creation of "institutional sources of respect and esteem," that is, recognition. These are the legal foundations of the liberal person. These are "the equality of citizens as *subjects*," "the equality they enjoy as the collective *sovereign*," and "the recognition of an individual as a bearer of rights" (Neuhouser 2008, 167-168). Social remedies to amour-propre operate as *du jure* recognition of the entire political community for each individual that takes part within it. It excludes anyone who is not a *citizen*,

making the distinction between subject *to* the laws and citizen *of* the law critical. Only those afforded political rights can receive social recognition through these institutions.

Additionally, there are two groups of remedies that rely on domestic education that are described in Rousseau's *Emile*. These are sequential stages of education that follow the course of child and adolescent development. The first stage of the proscribed domestic education is during childhood, and its aim is to form amour de soi and prevent the development of amour-propre for as long as possible. In this stage of their education, a young pupil is taught to "develop his natural capacities, to explore the world, and even to learn a trade (carpentry), all in the absence of the evaluating gaze of other subjects" (Neuhouser 2008, 173). In other words, the student is encouraged to revel in their own existence, which is the practice of amour de soi. 'To form' amour de soi merely means to build it up as much as possible so that when the other self-love does inevitably arise, amour de soi is sufficiently strong in force to combat the evils that amour-propre typically produces. All this is done out of the gaze of others so that the student does not acquire a taste for their gaze and approval and become dependent upon them.

The second stage of Rousseau's domestic education begins at the beginning of adolescence, when self-love becomes expressed as amour-propre. The goal of this stage it to "instill in him a correct understanding of the 'rank' he occupies relative to others—or more precisely, the rank he takes himself to deserve" (Neuhouser 2008, 175). Unsurprisingly, the 'correct' social rank of the student is equal to that of their fellow citizen, so in the end, despite the emergence of amour-propre, the well-educated person will only desire to be considered equal to other subjects of the political institutions discussed above. Rousseau mandates that pity be cultivated in the student before amour-propre is allowed to take hold. Pity is formed so that the student feels empathy for the suffering of others. Imagination plays a key role in the formation of

pity, as it enables someone to identify with a suffering subject. Neuhouser emphasizes the importance of this faculty, stating that the "role of imagination, then, in forming, or habituating, the passions—making them 'second nature'—is to fix their objects, which, in the present case, amounts to determining to whom and on the basis of what Emile's pity is to be directed" (2008, 176). In other words, imagination is critical to the appropriate formation not just of pity but of all of the passions. It is imagination that "determines the passions' bent," and, when "properly directed," "transforms passions into good character" (Neuhouser 2008, 176). With good pity adequately developed, the educator can allow amour-propre to finally take hold in the student. However, the final step of their education is

> coincident with the emergence of *amour-propre*, [so that] Emile is brought face to face with a feature of human life that stands in tension with his newly acquired ideal of moral equality: the basic and, to him, startling fact of social inequality—the existence of 'artificial' inequalities in wealth and power (Neuhouser 2008, 178).

With the power of the values that the student learned early on in their education and of their fully developed pity, the sudden knowledge of artificial inequalities is so shocking to them that their amour-propre is withheld from finding those inequalities desirable. The strategy of Rousseau's domestic education if to completely dominate the development of the student so that each passion and faculty arise and are developed in accordance with the desired end: a non-inflamed amour-propre. Put together, the two types of remedies for amour-propre seek to mitigate its damages from opposing sides: social institutions seek to establish reliable and nonthreatening means of recognition; domestic education sees to thwart the most intensive feelings of amour-propre. As they stand, these remedies are unable to mitigate harms done to nature by human beings with inflamed amour-propre.

The question then becomes whether or not these acceptable remedies to amour-propre can be appropriated for the purposes of reducing the harm that human beings do to the planet. In other words, can the ecological problem be adequately solved by the establishment of these political institutions and domestic education. Of course, they cannot. This kind of solution fails to grasp the fundamental issue that allows for the ease with which human beings commit ruthless acts against nature. The driving force of the evils that human beings do to one another is for the recognition of those same (or others who are nonetheless like them) people who are harmed. The ends of amour-propre and the actions that the pursuit of those ends permit are altogether antithetical, irrational. That is, it promotes the destruction of recognizing beings for the recognition of the very same beings. Further, there is no recourse to the other passions. Recall that pity can only effect humans on the contingent that a person identifies with the suffering beings. A necessary condition for that kind of identification to occur is that the suffering being is sentient. In fact, that is simply a necessary condition for the *feeling* of suffering.

Hence, human beings cannot seek recognition beyond the bounds of humanity, whatever that is determined to be. Humans will never be able to—and thus should not attempt to—treat nature as they ought to treat one another. Nature cannot be a liberal person to whom rights are conferred and is able to participate as an equal sovereign of various states. On the limits of the political relationship between human beings and nature, Dienstag writes:

> The situation with nature is otherwise. If modern Kantian liberal theory wrongly speaks in place of citizens by claiming to know in advance what goods they want, the same reproach cannot apply to the *necessarily representative* relationship with matter or animals or nature that humans introduce when we (attempt to) speak on their behalf. There is no substitute for this inequality, and it will not do to ignore it or to wish it away or to pretend that it can be overcome with the right sort of moral orientation. Our concern and respect for nature can always only be that—namely, *our* care and *our*

> concern. Respect for other humans can reflect the self-respect that every individual at least has the potential to enact; respect for nature cannot (Dienstag, 628).

Human beings will never recognize nature and nature cannot grant recognition of a human being's personhood. If there is to be a Rousseauvian environmental political theory, it will not be based upon a post-humanist conception of the potential relationships between the two entities. Philosophers cannot decenter humanity from paradigms that were born in the state of society (morality and politics). Rousseau's environmental political philosophy must be anthropocentric in its entirety, and anthropocentrism is revealed to be, "not the opposite of ecological concern" but, "its only possible basis" (Dienstag, 631). This is the reality of the state of society based upon the acceptance that the state of pure nature cannot be returned to. Amour-propre finds no relief by looking for recognition in nature.

Towards a New Self-Love within the Environment

There is one last Rousseauvian hope that remains: a reformulation—or what can just as well be called a re-denaturation (denaturation of the denaturation)—of self-love wherein human beings desire to act well and the satisfaction of that new desire is experienced as an immediate act of self-loving.[12] In other words, this is a hope that there might be a recalibration of self-love as a response to ecologic catastrophe. It is possible that, driven by amour de soi, human beings alter their relationships with one another and nature that is made manifest through a reformulation of their passions. Such a hope finds its source in the heart of the plot of the *Second Discourse*. The action of the discourse, set off in the first paragraphs of the second part, is spurred by a great cataclysm of nature: the closing of the state of pure nature.[13] Amid the new

[12] For more on the concept of the "denaturation of the denaturation" in the thought of Rousseau as well as its relation to the "negation of the negations," see Althusser (95-97).
[13] Elaborated above in "Nature's Separation from Humans."

struggle for existence, it was amour de soi—love of existence—that pushed humans to participate in that struggle and ultimately join together in society. The formation of society was an egocentric move that individuals chose to partake in because of the clear advantage that social groups gave to them in the new struggle for survival. These primitive societies only lasted as long as that advantage was perceived to exist: as soon as "a hare happened to pass within reach of one of them," they abandoned the group that was hunting for a deer (DI, 163; OC, 167). Despite the initial weakness of the circumstances that push humans towards one another to form loose collectives of organization, social ties become ever stronger and ultimately result in the formation of civilization. Amour de soi pushes humans to become social creatures in an effort to sustain their own existence. As a result, it is denatured along with the whole of humanity.

Because recognition can only be obtained from beings that are able to confer that recognition and beings whose recognition is considered valuable, theories of recognition are of no use when analyzing how human beings might re-imagine themselves in order to create a better relationship with the environment.[14] Hence, amour-propre is not the kind of self-love that can be appropriated for the purposes of fostering a symbiotic relationship between human beings and the rest of nature: it is only useful for crafting just relationships *within* societies.

It is possible then to imagine a re-denaturation or a second denaturation of self-love that is not based on love of one's own existence nor on the love of the glances of others. This would be a new kind of self-love that is based upon a more generalized idea of the love of existence, which cares for the security of the life and freedom of human beings who live with and after an individual mobilized for the preservation and legitimation of one's own qualities that make themselves human beings. Rousseau asks,

[14] See Cooper (142) for a discussion of Cato, who "has too noble an *amour-propre* to seek recognition from his own society."

> by what Right those who were not afraid to debase themselves to this point [slavery] could subject their posterity to the same ignominy, and on its behalf renounce goods which it does not owe to their liberality and without which life itself is a burden to all who are worthy of it (DI, 178-179; OC, 183).

The environmental question becomes a matter of natural law. There is no right to alienate one's own life nor freedom because they are the "essential gifts of Nature" that are sufficient conditions to quality a life as human life (human animal and human being) (DI, 179; OC, 184). As such, one has no right to alienate the life nor freedom of any other human, *including generations of humans that do not yet exist*. Here, the Rousseauvian moral imperatives that relate to the present ecological catastrophe come into focus. Duties to posterity can be thought of as and become duties to nature as the material through which present humanity is acted on by the past and acts onto the future. The struggle with and domination of nature becomes the struggle against and domination over future human beings. The cooperation with nature is the cooperation with and for the preservation of the species. The destruction of the productive soil in the present is the eradication of the ability to produce life sustaining foodstuffs in the future. The preservation of the soil is the preservation of species-life. Self-love becomes actualized through loving the species.

This sort of self-love can be imagined as the revitalization of the lost forest. That is not to suggest that it is possible or beneficial to attempt to recreate the forest of the state of pure nature. However, we can imagine the reforestation of the fields that work to preserve human life and the continued habitability of the planet. This is not a complete reforestation of the planet and the total eradication of the fields, which would be akin to the romantic dreams of a "return." Rather, we should imagine a Rousseauvian balance between forests and fields that is based upon a

synthesis of idealism and historical analysis.[15] A balance that allows living human beings to use the life sustaining resources of the planet without depriving future human beings of a humane existence full of life and freedom. The new environmental self-love would be a love and affirmation of oneself through our love of posterity.

[15] See Vettese and Pendergrass "Half-Earth Socialism" for one such example.

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