

17.03. Introduction to Political Thought
Lecture Outline: Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Part II

- I. Dependence, inauthenticity, and loss of freedom in social life
 - A. Why social life leads to dependence and inauthenticity
 - 1. Human faculty of perfectibility, triggered by changes in external circumstances
 - 2. *Amour de soi* (natural love of self) v. *amour propre* (“vanity”)
 - B. Rousseau’s conception of freedom: freedom as autonomy
 - C. Challenge for the *Social Contract*: since we cannot return to the state of nature, how can we eliminate the dependence, inauthenticity, and unfreedom of the social state?

- II. Private property and inequality
 - A. Rousseau’s account of the origin of private property and inequality
 - 1. Inequality is not natural; it is artificial and unjust (cf. Locke)
 - 2. Not everything artificial is unjust
 - a. Golden age of moderate sociability
 - b. Possibility of legitimate government
 - 3. But presumption that anything artificial is illegitimate
 - 4. Psychological dependence: the rich desire inequality for their sense of self-worth
 - B. Critique of ‘right’ of private property

- III. Origins of political society
 - A. Why actual historical contract is illegitimate: swindle of the poor by the rich
 - B. Differences from Hobbes and Locke
 - 1. Aim of political society
 - a. Hobbes and Locke: ensure self-preservation
 - b. Rousseau: further plunder of the poor
 - 2. Bases of contract
 - a. Hobbes and Locke: matter of reasoned agreement based on individual consent
 - b. Rousseau: matter of propaganda

- IV. “Hypothetical history of governments”
 - A. Three stages
 - 1. Establishment of law & right of property: *de facto* ownership gets protection of law (authorizes class of rich and poor)
 - 2. Institution of the magistracy (class of strong and weak)
 - 3. Conversion of legitimate into arbitrary power (class of master and slave)
 - B. Paradox: good regime requires good citizens, but citizens become good only under a good regime