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Between Primates and Primitives: Natural Man as the Missing Link in Rousseau's *Second Discourse*

Francis Moran III

In his letter to Christophe de Beaumont (1762) Rousseau informs the Archbishop that the “fundamental principle of all morality . . . is this: That man is a naturally good being, who loves justice and order; that there is no original perversity in the human heart and that the first movements of nature are always right.”¹ This would seem to make the *Discourse on Inequality* (the *Second Discourse* [1755]) and its discussion of the natural condition of the human species the cornerstone of Rousseau’s ethical and political philosophy. If this is indeed the case, then it is essential that we understand his conception of natural man as accurately as possible. Recent studies of the *Second Discourse* have increasingly portrayed this creature as some type of protohuman or “primate with unused potentialities,” rather than as a fully human being.² The more ambitious of these studies have suggested that Rousseau was not only intimating human descent from simian ancestors³ but also anticipating modern develop-

¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Letter to Christophe de Beaumont” (1762), *The Indispensable Rousseau*, ed. John Hope Mason (New York, 1979), 232.

² Lester G. Crocker, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (2 vols.; New York, 1979), I, 232. Also see Aryeh Botwinick, *Rousseau’s Critique of Liberal Democracy* (Bristol, Ind., 1983), 15.

³ See, for example, Maurice Cranston, “Introduction,” *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: A Discourse on Inequality*, ed. Maurice Cranston (New York, 1984), 28-30; Lester Crocker, “Diderot and Eighteenth-Century French Transformism,” *Forerunners of Darwin: 1745-1859*, eds. Bentley Glass, Oswei Temkin, and William L. Straus (Baltimore, 1959), 133-34; A. O. Lovejoy, “The Supposed Primitivism of Rousseau’s Discourse on Inequality,” *Modern Philology*, 21 (1923), 165-86; Roger D. Masters, “The Structure of Rousseau’s Political Thought,” *Hobbes and Rousseau*, eds. Maurice Cranston and Richard S. Peters (Garden City, N.Y., 1972), 403-4; Masters, “Jean-Jacques is Alive and Well: Rousseau and Contemporary Sociobiology,” *Daedalus*, 107 (1978), 93-105; Masters, “Nothing Fails Like Success: Development and History in Rousseau’s Political Philosophy,” *Trent Rousseau Papers*, eds. Jim MacAdam, Michael Neuman, and Guy LaFrance (Ottawa, 1980), 99-118; René Pomeau, “Voyage et lumières dans la littérature française du XVIIIe siècle,” *Studies on Voltaire and*

ments in anthropology,⁴ sociobiology,⁵ and primatology.⁶

Of course Rousseau's discussion of *orang outangs* and natural human beings initially appears to encourage evolutionist speculation. After all, in Note X of the *Discourse* Rousseau quotes the abbé Prévost describing *orang outangs* as a "sort of middle point between the human species and the baboons,"⁷ and in Part II he places his own natural human beings "at equal distances from the stupidity of brutes and the fatal enlightenment of civil man."⁸ By describing natural man in terms similar to those used to describe *orang outangs*, Rousseau seems to be suggesting a close relationship between the two species. In the following discussion, however, I aim to temper some of the enthusiasm for this evolutionist reading by demonstrating that the natural man of the *Second Discourse* is in fact a true human being modeled after eighteenth-century conceptions of the "missing link" connecting human beings and animals in the "chain of being" ...at that time the dominant European theory of natural history.⁹

I. Primates, Missing Links, and the Chain of Being

By referring to natural man as a mid-point between animals and human beings, Rousseau is providing his audience with a recognizable framework for understanding the kind of creature he will be describing.¹⁰ In the context of

the Eighteenth Century, 57 (1967), 1269-89; Robert Wokler, "Perfectible Apes in Decadent Cultures: Rousseau's Anthropology Revisited," *Daedalus*, 107 (1978), 107-34; and Robert Wokler, "The Ape Debates in Enlightenment Anthropology," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 192 (1980), 1164-75.

⁴ See Christopher Frayling and Robert Wokler, "From the Orang-utan to the Vampire: Towards an Anthropology of Rousseau," *Rousseau After 200 Years*, ed. R. A. Leigh (New York, 1982), 109-24; Asher Horowitz, *Rousseau, Nature and History* (Buffalo, 1987); and Horowitz, "Laws and Customs Thrust Us Back to Infancy: Rousseau's Historical Anthropology," *Review of Politics*, 52 (1990), 215-42.

⁵ See especially Masters, "Jean-Jacques is Alive and Well."

⁶ See especially Frayling and Wokler, "From the Orang-utan to the Vampire," and Wokler, "The Ape Debates."

⁷ "Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men (1755)," in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The First and Second Discourses*, ed. Roger D. Masters (New York, 1964), 150; hereafter *SD* followed by the page number in the Masters edition.

⁸ *SD*, 204.

⁹ For an historical overview of the idea and its importance in eighteenth-century thought, see A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), 183-287; John C. Greene, *The Death of Adam* (Ames, Ia., 1959), 132-52; William F. Bynum, "The Great Chain of Being After Forty Years: A Reappraisal," *History of Science*, 13 (1975), 1-28; and Norman Hampson, *A Cultural History of the Enlightenment* (New York, 1968), 63-95.

¹⁰ For the most part I have confined my remarks to those sources that either were cited directly by Rousseau or were cited in works he cites. Although some of the anthologies I cite (in particular, those by Lord Monboddo and Oliver Goldsmith) were published after the *Second Discourse*, many of the episodes they relate are taken from sources originally published before the *Second Discourse*. For a thorough discussion of Rousseau's sources for the *Second Discourse* see Jean Morel, "Recherches sur les sources du discours de l'inégalité," *Annales de*

mainstream eighteenth-century thought, this reference would probably have been read as an allusion to the chain of being rather than as an indication of human descent, for unlike the later evolutionists, eighteenth-century naturalists who suggested a possible relationship between primates and human beings were generally uninterested in tracing the genealogy of these populations. Instead, their claims were meant to establish the relative position of each in the chain of being.

Because there was some concern that the human species represented a possible break in the natural hierarchy of the chain of being, those naturalists interested in preserving the chain began to search for possible “missing links” which would reunite human beings with other animals. This search focused primarily on the (alleged) anatomical, morphological, and behavioral similarities of the populations presumed to be closest to the break...i.e., primates (as the highest animal) and the native populations of Africa, the South Pacific, and the Americas (as the lowest human beings).

As we can see in the passage from Prévost cited above, the single most important primate species featured in the accounts were the so-called “*orang outangs*.” We should be careful, however, not to confuse these animals with modern orangutans since naturalists at this time had not yet begun to distinguish among the different species of higher primates. In general “*orang outang*” is roughly synonymous with our “great ape.” We should also bear in mind Victor Gourevitch’s (1988) point that very few Europeans in the mid eighteenth-century (including Rousseau) had actually seen a living *orang outang*.¹¹ When reading the following descriptions of these animals it is best to try to erase any preconceptions one might have about the kind of animal being discussed and imagine that one has never seen a chimpanzee, orangutan, or gorilla.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century descriptions of *orang outangs* is their emphasis on the *orang*’s human physical appearance. For example, the primate receiving the fullest attention in

la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau, V (1909), 119-98. Also useful on this score are Jean Starobinski, “Notes et Variantes,” *J.-J. Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes*, eds. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, (4 vols.; Paris, 1959-69), III, 1285-1379; Roger D. Masters, “Editor’s Notes,” *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The First and Second Discourses*, ed. Roger D. Masters (New York, 1964), 229-48; and Victor Gourevitch, “Editor’s Notes,” *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The First and Second Discourses and Essay on the Origin of Languages*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York, 1986), 328-58. For a discussion of Rousseau and the travel literature of the period, see George Pire, “Jean Jacques Rousseau et les relations de voyages,” *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France*, 56 (1956), 355-78. For an overall introduction to the relevant travel literature see Gilbert Chinard, *L’Amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1913); Geoffrey Atkinson, *The Extraordinary Voyage in French Literature: 1700-1720* (Paris, 1922); and R. W. Frantz, “Swift’s Yahoos and the Voyagers,” *Modern Philology*, 29 (1931), 48-57.

¹¹ Victor Gourevitch, “Rousseau’s Pure State of Nature,” *Interpretation*, 16 (1988), 43-45. I have used the spelling *orang outang* whenever I refer to eighteenth-century descriptions of these animals.



Figure 1: Reprint of "Oran-ootan" described by Beekman (1718).

Rousseau's Note X...the "pongo"...is said to have a "human face" and to "resemble man exactly."¹² Likewise, Edward Tyson (1699) described a primate he called a "pygmie" that had a "human face" and ears which "differe nothing from the human form";¹³ and William Smith (1744) described an animal called a "boggoe" or "mandrill" that bore a "near resemblance of a human creature, though nothing at all like an Ape."¹⁴

¹² *SD*, 204.

¹³ Edward Tyson, *Orang-Outang or the Anatomy of a Pygmie Compared with that of a Monkey, an Ape, and a Man* (1699), cited in Ashley Montagu, "Edward Tyson, M.D., F.D.S. 1650-1708," *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society*, 20 (1943), 244; hereafter *Orang-Outang*.

¹⁴ Cited in John Green, *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (4 vols.; London, 1745-47), II, 718; hereafter *NGCVT*. This anthology was the basis for the first seven volumes of Prévost's *Histoire générale des voyages*, thus, a similar summary of Smith's account may also be found in Prévost, *HGV*, IV, 240. These animals were also mentioned in Rousseau's Note X, see *SD*, 207.

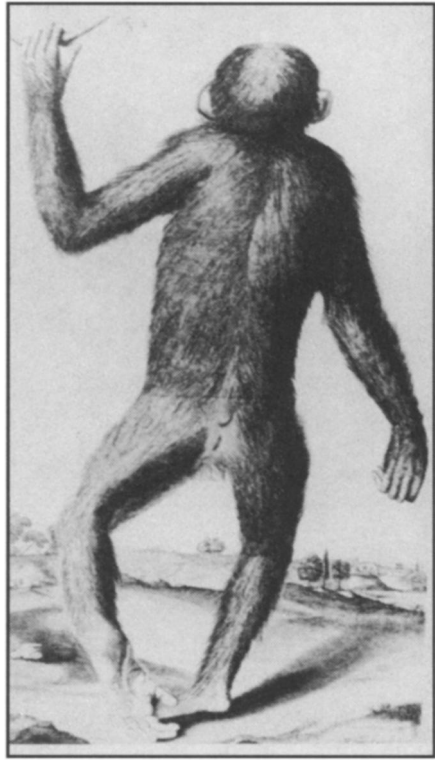
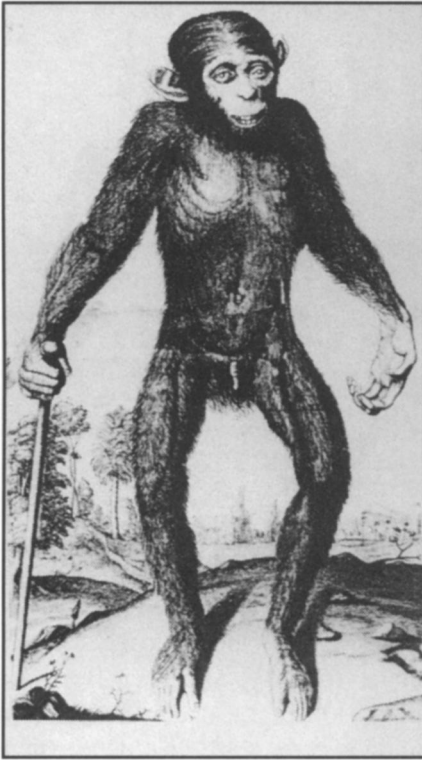


Figure 2: Front view of pygmie in Tyson. Figure 3: Rear view of "pygmie" described by Tyson (1699).
 Taken from reprint in Gould (1985).

When naturalists sought more specific references for their comparisons, they generally turned to the native populations of Africa, especially the Hottentots. Thus, Francois Leguat (1708) compared an ape directly to a Hottentot and claimed that “[i]ts Face had no other Hair upon it than the Eye-brows, and in general it much resembled one of those *Grotesque* Faces which the Female *Hottentots* have at the Cape”;¹⁵ and Daniel Beeckman (1718) opined that his *orang* was “handsomer I am sure than some Hottentots that I have seen.”¹⁶ Beeckman included an illustration of this animal (Figure 1) and one cannot help being struck by its human appearance.

¹⁵ Francois Leguat, *The Voyage of Francois Leguat* (1708), ed. Pasfield Oliver (2 vols.; London, 1891), II, 234; hereafter *Voyage*.

¹⁶ Daniel Beeckman, *A Voyage to and from the Island of Borneo*, (London, 1718), 37; hereafter *Borneo*.



Figure 4: Reprint of "Chimpaneze" from Prévost (1747).



Figure 5: Reprint of "Jocko" from Buffon (1766).

Another common feature of these accounts was the claim that *orang outangs* could walk like human beings. Samuel Purchas (1625), Tyson, Leguat, Beeckman, Smith, Benoît de Maillet (1748), and Buffon (1766), for instance, all describe some primate in this fashion.¹⁷ Tyson's study is particularly instructive on this point in that Tyson studied a live specimen shortly before its death and observed that while it occasionally walked upright, it regularly walked on its knuckles. When he eventually dissected the animal, he concluded that nothing anatomical prevented it from walking like a normal human being and attributed its inability to walk upright to its weakened condition. Accordingly, his illustrations of the pygmie show it standing on two legs but supporting itself either by leaning on a cane (Figure 2) or by clinging to a rope (Figure 3). This practice becomes fairly common in later drawings of these creatures. Prévost, for example, includes an engraving of a "chimpaneze" supporting itself with a cane (Figure 4), and Buffon includes an illustration of a "jocko" standing with a walking stick (Figure 5).

Perhaps at this point we ought to pause and examine the way in which this type of illustration can influence our understanding of these animals.¹⁸ For by presenting a picture of a creature bearing such a close physical resemblance to

¹⁷ Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, VI, 398; Tyson, *orang outang*, 261; Leguat, *Voyage*, II, 234; Beeckman, *Borneo*, 37; William Smith, *A New Voyage to Guinea* (1744), in *HGV*, IV, 240; Benoît de Maillet, *Telliamed* (1748), tr. Albert O. Carozzi (Chicago, 1968), 201; and Buffon, "Natural History of the Orang-Outangs, or the Pongo and Jocko" (1766), *Natural History: General and Particular*, ed. Edward Smellie (8 vols.; London, 1781), VIII, 86; hereafter *NH*.

¹⁸ Stephen Jay Gould, *The Flamingo's Smile* (New York, 1985), 272.

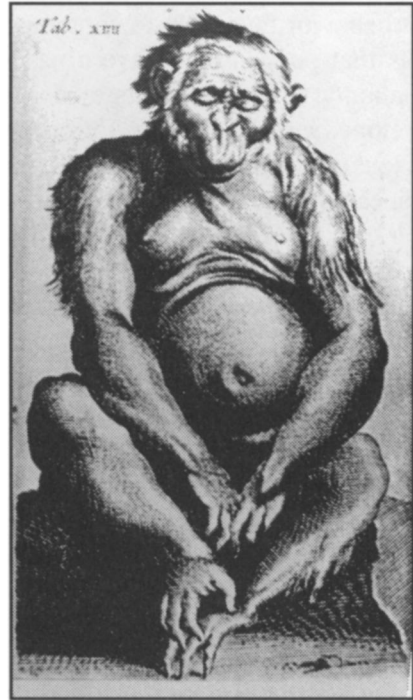


Figure 6: Reprint of female "Orang outang" from Prévost (1747).

Figure 7: Reprint of female "Orang outang" from Tulp (1641).

human beings standing in a human pose and using human tools, these drawings leave the impression that the apparent gap between human beings and animals may not be as large as originally suspected. This would be especially true for an audience that has had little direct contact with the animals themselves. These drawings help us to appreciate Rousseau's uncertainty over whether such creatures were animals or primitive human beings who had been misidentified by careless observers. Recall that in Note X Rousseau wonders whether "various animals similar to men [i.e., *orang outangs*], which travelers have without much observation taken for Beasts . . . might not indeed be genuine Savage men whose race . . . had not acquired any degree of perfection, and was still in the primitive state of nature."¹⁹ Indeed, this speculation becomes all the more plausible when we take into account European descriptions of primate ethology.

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European reports of primate behavior provide some of the clearest examples of the way in which the demands of the chain of being could influence scientific observation. Naturalists, in their zeal to make these animals appear as human as possible, were willing not only to describe *orang outang* behavior in anthropomorphic language but to compare

¹⁹ *SD*, 204.

that behavior favorably to contemporary European standards. Thus Purchas hints that pongos may have a nascent religious understanding,²⁰ and Lord Monboddo (1773) presents evidence that *orang outangs* have a fairly well developed sense of justice.²¹ European naturalists also overcame one of the more obvious difficulties of finding a missing link between human beings and animals by speculating that some primates might be capable of speech.²²

Orang outang behavior could also be used to sanction more mundane aspects of European social mores. Prévost and Tyson, for example, report on the elegant table manners of primates introduced to European dining.²³ Tyson also claims that his pygmie naturally adopted a conservative attitude towards alcohol and nudity;²⁴ and Tulp (1641), Jacobus Bontius (1658), Leguat, Buffon, and Monboddo all discuss the superior sexual morals—particularly the modesty—of the females of some primate species.²⁵

This last behavior was effectively captured in visual representations of the animal, as we can see in an illustration of a female *orang* taken from Prévost's *Histoire générale* who is shown covering her genitals and directing her eyes away from the viewer (Figure 6).²⁶ Notice that in presenting the *orang* in this manner, the artist is able to convey the idea that the creature understood both what she would have been revealing and the impropriety of the revelation.

Further confirmation that these creatures were the potential missing link between human beings and animals can be seen in Tyson's claim that when given a choice of associating with either human beings or monkey, they markedly prefer the company of the former. He suggests, in other words, that the *orang outangs* themselves recognized their proximity to human beings.²⁷ As de Maillet notes in summarizing his account of *orangs*, "if we could not say that these

²⁰ Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, VI, 399.

²¹ James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (6 vols.; Edinburgh, 1773-1792), I, 87-88; hereafter *Origin and Progress*.

²² According to Prévost "guinous" are suspected of feigning muteness in order to escape being used as slaves; see Prévost, *HGV*, III, 293. Green offers similar speculations on two other types of primates: "magots" and the "quojas-morrow"; see Green, *NGCVT*, II, 349-50.

²³ See Tyson, *Orang-Outang*, 241; Prévost, *HGV*, V, 89. Rousseau included the passage from Prévost in Note X, see *SD*, 206.

²⁴ Tyson, *Orang-Outang*, 257; 280.

²⁵ Tyson, *Orang-Outang*, 280; Leguat, *Voyage*, II, 234; Buffon, "Natural History of the Orang-Outangs, or the Pongo and Jocko," 56; and Monboddo, *Origin and Progress*, I, 270. For a summary of Tulp and Bontius, see T. H. Huxley, *Man's Place in Nature* (1863), ed. Ashley Montagu (Ann Arbor, 1959), 17.

²⁶ This drawing appears to have been based on an earlier illustration (see Figure 7) of the same animal that was published in Tulp's *Observationum Medicarum*; see Nicolas Tulp, *Observationum Medicarum* (Amsterdam, 1641). We should note two subtle differences between the two illustrations: 1) the artist of the Prévost drawing augments the orang's mammaries so that they resemble more closely those of a human female; and 2) modifies the jaw to create a more human facial structure.

²⁷ Tyson, *Orang-Outang*, 257.

living creatures were men, at least they resembled them so much that it would have been unfair to consider them only as animals.”²⁸

The preceding discussion provides some valuable context for Rousseau’s discussion of pongos and the other anthropomorphic primates mentioned in Note X. Given the close physical and behavioral similarity between *orang outangs* and human beings, his suggestion that *orangs* might be primitive human beings does not appear as revolutionary as some recent studies have suggested nor as farfetched as some of his contemporary critics supposed.²⁹ Rousseau’s response to Charles Bonnet’s objections to this characterization seems perfectly adequate: “[t]hat the monkey is a Beast, I believe it, and I have stated my reason for believing it; you are good enough to inform me that the Orang-outang also is one, but I must admit that given the facts I cited, that seemed to me a difficult fact to prove.”³⁰ Throughout Note X Rousseau is simply questioning how we define a human being. His concerns on this score come into sharper focus once we begin to examine the treatment of so-called “primitive” human populations in the travel literature of the day.

II. “Primitive,” Missing Links and the Chain of Being

The discovery of anthropomorphic primates was but one part of eighteenth-century attempts to link human beings and animals in the chain of being. European naturalists also tried to narrow this gap by drawing attention to the purportedly simian attributes (both physical and behavioral) of some human populations—usually African and specifically Hottentot. Sir John Ovington (1696), for example, described the Hottentots as “the very Reverse of Human kind . . . so that if there’s any medium between a Rational Animal and a Beast, the *Hotantot* lays the fairest claim to that Species.”³¹ Similarly, Beckman

²⁸ De Maillet, *Telliamed*, 201.

²⁹ The purportedly evolutionist implications of the *Second Discourse* have been drawing increased attention of late. See, for example, Cranston, “Introduction,” 29-30; Bertrand de Jouvenal, “Rousseau the Pessimistic Evolutionist,” *Yale French Studies*, 28 (1961), 83-96; Frayling and Wokler, “From the Orang-utan to the Vampire”; Roger D. Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau* (Princeton, 1968); Masters, “The Structure of Rousseau’s Political Thought”; Masters “Jean-Jacques is Alive and Well”; Masters “Introduction,” *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: On the Social Contract*, ed. Roger D. Masters (New York, 1978), 13; Masters, “Nothing Fails Like Success,” 99-102; Marc Plattner, *Rousseau’s State of Nature* (DeKalb, Ill., 1979), 36-40; Wokler, “The Ape Debates,” 1171; and Wokler, “Perfectible Apes in Decadent Cultures.” The earliest example of this type of reading that I could locate is C. E. Vaughan’s introductory essay in his edition of Rousseau’s political writings; see C. E. Vaughan, *The Political Writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau* (1915) (2 vols.; New York, 1971), 120-23. Also see Charles Bonnet, “Lettre de M. Philopolis” (1755) *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes*, III, 1384.

³⁰ Rousseau, “Letter to Philopolis” (1755), *The First and Second Discourse*, ed. Victor Gourevitch, 235.

³¹ Cited in Frantz, “Swift’s Yahoos and the Voyagers,” 55.

claimed that Hottentots “are not really unlike Monkeys or Baboons in their Gestures and Postures, especially when they sit Sunning themselves.”³²

Beeckman goes on to relate that Hottentot men have “broad flat Noses, blubber Lips, great Heads, disagreeable Features, short trifled Hair” and that “nothing can be more ugly.”³³ Hottentot women fared little better in Beeckman’s eyes, as he adds that they were “as ugly in the kind as the Men, having long flabby Breasts, odiously dangling down to the Waste; which they can toss over their Shoulders for the Children to suck. . . .”³⁴ This confirms an earlier claim made by English explorer Sir Thomas Herbert (see Figure 8) concerning these same women.³⁵ Oliver Goldsmith (1774) later extended this attribute to include all African women, noting that once these women begin childbearing, their breasts “hang down to the navel; and it is customary with them, to suckle the child at their backs, by throwing the breast over the shoulder.”³⁶

Given that Europeans were willing to describe the physical attributes of black Africans in such terms, it should not be too surprising to find them using similar language in their accounts of African behavior and intellectual development.³⁷ Indeed, European naturalists saw a direct correlation between the physical and intellectual inferiority of black Africans. As Goldsmith notes in describing Africans, “[a]s their persons are thus naturally deformed, at least to our imaginations, their minds are equally incapable of strong exertions.”³⁸

For many eighteenth-century naturalists the mind of a black African was incapable not only of strong exertions but of most feats associated with human intelligence. Buffon, for example, claims that the Africans of Guiney “appear to be perfectly stupid, not being able to count beyond the number three, that they never think spontaneously; that they have no memory, the past and the future being equally unknown to them,”³⁹ and Beeckman refers to Hottentots as “filthy Animals,” who “hardly deserve the name of Rational Creatures.”⁴⁰ And where some naturalists speculated that some primates might be capable of

³² Beeckman, *Borneo*, 187.

³³ Beeckman, *Borneo*, 184.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 184-85.

³⁵ Thomas Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels into Divers Parts of Asia and Afrique* (London, 1638; 2nd ed.), 17; hereafter *Some Yeares Travels*.

³⁶ Oliver Goldsmith, *An History of the Earth and Animated Nature* (8 vols.; London, 1774), II, 228; hereafter *HEAN*. Buffon reported the same characteristic in Eskimo women, see Buffon, “Of the Varieties of the Human Species,” (1753), *NH*, III, 59.

³⁷ For more on the problem of racism in eighteenth-century natural history see Phillip R. Sloan, “The Idea of Racial Degeneracy in Buffon’s *Histoire Naturelle*,” *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, III (1973), 293-321; Richard Popkin, “The Philosophical Basis of Eighteenth-Century Racism,” *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, III (1973), 245-62; and Henry Vyverberg, *Human Nature, Cultural Diversity, and the French Enlightenment* (New York, 1989).

³⁸ Goldsmith, *HEAN*, II, 228.

³⁹ Buffon, “Of the Varieties of the Human Species,” 151.

⁴⁰ Beeckman, *Borneo*, 186.

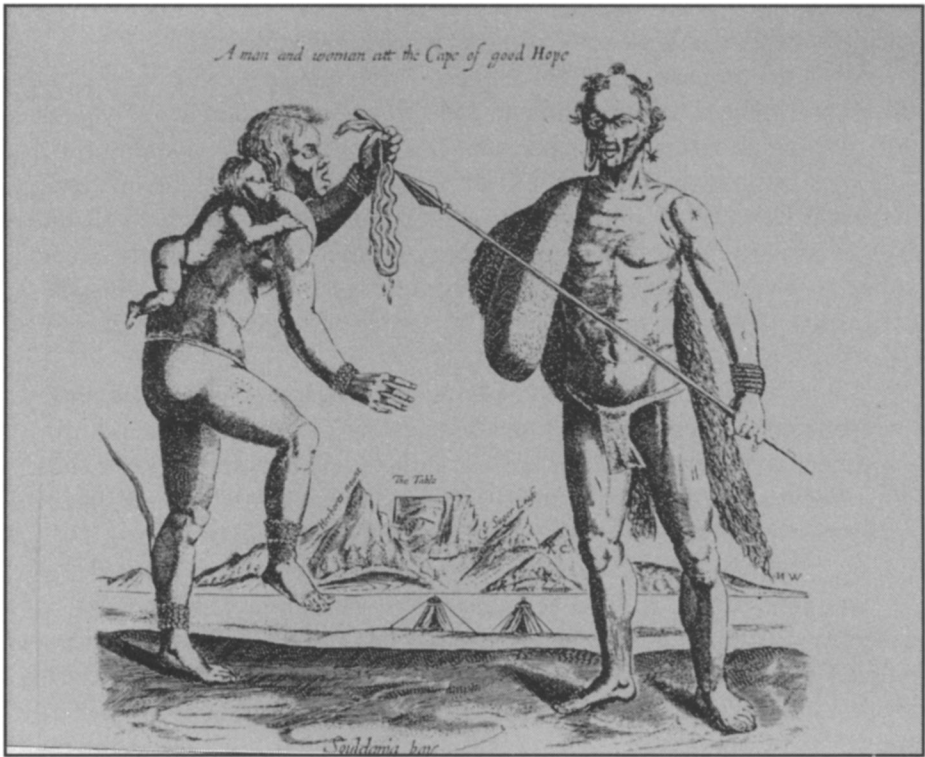


Figure 8: Reprint of male and female Hottentot from Herbert (1632).

speech, others compared the Hottentot language to animal vocalizations. Beeckman, for instance, heard it as the cackle of hens or turkeys;⁴¹ and Herbert described it as “apishly sounded (with whom tis thought they mixe unnaturally)” and “very hard to be counterfeited” since it was voiced “like the Irish.”⁴²

Herbert’s description of Hottentot speech provides another striking example of the way in which African behavior was cast in animal terms; namely, European descriptions of African sexual practices. Whereas female *orang outangs* were credited with a fairly high degree of sexual modesty, African women were depicted as having a rather liberal attitude towards sex. Thus, Herbert claimed that Hottentot women expressed gratitude by displaying their genitalia and noted that these people live communally, “coupling without distinction, the name of wife or brother unknowne among these incestuous Troglodites.”⁴³ Similarly, Prévost mentions that marriage was unknown among the Africans who inhabited the Islands of Bomma,⁴⁴ and John Green (1745)

⁴¹ Beeckman, *Borneo*, 188.

⁴² Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels*, 18.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

⁴⁴ Prévost, *HGV*, IV, 614.

describes the Africans of Teneriffe as a “rude uncivilized People” living in a society where “everyone took as many women as he pleased. . . .”⁴⁵

Several European explorers suggested that male primates exploited this difference in the behavior of human and simian females and actively pursued African women as their sexual partners. It is not particularly uncommon to find European naturalists suggesting that *orang outangs* may be the offspring of successful human/simian copulation. Olfert Dapper (1688), for example, claimed that the *orang outangs* of the Congo were so numerous and so nearly human in appearance that “it has entered the minds of some travelers that they may be the offspring of a woman and a monkey.”⁴⁶ Similarly, Leguat noted that

Nature, who does not oppose the Copulation of Horses with Asses, may well admit that of an Ape with a Female-Animal that resembles him, especially where the latter is not restrain'd by any Principle. An Ape and a Negro slave born and brought up out of the knowledge of God, have not less similitude between them than an Ass and a Mare.⁴⁷

One final aspect of these accounts that I want to mention concerns their description of the relations between different African peoples and between African peoples and primates. The European slave trade was rationalized at least in part by the claim that primitive black tribes subjugated more primitive tribes and that some primates subjugated at least some black tribes. Indeed, the ability for human beings to subjugate both other people and other animals was so important for eighteenth-century naturalists that so respected a figure as Buffon could use this trait to distinguish human beings from all other creatures.

In his discussion of human nature, Buffon points out that while there is no shortage of powerful animal species capable of destroying the members of other species, none of these species are capable of making slaves of inferior species. He notes that human beings alone have been able to tame other species and that animals do not recognize any sense of subordination vis-a-vis other animal species. This enables him to conclude that human nature is different in kind from that of other animal species.⁴⁸

Monboddo will later draw on Buffon's authority and use reports of primates making slaves of some local African population to indicate that these creatures should be included in the human species: “the great Orang Outang carries off boys and girls to make slaves of them, which not only shews him, in my apprehension to be a man, but proves that he lives in society, and must have made

⁴⁵ Green, *NGCVT*, I, 534; also see Prévost, *HGV*, II, 229.

⁴⁶ Cited in Prévost, *HGV*, V, 88; also reported by Rousseau at *SD*, 206.

⁴⁷ Leguat, *Voyage*, II, 235.

⁴⁸ Buffon, “Of the Nature of Man” (1749), *NH*, II, 362. Although Buffon criticizes slavery elsewhere (e.g., “Of the Varieties of the Human Species,” 152-53), the general tenor of his theory could be used to support this institution. See Sloan, “The Idea of Racial Degeneracy in Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle*.”

some progress in the arts of civil life; for we hear of no nations altogether barbarous who use slaves."⁴⁹

We should now be better able to appreciate the structure of the argument in the *Second Discourse*. Contemporary descriptions of both primates and primitive human populations were meant to demonstrate continuity in God's creation and the viability of the chain of being. This implied that if the chain of being was an accurate account of natural history, then inequality was a necessary feature of human society: "ORDER is heav'ns first law; and this confessed,/ Some are, and must be, greater than the rest. . . ."⁵⁰ Natural history becomes relevant to Rousseau because it was the basis for an important counterargument to his egalitarianism; that is, according to the chain of being, inequality was both natural and just.⁵¹ Rousseau must therefore demonstrate that the natural condition of the human species is much like the condition Buffon sees in other animal species. He must show that human beings are by nature equal.

III. Natural Man as a Physical Being

Rousseau approaches his discussion of natural human beings by arguing that the only sure means we have of knowing human nature is to separate what is natural from what is artificial in the human species, where artifice is understood to mean socially produced effects on human nature. In drawing this distinction he appears to pattern his account after a similar discussion in Buffon's essay on domestic animals.

Buffon argues that it is difficult to discover the true nature of domestic animals because of the changes wrought by their excessive contact with human beings.⁵² Yet he also claims that it is incumbent upon the naturalist to try to separate what God created from what human beings have produced: "it is the duty of the naturalist . . . to distinguish those facts which depend solely on instinct, from those that originate from education; to ascertain what is proper to them from what is borrowed; to separate artifice from nature; and never to

⁴⁹ Monbodo, *Origin and Progress*, I, 344.

⁵⁰ Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man* (1734), ed. Frank Brady (New York, 1965), Epistle IV, lines 49-50; hereafter *Essay*.

⁵¹ The chain of being was frequently deployed by conservatives to provide a form of what Basil Willey has called "cosmic Toryism;" see Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth Century Background: Studies on the Idea of Nature in the Thought of the Period* (New York, 1940), 43-56. Some examples of this use of the theory may be found in G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy* (1710), tr. E. M. Huggard (LaSalle, Ill., 1985) sec. 241-46; Pope, *Essay*, IV; Buffon, "Of the Varieties of the Human Species," 57-207; Bonnet, "Lettre de M. Philopolis," 1383-86; Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), ed. Thomas H. D. Mahoney (Indianapolis, 1955), 110-11; Soame Jenyns, "A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil" (1757), and "Disquisition on Government and Civil Liberty" (1782), *Works of Soame Jenyns*, ed. Charles Nalson Cole (4 vols.; London, 1793), III, 43-52 and III, 258-75; and Joseph Marie, comte de Maistre, "Study on Sovereignty" (1793), *The Works of Joseph de Maistre*, ed. Jack Lively (New York, 1965), 95-96.

⁵² Buffon, "Of Domestic Animals," *NH*, III, 301.

confound the animal with the slave, the beast of burden with the creature of God.”⁵³

We should note that Buffon is advocating a radically new understanding of nature, one which releases the concept from its Aristotelian moorings. For Buffon the natural condition of an animal is no longer its highest manifestation but rather the one most removed from human interference. Rousseau will push this idea much further and apply it to his examination of the human species. Thus, he starts with the assumption that natural man can only be discovered by stripping from him anything that can be ascribed to life in a particular society.

Rousseau begins his discussion of natural man with a brief account of human morphology. In the opening paragraph of Part I and again in Note III he argues that the physical appearance of human beings has generally remained constant; that, for example, human beings have always been bipeds. This is not to say that he denies variation in the physical attributes of the human species. In Note X, for instance, he draws attention to the diversity in such attributes as skin color, body size, and hair texture, as well as to reports of some human populations with tails.⁵⁴

Rousseau’s willingness to entertain this last possibility and his reluctance to specify any further details of human morphology in the state of nature is significant given that at this time naturalists were certain that Europeans were the prototypical human being. Other human forms were simply progressive degenerations of this superior European stock.⁵⁵ Rousseau’s failure to specify the morphology of natural human beings in any great detail leaves open the possibility that Europeans were not the original human beings. It also signals the kind of criteria he will be using throughout his description of natural man—that is, he will define natural man in terms of the minimal traits necessary to classify a being as human.

Rousseau’s account of human ethology in the pure state of nature describes a being that is healthy, vegetarian, physically strong, well coordinated, stupid, and solitary; and each of these characteristic behaviors can be supported by the relevant literature. In terms of health Prévost provides an account describing the Africans in the Kongo as quite healthy despite having neither doctors nor a rudimentary medical establishment.⁵⁶ Buffon claimed that the inhabitants of the Marianna Islands were stronger and more robust than Europeans, were free of disease, and had a life expectancy of one hundred years;⁵⁷ and Lionel Wafer

⁵³ Buffon, “Of Domestic Animals,” *NH*, III, 301-2.

⁵⁴ Buffon, for example, mentions several accounts describing the people of the Philippines as having four or five inch tails, as well as one uncorroborated account (which he questions as exaggerated) of the people of Formosa having foot long tails; see Buffon, “Of the Varieties of the Human Species,” 87. Also see de Maillet, *Telliamed*, 202-6.

⁵⁵ See Buffon, “Of the Varieties of the Human Species”; Buffon, “Of the Degeneration of Animals” (1756), *NH*, VII, 392-452; and Goldsmith, *HEAN*, I, 239.

⁵⁶ Prévost, *HGV*, IV, 643.

⁵⁷ Buffon, “Of the Varieties of the Human Species,” 91.

(1699) noted that the indians of South America are generally free of deformities and cripples.⁵⁸ The strength of natural man could be deduced from the superior strength of Hottentots and pongos (related in Rousseau's Notes VI and X respectively); and the suggestion that natural man may have been vegetarian (a speculation developed most fully in Rousseau's Notes V and VIII), can be supported by the vegetarianism of pongos⁵⁹ and the human population of Teneriffe.⁶⁰

The final two claims (those dealing with natural man's intellectual development and social arrangements) are slightly more problematic in that they seem to raise doubts about whether a creature so situated can be considered a fully human being and not simply an animal with an anthropomorphic body. Rousseau's summary of natural man does little to allay such concerns; as early in Part II of the *Discourse* he notes that "Savage man, by nature committed to instinct alone, or rather compensated for the instinct he perhaps lacks by faculties capable of substituting for it at first, and then of raising him far above nature, will therefore begin with purely animal functions."⁶¹ Specifically, Rousseau points out that natural man's desires do not exceed the physically necessary⁶² and that his mind is consumed by its present existence.⁶³ Although it might seem difficult to accept the fact that a creature with no sense of self extending through time could be a human being, we should recall that European explorers had described several contemporary human populations in these terms. We have already seen, for example, Buffon's report that the Africans of Guiney have neither memory nor foresight, and we also have Herbert's testimony that Hottentots are "an accursed Progeny of Chan, who differ in nothing from bruit beasts save forme."⁶⁴ Rousseau thus had concrete examples of presently existing human populations with the intellectual capacity of animals.

Many of the byproducts of this low intellectual development could also be supported with contemporary ethnographic information. For example, when Rousseau acknowledges that he is at a loss to explain how a human being with this level of intelligence would have been able to discover and use fire, we need to recognize that he had access to accounts of presently existing human populations—the African natives of Teneriffe and the Marianna islanders—who were ignorant of the use of fire prior to their contact with Europeans.⁶⁵ Likewise, his speculation that natural man was without possessions and a settled home can

⁵⁸ Lionel Wafer, *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America* (1699), ed. L. E. Elliot Joyce (London, 1934), 78-79. Also see George Pire, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau et les relations de voyages," 368.

⁵⁹ Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, VI, 398; and Prévost *HGV*, V, 87.

⁶⁰ Prévost, *HGV*, II, 229.

⁶¹ *SD*, 115.

⁶² *SD*, 116.

⁶³ *SD*, 117.

⁶⁴ Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels*, 16.

⁶⁵ Prévost, *HGV*, II, 229; Buffon, "Of the Varieties of the Human Species," 91.

be supported by Buffon's reports that the natives of New Holland "have no houses, and . . . sleep on the ground without any covering,"⁶⁶ and that black Africans in general share their few possessions freely among the needy "without any other motive than that of pure compassion for the indigent."⁶⁷

Rousseau's speculation that natural man was a solitary creature, however, was already controversial when the *Discourse* was first published and was rejected by a number of his contemporary critics.⁶⁸ Perhaps the most telling objection to Rousseau's view was the claim that the family was the minimal social arrangement which would ensure the perpetuation of the species. As Buffon argued,

Even supposing the constitution of the human body to be very different from what we see it, and that its growth were more rapid [Rousseau speculates in Note XII that human children in the pure state of nature may have developed faster than present day children], it is impossible to maintain that man ever existed without forming families; because, if not cherished and attended for several years, the whole children must have inevitably perished.⁶⁹

This is a fairly powerful objection to Rousseau's conception of natural man, if not the general argument of the *Second Discourse* itself. For if his natural human beings could not have survived as a biological species, it is difficult to see how they could be used to support his normative claims.

In order to defend himself from this type of counterargument, Rousseau needs to demonstrate that the human species could have survived without any settled social arrangements; that human fathers, human mothers, and their children would have had little need for prolonged social arrangements. I believe that he does offer such an argument. He demonstrates that fathers have no physical reason (after successful copulation) to care for either mother or child, and that mothers can care for their children absent the father's assistance.

The first claim appears fairly easy to defend once we accept that natural human beings have neither memory nor foresight. Rousseau correctly points out (see Note XII) that natural man would lack the requisite intellectual acumen to remain with a woman after conception and through a pregnancy. As he argues, fathers may have a moral obligation to care for mother and child, but they certainly have no physical reason to do so, and "moral proofs do not have great force in matters of physics."⁷⁰ The second claim, however, is probably both more important and more difficult to defend.

⁶⁶ Buffon, "Of the Varieties of the Human Species," 95.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Buffon, "A Dissertation on Carnivorous Animals" (1758), *NH*, IV, 183-93; and George Havens, *Voltaire's Marginalia on the Pages of Rousseau* (Columbus, Ohio, 1933).

⁶⁹ Buffon, "A Dissertation on Carnivorous Animals," 186.

⁷⁰ *SD*, 215.

Rousseau begins this argument by pointing out that while human children appear to develop slower than those of other species, a human mother has an advantage over her counterparts in most other species in that she can use her arms both to defend herself and to carry her children when fleeing an attacker. Thus, unlike other mothers, a human mother need not abandon her young when retreating nor endanger herself by slowing her retreat to her children's pace:

If they [i.e., human beings in the state of nature] have only two feet to run with, they have two arms to provide for their defense and their needs. Perhaps their children walk late and with difficulty, but mothers carry them with ease: an advantage lacking in other species in which the mother, being pursued, finds herself forced to abandon her young or to regulate her speed by theirs.⁷¹

Some critics have seen a potential difficulty for this argument. Roger Masters, for example, argues that if we accept Rousseau's earlier claim that natural human beings were vegetarians who used their hands and arms when gathering food and if, as Rousseau concedes (see Note XVI), vegetarians need to spend a great deal of time collecting food, then human infants would be vulnerable if the mother was attacked while foraging. Masters points out that a mother would be forced to separate from her children during the time she was foraging since she could not simultaneously carry her children, defend herself, and gather food.⁷²

But in raising this objection Masters is assuming that the mother must use her arms to hold her infant. Yet this need not be the case since Rousseau does not specify how mothers carried their children, only that they do so with ease, and we have several examples of viable alternatives. Andrew Battel, for example, observed that in the pongos (who like Rousseau's natural human beings are vegetarian) the infant clings to its mother's body.⁷³ We also have seen that the Hottentot infant in Figure 8 is able not only to cling to its mother's back but to be suckled in this position. The ability to transport and nurse a baby in this fashion would seem to be a considerable advantage for natural woman since it would allow her to retain relative freedom of movement of both her arms and her legs. Because Rousseau has not specified the morphology of natural woman, it is at least theoretically possible that human females in the pure state of nature could have been similarly endowed.

Since human mothers in the state of nature may have been able to transport and nurse their children while they foraged, fought, or fled, they would not have been too inconvenienced by the requirements of tending for their children; and the prospects for the children would not necessarily have been as dire as Buffon

⁷¹ *SD*, 112.

⁷² Masters, *Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, 124.

⁷³ Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, VI, 399; and Prévost, *HGV*, V, 88.

suggests. Therefore, notwithstanding Buffon's objections to the contrary, Rousseau's suggestion that natural human beings were solitary creatures could be sustained by the relevant literature.

IV. Natural Man as a Moral Being

Now that we have examined the biology of natural human beings, we can turn our attention to what Rousseau refers to as their "metaphysical" or "moral" dimension. These two sides—physical and metaphysical—of natural man are intimately connected, in that the physical being establishes the parameters for the moral being. Perhaps the most important factor in natural man's moral self is Rousseau's assessment of his intellectual development. According to Rousseau, the key elements in the moral relations of human beings in the state of nature are peace, freedom, equality, and compassion or pity; and as was the case with natural man's physical attributes, each of these could be corroborated by actually existing primitive populations.

Green reports that the inhabitants of Teneriffe, for example, "dislike Bloodshedding of any kind. . .";⁷⁴ and he draws heavily on Kolben's generally sympathetic portrait of the Hottentots to assert that these people appear to be "some of the most humane and virtuous (abating for a few Prejudices of Education) to be found among the Races of Mankind."⁷⁵ Buffon also refers to the love of liberty among the Hottentots, characterizing them as "a wandering, independent people, frightfully nasty, and extremely jealous of their liberty." Moreover, we have already seen Buffon's testimony that Africans in general share their possessions with the needy.⁷⁶

The common trait underlying each of the features Rousseau is willing to credit to natural man is the limited intelligence of human beings in the state of nature, since stupidity prevents the development of jealousy, vanity, exploitation and slavery. Rousseau's claim that inequality is "almost null" in nature is based on his insight that inequality demands a certain level of intelligence in order to judge and compare the merits of different attributes.⁷⁷ Nonrational animals, to say nothing of plants and rocks, are incapable of making these kinds of judgments and are therefore unable to construct inter- and intraspecific hierarchies. One might object that the low intelligence of natural human beings also poses a major difficulty in Rousseau's conception of their moral relations, since it appears to undermine the possibility that pity was one of natural man's basic sentiments.

Although Rousseau claims that pity operates prior to reason, some critics (e.g., Plamenatz, Masters, and Charvet) have argued that that is impossible

⁷⁴ Green, *NGCVT*, I, 534; also Prévost, *HGV*, II, 229.

⁷⁵ Green, *NGCVT*, III, vi.

⁷⁶ Buffon, "On the Varieties of the Human Species," 154.

⁷⁷ *SD*, 180.

because pity demands a higher degree of intellectual development that Rousseau was willing to credit to natural man.⁷⁸ Charvet, for example, argues that in order to experience pity an individual must be able to imagine himself in the position of the thing experiencing the suffering.⁷⁹ And as we have seen, Rousseau's natural man does not appear to possess the requisite intelligence to accomplish this mental shift.

This is a potentially devastating critique; for inasmuch as pity is the source of such emotions as generosity, clemency, humanity, friendship, and benevolence, it is also Rousseau's solution to the social problem.⁸⁰ As Charvet points out, pity (in some for or another) becomes the primary means for uniting previously solitary individuals into a social unit.⁸¹ Thus, if Charvet is correct and pity is impossible in a being with the mental development Rousseau credits to natural man, the argument in the *Second Discourse* fails.

This type of criticism, however, is misplaced for two interrelated reasons. First, while Charvet may have accurately described the mental process involved when an individual experiences pity for the suffering of another (a process which Rousseau discusses in similar language in his *Essay on the Origin of Languages*),⁸² this does not necessarily mean that the pitying individual consciously calculates the process. It is possible that natural man simply feels the pain of the sufferer without understanding why. As Rousseau notes, pity is "obscure and strong in savage man, developed but weak in civilized man."⁸³ This claim becomes more plausible once we examine how this sentiment was treated in the context of eighteenth-century physiology.

Naturalists at this time did not discuss pity in terms of its intellectual components. Buffon, for example, begins his discussion of pity by drawing a distinction between sensation and sentiment and claiming that the former is rooted in the brain and refers to the mental capacity necessary for a creature to be receptive to external stimuli, while the latter is the internal process responsible for transforming sensation into such emotional responses as pleasure, pain, anxiety, and sickness. He then argues that the brain is not involved in experiencing sentiment, so that "in man, the sentiment of pity belongs more to the body than to the mind" and that "horror and pity are not so much passions of the mind, as natural affections depending on the sensibility of the body, and similarity of structure."⁸⁴

⁷⁸ John Charvet, *The Social Problem in the Philosophy of Rousseau* (London, 1974), 18-19, hereafter *Social Problem*; Masters, *Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, 138-40; John Plamenatz, *Man and Society* (2 vols.; New York, 1963), I, 375.

⁷⁹ Charvet, *Social Problem*, 18-19.

⁸⁰ *SD*, 131-32.

⁸¹ Charvet, *Social Problem*, 19.

⁸² Rousseau, "Essay on the Origin of Languages" (1755), *The First and Second Discourses*, ed. Victor Gourevitch, 261.

⁸³ *SD*, 132.

⁸⁴ Buffon, "A Dissertation on Carnivorous Animals," 167-68.

Buffon attributed this to the fact that in human beings and other similar species, the diaphragm is the center of sentiment and thus it is in the diaphragm “that all the movements of the sensible system are exerted. . . .”⁸⁵ Thus, far from representing a contradiction in his conception of natural man, Rousseau’s discussion of pity was fully in accord with mainstream natural science. Natural man did not need to understand the complexities of how pity was experienced; he simply felt it.

V. The Politics of Natural Man

Rousseau’s description of natural man deftly turns the chain of being against itself. Where naturalists using the chain of being subdivided and ranked groups within the human species according to the purportedly highest attributes of the species (e.g., intelligence, civilization, and culture), Rousseau sought the baseline attributes shared by all members of the species. That is, he searched for those attributes a being needed to possess in order to be classified as human. This baseline conception of human nature was necessarily determined by the descriptions available in the literature; and as we have seen, increased European contact with the native populations of Africa and the Americas extended the possibilities of human culture dramatically. Moreover, because these accounts sought to minimize the gap between human beings and apes, the line between these populations was not drawn very sharply. Rousseau’s baseline, then, is correspondingly low and seems to equate natural man with an animal because Europeans had discovered human beings that looked and acted like animals and animals that looked and acted like human beings.

The decision to apply Buffon’s distinction between natural and artificial to his own account of the human species provided Rousseau with an alternative set of criteria for defining the natural condition of the human species, and these new criteria supported his egalitarianism. In Rousseau’s hands equality, freedom, health, and happiness replace developments in the arts and sciences as the truly relevant indications of what is human. Rousseau prefaces his account of the human history outlined in Part II of the *Discourse* by conceding that

as the events I have to describe could have happened in several ways, I can make a choice only by conjectures. But besides the fact that these conjectures become reasons when they are the most probable that one can draw from the nature of things, and the sole means that one can have to discover the truth, the conclusion I want to deduce from mine will not thereby be conjectural, since, on the principles I have established, one could not conceive of any other system that would not provide me with the same results, and from which I could not draw the same conclusions.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Buffon, “A Dissertation on Carnivorous Animals,” 169-70.

⁸⁶ *SD*, 140-41.

The “principles” he claims to have established are based on his conception of natural man. This human being is not some chimpanzee, gorilla, or orangutan but a composite of actually existing human populations representing an alternative to European culture. Rousseau presents us with two facts given as real (to paraphrase from the last paragraph of Part I): the inequality, misery, and slavery of modern Europe, and the equality, freedom, and happiness of various “primitive” populations.

In order for his argument to succeed, Rousseau did not need to provide an accurate account of human history since the actual direction of that history is largely irrelevant. Whether human history moves as he will suggest it does, beginning with “primitive” human beings and ending with Europeans, or as Buffon suggests,⁸⁷ beginning with Europeans and ending with “primitives,” the validity of his egalitarian claims will be unaffected.

In the *Second Discourse* Rousseau accepts the assumption that nature is a viable normative standard and then demonstrates that regardless of the actual direction of human history, European society should no longer serve as the standard for what is natural. If he is correct in his assumption concerning the trajectory of human history, then primitive populations are the original human beings and the true representatives of what God intended for the species. If Buffon is correct, then primitive peoples represent a part of the species who, for whatever combination of circumstances, have degenerated so far from the European norm that they have been able to produce social arrangements which are both closer to nature and which provide for greater health, happiness, equality, and freedom.

These developments evidently came with the price of sacrificing the arts, sciences, and other corollaries of “higher” intelligence. The key question thus becomes: which set of standards is more worthwhile? Those who see Rousseau as a pessimist⁸⁸ are tacitly acknowledging that they accept his criteria as the true measure of humanity.

VI. Conclusion

Rousseau’s understanding of human nature and the natural condition of the human species deftly turns the chain of being against itself. His natural human beings are modeled on European conceptions of the missing link between human beings and animals in the natural chain and indicate that the true measure

⁸⁷ See Buffon, “Of the Degeneration of Animals,” *NH*, VII, 392-94. For further discussion of Buffon’s theory of racial degeneracy see Sloan, “The Idea of Racial Degeneracy in Buffon’s *Histoire Naturelle*,” 307-8.

⁸⁸ See, for example, deJouvenal, “Rousseau the Pessimistic Evolutionist”; Masters, “Nothing Fails Like Success,” 102; William Pickles, “The Notion of Time in Rousseau’s Political Thought,” *Hobbes and Rousseau*, 380; and Jean Starobinski, “Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité,” *J. J. Rousseau: Oeuvres Complètes*, III, xlii-lxx.

of man was not in the parlors of Europe but in the jungles of Africa. We should recall that the epigraph chosen for the title of the Discourse reads “Not in corrupt things, but in those which are well ordered in accordance with nature, should one consider that which is natural.”⁸⁹ For Rousseau Europe offers a corrupt form of the species and the inequality inherent in its societies should not be taken as the standard for assessing either other cultures or other species.

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⁸⁹ Rousseau’s original is in Latin. I follow Masters’s translation. My thanks to Larry Arnhardt, Donald Tannenbaum, Donald R. Kelley, and the anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.