



IVP
CLASSICS

Escape
from Reason
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Chapter 5 takes philosophy into the world of art, discussing such artists as Heidegger, Malraux, Picasso, Dali, Leonard Bernstein, and Henry Miller.

Ultimately, pornography and the loosening of one's morals replaces any thought of religion, becoming the upper-story of freedom.

“We observed that from Rousseau's time the dichotomy was drawn between nature and freedom. Nature had come to represent determinism, the machine, with man in the hopeless situation of being caught in the machine. Then, in the upper story, we find man struggling for freedom. The freedom that was being sought was an absolute freedom with no limitations. There is no God, nor even a universal, to limit him, so the individual seeks to express himself with total freedom, and yet, at the same time, he feels the damnation of being in the machine. This is the tension of modern man. [Schaeffer, Francis A. *Escape from Reason* (IVP Classics) (p. 75). InterVarsity Press]

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In much of his work, Swiss writer and philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau addresses freedom more than any other problem of political philosophy and aims to explain how man in the state of nature is blessed with an enviable total freedom.

Rousseau's philosophy impacted governments around the world elevating the importance of "the social contract" and its inseparable alliance with individual freedoms

- He argued that the people and the government form a social contract.
- The people allow the government to have power over them, consenting to be governed.
- In return, the government promises to protect the rights of the people.
 - This idea of individual rights was important and was the driving force behind the American Revolution.

Rousseau believed that the right of individuals to be free is one of the most important things that people have.

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- Because of this, he believed that a good government had to protect those rights.

And as impactful as his philosophy was for the American Revolution, aspirants to freedom from the domination and taxation of England did not transfer the zeal to the enslavement of African laborers in the “newly freed nation.”

Rousseau always saw freedom as the **innate right** and the **inherent equality** of every individual, thereby purporting that **slavery** not only denies the innate rights/**freedom** of the individual but also denies the reality of inherent equality among humans.

Rousseau’s freedom stood antithetical to the newly formed America for two reasons:

- 1) First, he saw natural man as physically free, and is not to be constrained by any repressive state apparatus or ever dominated by his fellow men.

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2) Second, he concluded that man is psychologically and spiritually free because he is not enslaved to any of the artificial needs that characterize modern society.

❖ This second sense of freedom from need, makes up a particularly insightful and revolutionary component of Rousseau's philosophy.

❖ Rousseau believed modern man's **enslavement to his own needs** was responsible for all sorts of societal ills, from exploitation and domination of others to poor self-esteem and depression.

Further, he believed that good government must have the freedom of all its citizens as its most fundamental objective.

The Social Contract is Rousseau's attempt to imagine the form of government that best affirms the individual freedom of all its citizens, with certain constraints inherent to a complex, modern, civil society.

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Inherent in “The Social Contract” there are four different kinds of freedom that are relevant to politics: **(1) Natural freedom (2) Civil Freedom (3) Democratic Freedom and, (4) Moral Freedom**

Rousseau acknowledged that, as long as property and laws exist, people can never be as entirely free in modern society as they are in the state of nature, a point later echoed by Marx and many other Communist and anarchist social philosophers

History has proven that there is an inverse effect when there is diminished participation in property ownership and dishonoring of the right so others.

- a) Ownership incentivizes productive use of resources and conservation for communal good
- b) Private property ownership provides incentives lacking under government control.

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c) A resource owner has legal rights against anyone who would harm the resource.

d) Property rights provide long-term incentives for maximizing the value of a resource.

This kind of liberty is strongly tied to certain principles of governance that can afford the members of society a level of freedom that at least approximates the privilege enjoyed in the state of nature.

To succeed in determining which societal institutions and structures contradict man's natural goodness and freedom, one must first define the "natural."

The state of nature, Rousseau argued, could only mean a primitive state preceding socialization; it is thus devoid of social traits such as pride, envy, or even fear of others.

It is a morally neutral and peaceful condition in which mainly solitary individuals act according to their basic urges (*for instance, hunger*) as well as their natural desire for self-preservation.

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He strips away all the ideas that centuries of development have imposed on the true nature of man and concludes that many of the ideas we take for granted, such as property, law, and moral inequality, actually have no basis in nature.

- For Rousseau, modern society generally compares unfavorably to the "state of nature."

The most important characteristic of the state of nature is that people have complete physical freedom and are at liberty to do essentially as they wish.

- Why would the Highest Court in America rule in 1857 that people "of the African race" are not US citizens in the Dred Scott v. Sandford decision

- ❖ Dred Scott was born a slave in **Southampton County, Virginia**, around 1799

- ❖ His original owner, Peter Blow, moved to **Alabama** in 1818 and then relocated to St. Louis, **Missouri**, in 1830, taking with him his property—including his slaves.

- ❖ Blow died in 1832, and Dr. John Emerson, an army surgeon, purchased Scott.

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- ❖ For three years, Emerson served as the post physician at Fort Armstrong, Illinois, and Scott lived with Emerson on the army post.
- ❖ Because Illinois was a free state, Scott could have claimed his freedom during these years; however, he did not do so.
- ❖ After Emerson's death, Scott offered to purchase his freedom, from his widow and she refused to sell him to himself, and in April 1846 he began the legal proceedings that would eventually bring his case to the Supreme Court.
- ❖ The case adjudicated that Dred Scott, who had resided in a free state and territory was not entitled to his freedom, thereby slavery was legalized in all U.S. territories
- The ruling, widely considered the worst in American history, was overruled in 1868 by the 14th Amendment

The court's decision stood in strict opposition to Rousseau's "state of nature," and carried with it the drawback that even so-called enlightened human beings could be irrational and immoral.

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Rousseau largely reveres the proper state of nature as fit for the physical freedom it grants people, allowing them to be unencumbered by the coercive influence of the state and society.

These developed systems of thought were supposed to provide man with a satisfactory explanation for all existence, including what and how man thinks.

Over time, the humanistic expectation of autonomous man providing a unity to all of knowledge and all of life had stalled.

In the 18 century the optimism of humanism was replaced with **pessimism** because the humanistic ideal had failed.

The exact time of this realization and beginning of despair is debatable but for Francis Schaeffer it began with the French thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778).

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Rousseau's notion of a state of nature, whether real or hypothetical, was most influential during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Nevertheless, it has also influenced more-recent attempts to establish objective norms of justice and fairness, notably those of the American philosopher John Rawls in his *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and other works.

Although Rawls rejected the notion of a **pre-social** or **pre-political** state of nature, he argued that the basic features of a just society could best be discovered by considering the principles of government that would be accepted by a group of rational individuals

He believed those who have been **made ignorant of their positions in society** must experience what he calls a **heuristic device** to overcome the “**veil of ignorance.**”

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Proponents of this philosophy suggest whenever contemplating a moral action, one might not know if they will be the moral doer or receiver, and when in doubt err on the side of the other person.

Logically, no one wants to be part of a disadvantaged group, so the conclusion is that the veil of Ignorance would produce a fair, egalitarian society.

Consequently, beyond the Veil of Ignorance, cognitive biases should melt away, and according to Rawls, the consensus of a fair society should afford to all citizens:

- **Rights and liberties** (including the right to vote, the right to hold public office, free speech, free thought, and fair legal treatment)
 - . **Power and opportunities** to pursue one's desires
 - . **Income and wealth** sufficient for a good quality of life
(*Not everyone needs to be rich, but everyone must have enough money to live a comfortable life.*)
 - . The **conditions generated** in the society promoting **self-respect**

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There was wisdom in Rousseau's philosophy that is manifesting itself in our current society as he proposes: *'The society which decides that 10% of the population will be slaves to the others, they cannot be surprised if they find themselves to be slaves.'*

Therefore, I must intentionally digress to examine the biblical perspective on man's personal thoughts about himself.

- **Haggai 1:5** Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways.
- **Proverbs 26:12** Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
 - **Luke 6:42** How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

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There is one more verse that screams to be mentioned considering Rosseau's and Rawl's assertion and that verse is **Proverb 23:7** *For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, But his heart is not with you.*

- You can't consider this verse without the one preceding it, and the one after it, so let's read again in context:

➤ **Proverbs 23:6-8** Do not eat the bread of a miser (ra 'ayin -- *literally one who has an evil eye*), Nor desire his delicacies; ⁷ For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, **But his heart is not with you.** ⁸ The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up, And waste your pleasant words.

One of the most amazing gifts that God has given us the human mind, affording us the ability to learn, think, choose, and reason—essentially that is what makes us human.

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- But thinking is not the end, for the Bible says our thoughts reflect who we really are
- Uniquely **Proverbs 23:6-8** has three implied applications for all mankind:
 - A. Truly, all our hearts—women and men—are similarly prone to sin.
 - B. What you see in this verse is a person who is saying one thing with their mouth—but their heart is in a completely different place.
 - C. When faced with conflicting alternatives, we believe the one that is in our hearts. Thus, the thoughts and inclinations of the heart shape the reality of who we are.
 - ❖ And in shaping our thinking, they will ultimately shape your actions.
 - Might we then surmise that the battle for liberty and freedom in America today, even as when Schaeffer wrote *Escape from Reason*, is one group angry, not over what others are gaining, rather in what they think they are losing.

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Rousseau concluded that *'The noble savage was man at his best and the more he came under the influence of civilization the worse he became. So he gave up his faith in 'progress.'*

- Incidentally, by “noble savage,” Rousseau was referring to the original man who was free from sin, appetite or the concept of right and wrong; that is until he was influenced by something in his environment.

Schaeffer seems to believe that Rosseau is promoting “nature” as the guiding force for what is right or wrong. To challenge this premise, **Schaeffer asks** us to consider the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814), who well understood the logical conclusion of this deification of nature.

- He knew that if nature is all, then what is right, and nothing more can be said.
- The natural result of this was his ‘sadism,’ his cruelty, especially to women.

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- De Sade wrote in his book *Justine* “As nature has made us (the men) the strongest, we can do with her (the woman) whatever we please.”
- In nature there is no right or wrong, no good or bad, and there is no basis for making those distinctions. In nature, might makes right.
- Thus, **Schaeffer** concluded that based on nature alone, there are no moral distinctions, or no value system.

We must examine this conclusion in view of the “natural law” residing in Romans 2:12-16

- V 14-15 “When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts”
 - What is right? Is there a basis for either morals or law? How do we decide the distinction between cruelty and non-cruelty.

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As Martin Luther stated before the council at the Diet of Worms, when called to recant his theological views: “Unless I am convinced by Scripture or by evident reason I cannot recant. For my conscience is held captive to the Word of God.”

Of course, the term *cannot* does not mean Luther was intellectually or vocally unable to take back his statement of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- What he meant was that he would not be able to recant without any consequences.
- Being subject to the Lord Himself, he could not bow to a different law with impunity.

The consequence of being the God the Creator, carries with it the preeminence of supreme authority for the entire universe.

- Everything in creation exists by His good pleasure, so He answers to none other (Gen. 1:1; Isa. 45:5).
- The lesser authorities found in the government and family derive their right to govern from God (Rom. 13:1–7), but their rule over us is not absolute.

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- Only God's moral law binds our consciences, and we must obey Him even when doing so means we disobey lesser rulers in certain situations.
- Our society has embraced moral relativism with a vengeance, at least verbally, but that any laws exist at all is a testimony to the existence of a supreme, objective authority.
- Humans write laws because we know instinctively that there is a proper moral order to the universe.
- We make law because God's law exists, in some sense, on the hearts of all people and the *lex naturalis*, or natural law, is what theologians have called the universal sense of right and wrong.
- Western jurisprudence has been decisively shaped by it, although recent years have seen public education, elected officials, and law schools increasingly turn their backs on this time-honored concept. Only God's moral law binds our consciences, and we must obey Him even when doing so means we disobey lesser rulers in certain situations.

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