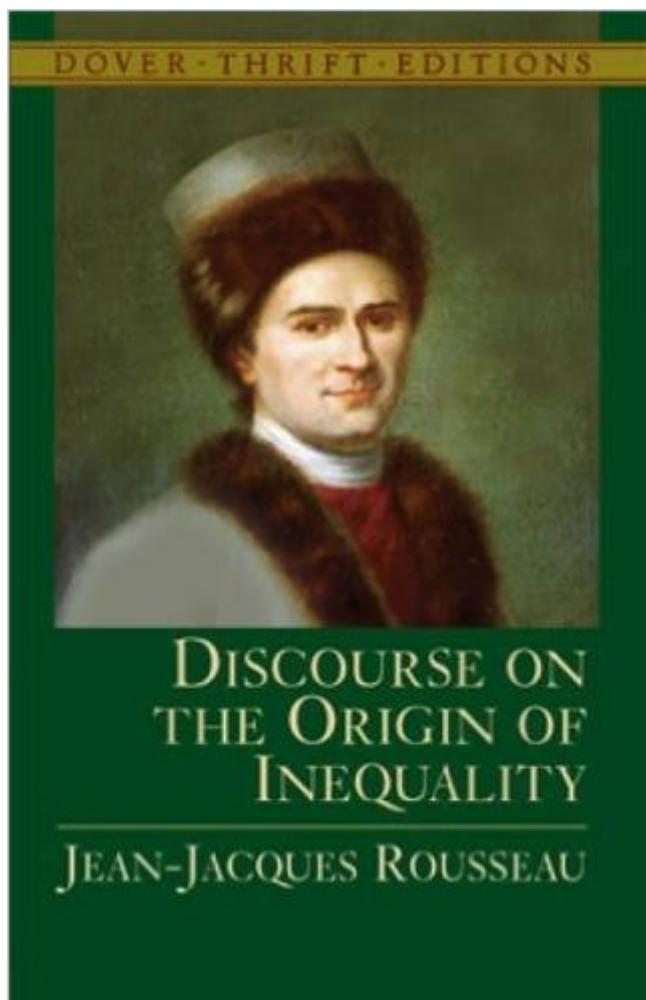


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Discourse On The Origin Of Inequality (Dover Thrift Editions)



Synopsis

If humans are benevolent by nature, how do societies become corrupt? And how do governments founded upon the defense of individual rights degenerate into tyranny? These are the questions addressed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, a strikingly original inquiry into much-explored issues of 18th-century (and subsequent) philosophy: human nature and the best form of government. Rousseau takes an innovative approach by introducing a "hypothetical history" that presents a theoretical view of people in a pre-social condition and the ensuing effects of civilization. In his sweeping account of humanity's social and political development, the author develops a theory of human evolution that prefigures Darwinian thought and encompasses aspects of ethics, sociology, and epistemology. He concludes that people are inevitably corrupt as a result of both natural (or physical) inequalities and moral (or political) inequalities. One of the most influential works of the Enlightenment, the Discourse on the Origin of Inequality offers a thought-provoking account of society's origins and a keen criticism of unequal modern political institutions.

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Customer Reviews

This publication is unacceptably limited in content. 1) It does not include any of Rousseau's footnotes, which are critical to a more complete understanding his arguments. 2) It does not include the original date of publication. 3) It does not include his Dedication to Geneva.

This essay was Rousseau's submission to the Academy of Dijon contest, entitled, "Has the progress of the arts and sciences contributed more to the corruption or purification of morals?". This text is his story about Nature, and Society, and the scandal that happens when people come together, build, divide, dance, sing, and compare themselves with one another. In many ways, it is his answer to the problem of evil. Natural man is, in many ways, good, because his needs are immediately felt and immediately fulfilled. Social man begins to compete, to hoard, and to use cunning to enslave his fellows, to gain their esteem, take their property, and sometimes their lives. His picture of the natural man is half what we think of an "animal" and half the "human" that we recognize in ourselves. He shifts his description as the flow of argument dictates. The habitual provocateur, Rousseau - watch him! In a way, he is rewriting the Christian "Creation Myth". In his version, evil does not originate at that moment when man eats the fruit of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" --to "be like God"; it happens when Adam wants a better apple than Eve's got for herself. Before society develops as we know it, Adam would have been fine with just a pear.

Jean-Jacques has wrote a interesting and thought provoking body of work. It is relevant for today, reflecting assumptions about this topic we currently make. A recommend read and I look forward to his other articles.

This book addresses inequalities in life. Books such as this one often make me wonder. How could such intelligence available so long ago, lead to where we have arrived today? This title is certain to open your eyes. I highly recommend this book. Personal enlightenment always makes life easier and happier.

This product does not include any of the pages my instructor had us read. Do not buy if you are using it for college.

well written and goes through each point clearly. I'd recommend to anyone interested in philosophy especially

I find Rousseau especially creative in the way he describes how inequality progressed from the time the first humans made contact. He makes a good case for the solitary life. I think Rousseau believes it is destructive whenever humans come together in groups. Governments were formed to protect the weaker from the stronger or as Rousseau thinks to actually protect the rich from the poor. This is

an outstanding book. It will haunt you.

This is a wonderful example of the 18th century enlightenment. In this work, Rousseau states that inequalities of rank, wealth, and power are the inevitable result of the civilizing process, something most of us have found to be very true if unfair. This new translation also includes all of Rousseau's own notes. I enjoyed this tremendously, and am always amazed that the thought pattern and process is one of the few things that hasn't changed over the centuries.

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