

VOLUME XXIII

NUMBER 1

Kyoto University Economic Review

MEMOIRS of The FACULTY of ECONOMICS

in

KYOTO UNIVERSITY

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APRIL 1953

PUBLISHED BY
THE FACULTY OF ECONOMICS
KYOTO UNIVERSITY
KYOTO, JAPAN

ROUSSEAU'S POSITION IN THE HISTORY OF THE PEASANTRY

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I. Rousseau and the Peasantry

What ultimate aim was Rousseau pursuing through sixty-seven years of his lifetime? In a word, it could be said that he was seeking to free man both internally and externally, free him from every oppression and poverty, from every injustice and falsity. In one of the letters addressed to M^{me} d' Houdetot, he said: "Je ne fais point ma cour au riche, mais je n'éconduis point les pauvres. Ma porte ne fut jamais fermée au malheureux.." (*Correspondance générale. T. III. 233*). Thus, it was only natural that all his concern and interest was focussed on those under oppression and in poverty.

His sympathy and compassion with those oppressed in poverty found, on the other hand, their natural expression in his antipathy and resentment to those in power and wealth. In his "Confessions" (*Vol. VIII. 12*), he said:

"Mon coeur s'enflame au spectacle ou au récit de toute action injuste, comme si l'effect retomboit sur moi. Quand je lis les cruautés d'un tyran féroce, les subtiles noirceurs d'un fourbe de prêtre, je partiroy volontiers pour aller poignarder ces misérables, dussé-je cent fois y périr."

It would be important to note with emphasis that all his works are undertoned with such vehement sentiment as evidenced in this short excerpts.

However, it should be noted, at the same time, that his fervor for rectifying social injustices and freeing fellow men from them was never given the same position of prominence in all of his works. In his earlier works, the "Sciences et arts" and "Discours sur l'inégalité," Rousseau's sympathy to

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the common man was expressed in his admiration of the primitive natural-state of man and also in his emphasis of man's original morality and happiness in this state of naturalness. Again, his antipathy to oppression, it should be noted, was expressed in his criticism of sciences and further of the social condition prevailing at his time. What characterised Rousseau at this stage, thus, should be considered to have existed in his remaining just a moralist. Social injustices and man's miseries he criticised from the standpoint of human morality, evidently looking forward to recovering in this way such morality, as is inherent in man or is considered to be existent in the primitive state of his existence.

However, as is clearly seen in his "Discours sur l'inégalité," his consciousness, already at this stage, had been flavored, more or less overtly, with a social and practical tinge. He sought the cause of the miseries of common people in the unfair distribution of wealth, and, in his endeavour, even tried to explain away the reality of either politics or power in the light of human relations in terms of material property. This tendency on his part became more pronounced in his "Contrat social" than in his earlier "Economie politique." In these works, he took the pose of tackling with these problems as a political thinker rather than just a moralist, and, by seeking to explain the fundamental form of either the politics or the state, endeavored to give an answer to them. To exemplify this, his proposal for setting up a "luxuries tax" seen in his "Economie politique" and his assertion of the "popular sovereignty" expounded in his "Contrat," among other things, should be mentioned.

From his "Economie politique" to the "Contrat social," Rousseau was apparently at his zenith of fervor as far as his social and practical consciousness was concerned. In his "Economie politique," he expounded with such vehemency the need of inaugurating a "luxuries tax" aimed against the wealthy classes, while he was not unaware of the inevitability of his assertion being met with the following opposition that, seeing that these wealthy classes were actually in a position to dictate the politics, it would simply be unthinkable that they would acquiesce in such a proposal. To this, Rousseau retorts: popular happiness would be entirely out of question as long as the people, who are justly the holder of the sovereignty, are contented with entrusting the power of politics in the hands of those who are tantamount to the enemies of the people. (*Economie politique* 273) This, in other words, would amount to his implicitly insinuating the necessity of raking back the political power from the hands of these "enemies of the people." In the "Contrat social" this point becomes more pronounced, for, there the inevitability of the sovereignty resting with the people is expound-

ed theoretically, and the author goes on to reason that the people, through a unanimity, would be allowed to denounce the social contract, which, it should be noted, is tantamount to justifying the endeavor to establish a popular sovereignty through a revolution. (*Contrat social* 102)

In the "Emile," the idea expounded in his "Discours sur l'inégalité" is applied to the vicissitudes in a man's lifetime, where the co-relation between the natural condition and social circumstances of man as is mentioned in the "Discours sur l'inégalité," is replaced with man's infancy and his subsequent social surroundings. And, in how to protect and foster undistortedly man's inherent and natural properties lies the pivotal issue the "Emile" poses as an educational treatise. Seen in his light, this essay should be considered to embody much of anti-social and, naturally, anti-educational elements. Again, the "Nouvelle Héloïse" has as its central theme the victory of love, especially, of the soul over the social restraints, or, specifically, those resulting from the traditional caste. Here, too, we could unmistakably point to the lofty figure of Rousseau, who would stand on the side of naive and natural sentiment as against the sway of authority and wealth.

Now, we come to the question: who, in concrete terms, were those poor people, with whom lay the unbounded sympathy on the part of Rousseau and for whose freedom and rights he was so unswervingly ready to fight? When he asserted that man, originally, should be free and equal, he envisioned, in his own idealised form, such man as was completely liberated from all constraints attendant upon the caste, class and power relations, that man, intolerant with every form of oppression and restraint, free and endowed with an unbiased republican spirit and a lofty, proud and unconquerable character. In his "Discours sur l'inégalité," he found such an ideal man in the primitive society of men, while in his "Contrat social" he found him in an ideal society founded on the basis of a unanimous popular will. (*Confession VIII. 4.*)

Man in such natural and original state, such 'homme naturel,' would find his closest counterpart in the actual reality in such 'hommes...nés nus et pauvres' (*Emile* 192), and, this, in other words, should point to the peasantry, which occupies the overwhelmingly dominating part of the population. According to M. Levasseur, the population of France, prior to the Revolution, amounted to nearly twenty-six million people, of which the peasantry numbered approximately twenty million, occupying about 76% of the entire population (Levasseur, *La population française, 1889. I. 219, 370*). As these farming classes, as is referred to later, were suffering in general privations and miseries, it was only natural for Rousseau to sympathise with

their lot and revolt against authority, nobility, church and business in the sense that they concertedly worked to oppress the peasantry.

Rousseau's preoccupation with the peasantry, for one thing, emanates from his own personal experiences. On his travel to Chambéry from Paris, Rousseau, as a young man, was deeply moved at the sight of the farmers, who, fearful of the eyes of the tax collector, had to hide their bread and wine. And, lamenting over the bountiful farms of his country being turned into the "proie des barbares publicains," he reflects "ce fut là le germe de cette haine inéxtinguible qui se développa depuis dans mon coeur contre les vexations qu'éprouve le malheureux peuple et contre les oppresseurs" (*Confession VIII. 116*). In much later years, again, he recorded what he personally witnessed and heard about the poor lots of the peasantry, who, just for adding to the hunting fun of the nobility, were not permitted to kill wild animals infesting their fields, and, under this restraint, had to "...passer les nuits dans leurs fèves et leurs pois, avec des chaudrons, des tambours, des sonnettes, pour écarter les sangliers" (*Confession I 23*).

However, it should not be considered that it was solely on account of these personal experiences on the part of Rousseau that he came to entertain such sympathy and compassion with the lots of the peasantry in general. As has already been mentioned in the preceding lines, he looked upon the common farmer as the existence closest to the natural man as he conceived; what is more important than this, however, is that he took due cognizance of the value of the labor exercised by the farmer, and placed the farming district, where such labor takes place, above the urban district, in his estimation. It could be said that Rousseau, standing on this point of view alone, could convince himself that the oppression and exploitation imposed upon the peasantry did actually constitute one explicit expression of the injustices prevalent in the society, and, thus, that defence of their freedom and rights at once led to the projected emancipation of man and the establishment of a popular state.

In his "Discours sur l'inégalité," Rousseau expounded the theory that the iron manufacture as well as farming constituted the two main arts which had preceded the development of the modern civilisation and that the farming labor paved the way for the subsequent private ownership of land, which, in his opinion, accounted for the inequality in the distribution of wealth. This is to say in other words that man, as long as he remained at the stage of hunting and fishing for his livelihood, he was able to retain his freedom and independence, and that, however, no sooner than he moved on to the stage of farming, his freedom and independence were gradually replaced with domination and submission, which, in their intrinsic nature,

carried the germs of violence and exploitation. In the light of his position to contrast the civilised society with the primitive society, such reasoning by Rousseau should be considered a natural conclusion. However, it should be conceded as done by Rousseau himself in his "Discours sur l'inégalité," that, in terms of the actualities where the modern civilised society has already been entered by man, it is simply out of question to "retourner vivre dans les forets avec les ours." (207) It could thus be seen that man could by no means remain at the stage where hunting and farming were looked upon as the ideal forms of their existence.

As Rousseau moved on to his "Economie politique," his assertion in this vein was expressed in the form of an opposition to the land tax and that imposed on agrarian products out of the necessity on his part to defend the peasantry and agrarian production against the wealthy classes, while, in his "Contrat social" he went on to point out that the ancient Romans paid due respect to farming. In his "Emile," he said: "L'agriculture est le premier métier de l'homme: c'est le plus honête, le plus utile, et par conséquent le plus noble qu'il puisse exercer." (II. 167) His position was further made clear in his "Projet pour Corse," in the following vein: "Le seul moyen de maintenir un État dans l'indépendance des autres est l'agriculture. Eussiez-vous toutes des richesses du monde, si nous n'avez de quoi vous nourrir, vous dépendez d'autrui.....Le commerce produit la richesse; mais l'agriculture assure la liberté" (311)

Such estimation on the part of Rousseau of agriculture inevitably is associated with his high admiration of it. To quote him:

"Les villes sont le gouffre de l'espèce humaine. Au bout de quelques générations les races perissent ou dégénèrent; il faut le renouveler, et c'est toujours la campagne qui fournit à ce renouvellement." (*Emile* II. 27) And, again:

"L'égalité, la simplicité de la vie rustique a, pour ceux qui n'en connaissent point d'autre, un attrait qui ne leur fait pas désirer d'en changer. De là le contentement de son état.....de là l'amour de la patrie." (*Projet pour Corse* 310)

Another interesting fact, in this connection, is that Rousseau made the following statement concerning the relation between the agriculture and the revolution.

"C'est la vigueur de vos pièves qui a fait la révolution, c'est leur fermeté qui l'a soutenue...Des villes, peuplés d'hommes mercenaires, ont vendu leur nation pour se conserver quelques petits privilèges." (*Projet pour Corse* 317)

While this statement was made in reference to the Corsican war for

independence, it should be noted that Rousseau pointed to the fact that rustic people fought with their own blood for liberty but urban inhabitants bowed their knees before their conqueror to serve as the stronghold for subsequent oppression. The fact that Rousseau here took notice of the relation between the city and the farming community from the standpoint of class and politics should be worth our due attention.

II. Peasantry in the Eighteenth Century.

Now, a brief observation will be made here concerning the actual conditions in which the farmers and the farming communities then found themselves, with which Rousseau showed so much sympathy and compassion. Many have already pointed to the fact that the peasantry in the eighteenth century, or, more broadly speaking, in the *ancien régime*, were living in utter privations, and Rousseau himself was no exception to this in stressing this fact. Here, however, a few lines will be devoted to the analysis of this problem in the light of the history of social and economic developments, although such might mean a departure from our pivotal figure in this short treatise, Rousseau.

While it goes without doubt that farmers in the eighteenth century were forced to suffer from extreme poverty, mere mention of this fact will never suffice to enable the student to take cognizance of the necessity under which these farmers were eventually headed toward a revolutionary uprising toward the closing years of the eighteenth century, nor grasp the potential energy latent in them which was to drive them on to the revolution. This, at the same time, will preclude him from fully comprehending the big role Rousseau is alleged to have played in the history of peasantry. Thus, it will become obvious that the crux of the question does not lie in mere mention of the condition of extreme privations under which these farmers were suffering, but boils down to the discovery of class relations which, notwithstanding all these, must have been in existence through all these years.

Typical among various forms of landownership in the *ancien régime* was that of landlord, which is already well known. Big landowners in France, however, unlike those in Prussia who undertook a direct management of their land under a serf system, or, again, unlike those in England who dominated over their lands more or less in such a manner as modern capitalistic landowners would do, were content with placing the greater portion of their lands in the hands of tenant farmers and lived on the rents accruing from them. In this sense, it could be said that the land owner-

ship in the ancien régime was semi-feudalistic and parasitic.

Under such semi-feudalistic and parasitic landownership, the greater majority of farmers in these years engaged in farming labor either as "metayer," who, renting the land from their landlords, had to pay a half of their crops to their owners, or as "journalier," who were employed for so much per day. True, it was a fact that even a "metayer" did not depend solely upon the rented land for living, but was himself the owner of a lot, small or big. The area of such so-called "propriété paysanne" is said to have totalled between 20%, or an average of 30-40% (Lefebvre, *La Révolution française et les paysans*. Cahiers de la Révolution). The important thing in this connection, however, is that such propriété paysanne was distributed among a great many farmers so that the area of land owned by individual farmers was quite inadequate to support their living. It is apparent that this had a close connection with the striking prevalency of the metayer class. For instance, in areas in the Nord, no less than 75% of the actual tillers of the land were in possession of less than one hectare of land (Lefebvre, *La Place de la Révolution*).

The condition prevailing having been such as has been described in the preceding lines, it could easily be presumed that there was quite a great number of farmers who were not allowed to possess any lot of land. According to Lefebvre, 75% of peasants were landless in the Flanders while in Basse-Normandie 30-40% were without land in their possession. These peasants had to be content with the misery of either depending for their living on the their respective farming communities, or being employed for so much by wealthy landowner-farmers. For them a casual minor misfortune might have easily deprived them of their means of living, when they had to mete out a meagre living in their degraded condition of either beggars or tramps, and this largely accounted for the tendency of an increasing number of farmers leaving their native hamlets and seeking, precariously, a new means of living elsewhere.

While such applied to the general situation then prevailing in which the greater percentage of farmers consisted of destitute small-scale peasants, the fundamental factor which went to support the continued existence of such poor farmers was the community customs which persisted in the agrarian districts. The peasants in a word, did not engage in farming labor on an individual independent basis but made decisions according to the communal decisions reached in their respective communities on the time and methods of sowing seeds, harvesting and suspending tilling. The "communauté rurale," in this way, wielded a considerable degree of sway on the operation of agrarian economy, while it at the same time served as a last

stronghold to prevent it from meeting a catastrophic degeneration.

The basic point in the communal customs was to be found in the practice of "jachère" and in the utilization of "communal." The practice of "jachère" was widely resorted to for the purpose of effectively maintaining the latent potentiality of the land, and, for another, of utilizing the land thus made available for feeding the livestock. This was a system, in a word, under which the "jachère" was coordinated by means of "assolement forcé" and, thus, the lands owned by individual farmers were concertedly utilized as the "vaine pâture." Thus, it will be seen that the system of "jachère" was not only indispensable in maintaining an adequate level of agrarian production but also in combining agriculture with stock-farming, while the utilization of the "communal" was necessary for implementing the agrarian products. Utilized for this specific purpose were grassy plains, forests and swamps and lakes. These were important as the sources of supply of fuel, fodder, fertilizers and grazing grasses as well as in the sense that they would be of immediate use as pastures (M. Bloch, *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*).

However, the "communauté rurale" did not presuppose a perfect equality among the farmers who composed it. On the contrary, it should be noted, there was such ramification of class grades that each of them, in the ancien régime, was either extremely poor or tolerably well-off. Each of them under the circumstances, was allowed to contribute to the "vaine pâture" such number of livestock as was allotted to them in proportion to the area of land in their individual possession, which is to say, in other words, there was, in actuality, no room for a perfect equality. However, in spite of this, it was a fact that as far as he was a component member of the "communauté rurale," each poor peasant, even though he had not a piece of land in his possession, was entitled to the privilege of feeding there a minimum number of livestock with which to support his living. Therefore, it should be said that, for farmers, in general, and, especially, for poor peasants, the maintenance of the "droits collectifs" as well as the existence of such rural community, meant the last stay for their livelihood.

In the meantime, about the time Rousseau embarked upon his career of writing in the middle part of the eighteenth century, a new situation was gradually in the making in the rural districts of France. Stimulated by the phenomenal expansion of overseas trade, especially by the remarkable increase in the transactions of agrarian products, some of the big landowners had been lured to embark upon the direct management of farming, which struck them as strikingly lucrative. While this new trend was more pronounced among the newly-risen landowners hailing from commerce,

the old aristocratic classes were not late in taking advantage of the new situation in attempting to restore and strengthen their "droits seigneuriaux." Marc Bloch, in the sense that this new tendency was bound to dispense with the old restraints of the rural community and head toward the strengthening of the establishment of private ownership and the modernization of agriculture, defined it in the term of the "individualisme agraire" (Bloch, *La lutte pour l'individualisme agraire dans la France du XVIII^e siècle*. Annales d'histoire économique et sociale), while Lefebvre, interpreting this as initial nature undertaken by old landowners, gave it the definition of being a "réaction aristocratique" (Lefebvre, *La Révolution française*).

This new tendency, for one thing, implied that the peasants were shut out from the "communal" and that the grassy plains were put in enclosures to be turned into improvised pastures where to feed sheep and other livestock, and, for another, that a way was opened for a reasonable and self-sufficient agrarian management unattended with "jachère" by prohibiting communal grazing on the part of farmers (Bloch, *ibid.*). For this purpose, big landowners, especially bourgeois landowners, went so far as to prohibit peasants from communal utilization of the lands in their possession, and, by forcibly effecting the "réunion des fermes," placed their management in the hands of upper-class farmers and capitalistic tenant farmers in order that their rent income be increased. Although it was not easy to effect the direct expulsion of the farmers from the lands under lease because of the existing "droits seigneuriaux" and the peasant ownership, the taking over of the communal, especially the plains, was forcibly carried out through the tacit connivance between the bourgeois landowners and local government officials.

The movement of the agrarian reform, which became more pronounced in the sixties of the eighteenth century put in relief the two apparently conflicting interests. One of these was represented by those groups including big land-owners, capitalistic tenants and wealthy farmers, who stood in favor of agrarian modernization, and strongly defended the "sanctity of ownership" and the "freedom of enclosures," and were avid followers of the English-style new agrarian method, while the other, opposing this, was a vast influence spearheaded by poor farmers and backed by an extensive agrarian class, who offered a full-fledged opposition to the enclosures put up by the land-owners and tried to retain as far as possible the "droits collectifs." In the years following the sixties, the rivalry between these two interests became more and more severe, the farmers, as it is recorded, on several occasions, rose in riot in revolt against the land-owners' enclosures. To cite an instance, farming lands were converted into grazing grounds in

northern France, and, in 1771 a special law was enacted on the enclosures, on the strength of which strong fences were erected gradually around the plains. In opposition to this, peasants promptly rose in revolt and are said to have done so far as the "bris de clôture, pillages d'arbres fruitiers, coups de feu sur les bêtes, et même, à la faveur de la nuit, sur les gens" (Bloch, *op. cit.* II. 530.)

This movement for the modernization, pushed from *above* by the landowners, was to shatter the old agrarian community and realise the absolute freedom of private ownership, and, at the same time, it was in favor of the freedom of grain transactions based on a reasonable agrarian management and of the abolishment of the internal tariffs. Such reforms, while, on the one hand, it would promise a new source of wealth for well to-do farmers possessing more or less considerable number of livestock and a wide expanse of lands to till, would, on the other, work to speedily drive the greater majority of poor peasants in farming districts into the abyss of utter privations, who had depended for their scanty living on the farming community. And, this would, further, stimulate the ramification of farmers classes, with the result that these helpless peasants would be embroiled into the intricate workings of money-economy, and the inevitable consequence of this would have been that an increasing number of these peasants were forced to tread the path to proletarian tramps. This trend of events perfectly fits in with what Rousseau pointed out in his "Discours sur l'inégalité."

He describes this situation in the following sentences:

"A mesure que l'industrie et les arts s'étendent et fleurissent, le cultivateur méprisé, chargé d'impôts nécessaires à l'entretien du luxe, et condamné à passer sa vie entre le travail et la faim, abandonne les champs pour aller chercher dans les villes le pain qu'il y devrait porter." This situation was truly symbolized by "les champs abandonnés, les terres en friche, et les grands chemins inondés de malheureux citoyens devenus mendiants ou voleurs." (*L'inégalité* 206 note)

The enclosures were not, however, the sole factor which worked to harass the peasants. They had not only to pay the "redevances" and "dîmes," the traditional feudal rents, to their feudal landowners, but also the "tailles," "capitations" and "vingtièmes," direct taxes, and other consumer taxes like "gabelles" and tariffs, to the king. (H. Sée, *Histoire économique de la France*) Thus, they were not only under the immutable, and, in some instances, strengthened sway of the traditional privileged classes, but also had to be subjected to the relentless exploitation by the growing influences of big bourgeois landowners.

To the enclosures, the king and aristocracy opposed to the extent that

such made a satisfactory collection of the afore-said taxes and rents difficult; however, it could safely be said that the agrarian reform could attain its main aims under a compromise worked out among the king, aristocracy and big landowners, and at the sacrifice of peasants, who were actual workers on the lands. This was achieved by confining the extent of the reform to the "communals" and by bourgeoisizing aristocracy itself. (Lefebvre, *La Révolution française et les paysans*). Under the circumstances, the peasant classes in the latter half years of the eighteenth century had no other alternative than rise in full-fledged opposition to the privileged upper classes including the bourgeois landowners.

III. Way to the Revolution and Way to Reform.

The movement for the modernisation of agriculture accompanied mainly with the liberty of the enclosures and the abolishment of "jachère," was theoretically represented by a group of people labelled either "Économistes" or "Physiocrates." This group, represented by François Quesnay, court physician, succeeded to set up the first modern economic theory; their activities, however, were never confined to theorisation alone, but also exerted a considerable influence upon the politics in the closing years of the ancien régime.

Constituting the central point of the assertions put forth by these economists was their defence of economic freedom. They took the position of recognising the natural law and natural rules in the actual society of man, and of asserting that, on a free and unbounded realisation of these, should lie the role of politics. Such interpretation, it should be conceded, apparently fitted in with the interests of big landowners and bourgeoisie. The "freedom" as asserted by these men could remain the freedom for propertied classes which ruled, but never could mean freedom to be enjoyed by general working people. Basically, they acquiesced in the then existing power relations and even tried to increase the ratio of powers the bourgeois elements occupied in these relations, and, thus, herein, it should be admitted, was to be found the reasons why they, essentially nothing more than the courtiers, merely expounded a renovation on the basis of a "despotisme éclairé."

The "Économistes" found number of supporters among the court officials and "intendants," provincial officials sent out by the king, and this enabled them to carry out a series of policies pertaining to the liberty of the enclosures and the freedom of commerce. For instances, Bertin and d'Ormesson gave an impetus to the agrarian reform, while Calonne and Turgot

energetically worked for economic liberalism. Between 1767 and 1777 law on enclosures was enacted in such regions as the Lorraine, Trois Evêchés, Barrois, Hainaut, Frandre, Boulonnais, Champagne, Bourgogne, Franche Comté, Rouchillon, Béarn, Bigorre and the Corse (Bloch, *Caractères* 126), and this amply bespoke what the absolutistic officialdom, fast attaining a bourgeois status, could achieve under the influence of these "économistes."

The *philosophy* upheld by these realistic "Économistes" embodied the worship of land ownership, the mystification of land was the source of all productive powers, and the faith in the natural law as the embodiment of God's will. They, under the name of the sanctity of ownership, defended the inequality of property actually existing in the society, maintaining that such inequality was allowed by the "dessin de Dieu" (Quesnay, *Oeuvres* par Oncken 368). While opposing all the restraints to be imposed upon the property, they actually opposed more against the communal restraints than against feudalistic restraints. According to them the communal restraints amounted to the "monuments de la condition sauvage et grossière où l'humanité fut longtemps réduit" and the "droit odieux" (Bloch, *La lutte pour l'individualisme* 333), while, on the contrary, "un heritage ferme de murs, de palisades ou de haye est la seule vraie propriété" (Bloch, *op. cit.* 335).

Further, they made clear that agriculture was the sole productive labor and that it was the sole source of "produit net." Agriculture in their conception, however, was not such which depended on the labor of peasants, essentially, but was actually a combination of nature or land, which they worshipped, and labor. According to them, what counted more was rather land than labor, and they thought that the real factor for production was not labor but land (Gonnard, *Histoire des doctrines économiques* 213). Undoubtedly this amounted to a defence of landowners.

However, it should be noted that these "Économistes," while being, perhaps, theoretic, were able to take cognizance of the society as a world of natural and necessary rules working therein. This marked the first manifest establishment of a social scientific conception and of the economics as a science. At the root of such achievement on their part lay the fact that these "Économistes" represented the highest stage of the productive power prevailing at that time and that their proposition at the same time served to heighten the productive power possible in that society. In a society which incessantly was in the face of famine and rise in the prices of foodstuffs, they were in a position to make clear that agricultural production could be heightened through affording absolute liberty to ownership. It was because of this particular circumstance that they could become the disciples of *Laissez-faire* and a simple and naive optimism.

While Quesnay and some other economists were included in that group of supporters of enlightenment called the "philosophes," this latter group had another group in it, labelled the "Encyclopédistes." The position of the Encyclopédistes, the main members of which included such prominent figures as Diderot and d'Alembert, while maintaining a certain kinship with that of the "Économistes," could be considered, on the whole, to have been bent more on the radical renovation than the "Économistes."

The "Économistes," in an effort to advocate the bourgeois ownership of land, consequentially defended the privileged land ownership being enjoyed by the old aristocracy. This was sufficiently exemplified by their opposition to the communal restraints to be imposed upon the land ownership and their compromising stand taken toward the hierarchical of feudalistic restraints. Thus, it would be seen that the "Économistes," while, as far as the principle of class was concerned, were in a position to represent the landowners who were fast metamorphosing into bourgeois, the "Encyclopédistes," on the other hand, were, so to speak, assuming the representatives of the bourgeoisie on the whole. And, to that extent, the "Encyclopédistes," unlike the "Économistes," acted as a positive critic of the feudalistic domination (Kingsley Martin, *French Liberal Thought in the Eighteenth Century*). This is most eloquently explained by the fact that they revolted against the authority of the Church and the feudal lords, which were the main stay of the feudalistic sway, and intensively and energetically criticized the Catholic doctrines.

Thus, the role of the *philosophy* upheld by these "Encyclopédistes" was to deprive "nature" of its divinity and reduce it to the level of rational cognition. It is probably well-known that their *philosophy* eventually culminated in the atheism and materialism, which propounds the overall dominance of natural powers. This, in other words, served to show the extent of self-confidence on the part of the newly-risen bourgeoisie, which boldly dispensed with the transcendental, irrational ruling authority and succeeded to establish its own society and its own authority.

Speaking from a political point of view, they were on the side of Voltaire and Montesquieu in favor of the English-type limited monarchy, which was, in other words, a bourgeois democracy. Both Diderot and d'Holbach were unmistakably critical of not only despotism but also of "despotism éclairé" (H. sée, *L'évolution de la pensée politique en France au XVIII^e siècle* 185, 221). However, they never took the position of being a revolutionary, as was the case with Rousseau, but at all times remained within the scope of being a renovator. They not only recognised the monarchical rule under certain restrictions, but also tried to impose certain similar restrictions on

people's participation in politics, one example of which being the condition that such would be allowed only in case of the individual being a landowner. (*ibid.* 189, 222). Viewed from their position as landowners, it was simply imperative that a certain power system, like that represented in the monarchical authority, should be in existence, and, therefore, again, it was inevitable that such democracy based on a comprehensive popular level should have been considered too radical.

The *philosophy* of the "Encyclopédistes" implied, from a social point of view, the pursuit of individual happiness of the composing member. That they opposed all privileges and social stations as such and tried to arraign all men on a legally equal footing was because they considered, by so doing, the condition would be filled that the individuals be allowed to engage in free economic activity, which, in other words, was tantamount to the pursuit of individual happiness. They essentially were the individualists and pragmatists, and, as a matter of fact, the individuals, as meant by them, were not the destitutes and the laborers but were propertied people.

While, generally speaking, it was evident that the position occupied by the "Encyclopédistes" was more advanced than that of the "Économistes," they nonetheless had this in common that both embodied the ideology held by property owners. However, the "Encyclopédistes," as was seen in the theory of popular sovereignty held by Diderot (Sée, *L'évolution de la pensée politique* 180), at the same time embodied also the position of small bourgeoisie, a fact which should duly be noted. However, the main concern of the "Encyclopédistes" was to impart a rational cognition to man through a relentless fight against religion and superstition. They were optimistic to the extent that they seriously hoped to reform the society simply by giving a rational cognition to man and enlightening their monarchs, and, therefore, the problems of politics and authority never appeared for them as being of a superlative meaning. On the contrary, their position was to call on human reason from the standpoint of super-national and universal humanistic conception. Thus, it was only inevitable and a matter of course that they, as far as politics was concerned, had to remain a partial rennovator.

In contrast to the fact that the "philosophes," including both the "Encyclopédistes" and the "Économistes," expounded a social rennovation from their position of being property owners, Rousseau, in his theory, was diametrically opposed to them, and the relation between these two groups was strikingly reminiscent of the position taken by poor peasants as opposing, in relation to the agrarian reform centering round the enclosures, against the entire authority represented by monarchy, aristocracy and big landowners. In the same way as poor peasants and semi-proletariats could not

have been saved from their plight simply by compromise or renovation, Rousseau rejected all compromises and directly headed toward a revolution. In the following lines, this will be taken up as issue.

IV. What Was the Aim of Rousseau?

Rousseau's ideological career started from his comprehensive criticism of the "philosophes." While this could be observed in his "Sciences et Arts," it would be worth attention that Rousseau labelled a frontal attack against the position of the "philosophes" who, for the sake of enlightenment, placed undue emphasis on culture, or the bourgeois progressiveness with over-due belief in the expediency of learning, arts and luxuries. He said: "Les sciences, les lettres et les arts...étendent les quirlandes de fleurs sur les chaines de fer dont ils sont chargés, étouffent en eux le sentiment de cette liberté originelle pour laquelle ils sembloient être nés, leur font aimer esclavage et en forment ce qu'on appelle des peuples policés." (*Sciences I. 3.*) Learning and letters are the production of evils and the results of luxury and inactivity, and work to deprive man of his virtues and courage. Rousseau, from his standpoint as a moralist, in his sharp criticism of the culturalism followed by the "philosophes," asserted that a philosopher "...n'est ni parent, ni citoyen, ni homme." (*Narcisse Préf. V. 105.*) This criticism labelled against the philosophers by Rousseau would be taken for a position of an overall distrust on his part, which is strangely reminiscent of the word given by Marx to Feuerbach, "Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden interpretiert, es kommt darauf an sie zu verändern" (*Die deutsche Ideologie. 535. H. r. g. von Adoratskij*) although, it should be conceded, the positions taken by Rousseau and Marx were not quite identical.

In his "L'inégalité," Rousseau's attack on the "philosophes" become more drastic and vehement. In his attack, Rousseau, while tracing the origin of the inequality, which the "philosophes" apparently acquiesced in, and discussing about what it had brought in its trail, centers his criticism of the actual world prevailing. Here, however, it is evident that Rousseau still retained his position as a moralist, his attacks centering around the aspects of vices, degeneration and compassion, and, naturally, the questions of the reform of politics and social system did not yet occupy a place of predominance in his consideration. Although it goes without question that the "L'inégalité," as a work, retains importance on account of its endeavor to bare the basis on which man's inherent and natural rights were supposed to rest, it, however, so long as it is interpreted in this light, should be considered to have still been under the influences of the individualistic phi-

losophy followed by these "philosophes."

It was, at the latest, between 1753 and 1754, that Rousseau was made conscious of the fact that in the actual world politics carried with it the factor of decisive importance. Around this time, his personal relations with the "philosophes" began to strike a note of discord, while it was also in these years that he found his own ideological peculiarity firmly established (René Hubert, *Rousseau et l'Encyclopédie*). Already in his "Préface du Narcisse," he asserted that vices were not inherent in man but were the consequences of bad politics in the following words:

"Tous ces vices n'appartiennent pas tant à l'homme qu'à l'homme mal gouverné." (V. 106)

In his "Dédication" (1754) prefaced to his "L'inegalite," his idea showed a further advance. To quote his own words; "un pays où le souverain et le peuple ne pussent avoir qu'un seul et même intérêt" (126) ... such a world, indeed, which should be "démocratique" in the sense that both the sovereign and the people each enjoy the same and identical personality, had already, apparently loomed large in Rousseau's mental horizon as an ideal form of society in which man was to live.

Rousseau's political theory, which began to take a definite shape already in his "Économie politique," was perfected in his capital work "Contrat social" (1761), where the difference between the positions taken, respectively, by Rousseau and the "philosophes" was immutable, which means, in other words, that his ideological peculiarity had firmly been established. His later works, "Projet pour Corse" and "Consideration sur Pologne" would well be considered to have been cases of a practical application of his political notions, which had earlier taken a definite and immutable shape.

(Note): A considerable distance could be observed in his political conceptions as were expressed in "Projet pour Corse" and "Consideration sur Pologne," respectively. Such could never have apparently been caused by the shift of the subjects discussed from Corsica to Poland. It should be observed, in this connection, that while the ideas expressed in his "Corse" represented the political conceptions entertained by Rousseau at the apex of his ideological career, those shown in his "Pologne" were the product of his later years, where signs of recessions were unmistakably in evidence. In his "Consideration sur Pologne," Rousseau evidently recognised the existence of monarchy and defended aristocracy. Because of this, this particular work has not been taken up as the principal object of discussion in the present discourse.

Now, what shape of society did Rousseau consider to be ideal as seen from all these works of his? First of all, it should be a society in which sovereignty lies in the hands of the people, or, in other words, the will of people governs. It will differ from a despotism, which Rousseau compares

to a prison (*Contrat* 128), and from a despotic monarchy based upon a contract between the sovereign and the people; it should be a state, where the government should be sacrificed for the sake of the people, and not the people for the sake of the government. (*Contrat* 68).

Such a state was neither a watchman-state, as was asserted by the "Économistes," which would keep vigilance over unrestrained economic activity, nor such as would stand for universal humanitarianism advocated by the "Encyclopédistes." For Rousseau, a state meant something more primordial. Popular sovereignty, an expression of popular will, will never be constrained by anything nor will ever be ceded or divided, but will be equipped with an absolute authority to rule over all of the constituent members (*Contrat* 43). Such powerful state, however, will never resort to its absolute authority in an effort to constrain the liberty and rights enjoyed by its composing members, but, on the contrary, in order to safeguard these rights and liberty on the part of the composing members. Rousseau interprets the constraining power attendant upon the social contract as meaning "to be forced to be free" (*forcer d'être libre*) (*Contrat* 36). This interpretation of his should be seen as tersely expressing his intentions that the powers of an absolute despotism be taken back by the people to be placed for their service.

Thus, Rousseau tried to offer a justification of a revolution, although, of course, he did never make such endeavour in any overt manner. It would be evident, however, that any attempt to realise Rousseau's ambitions in the actual society, could not but culminate in a revolution. This was probably the reason why he was then actually treated to be a dangerous person, and, again, why he could exert a strong influence upon the later groups of revolutionaries.

Now, what was the aspect of such a state? Rousseau intended to reform the situation where "une poignée de puissants et de riches au faits des grandeurs et de la fortune, tandis que la foule rampe dans l'obscurité et dans la misère." (*L'inégalité* 192). How could such be done? His answer was simple: it could be achieved through realising equality. As has already been observed with regard to the peasants, Rousseau thought, working people and none others should be the foundation of the society. He said: "Travailler est donc un devoir indispensable à l'homme social...Riche ou pauvre, puissant ou foible, tout citoyen oisif est un fripon." (*Emile* 167). He did not want his disciple, Emile, to work for the production of articles of luxury as embroidered pieces or metalplated and lacquered articles, and also to become musician, actor or writer. He said: "J'aime mieux qu'il soit cordonnier que poète," (*Emile*) This shows that he placed the first

importance, in a society, upon agriculture and upon labor productive of life's necessities.

Private ownership of land, so far as it is based upon labor, would be duly recognised. He said: "C'est le seul travail qui, donnant droit au cultivateur sur le produit de la terre qu'il a labourée, lui en donne par conséquent sur le fonds." (*L'inégalité* 117). Thus, land ownership on a major scale as would be seen with traditional landlords, would, of course, have to be denied outright. It would be necessary that "nul citoyen ne soit assez opulent pour en pouvoir acheter un autre, et nul assez pauvre pour être contraint de se vendre." (*Contrat* 161). As a means to materialise such situation, Rousseau, in his "Projet pour Corse," ventured to be re-advance a plan, in which the population concentrated in urban areas would distributed evenly in the entire country, each of which would be given a certain fixed area of land, which would be registered, and the grant and bequeathing of which would not be allowed unless such deal occurs against the same area of land. Referring to this, Vaughan called it as a "State socialism in the most drastic form conceivable." (*Political Writings II* 303.)

In his "Nouvelle Héloïse," Rousseau found an ideal life of a peasant in the life of the Wolmars. He undoubtedly was desirous of elevating the living standard of all peasants to that of the Wolmar, a more or less well-to-do independent farmer, did not think of buying new lands or increasing his property, but found his sole source of joy and happiness in increasing the productivity of his lands so that he could maintain his living on his own products as far as possible. One of the mottoes of life for Wolmar was "notre grand secret pour être riches est d'avoir peu d'argent et d'éviter, autant qu'il se peut...les échanges intermédiaires entre le produit et l'emploi" (*Nouvelle Héloïse IV*. 42). He even paid to his employees in kind and made with his own hands clothes, wine, oil and bread. Wolmar, thus, was a perfect personification of Rousseau's idealised farmer, industrious and economical, who was in perfect possession of his own personal independence and liberty.

Judged on the basis of such pattern of Rousseau's thinking, commerce, coins and all items of luxury would well be entitled to be expelled. He said: "Anciens politiques parloient sans cesse de mœurs et de vertu; les nôtres ne parlent que de commerce et d'argent." (*Sciences I*. 12). And, also: "Le luxe nourrit cent pauvres dans nos villes, et en fait périr cent mille dans nos campagnes." (*Dernière réponse à M. Bordes I*. 53 note). For Rousseau who incessantly emphasized the necessity of self-sustaining agriculture and barter dealings, commerce and coins were not only unnecessary but also were harmful because they tended to offer the main sources of inequality in the

society. Even agricultural products in surplus should not have been exported to overseas, for he wanted to "couper par la racine les grands possessions" (*Corse* 356). According to Rousseau, "une nation n'en est ni plus riche ni plus pauvre pour avoir plus ou moins d'argent," because money, in the last analysis, was nothing more than a "signe" and a "signe d'inégalité" (*Corse* 327), and because it would indicate nothing further than relations of possessions. This, according to Rousseau, was to say that the less money was in actual circulation, the more nation's happiness would be promoted. It was evident that such was a comprehensive and uncompromising criticism of the mercantile system then prevailing.

Lastly, let us consider his views on taxes. While his views on this particular question would be apparent from what has been described in the preceding lines regarding his pattern of thinking in general, Rousseau stood against the levying of taxes in terms of money and asserted that national needs should be met by the proceeds from the "domaine public" especially set up for the purpose. He was particularly bitter against the existence of "financier" and "fermier général." He said: "Ce qui rend le plus pernecieux un systeme de finance est l'emploi de financier" (*Corse* 340). In place of collecting money as taxes, he proposed levying them in terms of labor rendered, or, suggested a simultaneous application of levying both in kind and currency (*Corse* 338, 341). Especially noteworthy in this connection is his opposition to the levying of taxes on the lands and farm products on the ground that these would go to hamper agrarian production (*Economie* 269). Instead, he strongly urged the inauguration of a luxury tax, proposing that appropriate taxes be imposed on the spacious gardens, mansions, furnishings and vehicles in possession of rich persons (*Economie* 271). This would amply show the fundamental stand of Rousseau, aiming at the liberation of peasants and depriving the rich of superfluous items in their possession.

V. Rousseau's Position in the History of Peasantry.

It has already been made clear, in the preceding lines, that Rousseau's ideal was to revive the ancient form of society, where the functions of commerce and money would be minimized and natural economy maintained unmolested. Would it be right and proper, in the light of this, to label Rousseau as a revivalist and a "utopiste rétrograde"? (A. Lichtenberger, *Le socialisme au XVIII^e siècle*. 178).

We are all well aware that it has more frequently happened than not that a revolutionary theory has been advanced under the guise of a movement for revival. It is a fact that many of peasants' uprisings in the me-

diaeval ages had for their purpose the re-realisation of a state of absolute equality as was envisioned in the primitive Christianity; the "Diggers" in the English revolutions as well as Andō Shōeki, a Japanese revolutionist, gave vent to their revolutionary ideas under the guise of the ancient ages when man lived in absolute equality. (E. H. Norman, *Andō Shōeki and the Anatomy of Japanese Feudalism*) In the case of Rousseau, likewise, it should not be overlooked that his desire to see natural economy revived was at once to lead to his most vigorous and fundamental criticism of the actualities as were prevailing in the ancien régime.

As has already been described, the eighteenth century witnessed a rapid progress of the bourgeoisie, which was attended with the inevitable consequences that the farming population, occupying a major proportion of the entire population, had to suffer under the increasing burdens of monetary economy and the requisition of the "communal." Farming communities of France were passing overnight into a new age of exploitation and away from that of bucolic romances. While it should be admitted that such was one of the transitions unavoidable prior to the consolidation of a capitalistic society, Rousseau could not but discern the sources of all contemporary evils therein, which he did everything in his power to eradicate. Although the "philosophes," in their role of being the pioneers of the bourgeois advancement in this century, succeeded to find a "forward" solution to this question by stressing the natural law applicable to a society, it should be conceded that for the peasants under incessant oppressions and exploitation, the question was never confined to these natural laws in a society but was rooted much deeper in the need of re-building it from its very foundation. He said: "Tout ce qu'ont fait les hommes, les hommes peuvent le détruire." (*Emile* 166). The question of economy would never be solved in itself as detached from politics, but by being subjected to politics. Thus, the issue should first be presented as a political question. Rousseau's political theory had this preposition to tackle with.

On the contrary, however, landlords and bourgeois would start with the approval of the existing direction of a society's advance together with the existence of the actually dominating powers, on the basis of which they would set about thinking of a reform and policies to be taken. This should be coincident with the road of reform and compromise, whereas Rousseau would rather check the advance of the society (*Emile* 253) and resorts to the "good old days" for a contrast. Destitute farmers were never in a position to represent in any way the newly-risen productive power, nor was it possible for them to do so; they were not the "children of the age" but actually were beings left outside the progress of the age. They would na-

turally try to continue to live in memories of the bucolic past and envision the past in the present actualities. What characterised more than anything else were their fervor to rise in revolt and their inclination to sink in a transcendentalistic mysticism. The guiding principles for the actions on the part of the peasants were for the defence of their community, and for the maintenance of the communistic customs, and Rousseau, likewise, tried, not following the principles of "laissez-faire" which would liberate man as he is, to absorb him within a state organisation, and, by doing so, to find a guarantee for his liberty, independence and rights of possessions, and herein is to be found the basis for Rousseau's theory of popular sovereignty and the absolute powers he imparted to this sovereignty.

It was impossible for Rousseau to concede that the ruling class and the peasants could live side by side. According to him, "dans l'état social, le bien de l'un fait nécessairement le mal de l'autre." (*Emile* 73 note). And, also: "Toujours la multitude sera sacrifiée au petit nombre, et l'intérêt public à l'intérêt particulier." (*Emile* 206). Therefore, if man could not live in such a society without committing some sort of a criminal offences: "ce n'est pas le malfaiteur qu'il faut pendre, c'est celui qui le forcé à le devenir" (*Emile* 165). Thus, it was a question of "tout ou rien" (*Confessions* 374) for Rousseau, and no intermediate road was permissible. This most adequately indicated the position of poor peasants and semi-proletarians, who had to confront face to face with the entire ruling classes and open up their own path to follow only through revolutionary uprisings. However, similar as the conflict staged by the peasants was strongly tinged with an irrational mysticism, so Rousseau's political conceptions involved roots for later fantastic mysticism. For one thing, such went to explain his propensity against culture, and, for another, was tantamount to a theory of the "législateur" comparable to the Almighty God. (*Contrat* 51).

To the peasants, who were being sacrificed for the sake of the agrarian reform, the capitalistic progress, in other words, the so-called capitalism from above, was to be looked upon as their very enemy. With regard to the progress of the accumulation of capital and its consequences, Rousseau declared: "Etrange et funeste constitution, où les richesses accumulées facilitent toujours les moyens d'en accumuler de plus grandes, et où il est impossible à celui qui n'a rien d'acquérir quelque chose." (*Narcisse* 106). It was the continued progress of the accumulation of capital — the process of the primitive accumulation of capital —, and the pauperization of people consequent upon this, that Rousseau tried to check and effect an escape from it. This was exactly the situation which the groups of the "Économistes" promoted, and which the peasantry, mainly consisting of

poor peasants, revolted against.

While conflicting with the interests of the peasants, the interests of land-owners and wealthy farmers, who were the supporters of the movement for modernization, would join hands with business and commercial speculation with the demands for the freedom in the dealings in cereals and foreign trade. In the sixties of the eighteenth century and after, Turgot, one of the "Économistes," practised the abolition of the internal tariffs with regard to the dealings in cereals for the sake of unrestrained trade in them, while poor peasants strongly opposed on the grounds that it would serve to raise the price levels of the cereals in favor of businessmen who would buy up all the stocks available, and eventually result in the deterioration of their own living, and, instead, they loudly clamored for the control of dealings in cereals and for compulsory cultivation (Lefebvre, *La Révolution française*) This will fit in with the assertions of Rousseau for trade control as seen in his "Projet pour Corse," for a kind of controlled economy, and, further, with his position opposing to the domination of commerce and currency.

It is needless to point out that the bourgeois theory of free trade is based upon internationalism or cosmopolitanism. The peasants in these years, however, had not yet been fully enlightened on international trade and the means to derive profit from it. Fearful of foreign competition, they tended to stick to the principles of self-sustaining economy. They were imbued with the patriotic fervor to the extent that they would not cede even an inch of land in the face of foreign aggressors, and at the same time were not without a chauvinism with a conviction that their own land ranked among the best in the world. This patriotism on their part was given a due vent in the French Revolution in the form of their concerted attack against the foreign influences and king's powers and other reactionary influences, which were closely united with the influences coming from outside; their patriotism went to defend the revolution and served a powerful factor which eventually led to its success. Rousseau's fervent patriotism could fully be comprehended from this angle with all its implications.

After writing the "Contrat social" and "Emile," Rousseau, amid relentless oppressions imposed by government officials and persecutions rendered by rioting mobs, travelled from one place to another. In his later works, beginning with the "Confessions" and ending with the "Rêveries," Rousseau's figure is characterized by the deepening loneliness and meditative inclination. In counterproportion to such retrogression on the part of Rousseau, the peasantry, spurred by the unchecked progress of enclosures, started to rise in open rebellion in various localities in years following the seventies of the eighteenth century. These agrarian riots eventually culminated in

the revolution, while their uprisings served to offer a fundamental power to sustain and push the revolutionary trend. They forcibly made the bourgeoisie, the new ruler, discard a number of feudal privileges and divide national properties among poor farmers. In 1793, under the "Dictature montagnarde" led by Robespierre, the abolishment of all feudal rights without indemnification and the sale of national properties were actually effected.

Although it was a fact that the French Revolution found a strong support and stay in the agrarian reforms, it at the same time would not be denied that the Revolution in itself was a bourgeois revolution. The broad direction of bourgeois progress as was witnessed in the ancien régime was not only maintained through all the revolutionary years, but was rather strengthened (Lefebvre, *La Révolution française*). True the farmers succeeded to throw overboard the feudalism and all the restraints attendant upon it; but, it is a fact worth notice that mere 35% of the entire peasantry were capable of becoming real landowners by purchasing national properties which had been offered to them (M. Block, *Statistique de la France II*. 22). The bourgeois revolution thus merely served to turn the upper-class farmers into new bourgeois and drastically hasten the domination of capital over them, who were quickly divided into various and conflicting classes.

Thus, it is clear that Rousseau's intentions to have the peasantry completely liberated were not fully materialised in the bourgeois revolution. So long as the powers remained in the hands of the bourgeoisie, the "enemy of the people," such was impossible, and this has already been pointed out by Rousseau himself. It should be said with confidence that because of this particular circumstance, Rousseau's theory of revolutionary democracy and his enthusiasm for the liberation of the peasantry retains its fresh and strong appeals even today.

(Note). The present treatise constitutes a chapter of "Rousseau; A Corporate Study" (A Report of the Research Institute of Humanistic Sciences, Kyōto University, published by Iwanami Shoten & Co., Tokyo) published in 1951. This joint study was, under the supervision of Professor T. Kuwabara, conducted from April, 1949 to March, 1950. Writings of Rousseau quoted herein were drawn, with regard to political writing, from the Vaughan's edition, and, otherwise, from "Oeuvres complètes de J.-J. Rousseau," Librairie Hachette, 1908.