Philosophers in Perspective

There is an abundance now of books of 'readings' from the major philosophers, in which the selections are so often too brief and snippety to be of any great value to the student. There are also many collections of essays and articles about the major philosophers on the market. These too are unsatisfactory from the student's point of view in that they suffer severely from the defect of discontinuity and are unable to trace the scope and articulation of a man's work, as each contributor writes from the standpoint of his own interpretation.

There is a great need for books that are devoted to a single philosopher and that are written by a single author who is allowed the room to develop both his exposition and his examination of his subject in sufficient detail. *Philosophers in Perspective* satisfies this demand and makes available to students studies of all the major philosophers, and some of the undeservedly minor ones as well, which will afford them for the first time the opportunity of understanding the philosopher, of coming to grips with his thought, and of seeing him in his place in the development of philosophy, or of his special area of it.

Each book in the series fits into this framework, but the authors are given the freedom to adapt it to their own requirements. Main emphasis will be placed on exposition and examination of the philosopher's thought, but enough will be written about the influences on him and about his own influence on subsequent thought, to show where he stands in the perspective of his subject. Wherever relevant, particular emphasis will be placed on the philosopher's contributions to moral and political thought, which have often in the past been treated cursorily as tailpieces to his writings on metaphysics and epistemology. This aspect of the series will prove most useful to students of politics, history and sociology.

Philosophers in Perspective

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ROUSSEAU

An Introduction to his Political Philosophy

John C. Hall

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To the Special Class in Moral Philosophy
in the University of St Andrews

Preface

This book is intended to be an exposition and discussion, from a philosophical point of view, of Rousseau's political philosophy. As such, it is concerned with only a small part (though a very important part) of Rousseau's writing. Rousseau was a many-sided man, and his writings are of many kinds: a major novel, a treatise on education, operas, works on musical theory, topical pamphlets on political and religious questions, and autobiographical works, in addition to his contributions to political philosophy. All of these would be equally relevant to a comprehensive study of his intellectual life. They are not all equally relevant for the student of his philosophy.

Many recent writers on Rousseau have assumed, tacitly or explicitly, that the whole of this varied output should be seen as the expression of a single theme or view of the world, which was his reaction, partly conscious and partly unconscious, to the experiences of his early life. This approach may have some use for some purposes of the literary critic; but it is of no use to the philosopher, who looks to Rousseau for arguments that may be judged valid or invalid and whose conclusions may be true or false. These arguments are to be found in those writings in which Rousseau is consciously and explicitly engaged in political philosophy, and they deserve to be taken at their face value as philosophical arguments and not treated simply as evidence of Rousseau's underlying concerns.

For this reason the interpretations offered in this book are based entirely on three works: the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, the *Encyclopédie* article 'Political Economy', and the *Social Contract*. I have ignored suggestions that the position of the

autor in *Émile* or Wolmar's country estate in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* should be treated as political parables (conscious or unconscious?) and used as aids to the interpretation of the explicitly political works.

I have also excluded from consideration some works that *are* explicitly political: (a) the writings on the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, which are concerned with questions peripheral to Rousseau's main doctrines; and (b) all works written after the publication of the *Social Contract*. These works have their own interest in different ways, but they are not those on which his reputation as a philosopher rests. Even within the *Social Contract* itself, I have hardly concerned myself with one part of the work – the chapters (III 1–10) that deal with government (as distinct from sovereignty). Although Rousseau himself placed a high value on the general theory of government contained in III 1, I have never heard or read of anyone who has agreed with this valuation.

It is the theory contained in Books I and II of the *Social Contract* that is Rousseau's main contribution to political philosophy, and it is with explaining and discussing this theory that the greater part of the present book is concerned. With so short a text I have not thought it necessary to give references in any more detail than to chapters and (occasionally) paragraphs. I assume that my readers will have read the text and will not need summaries of it.

I have to thank a number of my colleagues at St Andrews who have read the whole or parts of the book in draft and have made many helpful comments and corrections: Professor B. Mayo, Mr F. S. McNeilly, Mr D. Mallock, and Dr S. S. B. Taylor; and the editor of this series, Professor A. D. Woozley, who has been similarly helpful.

I am grateful to Messrs Methuen & Co. Ltd for permission to reproduce the extract from *On Aggression* by Konrad Lorenz.

J. C. H.

*University of St Andrews,
January 1971*

A Note on the Texts Cited

Abbreviation

O. of I. *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality among Men*: commonly called *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. First published 1755.

Pol. Econ. ‘Économie politique’: an article in vol. v (published 1755) of the *Encyclopédie*, edited by D. Diderot and J. d’Alembert.

S.C. *Of the Social Contract*. First published 1762.

Gen The text of *S.C.* contained in the Geneva manuscript (Geneva MS. français 225).

Int Hypothetical intermediate text of *S.C.*

References to *O. of I.* are to the translations by R. D. and J. R. Masters, and by G. D. H. Cole (see Bibliography). For example. ‘p. 193 M, 222 Co’ signifies page 193 in the Masters’ translation and page 222 in Cole’s (unrevised edition).

References to *Pol. Econ.* are to pages of Cole’s translation.

References to *S.C.* and to *Gen* are to Rousseau’s books and chapters. For example, ‘1 6’ signifies Book I, chapter 6.

References to *Émile* are to pages of the French text in the ‘Pléiade’ edition.