

Dancing in the streets: Rousseau, the genealogy of vice, and the practice of freedom

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journals.sagepub.com/home/psc**Sid Simpson** 

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Abstract

Only recently has Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* begun to be read as a genealogy rather than a variation on the social contract tradition. This article argues that reading Rousseau as a genealogist not only clarifies his analysis of *amour-propre*'s inflammation, but also illuminates a conception of freedom achieved through the continuous political *practice* of shaping of *amour-propre*. In the first section of this article, I situate this conception of freedom against two separate but relevant bodies of Rousseau scholarship: those who read him as a genealogist, and those who emphasize the ambiguities of *amour-propre*. Next, I look to *The Social Contract*'s passages on censorship and court of honor in order to evaluate their roles as institutions that forestall the inflammation of *amour-propre*. Finally, I examine the social institutions that citizens actively participate in as they practice their freedom: the festivals, dances, balls and games described in *The Letter to D'Alembert* and *Considerations on the Government of Poland*. It is in these institutions that we see the political implications of Rousseau's genealogical system manifest: because his genealogy illuminates the human tendency toward vice, the cultivation of virtuous citizenship appears as a constant struggle rather than an idealist achievement.

Keywords

Rousseau, genealogy, amour-propre, vice, freedom

I Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau has long been hailed as the first to bring the question of history to bear on Western political philosophy. Richard Velkley contends that 'Rousseau discovers

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the later modern notion of the historicity of human existence' (2002, 55) while Arthur Melzer makes the even stronger claim that 'in a word, Rousseau was first to discover "History"' (2016, 50). Indeed, only with the importance of time in mind can we appreciate the image with which Rousseau opens his *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality Among Mankind* (*Second Discourse*): the weathered statue of Glaucus, disfigured by the elements and the persistent march of time, much like the 'scarcely distinguishable' human soul, 'altered in society by the perpetual succession of a thousand causes, by the acquisition of numberless discoveries and errors, by the changes that have happened in the constitution of the body, [and] by the perpetual jarring of the passions' (2002 [1755], 80).

Rousseau's reliance on conjectural history in the *Second Discourse* reveals a deep-seated concern for temporality throughout his oeuvre. *The Social Contract*, after all, includes numerous cautions against the inevitable degradation of public opinion, whereas in *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* Rousseau re-asserts at the end of his life that 'Everything is in constant flux on this earth. Nothing keeps the same unchanging shape, and our affections, being attached to things outside us, necessarily change and pass away as they do. Always out ahead of us or lagging behind, they recall a past which is gone or anticipate a future which may never come into being; there is nothing solid there for the heart to attach itself to' (1980 [1782], 80). That Rousseau's concern for temporality bears on his positive political considerations has been widely acknowledged: for instance, J.G.A. Pocock (1975) identifies Rousseau as a thinker fundamentally concerned with the temporal stability of the republic he envisioned, while William Connolly (1995) contends that Rousseau weaves a politics of homesickness to confront the destabilizing march of history. More recently, Mabel Wong has articulated Rousseau's political programs as attempts to 'develop[] an assemblage of psychosomatic techniques aimed at organizing and maintaining temporal unity in the face of time's flux' (2012, 174).

In the past few years, a handful of scholars have situated Rousseau's conjectural history in the *Second Discourse* within a particular tradition of engaging with temporality, one intertwined with the emergence of the self and our attachments to beliefs that harm us: the 'genealogical' method usually associated with Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault.¹ Though fruitful, this analysis is largely confined in extant scholarship to the historicity of the *Second Discourse*. Considerably less attention has been paid to the way that a specifically genealogical approach might have implications for Rousseau's positive political project. If Rousseau's critique of modern society emerges from a genealogy of vice and his conception of virtue is meant explicitly as an alternative to that vice, how might his understanding of virtue be affected? And moreover, how might his political prescriptions – dedicated to cultivating free and virtuous citizens – be shaped by his genealogical inquiry?

In the first half of this article, I articulate what I call Rousseau's 'practice' of freedom by bridging two relatively recent scholarly literatures. The first seeks to read Rousseau as providing a *genealogy* of vice, in much the same vein that Nietzsche offered a genealogy of morals and Foucault a genealogy of the subject. As will become clear below, I find this literature insightful yet ultimately incomplete; whereas other genealogical thinkers articulate their prescriptions in light of their genealogical categories, Rousseau's conception

of freedom and the politics that achieve it have not yet been read in this way. For genealogical thinkers like Nietzsche and Foucault, their historical method also directly illuminates a certain self-conscious and creative *practice* of freedom – a continuity in critique and prescription which I contend below also appears in Rousseau's work.

The second body of scholarly literature with which I engage draws attention to the protean ambiguities of *amour-propre*. While it is certainly true that *amour-propre* cannot be properly understood without analysing its roles both in exacerbating vice and cultivating citizenship, I contend that *amour-propre's* relationship to vice, virtue and the political prescriptions Rousseau ultimately offers are best understood in the genealogical context: insofar as his genealogy tells the story of how *amour-propre* became inflamed in modernity, it also implies the ways in which such corruption might be avoided. I proceed by arguing that Rousseau's genealogy thus directly implies his political prescriptions, and that *amour-propre* – which tends towards vice but can be reoriented toward virtue – is the animating force in that genealogy. In this way, introducing the temporal and embodied aspect of a specifically *genealogical* reading of freedom in Rousseau breaks with the prevalent 'Kantian-Hegelian' reading of *amour-propre's* positive capacities and importantly transforms both literatures. Those who already read Rousseau as a genealogist miss the full extent of the constructive insights he gleaned from it, whereas those who comment on the virtuous forms of *amour-propre* in political societies ruled by the general will likewise miss that those institutions and practices are the outgrowth of his genealogical account. What's more, the genealogical view helps us to clarify the character of Rousseau's temporal freedom: the accepted conception grounded in a 'Kantian-Hegelian' view of mutual recognition still smacks of historical teleology and rationalism, whereas a genealogical view of a Rousseauian practice of freedom remains vigilant to the ever-present danger of degradation.

This practice of freedom, of course, does not fall entirely on the citizen. In light of reading Rousseau as a systematic genealogical thinker, the political and social institutions of the republic ruled by the general will function as various ways to avoid the unfreedom he decries in the *Second Discourse*. In the latter half of this article, I argue that these institutions fall into two broad categories. First, Rousseau's discussions of the censor in the *Social Contract* as well as the Court of Honor in his *Letter to D'Alembert* serve a *preventative* role; they are institutions with which citizens engage each day that forestall the degradation of *amour-propre* into vice and thereby make possible the healthy cultivation of citizenship. The second set of institutions may be called *constitutive*, insofar as they actively cultivate and reinvigorate this healthy form of *amour-propre*. Here, I look to the periodic festivals and balls described in detail in Rousseau's *Letter* and *Considerations on the Government of Poland*. Moral freedom for Rousseau is thus best understood as an *embodied practice* in which people must continuously engage with each other as citizens and friends through institutions specifically tailored to nurture these daily activities. In the final analysis, I argue that reading Rousseau as a genealogist renders his conception of moral freedom as an ongoing and creative practice of tending to and shaping *amour-propre* through these institutions – one that finds the act of cultivating the possibility of mutual recognition equally as important as the mutual recognition itself.

II Rousseau as genealogist

“I have shown that all the vices imputed to the human heart are not natural to it; I have stated the manner in which they are born. I have followed their genealogy, so to speak, and I have shown how, through continuous deterioration of their original goodness, men finally become what they are” (Rousseau 2013 [1765], 28).

A marker of Rousseau’s richness is that his method has been a source of constant debate and inquiry. His oeuvre has been claimed to be both systematic² and paradoxically inconsistent,³ his treatises interpreted literally and letters analysed for hidden esoterism,⁴ and his methodological approach to politics continuously reinterpreted. Bruno Bernardi (2014), for instance, describes Rousseau as inhabiting a ‘laboratory’ of concepts, in which his political reasoning reflects the manner of chemists who experiment with admixtures and constituent parts. Frederick Neuhouser’s early study takes a different tack, articulating Rousseau’s method as a secular theodicy – a vindication of divine goodness in the face of evil – without the promise of redemption (2008, 2–4). While many of these interpretative approaches rightly connect Rousseau’s political thinking to his historical investigations, they largely do not methodologically interrogate Rousseau’s self-described genealogy of vice as a genealogy.

However, some recent scholarship has begun to place Rousseau into this methodological context. Pivoting from his earlier reading of Rousseau, Neuhouser’s later work has gone furthest in situating Rousseau in the genealogical tradition: ‘Rousseau conceives of the *Second Discourse* as providing a kind of *genealogy* of human inequality that is inextricably bound up with the project of evaluating – more precisely, criticizing – the very phenomenon whose origins his genealogy undertakes to elucidate’ (2014, 4–5).⁵ In other words, in order to adequately critique modern inequality, Rousseau had to explore its murky origins and trace the obscure path they took to the present. It is for this reason that the *Second Discourse* breaks explicitly with the then-popular state of nature theories articulated by Hobbes, Locke and Pufendorf; their accounts of humanity’s pre-history rest on a projection of civilized man⁶ back onto nature, whereas Rousseau begins his analysis with an account of the creation of the human being whose traits led them into civil society in the first place. Rousseau’s task is therefore to untangle what is natural and what is artificial in the *current* nature of man (Lemaire 2014, 160) without accidentally projecting what is artificial back onto the ‘natural’ in question (Vincenti 2004, 15–16). In this respect, Rousseau’s attention to the unexpected origins of our current social ills and unmasking of his peers’ unknowing presentism place him squarely at the beginning of a methodological tradition taken up by thinkers such as Nietzsche and Foucault.

And yet, it is not merely because Rousseau sought to banish presentism in order to grasp the issue at the root that he is a genealogist; his commitment to the temporality of social pathology begets a number of other structural similarities now associated with a ‘genealogical’ approach. Among them is the centrality of contingency to the development of man’s faculties. For instance, in Section II of the *Second Discourse* Rousseau cites the emergence of both metallurgy and agriculture as *contingent* circumstances that

unexpectedly brought about a ‘great revolution’ in the development of social conditions. In effect, the discoveries of ‘iron and corn... ruined mankind’ in Europe, while Americans remained ‘savages’ in their absence (2002 [1755], 120–121). Crucial to Rousseau’s analysis is the unexpected outcomes of these historical advances, which benefited individuals unevenly in proportion to the extent to which they could utilize their unequal natural talents (e.g. strength or dexterity), resulting in the concretization of their inequality: ‘the differences among men, developed by the differences of their circumstances, become more noticeable, more permanent in their effects, and begin to influence in the same proportion the conditions of individuals’ (2002 [1755], 122). For Rousseau, then, the genealogy of human inequality is altogether unintelligible without the influence of utterly contingent events beyond humanity’s control. He explains that his method ‘bring[s] together the different accidents which may have perfected the human understanding while debasing the species, and made man wicked by making him sociable, and from so remote a time bring man at last and the world to the point at which we now see them’ (2002 [1755], 120–113). Thus, according to Rousseau mankind’s social development has little to do with anything like an Aristotelian *telos* or Spinozan *conatus* – or more relevant to our purposes here, a Kantian rational teleology or Hegelian end of history – but instead bears much more resemblance to the contingency-oriented genealogical method central to Nietzsche and Foucault’s analyses.

A further structural feature of Rousseau’s approach that situates him within the genealogical tradition is the conjectural epistemological status of his critique. He begins the *Second Discourse*: ‘Let us begin, therefore, by laying aside facts, for they do not affect the question. The researches, in which we may engage on this occasion, are not to be taken for historical truths, but merely as hypothetical and conditional reasonings, fitter to illustrate the nature of things, than to show their true origin, like those systems, which our naturalists daily make of the formation of the world’ (2002 [1755], 88). In much the same way that Nietzsche’s genealogy of morals does not hinge on the actual historical existence of his infamous slaves and blonde beasts, Rousseau’s genealogy of vice does not fail on account of its historical (in) accuracy. To hold it to this standard would constitute a category mistake: the critical payoff of the genealogical approach is decidedly not fidelity to the historical record, but rather insight into the contingency of the present and the possibility that life *could be otherwise*. For this reason, Judith Shklar could famously describe Rousseau as ‘the last great political theorist to be utterly uninterested in history’, while at the same time writing that his greatest claim was that he alone had been the ‘historian of the human heart’ (1966).

Andre Charrak, in clarifying the originality of Rousseau’s ‘hypothetical’ or ‘conditional’ fictions, contrasts Rousseau’s method with Descartes, who also uses fiction to de-realize a false world in order to reach an obscured natural world (2014, 148). What specifically makes Rousseau a *genealogist* is that his conjectural fictions seek not merely to decipher (as in Descartes), but rather to unmask (2014, 149). Therefore, a Cartesian fable and a Rousseauian genealogy do not have the same value because Rousseau’s conjectural state of nature is evaluated precisely on the basis of its ability to combat the dogma against which it is proposed (2014, 151).

For Rousseau, then, a critique of modern inequality is successful insofar as it demonstrates that those social conditions are *not* historically necessary. It was in a similar

spirit that Foucault once quipped: ‘I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent’ (1980, 193). Given these critical continuities, it is not hard to agree with Neuhouser that we should locate *The Second Discourse* within this intellectual tradition.

What Neuhouser does not do, however, is bring the question of genealogy to bear on Rousseau’s conception of freedom. In other words, what does reading Rousseau as a genealogist illuminate about the widely acknowledged temporal aspect of his positive conception of politics? I contend that Rousseau’s genealogy expressly implies the kinds of politics he would later suggest, and more strongly, that his constructive political writings only make sense in light of his genealogy. Thus, Rousseau does not *merely* employ genealogy but is rather a systematically genealogical thinker. After all, despite genealogy’s reputation as solely critical, deconstructive or even nihilistic, thinkers that most famously utilize genealogy still offer various prescriptions directly implied by their genealogical analyses. For instance, Nietzsche’s genealogical method renders freedom an intentional practice of revaluation and self-overcoming that he refers to as the *gaya scienza*: ‘giving oneself style’, a ‘great and rare art... practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the idea’ (1974 [1882], §290). In this regard, Nietzsche’s genealogical methodology foregrounds the *activity* of being free insofar as it dispels the ostensible objectivity and temporal stasis of modern European conceptions of political freedom.

Moreover, Foucault’s ‘care of the self’ is likewise an articulation of freedom through the continual practice of self-creation. In a 1983 interview, Foucault uses distinctly Nietzschean language to describe the process: ‘From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to *create ourselves* as a work of art... We should not have to refer the creative activity of somebody to the kind of relation he has to himself, but should relate the kind of relation one has to oneself to a *creative activity*’ (1984, 351).⁷ Once again, the temporal conditions for the realization of freedom flow directly from the historicity at the heart of the genealogical method.

We should not however over-stretch the similarities between these thinkers. Rousseau is, after all, decidedly distinct from both Nietzsche and Foucault, not least of all because he is the only one to offer a detailed blueprint of a political regime wherein freedom might be realized. However, the methodological continuities above compel us to ask: if reading Rousseau’s *Second Discourse* as a genealogy illuminates the emergence of moral inequality through interrogating the intertwinement of vice and social subjectivity, should we not extend these same insights to Rousseau’s conception of freedom? Or put another way: if Nietzsche and Foucault envision autonomy in the form of making one’s life as a work of art, could we not understand Rousseau as directing us to make ourselves as citizens in the same way?

To be sure, some scholars have articulated an ‘active’ dimension of citizenship in Rousseau’s writings, albeit not in the context of Rousseau’s genealogy.⁸ Denise Schaeffer, for instance, looks to Rousseau’s *Plan for a Constitution for Corsica* in order to emphasize his ‘concern for deliberation and active citizenship’ (2012, 421–441) in contrast to others, such as Julia Simons, who argue that ‘Rousseau’s goal is to induce a “static state

of social conformity” (1995, 65). Yet while interpreting Rousseau’s conception of freedom as ‘active’ goes a ways in demonstrating that freedom is indeed constituted through *activity*, the extant literature does not make clear the intimate link between his genealogy as such and his practical articulation of freedom. In order to draw out this internal link in more detail, we must turn to recent scholarship on the protean ambiguities of *amour-propre*.

III Rousseau and *amour-propre*

Any account of Rousseau’s genealogy of vice that omits analysis of *amour-propre* is necessarily incomplete. Briefly, *amour-propre* is a social passion that compels individuals to pursue glory, honor, recognition and distinction. The ill effects of this sentiment are central to Rousseau’s critique of civilization: in the *Discourse on Sciences and Arts (First Discourse)* and *Second Discourse* he explains how the decadence, vice and corruption of modern day cities like Paris are a consequence of *amour-propre* run amok, to the detriment of moral equality and freedom. In the context of his genealogical analysis, the passion that fuels modern peoples’ yearning for distinction in civil society is traceable back to a particular moment in Rousseau’s conjectural anthropology: when humanity began to wrest itself from its wild isolation and coalesce into primordial social associations, ‘Everyone began to notice the rest, and wished to be noticed himself; and public esteem acquired a value. He who sang or danced best; the handsomest, the strongest, the most dexterous, or the most eloquent, came to be the most respected: this was the first step towards inequality, and at the same time towards vice’ (2002 [1755], 118). For this reason, it is not at all surprising that *amour-propre* is most often associated with the ills that Rousseau decries.

There is, however, a crucially important ambiguity to *amour-propre*: as Rousseau explains, ‘Selfishness [*amour-propre*] is but a relative and factitious sentiment, engendered in society, which inclines every individual to set a greater value upon himself than upon any other man, which inspires men with all the mischief they do to each other, *and is the true source of what we call honor*’ (2002 [1755], 146n). The socially beneficial dimensions of *amour-propre* have rightly been the subject of a number of recent studies. As Michael Locke McLendon succinctly points out, the usual narrative that *amour-propre* ‘gives rise to zero-sum competitions’ for social standing in which ‘no one really wins... as everyone’s moral personality is corrupted’ (2014, 341–342) has been supplanted, beginning with N. J. H. Dent’s insight that *amour-propre* is fundamentally neutral. Looking to *Émile*, Dent lays out the determining effect of *amour-propre* on the fulfilment of ‘man’s estate’, defined as the rights and duties befitting of ‘the moral standing of “humanity”’ (1998, 65–66). To the extent that *amour-propre* may, for better or worse, aid in the actualization of a person (or citizen), it cannot be immediately dismissed as inherently bad.

Extending this analysis (though ultimately disagreeing with Dent), Laurence Cooper elaborates on the ambiguity of *amour-propre*: he describes it as ‘protean and potent: it can be good or bad; it can be good *and* bad; it cannot be neutral’ (1999, 22). Against the vanity, anxiety and decadence so prevalent in the *First Discourse*, *amour-propre* can also

be generative of ‘things that give... life much of its pleasure, most of its meaning, and virtually all of its nobility’. He points to conjugal and paternal love as examples of these ‘sweetest sentiments known to men’ (1999, 123). Going even further, Neuhouser finds the passion a requirement for the formation of rationality, morality and subjectivity, leading him to claim that ‘Rousseau’s view is that there can be no genuinely *human* beings without *amour-propre*’ (2014, 70). *Amour-propre*, then, forms the intimate connection between Rousseau’s genealogy of vice and conception of freedom insofar as it mediates both vice and the virtues requisite for freedom. In a stretched analogy, we might think of *amour-propre* as a conceptual ancestor to Nietzsche’s will to power, which when turned inward could become a life-denying force but when sublimated becomes the basis for autonomy. Rousseau’s account of *amour-propre* is, of course, not as radical as Nietzsche’s account of the will to power. *Amour-propre* is an irreducibly social passion, whereas for Nietzsche all life is the will to power. Nevertheless, the comparison illuminates one crucial conceptual point: for Rousseau, the same passion that produces and exacerbates vice is also the key to virtue, and by extension, moral freedom.

However, one question remains: does *amour-propre* mediate vice and freedom in the same way? We know that *amour-propre*’s role in the production of vice is a contingent and temporal one. In his genealogical reading of the *Second Discourse*, Neuhouser is particularly clear on this point:

“Whereas the *Second Discourse*, with its diagnostic focus, concentrates on the considerable obstacles *amour-propre* poses to human freedom and well-being, a main task of his [Rousseau’s] social thought more generally is to show that these obstacles are not intrinsic to *amour-propre*’s strivings but are due instead to contingent and alterable features of the conditions under which individuals are constrained to seek to satisfy those strivings, above all to poorly ordered social institutions and faulty domestic education” (2014, 146–147).

That is, because of *amour-propre*’s protean nature, its degradation into vice must be interrogated temporally, and specifically, genealogically, as Rousseau views his modern peers as mistaking their vices for virtues. Indeed, the latter section of the *Second Discourse* is a chronicle of humanity’s mounting unfreedom due in no small part to *amour-propre*, spanning from the relatively innocent jealousy of the primitive ‘golden age’, through the creation and seizure of private property, to the emergence of despotism under the first State. In the same way, the famous proclamation at the beginning of the *Social Contract*, that ‘Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains’ is a direct reflection of the temporality at the heart of Rousseau’s genealogical critique (2002 [1762], 136).

If genealogy demonstrates that *amour-propre* can, through a history riddled with contingencies, become corrupted, how might we understand the cultivation of freedom? Neuhouser, who has done the most to link Rousseau to the genealogical tradition, contends that *amour-propre* may be bent towards freedom by reshaping it from a thirst for standing in the eyes of others to a ‘form of wanting to be respected as an equal – as simply a “person” or “human being,” for example – who has the same rights and dignity as every other individual’ (2014, 81). At the heart of the *Social Contract*, then, is an attempt to describe conditions under which equal respect, or the esteem sought by *amour-propre*

(2014, 142), might be achieved. Neuhouser is not alone in this ‘Kantian-Hegelian’ reading of *amour-propre*; Joshua Cohen (2010, 115–116), N. J. H. Dent (1998, 72), Anna Stilz (2009, 128–129), and even John Rawls (2007, 199–200) among others articulate *amour-propre*’s drive for social recognition as a desire for equal standing. As McLendon points out, casting Rousseau as ‘a proto-German idealist who holds that equal social standing can satisfy the emotional needs of self-respect often associated with the passion’ easily links *amour-propre* to the general will and renders the *Social Contract* a neat antidote to the ills of the *First* and *Second Discourses* (2019, 8–9). I agree, then, with Neuhouser that Rousseau’s genealogy and political prescriptions form a system, connected by Rousseau’s insights into the nature of *amour-propre*.⁹

Pace Neuhouser, I contend that a Kantian-Hegelian reading of *amour-propre* only partly describes the complex relationship between the passion and freedom. Rousseau, after all, is no proto-German idealist; his conception of history expressly rejects such self-assured teleology. While the spectres of Kant and Hegel conjure the image of a rocky but reliable progression of history, Rousseau seems more concerned with precisely the opposite: the way that history leads one away from freedom, rather than toward it. What’s missing, already implied by Neuhouser’s own reading of Rousseau as a genealogist, is the specifically contingency-oriented genealogical character of the temporal and, more importantly, *practical* relationship between *amour-propre* and freedom. While the *Social Contract* may well illuminate a set of institutions and conditions that would make possible the realization of *amour-propre* as mutual esteem and communal recognition, Rousseau is also attentive to the ongoing prophylactic *activity* of cultivating *amour-propre* in this way. In other words, Rousseau is concerned not merely with achieving intersubjective recognition and esteem, but just as importantly with the practices through which citizens sustain this condition over time. For Rousseau, there is always the fear of decline lurking at the margins of his writing – a sense lost in the Kantian-Hegelian reading because Kant and Hegel harbour an optimism about history which Rousseau would sharply reject. It is for precisely this reason that Rousseau emphasizes the mortality of the body politic in the *Social Contract*: ‘Therein is the inherent and inevitable vice which, right from the birth of the body politic, tends ineluctably to destroy it, just as old age and death ultimately destroy the human body’ (2002 [1762], 214). Thus, the cultivation of *amour-propre* for the sake of freedom does not and cannot culminate in a merely static exchange of esteem; rather, freedom itself is realized through the ritualized practice of tending to that very passion.

What’s more, the Kantian-Hegelian account suffers further on account of its implicit rationalism. Teleological trajectory aside, the proto-German idealist way of reading Rousseau conflates a rationalist understanding of mutual recognition, in which one defines one’s duties and sees them reflected in their state and fellow citizens,¹⁰ with the sensuous embodiment of the *practice* of mutual recognition – what Paul Audi calls a phenomenology of self love (2008, 381). If it is true that freedom is realized through the patriotic cultivation of the very same passion that so inflames envy and vice, an account that takes seriously that the virtuous form of that passion is *still* embodied rather than sublimating it into idealist rationalism is indispensable. It is for this reason that Marco Menin (2019) can describe the Rousseauian project as, in the end, a ‘politics of hearts’.¹¹

In the final analysis, looking to *amour-propre*'s role in producing vice through the lens of genealogy renders its role in the production of freedom importantly different from the prevalent Kantian-Hegelian account. The actual experience of creating oneself as a citizen over and over again is, in fact, *prerequisite* to the mutual social recognition more often associated with Rousseauian citizenship. At the same time, a genealogical account of virtuously cultivated *amour-propre* clarifies that it remains an embodied sensibility, even as its vicious tendencies are avoided. Importantly, this 'practice' of freedom is not left solely to the discretion of citizens; Rousseau outlines myriad political and social institutions to both indirectly and directly facilitate this ritualized cultivation of *amour-propre* as moral freedom. In what remains I will look to these institutions, beginning with Rousseau's writings on the censor and court of honor before turning to his famous discussions of festivals, dances and balls in his writings on Corsica and Poland.

IV The censor and the court of honor

Given the protean nature of *amour-propre*, Rousseauian citizens cannot be satisfied simply to leave their passions unchecked. As Rousseau is at pains to convey in the *Second Discourse*, *amour-propre* tends toward vice. Worse yet, in his Preface to *Narcissus* Rousseau claims that 'it is for the morals of a people that it is for the morals of a man: such a treasure should be preserved, but once lost it cannot be recovered' (2018 [1752], 83). Reading Rousseau as a genealogist is instructive here: unfreedom is not a condition that simply springs into existence, but rather is realized and concretized through repeated (vicious) social rituals. I argued above that a genealogical reading makes clear that virtue is likewise realized through repetitive social interactions. Rousseau must fight a two-front war, so to speak; he must devise institutions that forestall the daily activities that lead to the inflammation of *amour-propre* while at the same time imagining social institutions that require people to actively participate in the duties of a citizen. In this section, I look to the role of the censor in Rousseau's work, paying specific attention to how its manipulation of public opinion aims to stave off the vicious degradations of *amour-propre*.

Rousseau's discussion of the censorship in *The Social Contract* is short, but vital. For Rousseau, the law declares the general will, whereas the censorship has the important role of declaring public opinion (2002 [1762], 244). That public opinion is paramount for Rousseau should be clear given the *Discourses*: the chasm that opens between being and seeming appears as a response to the internalization of public opinion. Moreover, the extent to which citizens abide by the general will and adhere to the institutions of the republic is mediated greatly by public opinion. Given these properties, it is no surprise that for Rousseau a republic's public opinion and its 'character' are intertwined: 'It is useless to distinguish the character of a nation from the objects of its esteem, for all these things depend on the same principle and are necessarily intermixed' (2002 [1762], 244).

The internal link between public opinion and the well-being of a republic has to do with the way that public opinion mediates the everyday expression of *amour-propre*. This much is clear in Rousseau's *Constitutional Project for Corsica*:

“But vanity is the fruit of opinion; it arises from it and feeds upon it... It seeks things in proportion to the value it places upon them; to show it what it ought to respect is to tell it what it ought to do. This word vanity is not well chosen, since vanity is only one of the two branches of self-esteem [*amour-propre*]... Opinion which lays great store by frivolous objects produces vanity; but that which lights on objects intrinsically great and beautiful produces pride. You can thus render a people either proud or vain, depending on the choice of the objects to which you direct its judgments” (1986 [1768], 326).

Public opinion, a function of civilization and the socialization therein, is both conventional and malleable. In a nod to the *Discourses*, Rousseau claims that people often make mistakes in their judgements of what is ‘becoming’, and uses this insight to argue that public judgement must be guided toward the common good: ‘Reform men’s opinions and their mores will be purified by themselves’ (2002 [1762], 244). In this way, the function of the censor strikes directly at the fundamental ambiguity of *amour-propre*: it mediates public opinion, which when entrenched in peoples’ daily activities can lead both to moral inequality (when it is vain, insecure and anxious) or moral equality and freedom (when it is healthy and oriented toward the common good). Rousseau makes the point explicitly in his *Considerations on the Government of Poland*:

“It is national institutions which shape the genius, the character, the tastes and the manners of a people; which give it an individuality of its own; which inspire it with that ardent love of country, based on ineradicable habits, which make its members, while living among other peoples, die of boredom, though surrounded by delights denied them in their own land” (1986 [1772], 168).

Thus, Rousseau continues to affirm the pliability of human nature: in his genealogy of vice natural accidents over time affect the development of human sociability, and earlier in *The Social Contract* the Legislator is imbued with the power to shape human nature through the promulgation of sound institutions. The censor, then, attempts a similar intervention into the temporal development of humanity. Unfortunately, Rousseau does not say much in *The Social Contract* regarding the concrete ways in which the censorship would operate.¹² For that reason, we should look briefly to Rousseau’s lengthier treatment of censorship via the ‘Court of Honor’, an entity that resembles a material approximation of *The Social Contract’s* censor and its effects on public opinion in the *Letter to D’Alembert*.

Written in the interim between the publication of *The Second Discourse* and *The Social Contract*, the *Letter to D’Alembert* is Rousseau’s response to Jean D’Alembert’s *l’Encyclopédie* entry calling for the establishment of a theater in Geneva. Ultimately, Rousseau argues that a theater in a small city like Geneva would have deleterious effects (among them decreased trade, increased taxes, luxury and the ridicule of virtue), due in part to the spectacle’s misleading conception of social relations, and the necessary alienation of the spectator from the spectacle (Guénard 2011). However, a theater would be desirable in a large and corrupt city like Paris. In terms reminiscent of the *First Discourse*, Rousseau describes Paris as a place in which ‘morals and honor are nothing

because each [person], easily hiding his conduct from the public eye, shows himself only by his reputation and is esteemed only for his riches' (1980 [1782], 58–59). Because of the vice, vanity, and moral decay already present in Paris, Rousseau claims that a theater can, at least, serve to distract people from further succumbing to their vices: 'Since preventing them from occupying themselves is to prevent them from doing harm, *2 hours a day stolen from the activity of vice* prevents the twelfth part of the crimes that would be committed' (1980 [1782], 59).¹³ In the same way that the laws and institutions described in *The Social Contract* cannot recover virtue, but only forestall its demise, a theater in Paris would serve a similarly palliative role.

Ruminating on the ill effect actors would have on the populace of Geneva, Rousseau contends that citizens would have to be 'forced to be decent' through 'severe and well-executed laws', issued by the true legislator (1980 [1782], 66). Laws on their own, however, are insufficient: the interplay of laws and morals is crucial for Rousseau's account of a healthy citizen. By bringing well-molded laws together with morals, citizens should be able to follow the proclamation of the Spartan ephors: 'not to observe the laws, but to *love* the laws' (1980 [1782], 66–67).¹⁴ Rousseau's prescribed tactic for harnessing morals is, of course, to influence public opinion.

For this task, Rousseau describes the 'Court of Honor'. Staffed by 'old soldiers laden with honorable titles who have grown gray with their laurels', the Court guides public opinion through nothing but honor and disgrace (1980 [1782], 68). All citizens are answerable to the Court: 'all [are] equally subject to being honored or stigmatized according to the conformity or the opposition of their lives or sentiments to the principles of honor established in the nation and gradually reformed by the tribunal on the basis of those of justice and reason' (1980 [1782], 71). In other words, the Court sets the public standard for that which is noble and that which is disgraceful not by force of sword or law but through esteeming and shaming. Because the Court derives legitimacy from its honorable ministers, its judgements are enough to 'uproot the public prejudice' (1980 [1782], 68). Speaking on the Court's abolition of dueling through condemnation, Rousseau explains: 'it is not because they [duels] are despised or punished, but because the morals [manners] have changed' (1980 [1782], 71). In the context of the *Letter*, the Court has been offered as a beneficent guide of public opinion in contrast to actors in a theater, whose talent is 'the art of counterfeiting himself, of putting on another character than his own, of appearing different than he is' (1980 [1782], 79).

Rousseau articulates the effect of state institutions such as the Court of Honor on public opinion more generally in the *Considerations*: 'I should wish that, by honours and public rewards, all the patriotic virtues should be glorified, *that citizens should constantly be kept occupied with the fatherland, that it should be made their principal business, that it should be kept continuously before their eyes...* Their hearts would learn to know other pleasures than those of wealth' (1986 [1772], 170). In other words, Rousseau's central concern with time is apparent in the temporal language he uses to describe freedom and vice: in order to avoid the Parisian 'activity of vice', Rousseau prescribes as an antidote the 'constant' and 'continuous' business of citizenship.

Though scholars have argued that for Rousseau collective political action rightly understood is a form of pedagogical action (Baczko 1974, 49), the censor and Court of

Honor have received scant attention in the critical scholarship despite serving a fantastically important role in a republic ruled by the general will. Because *amour-propre*'s propensity to degrade is mediated by public opinion, the Court forestalls the 'activity of vice', or what we might call a practice of *unfreedom* (e.g. the vicious judgements of one's peers, the attempts to seem other than one is and the temptation to value certain jobs or possessions simply because others value them), in favour of a decidedly different daily practice: interacting with one's peers in an continuous and honorable way such that their *amour-propre* is bent toward the general will, citizenship and ultimately freedom.

V Festivals, balls and dances

While the censor and Court of Honor function as bulwarks against activities of vice, the well-known festivals and balls featured at the end of Rousseau's *Letter* and *Considerations on the Government of Poland* serve as concrete practices through which people create themselves as citizens. As Blaise Bachofen explains, these festivities are a kind of inversion of the theater that so worried Rousseau: instead of a spectacle in which the community is alienated, it is in festivals and balls that people can recognize themselves as people and enjoy putting on a show for themselves (2011). The exact way that these social institutions affect *amour-propre*, citizenship and freedom, however is still debated. Whether these social events even play an active role in the cultivation of citizenship has been called into question. Victor Gourevitch argues that 'Festivals allow the communal spirit to express itself. But they could not impart a communal spirit to a political society whose laws and morals do not also embody it. *Festivals can only confirm citizenship where it exists; they cannot make citizens*' (1972, 753).¹⁵ Over against this interpretation, a number of scholars have argued that the social events actually affect the development of *amour-propre*.

One account contends that their primary use is blunting the dangers of inflamed *amour-propre*. Shklar, for instance, describes festivals as 'necessary to protect the public self against the alluring calls of the private self, of *amour-propre* and the false empire of opinion' (1969, 158). Shklar's account, however, still treats *amour-propre* as a largely negative and politically corrosive passion.¹⁶ In this respect, recent scholarship by Megan Gallagher goes further; the emotional function of Rousseau's festivals, balls and rituals is to reclaim a 'worldly version of *pitié*' (2016, 9) and in doing so mediate the corrosive aspects of *amour-propre*, converting it into "*amour de la patrie*" (2016, 18).

Others have more explicitly connected these social events to the politically advantageous dimensions of *amour-propre*. Both Robin Douglass (2015, 164) and Zev Trachtenberg (1993, 196) argue that the festivals do not quiet *amour-propre* so much as they 'meld' it with a generalized *amour-de-soi-même*. Timothy O'Hagan perhaps goes furthest in tying these social events to *amour-propre*; instead of framing their function as limits on *amour-propre* and its tendency toward vice, O'Hagan claims that their use is to 'inculcate patriotism in the hearts of free citizens' by allowing a healthy *amour-propre* to flourish (1999, 119).

Though I agree that the above scholars are right to connect Rousseau's festivals and balls to *amour-propre* insofar as these events cool the vicious inclinations of the passion

and stoke its virtuous capacities, I contend that these social events' functions are best understood in the context of the genealogical framework described above: festivals and balls are not simply mere means to redirect *amour-propre* in more politically conducive directions, but rather continuous fixtures of political life through which people (re)create themselves as citizens through the very act of participating. A framework that understands Rousseauan freedom as a Kantian-Hegelian mutual recognition misses the necessity of the ritualized, embodied practices that make that mutual recognition possible. This is the distinct difference between the Kantian-Hegelian interpretation and an approach that reads Rousseau as a chiefly genealogical thinker: freedom is not an ideological or rational historical achievement, but instead an ongoing, ritualized practice because the possibility of its loss is ever present. In other words, 'liberatory self-realization'¹⁷ is a never ending process.

For Rousseau, these gatherings 'in the open air, under the sky' are the institutions in which moral liberty and well-being manifest (1996 [1758], 125–126). By physically engaging in dances, contests (gymnastic, running, discus, wrestling, etc.) and mutual entertainment, the love of one's citizen counterparts and the state is continually realized and renewed. As Peter Coleman explains, the republican festival enhances a people's happiness by bringing them to a better understanding of what causes that happiness (1984, 14): in this case, joyful participation in the creation of freedom with one's fellow citizens. Recalling the festivals of his youth, Rousseau describes the Genevans of his memory:

"They are unrecognizable; they are no longer that steady people which never deviates from its economic rules; they are no longer those slow reasoners who weigh everything, including joking, in the scale of judgment. The people are lively, gay, and tender; their hearts are then in their eyes as they are always on their lips; they seek to communicate their joy and their pleasures. They invite, importune, and coerce the new arrivals and dispute over them. *All the societies constitute but one, all become common to all*. It is almost a matter of indifference at which table one seats oneself" (1996 [1758], 127).

This passage lays bare the fundamental connection between physical activity, *amour-propre*, and freedom: it is in the very act of participating in such festivals that *amour-propre* becomes virtuous citizenship. In other words, it is the practice itself that is requisite for the realization of freedom over time. Rousseau here understands that the general will, for which this generalized form of *amour-propre* is necessary, is not itself guaranteed by the social compact. Rather, it is produced and sustained through the repetitive physical and affective ritual of patriotic celebration. Even if it is the case that, as Arthur Melzer points out, 'The end result of this unifying process is the citizen whose existence is merged into the common self' (2016, 194), wherein this 'unification' hinges on the transformation of *amour-propre* that occurs during these events.

In much the same way, Rousseau champions public contests and 'open-air spectacles... where the whole people will *participate* equally' in his *Considerations* (1986 [1772], 172).¹⁸ The modality of the *Second Discourse's* 'golden age of the huts,' namely, that it featured the emergence of *amour-propre* but was also the happiest epoch known to man, can be detected once again in Rousseau's description of the civic

festivities: ‘Nothing could be easier than to replace the earlier combats with less cruel exercises in which strength and skill would nevertheless still play a part, and in which the victors would continue to win honours and rewards’ (1986 [1772], 172). In other words, the ability to distinguish between better and worse singers or dancers predisposed primitive humanity ‘towards inequality, and at the same time towards vice’ (2002 [1755], 172) but in a republic bound by the social contract can be institutionalized in public spectacles and guided toward love for the common good, or what Bronislaw Baczko terms ‘enlightened patriotism’ (1974, 32). Citizens’ participation in these modern communal contests is the very activity through which *amour-propre* is reworked into the form required for moral freedom; whereas *amour-propre*’s tendency is toward vanity and dissimulation, civic festivities orient this passion toward honor.

While Trachtenberg and O’Hagan are quite right to point out the positive effects that these social events have on *amour-propre*, their accounts nonetheless remain consequentialist. Rather, what Rousseau emphasizes in his descriptions of these festivals is the *practice* of freedom itself that reorients *amour-propre*, what Douglass has called a ‘cultivation of the love of Fatherland’ (2015).¹⁹ As he remarks in *Poland*, holding public festivals and spectacles ‘is the way to make them love their leaders, and to combine respect with affection’ (1986 [1772], 173). Rousseau even implores his readers not to ‘neglect’ the need for these kinds of public displays which, when conducted with ‘gravity and decorum’, shape public opinion by esteeming civic virtue. Jean-Pierre Courtois (2005) helpfully describes these festivals as periodizing time in a libidinal economy of the spectacle: the regularity of these events is crucial to shaping the communal flow of a passion so prone to vice into a collective fount of virtue. It is in these repetitive acts of celebrating citizenship that one *feels* that they are a citizen, and so becomes one. Thus, the *Considerations* make clear that Rousseau is acutely aware of the indispensable political role that the act of participation in these festivals and celebrations plays in cultivating *amour propre*. In this way, the Court of Honor and the festivals operate as simultaneous prophylactics and patriotic incubators, carefully tamping down the kinds of daily interactions that beget vice while simultaneously honoring the patriotic activities that reorient *amour-propre*.

Beyond even these festivals and contests, in his *Letter* Rousseau devises balls for ‘young marriageable persons’ which are ‘salutary and befitting the vivacity of young people’ (1996 [1758], 128). Rousseau makes clear in his account that these events *literally* make one a citizen through participation, both for younger and older people. For the youth, the practice is a preventative of vice: through these balls, ‘they evade the intolerable tyranny, which nature and reason disavow. For the permitted pleasures which a lively and frolicsome youth is denied are substituted more dangerous ones’ (1996 [1758], 128–129). That is, engaging in such balls is itself a practice of avoiding the vicious proclivities of *amour-propre*. At the same time, participation in these events by elderly citizens reaffirms the free way of life they have practiced throughout their entire lives.

Rousseau writes that in the hall in which such a ball would be held, a section for honorable and aged citizens would be reserved so that they could watch ‘their grandchildren prepare themselves to become citizens’ (1996 [1758], 129). As a consequence, these youth balls expose freedom’s temporality in at least two ways: first, through the very

act of participating, which in youth forestalls vice and in the elderly reaffirms patriotic freedom, and second, in that citizenship is preserved, sustained and passed on through socialization and intergenerational celebration. As Rousseau puts it: ‘these balls, thus directed, would bring the people together not so much for a public entertainment as for the gathering of a big family, and from the bosom of joy and pleasures would be born the preservation, the concord, and the prosperity of the republic’ (1996 [1758], 131). The well-being and civic happiness produced by these festivities climax in a nostalgic sentimentality: ‘tears of joy and memory’ are shed at the sight of a new generation of citizens. For Rousseau, the practice of citizenship and love for one’s country involve memories formed through such practices, exposing a third dimension of freedom’s temporality: the practice of freedom transcends mere nostalgia and instead becomes creative imagination, which continually inspires the present to recreate that freedom.²⁰ The preservative function of these festivals and balls necessitates ‘sweet impressions made during youth’, both in order to socialize young people into citizenship as well as to reaffirm that same feeling in aging citizens.²¹ Such nostalgic re-creation of moral freedom in these political balls reminds us that there is no Kantian-Hegelian end of history for Rousseau; instead, one must make and shape history for it tends away from freedom, rather than toward it.

It is no surprise, then, that Rousseau relays one of his own youthful memories in a footnote near the end of the *Letter*. He recalls observing hundreds of men singing and dancing in unison in St. Gervais Square so loudly that they woke their sleeping wives and children. Rushing down to see their patriarchs, the women and children interrupted the dance and ‘now there were only embraces, laughs, healths and caresses’ (1996 [1758], 135n). The scene evoked in Rousseau a ‘universal gaiety’, the pure joy that only a public joy can produce. Most tellingly, Rousseau recalls his father embracing him and saying: ‘Jean-Jacques... love your country. Do you see these good Genevans? They are all friends, they are all brothers; joy and concord reign in their midst. You are a Genevan; 1 day you will see other peoples; but even if you should travel as much as your father, you will not find their likes’ (1996 [1758], 135n). The public joy – the profound moral sensibility²² – that Rousseau describes is itself the inverse of the *amour-propre* fueled self-alienation in Paris. Instead, his joy, and more importantly, his freedom, was made possible by and through his interactions with his fellow citizens.

VI Conclusion

I have argued here that freedom for Rousseau is realized through the active, iterative and creative process of cultivating the passion *amour-propre*. This claim follows from a critique of two recent trends in scholarship on Rousseau. The first reads Rousseau as a genealogist of vice, in many ways paving the methodological path for later genealogists such as Nietzsche and Foucault. While this scholarship focuses almost exclusively on the genealogical characteristics of the *Second Discourse*, I contend that it is incomplete: Rousseau’s concern for temporality in his conjectural history also illuminates the temporal fragility of virtue, and why the ‘practice’ of safeguarding and exercising freedom is inextricable from freedom itself.

The second body of work acknowledges the role of *amour-propre* in human vice, but emphasizes the positive capacities of the passion, namely its foundational role in the formation of subjectivity and patriotism. That is, if *amour-propre* becomes inflamed through certain repeated ‘activities of vice’ (e.g. those Rousseau believed a theater in Paris might be a distraction from), then *amour-propre* should likewise be rendered virtuous through civic, social, and patriotic activities. However, the prevailing interpretation of ‘virtuous’ *amour-propre* is a ‘Kantian-Hegelian’ one in which the passion’s drive for social recognition is satisfied by equal standing in the eyes of others. Here, I contend that the Kantian-Hegelian reading misrepresents both the temporal and sensuous character of freedom in Rousseau: because he is a genealogical thinker concerned with historical contingency and the ever-present danger of moral degradation, I argue that the *embodied practice* of both forestalling the spread of vice and re-creating a virtuous social world in which to be a citizen is at the heart of Rousseau’s politics. Put differently, the (inter)active practice of freedom indicated by my genealogical reading illuminates the way that *amour-propre* actually *becomes* virtuous citizenship rather than its inflamed vicious form.

In the latter half of the article, I argued that Rousseau is deeply attentive to the way that *amour-propre* develops as a consequence of peoples’ repeated actions. To this end, I read the censor of the *Social Contract* and the Court of Honor in Rousseau’s *Letter to d’Alembert* as institutions specifically designed to stave off the degradation of *amour-propre* by mobilizing public opinion against activities of vice. In much the same way, I interpreted Rousseau’s discussions of various festivals, balls and dances in the *Letter* and his writings on *Poland* as institutions intentionally designed to be the corresponding activities of virtue that transform *amour-propre* into citizenship. Moreover, reading Rousseau as a genealogist has the unexpected outcome of centering his well-known but less-studied social festivities in the realization of freedom. Though *amour-propre* inevitably tends toward vice, Rousseau believed the republic ruled by the general will could be sustained so long as people carried on the actions that made them citizens.

In the final analysis, focusing on the ongoing cultivation of *amour-propre* in the genealogical reading of Rousseau not only illuminates the centrality of a continuous ‘practice’ of self-creating freedom to his thought, it also makes exciting claims on our understanding of genealogy as a methodology. As others implied above, this analysis places Rousseau at the beginning of a genealogical tradition that spans through Nietzsche and Foucault into contemporary fields of inquiry, including critical social theory broadly understood. What’s more, reading Rousseau as a genealogist pushes back on the most common argument *against* genealogy in political theory: that it fails to yield, and even undermines, positive political projects. On the contrary, the analysis above shows that Rousseau’s genealogical approach to the practical emergence of vice and how it shaped modern man’s self-understanding is precisely what enables him to articulate a practice of freedom that aims to create the self as a citizen through the act of self-creation. That is, Rousseau’s writings demonstrate that genealogy need not necessarily be anathema to articulating positive political visions, as is widely assumed now. In this way, reading Rousseau as a genealogist and simultaneous theorist of freedom not only illuminates his own work, but serves as provocation toward contemporary users of critical genealogy.

A genealogical reading also gives us a further way to be sympathetic to Rousseau. If we see his genealogy of vice and his political prescriptions as forming two halves of a coherent system, we can also imagine disagreeing and thinking with Rousseau on his own terms.²³ What if, for instance, we are compelled by the moral psychology that animates his genealogy and undergirds his critique of modern political life, but disagree that his political prescriptions actually represent the best way to secure a freer, more virtuous life as he himself defines it? While a genealogy may well allow Rousseau to offer us a politics that avoids re-creating various social and political pathologies, it does not follow that his attempts to describe that better world are themselves without vice or unfreedom. Scholars such as Steven Johnston (1999) and Elizabeth Rose Wingrove (2000), for instance, find discipline and social control a more likely outcome of these institutions than virtuous patriotism. Reading Rousseau as a systematic genealogical thinker makes it possible to read Rousseau against himself rather than discard the entirety of his work if we find his prescriptions unnerving or unconvincing; his political visions are motivated by the *insight* of his genealogy, and we may yet still look to Rousseau's critique of modernity for inspiration for our own political theorizing, even if it does not end up resembling the *Social Contract*, *Corsica*, or *Poland*.²⁴

In any case, reading Rousseau as a genealogist helps us to understand – through all the festivals, courts, balls and dancing in the streets – that history serves as no guarantee of freedom; if the same human trait is responsible for both vice and virtuous citizenship, any defensible political program *must* constantly and constructively struggle against that trait's tendency to decay.

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Notes

1. Genealogy, then, is a subset of conjectural history; while a conjectural history may be teleological or dialectical, a genealogy has specific characteristics (contingency, an attention to the formation of moral psychology, a tendency to expose the current moment for other than it is, etc.) that I describe in further detail below.
2. See Melzer's *The Natural Goodness of Man* (2016).
3. See Bachofen and Bernardi's *Rousseau, Politique et Esthétique. Sur la Lettre à d'Alembert* (2011, 6) for a description of the apparent paradox between Rousseau's love of theater and the fact that he denies it for Geneva, and Baczko (1974, 25–26) on the reception of Rousseau's 'chimerical' text on Poland.
4. See Munnich (2011) for a reading of the *Letter to d'Alembert* that argues that Rousseau might have carved out room for the Genevan elite to put on clandestine plays for their own pleasure, in defiance of the guidance he lays out for the republic as a whole.
5. See also Charles Griswold's 'Genealogical narrative and self-knowledge in Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality among Men*' for an appraisal of Rousseau's genealogical method that emphasizes how the *Second Discourse*'s methodology is a response to our general lack of self-knowledge.

6. I translate *homme* here as ‘man’ to retain Rousseau’s general use of the terms ‘man’ and ‘he’ to denote humanity generally. Though a genealogical method would presumably expose the contingency and ostensibly hidden asymmetries of power in gender roles, our ability to hold Rousseau to this standard would be hindered by altering his language to be more inclusive.
7. Emphasis added.
8. See, for instance, Christopher Kelly’s *Rousseau as Author: Consecrating One’s Life to Truth* and Ethan Putterman’s, *Rousseau, Law, and the Sovereignty of the People*.
9. There are, of course, detractors from the ‘new’ interpretation of *amour-propre*. Avner Inbar, for instance, claims that those who read Rousseau in this Kantian-Hegelian light often do so with intentions of making him more palatable to a Rawlsian liberal readership.
10. See [Brunet and Guillaume \(2010, 221\)](#) for their distinction between a Kantian rationalist version of liberty and an embodied, sensuous version of liberty much closer to the analysis provided here.
11. See also Martin Rueff (2018), who locates Rousseau’s anthropology of the passions as the centerpiece of his anthropological and political writings.
12. Despite a dearth of secondary scholarship on the role of the censorship, Christopher Kelly’s ‘Rousseau and the Case for (and against) Censorship’ offers an account of Rousseau’s relationship with censorship, but does not connect this analysis with *amour-propre*. Scholars such as Melissa Lane, Valentina Arena, however, emphasize that the censor can *only* confirm morals, not create them. Alexandra Oprea emphasizes Rousseau’s Spartan inspiration for the censors, drawing connections between their function in preempting factions in Sparta to Rousseau’s own concerns on factionalization.
13. Emphasis added.
14. Emphasis added.
15. Emphasis added.
16. See also Cohen’s *Rousseau: Free Community of Equals*, 127.
17. I take the phrase ‘liberatory self-realization’ from [Brunet and Guillaume \(2010\)](#), who likewise use it in the context of cultivating healthy *amour-propre*.
18. Emphasis added.
19. See esp. Ch. 4.
20. See [Baczko \(1974, 53\)](#) as well as Rudy Le Menthéour’s claim that for Rousseau, nostalgia is recast as something noble in these Polish festivals (2018, 32).
21. See also Martin McCullum’s ‘Eyes Turning Toward the Light: Nostalgic Memory and Nascent Community in Rousseau’s *Émile*’.
22. See [Menin \(2019, 299\)](#) for an affective analysis of this memory.
23. A genealogical approach to Rousseau likewise makes it possible to square the claim that he is a methodologically systematic thinker with the apparent paradoxes (as noted by [Baczko \[1974, 1978\]](#) and [Menin \[2019\]](#)) that arise between texts such as *The Social Contract* and his *Considerations on Poland* by disposing of a singular form of polity or political subjectivity at the end of some Kantian-Hegelian teleology. As [Lemaire \(2014, 165\)](#) explains, the concept of man is necessarily incomplete in view of its numerous possible ways of being. The virtuous citizen in Geneva may well be different from the virtuous citizen of Poland, but this does not mean they are not both virtuous citizens in the ways that matter to their respective societies.

24. Once more, this insight also extends to the tensions between Rousseau's various positive political writings. While *Corsica* and *Poland* may superficially be in tension with *The Social Contract*, they are united in their attempts to quell the inflammation of *amour-propre* and set up the institutions that foster a culture of continuous civic self-creation best suited to specific peoples in specific places.

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